

Instructional Coaching: What is it?

Bill Gates (2013) says it best: “Everyone needs a coach.” ([Click here to hear the 2013 Ted Talk by Bill Gates](#)) Coaches are essential in athletics, business, and life to bring us to the next level. Teaching is no different.

Some educators view the need for coaches as a weakness, that only those that are underperformers need one. This just isn’t true. Tiger Woods has 4 golf swing coaches. Every MMA fighter has a team of coaches in his/her corner. Coaching is required to unlock potential.

Instructional coaches play an essential role in educational institutions across the country. Following the research by Joyce & Showers in the 1980’s, coaches became a federally funded initiative after the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) in 2002, which was federal legislation aimed at strengthening the quality of instruction in schools. **Instructional coaches** have arguably been one of greatest change agents in educational institutions for the past 20 years.

At SWCS, we train and educate the most elite forces in the world. We can’t maximize potential of students unless we maximize the potential of instructors.

“Why use an instructional coach?”

1. **Workshops aren’t enough.** When instructors receive professional development primarily through a one-shot workshop, some of the content may not be applicable to their unique environment. Additionally, there is rarely follow through from the presenter to ensure proper implementation. Using instructional coaching, the instructor focuses on goals and implementation of strategies that work for **them**. The coach’s role is to gather resources and provide feedback to assist in achieving these goals. This way, professional development shifts from being company or battalion directed to self(cadre)- directed.

Based on the Adult Learning Model (ALM), “as individuals age, they become **self-directed**, know when they are ready to learn, and engage in the **learning** that surrounds **authentic problems** faced in the real world” (Knowles, 1973). Instructional coaching reinforces these principles by being instructor directed (self-directed) and related to the instructor’s unique environment (authentic problem).

The ESC provides support for the uniform application of USAJFKSWCS educational processes across the Institution to include:

-Support to Curriculum & Instruction [Courses and Instructors];

-Support to Leadership & Professional Development Initiatives;

-Support to the development and implementation of program evaluation and assessment systems; and

-Support to the design and implementation of SOF Career Pathways.

For more information, contact Mr. Geoff Jones at geoffrey.jones2@socom.mil or (910) 396-2518.

2. **It benefits the learner.** Coaches work with instructors to bring them to the next level by facilitating instructor growth through reflection, questioning, and implementing more innovative, research-based practices. That growth inevitably trickles down to the learner themselves, increasing performance and retention of material learned.
3. **The science of teaching is progressing rapidly.** How do we know we are keeping up the latest and greatest methods? It's the instructional coach's job to read the latest research and help instructors implement these strategies in their classrooms. Instructional coaches become curators of best practices and preserve an instructor's most valuable resource- TIME! Instructors don't have to spend late nights perusing education journals trying to come up with the most engaging strategies. The instructional coach has you covered!
4. **Teachers need a fresh, outside perspective.** Instructors are subject matter experts, but that doesn't mean they will relay the information clearly, concisely and in a way that engages the adult learner. This is a common problem in educational institutions today and instructional coaches are the remedy. They provide another set of eyes and a wealth of experience that can offer a fresh, outside perspective.
5. **A performance evaluation is not the same as coaching.** Let's be honest, there are extra pressures when your superior is in the room observing. When entering into an instructional coaching partnership, it's not about evaluating your instructional skills. It's about having someone on your side to help you unlock your potential. Coaches are not evaluators. Coaches are not a mole for the command team. Coaches keep you on track and moving towards your goals by observing, helping you identify goals, and giving you feedback as you work towards achieving those goals.

If you're passionate about improvement and growth and want to work with an instructional coach to bring your teaching to the next level, contact Mr. Geoff Jones at geoffrey.jones2@socom.mil and the ESC team to get started.

References:

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Gates, B. (2013, May). *Bill Gates: Teachers Need Real Feedback* (Video File). Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_gates_teachers_need_real_feedback

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