

Job Embedded Coaching: Making room for the next tool for your principal “Tool-Belt?”

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In the recent Utah Legislature’s Education Interim Committee, Jennifer Thronsen, the Utah State Board of Education’s director of teaching and learning shared that “When teachers have consistent job-embedded coaching that also includes follow-up by administrators who observe teaching for desired changes, teachers will use those skills in the classroom 95% of the time”, she said. “Giving them the support to change their practice is what helps to get the change to occur,” Thronsen said (Gledhill, 2019).

How can we as administrators be prepared to actively participate in job-embedded coaching and acquire the knowledge to lead it, support it, and create the conditions necessary for it to benefit our teachers and the learners whom we serve? Perhaps the resistance of a traditional culture identified by teachers working in isolation is simply too difficult to overcome? Or, maybe the daily challenges of finding time for teachers to meet and engage in job-embedded coaching is a challenge?

Espinoza (2019) defines Job-Embedded Coaching as occurring during the work day and in the work place. It is closely connected to the actual work of teachers in their classrooms with their current students. It is centered on the student academic needs and is directly linked to the goals set for students by their Professional Learning Community (PLC) team. All teachers in the school work to improve the learning for all students. This is planned, organized, and shared in each school’s PLC’s activities. Annual school improvement plans must align with the school’s professional development plans and practices. Teacher actions are tied to meeting student achievement goals developed in their PLC’s. PLC’s link teachers’ work to the Utah State School Board of Education’s Core curriculum through collaboration among teachers and the curriculum

taught through the use of horizontal PLC's (teachers meet with other teachers who share the same grade level of students) and vertical PLC's. (teachers meet with other teachers who share the same content area).

So what does Job-Embedded Coaching look like in your PLC structure?

Collaborative work in your schools PLC's is the heart of job-embedded coaching, evaluating, and solving problems of practice in order to improve teacher quality. According to ALLTHINGSPLC (2019), this collaborative work may include, but is not limited to, teacher collaboration meetings to analyze classroom practice, the acquiring of new instructional strategies and tactics, field-testing them in the classroom, and reporting the results to one other and to broader range of peers in their PLC and Professional Learning Networks. Frequent observations by a peer, linked with profound and ongoing conversations about the art and science of teaching, take a teacher's practice to a higher level of performance. A peer that provides consistent follow-up with teachers by way of demonstrations, observations, and conversations, as they collaboratively implement new strategies and knowledge, provides the job-embedded coaching component of this process. In your PLC's, communicate and share to develop a common understanding of quality student work, identify student misconceptions, and evaluate your teaching methods. In PLC's, you and teachers in your school, will analyze results for standardized assessments and teacher-created assessments to determine, plan, and prepare for teaching strategies that will improve student achievement.

So what can we do as school leaders to support and nurture Job-Embedded Coaching in our schools?

As teachers serve on another as a main resource for learning in job-embedded professional development, Principals need to support them in making successful collaboration essential to their professional growth. You can support all your staff to actively participate and construct professional knowledge through their PLC activities by aligning professional learning with schoolwide student academic achievement goals. Be creative and aggressive in providing time during the day for job-embedded coaching to occur and flourish. This will demand establishing structures for teacher learning and improvement (e.g., PLCs, coaching, mentoring, peer observations).

Principals practice instructional leadership by creating a school culture, support structures, systems and dedicated time for making job-embedded coaching an intrinsic part of each teacher's day. Your ensuring ongoing analysis of school needs regarding both student and teacher learning will be critical in moving forward the achievement of all students in your school. Through your nurture and support, you will develop a school climate among your faculty

that promotes continued learning, focused on improving students' academic achievement. You can identify, train, and support effective instructional facilitators/coaches in providing job-embedded coaching. As addressed by the Minnesota Department of Education (N.D.), you can provide common teacher learning time, at least 60 minutes of uninterrupted time per week, which is distinct from teacher's individual, class planning time, to support your faculty in your school's goals to improve student achievement. Facilitate the use of student performance data to inform decisions of job-embedded coaching in your faculty's PLC's. Work to align your district's teacher evaluation process with the teacher learning, occurring in job-embedded coaching, so teachers can regularly strengthen their practice. While addressing the importance and power of measuring the progress student learning, do not overlook, your teacher's learning to ensuring success for all.

How can SUU's Master's of Education support your teacher's learning?

SUU's Masters of Education provides your teachers with a process to investigate Teacher/Practitioner-based research. This approach is designed to support teacher's problem solving skills and provide research opportunities in their classrooms, supportive of your PLC's. professional learning (ie., development). Our Master's degree addresses goal-oriented and work-related learning designed to systematically improve the context of one's life (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher, Kearney 2015). This could apply to a range of activities, issues, and challenges your teachers are addressing in their PLC's.

As you add Job-Embedded Coaching to your administrative toolbelt, please consider reaching out to our Graduate Studies in Education Office to see how we can collaborate with your teams and support your goals in increasing your faculty's and student's achievement.

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