HMH Coachly
Research Evidence Base

The HMH Coaching Framework that underlies Coachly was developed with deep understanding of the research on best practices for instructional coaching and adult learning. Effective coaching partnerships are grounded in an evidence-based framework of instructional best practices & actionable strategies that help teachers connect their own growth to that of their students. HMH coaches help teachers track progress and measure success, which motivates them to implement the best practices learned during coaching sessions. The coaching framework includes five instructional domains: Assessment & Progress Monitoring, Differentiation & Small-Group Instruction, Discourse & Questioning, Learning Disposition & Behaviors, and Planning & Pacing. This whitepaper details the research evidence underlying each of these instructional domains.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Professional learning must be focused on curriculum and assessment to ensure that teachers find it relevant. Evidence of students' social, emotional, and academic development gained through informal and formative assessment practices grounds professional learning. Coaches help teachers collect multiple types and forms of student learning data that align to standards, so that decisions made at different levels of the system reinforce each other (Aspen Institute, 2018). Teachers use student data and assessment measures that reflect learning spaces, learning dispositions, and methods to demonstrate mastery beyond traditional standardized testing metrics. Professional learning supports teachers in the design and implementation of multiple forms of assessment that consider personalized student needs (e.g., learning dispositions, learning preferences, language proficiency) in an effort to improve equity (NYSED, 2019).

Differentiation and Small Group Instruction

Formative assessment is a key component of differentiation, as it allows teachers to assess not only students' knowledge and abilities, but also their interests and learning styles. Differentiated instruction results in more equitable learning as teachers consider students' individual learning styles, learning dispositions, learning preferences, and levels of readiness and design lessons to meet the needs of all students (Tomlinson, 2017). Students in differentiated classrooms feel safe and supported in the learning process. Because effective differentiation requires additional teacher knowledge and prep time, professional learning and coaching is essential to its success (Weselby, 2022).

Discourse and Questioning

When teachers facilitate and provide feedback on small group or peer-to-peer discourse, students develop and use appropriate discourse and deepen their understanding of the material. Teachers can develop a formative and differentiated learning culture by asking questions and leading discourse that is designed to deepen student understanding (Kanold, 2019). The quality and quantity of classroom discourse can be improved through careful planning. A study of classroom discourse found that, as teachers focused on increasing student discourse, the way that they planned for discussions also changed (Kavanagh, 2022). PLCs, in which teachers discuss and ask questions about instructional practices, can be utilized to help teachers practice new roles and model new patterns of discourse and questioning in the classroom (Shepard, 2019).

Learning Disposition and Behaviors

Classrooms that engage in deep examinations of multilingualism and multiculturalism, rather than surface explorations of other languages and cultures, are more likely to engage students and help them develop productive learning dispositions. Centering students' multilingualism through literature and discussions in the classroom, by treating it as an asset to be explored rather than a deficit to be fixed, can help to engage students that might otherwise be left out in a monolingual classroom (Ghiso & Animashaun, 2021). Deep learning requires a safe and

respectful classroom where students feel comfortable sharing or demonstrating their current knowledge in order for new knowledge to be incorporated (Shepard, 2019). Professional learning that puts an emphasis on equity should center instructional practices that will facilitate learning in which students integrate new knowledge into their existing sociocultural context.

Planning and Pacing

When planning and pacing lessons, teachers and coaches should center issues of equity by considering the range of student abilities and ensuring that there are multiple opportunities for teachers to check that the pacing is appropriate. Teachers can use collaborative planning time with coaches or peers to investigate challenges faced by groups of students and assess the impact of instructional practices implemented to address those challenges (Aspen Institute, 2018). Leaders can ensure that schools have evidence-based professional learning and planning time that is supportive of culturally responsive sustaining instruction, including space for collaborative curriculum development (NYSED, 2019). Both coaches and teachers report that insufficient planning time is a blocker for instructional improvement. Partnering with coaches who do not have other responsibilities can help ensure that the teachers' and coaches' time is well-spent on those coaching activities – co-planning, observing teachers, and giving feedback – that are most likely to improve student outcomes (Ravenell, 2019).

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