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Building the teacher- coach relationship is the heart of successful coaching programs. “Building strong relationships with teachers require 6 key elements: 1) creating effective partnership agreements; 2) building teacher leadership capacity; 3) communicating about coaching services; 4) allowing teachers a voice and a choice; 5) encouraging feedback; and 6) managing resistance and conflict” (Coaching Matters, pg. 115).

Creating effective agreements are critical for effective relationships. Teachers and coaches should agree on the goals and how they will work together. An effective agreement is confidential and should describe each party’s role and responsibilities, the desired outcomes, how the work will be measured, specific data that will be used, and follow-up procedures (Coaching Matters, pg. 116). This all occurs in the **Before** phase of the **Before-During-After** (BDA) cycle of consultation.

Recognizing teacher leadership is necessary when building strong relationships. Teachers should see themselves as teacher leaders. Two guiding resources for coaches when facilitating teacher leadership are the PIIC 4 quadrant framework and Instructional Coaching Resource Guide, www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org ., and the Teacher Leader Model Standards @ www.teacherleaderstandards.org .

Clear communication about coaching services is essential. The coaching model’s vision and goals must be shared with the staff. A good place to start is with a detailed job description like the Pennsylvania Department of Education one found [here](#) on PIIC’s website. Once the goals are set, coaches can build awareness of their available services through brochures, flyers, and blogs. The coach’s contact information must be included.

Coaches are frequently asked how they support teachers. Keeping a log on the coaching services delivered can be shared with administrators and teachers; however, this log should not have any identifiable notes, names, or confidential details but rather a generic list with the types of support offered, e.g., text rendering or Cornell Note taking and not specific support attached to any teacher’s name. Confidential notes are kept by the coach and remain confidential. Teachers, however, can always share their notes with the building administrators if they so choose.

Provide the opportunity for “voice and a choice” by identifying the teacher needs and setting clear expectations. The PIIC model provides ample time for coaches to meet with teachers in the BDA cycle to honor the teacher’s voice. In the **Before** phase, the teacher and coach co-construct the “look fors” and determine their areas of foci. The

During

phase is where the coach and teacher “see” the implementation of the agreed upon goals and the

After

phase is where the coach and teacher reflect and discuss what they saw in class. This debriefing helps the teacher focus on his/her areas of strength and areas of need going forward.

Sometimes coaches are met with teacher resistance due to fear or a personal difference. In these cases, try to engage the teachers in friendly conversations and listen to them. Determining the root of resistance and addressing it helps to erase those fears.

As in any relationship, conflicts may arise. Try to find mutual ground by identifying what is important and discuss possible solutions to these conflicts. Open communication and transparency are critical in these situations. In extreme cases of conflict and resistance, it may be necessary to have the principal step in to help resolve the issue. Keep in mind, this may happen if the staff is unclear about the coaching model and the coach’s role.

Killion, J., Harrison, C, Bryan, C, & Clifton, H. (Learning Forward, 2012). *Coaching Matters*, 11 5-125.

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