Instructional Coaching Program: 2011-2012

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At-a-Glance

The Instructional Coaching initiative, as well as the Coaches Academy, continued within the district with Title I funding for this school year. The Instructional Coaching program served 81 schools during the year 2011-12. There were 40 elementary, 20 middle and 21 high schools targeted for the program. Instructional coaching was available to all schools, but district emphasis was to serve identified schools in the most need.

The Instructional Coaching program budget consisted of Title I and General Operation funds designated as Payroll Costs. Budget information is detailed by content area in Table 1. Decreases in 2011-12 budget were due primarily to a decrease in the number of Instructional Coaches.

Table 1
Budget for Instructional Coaches Program, 2009-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Source</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English/Language Arts (814)</td>
<td>3,529,608</td>
<td>3,709,646</td>
<td>2,447,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (904)</td>
<td>2,826,020</td>
<td>2,485,521</td>
<td>3,099,667</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies (907)</td>
<td>639,090</td>
<td>738,981</td>
<td>557,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (912)</td>
<td>2,064,019</td>
<td>2,217,884</td>
<td>1,967,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,058,737</td>
<td>9,152,032</td>
<td>8,070,979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data provided by Core Curriculum and Instructional Services Department. Amount budgeted corresponds to salaries only for 2009-2011. Budget 2011-2012 includes professional development.

In January of 2012, e-mails were sent requesting teachers and Instructional Coaches at Title I schools to respond to the Instructional Coaches surveys. Teachers and Instructional Coaches were surveyed separately. Approximately 200 teachers per core courses (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) and an additional 94 M-LEP teachers responded. The surveys included items concerning the level of the respondent’s satisfaction with various aspects of the program. There were also items regarding the effectiveness of the Instructional Coaches based on their assignments to multiple schools. Respondents were also asked to provide their opinions concerning program improvements and what an effective Instructional Coaching program should include.

The survey showed clear patterns of responses by coaches and teachers in relation to the implementation of the program, their agreement with the way the program is being implemented and their recommendations to improve the program.

Coaches and teachers agreed on many issues regarding the implementation of the program. In general, most coaches and teachers agreed that the program was, for the most part, a positive support. This was apparent from the concentration of most of their responses in the categories “Strongly Agree” and “Agree.” Coaches and teachers also tended to agree on the recommendations and expressed consistently the need for:

- Providing continued content professional development,
- Supporting teachers in the use of the Collaborative Planning Period,
- Improving the Curriculum Planning Guide for every content area,
- Providing coaches more opportunities to stay current with relevant literature,
- Conducting classroom observations and providing appropriate feedback on a regular basis,
- Providing training for school administrators so they understand better the purpose of the program and support it,
- Knowing and providing teachers with training on My Data Portal/Curriculum Central,
- Coach’s support helping use the Curriculum Planning Guide and to stay current with upcoming content, and
- Modeling Lessons.

Similarly, coaches and teachers indicated their dissatisfaction in common areas such as:

- Curriculum Planning Guide implementation and support,
- Quality of professional development,
- Support from the principal as Leader for Learning,
- Quality of instructional guidelines,
- Quality of feedback provided by school administrator,
- Quality of feedback provided by department,
- Development of rigorous model lessons,
- Professional development, and
- Technical support in content area.

Finally, coaches and teachers made recommendations that pointed to similar aspects of the program that are mentioned above. These sets of statements and comments appear to signal that the program needs improvements in its implementation. They seem to further indicate that the relationship between coaches and teachers, on one hand, and coaches, teachers...
and administrators, on the other, needs to be streamlined to make sure the proper implementation of the program is achieved.

Uniformity and fidelity of implementation are keystones for the success of any program. This case is not an exception and it is important that the guidelines of the program design are followed. Coaches and teachers mentioned that there must be uniformity in the implementation of the program from one Learning Community to the others. If the design is the same, there should not be differences in implementation from one Learning Community to another, or differences from one school to the others. Coaches and teachers seem to desire uniform support from the district, Learning Communities and School administrators. Without this support a successful implementation of the program and its ultimate goal to improve students’ performance becomes ever more difficult to reach. The relationship between coaches and teachers must be fluid and clear.

Coaches and teachers need to be properly trained and resources should be provided to them to complete their tasks. Teachers need constant support and feedback from coaches to improve their instructional practices. This feedback needs to be supported by research based practices, as it has been dictated by the district. Coaches and teachers expressed concern about the lack of effectiveness of the coaches’ efforts when they are assigned to too many schools. According to teachers and coaches, it is necessary to have more time to work together in a dynamic relationship to improve instruction based on best practices. This dynamic relationship can be achieved with time and constant interaction, which is not possible if coaches are assigned to too many schools. This lack of effectiveness was apparent from teachers mentioning repeatedly that they needed more lesson observation and modeling, more co-teaching, more face-to-face interaction with coaches, more pre-conferences and post-conferences with focus on instruction, and increased opportunities for professional development.

The majority of teachers and coaches agreed that the different aspects of the program components were being implemented. Some coaches and teachers tended to disagree with the way these aspects were being implemented. When satisfaction levels were surveyed, once again teachers and coaches tended to be dissatisfied with similar aspects of the program. The percentages of disagreement were higher for middle and high school teachers and coaches, which seemed to indicate a higher level of distortion in the implementation of the program. This lack of fidelity of implementation differs from the model’s requirements and frustrates teachers’ and coaches’ expectations. Also coaches tended toward higher levels of agreement than teachers.

Teachers and coaches indicated the need for more communication and collaboration among teachers, administrators and coaches.

Before these signs of disagreement and dissatisfaction become generalized among teachers and coaches, it would be important to make the appropriate adjustments to the program as a preventative measure.

Most teachers participated willingly in the program and expressed a degree of satisfaction with their progress and the coach’s support. The impact of the implementation of the program could not be isolated but there was a consensus among teachers and school administrators that the program was contributing to improved instruction. Even though the net effects of the Instructional Coaching program cannot be clearly isolated, the overall impact of Title I programs seems to be contributing to the improved performance of the students.

Additional information may be obtained by consulting the Instructional Coaching Program report, EA12-526-2, which can be found at http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/15252.