

# What is Pedagogical, Content-Focused Coaching?

Pedagogical, content-focused coaching is based on the premise that throughout their careers, teachers need to continue to grow in their knowledge of content and pedagogy. While a content coach helps teachers to extend their understanding of content knowledge, it may also include extending their knowledge of instructional strategies, of classroom management techniques, as well as the assessment of student thinking and the development of effective lessons that increase the learning of all students in their classrooms. The best place to accomplish this work is in the classroom with teachers and students.

## What does content-focused coaching look like?

Coaches help teachers to improve instruction through intensive in-class professional development. They focus on helping teachers to understand important mathematical concepts and to understand student thinking about those concepts. They also help teachers to develop techniques to support all students.

Coaches employ a variety of strategies to engage teachers. Typically, coaching involves an ongoing process of pre-teaching conferences, in-class experiences and post-conferences. The focus of pedagogical, content-focused coaching is on student thinking and understanding as evidenced by the work products students generate. Coaches vary the roles they play from modeling to team-teaching to leading. The key to being an effective coach is listening and asking questions. The coach is seen as an agent of change, one whose goal is to develop the teacher's own capacity for continuous mathematical growth. The coach works with teachers both inside and outside of class (sometimes in teams) examining student work, delving deeper into mathematics concepts, assisting in lesson planning, and/or providing other professional development experiences.

The role of the pedagogical, content-focused coach may develop into any one of the three descriptions identified below:

- *Coach as a Collaborator:* The coach sees him/herself as a resource to the teacher. In partnership with the teacher, a content coach works collaboratively with the teacher in planning lessons and analyzing student work. The coach gives direct feedback to the teacher about his/her pedagogy or presentation of the math of the lesson. Coaching discussions focus on what the students understand based on direct evidence and assist in planning next steps.
- *Coach as Model:* The coach uses a long-range plan of working with teachers by modeling instruction. The instruction actively involves children in high level tasks as well as modeling the coaching process itself with the coach as the teacher. The coach may provide follow-up lessons for the teacher to use after the model lesson.
- *Coach as Leader:* The coach is a guide to the teacher. The direct guidance on content issues and pedagogy is effective and accepted because of the way it is approached. The comments are focused on what the teacher did and what the students understand; both are grounded in the direct evidence collected during the lessons. The coach and teacher become collaborative problem solvers in designing next steps in instruction.