Instructional Coaching: Effective Observations and Feedback
Session Agenda and Objectives

1. Discuss the value and importance of instructional coaching, an Essential School System.

2. Review the components of a comprehensive instructional coaching system.

3. Give district teams time to develop and refine school coaching models.
Coaching Benefits Students:
The quality of instruction is the single largest factor impacting student achievement.
The top 20% of teachers.

...Generate 5 to 6 more months of student learning each year compared to their peers.

Coaching Benefits Teachers:
Strong teachers want to stay in environments where they feel supported and developed as professionals.
Instructional Culture Matters: Reasons Top Teachers Leave

Bottom-Quartile Schools
Weak Instructional Culture where schools lose twice as many of their effective teachers.

- Personal reason not associated with school: 18%
- Dissatisfaction with school leadership: 18%
- Insufficient development opportunities: 14%
- Financial compensation: 12%
- Student conduct and learning environment: 10%

Top-Quartile Schools
Strong instructional culture where students learn more at a faster pace.

- Personal reason not associated with school: 47%
- Workload: 13%
- Financial compensation: 8%
- Dissatisfaction with school leadership: 8%
- Student conduct and learning environment: 6%

Our Investment:

A large portion of Alliance and Priority School District funds supports instructional coaches.

We are counting on district leadership to ensure instructional leaders in schools are fostering strong learning environments for students and staff.
The Bottom Line:
We need high-quality teachers in every classroom to reach our student achievement goals, and we must proactively develop and retain excellent teachers.
Session Agenda and Objectives

1. Discuss the value and importance of instructional coaching, an Essential School System.

2. Review the components of a comprehensive instructional coaching system.

3. Give district teams time to develop and refine school coaching models.
Today, we will review concepts, tools, and ideas presented in *Leverage Leadership*. Alliance Districts are not required to adopt these processes; rather, the concepts and frameworks provided are meant to offer ideas and stimulate planning conversations.
Debunking the Myths

Myths in Creating Strong Professional Learning Environments:

**Myth #1**
Principals are administrators and firefighters, not instructional leaders.

**Myth #2**
Observations, walkthroughs, and teacher evaluations are sufficient.

**Myth #3**
Change is slow, and teacher development takes years.

**Myth #4**
Culture comes before instruction... or instruction before culture.

Santoyo’s 7 Levers for Quality Instruction and Culture

1. Data-Driven Instruction
2. Observation and Feedback
3. Instructional Planning
4. Professional Development
5. Student Culture
6. Staff Culture
7. Management of School Leadership Teams

Source: Leverage Leadership, P. 10.
Observations and Feedback as Instructional Levers

Who are our instructional coaches? How do they spend their time?

Who are our teachers? What are their development needs and goals?

What are our processes to achieve an optimal coaching cycle?
Reflection

Directions:

On a piece of scrap paper, jot down two numbers:

What percentage of teachers in your district are observed every week? What percentage of your teachers receive feedback on a weekly basis?
We need to spend more time coaching and developing excellent teachers.

We must employ effective coaching tactics to maximize our impact.
Components of Observation and Feedback

Scheduled Observations: Lock in frequent and regular observations.

Key Action Steps: Identify one or two the teacher’s most important growth areas.

Effective Feedback: Give direct face-to-face feedback and practice the specific action step with the teacher.

Direct Accountability: Create systems to ensure feedback translates to changes in practice.

Source: Leverage Leadership, P. 65.
**Strategy #1:** Distribute the teacher coaching caseload across all instructional leaders.

- Who are the instructional coaches in your schools (e.g., principals, AP’s, math/reading coaches, teacher leaders, department chairs)? What proportion of their time is dedicated to observation and feedback?

- How can you divide the teachers in your schools among your instructional leaders, ensuring that all teachers have an informal coach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>AP</th>
<th>Math Coach</th>
<th>Reading Coach</th>
<th>Teacher Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Principal" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="AP" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Math Coach" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Reading Coach" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Teacher Leader" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scheduled Observations: The Time Challenge

**Step 1**

**Strategy #2:** Employ an efficient coaching cycle. Structure a consistent coaching experience for teachers, including frequent and short observations, face-to-face feedback meetings, and as needed follow-up.

- What does your coaching cycle look like?
- What is the length of the cycle?
- How is this differentiated for teachers based on development needs (e.g., coaching cycle repeated every week for high-touch teachers, every 3 weeks for low-touch teachers)?
Scheduled Observations: Making It Happen

• Typical teacher caseload: 15 teachers

• One observation per week per teacher: 15 minutes

• Total minutes of observation per week: 15 teachers x 15 minutes = < 4 hours/week

• One feedback and planning meeting per teacher: 30 minutes

• Total minutes of feedback and planning meetings: 15 x 30 minutes = 7.5 hours/week

• Assuming a 7 AM – 4 PM administrator day = 25% of an administrator’s schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Jones, Torres</td>
<td>Meet Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet Robbins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Ramirez, Smith</td>
<td>Meet Smith</td>
<td>Meet Brown</td>
<td>Meet Clark</td>
<td>Meet Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Meet Ramirez</td>
<td>Meet Howe</td>
<td>Meet Robins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
<td>Parker, Hoyt</td>
<td>Meet Torres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Robins, Sims, Clark</td>
<td>Sanchez, Carr</td>
<td>Meet Sanchez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White, Robins</td>
<td>Meet White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brown, Howe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet Hoyt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet Parker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leverage Leadership, P. 68.
Team Work Time: Coaches, Caseloads, and Scheduling

Directions:

Review the coaching ESS planning template (note: you are not required to use this format). Take **20 minutes** with your district team to plan in any of the following areas:

I. Identify your **instructional coaches**.
II. Establish a **faculty coaching plan**.
III. Define the **coaching cycle** that all coaches will use.
IV. Develop your/your coaches’ weekly coaching **schedules**.
Components of Observation and Feedback

**Step 1**  
**Scheduled Observations:** Lock in frequent and regular observations.

**Step 2**  
**Key Action Steps:** Identify one or two of the teacher’s most important growth areas.

**Step 3**  
**Effective Feedback:** Give direct face-to-face feedback and practice the specific action step with the teacher.

**Step 4**  
**Direct Accountability:** Create systems to ensure feedback translates to changes in practice.
Key Action Step

- **Measurable:** Coach can see whether it has been accomplished when observing and reviewing lesson plans.

- **Bite-sized:** Teacher can accomplish the action step within the next week.

- **Precise:** Action step addresses the root causes, not just the surface problem.

- **Data- and Goal-Driven:** Action step is connected to larger PD goals and/or teacher development goals.

- **Outcomes-Oriented:** Action step is directly connected to student learning.

**Sample Action Steps**

- Clearly state instructions and have students repeat.
- Develop procedures; write and rehearse minute-by-minute.
- Narrate the positive. Describe what students are doing well, not what they’re doing wrong.
- Increase teacher radar (awareness of off-task behavior) and implement least-invasive interventions when students first exhibit off-task behaviors.
- Use a strong voice. Establish authority.
- Develop pacing. Create the illusion of speed so students feel continually engaged.
- Check for understanding. See whether students have learned the material frequently using various techniques.
- Increase think ratio. Get students to do more of the thinking.
- Encourage effective independent practice. Ensure that student independent practice meets the lesson objective.
- Establish the right lesson objective. Write precise learning objectives.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 73.
Weak vs. Strong Action Steps

**Scenario 1:** Students are talking while the teacher is talking.

- **Weak Action Step:** Reduce student talking when you are talking.
- **Better Action Step:** Don’t talk over students. Stop and make eye contact with the student talking. Throughout the lesson, walk with purpose toward students who may have a hard time staying on task.

**Scenario 2:** Students never get enough time to practice the skill independently.

- **Weak Action Step:** Watch your pacing so as not to sacrifice independent practice.
- **Better Action Step:** Set a timer to go off when there are 20 minutes left in the lesson to remind you to begin independent practice.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 77.
Feedback Conversation Protocol

1. **Provide Praise:** Start off the meeting with one or two pieces of precise praise from your observation.

2. **Probe:** Ask a targeted, open-ended question about the growth area observed.

3. **Identify Concrete Action Step:** Identify the problem and state a clear, measurable, observable action step that will address the issue.

4. **Plan and Practice:** Role-play or simulate how the teacher could have improved the lesson. Design or revise an upcoming lesson to implement this practice.

5. **Set Timeline:** Determine a time by which the action will be accomplished/observed.

Consider aligning praise and action steps to the walkthrough rubric.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 78.
## Common Missteps in Delivering Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misstep:</th>
<th>Truth:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More is better.</td>
<td>Less is more!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengthy written evaluations drive change.</td>
<td>Face-to-face feedback makes the difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just tell them; they’ll get it right.</td>
<td>If they don’t do the thinking, they won’t internalize what they hear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State the concrete action step; then the teacher will act.</td>
<td>Guided practice makes perfect. A surgeon doesn’t read the textbook and then perform the surgery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers can implement feedback at any time.</td>
<td>Nail down the timeline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 79.
Sample Classroom Observation

Directions:

Watch the video clip.

What precise point of praise might you offer to this teacher?

What action step might you identify for this teacher?
Sample Feedback

Provide Praise:

• **Classroom Rubric #4: Positive Behavior Management** - Good movement around the classroom.

• **Classroom Rubric #3: Classroom Learning Environment** - Engaging and clean classroom environment.

Probe:

• What was your lesson objective (e.g., root words, new vocabulary)?

• What proportion of the lesson was spent with you talking, students thinking, and/or students talking/conversing?

• Did students end the lesson with a clear definition for the word “specially” (e.g., for a special purpose)? How do you know?

Identify Concrete Action Step:

• **Classroom Rubric #1: Student Engagement** - Establish a clear lesson objective.

• **Classroom Rubric #6: Academic Rigor and Ownership** - Give student more “think time” and decrease teacher talk.
Watch the **video clip**.

What precise point of praise might you offer to this teacher?

What action step might you identify for this teacher?
Sample Feedback

Provide Praise:

- **Classroom Rubric #1: Student Engagement** - Clever lesson idea, asking students to recall definitions and integrate vocabulary in teams.

Probe:

- What instructions did you share with your students?
- How did you know students understood the directions?
- When students began the activity, did they follow the instructions you provided? How do you know?

Identify Concrete Action Step:

- **Classroom Rubric # 2: Use of Time** - Improve efficiency during transitions by clearly explaining instructions and asking students to restate the directions.
# Accountability: Monitor Teacher Development

## Observation Trackers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Mr. Smith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach:</td>
<td>Mrs. Sanchez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Date:</td>
<td>Feedback Meeting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>9/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>9/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Observation Trackers allow you to observe:**

- Patterns over time
- Patterns across teachers
- Patterns of visits (observing too much/not enough)
- Pattern in feedback effectiveness (implementation and success rates)

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 94.
Accountability: Monitor Teacher Development

For support in creating and using Google trackers, please contact Dipa at Dipa.Desai@ct.gov
Accountability: Tiered Support and Coaching

**Early Warnings**
**Yellow Flag Strategies**

- Provide simpler instructions and techniques
- Give face-to-face feedback more often
- Plan immediate post-feedback observations
- Arrange for peer observations
- Choose interruptions during the classroom lesson with care

**Continued Struggles**
**Red Flag Strategies**

- Model entire lessons
- Take over the lesson

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 90.
Session Agenda and Objectives

1. Discuss the value and importance of instructional coaching, an Essential School System.

2. Review the components of a comprehensive instructional coaching system.

3. Give district teams time to develop and refine school coaching models.
Team Work Time: Action Steps and Monitoring

Directions:

Revisit the coaching ESS planning template. Take **20 minutes** with your district team to plan in the following areas:

V. Identify a bank of potential teacher **action steps** based on known teacher/school-wide growth areas.
VI. Build a protocol for coach/teacher **feedback meetings**.
VII. Develop a **monitoring tool for coaches** to log observations, feedback meetings, and teacher action steps and progress.