

What is the Instructional Coaching Model?

The Instructional Coaching Model is a research-based and benchmarked professional development model that will streamline the implementation of the division's core initiatives – the Framework for Quality Learning, Professional Learning Communities, and the Teacher Performance Appraisal – as these mentors work with teachers in schools to implement pedagogical and curricular best practices. Coaches will provide job-embedded and ongoing development of teachers, and serve as part of a school's leadership team.

What are the benefits of the Instructional Coaching model?

Research shows that modeling best practice, encouraging specific improvements toward that best practice, and reflection on one's day-to-day work – the duties of a coach – are the most effective ways to shift adult behavior. According to a study at the University of Kansas, traditional professional development models – attending a conference outside of one's daily job then aspiring to implement suggestions and innovations learned there only has an approximately 10 percent implementation rate. Coaching models, on the other hand, have an approximately 85 percent implementation rate, because a coach is available to encourage, support, and provide resources to integrate improved practices.

What role will the Instructional Coaches play in schools?

What constitutes best practice in teaching is evolving, especially as the needs of the 21st Century learners dramatically shift due to globalization and the integration of technology. Instructional Coaches will be a resource for teachers to help them keep up with these changes, and to implement new practices in their classrooms in order to improve learning for all students. Coaches advocate for, facilitate and support the work of the teacher, but do not supervise. They will neither perform, nor contribute to, teacher evaluations, which remain the province of the principal at each school. An Instructional Coach provides professional development and guidance for teachers to enhance their content knowledge and instructional strategies. The effective coach sees him/herself as an equal partner with teachers, spending the majority of the time working in classrooms (e.g. modeling, observing, co-teaching). Overall, the job of the coach is to build the capacity of the school and its teachers to meet the learning needs of all students. The Instructional coach is assigned to a team that supports a cluster of schools and is evaluated and supervised by a central-based Lead Coach.

What will be the primary function of an Instructional Coach?

The Instructional Coaching teams will mentor and coach teachers in best practices in pedagogy, technology integration, literacy, and curriculum in order to help teachers create concept-centered, standards-based curriculum units; engaging, innovative and effective instructional practices to meet the needs of 21st century learners; high-quality and varied assessments of student learning; and to use data to inform their practices for continuous improvement. Instructional coaches will serve all classrooms in the Division; it should not be perceived that if a teacher is working with an IC, that they are somehow underperforming or being disciplined in any way. Each Instructional Coach will be expected to have deep expertise in instructional approaches, resources and technologies; skills in analyzing and using data; interpersonal, problem solving and organization skills; and comprehensive knowledge of the division's curricular structures: the Framework for Quality Learning, Professional learning Communities and the domains and standards of the Teacher Performance Appraisal. In addition to these broad curricular and pedagogical skills, individual Instructional Coaches will have content-specific expertise that will create a cross-functional team, and provide a specific type of support for particular needs, such as literacy, numeracy, technology, or the various content areas of English/language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, health/physical education, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

What is an Instructional Coaching Team?

The Instructional Coaching Teams will be cross-functional and employ a variety of expertise and specialties. It is expected that each Instructional Coach will have expertise in more than one area, and will be a master teacher who can assist with pedagogical skills no matter the subject area.

Why are these Instructional Coaches centrally managed but schools-based?

Centrally managing the Instructional Coaches will accomplish four goals:

- Ensure consistency of expectations of scope and delivery of coaching services
- Maintain a single point of accountability for these coaches
- Alleviate the management and evaluation work for these positions for the principals
- Ensure communication and cross-functionality across teams based in various schools

Basing the teams in schools will:

- Bring the coaches closer to the classrooms they serve
- Allow the coaching teams to meet frequently with principals to accomplish building level improvement goals
- Allow more focused and flexible scheduling for coaches to work together with their teams, and PLC teams in place at schools

What if the team assigned to my school doesn't have someone with strong expertise in a particular content area?

How will I get the assistance I need to serve my students?

While each school will have a particular team of Instructional Coaches assigned to serve the teachers and students there, all eight of the Instructional Coaching teams will work together as one large team or pool of resources to assist schools. If a type of expertise needed by a school is not present on the team assigned to that school, the need will be brought to the entire team of 35 Instructional Coaches, and someone with that expertise will be determined. The Instructional coaching model offers schools increased flexibility in obtaining specific expertise that can assist their teachers: rather than relying on a single specialist in the building with a certain skill-set, a teacher can draw from the 35 coaches who bring a variety of skills to the table to assist teachers.

We are already a high performing school, with test scores significantly higher than the state expectations. Why do we need an Instructional Coach? Will our school receive a lower allocation of Instructional coaching resources?

Instructional Coaching is a professional development model to continually improve the skills of our division's teachers, leading to better learning opportunities and achievement for students. Just as a surgeon may observe or assist another surgeon who has created or mastered an improved technique, a teacher working with an Instructional Coach can learn and refine skills to become even more effective. Working with an Instructional Coach does not imply a deficiency, but rather a willingness to continue to learn and to continue to improve.

Unlike the former model with schools-assigned specialists based on enrollment and subpopulations, all schools will have the same opportunities to work with the Instructional coaches assigned to their cluster, and to leverage expertise that may exist on any of the Instructional Coaching teams.

Won't there be fewer people to help teachers in the schools in this model?

Overall, there is a reduction of a total of five full-time equivalent specialist positions (FTEs) based in the schools through this model. However, these duties were spread among schools in a varied manner: some schools had a full-time literacy specialist and a full-time CTIP, while others had a .25 allocation of each. Schools reported that teachers or librarians

who were also serving as a part-time literacy specialists, CTIPs or Framework Advisors were having a difficulty allocating sufficient time and resources to their specialist roles, due to the demands of teaching that impinged upon their availability to their colleagues. In this model, there will be no part-time coaches who will have to divide their time among the responsibilities of teaching their own classes and assisting their colleagues with improving their instruction or serving their students.

In this model, there are 16 elementary schools who will be served by 19 Instructional Coaches and 3 Lead Instructional Coaches, as well as a Director of Elementary Education. That is a total of 23 full-time employees dedicated to serving the curricular, instructional needs of elementary teachers and students. At the secondary level, the 10 middle and high schools will be served by 16 Instructional Coaches, 2 Lead Instructional Coaches, and a Director of Secondary Education, a total of 19 full-time employees dedicated solely to those teachers and students.

The ability to read is the crux of education, and a predictor for the achievement of students throughout their school years and lives. Doesn't this model de-emphasize the importance of literacy development, and represent a step backward for improving student achievement in reading?

Albemarle County Public Schools has not wavered from its goals of preparing all learners to succeed in the global economy and to eliminate the achievement gap. The School division recognizes the importance of both intervention and remediation strategies for students, but also of the quality of instruction occurring day to day in the classrooms throughout the division. By developing our teachers in our classrooms to create more effective learning opportunities to increase student performance we will continue to narrow the achievement gap and lower the need for intensive remediation. Furthermore, this model does not remove the certified reading teachers from the classroom, nor does it remove those support services from schools. It simply reorganizes the way we are delivering those services to the teachers, while at the same time, increasing the capacity of those teachers to assess, diagnose and intervene themselves, during their lessons.