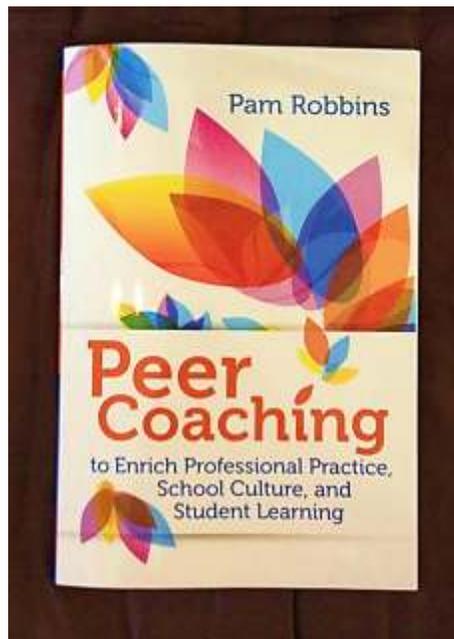


**Peer Coaching: Pathways for
Reflection, Growth, Teaching
Excellence, and Student Achievement**

June 18, 2015

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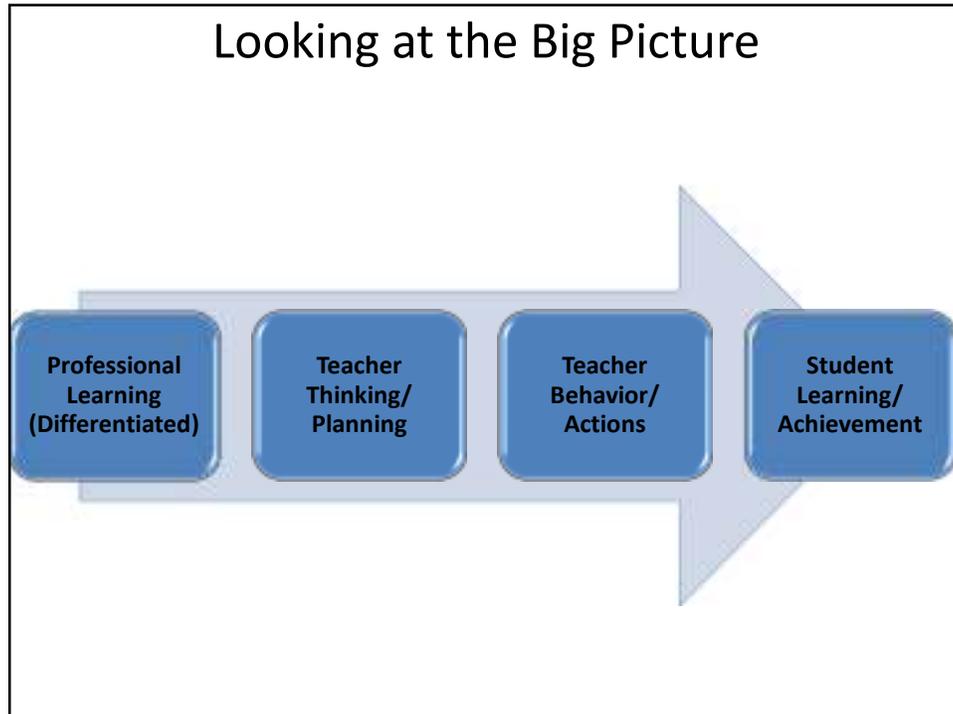
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Peer Coaching Defined

Peer Coaching is a powerful, confidential, non-evaluative process through which two or more colleagues work together to:

- Reflect upon and analyze teaching practices and their consequences
- Develop and articulate curriculum
- Create informal assessments to measure student learning
- Implement new instructional strategies, including the integrated use of technology
- Plan lessons collaboratively

- Discuss student assessment data and plan for future learning experiences
- Expand, refine, and build new skills
- Share ideas and resources
- Teach one another
- Conduct classroom research
- Solve classroom problems or address workplace challenges
- Examine and study student learning with the goal of improving professional practice to maximize student success.

(Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, p. 9)

Peer Coaching: Collaborative Work

Collaborative Work engages two or more professional colleagues, or groups or teams, in informal interactions, usually structured to reflect a specific focus, independent of a classroom observation. The focus of Collaborative Work usually explores classroom practices and their impact on student learning, or resources to address specific student needs. Collaborative experiences build the values and beliefs necessary for a culture of inquiry and learning to thrive.

(Adapted from Robbins, May 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, ASCD, p. 25)

Peer Coaching: Formal Coaching

Formal Coaching takes place within the classroom and, with the exception of co-teaching, usually involves a pre-conference, an observation, and a post-conference. The *inviting teacher*—the person who issues the invitation to the coach—decides on the focus, which is usually directed toward examining a teaching practice that affects student learning.

(Adapted from Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, p. 26)

Examining Collaborative Work and Peer Coaching Roles

Collaborative Work

- Sharing stories about teaching practices
- Analyzing videos of teaching practices
- Solving problems of professional practice
- Implementing study groups
- Having conversations focused on student work
- Participating in book talks
- Participating in data talks
- Coplanning lessons

Formal Coaching Roles

- Coteach one or more lessons
- Act as collaborator
- Serve as expert advisor
- Act as a mentor
- Serve as a mirror
- Provide professional learning resources

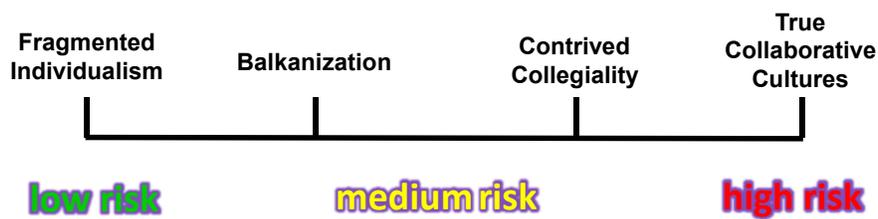
(Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, Figure 2.1, p. 24)

Where do you start?

Consider culture...

- The culture of a school can augment or diminish the resources available to classroom teachers.
- Culture influences
 - The way people think
 - What is valued
 - How people feel
 - How people act
- The professional context in which teachers work has a profound impact on their ability to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

Relationships Among Colleagues



Andy Hargreaves

Trust

Trust: The Foundation for Peer Coaching

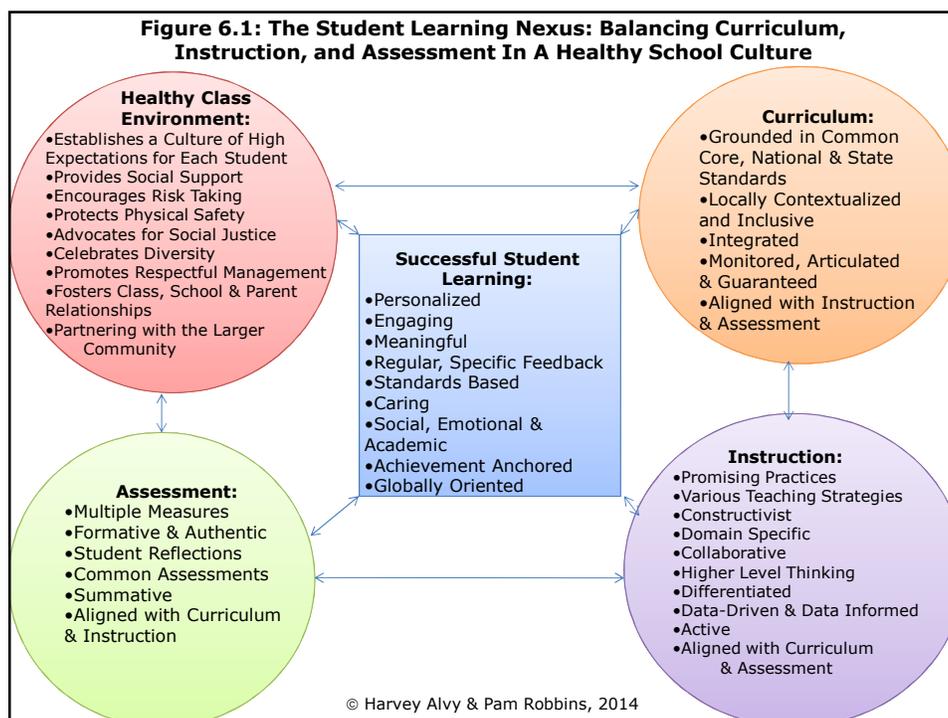
Creating a nurturing environment for Peer Coaching requires building a climate of trust in which risk-taking and experimentation can occur. Where trust among professional colleagues exists, teachers are more likely to try new ideas, new behaviors, new materials, and new ways of operating that result in student achievement. Teachers need a safe environment to feel comfortable exploring and examining their practices and the consequences of those practices.

(Adapted from Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, pp. 30-31)

Tools and Tips for Implementation Success

Choice Creates Meaningful Work and Generates Commitment

Empower educators to take ownership of their professional learning by setting growth goals and seeking non-evaluative feedback from trusted colleagues. The result of these interactions expands the resources of colleagues, enhances teacher skillfulness, and culminates in student learning.

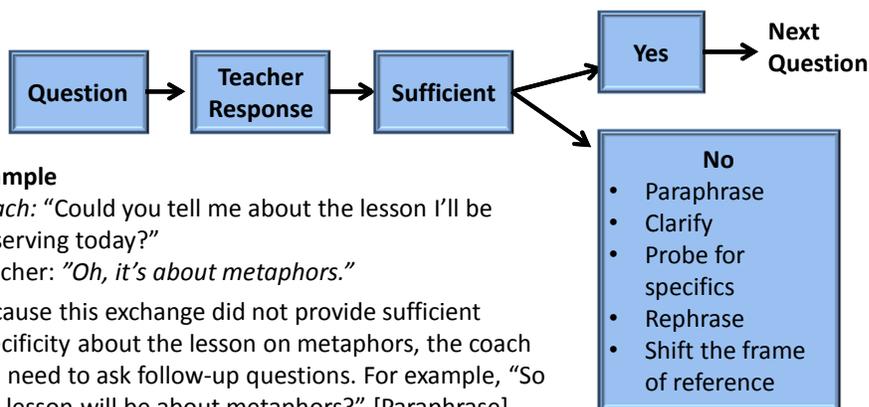


It's All About the Questions

How questions are asked is just as important as which questions are asked. The words chosen and the tone with which the words are delivered have a profound effect on how both parties—teacher and coach—will embrace the coaching process. Developing sensitivity to the tone of the conversation during the conferencing process (Formal Coaching)—and even in informal interactions (Collaborative Work) within the halls of the school—can be a helpful awareness. Word choice can enhance or inhibit conversations about teaching and learning. A coach's questioning skills—including the manner in which questions are asked—are key to successful Peer Coaching interactions.

(Adapted from Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, pp. 74-75)

Figure 5.1 Coach's Decision-Making Chart for Asking Follow-Up Questions



Example

Coach: "Could you tell me about the lesson I'll be observing today?"

Teacher: "Oh, it's about metaphors."

Because this exchange did not provide sufficient specificity about the lesson on metaphors, the coach will need to ask follow-up questions. For example, "So the lesson will be about metaphors?" [Paraphrase]
 "What specifically will you teach about metaphors?" [Probe for specifics]
 "What will students be doing?" [Clarify]

(Adapted from Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, p. 75)

Increasing the Quality and Quantity of Feedback for Results

"...There are never enough supervisors to provide the quality and quantity of feedback to allow classroom teachers to learn and grow over time...Quality feedback does not need to be supervisory. In fact, it could be argued that, with the proper training, non-supervisory feedback, because it is less threatening, might actually be of greater value. Peer coaching then becomes a useful tool for gathering data about practice that provides a teacher with the feedback necessary to inform reflection (What am I doing? What is its impact on the [students] I am teaching? How can I modify what I am doing to improve the experience and the outcomes for students in my classroom?)."

“Coaching enhances professional practice and the quality of learning experiences students encounter by increasing the amount of feedback available to teachers about their instruction, the implementation of curriculum, and the various modes of assessment. Interdisciplinary, professional in focus, peer coaching becomes a significant professional development activity and creates opportunities for collaboration between and among various teachers. All of this activity helps to inform and strengthen the professional, collegial, and student-focused community that characterizes the best schools.” —Kolia O’Connor

Head of School, Sewickley Academy

(O’Connor in Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, pp. 151-153)

Embed Peer Coaching within Existing Structures and Initiatives

Many faculty members feel that they are overwhelmed with initiatives and Peer Coaching might be perceived as “one more thing to do.”

Peer coaches at Parkside Middle School (Manassas, VA) decided to integrate Peer Coaching with Data Teams so that coaching practices became interwoven with studying assessment data and developing learning support for students.

Outcomes from One District's Experience Implementing Peer Coaching

CCSD 181 reported several outcomes from the implementation of Peer Coaching:

- “Increased conversation about improving teaching and learning
- Increased collaboration among teams within and between schools
- Increased understanding of the school improvement process
- Increased consistency in the implementation of reading and writing workshop
- Increased understanding of the new Illinois Standards Incorporating the Common Core”

(Schuster in Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, p. 156)

“Surprises” from One District's Experience Implementing Peer Coaching

In CCSD 181, “the first surprise was the role of the principal in establishing the culture of coaching in the school. The principals of teams who adopted peer coaching more quickly demonstrated the following:

- They were actively involved in the professional development on peer coaching
- They shared the role of leader during discussions with members of their team
- They tended to ask questions such as, “How could we ...?” or “What do you think about ...?”
- They encouraged teachers to share their ideas and be innovative”

The second “surprise was that teams needed more practice time and more review of concepts than we initially planned in the professional development. We found that if we did not incorporate enough practice time, teams seemed to regress between professional development sessions and had to regroup and review prior concepts. Teams who were meeting regularly to collaborate about teaching and learning seemed to experience less of this frustration. When we increased the team time during the professional development sessions to practice or apply the concepts being learned, all the teams seemed to benefit.”

(Schuster in Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, pp. 157-158)

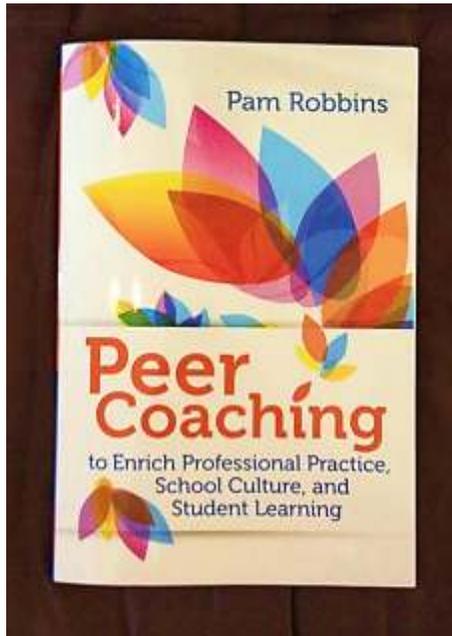
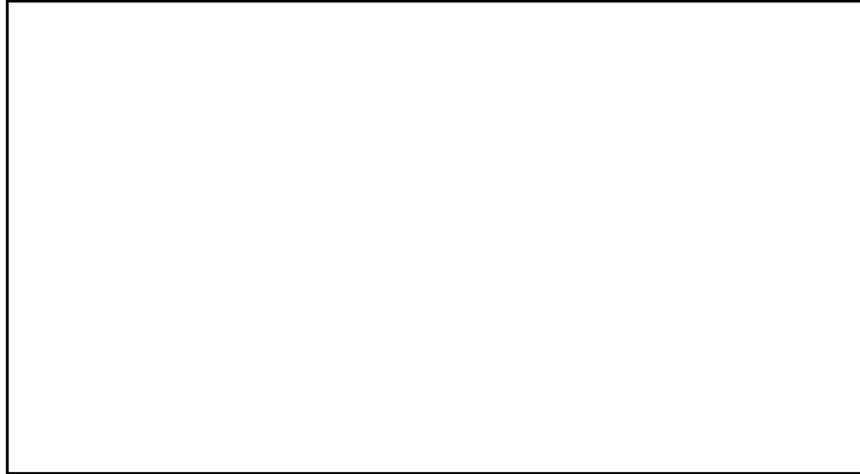
Final Thoughts

“Peer coaching takes time and you will experience successes and challenges along the way. Expect mid-course adjustments for this is the synergy that comes from the coaching process and is the origin of some of our best ideas. Finally, kindness, encouragement, and respect go a long way in fostering a culture of coaching.”

—Dr. Renée Schuster
Former Superintendent, CCSD 181

(Schuster in Robbins, 2015, *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning*, p. 160)

Questions and Reflections



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