

In his work with teacher leaders, Les Foltos (JSD February 2015, Vol. 36 No. 1) encourages coaches to work with their colleagues and serve as catalysts for a collaborative culture that is vital to ensure success for all teachers and students. That is certainly something all coaches have heard from their work with PIIC and their IU PIIC mentors. It is true – PIIC focuses on the BDA cycle of consultation and the 4-quadrant framework. This content and process are accomplished through the ongoing, consistent conversations between and among teachers and their coaches. And, just in case you haven't noticed, that's not so easy! Remember, *"Collaboration is the unnatural act between non-consenting adults"* (Jocelyn Elders)."

A collaborative culture is more than a conversation but that's certainly where it starts. School communities need to talk about what they see in schools and share their visions of what they want to see. They need open dialogue about where they are in the continuum of school wide improvement, where they want to go, and how they plan to get there. They also need to revisit that vision regularly to determine if the plans for improvement are matching the expectations and intended outcomes. If not, adjustments need to be made to ensure that the changes taking place are the ones that will move the school community forward in ways that influence student learning and teacher growth. It is a process, not an event... much like instructional coaching.

Everyone wants change... you go first! That's why there are early adopters, the "wait and see" type adopters, and those that are not interested in moving their cheese at all. Again, this is not automatic and requires the deliberate and intentional support of the coach and other school leaders. It takes the whole school community to recognize that change is needed and then engage in conversations about what that might look like and the essential steps towards making those changes a reality for the school. That takes time, thought, TLC, and most of all, trust.

Instructional coaches are critical for change to take place. They are not just influencing individual practice; they are changing school practice by ensuring a consistency in practice and language and providing opportunities for colleagues to work together and achieve a common goal.

Often, the school community thinks that coaches going into classrooms and helping teachers implement a specific program or teach a particular concept is enough. It isn't. That's more like program implementation than school transformation. Coaching is a transformative process that requires continual planning, analysis, contemplation, and timely feedback. So, when coaches regularly visit classrooms and talk about instructional practices, that's just part of the process

followed by collective problem solving and critical thinking.

Coaching is hard! Teachers must be gently nudged and encouraged to keep the momentum moving. They must be heard; their actions must be endorsed; and their practices must be validated. A coach's colleagues must know that coaching is non-invasive and supportive, responsive and reassuring. It is not supervisory or dismissive. A coach's words are meant to encourage thinking not discourage a colleague from trying something different, even if the idea is new for the coach. Remember, coaches are not experts; they are skilled, experienced practitioners who are members in a community of learning. They focus on adult learning and how to help their colleagues in measured ways. They understand that their colleagues want to be better at their craft and they treat them with dignity and respect, never losing sight of the shared vision: increase student engagement and build teacher capacity so that student learning is transformed.

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