

The Purpose of the Proactive Coaching Framework

There is a growing body of research that points to the positive impact that mathematics leaders can have on teachers (Baldinger, 2014; Gibbons et al., 2017) and students (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Harbour et al., 2021; Kraft et al., 2018). The support that coaches provide is ultimately aimed at improving student learning opportunities so that all students can become powerful mathematics thinkers and doers (NCTM, 2018, 2020a, 2020b), but mathematics leaders need support in parallel. The Proactive Coaching Framework (PCF) provides that support through a reflective protocol to guide mathematics leaders in decision-making. The Framework takes what is known and working in teacher education, integrating teacher practice and research on how people learn mathematics, and connects to research about the design of effective professional learning experiences. The PCF

- is **job-embedded within relevant contexts** to provide sustained and ongoing learning opportunities situated in practice.
- is **focused on improvement of the methods of teaching** rather than focusing solely on individual teachers.
- provides **flexible and tailored implementation** to meet the diverse needs of your context and audience.
- is **grounded in evidence- and research-based teaching and coaching practices** that are coherent and flexible in a variety of contexts.
- allows for **collaborative opportunities** to learn in, from, and for practice among school stakeholders.

- supports **active learning opportunities** partnered with **guided support during implementation** to provide feedback and opportunities for ongoing reflection.

The PCF supports mathematics leaders in considering their context, the mathematics, and their long- and short-term goals as they design and deliver professional learning experiences.

The Framework brings together the Mathematics Coaching Practices (MCPs) and the Mathematics Teaching Practices (MTPs; NCTM, 2014) to support mathematics leaders in purposefully planning their coaching and leadership interactions. We drew on the eight MTPs as a core set of teaching practices used in mathematics instruction because they describe a vision of high-quality mathematics instruction. The MTPs allow mathematics leaders to address the complexity of teaching while making the learning demands manageable for the teachers they support (Grossman et al., 2009). The MTPs also represent essential teaching practices necessary to promote deep learning of mathematics and provide a common set of practices for school stakeholders to work on collectively as they move toward improved instructional practice at scale.

The PCF provides a unique perspective on mathematics coaching and leadership by intentionally blending the context and content. Those who have utilized the Framework have shown increased content-focused interactions and intentionality in professional learning implementations (Baker & Knapp, 2019; Baker, 2022). Additionally, as a coaching tool, the PCF provides self-reflection opportunities for mathematics leaders to step out of their personal comfort zones, critically examine their own practice, and target necessary areas of growth. This framework allows individuals to improve upon and reflect on professional learning experiences so that they can begin to have conversations and actions focused on instructional improvement.

Essential Elements of the Proactive Coaching Framework

- Guide users' thinking to make choices about designing professional learning experiences that honor the context and foreground mathematics content.
- Recognize a variety of coaching approaches and stances.
- Provide a flexible and modifiable tool to be used with other resources.
- Consider and highlight work with various individuals (e.g., coaches, leaders, principals, and specialists) and various groups (e.g., grade-level teams, the whole school, and multisite collaborations).
- Consider and highlight work in a variety of settings to promote collective, transformative, and systematic change.

- Promote explicit long- and short-term goal setting with multiple and ongoing coaching or leadership interactions.
- Focus on content-specific interactions. (Although the guiding questions can be applied broadly, the PCF focuses on specific sets of research-informed mathematics and coaching practices.)
- Develop reflective practice no matter the level of expertise or your positioning in K–12 education.

We recognize the complexity of coaching as well as the variance across sites. Just like anything in education, coaching and leading mathematics is not simple. It is our hope that those tasked with planning instructional or transformative change within a system recognize that

1. one person cannot do this work alone,
2. both short- and long-term goal setting and refinement is required, and
3. there are many factors to a coaching interaction that must be considered to foster others' productive beliefs in mathematics and make equitable instructional shifts.

When mathematics leaders support teachers' development of productive beliefs, new norms of instructional practice are established, and structures are created that encourage collaboration and address issues of equity and access. *Principles to Actions* (NCTM, 2014) acknowledges coaches' and leaders' critical role in positively influencing teachers' beliefs and enhancing teacher capacity. The Catalyzing Change series (NCTM, 2018, 2020a, 2020b) extends this by fostering critical examination and dialogue to systemically ensure access, equity, and excellence for every child. As mathematics leaders, it is critical that we realize our potential to influence others and build capacity in others to make equitable instructional improvements. We cannot wait for others to start the deconstruction of barriers and inequitable practices that hold students back. In the chapters that follow, we highlight ways in which the PCF supports the empowerment of mathematics leaders in acknowledging their role in catalyzing change, critically examining school structures, and surmounting long-standing inequities to better serve students.

References

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