

Leadership Coaching

Evidence-Based Best Practices

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Principals are expected to confront myriad challenges with diminishing financial resources, while improving the academic achievement of each and every student and running an extremely complex human organization. And, they are under the added pressure of knowing that the strength of their leadership is crucial to the success of their school system (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

School improvement is the highest priority for every principal today; in fact, having an effective principal is a prerequisite for school improvement (Wise & Hammack, 2011). Given that the quality of school leadership is second only to teacher quality as the most critical school-level factor in student achievement, it is imperative that school districts create conditions that systematically support, develop, and retain highly effective principals (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Research has proven time and again that educational organizations will not change until individual behavior changes. This is why school districts are increasingly deploying leadership coaches to help school principals develop the leadership and interpersonal skills they need to effectively lead teams of teachers through organizational upheaval and transformation. Transformational leadership coaching, as a model for professional development and school improvement, has been shown to be an effective approach to producing necessary changes (Reeves, 2009).

What's the evidence?

Leadership coaching has been commonly used in the business world as a useful tool to enhance the performance of leaders and the productivity of organizations (Nyman & Thach, 2009). Although there is limited research evidence about the critical factors that make leadership coaching effective or, for that matter, any evidence of a causal link between specific coaching practices and leadership effectiveness, varying models and approaches are increasingly used for the development of school leaders (Hammack, 2010). What follows is a

Originally a *coach* “conveyed valued persons from where they were to where they wanted to be.” Today, *coach* usually refers to a mentor or guide who supports people in learning specialized skills as in sports or business. In education, a *leadership coach* “conveys people and organizations through change processes, guiding them from one place to another in their personal and professional lives” (Reiss, 2007, p. 11).

review of literature related to leadership coaching, best practices identified by those working in the field of leadership (or principal) coaching, and an extrapolation of the evidence based on the literature.

Elements of Coaching

While a fair amount of recent research has focused on the leadership qualities of effective principals, there are very few studies that identify essential coaching practices that move a school leader toward maximum effectiveness.

Wise (2010) conducted a study of principals who were receiving coaching to determine the essential elements of that coaching. The researcher found that the principals spent approximately one to two hours twice a month in coaching sessions. Most sessions (95 percent) took place at the school site and were complemented by e-mail and phone conversations. The coaching sessions were carried out in an atmosphere of trust and openness and generally involved discussions about setting and monitoring goals related to practices that would bring about increased student achievement. Coaches and principals also spent time debriefing recent situations and issues, and the coaches tended to ask probing questions to push the principal to deeper reflection and understanding. The coaches were seen as “seasoned experts who have knowledge and experience in key areas.” Trust was considered to be the most essential element in the successful coaching relationships (Wise, 2010).

Characteristics of Principals Receiving Coaching

During the same time, Hammack (2010) studied 325 elementary school principals to understand the characteristics of those receiving coaching and the types of coaching received. He found that females, ethnic minorities, principals in their first few years in the position, and principals of schools with low achievement scores received coaching in higher percentages than did their colleagues. These principals received coaching generally once or twice a month; approximately 64 percent of the principals assigned a coach did not request the support, while 36 percent of the principals being coached received support at their own request. Coaching was provided either by employees of the same district (47.5 percent), private agencies (36 percent), or the local county office of education (16.5 percent) (Hammack, 2010).

Purpose of Having a Coach

Hargrove (2008) said that the purpose of having a coach is “to expand an individual’s capacity to obtain desired results and to facilitate that individual’s organizational development.” In education this means that coaches work to bring about successful teaching and leadership practices that lead to enhanced student achievement. Bandura (1982) stated that facilitating the “self-efficacy” of the principal is the primary role of the coach. According to Bandura, “The coach must help the [principal] find the strength within him or herself to make sometimes difficult decisions” by encouraging the [principal] to believe that he or she is capable of making the right decision and taking the correct action in a given situation (Bandura, 1982).

In the education setting, it is important to differentiate coaching for supervision or evaluation from coaching for professional development and organizational change. Coaching conducted by a supervisor or evaluator, although essential to moving a school leader's practice forward, has noted limitations, particularly in relation to establishing and maintaining trust. According to Aguilar (2013), if we are to assist school leaders in moving to a higher level of competence, confidence, performance, and insight in their role, we must be very clear that the intentions of leadership coaching are not training in a program or curriculum, therapy, or evaluation and supervision. Research indicates that "when coaches are evaluators, there is the tendency to identify deficiencies and then specify coaching as a remediation strategy, which turns coaching into a consequence of a poor evaluation and termination into a consequence of failed coaching" (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011, p. 13).

Professional Development Models Used for Leadership Coaching

Robertson (2009) summarized the conclusions of four studies of professional development models used for leadership coaching in schools, noting the "collective perception was a model of professional development that successfully provides the essential components of effective leadership in which praxis (the practical aspects of everyday work) and transformative practice (organizational change) are the desired outcomes" (Robertson, 2009).

In this extrapolated professional development model a specific coach works with a specific principal to develop both the practical and transformative knowledge and skills necessary for the principal to become an effective leader. Reeves (2009) recommended that district or state education agency (SEA) leaders engage in a process of inquiry to delineate the knowledge and skills required by specific principals and the qualities of specific coaches that would optimally match those needs. To increase the viability of the coach/principal match, Reeves suggests that the hiring agency clearly answer these questions:

1. What skills will this principal need to implement the required changes?
2. What is the best approach to developing these skills?
3. How will the district/SEA deliver that professional development/training?
4. What level of sustained support is the district/SEA prepared to provide the principal/school to embed these changes?
5. What knowledge, skills, and experience must a coach have to be considered fully qualified to facilitate this principal in making the required changes? (Reeves, 2009)

Evaluating Coaching

After a coach/principal match is made, the SEA will need to assess whether coaches and principals are effectively matched and whether the necessary practical and transformative knowledge and skills are being developed. SEAs should be prepared to formatively assess the effectiveness of the coaching relationships (and to some extent, the coaching model) using an inquiry process that involves a continuous feedback loop (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010).

Why Coaching?

One recent study of educational leaders revealed the growing chasm between what we know to be important and how leaders actually behave. This gap provides clear evidence that the evaluation systems that are now in place display an intellectual understanding of what needs to be done, but lack the fundamental ability to act on that knowledge (Reeves, 2009).

When school leaders attend training or workshops designed to help them in their role as principal, little of what they learn transfers into their daily practice. As adult learners, we implement only a small percentage (approximately 10 percent) of what we learn in a workshop by listening to a presentation (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

However, school leaders implement up to 95 percent, of what they learn if there is an opportunity to practice with feedback and follow-up coaching (Knight, 2009).

Conclusion: If the goal is to help school leaders grow and develop their practice, coaching is essential.

With a clear protocol that considers the evidence of current practice and results compared with the necessary results, leadership coaching includes a focused exploration of a learning agenda, experimentation with new leadership strategies, feedback on effectiveness and a relentless comparison of the present to the ideal state (Reeves, 2009, p. 74).

For example, questions such as the following might be used to guide that process:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between the coach and the principal in building knowledge (short term) and in changing practice/behavior/action (medium term)?
2. How do the knowledge, skills, and practices that the coach imparts affect the desired changes being implemented by the principal?
3. How do we measure the extent to which the principal's knowledge has increased and practice has changed? How do we measure their effectiveness?
4. How do we know if the coach/principal change process has impacted student outcomes (long term)?

(M. Leong, personal communication, March 13, 2014)

Based on the few relevant descriptive studies that attribute successful outcomes to leadership coaching practices, we can extrapolate a model to suggest how leadership coaching works in schools:

- The coach provides leadership coaching to the school leader utilizing competencies, such as relationship building and goal setting to establish the relationship and communicating effectively to facilitate the learning and performance of the leader.
- The content of the coaching conversations is based on research-based best practices of principals who lead schools with high-poverty students who demonstrate high achievement.
- As the educational leader puts best practices into place, the inevitable outcome is increased student achievement.

Wise and Hammack (2011) conjecture that if coaching can bring about the use of educational leadership best practices that correlate with increased achievement, then increased achievement should follow directly from coaching leaders in best practices. But, what are the specific coaching competencies that help principals implement the best practices associated with increased student achievement? And, what are the evidence-based best practices that leadership coaches use?

What a coach should know and be able to do

Specialized competencies are considered key to a successful coaching outcome. Across the literature, coaching competencies are generally defined as those abilities, behaviors, and skills used in the coach-client relationship to further established goals. The coaching competencies are the “tools” coaches use to attain those goals, which in leadership coaching are always related to individual or organizational performance. Reiss (2007) asserted that trust, communication, goal setting, and organizational awareness are the most crucial competencies that a coach brings to the relationship.

For the coaching relationship to be successful, a coach must possess or develop multiple competencies. There are many lists of coaching competencies but no comprehensive research that identifies which competencies are more effective than others. The list below competencies mentioned in multiple texts across the literature. Some of the competencies are framed as tasks that the coach helps the principal to accomplish, while others deal with the dispositions that the coach possesses or strategies the coach uses to move the principal forward in his or her thinking. According to the literature, successful coaches are able to:

1. Establish and maintain rapport
2. Establish and maintain trust, including confidentiality
3. Communicate interest in what the principal is saying
4. Actively listen by using paraphrasing, probing or clarifying questions, and summaries of what the principal has communicated
5. Help the principal set and accomplish goals
6. Develop strategic, open-ended questions about the principal's goals and multiple sources and forms of data
7. Provide reflective and evidence-based feedback that the principal can understand and use
8. Provide the principal with opportunities for reflection and self-assessment
9. Ask effective questions, both preplanned and in the moment, to push the principal's thinking, challenge assumptions, and broaden or deepen analysis
10. Provide teaching when needed and requested
11. Establish action plans that are rooted in the principal's goals and data
12. Manage the principal's progress and hold him or her accountable

(Adapted from Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Costa & Garmston, 2002; International Coach Federation, n.d.; Kee, Anderson, Dearing, Harris, & Shuster, 2010; Knight, 2009; Reiss, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011).

Underlying the successful application of these coaching competencies must be an understanding of how adults learn. Research tells us that adult learners must find their new learning to be relevant and feel that they have some control over what and how they learn (Aguilar, 2013). When adult learners sense that their competence is being challenged, they can become defensive so the coach must frame any assistance in supportive, rather than judgmental, terms and approaches. Most adult learners will not immediately begin to apply what they have learned; if they are to implement and sustain new practices over time, they will require coaching and feedback in the context of ongoing practice. In addition, adult learners require feedback that is specific, positive, relevant, growth-oriented, and focused on their own goals (Speck & Knipe, 2005).

Building on the existing knowledge base, it is possible to group the essential coaching competencies into four components or clusters of skills and approaches. The four components and the coaching competencies related to each are summarized below (extrapolated from Teaching Learning Solutions, 2013 and International Coach Federation, n.d.).

The International Coach Federation defines leadership coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, n.d. introduction).

The value of collaboration in making an effective match between a coach and a principal and between the coaching methods and the principal's needs cannot be overstated (Boyce, Jackson & Neil, 2010).

Components of Coaching Competencies

- Component#1: Preparing to establish the coaching relationship
- Component#2: Building the relationship
- Component#3: Pushing for depth and reflection
- Component#4: Developing goals, implementing an action plan, and assessing outcomes

Component #1: **Preparing to establish the coaching relationship—analysis of school data as the basis for setting goals for principal improvement**

First, the coach must fully understand what is required in the specific coaching interaction and come to an agreement with the hiring agency (the SEA or local education agency) about the coaching process and relationship, including explicit guidelines and specific parameters about logistics, fees, scheduling, techniques, and tools. Coaches must be able to tailor their work to the individual needs of each principal, rather than always using the same strategies and approaches (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

The foundation for effective coaching is thoughtful preparation and planning; data and evidence analysis; and an awareness of the strengths and goals of the school leader being coached (Aguilar, 2013). Planning for coaching sessions involves two major skills: analysis of multiple forms of evidence and data, and preparation of a careful sequence of open-ended questions. For example:

- The coach should gather and analyze relevant data from multiple sources, including schoolwide achievement scores; observation notes; department meeting agendas; attendance and suspension rates; teacher or parent survey results; and, notes from prior coaching sessions (Aguilar, 2013). Data analysis allows the coach to determine whether progress is being made toward the school leader's goals and ensures that data are the vehicle for objective, evidence-based feedback during the coaching conversation (Bloom et al., 2005).
- The coach should carefully sequence a set of open-ended questions designed to encourage reflection on the principal's goals based on the data analysis. The coach asks these questions to explore the principal's planning, data analysis, assessment, decisionmaking, instructional leadership, and professional development rather than to micromanage the minutiae of the principal's day (Bearwald, 2011). Open-ended questions tend to tie the current session to past sessions by asking the principal to reflect on outcomes of carrying out previous action items. Presuming that the principal carried out the action items provides not only a level of accountability but also establishes a context of trust (Bearwald, 2011).
- Goal setting is the foundation for successful self-regulation and effective coaching. It is essential that the coaching plan set goals and objectives that are attainable, measureable, specific, and have target dates. The principal's commitment to these goals is crucial to success. Research shows that attaining a high level of commitment is more likely when the goal is perceived as being attainable and important, and when the principal participates in determining the outcomes (Grant, 2006).

Knowing how to carve out dedicated time and to designate boundaries are essential prerequisites for developing effective education leaders (Robertson, 2009). The coach is responsible for clarifying expectations and roles, developing an environment of trust, and mutually establishing a results-based coaching plan (Hargrove, 2008). The coaching plan designates what actions are to be carried out by both the coach and the principal to attain the specific goals laid out in the agreement. Wise (2010) found that some coaches use a template with overall coaching goals and close each coaching session by focusing on next steps or “homework” activities.

Component #2: Building the relationship—interpersonal skills, including trust and sensitivity to timing and context

While the coaching content is critical, the principal will not benefit from the coaching without attention to establishing and maintaining rapport, respect, trust, and confidentiality. It’s also important for the coach to confirm that the principal has valuable experience and knowledge upon which to build.

According to Reeves (2009) the initial component of any coaching relationship is the coach’s affirmation of the individual associated with the behavior that is being changed. The essential message must be reframed from “you are broken and I am here to fix you,” to “you are so valuable and worthy, our mission so vital, and the future lives of our students so precious, that we have a joint responsibility to one another to be the best we can be” (Reeves, 2009).

The coach should have skills in interpersonal effectiveness and genuine empathy for widely differing groups, as well as listening skills, patience, adaptability, analytical problem-solving skills, creativity, and a sense of humor (Wasylyshn, 2003). Orenstein (2002) insisted that coaches need training in self-awareness and self-reflection so that they have the capacity to select and implement the appropriate interventions and accurately monitor individual and organizational change.

It is important that the coach and principal spend some time discussing the nature of their relationship and that they jointly design the dynamics of their working alliance. Most problems in coaching can be circumvented by having a clearly articulated and shared understanding of the coach-client relationship (Stober & Grant, 2006). The coach must be fully willing and capable of speaking openly and honestly, listening and showing interest, and creating a climate where revealing secrets evokes no judgments (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). As the coach encourages and cultivates open and honest conversations with the principal, he or she models for the principal how to build the foundation for trusting relationships within the school culture.

One approach to facilitating the coach’s development of trusting relationships within the school culture involves four steps (McAlpin & Wilkinson, n.d.):

1. Holding welcoming conversations about pressing or concerning issues and being fully mentally present when engaging
2. Openly encouraging honest dialogue on urgent topics and maintaining confidentiality in the coaching context

“True coaching cannot take place in the absence of a trusting relationship. The principal must be willing to participate in the process and feel safe enough to open up and show vulnerability around the most sensitive issues of professional practice” (Bloom et al., 2005, p. 7).

3. Asking questions and encouraging the principal's reflection and sharing by using paraphrasing, summarizing, presuming positive intent, listening objectively, mirroring body language, and offering nonjudgmental responses
4. Demonstrating an interest in the feelings being expressed and using them to guide the conversation

As with any relationship, the coach-principal relationship is most successful when each party takes full responsibility for his or her engagement in the process, clearly demonstrating integrity, honesty, and sincerity throughout their interactions. The coach should be respectful of the principal's perceptions and learning style, and provide ongoing support for new behaviors and actions, including support for risk taking and confronting fear of failure (Stober & Grant, 2006).

In a fully developed coaching relationship, there is trust in both parties' professional judgment about what is most effective in the moment. In this one-on-one relationship, the coach helps the principal change ineffective behaviors through self-awareness and learning. But, the coach must also be comfortable with covering new territory; being open, flexible, and confident about taking risks; shifting perspectives; and experimenting with new possibilities (Joo, 2005).

Component #3: Pushing for depth and reflection—questioning, paraphrasing, summarizing, and providing feedback to elicit critical thinking and reflection

If the principal is to gain awareness and achieve agreed-upon results, the ability to integrate and accurately interpret multiple sources of information is essential. The coach helps create an awareness, clarity, and understanding of the issues by guiding the principal through a process of inquiry. The coach must help the principal move beyond what he or she thinks are the issues and into the context of the bigger picture. The more active and open the feedback loop of this inquiry process is between the coach and the principal, the more effective the principal's adaptation and organizational change will be (Alexander, 2006).

The ability to listen attentively, to paraphrase when necessary, and to ask effective open-ended questions are all skills that have been shown to enhance the coaching relationship (Costa & Garmston, 2002). This means that the coach focuses completely on what the principal is (and is not) saying, understands the meaning of what is said in the context of the principal's desires, and supports the principal's self-expression. The coach encourages, accepts, explores, and reinforces the principal's suggestions and integrates them into the coaching plan. By asking open-ended questions, the coach creates greater clarity, possibilities, and new learning that in turn evoke discovery, insight, commitment, and action by the principal (Grant, 2006).

Honest feedback and the ability to push the client to new levels of understanding at key moments are both critical skills of an effective coach (Hargrove, 2008). In the context of this trusting relationship, the coach is clear and direct when providing feedback, but is always appropriate in tone and content and

respectful of the principal's perspective (Hall et al., 1999). All communications maintain a sharp focus on the objectives of the coaching plan, the meeting agenda, and the coaching techniques and exercises (Peel, 2005).

At this point in the relationship, usually because the coach holds more expert knowledge than the principal, the coaching relationship might go in one of two directions: the inexperienced coach can shift into "instructor" mode becoming an "expert advice giver" or the highly skilled coach can use principles of coaching that emphasize the "delivery of expert knowledge" through a technique called "ask-not-tell" (Stober & Grant, 2006).

Highly skilled coaches use a nondirectional "ask-not-tell" approach that has proven to be effective in raising the awareness and responsiveness of the principal. According to Whitmore (1992), using this nondirectional approach, the coach facilitates the principal's process by:

- Asking the principal to explore the different, interrelated factors that affect his or her behaviors (including beliefs, thoughts, feelings, body, and background)
- Helping the principal to identify unconscious behavior patterns and concerns that result from these factors and to recognize that there are alternative viewpoints
- Helping the principal discover new thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, and moods that strengthen his or her ability to take action and achieve what is important to the process
- Communicating broader perspectives and inspiring a commitment to shift viewpoints and find new possibilities for action
- Expressing insights in ways that are useful and meaningful for the principal
- Asking the principal to identify major strengths and growth opportunities and then deciding what is most important to address during coaching
- Asking the principal to distinguish the significant issues and situational and recurring behaviors when a discrepancy is noticed between what is being stated and what is being done

During times when it is appropriate for the coach to equip the principal with a specific skill by playing a more instructional role, it should always be approached with the goal of helping the principal to perform the task independently. Using a gradual release model, the coach models the task, then engages the principal in guided practice, and finally monitors the principal's independent work to help ensure mastery of the targeted skill (Bloom et al., 2005).

Component #4: Developing goals, implementing an action plan, and assessing outcomes—the principal takes responsibility for managing time and logistics, setting goals, taking action, and assessing outcomes

The principal's action plan should set goals and objectives that are attainable, measurable, specific, and have target dates. Self-regulation, effective coaching, and the principal's commitment to the goals are crucial to success. Research

shows that a high level of commitment is more likely when the goal is perceived as being attainable and important, and when the individual participates in determining outcomes (Grant, 2006).

Developing and maintaining an effective plan means consolidating collected information and incorporating developmental learning goals that address concerns and major areas for learning and development (Wise, 2010). In the plan, it is helpful to distinguish between outcome goals, long-term goals, short-term goals, and performance and developmental learning goals. Research suggests that combining developmental learning goals and performance goals with long-term and short-term outcome goals in the coaching plan can lead to enhanced strategy development and better long-term performance (Weldon & Yun, 2000).

Guiding the principal toward actions that most effectively lead to the agreed-upon outcomes requires the coach to create opportunities for ongoing learning, both during the coaching sessions and beyond. The coach helps the principal design activities through brainstorming the types of actions that will enable him or her to demonstrate, practice, and deepen new learning. By focusing on and systematically exploring specific concerns and opportunities essential to the agreed-upon coaching goals, the principal can consider and evaluate alternate ideas and solutions. Such an iterative process gives the principal confidence to make appropriate decisions (Bloor & Pearson, 2004)

As the principal experiences incremental successes and celebrates new capacity for future growth, the coach promotes active experimentation in situations where the principal can apply what has been discussed and learned. The principal begins to emulate the coach's example as he or she challenges assumptions and perspectives to generate new ideas and new possibilities for action. Now, the coach can advocate or bring forward points of view that are aligned with the principal's goals and which the principal can assess. At this point in the coaching relationship, the principal is learning and growing at a comfortable pace.

When the coach and principal engage in an iterative feedback process, the principal experiences continuous insights into his or her progress and can make ongoing adjustments to the plan. Most important, by helping the principal identify and target early successes, the coach helps the principal shift out of planning mode and into implementation mode. It is at this point that the principal begins to feel more positive, optimistic, and in control of outcomes. According to behavioral research, this shift into implementation mode requires the type of thinking that is associated with higher levels of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and goal attainment (Bandura, 1982).

The coach helps the principal stay focused on what is important for successful outcomes but leaves the responsibility for action with the principal. The coach helps the principal stay on track between sessions by sustaining the principal's focus on the coaching plan and outcomes, agreed-upon courses of action, and topics for future sessions (Joo, 2005).

To facilitate the principal's sustained focus, the coach follows this course of action (Kouzes & Posner, 2002):

- Clearly requests actions that will move the principal toward his/her stated goals

- Demonstrates follow-through by asking the principal about actions that the principal committed to during the previous session(s)
- Acknowledges what the principal has done, not done, learned, or become aware of since the previous coaching session(s)
- Effectively prepares, organizes, and reviews with the principal information obtained during coaching sessions
- Sustains focus on the coaching plan but always remains open to adjusting behaviors and actions based on the coaching process and shifts in direction during sessions
- Consistently moves back and forth between the big picture of where the principal is heading, setting a context for what is being discussed and where the principal wishes to go

The coach must promote the principal's self-discipline and hold the principal accountable for following through on commitments that have been made by reminding the principal of time frames and intended outcomes of actions specified in the plan (Stober & Grant, 2006). The coach must be willing and ready to positively confront the principal when agreed-upon actions have not been taken (Luthans & Peterson, 2003). The coach supports the principal in making decisions, addressing key concerns, and setting the agenda for skill development; the coach does this by offering feedback about the priorities and pace of learning, and by helping the principal reflect on and learn from experiences.

Conclusions

At this time, there is very little research evaluating the effectiveness of coaching practices related to outcomes, specific techniques, or underlying mechanisms of change. The anecdotal and descriptive "evidence" offered thus far has generated hypotheses and theories, but no explicit findings about what works in coaching or why it works (Stober & Grant, 2006).

The 2013 *Organizational Coaching Study* provided some new information and insights about the value, effectiveness, and impact of professional coaching within all types of organizations. The study, by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, painted a detailed picture of when and how coaching is used and reaffirmed the fact that organizations of all sizes and in all sectors assume that perceived positive changes are due to coaching. A synthesis of information gleaned from in-depth interviews with individuals responsible for making decisions about coaching within their organizations showed that ethical standards (e.g., trust, honesty, integrity) and their role in the coach/client relationship are a key driver in the selection of the coach (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013).

Although the International Coach Federation and other organizations have begun defining essential coaching competencies, the work has drawn primarily from practical experience and professional judgment. Without research we cannot evaluate whether any or which of the proposed coaching competencies can be reliably tied to positive outcomes. It is only through research that connections with both scientific integrity and practical utility can be made between the descriptive study of the professional practices of coaching and individual and organizational outcomes. In the meantime, practitioners will

continue to draw on tangential evidence from fields such as psychology, adult learning, and communication that bear on the knowledge and skills brought to coaching practice (Stober, Wildflower, & Drake, 2006).

Summarizing the literature up to this time, the following are key considerations for the implementation of coaching as a catalyst for change:

- Changing organizational policy without changing the culture of the organizations is an exercise in futility and frustration (Reeves, 2009).
- Implementation of coaching most widely utilizes a “hybrid” model that employs both internal and external coaches (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013).
- When making hiring decisions, organizations typically consider coaches’ reputations and recommendations based on successful track records (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013).
- Coaching sessions with principals are usually scheduled one to two hours, twice a month, and typically take place at the school site (95 percent) with follow-up email and phone conversations (Wise, 2010).
- While a primary role of a coach is to ask questions that help the client think deeply and to explore new ways of thinking, the coach is often a seasoned expert who has knowledge and experience in key areas (Wise, 2010). Trust in the coach (and respect for the coach’s experience) is considered one, if not the most, essential element in successful coaching relationships (Wise, 2010).
- Principals who worked with coaches set more specific goals compared to peers who did not receive coaching. Also, they were more likely to share their feedback and solicit ideas from their supervisors (but not peers or subordinates), and have improved performance ratings (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003).
- The top criteria for assessing the effectiveness of coaching practices are sustained behavior change (63 percent), increased self-awareness (48 percent), more effective leadership (45 percent), credibility of the coach (29 percent), and satisfaction of the hiring organization (31 percent) (Wasylyshyn, 2003).
- Coaching yielded a host of positive organizational impacts, including leadership development and performance, increased levels of employee engagement, reduced attrition, and improved teamwork (Joo, 2005).
- A 360-degree performance review process, prevalent in executive coaching, is being modified for use in the coach/principal dyad to provide immediate and direct feedback on performance behaviors and outcomes. It has been shown to be particularly useful in identifying and establishing self-development goals (Luthans & Peterson, 2003).
- Formally assessing and quantifying the return on investment in coaching through measures of effectiveness remains a challenge (Luthans & Peterson, 2003).

The past several decades of research in change leadership have shown that evidence, commands, and fear are insufficient to create change at either the individual or the organizational level. To accomplish sustainable change requires a shift in priorities and values so that the comfort and convenience of the individual is no longer the measure by which the legitimacy of change

is considered. The paradox of change leadership is that while the vision for change is elevated beyond consideration of any single individual, an individual is elevated to a place that is unique, powerful, and essential in the process of the coaching relationship (Deutschman, 2007).

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About the Northwest Comprehensive Center

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