

— A Beginner's Guide to — **INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING**

Access online at steplab.co/beginners-guide



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Welcome

Instructional coaching is one of the **best** ways for schools to improve teaching. We've pulled together this Beginner's Guide to help share what we've learned about effective instructional coaching and how to make it work.

It only scratches the surface, but will hopefully act as a useful 'beginners guide' for the system. As always, do get in touch with any suggestions for how we can make it better.

Josh Goodrich

Co-founder & CEO, Steplab

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What Exactly Is Instructional Coaching?



Peps Mccrea
Director of Learning, Steplab

You might have heard that instructional coaching is one of the most powerful forms of PD for teachers. But what exactly is it? Here's our perspective on the fundamentals.



Sarah Martin coaches Josh Carr

Instructional coaching involves one teacher working with another teacher, to help them take small, personalised steps to improve their practice. Instructional coaches help their teachers to get better by doing two things on a regular basis:

1. Identifying an area for improvement, usually based on a short observation.
2. Providing teachers with opportunities to rehearse, get feedback, and make a habit of their improvement.

In the observation phase, the coach will often drop in to the teacher's lesson for about 15 minutes. This is a chance to see how their teacher is getting on and identify the next best small step for them to work on. Instructional coaching observations are about developing teachers, not judging them.

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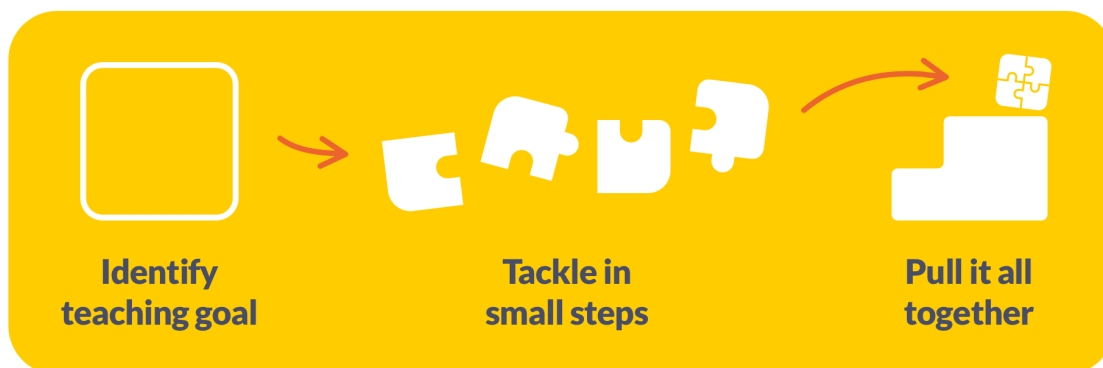
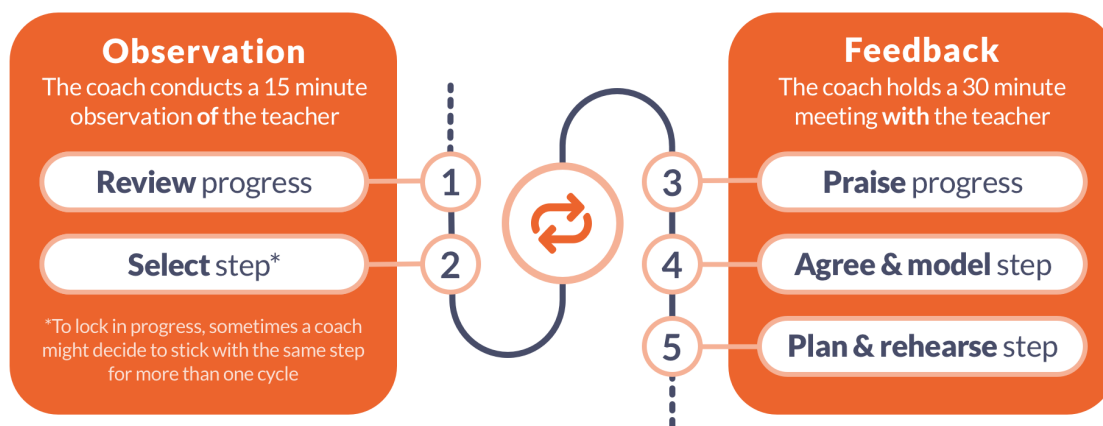
In the feedback phase, the coach and the teacher get together for a structured meeting lasting about 30 minutes. During this time, the coach leads the teacher through 3 activities designed to help them to improve:

1. Providing the teacher with praise on any progress they have made.
2. Agreeing the next best step for them to work on, before modelling the step to help the teacher develop an understanding of 'what good looks like'.
3. Helping the teacher to plan and rehearse their step, just as they'll use it in their classroom.

Coaching works best when we focus on small changes. Steps work best when they accumulate over time to help teachers achieve a bigger teaching goal.

During rehearsal, teachers typically try out their step multiple times, with the coach giving balanced feedback between each round. Rehearsal in this low-stakes environment allows teachers to focus all their attention on improving, so they can begin to master their step *before* taking it to the demanding environment of the classroom.

The coach then books in some time to observe the teacher using their step, and the cycle starts again. Here's an overview of the whole process:



The mechanics of instructional coaching

It's important to recognise that this is just an overview of the *basics* of instructional coaching. The 'full fat' version is much more complex and responsive to the needs of the teacher and goals they face. We're working on an 'advanced guide' to IC, but in the meantime, here are a few nuances to bear in mind.

Nuance 1 Instructional coaching doesn't just have to focus on what teachers do **within** the classroom. It's just as useful a tool for improving things such as lesson planning or assessment design.

Nuance 2 Sometimes, coaches provide lots of explicit guidance. Sometimes, coaches will ask lots of question to facilitate development. The best instructional coaching is **responsive** to the needs of the teacher being supported.

Nuance 3 The power of instructional coaching lies heavily in the 'compounding effect' of making small improvements on an ongoing basis. This is why IC works best when it is done regularly: ideally weekly or fortnightly, integrated into school timetables.

So there you have it, an overview of our perspective on the fundamentals of instructional coaching. For a more detailed perspective, check out Josh's blogs over at notes.steplab.co

Here's a visual summary of the main parts of the process:



The coach observes the teacher, reviewing their process and identifying a potential next best step



The coach gives the teacher precise praise before sharing and agreeing the next step to work on



The coach models the step to help the teacher see what good looks like in practice



The teacher plans and rehearses the step, multiple times, with feedback between each round, before taking it successfully to their classroom

A Short Summary Of IC-Related Evidence



Sam Sims

Researcher, Institute of Education UCL

Instructional coaching involves a more expert teacher working with a more novice teacher in an individualised, classroom-based, observation-feedback-practice cycle. Instructional coaching usually involves revisiting the same specific skills several times, with focused, bite-sized bits of feedback specifying not just what but how the coachee can improve during each cycle.

Over the last decade, we have accumulated considerable evidence supporting the effectiveness of instructional coaching. In 2011, a team of researchers published the results from a randomised controlled trial of the My Teaching Partner instructional coaching programme, showing that it improved results on Virginia state secondary school tests by an effect size of 0.22 (Allen et al, 2011). In 2015, the same team of researchers published the results from a second, larger randomised controlled trial of the My Teaching Partner programme, which found similar positive effects on

test scores (Allen et al, 2015). This evidence from replicated randomised controlled trials provides strong evidence that instructional coaching can work.

In 2017, a team of researchers from Brown and Harvard published a meta-analysis of all available studies on instructional coaching (Kraft et al, 2017). They found 31 causal studies looking at the effects of instructional coaching on attainment, with an average effect size of 0.15. The average effect size was, however, slightly lower



Sam Sims, IOE UCL

in studies with larger samples. This evidence from meta-analysis provides good evidence that evaluated instructional coaching programmes work on average.

A year later, a team of researchers from South Africa published the results from another randomised controlled trial (Cilliers et al, 2016). They compared a group of teachers who received (A) training on new techniques for teaching reading at a traditional 'offsite' training day, and (B) a group of teachers trained on the exact same content but using instructional coaching. The results showed that pupils taught by teachers given the traditional 'offsite' type training showed no statistically significant increase in reading test scores. By contrast, pupils taught by teachers who received the same content via instructional coaching improved their reading test scores by an effect size of

0.18. This evidence from A-B testing shows that using instructional coaching can make the same PD content more effective.

Instructional coaching is effective across school phases. There is also good evidence to support the effectiveness of instructional coaching focused on English and for instructional coaching focused on cross-subject teaching practices (Kraft et al, 2018). There is relatively little evidence on instructional coaching focused on STEM and humanities subjects, however, teachers in these subjects would likely still benefit from instructional coaching focused on cross-subject teaching practices. Recent research suggests that coaches themselves vary considerably in their effectiveness (Blazar et al, 2022). However, more research is required to understand what differentiates more and less effective coaches.

References

Allen et al. (2011) An Interaction-Based Approach to Enhancing Secondary School Instruction and Student Achievement.

Allen et al. (2015) Enhancing Secondary School Instruction and Student Achievement: Replication and Extension of the My Teaching Partner-Secondary Intervention.

Blazar et al. (2022) Instructional Coaching Personnel and Program Scalability.

Cilliers et al. (2016) Improving Early-Grade Reading in South Africa.

Kraft et al. (2018) The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence.

Four Challenges To Setting Up Coaching In Your School



Josh Goodrich
CEO, Steplab

Implementing instructional coaching is a tough leadership challenge, and requires constant effort and adjustment. Every school we know of that has ‘successfully’ built a great programme changes something about their approach every year.

Based on conversations with school leaders, our own work implementing coaching across schools and MATs, and the research, we’ve identified four key challenges that drive successful implementation:

- **Professional Culture** How can we develop a culture of openness to feedback and commitment to ongoing development?
- **Training** How we can recruit and train a team of skilled, knowledgeable coaches?
- **System Design** How should we structure our programme so that it delivers results in a way that balances with other school systems, and delivers efficiency?
- **Responsive Leadership** How can we gather information about what’s happening when our programme is up and running? How can we respond effectively to address issues and deliver continued improvement?

For schools that are at the beginning of their implementation, we would recommend taking on the challenges roughly in this order:



4 challenges of implementing instruction coaching

Challenge 1a: Building Culture

Solution → Before you implement IC, spend time making sure the cultural conditions are right

- **IC not PM** Ensure a full split of Instructional Coaching from judgemental performance management.
- **Open doors** Build an open-door culture by encouraging staff to give regular, short, 'zero-stakes' drop-ins. Make this a central feature of your whole-staff and subject PD.
- **Model mechanisms** Ensure that staff are familiar and comfortable with some of the key mechanisms of IC like modelling and rehearsal by including these as key components of your whole-staff PD.
- **Equalise it** Build a sense of IC as an egalitarian practice by recruiting widely for your initial team of coaches: move beyond SLT and look into using middle and pastoral leaders and beyond.

Challenge 1B: Training

Solution → Recruit and train your initial coaching team. The more time that they spend practising, the better

- **Set the standard** Develop a clear vision of what great teaching looks like in your context, including standardised language to help teachers describe this clearly. Codify clearly and share widely.
- **Create competence** Once you've recruited your initial coaching team, spend time training them in your vision of great teaching, as well as in key areas of coaching expert knowledge and skill, like how to model and lead rehearsal
- **Paired practice** Help your coaches develop confidence by giving them a chance to practise coaching on each other before they go live. Pair them up in reciprocal coaching pairs; only 'unleash' them on teachers when you - and they- feel ready
- **Coach-on-coaching** Keep an eye on the strengths and weaknesses of your team as they develop by conducting regular 'coaching-on-coaching'. Visit lessons with your coaches, discuss these with them, watch their feedback meetings and then coach them to improve their skills.

Challenge 2: System Design

Solution → Think hard about effective, efficient systems so coaching fits into your school day in a way that is manageable for teachers, coaches and leaders

- **Consider costs** Carefully consider the costs of IC for coaches and teachers: for coaches, each new coachee adds around 15 minutes for the lesson observation and 30 minutes for the feedback meeting
- **Work the ratios** Manage this by working on your coach-teacher ratio, ideally 1:1. Higher ratios may be manageable for senior leaders or those with dedicated time assigned to coach, but may prove too much for others. If your ratio of teachers to coaches is too high, you may need to recruit and train more coaches
- **Re-purpose meetings** Solve the 'time for coaching' issue in one go by providing dedicated time for coaches and teachers to complete feedback. One method that has worked well in many UK schools is to re-purpose a weekly staff meeting.

Challenge 3: Responsive Leadership

Solution → Focus on sustaining and improving your coaching over time

- **Improve completion** Gather and analyse data around completion of coaching observations & feedback meetings. Intervene early when coaching isn't taking place so that your coaches build lasting habits
- **Recognise effort** Build a culture where coaches feel valued for their hard work by taking the time to recognise coaches that are getting the job done well, week-in, week-out
- **Improve quality** Gather and analyse data about the quality of coaching feedback. Intervene early to address potential weaker quality coaching through providing additional training and using coaching-on-coaching
- **Compare with reality** Cross-reference your data against the reality of teachers' classrooms. Ask your T&L and SLT teams to take a history of teacher action steps on a learning walk: are teachers *really* using these in their classrooms? Do they appear to be improving learning? What might teachers need to be reminded about? What else could coaches focus on?
- **Grow your team** Ensure that you regularly recruit and train more coaches. Remember, every new coach you recruit and train increases your capacity to improve the quality of teaching.



A Brief History Of Steplab



Josh Goodrich
CEO, Steplab

When I trained as a teacher well over a decade ago, I found the process to be tough. Teaching, it turns out, is difficult, and so is getting better.

When I was initially entrusted with helping others to improve, I wanted to make this as easy as possible. At this point, hearing about Instructional Coaching was like having a lightbulb switched on in my mind: it just seemed like the obvious solution to these problems. I tried to make it work in my school and immediately hit a brick wall: it's just so hard to implement! Luckily, I didn't give up. Every aspect of Steplab is a response to barriers I identified at this point. At first, my

very limited technical prowess meant that all I could manage was a set of paper-based tools to help coaches do a great job; then, a kind-hearted tech genius (Ben) joined up, and our first online platform Powerful Action Steps was born. We've come a long way since then - including a much needed name change - and our team has got a little bigger, but we're still trying to solve the same problem that I faced back then: how can we make it as easy as possible for teachers to get better.



How To Select And Train Great Coaches



Harry Fletcher-Wood
Director of Training, Steplab

Effective instructional coaching relies on effective instructional coaches. An effective instructional coach is a special kind of teacher. They know how to teach effectively – and they are able to share this knowledge with other teachers. They are skilled classroom practitioners, and skilled in pinpointing teacher needs, modelling action steps, and helping teachers practise new skills. They can win their

peers' trust and build their confidence – while challenging them to improve.

There are three big things leaders can do to build a team of effective instructional coaches. First, they can select coaches who have this knowledge and skill – or who seem ready to learn. Second, they can offer training. Third, they can provide ongoing support to help coaches keep learning and improving.

1. Selecting promising coaches

It's always tricky to select the right person for a role. Since coaches are usually selected internally however, we can at least benefit from our existing knowledge of their skills and characteristics. Many schools find it helpful to select coaches for their interest in pedagogy and helping teachers improve – and for the enthusiasm for further learning. We don't believe the perfect selection process exists. The training and support we offer coaches, once selected, is probably more important.

2. Training to help coaches improve

Instructional coaching demands a new set of skills. Classroom teaching alone doesn't fully prepare coaches for this. So we believe schools need a structured programme to help new coaches learn the job, and existing coaches improve. The curriculum for this would follow the phases of a coaching conversation, including:

- Setting up the coaching conversation and building trust
- Identifying learning problems, teaching goals, and action steps
- Developing and using effective models
- Planning and rehearsing the action step
- Following up and overcoming scepticism

We can help teachers gain these skills by explaining the principles, showing models, practising, and following up – as we would teach any new skill. One-off training can be forgotten in the maelstrom of an ordinary school week however, so offering ongoing support to coaches is crucial.

3. Ongoing support for coaches

Just as we weave instructional coaching into the fabric of the school day, and the teacher's life, we want to weave support and development into the coach's work. We might achieve this by encouraging coaches to observe one another coach, or by filming coaching sessions and reviewing them with other coaches. We can also safeguard time for coaches to plan coaching conversations together, or discuss the challenges they are facing. This ongoing support reinforces the training, and helps coaches apply it.



Case Study A: Building Systems To Support IC

Introduction from Josh To achieve the desired impact from an Instructional Coaching programme, schools need to get two things right: first, schools need to ensure that coaches are skilled in their jobs, that they are helping teachers work towards high-quality, evidence based teaching goals, and delivering feedback that helps move teachers forwards. It is the second, though, that is often an even bigger challenge for school leaders: if coaching observations aren't even taking place, then nobody will be getting better. Put simply, schools need to aim for a high-completion rate of coaching observations and feedback meetings if they want teachers to get better.

On Steplab, we help school leaders measure these completion rates so that leaders can make educated decisions about how to improve their

coaching programmes. This year - and despite the many challenges that COVID brought - one school jumped out as have the highest coaching completion rates in the country: St Lukes C of E school, part of the Ted Wragg Trust.

While many schools - due to staff absence issues and other related challenges - were struggling to get their completion rates up to 40 and 50%, St Lukes regularly managed to get these to 70 and 80%, and sometimes even higher. This would've been a major challenge before the pandemic, but these numbers truly signal that something special is happening at St Lukes. We asked Alex Evans, Assistant Principal for T&L what he did to make this happen. Alex kindly wrote the below blog to answer the question. We hope you find it useful.



Alex Evans

Assistant Principal, St Lukes

The context at St Lukes One year after starting to implement a coaching programme, the impact on the quality of teaching and learning in my school was visible. Seeing this impact my Headteacher said, “I need people to value coaching as much as they value lessons. Teachers would never miss a lesson, yet sometimes coaching gets pushed aside because people are too busy; coaching needs to be something which is never missed”.

Coaching at St Lukes got off to a great start. Firstly, staff did value access to coaching really highly: I’d recently surveyed staff and after our first year of having a coaching programme and 100% of staff had said so. I also knew I had a team of coaches completely committed to supporting staff and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

It’s not everyone that is in the position of having a willing coaching team, a supportive Headteacher and staff who highly value access to regular coaching. However, as everyone is aware, schools are incredibly busy places and school days are incredibly reactive for teachers and leaders; no two days in school are ever really alike.

What systems can help staff to prioritise coaching? With this in mind, I considered what measures I could put in place to maximise the completion in order that coaching could have the greatest possible impact.

1. Allocating time Firstly, both coaches and staff needed to be allocated time to coach and be coached. We found it essential to provide this time to staff so that people could really concentrate on the process of coaching and getting better without other distractions creeping in. All staff teach one lesson less than their allocation in order that they can receive feedback every week and equally coaches are allocated time to observe and give feedback.

2. Continuous messaging The second consideration was about communication. Firstly, to the staff body and secondly to the coaching team. The key messages to staff were that coaching is about development not evaluation: every single member of staff from ECTs, to the Senior Leadership team are coached weekly. I shared the financial and time investment the school was making in every member of staff in order that they could improve because, as Dylan Wiliam states,

“every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better.”

After communicating with staff it was important to also get the message right to the coaching team. The following quote from Paul Bambrick-Santoyo was used to explain this: “walk the halls in the best schools in the world, and an indisputable pattern emerges: the difference between a good school and a great school is not seen in the strongest teachers; there are strong teachers in nearly every school. Instead, the gap can be found in the difference between the strongest teacher and the weakest one. If your strongest teacher is an island, then the rest are as well, stranded from the resource that could make them better. But if teachers across the school learn and replicate what’s working in the strongest teachers’ classrooms, you’ve built bridges between those islands- and everyone’s students will thrive”.

This explained why they were the right people to coach and their purpose as coaches. I then needed to ensure we had a shared purpose and responsibility to ensure coaching completion was maximised in order to get improvements. For this, I shared the cost of coaching. Coaching, for all its incredible benefits, and it’s been one of the biggest factors in my

school’s journey of huge improvement and in my opinion completely worth it, is expensive. Especially if you allocate adequate time to it. If you tally all the time spent on coaching across the year and calculate how much staff’s time cost then you can imagine the figure. I spoke about our responsibility regarding this. The school had made a massive investment of our student’s money in coaching and it was therefore our responsibility to ensure coaching had the desired impact. Especially as we know that quality of teaching has the biggest impact on our most disadvantaged students who in the classrooms of the best teachers learn at the rate of their advantaged peers.

3. Setting the schedule in stone

These messages were well received by staff but we needed to do more. It’s one thing to get people on board, but I knew action was needed to get coaching thriving every week. This was a particular challenge because COVID was so prominent in our school that we regularly had several staff absent each day and often no cover teachers available. How could we help to raise the priority of coaching so that it equalled the status of teaching our students?

Our answer was inspired by my Headteacher’s challenge of helping

coaches to value their feedback in the same way that they value their teaching. The reason lessons are not missed is because they are timetabled: staff are expected to be in a set place at a set time. I knew I needed to replicate this for coaching.

To do this, after the school's timetable was confirmed I created a selection timetable with every member of staff in our school and ensured that every coach could observe their coachee a few times per week, with an additional timetabled lesson for weekly feedback. This was protected on their timetables and meant that staff couldn't be called for cover during the time their coaching meetings were meant to happen. In addition to timetabling coaching, I also wanted to make sure there was always a place where coaching meetings could take place. We now have a coaching room, dedicated to teaching and learning to ensure that teachers and their coaches have a quiet space, specifically dedicated to the idea of getting better.

The expectation is that the meeting takes place in this room at a set time, meaning that if a meeting is going to be missed, emails have to be sent and plans rearranged. This ensures the meeting isn't notional or something which needs to be re-planned each

week by a busy teacher. We found that it hugely increased the frequency of coaching that took place.

4. Step in when needed While time for coaching observations was protected, with high numbers of staff absence and the natural unpredictability of schools, things could still go amiss. As a contingency plan there was also the offer that coaches could email me and I'd cover the observation. I would drop-in and film so that the feedback could still take place.

Conclusion We're really proud of building a coaching programme where staff really have the space to prioritise getting better, but we want to make it better still. We're already considering additional strategies we can implement in the future, such as buying cameras for departments to film specific elements of lessons when their coach can't visit at that time or is absent. However, as absence returns to normal levels we're expecting our coaching programme to naturally improve. The key thing we've learned from this is that to make coaching truly prioritised and valued by staff, we need to help them to see that coaching is as important a part of teachers' jobs as their classroom teaching.

How To Support Effective Coaching Diagnosis



Josh Goodrich
CEO, Steplab

The central idea of Instructional Coaching is deceptively simple. As coaches, we watch a teacher in action, help them to select a 'high leverage' change, a teaching strategy that will make a big difference to the learning of their students, and work with them to enact this. However, the reality is slightly more complex.

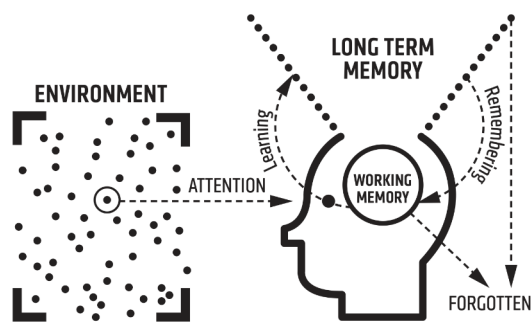
If the problems teachers faced were always simple enough to be tackled by a single step, they wouldn't really be problems at all. It's worth drawing an analogy with how we design curricula for students. The most effective method isn't (just) to ask teachers at the end of every lesson: "What is the next most high-leverage thing that you can teach?" Instead, great teachers combine in-the-moment responsiveness with a pre-planned curriculum. This article is an attempt to outline a more nuanced approach to coaching diagnosis.

1. Start with Learning Problems Coaches should base diagnosis on an evidence-informed model of the mechanisms underpinning learning. In Dan Willingham's "simple model" of memory, the central mechanisms of learning are modelled in a way that can be helpful to coaches.

The environment (eg classroom, resources, learning content, teacher talk, other students) is our *only* source of leverage over student

learning and behaviour. Through taking action to alter environment, teachers can influence:

1. **Attention** Students can only think about what they attend to; they can only learn what they think about; they can only recall or practise what they've already learnt.
2. **Working memory** Before students can successfully think - and therefore learn - we need to ensure that the quantity or challenge of content is appropriate.
3. **Thought** Before students can retrieve learning, initial encoding needs to take place. Students need to think about the right things, at the right times, to learn.
4. **Long Term-Memory** Finally, once students have successfully encoded new learning, retrieval and practice are necessary conditions of lasting learning.



Willingham's *Simple Model of Memory*
illustrated by the talented Oliver Caviglioli

2. Transform Learning Problems into Teaching Goals While learning problems are helpful guides to begin thinking about how to improve teaching, we cannot afford to stop here. Coaches must transform Learning Problems into Teaching Goals. A Teaching Goal is a specific sub-section of the problem: teachers can work on it for a period of time, make progress and even be said to have 'finished'. For example, while managing student attention [**learning problem**] is overwhelmingly large, asking a teacher to improve their systems for achieving and maintaining silence [**goal**] feels more manageable.

If coaches have a variety of potential goals, two principles can help to select appropriately:

1. **Motivation** Teacher learning cannot occur without motivation (Kennedy, 2016). If there is a choice of several possible goals, teacher motivation is a key factor.
2. **Coherence** As with students, teacher learning is best assured by following a coherent curriculum, so that teachers can build strong, stable mental models. If we have a choice of goals, the option that preserves curriculum coherence is worth selecting.

3. Transform Teaching Goals into Steps and Sequences Effectively setting steps for teachers is challenging. If the step is large than allows for easy change, teachers don't get better; if the step is too small for teachers to see its relevance to the wider context, change is often applied incorrectly.

To avoid this, we should carefully excavate the purpose of Steps. We achieve this by summarising the Challenge and Goal *before* the 'by' and clearly outlining the specific teacher action *after* it. For example: "Increase accountability for all students to participate and think hard during questioning **by** using the question, pause, name format: "How do Christians know that Jesus was resurrected... Ridwaan?"

Achieving lasting change in the classroom is rarely as easy as giving the teacher a single new step to perform. Coaches may need to create a sequence, a succession of small steps that will aggregate into a large scale change.

If it seems as if a teacher needs to take multiple steps to achieve a goal, coaches can sequence steps using the following principles:

1. **Teacher Knowledge** Step one is to consider what teachers *know*: the quality, accuracy and depth of teacher mental models is a critical foundation for any change
2. **Teacher Action** Next, we need to support teachers to enact these as classroom behaviours.
3. **Student Knowledge** Before a teacher can act to successfully change student behaviour, they need to influence what students think, feel and know
4. **Student Actions** Once the students understand the expectations and rationale for a change, teachers can begin positively influence learning behaviours.

And there you have it. How to support effective diagnosis in instructional coaching.

Instructional Coaching FAQ

Isn't subject-specific coaching the only thing that matters?

Mary Kennedy talks about the idea of teachers working constantly on five 'persistent challenges' of teaching. These are issues that all teachers face, no matter their phase, subject or context. These are:

- Behaviour: Managing behaviour and building motivation
- Curriculum: Selecting and Sequencing Knowledge
- Communication: Communicating complex content simply and digestibly
- Cognition: Ensuring students think hard about and retain knowledge
- Assessment: Assessing learning and responding to knowledge gaps

Some of these very clearly require subject-specific coaching: we cannot get better at selecting and sequencing knowledge through generic coaching. Others are very clearly generic: coaching on behaviour can happen independently of subject expertise. Others require a blend: within Assessment, teachers might need more 'generic' coaching on the best methods for gathering whole-class data in the context, or 'subject-specific' coaching on the key misconceptions within Act I of Macbeth. The research on coaching, and on teacher development more generally, is clear that expert teaching requires a balance of the 'generic' and the 'subject-specific'; any generic feedback also must always be contextually tweaked by the coach.

Coaching seems so time-consuming... how can I make time in our busy schedule?

Instructional Coaching works best when coaches have the time and space in their timetables to do coaching well: they can prioritise their lesson visits and feedback meetings without sacrificing other important aspects of their job. This happens when coaching is integrated with the school systems by removing other less important systems that may conflict with or block it. An example of this working well is dedicated a weekly whole-staff meeting for coaching feedback: staff need to attend the meeting, so this isn't wasted time for them, but we make the time work in the service of something that will really help them to get better.

Does this form of coaching limit teacher autonomy?

Teachers sometimes worry that their coach will force them to teach in a particular way. This worry can be particularly acute if they have previously experienced more open coaching in which they chose their own targets and actions. It may be helpful here to separate what the coach does from the autonomy the teacher retains.

For example, the coach may highlight a challenge in the classroom – some students don't fully understand the teacher's explanations. They will work with the teacher to identify an action step: breaking the explanation into smaller chunks. The teacher is free to persuade the coach another action step would be a better solution: they might prefer to check students' understanding more frequently during the explanation. The teacher retains autonomy over everything else that's happening: the lesson's objective, the point their explanation seeks to convey, the charisma they inject into it.

One way to explain the division of responsibility – and control - would be to say that the coach is invited to highlight an issue which needs to be addressed, but the coach then works with the teacher to agree how best to address it.

What if my teachers don't want to practice?

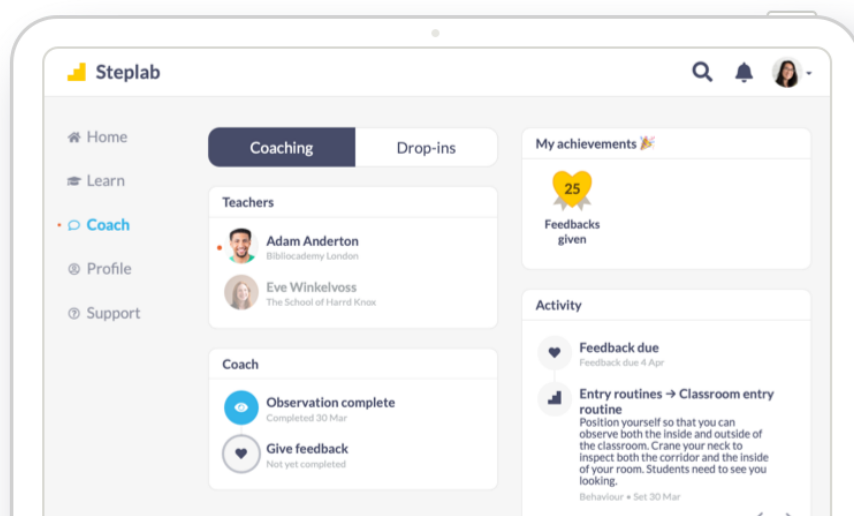
Building the correct professional culture is central to successful Instructional Coaching. Teachers must believe in the power of lesson drop-ins, shared planning and practice as vital tools in making consistent improvements. Schools that build a culture that promotes teachers' buy-in and motivation to participate in IC and make changes to their practice are more likely to see positive effects from IC. Leaders can begin to address any cultural issues by:

- Using rehearsal of key teaching skills as a central process in whole-staff PD first, so that staff can see this modelled and used well
- Explaining the centrality of modelling, rehearsal & practise to learning in other high-status, high-skill professions, like medicine
- Ensuring that leaders model the importance of deliberate practice
- Being unapologetic about asking staff to rehearse & practise. Replace: "now for the awkward bit!" with "Now for the important bit!". It may also be worth initially acknowledging that practice can feel awkward and scary at first.

Join thousands of teachers

Improve teaching in your school

Steplab is a professional learning platform for schools that harnesses instructional coaching and data-driven insights to systematically improve teaching.



What are schools saying about Steplab?

"If you are looking for genuine and measurable improvements to teaching and learning, I would wholeheartedly recommend Steplab. Its easy-to-use system offers clarity for coaches while giving leaders a tangible evidence base for improving professional development."



Jen Brimming
Head of T&L, Marine Academy Plymouth

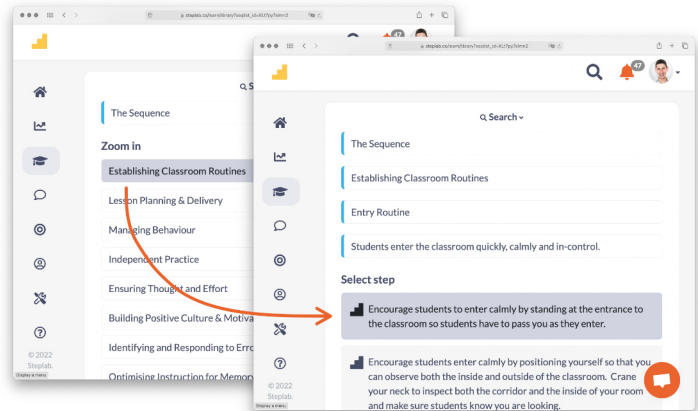
"Steplab has helped us answer one of the key questions all schools face: *how do you build great teachers?* It helps us ensure that every class teacher is given the support they need to drive great student outcomes."



Aidan Sadgrove
Principal, One Degree Academy

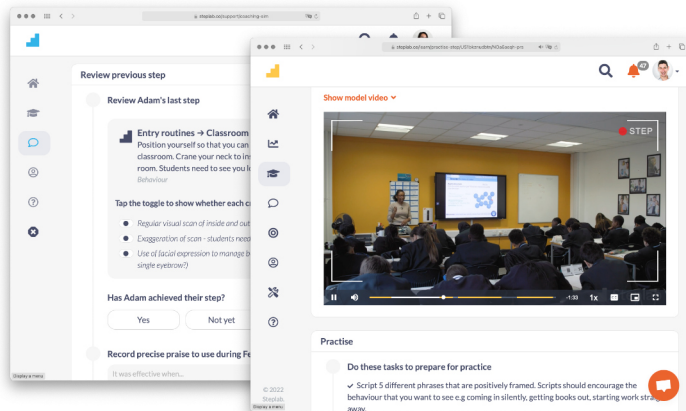
Content to help teachers improve

- ✓ 1500 granular improvement steps, each with success criteria, model videos and tasks to support deliberate practise
- ✓ Schools can use this straight out of the box, or use our course builder to customise it for their context



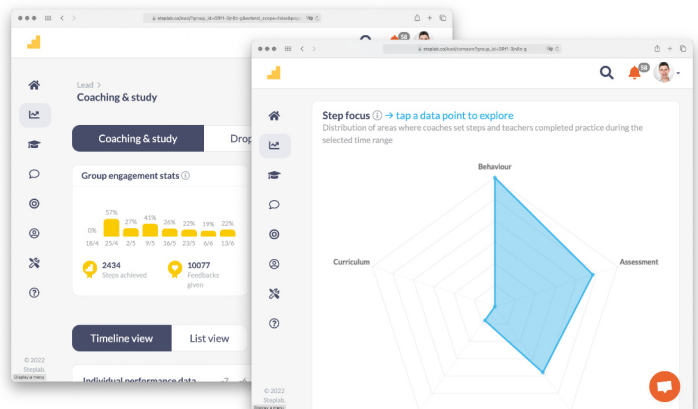
Tools to help great coaching happen

- ✓ Sophisticated online tools and content to power evidence-informed coaching observations and feedback
- ✓ Tools to help schools build the positive and open culture needed for coaching to thrive



Data analytics & training for leaders

- ✓ Our visual data dashboard helps senior leaders track and improve coaching over time
- ✓ Steplab comes with training and ongoing support to help get instructional coaching set up and working in your school



Want to learn more about how Steplab might be able to support your school or trust? Just drop us an email and we can set up a friendly chat → hello@steplab.co

