

The Partnership Principles

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- **Equality:** *Instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners.*

Partnership involves relationships between individuals. The instructional coaches recognize collaborating teachers as equal partners, and they truly believe that each teacher's thoughts and beliefs are valuable. Instructional coaches listen to teachers with the intent to learn, to really understand, and then respond, rather than with the intent to persuade.

- **Choice:** *Teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn.*

In a partnership, one individual does not make decisions for another. Because partners are equal, they make their own individual choices and make decisions collaboratively (Block, 1993). Professionalism is about making choices. Rather, an instructional coach's goal is to meet teachers where they currently are in their practice and offer choices for learning.

- **Voice:** *Professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers.*

All individuals in a partnership have opportunities to express their point of view. Instructional coaches who act on this principle encourage teachers to express their opinions about content being learned. They view coaching as a process that helps teachers find their voice, not a process designed to make teachers think a certain way.

- **Dialogue:** *Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue.*

Partners engage in conversation learning together as they explore ideas (Bohm, 2000). For instructional coaches, this means they listen more than they tell. Instructional coaches avoid manipulation, engage participants in conversation about content, and think and learn with collaborating teachers. Conditions for dialogue are humility, hope, faith, and love.

- **Reflection:** *Reflection is an integral part of professional learning.*

One of the most important choices collaborating partners will make is how to make sense of whatever the instructional coach proposes they learn. Instructional coaches encourage collaborating teachers to consider ideas before adopting them. Indeed, instructional coaches recognize that reflective thinkers, by definition, must be free to adopt or reject ideas, or they simply are not thinkers at all.

- **Praxis:** *Teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning.*

Partnership should enable individuals to have more meaningful experiences. In partnership relationships, meaning arises when people reflect on ideas and then put those actions into practice. In partnership with collaborating teachers, instructional coaches focus their attention on how to use ideas in the classroom as those ideas are being learned.

- **Reciprocity:** *Instructional coaches should expect to get as much as they give.*

In a partnership, all partners benefit from the success, learning, or experience of others – everyone is rewarded by what each individual contributes (Freire, 1970; Senge, 1990; Vella, 1995). For that reason, one of an instructional coach's goals should be to learn alongside collaborating teachers. Learning about each teacher's strengths and weaknesses while implementing new teaching practices will enhance a coach's ability to collaborate with all other teachers and the coach's skill in using the new teaching practice.