

Partners in Learning Peer Coach Programme

The Issue of Time and Cost

Some of the most frequently asked questions at Session 1 of the Peer Coach Programme are related to time and cost.

How do we find the time? How much time is needed? Who pays the peer coach?

Time is an ever-evasive commodity for teachers. Peer coaching is meant to become an integrated part of a school's professional development strategy. This is why we invite the school's leadership to the first session. In the seventh session we once again invite the leadership to attend and we actually address the issue of whole school professional development at that session.

Peer coaches are justifiably going to want to feel supported in some way regarding the time that they will require to coach. From the coaches' side there is already a commitment to time spent on training over weekends and growing their skills during the week. As they engage with a few teachers in the peer-coach relationship they will be looking for common time to spend having their planning meetings.

How much time is used in peer coach activities depends on the school's peer coach plan for that peer coach. Typically a planning meeting and the resulting lesson and follow-up takes about 4 hours, although this depends on many variable factors such as the nature of the lesson and the prior experience in using ICT, to name but a few.

Schools approach the time issue in different ways. Some schools provide substitute teachers so that peer coaches can have planning meetings during scheduled school time; other schools release peer coaches from the extra-mural programme. Some schools already have scheduled staff development time.

How schools allocate time to the peer coach is dependent on how schools value the potential of having peer coaches collaborating with teachers, exploring how to enhance learning with ICT integration. This one-on-one or small group collaboration will grow with every year of involvement in the programme as we train new peer coaches in the school. It therefore makes sense for the school to think in the long term when deciding on how it will make time available for peer coach sessions.

As part of its PARTNERS IN LEARNING programme Microsoft provides South African schools with free software and has invested in a wide range of teacher development courses such as Peer Coaching. There will be no additional payment for peer coaches. The peer coach training is valued at more than R2000 per peer coach and the experience and skills that the coaches will gain will be invaluable in their professional careers.

Read about how schools internationally are dealing with this challenge:
<http://www.school.za/PILP/peercoach/sessions/s1/faq.htm#q5>

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