Tools index for Chapter 11		
Tool	**Title**	**Purpose**
11.1	**Critical inquiry process**	Use this process to provide a structure to use in facilitating a discussion about a problem or challenge that requires attention.
11.2	**Evaluation-think protocol**	Use this process to provide a simple process that asks educators to examine their work critically and reflectively to determine what is working and what is not working and to determine what actions to take to improve a coach's practice.
11.3	**Gap analysis**	Use the gap analysis process for identifying the gap between the current state and the desired state.
11.4	**Appeal to the heart as well as the head**	Use this article and process to consider all aspects of successful change initiatives and envision the change.
11.5	**Warm demanders**	Use this process to explore ways to combine a growth mindset with high expectations.

Chapter 12
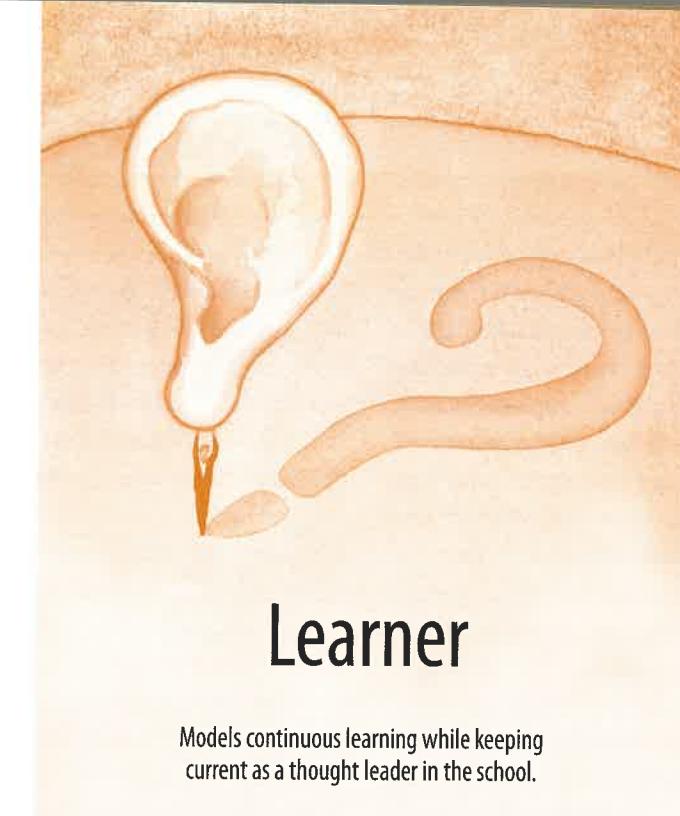
Learner

Models continuous learning while keeping current as a thought leader in the school.

Coaches are leaders of learning in their schools. In this role, a coach is a lead learner. If coaches learn and model continuous improvement, they can influence others through their actions. In a speech about school-based staff developers, Hayes Mizell (2004) suggests that this is the most important role for coaches. "Aside from the support you provide teachers by helping them improve their instruction and classroom management, your most important role is to model attitudes and behaviors teachers need to be successful," he says. "The most important of these is the desire to learn, knowing how to learn, and knowing how to apply learning."

Mizell (2004) continues to identify a process for coaches to use in their learning. First, he says, they need to be clear about what they want to learn and they must identify this publicly. "Acknowledging one's ignorance is a prerequisite for learning." Coaches cannot wait for someone to offer them learning, rather they must take charge of their own learning. They reach out to create their own learning plan. When coaches model learning behaviors, it has the potential to impact teacher attitudes and behaviors. Most districts realize the importance of coaches' continual learning by providing opportunities for coaches to learn in weekly or biweekly meetings focused on extending coaches' skills, knowledge, and problem solving.

The second part of the process of being a learner, according to Mizell (2004), is to put the learning into practice. "Professional learning means very little if it does not cause teachers to perform more effectively in the classroom." Learning without applying is meaningless. Learning with the intent to change is a hallmark of a learner. Fullan (1994) suggests that teachers who assume leadership roles within their schools make a commitment to moral purpose and continuous learning about teaching and learning, the

educational contexts, collegiality, and the change process.

Coaches use reflection as a process to support their own learning. Reflection is the process of examining analytically one's own practice or experience with the intention of learning from the practice or experience. Donald Schön (1983) described two forms of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Killion and Todnem (1991) add a third form of reflection, reflection-for-action.

Reflection-on-action is a process of looking back at an experience, analyzing it to understand what occurred and why, and drawing from the experience learning that will inform future actions. Reflection-in-action is a similar process, but it occurs alongside the experience. In a split-screen process, the reflector is simultaneously experiencing the event and reflecting about it to understand more deeply how his or her actions are affecting the event and vice versa. Reflection-for-action is analyzing an experience, forming conclusions or generalizations that can be drawn from the experience, and then using these learnings to inform future decisions or actions (see Tool 12.1).

The coach who is a learner avoids the potential of becoming complacent or being stuck in one way of seeing things and doing things. Learning keeps the coach fresh, aware of what the learning process entails; it allows the coach to be proactive rather than reactive and to lead other learners along the pathway of changing their knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors.

According to the University of Florida Lastinger Center, Learning Forward, and Public Impact (2016):

Coaches need regular professional learning opportunities to help them understand and become skilled leaders of adult learning and the change process. Coaches also need to hone their own knowledge of research-based instructional practices and evolving expectations for student learning (p. 12). … Coaching is complex, a highly demanding professional role that may take years to master. (p. 25)

Just as masters in other areas require 10 years or 10,000 hours of practice, coaches are unlikely to gain all the expertise they need in a few years of practice.

Developing expertise, according to Robert Sternberg (1999) requires continuous learning. "The main constraint in achieving expertise is not some fixed prior level of capacity, but purposeful engagement involving direct instruction, active participation, role modeling, and reward" (p. 361). It involves, as Sternberg notes, deliberate practice that supports the berg notes, deliberate practice that supports the interaction through deliberate practice among metacognitive skills, learning skills, thinking skills, knowledge, motivation, and context. K. Anders Ericsson, Michael Prietula, and Edward Cokely (2007) underscore the investment required to develop expertise:

The journey to truly superior performance is neither for the faint of heart nor for the impatient. The development of genuine expertise requires struggle, sacrifice, and honest, often painful self-assessment. There are no shortcuts. It will take you at least a decade to achieve expertise, and you will need to invest that time wisely, by engaging in "deliberate" practice — practice that focuses on tasks beyond your current level of competence and comfort. (p. 2)

Coaches as learners support teachers in several ways

When the coach is an avid learner, he or she encourages teachers to be learners too. When coaches take time to learn new skills themselves, they understand more clearly the hurdles that will challenge teachers as they learn new skills. Since coaches explore the possibilities and limits of new strategies, they are able to share their insights with teachers as they move forward into implementation. When coaches move beyond the role of learner to support others' learning processes, they move into the learning facilitator role.

Coaches as learners need certain knowledge, skills, and practices

As competent educators, coaches use what they know about how people learn to understand how they learn; furthermore, they understand their strengths and weaknesses as learners. They understand also how they access and process information as well as what types of learning experiences stimulate superficial and deep learning. They seek to gain awareness of their biases and assumptions so that they can examine and challenge them. Coaches who lack such self-awareness risk having biases interfere with their openness to new ideas.

The coach as learner uses such skills as reading research, doing action research, reflecting, analyzing, dialoguing, journaling, and synthesizing. Coaches draw information from multiple sources and consider how ideas relate and apply to their own work. Coaches often spend a great deal of time staying current in the many aspects of effective instructional and coaching practices. They adapt and apply new learning into their own work.

They engage in dialogue about new ideas with their colleagues to help clarify their own understanding of the ideas and to gain new perspectives. They use writing to clarify their thinking. They create and use feedback systems to gather data about their work. They often ask colleagues to let them use their classroom as places they can practice new learnings with real students.

Coaches have several options for their own learning. They can participate in collaborative learning experiences that are more structured or ones that are less formal to refine their coaching practices, gain greater awareness of their biases and assumptions, and challenge barriers that get in the way of their effectiveness (see Tool 12.2). They can also engage in personal professional learning or become a member of a professional learning network (PLN). Often forming or joining a PLN enables coaches to customize their learning experiences to a narrow band of content or learning levels.

They use their logs to record time spend doing different tasks and then reflect on the impact of those tasks. They also use their logs to periodically reflect on whether they are spending their time where it makes the most difference (see Tool 12.3).

Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), calculates that it takes 10,000 hours of deliberate practice — practice that promotes continuous improvement — to master a complex skill. Coaches strive to become masters of many instructional strategies, which means they practice multiple times. They take time to practice and get feedback as they learn new practices. To ensure that many of the instructional practices work with students, coaches practice using them in a variety of classrooms. Coaches often implement the strategy in a

teacher's classroom to experience the result so that when they work with other teachers they can share actual personal experience with the strategy (see Tool 12.4). Sometimes, coaches practice by co-teaching with a classroom teacher, or they ask a willing teacher and classroom of students for permission to practice a new strategy before they share it with other teachers.

Another skill in this area is learning to prioritize which instructional strategies and coaching skills are most important to learn and hone at any time (see Tool 12.5). Thinking about what the teachers at a site need assists the coach to decide their learning priorities. When coaches have opportunities to engage in the feedback process with other coaches, coach champions, or supervisors, they construct and

deconstruct new knowledge that they can apply in their practice (Killion, 2015).

Coaches must give themselves permission to take time for practice and some mistakes. Becoming a master coach takes many years and, since the work of teaching is constantly evolving, coaches always learn new things. Theirs is a never-ending spiral of learning.

Coaches as learners face challenges

Coaches who are learners face several challenges. One is finding time to learn. Coaches' lives are full. As a result, many find it difficult to add time for learning into their day. Like their efforts to initiate job-embedded learning for their colleagues, coaches can also engage in

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SNAPSHOT

A coach as a learner

Manya Maye is an experienced instructional coach at Deardon Elementary School.* She is grateful her first two years are behind her. When she applied to become a coach, she had no idea how challenging the work would be. She went home every night so exhausted that she had little time for her family and friends. Now in her third year, she still finds her work intriguing and enriching, yet she is not feeling the same level of challenge she once did.

Most of Maye's professional learning during the first two years has been in training sessions where she has been learning new coaching skills. This year, however, a group of district coaches meets weekly for a half day in a learning community for self-directed learning. After they identify areas for growth, the district coaches access and use tools ranging from Teaching Channel webcasts to teach one another skills, share best practices, and read articles or books and discuss their work. Often, they share reflections about their week; then they discuss

the actions they might take after reflecting on their practice.

They structure this work with protocols to help coaches focus the conversations and get practice with the protocols they may use with teams of teachers.

Once a month, the district coaches observe one another doing some coaching. They conduct a coaching lab where they look at their own application of coaching concepts. Each coach chooses a situation for observation such as coaching a teacher, holding a partnership agreement conversation with the principal, team coaching, or facilitating professional learning with school staff. When the coaching group gets to the school, they meet as a group. The group facilitator sets the norms for the session. She focuses on creating an environment for growth, not criticism, while encouraging the coaches to really push one another's thinking so that each coach is challenged to think about her work in a new way. The coach then provides the team with a focus question and identifies the areas for growth where members would like feedback. After the observation, team members use a protocol as they discuss the observation.

Coaches report that this is the best learning for them and really stretches their thinking.

For Maye's session, she chose to have a coaching conversation with a teacher whose lesson she observed. During the lesson, the teacher used a protocol to help students examine one another's constructed responses. The teacher brings the protocol and samples of the student work to assist in the coaching conversation. During the conversation, Maye wants to support this second-year teacher to achieve a deeper level of understanding about lesson planning.

Maye's focus question for her own growth revolves around the levels of thinking she wants the teacher to explore in the conversation. She wants the other coaches to observe and record the questions she asks the teacher and the teacher's responses.

Throughout the coaching conversation the teacher and Maye examine student work. Maye encourages the teacher to consider the evidence of student learning in the artifacts and then to consider alternative ways to have students apply the skills necessary to write an effective constructed response.

The other coaches are taking notes throughout the conversation. Before the teacher leaves to return to her classroom, the group facilitator asks her what actions Maye took during the conversation that assisted her in her thinking about her work. Then, she asked the teacher for any ideas that might be helpful to Maye in her next coaching conversation with her.

After the teacher leaves, the coaching group goes through three rounds of describing the coaching behaviors, their impact on the learning of the teacher, and the levels of thinking that the teacher exhibited during the conversation. The coaches and Maye play out several sequences of questions that were used and alternatives, as well as ideas about strategies to use during the next conference with the teacher.

Having regular opportunities to interact with other coaches, watch their practice with teachers, and reflect on these interactions with other coaches has allowed Mayna Maye to grow in her own practice.

Fictitious name and school

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job-embedded learning. They use their regular daily experiences as opportunities to learn by making it a habit to reflect on their work. They consider their impact on both people and the students they serve. Coaches are always model learners even when some of the learning situations they experience are less than ideal. It is important that coaches also work with the principal and other administrators to ensure they take part in teacher learning and model effective learning behaviors. When there is training for teachers or teachers are working in collaborative groups learning new knowledge or skills, it is important that administrators, as well as the coach, participate in this same learning with teachers.

When trying to implement new learning, coaches often seek classrooms of students for authentic practice. Another challenge is feeling confident enough with new behaviors knowing that inevitable failures will be relatively public. Modeling the willingness to make mistakes publicly and learn from those mistakes is often a challenge for coaches, especially when beginning this work. At times, coaches may not feel confident in all grade levels or content areas, so being willing to be partners with classroom teachers in these grades and content make a coach vulnerable, and that is a challenge as well. Part of learning is making and learning from mistakes. Showing how to be a risk taker as one is learning a new skill is a very powerful model for others. If coaches expect teachers to experiment and take risks with new practices, then they must also do the same.

Another challenge for a coach is the struggle between being recognized as a master teacher and being willing to acknowledge one's "ignorance," as Mizell labels it (2004). Coaches who strive to be masterful and skillful can easily slip into a stance of being right rather than being open to new

"After the protocol conversations, I feel as if I have some next steps that I am ready to implement tomorrow. I know that I would have analyzed and overanalyzed my next move had I not had the opportunity to discuss it with my team."

Hattie Fritch
Instructional Coach
Leroy Elementary School
Adam 12 Five Star Schools
Thornton, Colorado

ways of understanding or different points of view.

In the struggle between expert and learner coaches seek to surface their own assumptions and examine the impact of those assumptions on their own practice and that of others. Coaches find difficulty in knowing how their beliefs or mental models affect their decisions. Sometimes, coaches espouse politically correct beliefs because they are expected to do so, yet their actions may be incongruent with those espoused beliefs. When inconsistencies occur between what the coach says and what the coach does, her integrity may be compromised.

Conclusion

When coaches commit to their own learning, they simultaneously commit to the significance of professional growth. Peter Senge (1990) reminds us,

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through

learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we reperceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. (p. 14)

Because the primary function of coaching is promoting continuous growth, coaches model for others the importance of continuous development throughout one's career. When coaches engage in formal and informal professional learning, they recognize that their professional growth depends on expanding their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices.

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