A Coaching Model for Classroom Management

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There is a great need for effective professional development to promote effective classroom management, but frequently more traditional forms of training, such as workshops, do not provide sufficient support for teachers who want and need to improve the culture of their classrooms.

Enter instructional coaches.

For the past two decades, researchers at the University of Kansas have conducted studies to better define, validate, and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of instructional coaches. The result of all this work is the impact cycle (Knight, 2018), a model coaches can use with teachers to help them create positive classroom climates. The impact cycle has three stages: Identify, Learn, Improve. Here's how it works:

Identify. During this stage, coaches partner with teachers to identify a clear picture of reality in the teacher's classroom, a goal, and a teaching strategy the teacher will implement to hit the goal.

The easiest and most powerful way for teacher and coach to get a clear picture of how students behave and learn is to video record and watch a lesson (Knight, 2014). Video provides teachers with an objective perspective on their lesson. Frequently, teachers who watch video of their classrooms are surprised by what they see. A teacher might be delighted to see how supportive her students are during a group activity, for example, or displeased to see a large amount of wasted time as students move from one circle activity to another.

Coaches or teachers can also interview students, gather observational data in the classroom, or review student work. The coach then discusses relevant data with the teacher, such as the percentage of students who are authentically engaged, the number of disruptions, how much transition or "wasted" time there is, the ratio of positive to corrective interactions, the number of student responses, or the number of students who show respect.

Next, the coach and teacher set a goal. Positive classroom management goals might involve increasing learning time or engagement or reducing the number of disruptions. Then, teacher and coach identify the teaching strategy or strategies the teacher will implement to meet the goal. For example, a teacher's goal might be to increase student engagement to an average of 90 percent time on task. The coach would work with the teacher on specific strategies to use to meet that goal.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept18/vol76/num01/A-Coaching-Model-for-Classroom-Management.aspx
Learn. During this stage, coaches support teachers in learning and fluently implementing the strategies to hit their goals. Coaches often use checklists to describe and explain teaching strategies, modifying those strategies to the students' unique needs and the teacher's unique strengths. An instructional coach helping a teacher learn how to use expectations to increase engagement, for example, might share one checklist that describes how to create effective expectations, such as communicating clearly to students what expected behavior looks and sounds like (Sprick, 2009); a second checklist on how to teach expectations; and a third checklist on how to reinforce routines until the students' actions are consistent with expectations. I recommend that coaches organize and deepen their knowledge of effective teaching strategies by creating an instructional playbook, a digital or printed document that includes descriptions and checklists of the teaching strategies they most frequently share with teachers (Knight, 2018).

Often teachers want to see a strategy in action before they themselves use it. Coaches can help by demonstrating the strategy without students in the classroom, showing a video of the strategy in action, or arranging a time for the teacher to watch another teacher using the techniques. I caution coaches against modeling strategies in teachers' classrooms. We have found that when coaches take control of a class where classroom management is needed, they can undermine the collaborating teacher's fragile powerbase by making it even more clear to students that she or he does not have control.

Improve. During this stage, coaches and teachers make adaptations until the goal is met. Adaptations might involve changing the strategy itself, or how it is implemented. It might involve tweaking the goal or how progress toward the goal is measured. Or it might mean changing nothing at all, and simply waiting until the goal is met.

Throughout the entire impact cycle, coach and teacher work together in a creative, thoughtful partnership. When teachers need to learn new approaches to community building, coaching, done well, can have a dramatic impact on student behavior, achievement, and student and teacher well-being.

References


Endnote

1 For more information on good goal setting, see PEERS Goals at www.instructionalcoaching.com/peers.

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KEYWORDS