Developing an Understanding of Instructional Coaching
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Instructional coaching, as an individualized and differentiated professional development practice, is recognized as a means to raising teacher effectiveness (Dantonio, 2001; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2007; Reiss, 2007; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). Reiss (2007) defines coaching as a ‘change process’ which involves “a person being moved to a higher level of competence, confidence, performance, or insight” (p. 11). Reiss’s use of the term ‘process’ when referring to coaching is echoed throughout the literature for coaching is a process that takes time to develop (Dantonio, 2001; Guskey, 2000; Reiss, 2007; Witherspoon & White, 2007). Robertson (2008) defines coaching as "a learning relationship, where participants are open to new learning, engage together as professionals equally committed to facilitating each other’s leadership learning development and well-being (both cognitive and affective)” (p. 4). Grant (2006) provides a similar definition:

> Coaching is a goal-oriented, solution-focused process in which the coach works with the coachee to help identify and construct possible solutions, delineate a range of goals and options, and then facilitate the development and enactment of action plans to achieve those goals. (p. 156)

It is the notion of the individualized nature of coaching that causes coaching to be an intriguing professional development practice. The idea that coaching can be developed in a manner to support the coachee’s individual needs is to Berger (2006) “one of the most exciting elements of coaching” (p. 77).

The foundation for coaching in the workplace is built on the expectation for improvement in the coachee’s performance in tasks associated with his or her job (Reiss, 2007; Stern, 2007; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983; Witherspoon & White, 2007). Coaching in the workplace originally began as a ‘punitive’ action for those that needed help to improve their performance (Kouzes, Posner, & Biech, 2010; Western, 2008). According to Western (2008), in the original use of coaching in the workplace, “the perception was that if you were recommended, or instructed, to see a coach, you were in trouble, your performance was not up to scratch, you needed ‘fixing’ ” (p. 99). Western ascertains that due to this role as a punitive action, coaching struggled to be accepted as an overall developmental tool in the workplace. Although punitive coaching, based often on performance or skill training, still exists in modern society, the field of coaching has branched out into other forms that are less punitive and more developmentally based. Western stresses that the skills associated with coaching are now “essential for today’s managers and leaders” (p. 101). These changes to the perspective of what coaching is about have provided the impetus for coaching to become an impactful tool for developing the capacities of individuals and organizations.

The literature on coaching suggests a number of different forms beginning with the original forms of coaching which were skill/behavior coaching (Reiss, 2007; Stern, 2007; Witherspoon & White, 1996, 2007) and performance coaching (Reiss, 2007; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983; Western, 2008; Witherspoon & White, 2007). According to Western
(2008), both of these forms of coaching “focus on work-based performance and often very short-term interventions. The aim is to change behaviour and enhance workplace performance” (p. 99). Although these forms of coaching have moved out of the punitive stance they began with, each comes with a certain cache of ‘fixing’ the individual in terms of very specific skills and behaviors in order to improve their performance.

A second form of coaching in the literature is that of executive/leadership coaching (Kilburg, 2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Levinson, 1996, 2007; Peterson, 1996, 2007; Reiss, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Stern, 2007; Western, 2008; Witherspoon & White, 2007). Stern (2007) defines executive coaching as “an experiential, individualized, leadership development process that builds a leader’s capability to achieve short- and long-term organizational goals” (p. 31).

Crane’s (2002) transformational coaching offers another form of coaching that relies on the humanistic approach to coaching. Crane defines this form of coaching as “the art of assisting people enhance their effectiveness, in a way they feel helped” (p. 31). For Crane, transformational coaching “creates egalitarian, mutually supportive partnerships between people that transcend the traditional boss/subordinate relationship” (p. 32).

Three additional forms of coaching that are often cited in the literature factor heavily into coaching within the education system: peer coaching (Dantonio, 2001; Glickman, 2002; Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996), formative coaching (Nidus & Sadder, 2011), and cognitive coaching (Auerbach, 2006; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Showers (1985) referred to peer coaching as “a cyclical process designed as an extension of training” (p. 44). In peer coaching, this process takes place between teachers in a collaborative relationship focused on improving instruction (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Showers and Joyce (1996) found that teachers who participate in peer coaching relationships “practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires” (p. 14).

Formative coaching, which focuses on student work as the center of the coaching relationship is defined by Nidus and Sadder (2011) as “built on deep analysis of teaching and learning – and on the assumption that the ultimate purpose of improving instructional practice is to improve student achievement” (p. 31).

Cognitive coaching (Auerbach, 2006; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000) is a widely popular form of coaching developed with the education system in mind. Costa and Garmston (1994), the earliest theorists on cognitive coaching, propose that the goal in this form of coaching it to “attend to the internal thought processes of teaching as a way of improving instruction; coaches do not work to change overt behaviors. These behaviors change as a result of refined perceptions and cognitive processes” (p. 5). This form of coaching addresses the deeper meanings and perspectives of the coach and coachee rather than focusing on the skills and behaviors shown by the coachee in practice. Costa and Garmston (1994) have found that this form of coaching aligns closely with the need to individualize coaching for teachers in order to:
Understand the diverse stages in which each staff member is currently operating; to assist people in understanding their own and others’ differences and stages of development; to accept staff members at their present moral, social, cognitive, and ego state; and to act in a nonjudgmental manner. (p. 7)

It is in this quote from Costa and Garmston, that the benefits of coaching as a professional development tool can be recognized. Regardless of whether the coaching approach is based on performance, or skills, or knowledge, or perspectives, the idea that coaching can be individualized and differentiated not only for the organization, but for the individual as well, is the key to the effectiveness of coaching as a developmental tool.

The Constructs of Effective Coaching

Having briefly explored the multiple methods of coaching that are used in organizations, we now turn our attention to developing a better understanding of the constructs of effective coaching. The key constructs that will be detailed in this section are: 1) building a relationship between coach and coachee; 2) dialogue between coach and coachee; 3) asking questions to the coachee; 4) providing feedback to the coachee; and 5) developing the coachee’s self-reflectiveness.

Building a relationship between coach and coachee

The first construct of effectiveness pertains to the building of a relationship between the coach and coachee (Crane, 2002; Dantonio, 2001; Kilburg, 2007; Knight, 2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Peterson, 1996, 2007; Portner, 2008; Stober, 2006; Stowell, 1988; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983). The literature suggests that the building of a relationship between the coach and the coachee is of fundamental importance. Portner (2008) theorizes that for a coachee to enter into a coaching situation, “it takes trust to ask for help, to expose your insecurities and inexperience to a coworker, and to leave yourself vulnerable and open to ridicule” (p. 16). This is of extreme importance in coaching relationships between a supervisor and an employee. Without the trusting relationship, the employee (in this case the coachee) will not trust that they can open up about their deficiencies for fear of it being used in evaluation.

Dialogue between coach and coachee

Associated with this need for a relationship is the effective use of dialogue between the coach and coachee (Crane, 2002; Guskey, 2000; Drago-Severson, 2004; Knight, 2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Stowell, 1988; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983). Dialogue is formed out of a trusting relationship between two individuals who respect each other as professionals and as people. Drago-Severson (2004) refers to this form of dialogue as a ‘collegial inquiry’ or “a shared dialogue in a reflective context that involves reflecting on one’s assumptions, convictions, and values as part of the learning process” (p. 103). The direct opposite of dialogue is the relationship where the coach tells the coachee what they are doing wrong and what they need to do to fix it. Crane (2002) refers to this as a ‘command-and-control style’ which “may create stability, predictability, and uniformity, but they do not bring about deeper commitment and creative problem solving” (p. 101).
As Acheson and Gall (1997) suggest, in a coaching situation, the coach should “listen more, talk less” (p. 161). Costa & Garmston (1994) argue that the coaching process “is not one which the ‘superior’ does to the ‘inferior’; rather they are two dedicated professionals striving to solve problems, improve learning, and make curriculum more vibrant” (p. 50). Costa and Garmston solidify this argument in suggesting that the goal of coaching should be that the teacher is able to judge his or her own behaviors, actions, and perspectives rather than having it judged by another person. Effective dialogue is not a one-sided affair, but rather a committed conversation between two people who share goals for the conversation.

**Asking questions to the coachee**

An additional key construct of coaching is the coach’s action of asking questions rather than telling the coachee what to do (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008). According to Crane (2002), when a coach tells the coachee what they did right or wrong, or what they should do fix issues, this action “tends to control conversation, shuts off the flow of ideas and may trigger combative or other forms of self-protection” (p. 100). Crane believes that questioning does the complete opposite as it allows the coachee to open up and to be reflective on their practice. But it is not just about asking questions in general for Crane, as he offers the stipulation that the questions should be asked in a manner that is “specifically designed to elicit [the] coachee’s points of view” (p. 80). This idea of stimulating reflectiveness in the coachee is echoed throughout the literature as a key aspect of asking questions in the coaching process (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Portner, 2008). For Costa & Garmston (1994), the ability of the coach to ask questions about the decisions, actions, and perspectives of the coachee allows for the coachee to begin to ask themselves the same questions and examine their own work, outside of the coaching process.

**Providing feedback to the coachee**

Another key construct of effectiveness in coaching is providing feedback to the coachee (Crane, 2002; Kouzes et al., 2010; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Stowell, 1988; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Zepeda, 2005). Crane (2002) defines feedback as an action that “provides information from the environment about how the individuals and groups are performing in terms of their goals” (p. 67). According to the literature, effective feedback in a coaching relationship should be timely (Crane, 2002; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). This refers to the notion that feedback should follow up shortly after the observation of the coachee’s behaviors or actions. Effective feedback should also be concrete and specific about observable behaviors and actions (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). Additionally the feedback should be limited to a small amount of items (Veenman & Denessen, 2001) and it should be on items that the coachee can actually address in future behavior and actions (Portner, 2008). The final aspect of effective feedback is that it should be descriptive rather than evaluative in nature (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008). To this point, a coach’s feedback and actions must be non-judgmental in regards to the coachee’s performance (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Reiss, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Stowell, 1988; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Crane considers this a critical element of coaching.
Developing the coachee’s self-reflectiveness

According to Costa and Garmston (1994) the ultimate goal of the coaching process should be to develop self-reflectiveness in the coachee, which is reinforced throughout the literature on essential constructs of coaching (Crane, 2002; Dantonio, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004; Knight, 2007; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008). Portner (2008) posits that coaching should be about building the ‘self-reliant’ teacher “who is willing and able to (a) generate and choose purposefully from among viable alternatives, (b) act upon those choices, (c) monitor and reflect upon the consequences of applying those choices, and (d) modify and adjust in order to enhance student learning” (p. 45). Dantonio (2001) writes that this act of self-reflectiveness allows for the teacher to reflect on his or her own behaviors, actions, plans, and practices in terms of their impact on students. Stober (2006) argues that it is the push for what he refers to as ‘self-actualization’ or movement through a ‘growth process’ that sets coaching apart from other relationships that only offer “general encouragement and advice giving” (p. 18). It is about gradually moving the coachee away from the dependence on others and into the ability to self-reflect and grow as an individual.

The Coaching Process

Having detailed the key constructs of coaching that exist within the various forms of coaching, we now turn our attention to developing a better understanding of the coaching process. The key factor in coaching as a developmental tool is that it is a process that takes time (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Guskey, 2000; Reiss, 2007; Showers, 1985; Witherspoon & White, 2007). The process for coaching teachers on instruction is commonly described as a three-step process that includes a pre-observation conference, observation of instruction, and post-observation conference (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Dufour, 1991; Nidus & Sadder, 2011; Portner, 2008; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Veenman & Denessen, 2001). Some authors suggest additional steps in the coaching process such as analysis (Goldhammer, 1969) and reflection (Dantonio, 2001; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000), while others use different names for the steps in the process. For example, Crane (2002) refers to the stages as ‘foundation phase,’ ‘learning loop,’ and ‘forwarding the action.’ The three step coaching process will be explained in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

The pre-observation conference

The first step in the coaching process is for the coach and teacher to meet together in a pre-observation conference. This first stage in the process is referred to as either a pre-observation conference (Goldhammer, 1969; Portner, 2008) or a planning conference (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Sullivan & Glanz, 2001). For the purposes of this review of the literature, the term ‘pre-observation conference’ will be used in describing this stage of the coaching process. The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to begin the coaching process by opening the lines of communication and building the coaching relationship.
This stage of the process is an opportunity for the teacher to share his or her goals for the lesson that will be observed by the coach (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001). Dantonio (2001) writes that it is in this stage that the coach and the teacher “discuss the teacher’s purposes for the lesson, specify and sequence the instructional events, identify problems that may arise in delivery, and determine strategies for dealing with the anticipated problems” (p. 26). The pre-observation conversation should include the coach asking clarifying or probing questions to the teacher about the upcoming lesson (Dantonio, 2001; Goldhammer, 1969; Portner, 2008) or even to go through role playing scenarios based on the plans for the lesson (Goldhammer, 1969). Through each of these techniques, the teacher is provided the opportunity to work through their lesson so as to anticipate possible changes to the instruction (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Portner, 2008) as well as to anticipate the impact of the instruction on student learning (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Portner, 2008). Goldhammer (1969) warns, however, that this conversation is not meant to “undermine [the teacher’s] strategy for the teaching about to be undertaken” (p. 80). For Goldhammer, it is not about the coach directing the teacher towards a certain action or behavior in the lesson, but rather to let the teacher come to his or her own decision on instructional techniques or strategies.

The importance of this step in the process for Acheson and Gall (1997) is based on the idea that this stage is meant to “help the teacher identify concerns and translate them into observable behaviors” (p. 57). What is to be observed during the next stage of the process is a key element of this pre-observation conference. Not only do the teacher and coach need to schedule the observation and post-observation conference (Dantonio, 2001; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Veenman & Denessen, 2001), but they also must come to a joint decision about what will be observed in the instruction and how it will be documented during the observation (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Goldhammer, 1969; Sullivan & Glanz, 2001). This is a key aspect of the pre-observation conference for Dantonio (2001) as this provides a situation where “the coaching partners can experience the lesson with a consistent mental picture about what is to take place during the teacher’s classroom delivery of the instructional plan” (p. 26). Without this agreement, the coach and teacher could have very different ideas about the goals, purposes, and outcomes of the lesson that is being observed. By being on the same page in terms of what to look for, document, and then discuss after the observation, the coaching process has a greater possibility for effective developmental change.

**The observation of instruction**

The second stage of the coaching process is the observation of the teacher’s instruction in the classroom. The observation of the instruction should not be centered on the evaluation or judgment of the teacher’s instructional practice (Dantonio, 2001; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Instead, the observation should be used to provide data and feedback to the coachee in the post-observation conference. According to Guskey (2000) the observation of instruction in the classroom is a highly effective method of professional development. Guskey argues that the development occurs both by observing other teachers’ instruction as well as having one’s own instruction observed. Observation is a key tool in the development of practice for Goldhammer (1969) as well, for he points out that the “teacher cannot usually see the
same things happening as a disengaged observer can” (p. 61). Through what
Goldhammer refers to as ‘adding eyes,’ the teacher is provided outside perspective on his
or her instruction.

According to Sullivan and Glanz (2000), both qualitative and quantitative observational
techniques can be used depending on the focus of the observation. Data can be collected
during the observation through a number of methods including recording devices (Costa
& Garmston, 1994; Glickman, 2002; Goldhammer, 1969), taking notes (Costa &
Garmston, 1994; Glickman, 2002; Goldhammer, 1969), or tally and frequency counts
(Costa & Garmston, 1994). Goldhammer (1969) suggests that all of the data that is
collected should represent what the observer “hears and sees as comprehensively as
possible” (p. 61). The key to the collection of data during the observation, according to
Dantonio (2001), is the collection of “specific, concrete information related to the
observation focus that was determined by the coaching partners during the planning
conference” (p. 69). This is an important aspect of the data collection during the
observation, as the literature suggests that vital to the coaching process is the ability to
focus in on a limited number of behaviors or actions (Dantonio, 2001; Knight, 2007;
Portner, 2008). The more closely aligned this limited number of focus points for the
observation to the original jointly decided plan for the lesson, the more effective the data
will be to the developmental process for the teacher.

Along with what is to be observed and the amount of data that should be collected, an
important facet of this step in the coaching process, is how the observer should conduct
their observation. Robertson (2008) succinctly argues this point in that the observation
should not be about judging the worth of the practice in terms of “good or bad, effective
or ineffective” (p. 116). The literature on observations during the coaching process
presents the notion that it is not about diagnosing problems or observing what is right and
wrong in the teacher’s instruction (Dantonio, 2001; Portner, 2008; Sullivan & Glanz,
2000). Dantonio (2001) points out that those observational techniques belong to
evaluators rather than coaches, and even hypothesizes that “if teachers perceive that
information gathered during the collegial coaching process will be used for purposes of
evaluation, they may feel threatened and choose not to engage in future development
activities” (p. 70). In order to accomplish the correct mode of observation, the coach
should focus their notes during the observation on actual observable actions and
behaviors rather than making comments or inferences in the notes (Dantonio, 2001;
Goldhammer, 1969). By recording in one’s notes what is actually happening rather than
focusing on one’s thoughts on these actions, the observer can avoid the pitfalls of
judgment that plague coaching relationships. The collection of data based on observable
actions and behaviors provides the impetus for the next stage of the process, where the
data will be used as feedback in the actual coaching of the teacher.

**The post-observation conference**
The final step in the process comes after the observation of the teacher’s instruction in the
classroom. This third step in the process is referred to in the literature as the post-
observeration conference (Goldhammer, 1969), reflecting conference (Costa & Garmston,
1994), debriefing conference (Dantonio, 2001), or feedback conference (Acheson & Gall,
For the purposes of this review of the literature, the term ‘post-observation conference’ will be used in referring to this step in the process. This stage of the coaching process is where the actual coaching takes place based off of the conversation in the pre-observation conference and the observation of the teacher’s instruction in the second step of the process.

The post-observation conference, according to Dantonio (2001), is the point at which the coach and teacher “explore potential ways of eliminating discrepancies between what was anticipated and what actually occurred during instruction” (p. 80). The post-observation conversation should incorporate, especially at the onset, an opportunity for the teacher to reflect on and discuss their thoughts on the lesson that was observed (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001). Costa and Garmston (1994) argue that by eliciting the teacher’s perspective on the lesson, it provides the foundation for a conversation where “the teacher is the only participant who is judging performance or effectiveness” (p. 22). Too many times, when observation is used for evaluation rather than development of instruction, the supervisor will begin with the issues that they observed in the teacher’s instruction. Not only does the teacher become defensive about his or her actions during the lesson, but Dantonio reasons that “nothing will change until the teacher comes to terms with what needs to be changed, why it needs to be changed, and how it can be changed” (p. 81). So instead of the observer going through a list of issues and problems, the elicitation of the teacher’s perspective allows the teacher to avoid the defensiveness that can shut down the coaching process.

Through this self-reflection by the teacher, issues or problems with the instruction come to light through the perspective of the teacher. It is the point of the process where there is “an avenue for comparing preparation with performance in the classroom” (Dantonio, 2001). Since the coach has observed the lesson that the teacher is reflecting on, he or she can now begin to coach the teacher on strategies and plans that address these issues (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Dantonio, 2001). Integral to this coaching is the use of the data collected during the observation (Goldhammer, 1969; Nidus & Sadder, 2011). Acheson and Gall (1997) write that the collected data from the observation should be focused on what was agreed upon in the pre-observation conference, and if it is “accurate and relevant” (p. 150) then it will have an impact on the coaching process. It is at this point of the process that the actual coaching of the teacher on instruction takes center stage.

An additional stage to develop the coach’s practice
Goldhammer (1969) called for an additional stage in the process to take place after the post-observation conference. According to Goldhammer, this stage is a place where the coaches analyze each other’s coaching and behaviors. In the context of coaching teachers on instruction, this would be a place for the coach to receive coaching from their coaching peers about his or her coaching of the teacher. As Goldhammer suggests, this stage of the process is where the coaching “is examined with all of the rigor and for basically the same purposes that [the] teacher’s professional behavior was analyzed” (p. 71). Goldhammer further writes that this is an opportunity for the coach to further develop their own skills at working with the teacher on the development of instructional practice.
Issues with Instructional Coaching
While the literature on instructional coaching clearly delineates the positive impact this form of professional development can have on teachers’ instructional practices, there are significant issues in its implementation. Two particular issues, which are examined below, warrant particular attention by school district as they plan instructional coaching implementation.

There is an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mindset in education.
One of the major issues in effectively implementing an instructional coaching program are the perspectives of teachers regarding coaching. The perspective of many teachers is that teachers and coaches are not working together, but rather it is a case of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ This perspective of pitting coach versus teacher is built from a notion that instructional coaches, regardless of their role as a teacher or former teacher, are not teachers, but rather administrators. Teachers who are being coached fear that the coach will ‘evaluate’ them and then share these evaluations with school site administrators. Since instructional coaches are often housed in the district office or in the front office of a school, the perspective of these coaches as “administrators lite” is reinforced. An additional component of this ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mindset is that many teachers do not believe coaches are ‘good enough teachers’ to tell teachers how to teach. This comes from a fear of being told what to do as well as a fear that if they are being coached it means they are not good teachers. School leaders must be active in demystifying these myths about the coaches by clearly explaining the purpose of the coaches and clearly describing coaches’ roles as supports, not supervisors.

Coaches need content knowledge/expertise to be effective
A second major issue in the implementation of coaching programs is that both teachers and coaches believe that the coach must be a content expert to be effective. For example, the common belief is that if a coach is going to work with a science teacher, than that coach must be an expert in science. The same expertise is expected in regards to grade level, coaches at the elementary school level must be elementary teachers. It is not just teachers who believe in this, as many coaches believe that they cannot help a teacher in another subject because they do not have content expertise. The need for content expertise is a common perspective that can greatly impede the success of a coaching process. However, this perspective is not accurate according to the literature on effective coaching. Stober’s (2006) thoughts regarding content knowledge suggests that it is not necessary for effective coaching. Stober explains this in the following manner:

The coach’s role is that of facilitator, rather than subject matter expert or more experienced guide. Coaches need to be experts at the process of coaching but recognize their clients are the experts on the content of their own experience. (p. 20)

Reiss (2007) writes that instructional coaches should not worry about the content matter, but rather be concentrating on the individual they are coaching. To both Reiss and Stober, the content is not as important as other aspects of coaching. The key is to concentrate on the coaching process rather than the content, for instructional coaching
should not focus on the content but rather the instructional practices that are effective in any subject area or grade level.

**Future Implications**

Instructional coaching as a form of professional development is never more reticent than in the current changing reality of the educational system. As more and more schools dive head first into the digital era of education, there is a need to also change the way in which teachers develop. The traditional forms of professional development are no longer capable of building the instructional capacities of teachers to fit this changing era that is moving so quickly. To keep up with the changing times, there is a need to change the way teachers are developed and the way that school leaders support this development. The digital era of getting technology into every child’s hand would be mired in ineptitude if traditional methods of instruction are still used in this new interface.

Further accentuating the need for coaching is the idea that as the digital era takes hold, a great many teachers are going to struggle with the changes. Ranging from defensiveness to a lack of interest in changing to a lack of skills and confidence in technology, teachers are going to be frustrated, downtrodden, and alienated by the changing system. These teachers need someone or something that can support them and their individual and differentiated needs. These teachers need someone to enable their development of instruction to match the new learning occurring on in schools. They need professional development opportunities that fit the changing world of education and their own individual needs, interests, and developmental levels.

Coaching is an effective form of professional development because it fulfills the evidence-based effective constructs of professional development including collaboration, connecting with the individuality of the teacher, developing over long periods of time, and being job-embedded practice. Coaching provides an avenue to build relationships that strengthen the overall culture of a school. This culture is never more important than in an era of great change, for it provides the common ground and linkage of staff members who are at varying levels of change. Coaching as a professional development tool is built on this ‘humanistic’ approach. An impact on teachers’ instruction directly impacts student learning outcomes, which ultimately is the goal of any professional development practice. The possibilities that coaching provides are endless, and thus should be seriously considered by any school or district committed to making a difference in students’ lives and achievement.
REFERENCES


