INNOVATIVE IDEAS TO TRANSFORM INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS 360°

It's Not as Difficult as You Think

By: Cassandra Williams
Copyright © 2019 Educational Innovation 360°

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the writer, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.
# Table of Contents

A 21ST CENTURY SCHOOL WITHOUT INNOVATION ................................................................. 4
DO YOU HAVE AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH AT YOUR SCHOOL? ........................................ 5
CHANGING THE FACE OF ELEARNING FOR TEACHERS ...................................................... 9
TEACHER DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES ............................................ 12
BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN URBAN SCHOOLS ........................................ 15
UNLEASHING EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION AND THE CHALLENGES ................................. 19
WHAT ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES TO LETTER GRADES? .................................................. 22
IMPLEMENTING PERSONALIZED LEARNING ....................................................................... 26
SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTING A COACHING PLAN FOR THE YEAR ................................. 30
PROOF THAT VIDEO TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES TEACHER OUTCOMES ............................... 34
GAMIFICATION IN EDUCATION ............................................................................................. 37
IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING NECESSARY? .................................................................... 40
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING AGREEMENT WITH YOUR ADMINISTRATOR ........................ 43
RETAINING NOVICE TEACHERS ............................................................................................ 47
A NEW WAY TO CONFERENCE WITH PARENTS .................................................................... 52
TURNING YOUR SCHOOL INTO THE SCHOOL OF ONE ......................................................... 55
WHY KICKING KIDS OUT OF SCHOOL DOESN’T WORK ..................................................... 56
CONNECTING STUDENTS TO THEIR TALENTS ................................................................... 58
DARE TO BE DIFFERENT, INNOVATIVE PLAYGROUNDS ...................................................... 60
A 21ST CENTURY SCHOOL WITHOUT INNOVATION

In order to become a 21st century school it takes a visionary learner. A 21st century school needs a leader that will not be afraid to be creative and innovative as well as listen to their stakeholders. It takes a superintendent or a principal to make this choice and hold everyone accountable to the mission but remember TECHNOLOGY alone will not get solutions! There needs to be a hands on model combined with technology in-order for success to occur. I recently walked in a school where the superintendent was in a classroom spending time with students having ongoing discussions via skype about projects, events, and student concerns. How many administrators do you know do this, or actually care? This is a school where everybody knew everybody, the janitor knew Jim by name and from time to time give a teachable life lesson. Is this present in your school? Is there a family-like culture at your school site? In some schools it seems as though everyone actually knew all of the students by name and understood what works for each pupil. For instance, a second grader came to the principal with concerns, “I would like to be included in picking our mascot” he stated. This is a unique approach to education top down approach simultaneously with a grassroots approach. In what organization have you been to where this takes place? How amazing!
DO YOU HAVE AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH AT YOUR SCHOOL?

What if I told you that teachers can receive their own support system. With the use of today’s technology, it is now possible! Everyone needs a coach! Coaches provide an outside perspective and can see things that we may be doing wrong, or need to do better, which can help us perform at a higher level. When teachers are successful, coaches pat them on the back, but they refocus their efforts, so they do not take too much time to rest on their laurels.

The current technology allows teachers to visually stream and record classroom content while providing timely feedback to anyone anywhere in the world. According to Harvard “teacher-controlled video can improve the observation process.” Video Capturing allows teachers, to watch themselves, while working with a coach to help them identify best
practices and support them in areas of growth. Coaches allow the teachers to select the day and time they would like to be observed and support them along the way. Although you may think this is an expensive process, it takes the guess work out of teacher professional development and funding can come from title I and II.

Did you know, many schools are starting to use their title II funding for school Coaches? We know and understand this funding is used to increase student achievement through strategies such as improving teacher quality and using metrics. Instructional coaches and teachers improve their practice while receiving extra funding. Title II, Part A funding can really move student learning forward and really impact teachers and students. Funding can be used to support differential pay for teachers in high needs districts signing bonuses, salaries, and stipends for teachers. Allocating funds to support coaches is much better than some of these things that are currently being done in K-12 schools. Here are a couple of things we've heard teachers complain about before, during, and after professional development.

According to Cindy Strickland, here are the statements and in quotation marks my various experiences:

- Drive-by workshops- “When the principals says to the coach, develop a one day workshop for Tuesday”
- One-size-fits-all presentations “When you have the whole staff on Tuesday and decide to create a PD on a broad topic such as Literacy”
- “Been there, done that” topics “Third of using Lucy Calkins, Lets brainstorm ways to implement”
- Little or no modeling of what is being taught “Well, we have the curriculum... I guess we should use it”
- Focus on rotating fads “QR Codes are trending, lets use them everywhere”
- Lack of follow-up “Why didn’t we use this curriculum again? We received training right... some didn’t “
This tends to happen more often than you think, but some are opting for more Effective Teacher Professional Development which uses methodology, and incorporates most, if not all, of the following elements:

- **Is content focused:** PD that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content supports teacher learning within teachers’ classroom contexts. This element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development and pedagogies in areas such as mathematics, science, or literacy.
- **Incorporates active learning:** Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for their students. Such PD uses authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models and environments that are lecture based and have no direct connection to teachers’ classrooms and students.
- **Supports collaboration:** High-quality PD creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.
- **Uses models of effective practice:** Curricular models and modeling of instruction provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.
- **Provides coaching and expert support:** Coaching and expert support involve the sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers’ individual needs.
- **Offers feedback and reflection:** High-quality professional learning frequently provides built-in time for teachers to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both help teachers to thoughtfully move toward the expert visions of practice.
• Is of sustained duration: Effective PD provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice.

All in all, if you incorporate much of the list above then you are at least attempting to sustain effective professional development throughout. At Educational Innovation 360 we use a hybrid model to support coaches, and teachers throughout the United States. We use teacher standards, rubrics, and best practice modules. We support teachers for professional learning that enhances reflection on students, curriculum, and pedagogy for more effective decision making in the classroom.
What is E-Instructional Coaching?
Imagine you are in a school district with middle or low performing teachers. Education professionals who do not feel committed to their work, due to their vision of education as only a job, because they do not see prospects for improvement and growth in their schools. With students with behavior concerns that are reflected in their grades, but especially in their learning. You, as administrator, want to change this reality. You want to have committed teachers who love education and reflect this passion in their students, here is a secret they have the passion! Teachers who strive in their work, because they know that their effort will be not only recognized, but also rewarded with professional growth within their schools. That is how you support this passion!

You also want your students to be assertive people, young people who find in school a place to grow, to cultivate themselves and to become better people. You want them to see education as a stimulating, important process, and most of anything, a process that gives them tangible results in their everyday life once they finish their studies. You want students with good grades, yes, and with good behavior, yes, but above all, you want young
people who understand that school is the place that will make them have the successful life they dream of.

To achieve these structural changes, we present the E-Instructional Coaching, a system that partners with teachers for job-embedded professional learning that enhances the educators reflection on students, the curriculum, and pedagogy for the purpose for more effective decision making, with coaches who are dedicated to help your teachers to improve their performance in their work, which will be effectively reflected in the students’ education, improving their grades, improving their behavior, but above all things, improving their lives by providing them with high quality education options. But the E-Instructional Coaching system does not only coach the teachers, it also analyzes the reality of each school, generating development plans specially designed for each institution, indicating how schools can be improved to give teachers growing opportunities, turning directors and teachers into community leaders who love their jobs, who understand that education is the basis for society’s evolution, and therefore, will strive to generate conditions that will allow them to develop their potential, which will also develop their communities and, therefore, their quality of life. Sounds good, right?

Through programmed observation, frequent and regular points in the performance of the teacher that must be worked are found. Once they are defined, 2 or 3 areas where it is most important to achieve teacher’s growth are identified, to provide effective feedback specially designed for their development and to then directly practice the necessary steps to carry out the required action to improve their performance. Then, teacher’s direct responsibility systems are created to allow the teacher to translate the feedback and practice received into concrete actions that will result in performance improvement and, automatically, in education improvement as well.

E-Instructional Coaching cares about knowing who the teachers are, as well as their development and growth needs and goals. This is because strong teachers, who are comfortable within their schools, are much less likely to abandon their jobs, in addition, they make a greater effort to educate their students, improving the quality of the
education in their schools. This can change lives, as students who have strong leadership teachers will have better and greater opportunities to access to quality higher education, decrease their chances of leaving school, and have better behavior while they are studying. Do you want to change the quality of education in your school district? Do you want teachers who love their work, who do not see education as a job but as a fundamental element for the improvement of the community and their life quality? Do you want responsible students who take school seriously because they understand that is the only way to change their lives? Do you want to help with the growth and positive development of your community? Do you want to change the world? Then, your school district needs the E-Instructional Coaching system, an Educational Innovation 360º initiative to work as a team with teachers, principals and administrators to transform schools and change the lives of their students. Because quality education is the key to achieving the cultural, social and economic improvements that leverage an individual, improving the life quality of themselves and their families, and generating a great country, contact us and learn much more about this system that will improve the quality of education of your students, positively impacting the achievements in their lives.
The TNTP re-imaging teaching document explains how to provide high quality development for teachers to thrive. It goes over strategies for growing teams of teacher-leaders, tools for teachers to be successful in the classroom, purposeful professional development based off of individual teacher practices, and supports that need to be in place for teacher to practice perfect!

Yes, this is great but what if you had access to resources directly related to areas YOU in particular struggle with? Nice, right! Well in Denver teacher have access to an online platform of visual video resources that teacher can access directly related to their specific need on a ongoing evaluation. This is a great way to see what is expected from an administrator as well as have the link-tied to your principal’s reflection for ongoing training and support. Many schools now have these resources available but not organized in this way. If you want teachers to stay make sure you build systems of support! In 2001, Ms. Dixon and Ms. Valdez were my mentor teachers and each mentor brought individual
talents that helped me through those tough beginning years. Many of these people have a special place in my heart, kudos to extraordinary mentors! Larger district offer a wealth of support at Los Angeles Unified School District they provide teachers with the supports below. Does your school offer these supports?

**New Teacher Support Systems**

In order to provide on-going support for new teachers, the following support personnel are available.

* Literacy coach
The Literacy Coach assists with implementing the district’s reading program adopted at the schools. The Literacy Coach supports new and experienced teachers, and plans and facilitates professional development.

* Math coach
The Math Coach assists with implementing the district’s math program at the schools. The Math Coach supports new and experienced teachers, plans and facilitates professional development.

* Buddy teacher
A Buddy Teacher is an experienced teacher who is either assigned as a buddy or volunteers to assist. This Buddy Teacher usually is at the same grade level and provides assistance by familiarizing the new teacher with the curriculum and activities for that grade level and guides the new teacher into the culture of the school and community. This form of support is a relaxed and informal relationship.

* NBC teacher
National Board Certified Teachers provide support at the local school site based on the needs of the staff. NBC teachers instruct salary point classes, facilitate new teacher
meetings regarding school procedures and instructional policies, and plan and assist during grade level and track meetings.

Par
The Peer Assistance and Review programs have experienced, accomplished consulting teachers to provide sustained assistance to teachers who need it. Peer Assistance programs assist first-year teachers and other educators new to the school system and help veteran teachers improve their knowledge and skills. In Peer Review a consulting teacher may evaluate and support teachers with unsatisfactory evaluations.

Apeis (elementary schools)
Assistant Principal, Elementary Instructional Specialist coordinates ongoing collaboration between special education and general education personnel, monitors the implementation of required District procedures in accordance with the Special Education Compliance Guide, facilitates implementation of appropriate interventions, facilitates special education referrals and related assessments, and coordinates ongoing professional development for certificated personnel.

Program specialist
A program specialist is available through the local district’s coordinator of Special Education to support special education teacher. A program specialist clarifies program goals, intercedes in the areas of program implementation and Special Education procedures and guidelines.

Program coordinators
Such as Title I, magnet, bilingual, special education, and testing coordinators) Coordinators assist new teachers with schedules, supplies, instructional materials, school policies and guidelines, classroom management, testing procedures, teacher’s assistants, and parent conferences.
BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN URBAN SCHOOLS

Comprehension has been an ongoing struggle in Urban Schools. We already know that enhancing a student’s background knowledge is a strong indicator for earning potential so why don’t we spend more school time on making connections to academic content, pushing subjects across disciplines, and scaffolds to build background knowledge? As a K-12 teacher, I had two types of students one with “street smarts” and one with “book smarts.” I had brilliant students in second grade who could tell you the fastest way to get downtown (non-academic) and I had students that were able to see the relationships between school content and build connections (academic). Some aspects of life are related to “street smarts” though it has been shown that a student’s earning potential in life is primarily focused on academic achievement.

Resources
There are two ways we acquire new information: One, we store, process it, and we file it away in our brain to retrieve it later. Two, we consistently have academic experiences that help us make connections later. In schools, we must extend the amount of time necessary
for our students to acquire background knowledge, especially for the students that do not come from affluent backgrounds. We must provide enriching experiences (i.e. museums, art galleries, travel exchange programs, and experiential learning). These are just a few ways to transform teaching and if your school cannot provide those experiences, think about mentoring. It can be instrumental in the life of our students and these relationships go beyond the classroom that leave long term effects.

**Working with Content in the Classroom**

Teachers must come to understand that learning will no longer be defined by a time and place, and we have to adapt towards the future of learning. There are six major stages in building comprehension in the classroom. Here is the list:

**Create excitement** by building a dynamic activity to explore a topic, unit, or theme. Write down questions or statements students have about the topic, theme, or unit and address them when you are teaching
Preview the stories, books, articles, current news while consistently asking, “How this applies to a bigger concept?”
Picture walk and discuss while building Tier II vocabulary words and initiate student discussion on the topic or theme. Don’t forget you have story vocabulary and there is theme vocabulary!

Read the text together and use strategies (i.e. making Inferences, asking questions, predicting, summarizing, visualizing etc.).

Teachers must “Think Aloud” so students can hear how you think critically, and problem solve.

Read the text again for fluency and now focus on a comprehension skill (i.e. main idea and details, author’s purpose, cause and effect, drawing conclusions, genre, describing plot etc.)
Take one aspect of the story and extend it to a comprehension skill

Discussion without the teacher
The Teacher is the facilitator, but ideas have been recorded throughout the theme.
Don’t forget to mark new content and add to their existing body of knowledge.

Record new information to push thinking beyond the classroom (i.e. podcast, tweeting, posting, uploading, tagging).
There are so many ways student can display their knowledge. Think digital and concrete add it to the bulletin board and blog about it.

We are now tasked with the challenge of closing the gap, so it is important for us to find experiences that are no longer at our disposal. With the dwindling of funding, many schools can no longer afford to go on field trips which requires educators to think outside the box (think re-enacting the Civil War). I’ve brought in community members, visited
local business on walking fieldtrips with my students, invited a dance team to school, and had colleges help fund trips to the local campuses. The possibilities are endless, you can do this! All it takes is an idea and a friendly phone call.
In improving the education system, as well as the awareness of students to learn more, it is essential to acknowledge the interest and engagement of the students to use technology. It's a new set of opportunities for both students and teachers in making the learning and teaching more effective. In today's continuous technological advancement, it is not surprising that education will also benefit from this kind of innovation. Thus, many are quite interested in implementing education technology to efficiently acquire new learning experience and enhance one's learning capacity. When education technology is successfully implemented in each every classroom, what advantages students and teachers can expect?

**Improved Knowledge Retention but...**

With the help of education technology, students seem to be practicing active participation. When there are high interest and significant engagement, they are expected to obtain
better retention of knowledge. On the other hand, when technology is overused it can be ineffective. We are starting to see how device usage and screen time is causing addiction in adults as well as students. At least 72% of all children have at least one device in their bedroom, causing sleepless nights. The suggestion still stands, one hour of screen time is enough... keep this in mind during the school day.

**Better Classroom Collaboration**

Various online activities can make students practice collaboration. Education technology can connect students while pushing collaboration within similar classroom and school or even a learning environment across the globe. They can work on a variety of projects using collaborating with others in a virtual learning environment. Technology provides many opportunities but I worry about the 1:1 initiatives that spend a limited amount of time collaborating. It is OK for students to share a device, collaboration is key and this is where great discussion happens. Keep this in mind when moving in this direction.

**Enhanced Teaching Methods**
Technology offers limitless online resources where teachers can utilize different reputable apps and site to enhance their traditional means of teaching. To save time, they can take advantage of grading software, online assessment, and practical lesson plans. On the other hand, despite the benefits of education technology, some teachers and individuals are still against it. As a result, education technology is not yet applicable to some learning centers. Below are some of the challenges that education technology implementation is facing:

**Lack of Access to Technology**

Let’s face it, not every student owns a computer unit or has a computer access at home. Also, the bad news is that some students who have tight finances are with worse grades. If they cannot afford similar digital competencies as others, they might end losing interest and confidence to learn.

**Teaching Method and Materials for Education Technology are Costly**

From time to time, technology changes. This means that you also need to adopt these changes to ensure that you are effectively getting the benefits. Furthermore, it will take you a lot of time to practice to determine whether you are efficient enough with the teaching method. When you are about to find the right rhythm, technology starts to change again. As a result, the learning, teaching method, as well as the school system, are disrupted.

**Difficulty in Integrating Technology in the Classroom**

Some schools and teachers find it hard to integrate education technology in the classroom. The expertise of the teachers is challenged where they need to understand the content, method, and technology itself. It does not mean that they are not good at
technology, but it is more of they are comfortable with the system they are doing efficiently.

Through education technology, it is possible to improve the learning process of the students, and teachers can innovate their teaching method. However, it is good to know whether both students, teachers and schools are ready for the advantages as well as the challenges they might encounter before the implementation.

WHAT ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES TO LETTER GRADES?
While the letter grading system has been a staple used across the nation, it has proven to be ineffective in truly assessing a child’s abilities and preparedness for college or the workplace. See, the problem is that students are given a lecture, provided practice for a limited time and then given a test on how well they learn the material before moving on to another skill. The teacher grades the tests and assigns letter grades for them. Sometimes teachers even give completion points without checking to see if the practice is correct. You either did it all, or you didn’t. Ten points or a zero. However, there are better ways to assess a child’s capabilities, and it is time schools consider alternative grading systems so that parents and students aren’t misinformed about the real value of the learners’ minds.

Gaming:
One method that has seen success in the classroom is gaming. Gaming is when the educator runs the class like a video game with the following criteria: narrative, grouping, earning of points, retrying for points, and, of course, online work. It is considered useful since kids like video games. By running lessons in this format, students are engaged because they are having fun. They are learning content because they get to try repeatedly to pass a level. Furthermore, they get instant feedback by being leveled up or told to retry. The teacher can assign grades based on XP or experience points.

**Digital Portfolio:**

This type of assessment is effective because it allows the student to choose his or her best work for evaluation. To start, the teacher must create a rubric that outlines criteria for the portfolio utilizing standards. The collection of work is ongoing in that the teacher can provide feedback and allow students to correct or improve problem areas in the portfolio. By making the portfolio digital, parents, students, teachers, and administrators can see the work in progress and, more importantly, look at the improvements made by the students. Schoolchildren can have creativity in how the portfolio is created by choosing the content and providing self-evaluations—a crucial element to the success of this type of evaluation.

**Publishing:**
If a teacher really wants to improve the quality of work that a student produces, then having students publish their work in the real world is vital. Students do not like to be embarrassed and will work harder to apply critiques for improvement when a real audience is identified. Doing a unit on geography? Have your student write a letter to the principal with their proposal for a garden on school grounds along with a geographical representation. Discussing diseases in science? Have students publish a newsletter covering critical points about an assigned or chosen disease to pass out to students and parents.

With a little creativity, educational leaders can change the stigma of letter grades and genuinely prepare students to be educated citizens.
I doubt that there are a lot of people who have an in-depth knowledge of what this term means. Personalized learning is very important for teachers because it helps to change the perspective of how they handle students. Personalized learning, also known as personalization is quite different from differentiation. With differentiation, teachers tend to use specific instructions to tweak processes and products to meet students’ ability, willingness to learn and all round interest. Delivering this type of learning always starts from the content which is usually unchanging for each student.
The differential mode of learning is school and curriculum based, and it seeks to address the mode of delivery of every lesson to meet the needs of students by assessing their strengths and willingness collectively. With personalized learning, it is quite different. The teacher first has to ask the question: in this lesson, what is important for the student to learn, and how am I going to make it work? The personalized mode of teaching is student based and it aims to understand the differences between each and every single student and how they adapt to teaching procedures.

**Definition of Personalized Learning**

Personalized learning is the diversification of educational programs, instructions, approaches, teaching, experiences, and support programs that are used to address peculiar learning interest, needs, desires, as well as cultural orientation of different students on an individual basis. Personalized learning opposes the generalized approach to education in which teachers dish out to all students the same type and mode of learning,
instruction, assignment and assessment without considering the scope of each student. Personalized learning is also known as “student centered learning”. Personalized learning has been in existence since the early 1960s with the concept growing widely. Ideally, technology is used to enhance the idea of personalized learning because it is a strong tool for research, information and communication between students and teachers. Some of the instruction and assessment employed in personalized learning are computer software driven. Hence, stating the importance of technology in classrooms.

5 Tools and Strategies That Support Personalized Learning

Implementing personalized learning is not rocket science. However, it should be inculcated when forming the curriculum for the students. The tools that can help to drive personalized learning are:

- **Project based learning**: one of the best ways to make students participate in class is by making them active in class projects which are relevant to the topics being discussed in class. They learn to take responsibility by choosing research topics, designs and models that can help them become better students.

- **Continuous writing**: this is another way of encouraging students to read. They have to write in all forms from formal, informal and personal writing to assessments, essays and term papers.

- **Choice boards**: this is a way of using multiple ideas to drive home a single point. A couple of choices can be written down where if each of them are treated individually, they collectively address the issue being discussed. Furthermore, students can be told to develop their own ideas to assess their level of understanding.
• **Tiered learning targets**: this point can be used especially in cases of overcrowded classrooms and there is a need to follow up on all students. This approach helps to track the progress of students by breaking down assessments for them to tackle.

• **Mobile devices**: the use of technology in classrooms have now come to stay. This makes them privy to a lot of information that they can even source for by themselves. So on their own, they start to access information that will make them better students.

Learning is way better when it is personalized. Students do not all have the same intellect, therefore it is the duty of teachers and facilitators to encourage personalized learning to try and meet the needs of students individually.
SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTING A COACHING PLAN FOR THE YEAR

It can be challenging for Instructional Coaches to select a focus for the year. Yes, an Instructional Coaching agreement with your administration can help, but what if the principal changes their vision throughout the year? Does this mean that your focus changes? Coaches who work and collaborate closely with their administrators in shaping their vision typically find out they have the support of and sustainability to expand their program. Coaches need to first start the district? What is the district’s focus? What are their goals? In schools funds allocated for the selected focus.
Take a look at the Coaching Focus graph by Meyer. The outer layer is the first start, align your coaching focus with the district goals should be your first step. Many times there are resources and funds allocated for district initiatives. The school benefits from the district and the coach and use professional development to work on specific content areas and grade level data dives. Although, alignment is clear some administrators change during the year. If this happens, revisit your discussion and bring data to support reasons to change the focus or continue on your current path.
Work with teachers that are excited to receive support. With three teachers, you will have a small community present to get started. Make sure you complete the full cycle with each teacher and give them the resources needed for them to be successful. Once the word gets out that you are helping and providing support, others will come around. Your roles and responsibilities have already been determined but it is good to get clarity. The term “other duties assigned” is a statement that can take you away from your main priority, Coaching Teachers. Make sure you still have time to support your educators in a coaching cycle. Try to define your role and coach responsibilities so your principal knows how you are allocating your time. With your role being defined make sure there is a check-in system with administration that has been developed as well. How will you measure the success of your teachers? How often will you meet with your principal to give teacher updates? Make sure you have clarity on these questions before you leave the meeting with the principal.
Allocating resources, establishing a coaching cycle, and engaging in professional development are the last three areas to focus your effort. Making sure you are available and ready to support teachers while making suggestions that are best practices is key. The full coaching cycle is pre-planning the lesson, observing the lesson, debriefing observation within 48 hours, and setting new goals. It is impossible to take on every teacher, the maximum amount of teachers a coach can provide the full cycle to would be eight. Every part of the coaching focus should include Professional Development. Once a topic has been selected, provide professional development on the skill or content area. Next practice the skill and last role play. Now your targeted classroom walk-through relates to your professional development which in is guided by the district focus. It is a linear system with alignment throughout your coaching program.
PROOF THAT VIDEO TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES TEACHER OUTCOMES

Self reflection and video recording in the classroom is starting to become normal occurrence. Individual teachers are starting to upload their individual classroom videos and receive feedback from Instructional Coaches. We are seeing a rise in charter schools using classroom video cameras throughout school buildings. Videos can capture many things from safety self reflection; it is a good thing! With a secure platform; Instructional Coaches to provide timely supportive feedback to novice and experienced teachers anywhere and at anytime.

Video recording also helps student teachers. According to Miriam Sherin In-service (teachers currently teaching) and pre-service teachers (student teachers) can truly benefit from a video review of the classroom. In her research, both in-service and pre-service teachers practice changed overtime. Both teachers noticed the change in their classroom student behavior, individual scaffolding techniques, their pedagogy and practice. Video capture can help teachers identify student behavior as well. Having the teacher watch the video on their own and not together is a proven best practice. Teachers come to the
debrief with a form that shares individual thoughts prior to the meeting is supportive yet non-invasive. A typical cycle is to observe the classroom, have the teacher watch the video with the questions, debrief together marking strengths and areas of growth, have the teacher select a goal and plan for implementation of the goal in the next lesson and/or model the area of growth. Yes, it is a great thing to work with teacher in areas of need but it is also very important to use the video to identifying student behaviors, classroom management styles, equity, and inclusion.

Jim Knight created a video feedback form that is not evaluative that focusing on student outcomes. The questioning form in his book, “The impact Cycle” has each teacher express on a scale what they would rate themselves. Did they meet their objective? It also asks about highlights of the lesson and techniques and what they could have done to change the outcome. Last, he asks the teacher how could we measure your outcome? Together, the teacher and the coach plan strategies to use to reach their new goal. Harvard University’s Center for Education Policy Research, the Best Foot Forward Project, takes a look at the use of video classroom observation technology in the feedback process. Here are a couple of benefits below according to Kjersti Ulvestad.
• Video Classroom Observation Provides Concrete Evidence of Instruction
• Video Increases Efficiency and Reduces the Costs by Facilitating
• Video Enables Better Self-Reflection
• Video Enables Self-Efficacy and Agency in the Classroom Observation Process
• Classroom Observation Video Facilitates the Sharing of Best Practices and Lessons Learned

While there are many benefits, it is very important that coaches and administrators are clear about the video cameras purpose being a tool to support teachers. Understanding administrative goals and the various usage of footage should be discussed before implementation.
GAMIFICATION IN EDUCATION

The world today has evolved. We are in the digital age and everything in and around us has transcended to ICT. Now, we even wonder as to how people survived when there was no internet or the kind of advancement we have in technology today. This advancement has also been inculcated into our educational system, by way of using games to improve the way students learn – hence the term “gamification in education”.

Gamification in education is the transformation of academic resources into gaming to help, inspire, motivate and challenge students both individually and collectively to be better students. The object is to make students see that they can overcome hurdles and challenges in a fun way and it doesn’t necessarily have to be difficult. They also at very early stages of their lives begin to appreciate the benefits of group/team work as this will be very important while using games in the classroom.

One of the major reasons to indulge in educational gamification is to make the students engrossed, i.e. for the students to dedicate a lot of attention into the game. This way, the
students now imbibe the habit of paying rapt attention into whatever it is they are doing. In fact, this is the whole idea of gamification in the first place; for the student to learn how to pay undivided attention into whatever it is that’s being done. If this is attained, then the teacher has achieved much.

For gamification to fully occur, there are some key features that are worthy of note. Some of these features include:

- The students who will actually play the game under the supervision of the teacher. In this scenario, the students are also called users.
- The task with which the users need to undergo to advance to the next level.
- The points that will be earned when tasks are accomplished.
- The badges or medals that will be given to the users once levels have been completed.
- The users will be ranked according to who completes levels faster and better.

On how to gamify in education, well, it’s quite simple, but the teacher must first know the capabilities of the students in question. The teacher must know if the tasks to be executed by the users in the game are not too intense for them to indulge so there won’t be a backfire. Also, the objective of the game also needs to be spelt out to users, so they understand the reason why they have to indulge in the game in the first place. Another way to add games into education is to start gradually, and then increase the difficulty level gradually. This way, users get to progress, accumulate points, acquire medals and attain ranking. In the long run, they become more attentive and develop a friendly competitive attitude.

Some of the software used for gamification in education includes the following:

- Classcroft
- Brainscape
- DuoLingo
- Zondle
- PlayBrighter

These are just a few to mention from. The list is quite unending.
In conclusion, gamification in education has an all-round effect on the life of a student. They now believe learning is fun. They also develop better and longer attention span and learn how to interact better with other people. This is a major step in the right direction for our educational process.
IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING NECESSARY?

For most individuals, the term “collaborative learning” really sounds strange. But the meaning of this term is very simple, as it is already being applied in almost all learning institutions – knowingly and unknowingly to us. Collaborative learning is necessary for growth. It refers to the act of two or more individuals teaching and learning together in order to exchange ideas, skills, experience, resources and information. This way, these individuals intend to become better students because they can monitor, evaluate and correct each other’s work.

Collaborative learning also refers to the environments and methods with which learners carry out the same task, which makes them dependent and accountable to each other, which is also tantamount to their individual and collective growth and achievements as learners. Since this approach to learning contradicts the convectional or traditional learning system, it has received a wide range of criticism as to its benefits to the society at
large. Some of the activities carried out in collaborative learning are group projects, debates, study groups, group talks and so on. These designs are made to make learners get an in-depth knowledge about a subject matter since it is going to be viewed from different point of views.

Lev Vygotsky, Gerlach, Smith and MacGregor, have all proposed theories as concerning collaborative learning. In spite of their different ideologies, it is still obvious that they all indicate that students or learners need a high level of interaction between one another to attain full understanding of whatever task they have to accomplish. Since we are now in the twenty-first century, we can only imagine that technology has also been inculcated into the idea of collaborative learning. There are now hardware, software and applications that teachers are now employing to make it easier for students to interact together as they learn.

In 1987, Findley proposed the “Collaborative Network Learning” (CNL). This technologically based approach to collaborative learning helps learners interact using electronic means. Learners get to participate with each other in groups, and they are also being monitored by a group leader, facilitator, or coach, which makes sure they achieve individual and collective goals.
Apart from the Collaborative Network Learning, there is also the Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). This is quite different from the former, in that, this time, it is the computer technology that is doing the actual monitoring, regulating, evaluating, assigning of task to students who are learning in groups. All of these have been programmed, and we can always trust computers to carry out instructions to the letter.

Examples of technological hardware and software that classrooms employ for collaborative learning include Google Classroom, Google Drive, Apple TV, Whiteboards and other devices make students reach out across the world without necessarily leaving their classrooms. All of these are made possible by adding technology to collaborative learning.

In conclusion, the importance of technology to our society cannot be overemphasized, and that also applies to collaborative learning. It helps both students and teachers alike to appreciate the diversity of different approach and views towards completing tasks, thereby achieving both individual and collective goals.

“When we work together we are able to create something great for our students!”
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING AGREEMENT WITH YOUR ADMINISTRATOR

There are many ways Instructional Coaches can support the teachers in the classroom, but many times agreements must be in place before coaching begins. With any Instructional Coaching practice it is best to first establish norms and first have an understanding and or agreement with the principal. Many coaches know their role but are vague on their deliverables and day to day tasks. One coach stated, “I’m not sure how she evaluates me but she always says, “Keep up the good work,” so apparently I’m doing something right”. Here are a few things you can do to make sure you and your principal are on the same page.

First, start with the job description. Take a look at what the school had in mind before they hired you and are those particular items a part of your day to day tasks. Yes, you need
to do this way before you set up your meeting with the principal. Also, this gives you an opportunity to organize your thoughts and ideas. If you’re descriptions says “other duties assigned” try to understand where the principal is coming from. You do not want your position to be a dumping ground of tasks. Peter Dewitt, is worried about this as well in his article he states “we have instructional coaches leaving the position because there is a disconnect between what they thought the position was all about…and what the position has become all about.” Principals want to ensure your success because in many cases, they’ve selected you! So making sure you are not burnt out and unaware of your day to day tasks helps!

Align your job description with your day-to-day duties. See what is possible to complete and try to figure out things you can scale back on. I had a teacher in Texas say, “I had to coach an entire school!” This is not possible according to Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, in Leverage Leadership 8 teachers is the maximum amount of people that you can coach at one school site. This means the full coaching cycle that includes; co-lesson planning, observations, lesson debrief, data dives, and modeling in the classroom. Once you know and understand what your role and what is possible to complete at the school site, then you are ready to identify some ways they can evaluate you, if there is already something in place then this is not necessary but if not you want to identify at least two suggestions
you can make during your meeting with the principal, you know... just in case they don’t have a clue...

Once you have these items ready, the research is completed on evaluation and potential tasks. It’s time to schedule “The Informal Meeting.” This is where you should already know these answers before you go into the meeting but you want to clarify some of these items to make sure you and the principal are on the same page. Ask, What is your vision for the school? Where do you see focusing my efforts on this year? What specific content area should I focus on? There is usually one content area that your school or district is focusing on. If you are in an elementary school its either math, reading, and/or writing based on the data from your school. Make sure you document this discussion, write it down and take notes.

Instructional Coaches want to do well and succeed so asking about guidelines for measuring the impact of coaching on teacher and student learning should be on your list. Walk classrooms together and select a tool that will help you both support teachers. Also, the conversation will come up so be prepared to discuss and plan for the schools professional developments for the year. As an instructional coach there needs to be a plan in place for the specific topics you will lead. Some coaches have other duties such as small student group learning, large group teacher grade level meetings, and one-to-one sessions. Be prepared to discuss these topics and have a plan for scaling back some of these duties that take away your time from supporting teacher growth. There is much that can consume your time so value it and try to block off some time for you to do research and prepare talking points.
Effective communication is key, with everything you are responsible for do not forget to have ongoing communication with your principal with updates and data. Are you meeting monthly? Weekly? What does this meeting look like and what type of tool are you using to measure your effectiveness. As said earlier, this is the pre-work you should have done prior to this meeting. Remember... schools need their coaches so... do not do not take on too much, this will cause frustration which is overwhelming. Start early and create a positive connection with your administrator and with written reassurance, know that the principal has your back.
RETAINING NOVICE TEACHERS

In K12 schools, retaining novice teachers come with its challenges and its complexities. But before we divulge into what these challenges and complexities are in the retention of novice teachers, it is expedient that we try and highlight who a novice teacher is in the first place.

A Novice Teacher Can Be Defined in the Following Terms:

- A teacher who is in the first-through to third-years of employment.
- A teacher who typically has zero to three years of teaching experience and is a newcomer to the teaching profession.
- A teacher who is certified/credentialed/licensed professional in his/her first years in the profession.

As for teacher retention, a lot have left the profession even in their novice state. Some of the factors that influence their departure are:

- Weak enrolments in teacher preservice training.
- Poor district incentives to renew prerecession pupil-teacher ratios.
- Increasing enrolment of students.
- Elevated teacher attrition.
Challenges In Retaining Novice Teachers

Diversity:

One important challenge that has been mentioned in various articles is that novice teachers are confronted with cultural diversity. Novice teachers work with children and parents from different cultures, with different backgrounds and values and who speak a language other than the teacher’s native language. Teachers need to develop the cultural competence to address the difficulties of cultural diversity. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of ‘culturally sensitive teachers’ who have affirming views of students
from diverse backgrounds and see resources for learning in their students rather than difficulties to overcome. Novice teachers find it difficult to bring cultural sensitivity to their dealing with culturally diverse groups of students. Novice school teachers identified working with parents, and especially communicating with parents, as one of the biggest challenges of teaching in K12 schools, hence making it complex for their retention.

**Character Differences:**

Another important complexity in the retention of novice teachers is that teachers are confronted with relatively large differences within their classroom. Novice teachers must deal with differences between children in terms of character, behaviour, norms and values and attitudes, together with differences in the students’ cognitive and language development. Regarding differences in language development, second language learners are a major challenge for novice teachers. They must also deal with a relatively high number of students who are at risk of academic failure.

**Violence And Poverty:**

Furthermore, violence and poverty are important complexities for novice teacher retention. Teachers in K12 schools feel anxious about the students’ use of violence at school and also showed fear of the neighbourhoods in which they worked. Many teachers left the school or the teaching profession because of violence-induced stress. Numerous factors that impact students’ learning and development, including hunger, anger, fear,
illness, conflict and death – and all of these must be addressed for novice teacher retention to not be a complexity.

Professional teachers were once novice teachers. In other words, for the retention of novice teachers, we recommend the promotion of positive social change by implementing measures to stabilize new novice teacher retention rates, which will improve student learning and promote academic success by creating stability in the learning environment.
A NEW WAY TO CONFERENCE WITH PARENTS

There are many ways to have a parent teacher conference and yes, they are necessary but what if I told you parent teacher conferences are changing. Conferences usually suggest reporting which hinders a two way form of communication. We want parents to take an active role, suggest ideas, and collaboratively as a team come up with student supports, right. I first was introduced to this diverse thinking when I attended a meeting for the Prichard committee. This organization offers a variety of programs aimed at bringing together parents, teachers, and community members to participate in school improvement, education policy reform, and bridge the communication gap between stakeholders involved. In the session parents were discussing data, and how the parents can support the push of comprehension because it was a school-wide goal. Well at Creighton School district they are changing the landscape of conferencing they hold an academic Parent-Teacher-Conference Team that involves parent /teacher classroom meetings three times per year. They also hold an individual parent-teacher conference to review student performance.

Harvard’s Family Research Project states:

**Presenting the Data:** During team meetings, the teachers provide data on aggregate classroom performance. Each parent receives a folder containing his or her child’s academic data and is able to understand the child’s performance in relation to the rest of the class on standards for reading and math. Some teachers have parent’s color bar graphs to represent areas their child has mastered.

**Academic Parent–Teacher Teams**
Three 75-minute classroom team meetings each year. These team meetings are initiated by a personal invitation to the parent by the teacher, and consist of the teacher, the entire class of parents, and a parent liaison. Each meeting includes a review of student academic performance data, parent–student academic goal setting, teacher demonstration of skills to practice at home, parent practice, and networking opportunities with other parents.

One 30-minute individual parent–teacher conference.

In this yearly individual meeting parents and teachers review student performance data and create action plans to optimize learning. One-on-one parent–teacher meetings are held once a year, or more regularly if requested.

Setting Goals: The teacher then helps parents set 60-day goals for their child based on his or her academic scores. For example, if the standard is for 1st graders to learn 120 high-frequency words by the end of second quarter, children working ahead of the curve might have a goal of mastering all 120 by the end of November, whereas a child behind the curve might have a goal of 75.

Demonstrating how parents can support learning: After families set goals for their children, the teacher models different ways parents can support their child’s learning at home. Parents are then given an opportunity to practice these activities with other parents. Team meetings end with an opportunity for parents to network and socialize with other parents and families. One-on-one parent–teacher meetings are held once a year, or more regularly if requested, to also give parents a formal opportunity to meet with teachers on an individual basis.

Managing the new structure

The Director of Community Education is responsible for meeting student achievement goals through family involvement. This individual provides training for teachers, district board members and administrators, and the parent liaisons.
Measuring the results
Data sharing has helped Creighton School District shift the paradigm for how parents and teachers work together. A study of how APTTs influence student achievement and parent involvement is under way; however, anecdotes, short surveys, and analysis of utilization rates suggest six main results:

1. **Improved social networks:** Parents report expanded social networks as a result of getting to know other families at team meetings.

2. **Increased teacher participation:** APTTs are not a district mandate, but rather an optional grassroots project that teachers can adopt if they chose.

3. **Increased father involvement:** A surprising result has been the high numbers of fathers who have come to team meetings - more than in classrooms with conventional parent–teacher conferences. When fathers were asked what made them more interested in coming to team meetings, they said that they were specifically interested in academics and wanted to be involved in understanding their child’s progress.

4. **High attendance:** In the classrooms that had APTTs, attendance at meetings was 92% on average. That was much higher than participation in conventional parent–teacher conferences.

5. **Improved efficiency and time use:** With APTTs, teachers are more efficient and use their time in a more productive way. APTTs require the same number of hours as conventional conferences because the entire group of parents meets together at once, but instead of seeing parents only twice over the school year parents and teachers have four formal opportunities to meet.

6. **Parents are empowered:** Many of the parents who participated in APTTs asked to continue the program. They want their children to be in a classroom that will be participating in APTT this coming school year.
TURNING YOUR SCHOOL INTO THE SCHOOL OF ONE

The New York City School, the School of One, has an amazing operating system called *Teach to One* math, which was developed by New Classrooms. This concept is a little like building a school in the cloud, by Sugata Mitra. Innovative schools are getting more and more attention for its unique approach to education. Imagine merging direct instruction, group work and individual targeted learning while the teacher provides scaffolds for individuals to reach their goals. Yes, this is targeted learning at its best.

Here is what they do:

- Teachers give instruction during the day while other students are working on a particular task or training in a particular subject.
- Students use technology and work in groups and/or pods that are used for presenting information to their peers
- Large groups are used to support students and virtual teachers support students around the world
- Peers tutor and support others students by providing extra support
WHY KICKING KIDS OUT OF SCHOOL DOESN’T WORK

Our school systems has failed our children by not keeping them safe at schools, not turning a conflict into a teachable moment, and by suspending students for days at a time. What is going on? We need our children to feel safe, respect their positive learning environment, help them correct their misbehavior, and teach them to develop strategies for self-discipline. How does your school handle discipline? What is considered a minor infraction at your school site? I am asking for schools to rethink the way schools discipline students. Many schools are trying to find solutions to this question. A parent of Kent school in Washington asks “What are students supposed to do if students are attacked or bullied” The school board couldn’t answer this question.

Here is what we are noticing:

- Punitive discipline that removes kids from school leads to lower graduation rates.
- Students who mouth off to teachers, or fight, or cut class are typically the least engaged in classwork
- A study in Texas study suggested that 31 percent of suspended students repeat a grade; 10 percent ultimately drop out.
- More than one-third of the 475 youths suspended for “defiance” in a particular school year were black though African Americans comprise only 12 percent of the district’s student population. By contrast, white students written up for “defiance” were more often given a warning with no loss of class time (Kent School in Washington)

If you are tired of this then Do Something! Parent say SOMETHING and stand up for your children!

Parent Mary Valmonte, with son David, played a key role in the changes made in Kent schools. All children deserve an education! The Zero-tolerance approach does not work. Keep kids in school! Take those police officers out of uniform change their
role from security guards to hall mentors. Change student roles, classroom dynamics, and support students in their many unique styles! Something has to be done now!

**Here are some tips to start?**

- Know your students and turn a fight turns into a teachable moment on how to resolve conflict. Monitor behavior and be proactive
- Develop social problem solving and decision making skills among students
- Get parent support by maintaining a close communication with students’ parents
- Provide academic instruction and activities that motivate learning, we know they’re happier and feel safer.
- Create a school environments in which kids can succeed by providing scaffolds.
- Use praise and rewards to maximize the risk of diminishing intrinsic motivation

**Below are a couple of programs and methods that have been adopted: Yes it takes work, but these programs are out there to help teacher and administrators.**

- **PBIS** (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support),
- **Safe & Civil Schools, CBITS** (Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools)
- **Restorative justice**
- **Trauma-sensitive schools**
- **HEARTS** (Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools)
CONNECTING STUDENTS TO THEIR TALENTS

Of course we know that when parents feel welcomed and are invited in the school often they are more likely to be involved in their children’s education. Connecting schools with family members, parents, and mentors from the beginning is key for a successful school year. In “Inviting families to schools to share gifts and talents” allow teachers to design a curriculum to meet individual needs. What can schools do to help the teacher to parent pipeline?

The visual created to the right list simple steps to achieve the goal of helping students attain a plan. Administrators, teachers, and parents can work together and individualize a student curricula based off of individual goals and strengths. Here are some tips that will help:

1. First listen to parents, family members, and students separately- we must identify each student’s dreams and experiences, role models and mentors.
2. Teachers use data to identify student talents and strengths
3. Curriculum guide is created including mentors, projects, and technology research to support her learning
4. Data is collected while re-evaluating goals yearly with the start of the New
Schools can also:

1. Celebrate diversity- Events, Speakers, and Training for family members
2. Create a welcoming environment- Parent spaces, Technology centers with support, Open house, Re-written-Open door policy
3. Mentoring Opportunities- Parent to parent, family to family, alumni student to current students, Mentoring Training/handouts/support systems
4. Input from family to support learning at school- translation materials parent blogs, surveys, focus groups, all working towards the vision
5. Encourage family contributions and leadership- sharing stories, school resources, and personal talents

Take a look below at a FAST (Families and Schools Together)
DARE TO BE DIFFERENT, INNOVATIVE PLAYGROUNDS

What if school playgrounds came equipped with building materials, tools, and movable pieces? There is this breakthrough notion that students may be interested in exploring while using their imagination, go figure? Being a big kid, I would love to explore in an unstructured imagination playground? In one of the previous years alone Imagination playground has been contacted by 274 schools who wanted to push the power of imagination. David Rockwell, designer of imagination playground said he was inspired by watching his own children. David Rockwell is not the only idea in town, others have created spaces for children to play that are movable as well like Interactive Playgrounds. We have spaces that give students the ability to explore and create with other students such as the interactive playgrounds. Andy, Galen, and Joel work together to for interactive playgrounds. They design playgrounds with obstacle courses, carnival games, and yard games.

Yes, these are movable parts but why should our world be constant? What if, during the months January through May there were other choices for play while August through December, students were allowed to select from different options? I know we can list so
many reasons why not to do this... like the cost, injury, overseeing the structures and the multiple teachers on hand to trouble shoot problems.

Yes, there are many risks but so what, lets do it! There are traditional choices to playgrounds such as the large playground multifunction apparatus with a soft-fall flooring which have been the selected choices for many school areas, community parks, or gated communities. These are safe areas where students can play with other children while climbing. We also have the open filed area with a couple of structures to climb and maybe a swing set to accompany the wood chip flooring and some areas have a large cement area for basketball/tennis depending on the location. Last but not least, theirs the metal playground with indestructible play structures which may have a basketball court with a hoop. ZZZzzzzzz are you asleep yet, these are the boring structures in place but don’t settle for less, do something to CHANGE IT, be innovative.