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Inspiring improvement through Collaborative Leadership

Coaching model engages teachers, principals, students and families

Peter DeWitt is a professional development coach and the creator of Collaborative Leadership, a PD service that combines transformational and instructional leadership, and includes ways to engage the school community with a focus on learning. Collaborative Leadership is a series of one to five workshops focusing on research-based influences that can foster a supportive and inclusive school climate, increase academic and social-emotional learning, and maximize the efficacy of every school stakeholder.

Talk about the philosophy behind the Collaborative Leadership series.

The idea came out of my respect for servant leadership and instructional leadership. I wanted to convey a sense that incorporates both of those, while making sure that we highlight the need for family engagement, especially when it comes to new initiatives and implementation. Overall, Collaborative Leadership includes the purposeful actions we take as leaders to enhance the instruction of teachers, build deep relationships with all stakeholders, including families, through understanding self-efficacy and building collective efficacy to deepen our learning together.

What are some options for adopting this coaching model?

We have to remember that what is successful with one teacher may not be with another. I created a competency-based model of teaching that takes participants through six influences, or leadership factors, requiring them to collect evidence in their schools of how they are implementing the influences. Teachers learn to put these influences into practice as they identify four styles of leadership and build capacity with actionable steps to inspire real improvement with a collaborative coaching model of leadership.

How can Collaborative Leadership be used as a way to inspire teachers?

In *Collaborative Leadership: 6 Influences That Matter Most*, I write about Meet, Model and Motivate. Quite often suggestions are brought up in schools and then quickly

dismissed or dropped. There are a variety of reasons why this takes place, but one of the most important is that there are teachers or leaders in the room who just don't know how to put the idea into action.

So how do we put those ideas to action?

Too often we meet people where we think they should be, as opposed to where they really are. For example, we talk about growth mindset and expect teachers to understand what that means because they work in a school. Teachers and leaders were using it incorrectly. When we meet people where they are, it means we clarify these words we use, like growth mindset. Research tells us that not everyone feels efficacious in every part of their teaching, so this idea of modeling helps people conceptualize the idea we are trying to explore together. We model through watching videos, co-teaching in a classroom or watching someone else whom we feel connected to teach the concept. This idea of being connected to the person who models is an important distinction because they have to have credibility in our eyes in order for us to learn from them. Finally, motivation happens after people understand the concept, see what it looks like in action and then feel inspired to do it on their own.

What results can be seen in students whose teachers collaboratively lead?

This is an area I am now exploring because the work has been out there for over a year. What I have so far is the research collected by John Hattie, who I work with as a Visible Learning trainer. The research he has compiled shows that these six influences have an impact on student learning. However, what I would like to do is dig down a bit deeper and research this topic with the variety of groups I have worked with over the last year or two. So, I guess the last thing I want to say is ... stay tuned!



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