



Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Executive Leadership Coaching Program: Mid-Year Report (October 2020 – March 2021)

Over the past five months AIR Executive coaches and twenty Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) school leaders have participated in over 180 hours of shoulder to shoulder coaching (**Exhibit 1**). American Institutes for Research (AIR) has supported an innovative, virtual coaching model to provide a job-embedded, differentiated support to identify and develop the leaders organizational change leadership competencies needed to address issues within their assigned school. Executive coaching sessions have provided ACPS leaders the support to bridge transferring and applying content delivered during the coaching sessions to the specific school improvement plan and day-to-day activities. The research based executive coaching model has provided each leader differentiated, ongoing support and feedback needed as principals continue to bring new content and strategies to their buildings (Marzano, 2003; Trotter, 2006).

The AIR executive leadership development and competency-based coaching model has focused on cultivating the knowledge, skills, and competencies of current ACPS leaders to acquire the tools to drive change, effectively bring students back into the buildings, address learning loss, and ultimately improve outcomes for all learners. We have consistently provided responsive, needs-based support that challenged leaders to develop leader competencies; deepen instructional leadership skills; implement best practices in decision making; build distributive leadership skills; leverage knowledge and experience; and become disciplined strategic planners, communicators, implementers, and monitors.

Shoulder to Shoulder Coaching

AIR has provided Executive Coaching to all 20 ACPS school leaders beginning in October 2020. Each school leader has been engaging in virtual coaching sessions (60 minutes every other week). AIR coaches work with each school leader to schedule sessions during or outside the traditional school day based on their specific availability and preferences. Using the topics outlined in Exhibit 1 as the roadmap the school leader and AIR leadership coach may participate in the following activities based on the differentiated needs of each school leader:

- Use data tools to identify building-level inequities and their root causes.
- Develop leadership competencies and strategies to address inequities and close building-level gaps.
- Co-observe and or review videos of classroom instruction and debrief on components of effective instruction.
- Review and improve the type of feedback provided to teachers, as well as how feedback is delivered.
- Analyze school/grade/classroom-level data related to areas of the School Improvement Plan.

- Use data tools to monitor teacher improvement and determine additional professional needs for individual teachers and grade levels throughout the school.

Exhibit 1. ACPS Executive Leadership Coaching Session Topics

Session	Topic	Dates
1	Introductions – Getting to Know You	Oct 12-1, 2020
2	Goal Setting – Cycle 1	Oct 26-30, 2020
3	School Improvement Planning	Nov 9-13, 2020
4	Equity Gaps/Re-Entry Planning	Nov 30 - Dec 4, 2020
5	School Improvement Plan	Dec 14-18, 2020
6	Continuous Improvement Process	Jan 11-15, 2021
7	Goal Setting – Cycle 2	Jan 25-29, 2021
8	Equity/Opportunity Gaps & Quarterly Chat Support	Feb 8-12, 2021
9	Re-Entry Plan	Feb 22-26, 2021
10	Multi-Tiered Support Systems and Interventions	March 8-12, 2021

Goal Setting

AIR executive leadership coaching sessions are designed to follow the GROW model (Exhibit 2) for coaching (Whitmore, 2009). This model for professional coaching focuses on the coached individual setting a personal or professional goal for which he or she ultimately is responsible. Each AIR Executive Coach and school leader establish coaching goals per quarter based on the AIR Organizational Change Leadership Competency Self Reflection administered in October of 2020 and aligned with their individual School Improvement Plan. The role of the coach in each coaching session is to support the leader in examining progress toward his or her goal and identify relevant action steps to overcome existing obstacles.

Exhibit 2. AIR Coaching Cycle



At the end of each coaching cycle AIR Executive Coaches meet with each school leader to review and reflect on progress towards the established coaching goal. The AIR Coach and school leader discuss artifacts that the school leader brings into the coaching session to demonstrate progress towards the coaching goal. Artifacts could be meeting agendas and minutes, student data, a product that was developed such as a Communication or Implementation plan, and or videos demonstrating the leader in action. The AIR Coach and school leader review the artifacts and collaboratively determine a rating for the coaching goal; met, partially met, or not met. The goal review session ends with the setting of a new goal based on that rating.

Overall, coaching goals identified for the first coaching cycle reside within one of three broad areas:

- The principal will monitor and analyze school wide data practices.
- The principal will leverage and monitor Professional Learning Communities and quarterly data meetings.
- The principal will identify, implement, and monitor innovative and equitable means of communicating with parents.

The majority of ACPS school leaders met their goal for Coaching cycle #1 (Oct. – Jan. 2021). Of the school leaders who partially met their goal it was due to having a lack of time to fully address their goal due to the demands of planning for school reopening or that the goal which seemed doable in October became overly ambitious once the demands and challenges of remote learning were identified as the school year progressed. School Leaders who fell into this latter category used this as an opportunity for reflection to set a Coaching Cycle #2 goal acknowledging the parts of their former goal that were accomplished and focusing on deepening implementation.

Executive Coaching goals for coaching cycle 2 reside within one of the following three broad areas:

- The principal will implement and monitor a Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS).
- The principal will address the identification and implementation of strategies to address instructional loss.
- The principal will develop and implement communication plans for engaging parents in the reopening of schools.

Looking Ahead

- AIR is currently working collaboratively with ACPS District Leadership in planning professional learning sessions and a Community of Practice to potentially begin during the summer of 2021.
- Complete an end of the year AIR Executive Coaching summary.



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