

At the end of each work week, I'm sure you reflect and "check off" the mental notes you made about accomplishing your goals, working with your teaching colleagues, and helping others recognize their voices in a very demanding setting. You also probably begin the process of scheduling the following work week and identifying that week's goals according to the needs of your colleagues.

By now, you have helped others understand your role as a coach, the B (*before*), D (*during*), and A (*after*)

cycle of instructional coaching, and PIIC's four-quadrant framework. Your returning colleagues are already familiar with the practice and the gradual release of responsibility. Just be prepared... change is continual so you need to constantly and consistently work with your colleagues to help them implement effective instructional practices and meet with them to talk about what changes are necessary to ensure continuous improvement.

So, here's the danger... as your colleagues become more and more familiar with your work, they may be tempted to ask you to do things that are outside of your coaching portfolio. You will be tempted to become that "extra pair of hands" because you are comfortable with the environment and want others to be comfortable with you. After all, you don't want to spoil a "good thing." Don't be tempted... maintain the components of effective instructional coaching by frequently and repeatedly talking to your colleagues about instructional practices, student work, and improved habits.

Strong coaching relationships develop over time. You engaged in deliberate conversations with your colleagues to ensure that the goals, objectives, needs, data, outcomes, and a host of other important factors were discussed, agreed upon, and practiced. In fact, you probably referred to these discussions as access points, clarifying points, and/or feedback points. These conversations most likely developed into the basis of your partnership agreement where the parameters for your work as an instructional coach working with your teaching colleagues was defined.

Now that time has passed, you may need to go back and revise what you learned from those conversations and "re-issue" some partnership agreement boundaries that may have become rather amorphous as you move along the continuum with your colleagues.

Some may think these coaching conversations are like pre-nuptial agreements. After all, the relationship between a coach and a teacher is like an arranged marriage... teachers cannot choose the coach and the coach cannot choose the teachers; that relationship is established for them. Whether it is an arranged marriage or an arranged coaching partnership, both are collaborative partnerships and share several characteristics: good listening skills, respect, choice, voice, and continuing support to name a few. Good marriages do not suffer from ego driven decisions and either can effective coaching relationships. But, these relationships must not be taken for granted.

A pre-nuptial agreement for coaching involves an agreement that outlines the parameters of the coaching relationship; clarifies the goals and objectives; recognizes the needs of all stakeholders; states the expectations of the coach, teachers and administrators; and stipulates how the stakeholders will identify the effectiveness of working together. These are the kinds of specifications that need to be discussed and agreed upon prior to the start of the coaching relationship. Unlike a pre-nuptial agreement, however, these specifications must be reviewed at the end of each year to determine what adjustments are necessary. That way, the teachers and the coach revisit their goals and set new ones that enhance their practices. They don't let the comfort of an "old shoe" relationship stall ongoing effective instructional coaching.

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