

Funding Sources for Instructional Coaches

In North Dakota, schools are increasing the use of instructional coaches to assist with literacy and math instruction. Instructional coaches may also be known as “Intervention Specialists” or “Mentors”. Whatever the title of this position, the basic role of an instructional coach is to increase the instructional capacity of teachers so they can better incorporate literacy or math into their instruction (Hall, 2004). An instructional coach is one who supports others in building their teaching skills, assists others in applying new knowledge, and provides ongoing professional development.

Through conversations with districts across the state, many have indicated a lack of sufficient funding to support instructional coaches. The ideas listed below are possible solutions on how to fund instructional coaches.

1. Use Federal Title Funds:
 - Title I funds can be used to help fund instructional coaches in Title I buildings.
 - Title II A funds designated for professional development could be used to support an instructional coach within the building or throughout a district.
2. IDEA Funds. One of the four priorities in Special Education is to provide intensive district-wide development for special education and regular education teachers that focuses on scaling-up, through replication, proven and innovative evidence-based school-wide strategies in reading, math, writing, and science, and positive behavioral supports to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The use of instructional coaches can help meet this priority.
3. Rural Education Achievement Program Initiative (REAP). These funds target small rural districts. Eligible school districts are allowed to combine the funding under several Titles and can use these funds for any authorized activity. If your school is eligible, these funds can be combined into Title I, Title II A, or Title V and used to support instructional coaches.
4. Program Improvement Funds. Schools and districts identified for improvement may receive additional funds to help them make Adequate Yearly Progress. Using these additional program improvement funds to support instructional coaches would be an allowable use of these funds.
5. Transferability. These funds target larger urban districts. Eligible school districts are allowed to combine some of the federal funding under several Titles and can use these funds for any authorized activity. If the school is eligible, these funds can be combined into Title I, Title II A, or Title V and used to support instructional coaches.
6. Small Rural Schools Achievement Program Funds through REAP. Eligible schools can apply for these additional funds through the U.S. Department of Education. These funds can be used for any authorized activity under the Title programs and can support any of the supplemental activities under the federal programs, including instructional coaches.
7. General Funds. Another avenue for funding instructional coaches is the district’s general funds. If the school staff really believes that these activities will make a difference, consider collecting the data and showing how it will improve student achievement, then approach the school board and request funds to sustain it.
8. Pool Your Resources. In North Dakota, it is becoming quite common for districts to cooperate and share services. Federal regulations allow school districts to pool their resources to share services among several schools. One district would simply agree to be the fiscal agent and the funds would flow through that district to pay for the shared activities. Districts could pool their funds to hire an instructional coach. Another viable option would be to share resources through your local Regional Educational Association (REA).
9. Reallocated Title I Funds. Reallocated funds are available to school districts that would like to add on to their current Title I program, but need additional funds to accomplish their plan. The funds must supplement their current local and Title I budget. These funds are made available each September and could be used to support any additional activity that will enhance services for Title I students.