

# 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Making Principal Coaching Work



### 1

#### Support, don't evaluate

■ Coaches' main roles should be supporting principals and helping them to improve; they should have no involvement in a principal's evaluation. Clear district messaging on the distinction between evaluation and support is integral to getting principals to buy into the program and to be vulnerable about weaknesses.

### 2

#### Guide, don't direct: Do not micromanage

■ The coach is not there to do the principal's job, but to use their experience to develop their charge's leadership skills, solve problems, consider different perspectives, and lead their school on a continuous improvement path.

### 3

#### Establish trust

■ Without this essential ingredient, any principal-coach relationship is destined to fail. Principals will not engage in the necessary frank and open conversations that lead to breakthrough moments. The coach bears a large responsibility in forging that trusting bond. Frequent meetings at the beginning of that relations can help lay the foundation, but coaches must also let principals know that they are in a safe, judgment-free zone and that their conversations won't leave the room.

### 4

#### Build a district-level infrastructure

■ Districts have to know what they're trying to accomplish—is it stemming principal turnover, is it increasing tenure, for example?—and the problem they're trying to solve. Having a clear vision for the program and intended outcomes ensures that districts set up long-term planning, funding streams to pay coaches, and consistent procedures for all coaches to follow. It also ensures that the idea of coaching is embedded into the district's culture. It's also important that coaches are paid and are not volunteers.

### 5

#### Carefully hire and train coaches

■ Leading a successful school doesn't necessarily mean that a principal will be a successful coach. Coaches must be carefully selected, know how to lead adults—a different set of skills from leading children—and have excellent communication skills. They should also have a record of developing leaders during their tenure as principals. Districts must also invest in training coaches and providing continuous professional development if they want these programs to succeed.



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