

# INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING



As the sun excitedly awakened the eastern sky, it was a new day in Adventist education, which at times is synonymous with change. A new paradigm shift demanded educational practices that would meet the needs of all learners. We maintained our Adventist philosophical beliefs and our commitment to raising heaven-bound students; but how would we implement the new initiatives like standards-based learning and grading, differentiation, and data-driven instruction? The answer was inclusive of three main areas:

- Development and sustainability of interpersonal relationships
- Differentiated and reflective mentorship that is growth focused
- Data-driven instructional practices within a continuous school improvement framework

In response to the need to think differently about teaching and learning, the Southwestern Union Conference has opted to address the needs through instructional coaching. What is or does an instructional coach do? We are so glad that you asked.

- An instructional coach is a teacher facilitator, that is experienced in the field and that walks hand in hand with the classroom teacher in the refinement and development of their professional craft. It is a non-evaluative, growth-focused partnership.

- They assist teachers in the process of data-driven clarity, learning to determine what is and isn't working and how to transition from practices that are no longer beneficial to themselves or their students.
- They demonstrate that all growth is goal focused. Learning targets and success criteria are based on evaluation rubrics and standards that define the best practices of successful educators.
- The instructional coach works to ensure that the process isn't about themselves. They resist the urge to problem solve for the educator. Instead, they facilitate the process of self-directed growth for each person. They understand that discovery and self-revelation have greater lasting effects.
- Finally, the coach/teacher relationship must be safe. It should create a space where authentic growth can take place and continue to thrive. The instructional coach assists the process of real learning in real time. That learning is typically inclusive of knowledge and use of resources, learning environments, and self-care.

As the sun hesitatingly begins to set in the western sky, the birth of a new normal makes the anticipation of tomorrow's possibilities for our learning community almost unbearable, but we take comfort in the Jeremiah 29:11 promise: "For I know the plans I have for you." Great things are on the horizon!

*by Renee Whiting, Associate Director of Education  
Southwestern Union Conference*