

ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ACADEMY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Understanding the importance of instructional leadership to the improvement of teaching effectiveness, Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) has embarked on a substantive redesign of the process by which it prepares, and evaluates instructional coaches across the district. These efforts have led the district to reconsider the knowledge base and skill set necessary for instructional leaders to provide job-embedded coaching supports to teachers. Conversations began recently between OCPS and the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning to initiate a capacity-building effort to increase instructional leadership across the school district. These discussions touched on three fronts: (1) co-designing an instructional coaching certification process that will prepare and certify participants according to a research-based and rubric-driven review process; (2) training and certifying cohorts of district and school-based coaches through the Instructional Coaching Academy, and (3) enhancing the district's institutional capacity to take over full ownership and operation of the Instructional Coaching Academy by the end of a three-year partnership.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Instructional Coaching Academy offers a powerful, effective strategy to actualize the vision articulated in the Florida Student Success Act (SB 736), which calls for developing highly effective teachers who can raise student achievement, as well to transition to the high quality implementation of the Florida Standards. This customizable solution can help OCPS augment its capacity to improve instructional quality by developing cohorts of instructional coaches who work with schools in guiding measurable improvements in teacher quality, according to the district's instructional framework and teacher evaluation system as well as evidence guides that measure the implementation of college and career ready standards. Multiple studies (e.g., Truesdale, 2003; Baker, 1983; Showers, 1983) indicate that effective coaching increases the transfer of instructional skills into the classroom to improve teaching practice. Further, the quality of instructional practice is widely considered the most important single variable affecting student achievement (Knight, 2009). Thus, by training highly qualified coaches who can assist school leaders in observing, assessing, and providing actionable feedback about instruction, the Instructional Coaching Academy can enhance effective instruction and student learning in Orange County Public Schools. Further, the trained specialists emerging from the program will assist school leaders in creating a culture of learning and experimentation to energize teachers and promote collaborative work and discourse about engaging students in hands-on, authentic learning. In short, the Instructional Coaching Academy will develop a cadre of skilled coaches across Orange County who have a strong grasp of highly effective instruction and who can work effectively with colleagues to improve teacher practice and student learning.

More specifically, the Instructional Coaching Academy will provide Orange County Public Schools with:

- **A System for Developing and Certifying Instructional Coaches across the District:**
 - A rubric for evaluating the skills of instructional coaches' ability to focus an observation, collect and represent observational data to teacher participants, and engage teachers in coaching conversations that improve their instructional practice.
 - A training program that consists of a three-day summer institute, two-day fall institute and three follow-up training sessions throughout the school year to allow for sustained engagement with professional development within a community of instructional coaching candidates.

- An online platform that allows for accessing and sharing resources, engaging with colleagues, and sharing videos of coaching conversations with fellow participants and trainers.
- **New Concepts, Tools, and Strategies:**
 - Deep participant understanding of the district's Marzano-based instructional framework and the related observation instrument as well as indicators of the high quality implementation of the Florida Standards.
 - A comprehensive, research-based framework for effective instruction that synthesizes elements from multiple teacher observation systems.
 - Practical application of adult learning principles within a coaching structure that supports and enhances teacher practice and student learning.
 - Collaborative peer coaching strategies that support dynamic, fluid learning by teachers who work to synthesize content concepts, explore themes across disciplines and demonstrate connections between academic theory and real world application and problem solving.
 - A common language of instruction that supports the development of the school and district's instructional leadership vision across curricula and roles within the school system.
- **Skilled Trainers:**
 - UF instructional specialists who will lead training sessions for district staff to foster internal capacity for developing a pipeline of instructional coaches for the future. All UF instructional specialists must themselves pass through a rigorous certification process to demonstrate their expertise in instructional effectiveness and coaching.
 - District and school-based coaches who can lead the Instructional Coaching Academy process by the end of the partnership. UF employs a gradual release training approach so that the district builds capacity through the partnership.
- **Certified Instructional Coaches:**
 - An eligible candidate roster of skilled and certified coaches within PreK-12 classrooms who have demonstrated their competence in observing and coaching teachers according to the district's Marzano-based framework as well as college and career ready standards implementation guides. These coaches can work with school leaders to provide teachers with professional learning opportunities that increase their use of high impact instructional practices.
 - Instructional coaches who understand and utilize the foundational architecture of constructivist pedagogy and active learning embedded in the Florida Standards to enhance teaching practice and student learning.