

## Math Specialist and Academically and Intellectually Accelerated Advocate

The Math Specialist is responsible for working with teachers, administrators, and others as a resource to help every child in our district achieve their maximum potential as learners of math. The primary focus of this position will be on promoting a range of effective and innovative math practices within classrooms, which could involve significant time spent on math coaching. This position will participate in title one budgeting and will have access to those funds.

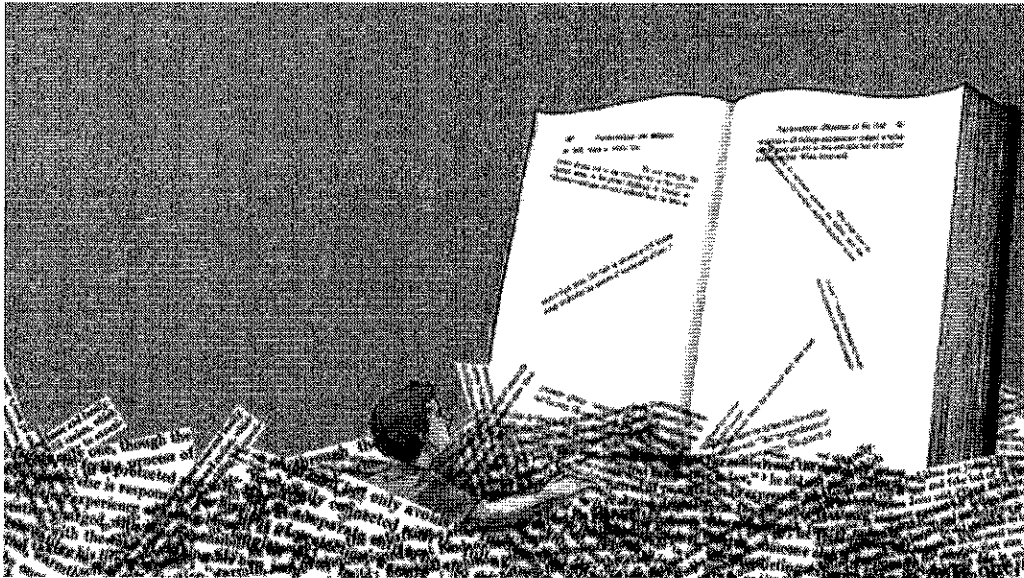
The Academically and Intellectually Accelerated Advocate is responsible for identifying the needs of academically and intellectually accelerated learners, some of whom may have traditionally been labeled as gifted students. The focus of this position will be on promoting a range of effective and innovative differentiation strategies in classrooms through the role of instructional coaching and advocacy, but the needs of students will drive the overall need of programming. Students with significant obstacles to their learning may require the coordination of outside learning services, counseling on self-advocacy and social interactions, and small group interactions to share and build on the emotional needs of some advanced learners.

### Job responsibilities:

- Review instructional and student performance data on regular basis
- Work with principals and counselors on student programming, including compacted math courses.
- Meet with teachers regularly to promote best practice in differentiation and math instruction
- Maintain regular communication with students, and their parents, that have identified advanced intellectual and academic needs beyond the regular classroom to maintain updates on the success of interventions to meet those needs
- Collaboratively build a plan of work around data and learner outcomes specific to district wide math instruction and advanced learners
- Participate in team meetings to design instruction to meet the needs of all students
- Prepare a board update report on math programming goals and programming around advanced learners.
- Advocate for educational best practice with the parents of our students and in our community.
- Coordinate the math and advanced learners program with other support services within the school district.
- Collaboratively oversee the Title I Budget and subsequent reporting with the reading specialist, under the direct supervision of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Oversee the collection and reporting of math data PK-12.
- All other duties as assigned and approved by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

## Is it Time to Redefine “Gifted and Talented”?

Holly Korbey



Manhattan mom Heather McFadden is grateful that entrance into the prized New York City Gifted and Talented program has worked out for her two kids. Her daughter cleared both hurdles – she scored in the 99th percentile on the test, and then was lucky enough to get chosen for the lottery. Her son tested in as well. “I am thankful they [gifted programs] exist. There simply wasn’t a school in our district we would send our kids to because of their ratings,” McFadden said. “G and T [Gifted and Talented] was our only chance besides moving.” She had also heard from teachers that kids who are more advanced would not be challenged in a standard setting.

While McFadden knows that her kids will receive an extra push in Gifted and Talented, not everyone in New York is so lucky. More than 11,700 kids qualified for about 2,700 Gifted and Talented seats last year.

What does it mean to be “gifted” — at least by school standards? The U.S. Department of Education defines gifted and talented as “Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience or environment.” According to the National Society of Gifted and Talented website, areas of talent include “creative ability, general and specific intellectual ability, leadership, psychomotor ability, and visual and performing arts abilities.”

But how “giftedness” plays out in the classroom for the roughly 3 million students who qualify can be hard to characterize. Some gifted and talented programs emphasize critical thinking and problem solving, others focus on creativity, and still others take what’s going on in standard classrooms and go into greater depth and complexity. Some G/T programs have separate schools, others have students for just an hour or two a week in a special classroom, and still others try to serve G/T students in standard classrooms by differentiating instruction in classes of mixed ability.

The wide variety of programs and curricula can mean that many G/T programs may end up being essentially ineffective to high potential learners. “The field of gifted education lacks convincing research as to what works,” writes Chester E. Finn, Jr, coauthor with Jessica Hockett of *Exam Schools: Inside America’s Most Selective Public High Schools*. “We found just two smallish studies focusing on the actual effectiveness of selective-admission public high schools. Worse, those two studies found scant advantage for the selective-admission schools.”

“It is just one learning style that needs to be met, due to the speed and ease at which the student learns. It does not mean they are better or likely to become more successful in life than their peers.”

Compounding the effectiveness of G/T programs is what it takes to qualify for entrance, usually IQ or other intelligence tests. According to cognitive psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman, author of *Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined*, the overwhelming use of IQ tests to understand student potential is limiting at best, and damaging at worst. Besides treating all students with the same IQ as having the same academic needs, Kaufman writes in the *LA Times*, defining students by a test only measures one aspect of their potential to be

successful: “Even done well, standardized testing has limits. Many other factors contribute to learning and real-world success, from active learning strategies to intrinsic motivation, grit, self-regulation and outside support and encouragement.”

In addition, Kaufman warns that abilities and talents can change as students get older, but often, tests that measure cognitive ability like the IQ test are taken early in life, and the scores follow children throughout their school careers, their numbers becoming immutable. “Although no state permits a single IQ score to determine gifted eligibility, 18 states set strict cutoff scores, and testing is typically a one-shot deal,” Kaufman writes. “You’re either gifted or you’re not, for the rest of your life.” Kaufman, who was diagnosed with a learning disability early in life, went on to defy his label and attained a PhD at Yale.

According to a North Carolina G/T teacher, Lisa, who asked to remain anonymous due to her district’s media policy, what many misunderstand is that being gifted is a learning need, not a privilege. “It is just one learning style that needs to be met, due to the speed and ease at which the student learns,” she said. “It does not mean they are better or likely to become more successful in life than their peers.”

In Lisa’s Academically and Intellectually Gifted program (AIG) for 4th and 5th graders, students are taken out of class for 45 minutes a week to focus on deeper conceptual understanding of what they’re already working on in standard classes. Lisa gave examples using math and reading instruction.

“When working with place value in a regular classroom, for example, in AIG I usually teach a 6-week class on alternative number systems, where we look at Roman numerals, Mayan numbers, binary numbers, as well as other number systems that don’t use a base 10,” she said. “In reading, we may work on a novel, or tie in social studies content such as doing a unit with American History that look at ‘History’s Mysteries’ such as The Abraham Lincoln Conspiracy, Lindbergh baby kidnapping, or the Lost Colony.”

Lisa’s main concern with the AIG program is time — or lack of it. “If I could change anything it would be the amount of time we are allowed to spend with the students,” she said. “In order to insure equity in the program, we are limited to 45 minutes a week in the areas identified as strong or very strong need. To say a student has these needs and only serve them 1/30th of the time they are in school seems, to me, to be problematic.”

## NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

For some parents of high-ability students, navigating the Gifted and Talented programs can be frustrating. Matt Prewett of Austin, Texas, doesn’t particularly like the term “gifted,” because it is easily misconstrued. He prefers to say “advanced in particular subjects.” He decided to pull his son, who was advanced in both language arts and math according to test scores and class performance, out of the local public school — not because they didn’t have a G/T program, but because he felt it was poorly implemented. “We pulled our son out of the district elementary school after 3rd grade, because we felt they had an inadequate system for ability-grouping,” he said.

Prewett gave an example of how the local school grouped for math ability: “They advertise a program for advanced students but there is only one chance to qualify, and it is on the first couple of days of school,” he said. “My son was very upset about attending a new school and cried during the exam, and didn’t qualify for the program. Despite good grades in math and extremely high scores on standardized exams, his teacher said there was no flexibility for students to move from the standard program to the advanced program. This is because the way they make the math program ‘advanced’ is by teaching them the curriculum from the next grade level: acceleration rather than enrichment.”

“Schools need to provide a way of making sure that children are educated at the level that is appropriate for them.”

Prewett, who has since become a fierce advocate for more and better advanced programs in schools, founded the Texas Parents Union to advocate for more quality education options for all parents. He worries that children at the top of the achievement ladder are often under-served.

“Schools need to provide a way of making sure that children are educated at the level that is appropriate for them,” he said. “While putting all abilities in the same classroom might be easier to manage, it results in a high likelihood that at least one group of children will be neglected. With NCLB and the focus on proficiency, the odds are that the advanced students will be neglected since principals/teachers know that they will pass standardized exams.”

Kaufman takes it one step further: perhaps it’s time to step back and re-define what it means to be gifted and talented. “It may be time for a paradigm shift,” he writes. “Perhaps we should stop describing people as gifted or ungifted and start describing a wide range of personal characteristics and environmental factors as potential gifts — and promote an educational culture that develops them.”

Kaufman recommends the work of another North Carolina organization, Project Bright Idea, a pilot program offering Gifted and Talented curriculum to every student. According to one of the program’s founders, Duke professor at the Sanford School of Public Policy William “Sandy” Darity, Project Bright Idea “shows an extraordinary increase in overall test scores despite demographic trends toward more ‘at-risk’ students (90% poverty rate at the end of the period),” he said. Even though some of the schools’ students wouldn’t have ever qualified for G/T programs, after two years using a G/T curriculum, nearly one in four was identified as “gifted.”

Project Bright Idea’s success has spread to 20 North Carolina public schools, and maybe the idea is growing. Brooklyn mom Karina Gauge reports that her two sons receive Gifted and Talented curriculum at their neighborhood school, P.S. 58, although they’ve never had to stress over getting in: “They have never had a G/T program, because our principal believes that all of the kids should be treated as gifted and receive the same quality education,” she said.

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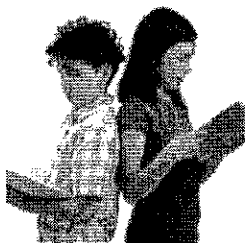
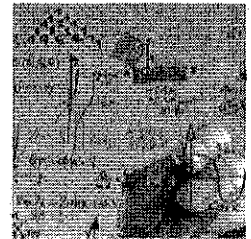
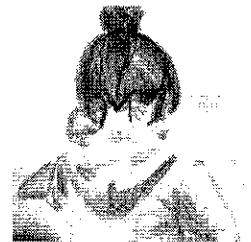
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## Treating Students as Gifted Yields Impressive Academic Results, Study Finds

Students in project developed by Duke researchers and state educators are much more likely to actually perform at a gifted level

March 24, 2011 | *Camille Jackson*

**DURHAM, NC** - Schools that seek to help students who are underrepresented in advanced programs should treat them as gifted young scholars, an approach that can result in many of them actually performing at a gifted level within a few years, according to a U.S. Dept. of Education study of a North Carolina program.

Developed by researchers at Duke University with state educators, the five-year study of 10,000 kindergarteners and first- and second-graders suggests that raising expectations could be a key to enhancing the academic performance of at-risk students nationwide.

"All students should get a gifted education, even if they are not subsequently identified as gifted," said William "Sandy" Darity, chair of African and African American studies and a professor at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. "It's not about who is in the class, but the quality of instruction."

Darity's research showing black and Latino students to be underrepresented in advanced and gifted classes helped lead the State of North Carolina to establish Project Bright Idea, the program analyzed in the Department of Education study. Co-designed more than 10 years ago by Margaret Gayle, director of the American Association for Gifted Children at Duke, the program trains teachers to treat all students as if they are gifted. Darity and Gayle say the project works because it nurtures students regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, gender or learning ability.

The new independent evaluation supports their claim. Its primary author calculates "on the safe side" that 15-20 percent of students taught with techniques usually reserved for gifted classrooms are identified within three years by their districts as being academically and intellectually gifted. Only 10 percent of a control group of similar students taught in regular classrooms met their district's "gifted" criteria during the same period.

By comparison, in 2004 19 percent of all third-grade students were identified as gifted in the three North Carolina counties (Cabarrus, Watagua and Wake) with the highest numbers. Not a single third-grade student in 2004 from the Title 1 schools involved in the study had previously been identified as gifted.

The pilot ran from 2004 to 2009 and included K-2 classrooms in Title 1 schools in 11 school districts with cohorts of more than 5,000 students in Bright Idea and 5,000 students in the control groups. As each cohort completed the research, the project was expanded to other classes and schools in the districts, including middle and high schools.

The project now continues as Project Bright Tomorrow at Northeast Elementary in Kinston and Town Creek Elementary in Winnabow, both in North Carolina. The two schools opened in 2009 and were modeled on Bright Idea.

"We are giving teachers concepts based on the latest and best research in the classroom. Then we provide support and mentorship to help them work through obstacles," Gayle said.

The project requires teachers to undergo regular and intensive training, energizing their profession and their classrooms by weaving together teaching strategies based on the work of national education experts, including Art Costa and Bena Kallick's work on "habits of mind," Mary Frasier's on "traits, attributes and behaviors" and Howard Gardner's on "multiple intelligences."

"We are literally changing the knowledge, skills and dispositions of teachers so they believe children can learn. It is a lot about teacher expectation and belief," said Mary N. Watson, the director of the exceptional children division of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, who helped develop the project.

In workshops and week-long summer institutes, teachers in the project are taught by national and state-level experts on how to develop students' thinking and skills such as controlling impulsivity, posing questions and taking responsible risks.

"We are teaching students how to think, not what to think," Gayle said.

More on  
Project  
Bright  
Idea

Bright Idea teacher Dawn Miller of Thomasville Elementary School in Thomasville, N.C., agrees.

"In college we learned about the multiple intelligences theory, it's nothing new. But Bright Idea had the research that provided a model to incorporate all the things we know that are right for kids," Miller said.

After training, Bright Idea teachers are asked to design curriculum customized for their classrooms.

Incorporating the project's concepts does not extend the work day, week or school year, nor does it require extensive tutoring for students to achieve success. But it does require support from principals and administrators, Darity said.

Edward McFarland, principal of Fuquay-Varina High School in Fuquay-Varina, N.C., was first introduced to Project Bright Idea as an elementary school principal. Since 2006 he has applied components of the project at the high school level, allowing teachers extra time each week to design curricula.

"Staff development is the key, but it takes time to retrain," McFarland said. "Many times we're looking for easy fixes but hard work is what gets you the results. You can throw in a new program. You may be committed for a year or so, take a few workshops and hand out a few lessons. But we really want to focus on planning lessons that go deeper than that."

By using some components of Bright Idea, McFarland watched the achievement gap at Fuquay Varina decrease by 4-6 percent from 2006 to 2010. Testing and graduation rates surpassed the county average within the same time period.

Project Bright Idea works best when it is applied comprehensively, changing the entire school atmosphere, said Ron Tzur, faculty chair at the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Denver, who evaluated the research for the Department of Education.

"It's very difficult to argue with the outcome," said Tzur, who said more research is needed, particularly on math and science scores. "Most projects have two teachers in one school. With Bright Idea, we are talking about hundreds of teachers and thousands of students. Most projects run out of steam when the funding runs out. But with high expectations, there is a change in teacher practices and more willingness and interest on their part. Teachers are saying they want more."

Project Bright Idea was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

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## Alternative Truths

The unexpected truths about judgment and decision making.  
by Adam Alter

### Why It's Dangerous to Label People

Why labeling a person "black," "rich," or "smart" makes it so.  
Published on May 17, 2010 by Adam Alter in Alternative Truths

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If you lined up 1000 randomly selected people from across the earth, none of them would share exactly the same skin tone. You could arrange them from darkest to lightest and there wouldn't be a single tie. Of course, the continuity of skin tone hasn't stopped humans from assigning each other to discrete skin-color categories like "black" and "white"--categories that have no basis in biology but nonetheless go on to determine the social, political, and economic wellbeing of their members.

Categorical labeling is a tool that humans use to resolve the impossible complexity of the environments we grapple to perceive. Like so many human faculties, it's adaptive and miraculous, but it also contributes to some of the deepest problems that face our species.

Researchers began to study the cognitive effects of labeling in the 1930s, when linguist Benjamin Whorf proposed the linguistic relativity hypothesis. According to his hypothesis, the words we use to describe what we see aren't just idle placeholders--they actually determine what we see. According to one apocryphal tale, the Inuit can distinguish between dozens of different types of snow that the rest of us perceive, simply, as "snow," because they have a different label for each type. The story isn't true (the Inuit have the same number of words for snow as we do), but research by Lera Boroditsky, a cognitive psychologist, and several of her colleagues suggests that it holds a kernel of truth. Boroditsky and her colleagues asked English and Russian speakers to distinguish between two very similar but subtly different shades of blue. In English, we have a single word for the color blue, but Russians divide the spectrum of blue into lighter blues ("goluboy") and darker blues ("siniy"). Where we use a single label for the color, they use two different labels. When the two shades of blue straddled the goluboy/siniy divide, the Russian speakers were much quicker to distinguish between them, because they had readily available labels for the two colors that the English speakers lumped together as "blue."

Labels shape more than our perception of color; they also change how we perceive more complex targets, like people. Jennifer Eberhardt, a social psychologist at Stanford, and her colleagues showed white college students a pictures of a man who was racially ambiguous--he could have plausibly fallen into the "white" category or the "black" category. For half the students, the face was described as belonging to a white man, and for the other half it was described as belonging to a black man. In one task, the experimenter asked the students to spend four minutes drawing the face as it sat on the screen in front of them. Although all the students were looking at the same face, those who tended to believe that race is an entrenched human characteristic drew faces that matched the stereotype associated with the label (see a sample below). The racial labels formed a lens through with the students saw the man, and they were incapable of perceiving him independently of that label.

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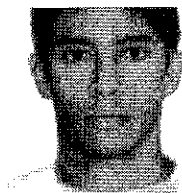
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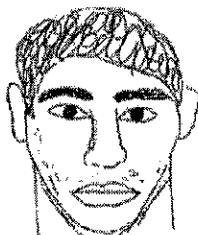
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"Black" drawing



"White" drawing



Race isn't the only label that shapes perception, and a classic study by John Darley and Paget Gross showed similar effects when they varied whether a young girl, Hannah, seemed poor or wealthy. College students watched a video of Hannah playing in her neighborhood, and read a brief fact sheet that described her background. Some of the students watched Hannah playing in a low-income housing estate, and her parents were described as high school graduates with blue collar jobs; the remaining students watched Hannah behaving similarly, but this time she was filmed playing in a tree-lined middle-class neighborhood, and her parents were described as college-educated professionals. The students were asked to assess Hannah's academic ability after watching her respond to a series of achievement-test questions. In the video, Hannah responded inconsistently sometimes answering difficult questions correctly and sometimes answering simpler questions incorrectly. Hannah's academic ability remained difficult to discern, but that didn't stop the students from using her socioeconomic status as a proxy for academic ability. When Hannah was labeled "middle-class," the students believed she performed close to a fifth-grade level, but when she was labeled "poor," they believed she performed below a fourth-grade level.

The long-term consequences of labeling a child like Hannah "smart" or "slow" are profound. In another classic study, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson told teachers at an elementary school that some of their students had scored in the top 20% of a test designed to identify "academic bloomers"—students who were expected to enter a period of intense intellectual development over the following year. In fact, the students were selected randomly, and they performed no differently from their unselected peers on a genuine academic test. A year after convincing the teachers that some of their students were due to bloom, Rosenthal and Jacobson returned to the school and administered the same test. The results were astonishing among the younger children: the "bloomers," who were no different from their peers a year ago, now outperformed their unselected peers by 10-15 IQ points. The teachers fostered the intellectual development of the "bloomers," producing a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the students who were baselessly expected to bloom actually outperformed their peers.

Labeling isn't always a cause for concern, and it's often very useful. It would be impossible to catalogue the information we process during our lives without the aid of labels like "friendly," "deceitful," "tasty," and "harmful." But it's important to recognize that the people we label as "black," "white," "rich," "poor," "smart," and "simple," seem blacker, whiter, richer, poorer, smarter, and simpler merely because we've labeled them so.

Referenced articles:



3 Why Do Men Sexually Assault Women?  
by Noam Shpancer, Ph.D.



4 Beauty Matters Part 1: The Hardware of Sexual Attraction  
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## A Wisconsin Example of the Impact of Instructional Coaching

The benefits of instructional coaching are well documented nationwide. Right now it is hard to attend a professional development in leadership in Wisconsin without hearing about Baraboo. Recently their superintendent and curriculum director presented for the AWSA Big 3 program.

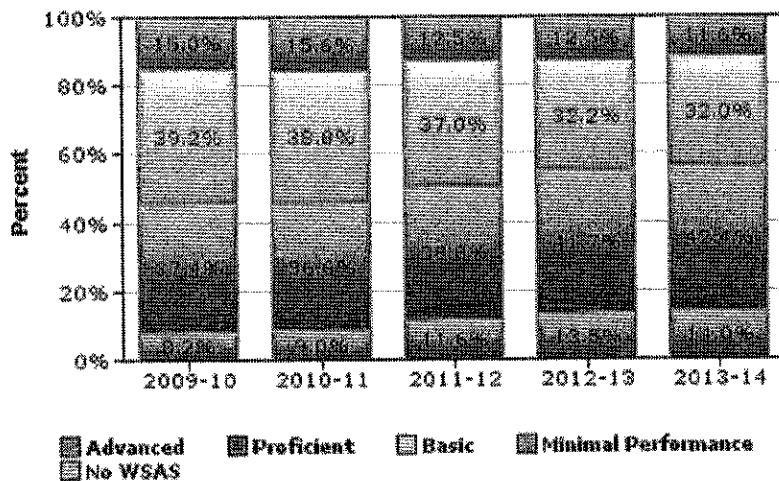
Last year Baraboo was a district of 3110 students. It had a 47.8% economically disadvantaged rate, 429 students (13.8%) with disabilities and they had 70 ELL students (2.2%). Last year Tomahawk had 1,297 students. 37.2% are Economically Disadvantaged, 153 students (11.8%) with disabilities, and 2 ELL students (less than 1%).

While they have adopted a myriad of things in their district, one of the things they highlighted in detail was their instructional coaching program. Their district has over 40 instructional coaches, 15 of them are full time with no teaching responsibilities. These coaching roles range from PBIS, to science, Math, literacy, ELL, GT, and even one coach dedicated to 4K instruction. They have exceeded state expectations as a district the last two years. As a district over the last five years their reading scores have been steadily improving, moving students up the scale from min to advance. Math is even more impressive. Moving students from 8.2% advanced to 14% advanced, and moving students on the minimal end from 15% to 11.6%. In the 2009-10 school year their math scores as a district they had 54.2% of their students scoring below proficient. Last year they had 43.6. Tomahawk has consistently hovered between 55% and 60% during that same time period.

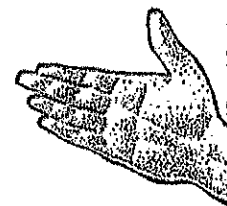
### Baraboo

#### WSAS Performance Category (Trends)

##### (Mathematics)



# A Primer on Instructional Coaches



BY JIM KNIGHT

## PREVIEW

**Instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to help them use proven practices.**

**Coaches model teaching in classrooms and help teachers identify when to implement interventions.**

**Principals work with instructional coaches to strengthen their own knowledge and identify teachers who will receive the greatest benefit from coaching.**

*Jim Knight (jknight@ku.edu) is the project director of Pathways to Success at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning in Lawrence, KS.*

When I was a principal, I wanted so much to have an impact on how my teachers taught. As I was talking with teachers or observing them, I'd think how much I wished I had the time to give these teachers the kind of support they need. If I had had an instructional coach in my school, I could have done that....When I see a coach and principal work well together, the coach is really an extension of the principal—the coach makes it possible for the principal to truly be an instructional leader.

—Doris Williams, A Harford County (MD) Department of Education Hall of Fame Principal and director of the Passport to Success Program in Anne Arundel County, MD

The pressure to improve the quality of instruction in schools may be higher today than at any other time in the history of U.S. education. To respond to this urgent demand, schools across the nation are hiring instructional coaches (ICs) although there is little published research that shows what works and what does not work when it comes to instructional coaching. This lack of information about instructional coaching puts principals and districts at risk. If principals and other decisionmakers do not understand exemplary coaching practices, they risk spending precious dollars on instructional coaching programs that have little or no effect on student achievement.

Over the past six years, researchers from the Kansas Uni-



versity Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL) have been studying ICs who work in two programs: Kansas University's Pathways to Success project and the Maryland Department of Special Education's Passport to Success project. Pathways to Success, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's GEAR UP program, has been implemented in nine middle level and high schools in Topeka, KS, and Passport to Success has been implemented in five middle level schools in Anne Arundel County, MD. In my capacity as the project director of Pathways to Success, I have identified seven common questions about instructional coaching and here is what the researchers have learned from studying these two instructional coaching programs.

### **What is an Instructional Coach?**

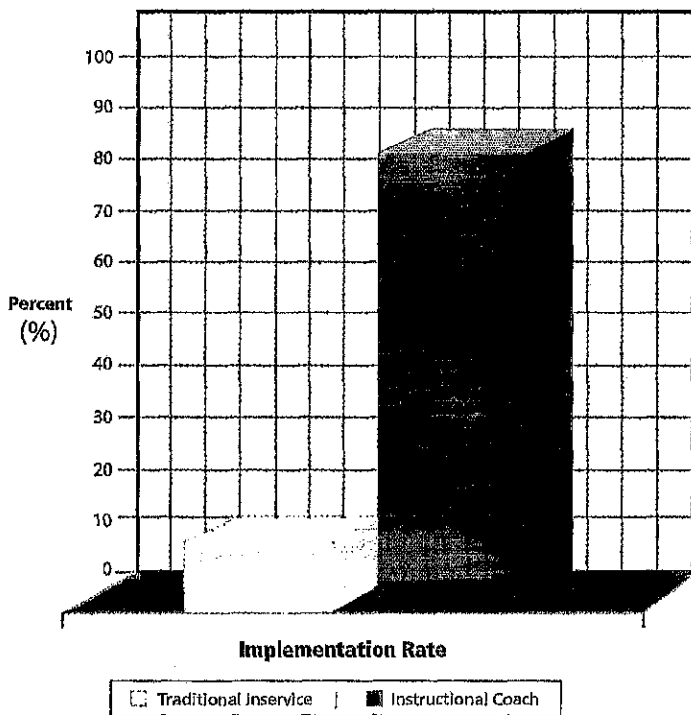
An IC is an on-site professional developer who teaches educators how to use proven teaching methods. ICs use a repertoire of effective instructional practices to collaborate with teachers, identify practices that will effectively address teachers' needs, and help teachers implement those practices. ICs use a variety of professional development procedures to encourage the widespread, high-quality implementation of effective teaching practices, including holding one-to-one or small-group meetings during which ICs can identify how to address their most pressing concerns; guiding teachers through instructional manuals, checklists, and other materials; collaboratively planning with teachers to identify when and how to implement effective instruction practices; preparing materials for teachers prior to instruction; modeling instructional practices in teachers' classrooms; observing teachers when they use interventions; and providing feedback to teachers (Knight, 2004).

**Why Invest in Instructional Coaching?**

Research from Pathways to Success and Passport to Success suggests that there are at least three important reasons why coaching can be a good option for school improvement efforts. First, coaching leads to implementation *when* the right conditions are in place. In both projects, well-constructed coaching programs have consistently generated implementation rates of at least 85%, with schools frequently getting every teacher to use several effective instructional practices.

Recent implementation rates after teachers had attended summer workshops reveal that within six weeks of the start of school, 85% of the Pathways to Success teachers (70 out of 82) were already implementing practices from at least one of the workshops. In contrast, Showers and Joyce (1996) suggest that traditional inservice with no follow-up is likely to have no better than a 10% implementation rate (see figure 1).

[Figure 1]  
Percentage of teachers supported by coaches implementing interventions within six weeks of workshops compared to the implementation rate for traditional inservice.



Second, ICs can also increase teachers' fidelity to scientifically proven instructional practices. Pathways to Success recently studied the importance of fidelity by comparing the results of middle level students ( $n=1,302$ ) in what is referred to as "hi-fi" classrooms (where teachers used practices that were close to those outlined in instructional manuals) with

middle level students ( $n=562$ ) in "low-fi" classrooms (where teachers left out major components of the teaching practices outlined in instructional manuals). The results showed that students in hi-fi classrooms improved the number of complete sentences by 13% (from 74% to 87%) and students in low-fi classrooms improved by 4% (from 76% to 80%) (see figure 2).

To better understand how ICs help teachers, researchers recently conducted a survey of teachers who had watched an IC from KU-CRL provide a model lesson in Pathways to Success schools. As figure 3 illustrates, teachers stated that watching an IC made it easier for them to implement a given teaching practice, increased their fidelity to the instructional model, increased their confidence, and enabled them to learn other teaching techniques. From the teachers' perspective, watching a coach in the classroom was an important part of professional learning.

A third benefit of instructional coaching is that it promotes positive conversations in schools. By providing support to teachers and changing the type of conversations that take place in schools, ICs make an important contribution to school reform. As Perkins (2003) has observed, encouraging positive, or what he refers to as "progressive," conversations in schools is difficult but very important:

"In times of stress, while cognitive load is high, behavior tends to regress toward simpler earlier-learned behaviors. And it's hard to be progressive when the other guy is being regressive. Both progressive and regressive practices stimulate their own kind." (p. 247)

Through healthy, empathetic conversation, ICs help teachers move away from regressive interactions in which personal responsibility is reflected mostly through blaming external factors such as parents or administrators (Fisher & Frey, 2003) to progressive interactions that involve "effective knowledge processing...[and] the kind of symbolic conduct that builds cohesiveness, trust, and commitment" (Perkins, 2003, p. 29).

**What Should ICs Teach?**

The intense pressure to foster significant improvements in student achievement can lead some leaders to promote many school improvement efforts within a single year. However, promoting too many interventions can actually be counterproductive. According to Conner (1992), most people embrace some change in their life, but as the number of changes multiplies and as the time demands increase, people approach a dysfunction threshold, a point where they lose the capacity to implement changes. For this reason, principals and coaches must carefully choose what changes they initiate and focus on high-leverage interventions that are likely to have a significant positive effect on students' and teachers' lives. In the Pathways to Success program, teachers' needs are viewed as a hierarchy that is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As a result, the

professional development is organized around teachers' and students' most-pressing needs.

ICs start by helping teachers address classroom management issues. For learning to take place, teachers must first be able to keep the classroom a safe and productive learning community for all students. After the classroom has become well managed, ICs focus on content. ICs help ensure that teachers are teaching the right content and that they have a deep, correct understanding of the content standards. ICs then proceed to collaborate with teachers to develop a rich repertoire of teaching tactics to ensure that students master the content. These tactics include such practices as advance organizers, effective modeling, constructive feedback, effective questioning, and scaffolding instruction.

ICs also work with teachers to develop assessment literacy. Teachers obviously benefit from knowing whether or not their students are learning content. In addition, students become motivated when they know how well they are doing, when they receive frequent constructive feedback on their progress, and when they are involved in assessing their own learning.

Once teachers have their classrooms under control, are clear on their content and content standards, use instructional basics fluently, and are assessment literate, they then can continue to collaborate with ICs to enhance instructional proficiency.

### What About Skills?

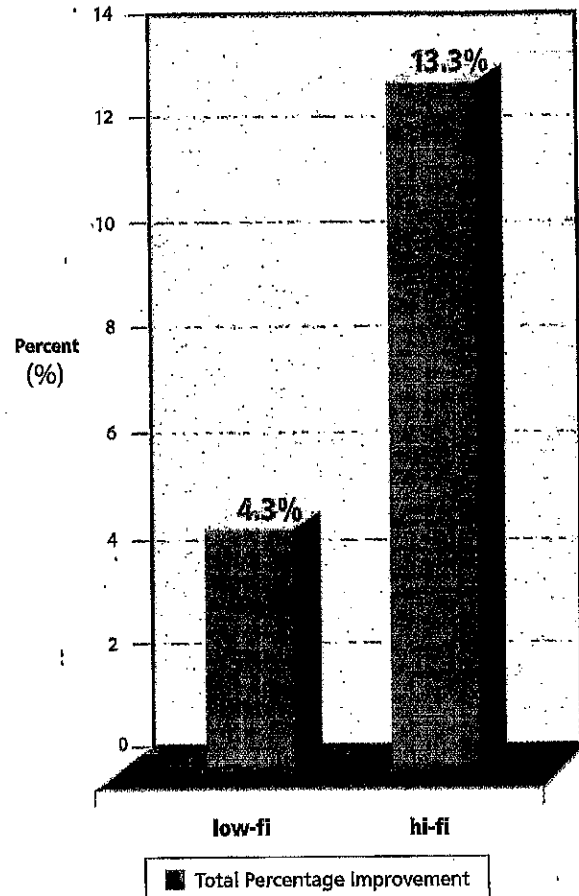
ICs need a deep understanding of the interventions they are sharing with teachers. In *Pathways to Success*, ICs receive ongoing and extensive professional development in the interventions they are sharing with teachers. In addition, personal qualities are very important: *How* a coach goes about working is just as important as *what* a coach knows.

Experience has shown that effective ICs must be master teachers who are comfortable going into any classroom and love having the chance to work with other teachers. Simply put, no matter how much ICs know, they won't win over teachers unless they can be successful in the classroom. An IC needs to have energy and a positive outlook, and he or she must be the kind of person that others enjoy being around. As one IC commented, coaches need to be "respectfully pushy." Most important, at their core, ICs must continually communicate their deep, honest belief in teachers—even when they are talking about specific ways that teachers need to improve their teaching practices.

### How Do Principals and ICs Work Together?

ICs have the greatest impact in schools where the principal and the IC work together in partnership. This partnership is manifested in several activities. First, ICs and principals must be in agreement about the nature, potential, and effectiveness of the interventions a coach brings to a school. In some

[Figure 2]  
Percentage Improvement in number of complete sentences written by students in hi-fi and low-fi classes.



cases, the principal already has a deep understanding of the interventions and what they should look like in the classroom; the principal might even be the primary mover behind the initiative being implemented by the IC. In other cases, the principal is one of the first people the IC educates.

*Pathways to Success* has developed tools that help principals quickly learn about the numerous interventions that are available. Because most principals do not have time to sit through extensive, detailed explanations, *Pathways* ICs have prepared *Strategies at a Glance*, which are one-page summaries of the various interventions, to make it easier to learn about the interventions. ICs often start to explain the various routines and strategies by sharing these materials with principals. In addition, ICs can share checklists that summarize the important teaching behaviors in the teaching routines and the learning strategies that teachers might be using.

Principals and ICs should also work together to identify the teachers who can most benefit from the IC's services. From their vantage point as administrators, principals can



identify teachers' true instructional needs and can respectfully encourage teachers to work with their ICs. At the same time, from their vantage point as professionals collaborating with teachers, ICs can offer principals another perspective on what is happening in the school.

**How Can Resistance Be Overcome?**

In some cases, teachers don't resist change as much as they resist poorly designed change programs. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), the history of technological change shows that the changes people embrace generally share two qualities: They are more powerful than older technologies and they're easier to use. Csikszentmihalyi states that the ideas, values, and technologies "that do the job with the least demand on psychic energy will survive" (p. 178). In other words, an appliance that does more work with less effort is preferred. If something is easier, if it does more, people embrace it. ICs believe that the same notion holds true for educational interventions and share interventions that are proven to work and that address the real challenges a teacher faces. The fact that these interventions help teachers help students increases the likelihood that teachers will adopt them.

However, even a powerful program is not likely to be adopted if it is difficult to implement. Interventions catch on and spread when they are powerful *and* easy to implement. This is where ICs become very important. The IC's job, in large part, is to make it as easy as possible for teachers to implement a given intervention. As IC Devona Dunekack from Eisenhower Middle School in Topeka, KS, observed, "As a coach, I do whatever I can to provide support. I make copies. I get them transparencies if they need them. I model

in their classrooms. I give them feedback. Sometimes support is just showing that things are happening even when the teachers are too close to the class to see it."

**What Is the Theory?**

The unfortunate reality is that ICs and principals can employ all of the tactics and methods outlined in this article and still fail if their change initiative is not based on sound principles. As the founding vice president of the Covey Leadership Center says "The principles you live by create the world you live in; if you change the principles you live by, you will change your world" (Lee, 1997, p. 7)

ICs in the Pathways to Success and Passport to Success projects receive extensive and ongoing professional development in what is referred to as the *partnership approach*

(Knight, 2002), which gives conversations a central role in professional learning and embodies seven key principles:

- Equality: Teachers and ICs are understood to be equal partners.
- Choice: Participant choice is implicit in every communication about content and in the process used to learn the content.
- Dialogue: ICs collaborate with teachers in conversations that allow the teacher and the IC to think and learn together.
- Praxis: Teachers and ICs creatively adapt, shape, and plan how to use interventions.

[Figure 3] Teachers' perceptions of the value of observing coaches providing demonstration lessons.

Questions	Mean score on a scale from 1.00 to 7.00
Does watching coaches demonstrate lessons make it easier to implement the interventions?	6.51
Do teachers think watching a coach model practices increased their fidelity to instructional practices?	6.4
Do teachers think watching a coach model practices made them more confident about implementing?	6.13

- **Voice:** Teachers and ICs know they are free to express their opinions about the teaching techniques they are learning.
- **Reflection:** Professional learning involves numerous opportunities for participants to consider the practical implications of the new ideas that teachers and ICs explore.
- **Reciprocity:** Coaches value the participants' perspectives and abilities to invent useful new applications of the content that they are exploring.

### In Conclusion

Instructional coaching is not a quick fix, but when it comes to creating an exemplary faculty, quick fixes are rarely the answer. Instructional coaching involves dedicated, persistent, meaningful collaboration among teachers, coaches, and principals. When highly qualified ICs are in place, when they focus on the right teaching methods, and when they take a partnership approach, real improvement can happen. Most principals find it difficult to find the time to do everything they need to do to support the professional growth of their teachers. However, when an IC and a principal work together in a true partnership, the IC can significantly help a principal with the challenging, time-consuming, and important work of developing an exemplary faculty. **PL**

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**Author's note:** More information about ICs can be found on the Kansas University Center for Research on Learning's Web site at [www.instructionalcoach.org](http://www.instructionalcoach.org). For additional information on the partnership approach, visit [www.ku-crl.org/partnership](http://www.ku-crl.org/partnership) to download the free Partnership Learning Fieldbook, which offers a detailed description of the partnership principles.



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