A Study Guide for *Student-Centered Coaching at the Secondary Level*

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We are excited to share the news that *Student-Centered Coaching at the Secondary Level* (Sweeney, 2013), is now a Corwin bestseller! Some districts have requested a study guide to support their dive into the processes and tools that are focused on throughout the book. Please consider this study guide as a launching off point rather a destination. I'm sure you will need to fine tune the following questions to meet the needs of your own group. If you have any further questions, feel free to email us at info@dianesweeney.com.

Chapter 1: Student-Centered Coaching at the Secondary Level

Lessons from the Field:

The first chapter in *Student-Centered at the Secondary Level* introduces the premise behind coaching with student outcomes in mind. It also introduces a set of core practices for engaging in student-centered coaching. I'm excited about this part of the chapter because it paints a clear picture of how student-centered coaches go about their work with teachers. In fact, since publication of the book, we have solidified these core practices even further. This is what they look like today:

Seven Core Practices for Student-Centered Coaching

- Setting student learning goals for coaching cycles
- Creating learning targets for coaching cycles
- Using student evidence to co-plan instruction
- Organizing coaching through coaching cycles
- Co-teaching with a focus on effective teaching practice
- Measuring the impact of coaching on student and teacher learning
- Partnering with the school leader

Guiding Questions:

1. What challenges have you had when goal-setting with teachers? How do you plan to take this important coaching practice further?
2. What feels right to you when it comes to the duration of a coaching cycle? Why?
3. What do your coaching logs look like? Are you using technology to document your coaching work?

Chapter 2: Getting Student-Centered Coaching up and Running

Lessons from the Field

As I think about engaging teachers in coaching cycles, I always come back to the work of James Flaherty (1999). This chapter introduces his Flow of Coaching and puts it into the context of a school-based coach. While it may feel a bit 'hands off' to take an invitational approach to coaching, we have learned that if we

want teachers to engage in authentic ways, then they need choice and ownership in the process. Without these elements, coaching can quickly slip towards fixing teachers and away from forming true partnerships. Lately, we have also been working with teams of coaches to push towards more intensive coaching cycles. If you are interested in this topic, please check out my three part series that can be found here: https://dianesweeney.com/getting-to-60-percent-1-of-3/.

Guiding Questions:
1. What does your coaching schedule look like? Do you feel that it is designed around intentional and ongoing work with teachers? If so, how? If not, why?
2. What are some strategies you have used to engage reluctant teachers?
3. Is there any work to be done to better define your role as a coach? If so, what are your next steps to help teachers understand how to engage in coaching?

Chapter 3: Coaching Teachers to Assess and Deliver
Lessons from the Field:
This is my favorite chapter in the whole book. It gets at the heart of the matter when it comes to coaching in secondary classrooms. The simple notion of assessing and then delivering is somewhat revolutionary when content moves at a fast pace, as it does in so many of our high schools. Working with teachers to slow down, formatively assess, and differentiate is simply good for our students. And if coaches are chipping away at this in their conversations with teachers, then hurray!

Guiding Questions:
1. Have you encountered a deliver and assess mentality in your school? How did you navigate through this belief system?
2. How do you handle the conflict between covering content and deeper learning?
3. How did you help teachers use those formative assessments to adjust for the learners in their classrooms?

Chapter 4: Measuring the Impact of Student-Centered Coaching
Lessons from the Field:
For me, there is no tool that has stood the test of time like the Results-Based Coaching Tool (p. 68). While at first glance, it might appear to be another piece of paperwork. The truth is it is a vehicle for Student-Centered Coaching. It keeps you on track and focused. And it helps you feel successful in your work with teachers. The Results-Based Coaching Tool isn't meant to be used to evaluate teachers or coaches, but rather to celebrate the impact coaching is making on student and teacher learning. Recently, we have begun to replace the paper

version of the Results-Based Coaching Tool with one in Googledocs. We have found that doing so makes the process easier to manage and more transparent.

Guiding Questions:
1. Have you used the Results-Based Coaching Tool? How did it go?
2. How do you know if coaching has impacted student and teacher learning?
3. What are some ways you use logs and templates to capture your impact?

Chapter 5: Leading the Coaching Effort
Lessons from the Field:
This chapter creates a vision for how accountability and support can work together to move coaching forward. Much of this thinking was inspired by the work of Michael Fullan when he describes the role of pressure and support in change efforts. We find that co-constructing our vision for instruction (no matter the content area) is a necessary component of instructional leadership. With clarity in place regarding instruction, then a coach is set up to move teaching and learning forward.

Guiding Questions:
1. As a coach, how do you avoid taking on administrative tasks in order to provide support to the teachers in your school?
2. What are some strategies you are using to effectively collaborate with your school leader?
3. What are your thoughts about Figure 5.3 on page 84? Does it lead you to any new thinking when it comes to the overlap between coaches and school leaders?

Chapter 6: Designing a School Culture that's About Student Learning
Lessons from the Field:
Part I of this chapter focuses on what a 'no opt-out' school culture looks like. Part II uncovers how to coach within a culture of learning. I approached the chapter in this way because creating a culture of learning is essential for coaching to thrive. Page 92-93 suggests the importance of the beliefs we hold as educators. Todd Whitaker's book, *School Culture Rewired* is also a useful resource as it is full of tools for analyzing how your school culture ticks. It can be found here: http://www.amazon.com/Todd-Whitaker/e/B0045AYYBC.

Guiding Questions:
1. Page 89 includes a list of the qualities of a school with an established culture of learning. What would be on your list?
2. How do you handle differing beliefs among colleagues?
3. What is your opinion regarding keeping coaching confidential or maintaining an open and transparent stance?

Chapter 7: Student-Centered Learning Labs

There is no question that teachers benefit from learning alongside one another, and learning labs are a great way to create rich opportunities for teachers to spend time in the classrooms of others. That said, classroom-based observations sometimes lack the focus, intentionality, and facilitation that is necessary to move learning forward. Or a greater risk is that they can be damaging to a school culture if not well orchestrated. We have learned that unhealthy school cultures are not the best place to implement learning labs. It is also less-than-ideal to highlight certain teachers as more effective than others. Again, this can damage the ever-so-sensitive cultures that we find in our schools. Rather, we like to design learning labs that celebrate adults as learners, risk takers, and askers of tough questions. We like to design learning labs that put the spotlight on challenges rather than perfection. And we like to design learning labs that keep the focus firmly rooted on student learning.

Guiding Questions:
1. Have you ever designed learning labs in your school? If so, what went well and what challenges did you encounter?
2. What are some facilitation techniques that you have found helpful when facilitating observations in classrooms?
3. Where have you struggled as a facilitator? Why?

Chapter 8: Developing Systems to Prepare and Support Coaches
Lessons from the Field:

Coaching is much harder than it looks. While it may be easy to launch coaching cycles; it is much more difficult to coach systematically throughout a school. Persistent challenges like reluctant teachers, competing demands, scheduling snafus, faculty size, and gaps in instructional expertise will always be present. For this reason, we advocate for creating a community of learning for coaches wherein we analyze challenges and collaboratively work toward solutions, observe one another to reflect and gather insights, share logs, artifacts, and templates, and study adult learning. Our golden rule is if it looks easy, than something is wrong. Coaching is never easy.

Guiding Questions:
1. What are some areas where you have felt supported as a coach? Why?
2. What do you need in the way of support for your coaching work?
3. As you read the rubric on pages 134-137, what is a goal that you would set for yourself as a coach? Why?