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It's not "sugar and spice." It's not "snips and snails." So, what exactly *are* the ingredients that make up a coach?

Throughout our involvement with PIIC, we have taken part in countless discussions about the essential characteristics of the coach, the skills these individuals must possess, and their importance in enhancing student achievement and engagement. We have had the opportunity to work closely with hundreds of amazing coaches and have found that they share the following character traits:

Coaches are advocates.

They put the needs of students first. "All students can learn" isn't a buzz-phrase for them, it is a firmly-held belief. To that end, coaches are always seeking ways to make learning more relevant, more engaging, and more rigorous.

Coaches are life-long learners.

They are self-starters who take responsibility for their own learning, constantly seeking out best practices and research-based instructional strategies. Coaches understand the unique needs of adult learners. They are positive, flexible, and always willing to learn something new.

Coaches are optimists.

They assume positive intentions. They share the belief that their colleagues are interested in improving their instruction to benefit their students. Coaches believe that good relationships are a key element in creating a positive school culture. Rather than presenting themselves as experts, they approach their colleagues as fellow learners in this process. In their work, coaches strive to be non-judgmental, open minded, and supportive.

Coaches are confidants.

They maintain confidentiality. They encourage teachers to discuss their needs and help them plan, analyze, and reflect. Coaches help teachers by moving them from light to heavy coaching. Through the BDA model of consultation, they help teachers set their goals, analyze their

practice, examine data, and reflect on their successes and next steps.

Finally, Coaches are reflective practitioners.

They analyze their strengths and their shortcomings. They look at their own needs and those of their teachers. Coaches are problem solvers who are not afraid to think “outside the box” to secure buy-in from their colleague. They are school leaders and true change agents who have the courage to find and develop solutions and to drive professional growth.

Obviously, the character of successful coaches can be the subject of many spirited discussions. We know that this has been the case in our Regional Mentor Coordinator group. As you reflect on these ideas, and your own experience, we invite you to share your thoughts on this extremely important topic.

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