

APPENDIX 3G

Coaches as Partners in Evaluation

Below you will find an overview of the potential role of literacy coaches and other specialized literacy professionals in teacher evaluation processes with embedded questions for discussion.

Coaches are leaders who can help align the puzzle pieces of evaluation policies and English language arts (ELA) instruction for teachers, as well as school and district leaders. We note that it is beneficial for coaches to hold a deep understanding of the structure and focus of ELA policies and programs, including teacher evaluation policies, of their district and state. As such, coaches should study state instructional frameworks and district reading plans to identify key branches. Then coaches can share these understandings and connections in clear and engaging ways with teachers to support coherence and common ways of understanding not only what policies require, but why. This could be embedded in professional learning community sessions or even one-on-one conversations with teachers. Coaches can also broach conversations with district and school administrators about how to prioritize certain pieces of the reading program given particular policies and initiatives. These discussions can contribute to a shared vision for literacy.

- How do you learn about evaluation policy?
- How do you learn about district and state frameworks/approaches for ELA?

Additionally, although coaches are not involved in evaluating teachers, we still urge coaches to dig into the details of evaluation systems so that they can serve as a resource for teachers as they navigate evaluation systems. With the proper information, coaches can answer teachers' questions and support teachers in linking effective literacy instruction with the demands of evaluation. If coaches have a clear idea of the demands of teacher evaluation rubrics and standards, they can coach teachers toward practices that evaluators will recognize. This will ensure teachers do not get mixed messages from coaches and evaluators because the goals of coaching and evaluation will be in alignment.

- What types of questions do teachers raise to you about evaluation?
- How do you support teacher learning about ELA? About the evaluation system and process?

We also encourage coaches and evaluators to meet to reflect upon the match between their messaging on evaluation and literacy instruction. This collaboration can raise administrators' awareness of the ways that literacy and evaluation efforts fit together.

- What is the nature of your collaboration with school and district administrators?
- To what degree do your administrator and you share a common vision for literacy instruction and outcomes?

Ways to Learn About Evaluation in Your Context

Sit in on a meeting where teachers are setting goals and see what approaches seem to work, what questions come up, and how school assessment practices help or hinder this work.

Shadow an evaluator or sit in on a rubric training or norming session so that you can see what evaluators are looking for during classroom observations.

Create a crosswalk document that illustrates how your school's literacy practices or initiatives connect to specific schoolwide goals or rubric rows.

Ultimately, the best way to be positioned as a resource for teachers and administrators working within a teacher evaluation system is for coaches to use each of the tools of the system for themselves. For this reason, we present the crosswalk of coaching and the stages of evaluation.

In many schools, coaches carry out some form of observations inside teachers' classrooms. Yet coaches' observations may be quite different than the observations carried out by administrators. At the same time, we share that there are ways for coaches to model focusing on principles of instruction. In particular, coaches can observe and provide feedback in ways that attend to the key components of literacy instruction. Coaches who conduct observations should be mindful of the central principles of effective feedback, as discussed in Chapter 6. They should strive to give teachers clear, actionable, and prompt feedback. We acknowledge that, because the coach juggles numerous responsibilities, it may prove challenging to find the one-on-one time to give feedback to teachers. However, this prompt feedback is crucial so the coach maintains the teacher's trust and develops teacher capacity. Coaches, too, should listen and learn while providing feedback to teachers. During this stage, coaches should be clear about norms of confidentiality regarding feedback to teachers.

- Reflect upon the strengths and limitations of your recent observation and feedback cycles:
 - » What are some strategies that you use so that teachers receive clear, actionable, and prompt feedback?
 - » What are some challenges for you to provide this type of feedback? What could support you in overcoming those challenges?
 - » How do you communicate with teachers about your stance toward confidentiality?

By bringing teachers together to study and discuss their district's formal rubric, coaches can work with teachers on developing a common vocabulary around high-quality instruction. In this manner, coaches can raise teachers' understanding of the bands of the observation rubric, which, in turn, could yield more productive feedback conversations for teachers and leaders. As a result, there can be greater coherence among teachers, coaches, and other leaders.

- How do you develop teachers' knowledge related to the evaluation rubric?

Coaches can also collaborate with teachers on setting and reaching goals. Specifically, after developing teachers' understanding of the goal-setting process, coaches and teachers can draft goals and brainstorm activities to attain those goals.

- How do you develop teachers' knowledge and skills related to goal setting?

Because coaches are *not* administrators, they can play an important role in teaching teachers about evaluation. Coaches are well positioned to talk through the steps, benefits, and concerns of a district's evaluation system with teachers in a way that those formally observing may not be able to. The coach–teacher dialogue on the observation process can be positive for teachers, as well as the school system. By opening lines of communication about observations, coaches can raise the curtain, demystifying the realm of evaluation and tying it to crucial pillars of literacy instruction.

- Reflect upon the strengths and limitations of your communication around evaluation policy and literacy instruction:
 - » What areas of literacy instruction have your recent professional development sessions for teachers addressed?
 - » How could future professional development sessions relate to literacy instruction?

Looking Ahead

Coaches are situated to see the active ingredients of literacy instruction on a daily basis as well as to promote these ingredients on a regular basis. This positions coaches to offer contextualized professional development opportunities that generate new understandings for faculty by sharing and analyzing examples of situated practice.