The STORYLiNE

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Cultivating a Culture of Coaching

"You're not a wave; you're a part of the ocean." Mitch Albom

Having a coach in a school creates an atmosphere of learning for teachers as well as students. The coaching process requires teachers to open their doors to their peers, to open their minds to thinking about learning in new ways, and to share their successes and failures with someone else. Over time, our hope is that the culture of the school will become a culture of coaching where everyone from students to parents to teachers to administrators is involved in the coaching process in some way.

According to Richardson (2001), school culture "is the accumulation of many individuals' values and norms. It is the consensus about what is important. It's the group's expectations. It's the way everyone does business." If our goal is to cultivate a culture of coaching in our schools, then what values, norms, and expectations should we have? A culture of coaching is about learning—an understanding and expectation among our organization that we are all learners.

As learners, we need both a supportive and challenging environment to continue growing. A critical piece to establishing a supportive environment is trust. Costa and Garmston (2002) identify four levels of trust: trust in self, trust in each other, trust in the coaching process, and trust in the environment. To establish a supportive culture of coaching, first individuals must trust their own abilities and know their own values and beliefs. Second, individuals in the school must see each other as credible and trustworthy. Third, anyone involved in the coaching process must trust the confidentiality and purpose of their interactions. Last, there must be congruency between the stated values of the school and the day-to-day practices. Even with trust between individuals, a culture of coaching will not develop if the school feels unsafe—physically, emotionally, or cognitively. A trusting school environment fosters a culture of coaching by allowing students, parents, teachers, and administrators to be open and honest about their learning needs.

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In addition to being supportive, the environment that cultivates a culture of coaching must be challenging. Coaching is not always about being "nice" to each other. It IS about caring about one another in a way that mediates thinking and promotes growth. Schools sometimes fall into a pattern of conviviality—where everyone is nice to one another, but no one is willing to say what they think or feel to avoid "rocking the boat." Conviviality does not help us grow as an organization or as learners. We need the challenge of cognitive conflict to grow. In a culture of coaching, we ask one another the hard questions. We push each other's thinking. We take time to be learners together and understand that we are questioning our ideas, not each other.

Cultivating a culture of coaching is not the job of the coach. A school might have a culture of coaching even without a person whose job title is "coach." The coach is but one wave in the ocean that is your school. The coach has introduced the idea of coaching to your school, but, for coaching to become your school culture, the values, norms, and expectations of the individuals in your school must support coaching. Does your school value coaching as a culture? What are some ways the adults in the building are learning together? How might you promote a culture of coaching in your school?

Costa, A., & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Richardson, J. (2001). *Shared Culture: A Consensus of Individual Values. Results.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

iCoach's Voice: Cultivating a Culture of Coaching

What happens when we notice a new culture that has been created in our schools- a culture of coaching? iCoach **Jenny Parris**, Chesnee Middle School, Spartanburg, shares evidence she has seen in her school.

"As a result of the coaching initiative in my school, I have seen changes in both attitude and vision that have aided in creating a culture of coaching. Teachers have developed an openness and acceptance to new ideas and new approaches. In fact, they now search for these things that only a couple of years ago were to be feared or resented. Reflection has played such an integral role in the coaching process. Although initially difficult and sometimes awkward, over time, teachers have evolved to becoming more self reflective, walking themselves through the process, identifying successes or short-comings and the reasons for them, while always looking for ways to improve and become more effective. Teachers are sharing plans and ideas, giving support and encouragement to one another. Peer collaboration has replaced competitive egos and helped overcome insecurities that had existed between and among teachers. The most obvious evidence that we have cultivated a culture of coaching is that there is now a sense of 'we', more so than 'me', with our faculty and administration working together as a team with common goals, focusing on improved instruction for students."

We want to share YOUR stories of *i*Coaching experiences. Please help us celebrate by submitting your story, in the format you wish it to be published, by email to Amy Threatt at athreatt@yahoo.com

iCoach Cohort 3 Summer Training 2009

This June 15th – 26th, 2009, iCoach MSCI 3 involves a special collaboration between the University of South Carolina (USC) and iCoaching Cohort 3. This collaboration, called **The Middle School Summer Institute**, brings teachers from Cohort 3 iCoaching schools along with their coaches to a local Columbia middle school for a special professional development experience. The teachers and coaches will participate in one of six science or math content courses aligned with the 6th - 8th grade SC science and mathematics' standards. Through their participation the teachers and coaches will earn professional development hours. These courses will not be your typical lecture style college courses. The teachers and coaches will participate in hands-on inquiry lessons that comprise a unit that they will take back to their classrooms and use with their students during the academic year. USC science and mathematics faculty (biologist, mathematician, geologist, etc.) will provide additional content to supplement the units so that the teachers and coaches are ready for almost anything their students might throw at them in an inquiry environment. For example, the eighth grade teachers will map out seismic and volcanic events throughout the world to determine earth's plate structures. The lessons will use inquiry-based teaching techniques that involve all students in collaborative learning.

In addition to learning new science and mathematics content and inquiry-based teaching techniques, the teachers will "practice" teach their newly learned lessons and inquiry skills to middle school students coming to the local middle school for a science and math enrichment program. Over 100 middle school students will gain new mathematics and science skills during this two-week program. Throughout the program, the teachers and coaches will reflect on the new lessons, science and math content, and inquiry teaching strategies in an effort to improve their own teaching as well as adapt the lessons to best suit their own students during the academic year.

It is our hope that through this shared experience, the iCoaches and teachers will further build their already established school-based collaborative communities. These iCoach-led communities, with support from USC through additional academic year learning sessions, will analyze the influence of the new lessons and teaching strategies on their students' understanding of science and mathematics. The USC partners look forward to working with the iCoaches and teachers this summer and during the next school year.

Additional information to follow.

Dates of Interest

March 26 – 27
Learning Community Meeting
iCoach Cohorts 2, 3

April 30 – May 1
Learning Community Meeting
iCoach Cohorts 1, 2, 3

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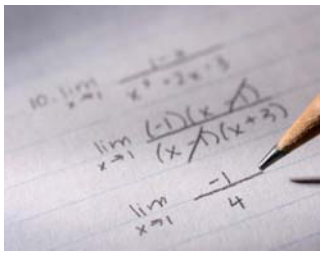

SC Mathematics Curriculum Standards Update

In November 2008, mathematics leaders from across the state met on Kiawah Island for the S. C. Math Leadership Institute. Conversations focused on the S.C. Mathematics Curriculum Standards and the recently released National Mathematics Advisory Panel Report. As a result of the institute, a call to action was made to revisit the S.C. Mathematics Curriculum Standards to align with the most current thinking of the profession.

The S.C. Mathematics Curriculum Standards will be revisited between now and May 2009. A work group representing the S.C. Mathematics community will strengthen the use of mathematically appropriate verbs, ensure a stronger vertical articulation of the standards, reduce the breadth of the standards, and rethink the ways the process standards are incorporated with the content standards.

An online site for commentary and suggestions regarding the current S.C. Mathematics Curriculum Standards will be established to provide feedback to the work group.

Please watch your email for more information as it becomes available.

STEM Professional Development Opportunities

- **International Polar Year STEM Polar Connection** for middle and high school STEM teachers, June 28- July 2 at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Applications due April 1. *www.umassk12.net/ipy*
- **Learning Net Educator Institute:** *Signs of a Changing Planet*. Experts in climate science and teachers will have opportunities to explore Learning Net resources. July 8-10, Boulder, Colorado. *www.ngsednet.org/learningnet*
- **Space Foundation's Space Discovery Institute:** Courses include biological research, robotics, rocketry and more which focus on national standards and STEM principles. Courses run in both June and July in Colorado.*www.spacefoundation.org/education*

The iCoaching Team values your feedback.
Please let us know how we might make
THE STORYLiNE work for you!

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