

By [PIIC Regional Mentor Coordinator Kathy Gori and the RMC-Mentor Team](#)

Collaboration is the backbone of instructional coaching. In order for coaches to create collaborative learning environments, they have to be able to clearly define and communicate the common goals of the school and how they fit under the umbrella of the PIIC framework. They have to use this common purpose to prioritize their actions and frame the scope of their work. In addition, they must be able to clarify their roles and responsibilities so that the teachers clearly understand not only what instructional coaching is, but also comprehend how coaches can work with them to improve their practice.

Most importantly, for coaches to build a collaborative culture, they must establish trust. Coaches must be honest, work to avoid conflicts, and maintain confidentiality at all times. They have to actively model the partnership principles and assume positive intentions when working with the administration and teachers.

Furthermore, coaches must take responsibility for clear and effective communication. Miscommunication can quickly undermine collaboration. Therefore, coaches must err on the side of over communicating, check for understanding among the staff, and take responsibility for being heard and understood. Coaches must seek to understand all sides of an issue and work to rectify any misunderstandings quickly and accurately.

Coaches must constantly remember that their colleagues have different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. They need to embrace the diversity of their colleagues and remember that reasonable practitioners can and do differ from one another. They have to be willing to learn from their colleagues, embrace divergent ideas based upon their merits and create a climate where teachers and administrators can safely express their ideas and feel that they are valued.

Finally, coaches need to review and gauge the culture of collaboration in their schools. They need to celebrate the success of the faculty and share their achievements while staying true to their responsibility to maintain confidentiality. Coaches must engage in constant reflection and encourage and guide their teachers to engage in the same type of reflection. Above all, coaches must focus on the true value of collaboration with teachers and administrators, which is working together for the common goal of improving student engagement and student

achievement.

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