



SABBATICAL QUESTION

How can leadership coaching develop team leadership and extend a school's vision and direction, develop a culture of self responsibility, create a greater sense of shared ownership and accountability and build a sense of enthusiasm that encourages creativity and innovation?

AUTHOR



This sabbatical report is submitted by Dorothy Bigwood, principal at Cockle Bay School, who was awarded a sabbatical in Term 2 2018.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks is given to: Roween Higginson for her inspiration and mentoring, the Cockle Bay School Board of Trustees for approving the sabbatical, senior staff at Cockle Bay School who managed the school in my absence, and the Ministry of Education for awarding my sabbatical. Thanks is also given to the schools, administrators and coaches who I visited overseas. They were: an Elementary School, North Vancouver; a Director of Instruction, North Vancouver School District; a school, Burnaby School District, Vancouver; a Helping Teacher & Assistant Surrey District Schools, Surrey District Vancouver; a Professor University of East London, London; a First Time Principal of a school, Tower Hamlets, East London; Directors of Learning, a private school in London; an Executive Coach and Strategy Consultant, London; a Principal Lecturer, Programme Lead for Primary and Early Years Education, Oxford.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sabbatical explored leadership coaching to develop leadership of teams in schools.. Elementary schools, school district administrators and professional and teaching coaches in Vancouver, London, Oxford and Auckland were visited to learn what systems and processes can support leadership coaching. Findings reflect the literature of coaching. There are different ways in which school leaders develop the professional expertise of staff. Interpretations of what coaching constitutes vary and developing a shared understanding is useful. Leaders can promote a coaching culture through modelling respectful relationships and a coaching approach. A team coaching contract is useful and needs purpose, parameters, buy in and the role of the leader made explicit. Confidentiality and any output requirement should be explicit from the start. Leaders should use good questions, and be expertly trained and supervised. Coaching is about relationships, rapport, trust and commitment, not from an imposed target. It may be useful to start small in a school, involving voluntary participants initially. A framework to guide school development is suggested as a starting point.

PURPOSE



My purpose was to deepen my understanding of the applicability of developing leadership capacity by coaching leaders of teaching teams. I would need to understand the role of leadership coaching and then explore what systems and processes can be provided to support this. My learning would focus on the strategies, functions, times and conditions around coaching teams which ultimately develop leadership capacity within both the team and the team leader and increased commitment to school goals.

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Within N.Z. primary schools there is increasing interest in building coaching practices into teacher inquiry, with goals of improving teacher performance and leadership capacity and ultimately raising student achievement. Van Nieuwerburgh (2017. p.3) suggested back in 2012 that “Coaching is already having an enormous impact on education. From the UK to the USA and Australia, the use of coaching is increasingly being seen as a useful intervention to support student, teachers, and administrators.”

Definitions of *coaching* and a *coaching approach* abound. A modern and simple definition from Knight, 2017 (in Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh, p. x) is that ‘instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met.’

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION



A coaching approach is ‘intentionally utilizing some of the transferable elements of formal coaching in a range of conversational situations that would not typically be considered coaching interactions’ (Campbell and van Nieuwerburgh p. 19). These include: an open-to- learning culture and encouragement of self-direction; awareness of self/others; a focus on a two-way coachee driven agenda; a solutions focus on present and future; an encouraging, non-judgemental stance. *A coaching culture* is based on trusting relationships and is often led from the top, when the principal and senior leaders adopt a coaching ‘way of being’ in interactions with others.

Coaching leadership refers to an emphasis on developing leadership capabilities or focused on educational leaders. Coaching educational leaders is related to building their leadership capacity as well as in those they lead. “Coaching can support educational leaders to continue to perform effectively and with commitment, and it is also a useful tool for bringing out the best in staff and students; it can also leverage organisational change within schools and colleges and systemic change across the wider educational arena” (van Nieuwerburgh, p.43).



RESEARCH LITERATURE

Robertson (p. 240) states that 'the way coaches and leaders work together provides the challenge necessary to move leaders from inaction to action, from reactive to proactive and from perpetuating the status quo to challenging it and creating new knowledge. Coaching is thus a transformative process because it allows educational leaders to act with agency - to know they can contribute to and develop the system rather than be a cog within it. The way they do this is by: developing a sense of community; including international perspectives; using generative approaches; validating personal knowledge; encouraging formal and informal leadership; providing a forum for discussion; ensuring that construction of meaning is a shared process and encouraging the growth of a counter-culture.' In a primary school these might look like: pastoral care for leaders who also distribute leadership to others who they care for (system leadership); learning about education in other countries; engagement with issues through deep understanding of them; validating personal knowledge through shared open to learning conversations; formal and informal leadership; providing a forum for discussion and critical inquiry.



RESEARCH LITERATURE

Campbell & Nieuwerburgh (p. 16) define *leadership coaching* as the ‘range of coaching conversations, formal and informal, that a leader may engage in with various team members and other stakeholders’.

Leadership coaching incorporates a power imbalance and it is the leader coach who needs to minimise this by; ‘acknowledging the hierarchical difference and how to manage these; listening more and being fully present; clarifying roles; discussing confidentiality; agreeing about notes usage; choosing a neutral venue and arranging furniture to minimise power imbalance; inviting feedback (Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh, p.17).



RESEARCH LITERATURE

Often school leaders coach teams, with members bringing a mix of experience to the team, existing relationships and interdependence. The Team Leadership Coaching Guide of Growth Coaching International explores seven key principles of team coaching to assist leaders in coaching teams effectively. They are: develop clear goals and direction; create a sense of shared ownership (are we all in this together?); build enthusiasm for innovation; invest in collaborative relationships, make the most of team thinking; promote real conversations and create a climate of responsibility. Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh (p.93)) suggest for team coaching short, focused, paired or small-group conversations within the larger team discussion; making thinking 'visible' e.g. whiteboard, techniques for all to speak; rotating the meeting leader. When the leader is team coaching, power imbalances are minimised by: clarifying roles, explicitly referring to the leader's role; clarifying ground rules and decision making; showing interest and being flexible; genuinely listening and delegating decision making appropriately (Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh,



ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

I visited schools, educational administrators and experts in coaching to gather evidence and learn what systems and processes were used to facilitate effective team coaching and support the lead coaches. I looked for specific functions, times and conditions used to implement team coaching. I found it impossible to gain access to schools without a personal contact. Many emails I sent did not receive a reply. I'm very grateful to local colleagues who provided points of contact so I received replies and could set up meetings and visits.

An Elementary School



- District Administrators mentored a first time principal
- Relationships between the principal and the mentor District Administrator were personal and supportive.
- There were Family of School systems and District systems in place for regular mentoring and professional development for school staff, led by administrators

North Vancouver School District



- New requirement to reflect formally for professional growth planning. This reflects a coaching model and is modelled by administrators. Contentious
- Great opportunities for mentoring but a blurring of evaluation, coaching and mentoring.
- Relationships between administrators, families of schools and principals is strong and supportive.



A School

- A breath of fresh air!
- Individual teacher goals on wall
- Principal showed interest, mentored or coached some teachers.
- Intention of teacher agency but formal processes beyond goal setting undeveloped.
- Expense of coaching training a barrier.
- Mentoring is successful between district schools
- Strong union influence



Helping Teacher Assistant Surrey District Schools

- Curriculum by Design Pamphlet and toolbox
- Mentoring for initiating new curriculum
- Some principals set goals and are mentored/coached by administrators
- Coaching espoused but unsure of any formal processes
- Difficulties of number of new schools and shortage of teachers and principals. Union successful in special needs and class size advocacy
- Book “Coaching in Professional Context” was used to create the conditions for mentoring.



Professor University of East London

- The highlight!
- A coaching culture includes democratic, voluntary involvement...a leader who models, high trust and goals of relevance to the teacher (passionate but without evangelism!)
- Coaching to narrow the GAP between where the school is now and the desired outcome
- Introduce for greatest need e.g. peer observations as an intervention
- Non hierarchical teams, GROW model, role modelling, choose those who will be successful
- 'Choice of training, mentoring and coaching gives accountability and choice. What is not negotiable is student satisfaction.
- A successful sports' coach notices and values what you do, makes a connection



First Time Principal

- A failing school, a dropping roll, BOT political/religious agendas
- Turned around by an Aussie lass and with OFSTED support
 - Positive approach
 - Valued staff
 - Line management by leaders of key staff
 - Release time for team leaders
- Formal coaching for the leadership team (so far)
 - practised on each other.
 - school model
 - 1-1 meetings scheduled and planned
- A positive approach and valued staff. All leadership line managed by various key staff.

A Private School in London



- Resourcing to needs always a priority
- Release time and training of Middle and Senior Leaders pivotal
- A Coaching/Mentoring culture established at the school and sustained, led from the top
 - High trust, high expectations and focus, collaboration and support, collegial, no blame.
 - Communication systems in place
- photographic ID vetted. This school had marvellous resourcing in staffing, equipment and teaching spaces. It had specialists in Technology, Makerspace, Music, Art, Science, the Library, Sport, Spanish, Literacy and LSAs for all classes. A Teaching and Learning team were released as well as the leadership team.
- High security a priority - fences, guards, reception



Executive Coach and Strategy Consultant

- Transformational change achieved using coaching
- Choice, may need to follow school goals, so get buy in and link to personal goals.
- Separate from appraisal but use questions in appraisals
- When introducing, be self aware and show the links to coaching as you coach
- Professional training useful.
- Conditions for Coaching: trust high expectations, unconditional positive regard, conversations so the Teacher owns the solutions, leadership culture of coaching
 - “What would you hear us say?
What would you see us do?”



A knowledgeable gem!

- An agreed contract (often overlooked)
 - Team coaching contract needs purpose & parameters, buy in and role of leader explicit
- High trust and respect, safe, optional not compulsory
- Personal development rather than linked to school improvement
- Leaders should use good coaching questions
- Coaches supervised
- Confidentiality, output requirement
- Start small, safe place, confidential, not reported back. Grow and sustain
- Trained by experts and practise together
- Coaching culture with children

“Best research all agrees, that coaching is about the relationship, rapport, trust and commitment, not from an imposed target.”



FINDINGS

A coaching culture maximises school effectiveness, based on trust and a no blame approach (with children too). Model from the top, regularly use in appraisal conversations.

Professional training and supervision of coaches is beneficial

Start small, use an opt in approach for real commitment

Write a Contract of ground rules

Separate coaching from teacher evaluation, include accountability

Pros/Cons to linking coaching to school goals



MY NEXT STEPS WERE/ARE....

- Share some of my learnings with BOT and Staff
- Continue with readings / research
- Kohia Terrace School visit
- Attend one day symposium: Thursday 23rd August 2018.
CoachEd: COACHING FOR SUCCESS AND WELLBEING IN EDUCATION
SYMPOSIUM
Dr Antonio (Tony) Fernando, Professor Christian van Nieuwerburgh,
Jason Pascoe
- Investigate Coaching for Students
- Write report and submit.



IMPLICATIONS FOR MY SCHOOL

- A shared understanding of what coaching is/is not is important
- Tensions - voluntary or required, privacy vs accountability, link to appraisal, school goals, team inquiry need clarification in contract in advance
- Start small - DPs, TLs
- Book outside support
- Keep the momentum going



CONCLUSIONS

There are many different models of coaching/mentoring and shared understanding of roles is important. A contract can clarify tensions of privacy, accountability etc is helpful. A coaching culture within the institution is led from the top, developing trust and a coaching approach within appraisal parameters.

Questioning and the relationship between coach and coachees is important. Formal training of coaches is recommended, with ongoing support to keep momentum high. Team leaders benefit from training in team coaching. Training needs to be ongoing and responsive to school needs, as these change over time.

Systems within the school should support and prioritise coaching e.g. time, outside support, focus of senior leaders.



A FRAMEWORK

for supporting coaching of team

Framework Dimensions:

1. Growth in leadership: Are there opportunities for staff to show leadership through coaching others? Formally or informally? e.g. senior leaders, team/other leaders, teaching teams, individual team members, students, parents?
2. Knowledge: Is there clarity over what coaching means for all involved?
3. Professional Development: Is expert coaching provided to support leaders in their leadership? Are they supervised in an ongoing way as they reflect on issues?
4. School Culture: Does the school culture reflect a coaching approach e.g. in informal conversations, team meetings, appraisal questioning?



FRAMEWORK

5. School Culture: Is there a culture of trust and how is this being built over time? How are power differentials between coach and coachee being managed?
6. Systems and Processes: What resourcing, time allocation is given to support leaders in coaching e.g. opportunities to practise and reflect on coaching, meeting times, contracts (purpose & parameters, buy in, role of leader explicit, confidentiality, records kept, personal development rather than school goals often preferred.)
7. Voluntary vs Compulsory: Is coaching seen as an add on or as useful? Are goals inspiring? Do they link to school direction? (Coaching is about the relationship, rapport, trust and commitment, not from an imposed target)
8. Sustainability: How is the momentum for coaching kept going within the school? What are the provisions for ongoing expert training of coaches over time? They need good questions. Start small, grow and sustain.



REFERENCES

Campbell, J. & van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2018). *The Leader's Guide to Coaching in Schools*. Great Britain: Ashford Colour Press Ltd.

Kelly, F. (2017). *Experiences of a New Zealand School setting up a coaching culture for learning*.

O'Bree, M. (2009). *The Leadership Coaching Guide*. (2nd ed.). Australia. Growth Coaching International.

Robertson, J. (2016). *Coaching Leadership: Building educational leadership capacity through partnership*. (2nd ed.). Wellington: N.Z.C.E.R. Press.

Van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2012). *Coaching in Education*. Great Britain. Karnac Books.