

In 1970, psychologist Albert Bandura's research found that the more confident a group is in its abilities, the more successful that group is in accomplishing its tasks. In fact, he says that *"... in schools, when educators believe in their combined ability to influence student outcomes, there are significantly higher levels of academic achievement"* (1993). He coined this "collective efficacy" (EL, March 2018, pg. 41) and many ensuing studies have confirmed his thinking.

Instructional coaches are in a great place to help teachers implement effective instructional practices and to reinforce the "collective efficacy" of working together to accomplish the same goal. And, as Kim Greene in the March 2018 Education Update says, *"To improve instructional practices and student outcomes, every teacher – no matter their experience level – deserves a coach."*

This notion that everyone deserves a coach is confirmed in one of our PIIC studies,

*Instructional Coaching and Student Outcomes: Findings from a Three-Year Pilot Study*

. Here, researcher Elliott Medrich finds that, "... as teachers are coached from year to year, they become better at their craft. And, as they get better at their craft, students achieve more." The findings further indicate that, "... as teachers improve their practice over time, and as students are exposed to teachers whose skill levels are improving from year to year, the student outcomes themselves improve..." (

[abstract found here](#)

). It is a cumulative effect... the more teachers work together and learn from each other, the more likely their craft is improved. The better they are at their craft, the more beneficial that collective learning is to their students. So, if they work together all year and over the course of several years, their craft becomes much more refined and improved.

In addition, at the top of John Hattie's list for factors that influence student achievement (2016) is that collective teacher efficacy.

We also know from Linda-Darling Hammond's research that students taught by underqualified teachers have "significantly lower achievement in reading and mathematics" (Quality Teaching: What it is and How Can it be Measured?). Dr. Hammond's research also reports that high-achieving nations provide teachers with 15 -25 hours a week for collaboration and 100 hours a year for professional learning (Linda Darling-Hammond, 2010). Imagine that... offering numerous possibilities for ongoing, relevant professional development that is transformed into professional learning through the guidance of an instructional coach. What a novel thought!!

So, what does all this mean to the practice of instructional coaching?

Effective instructional coaching includes providing multiple opportunities for teaching colleagues to regularly “combine their ability to influence student outcomes” by thinking aloud, planning together, and reflecting in, on, and about their instructional habits. It means that instructional coaches ensure that the environment for learning is a no-risk environment where making mistakes is almost a requirement. It is not a “fixit” model but rather a safe place for teaching colleagues to understand that not knowing something is okay and that together, the learning takes shape. It’s a place where discussing instructional goals and delivery is the norm and coming together to ask questions is how that learning is influenced. It’s like using the potter’s wheel to mold the vase that has taken many attempts to sculpt it before the product is ready. And even then, the finishing touches are not quite finished as each time the vase is viewed, another line, swirl, or thumb print can be added.

As an instructional coach, build and guide the team that consistently, persistently, and insistently meets together to collaborate on ways to build knowledge and to improve classrooms, schools, and instruction. It is modeling a place where *collective efficacy* makes the difference in the landscape of teaching and learning.