

Trends Across Instructional Coach Experiences

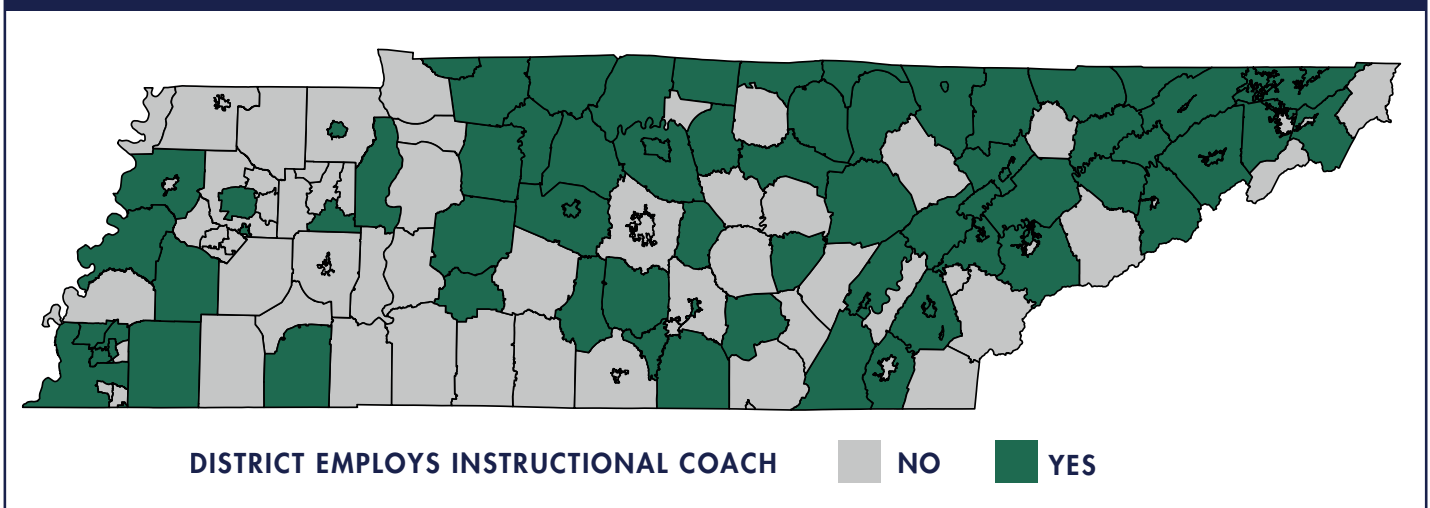
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ABOUT THIS SNAPSHOT

This snapshot provides insights into the experiences of instructional coaches in Tennessee. Working within 46 districts across the state, instructional coaches are school-based personnel who provide direct coaching to teachers in most academic subjects including ELA, math, science, social studies, and Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²). Compared to the average classroom teacher in Tennessee, instructional coaches tend to be more effective (as measured by level of overall effectiveness scores), more experienced, and have higher educational attainment. They work with all grades, but the majority work at the elementary level. Additionally, instructional coaching has increasingly been a focus for The Tennessee Department of Education through efforts such as the Read to be Ready coaching network.

In the 2018 Tennessee Educator Survey, we asked educators who indicated that their primary responsibility is working as an instructional coach to answer a series of questions designed to better understand how they spend their time, what challenges they may face, and how satisfied they are with their jobs. **These trends matter because understanding more about the instructional coach role in Tennessee provides important context for continued research into what high-quality professional learning activities look like for teachers.**

ABOUT HALF OF ALL TENNESSEE SCHOOL DISTRICTS EMPLOY AT LEAST ONE INSTRUCTIONAL COACH.*



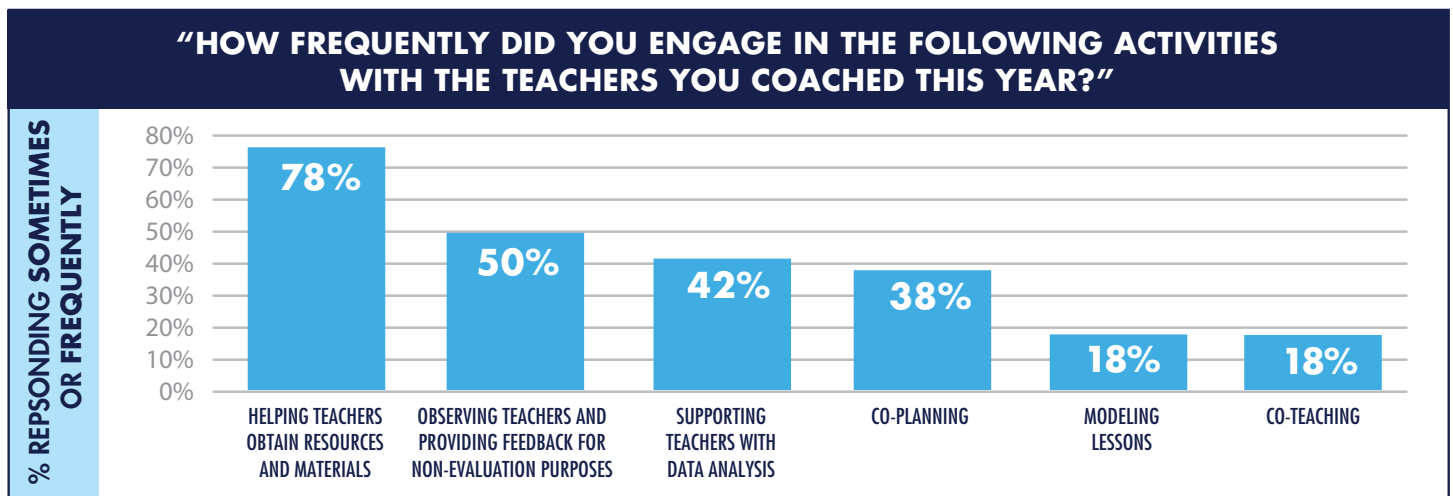
*Individuals identifying their "primary professional position/role" as "Instructional coach" on the 2018 TES are included in the survey analysis. For the map above, which includes both survey respondents and non-respondents, instructional coaches are identified as staff tagged with assignment code 308 in TNCompass during the 2017-18 academic year.

KEY TRENDS

Among the wide variety of job responsibilities, most instructional coaches who responded to the survey report that they frequently spend time helping teachers find instructional resources and materials.

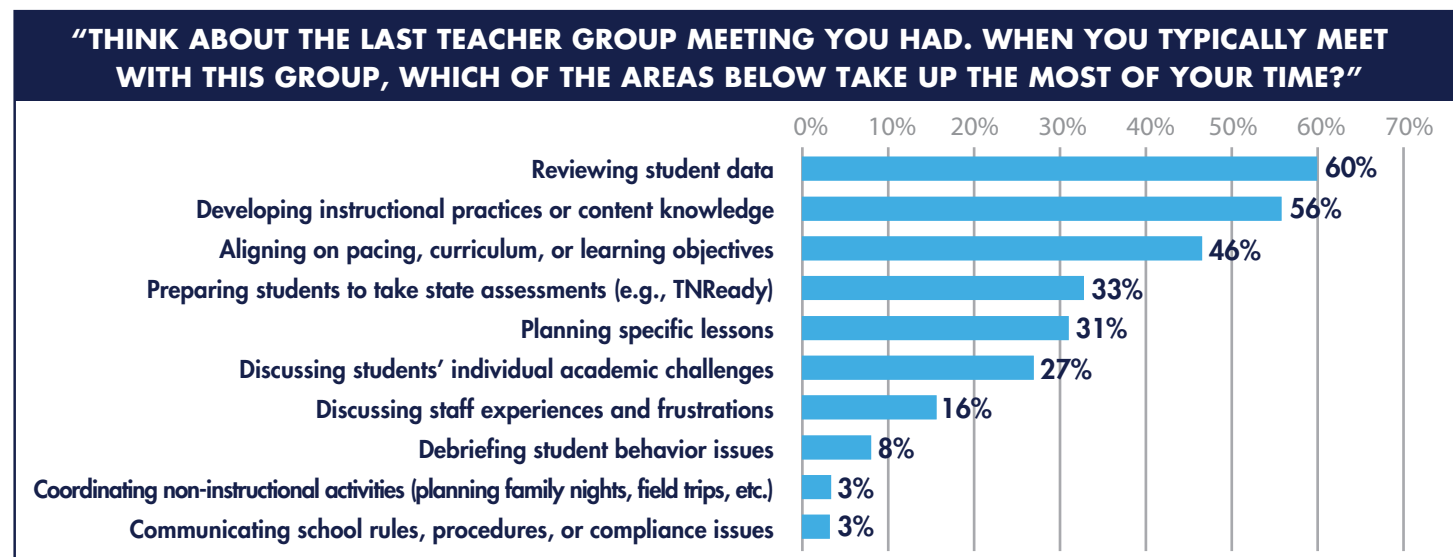
There are a wide variety of tasks that instructional coaches in Tennessee may do to support teachers and schools. Nearly 80% of respondents report that they frequently spend time helping teachers obtain resources and materials, and 50% state that they frequently observe teachers and provide feedback. However, instructional coaches seem to engage with teachers less when it comes to co-teaching or modeling lessons.

These trends support results from previous years' surveys where Tennessee teachers reported difficulties identifying and accessing high-quality instructional materials. On past surveys, instructional coach respondents indicated that there may be a misalignment between what they view as the most effective use of their time and what they actually spend time helping teachers doing. For example, in 2017, almost half of instructional coach respondents indicated that they help teachers obtain materials and resources on a daily basis but only 13% felt this was an effective use of their time (Bailey, 2017).



During a typical meeting with teachers, respondents report using that time mostly to review data and develop instructional practices.

When asked which aspects of their job take the most time during a meeting with teachers they work with, those who answered the survey report that they spend the most time either reviewing student data (60%) or developing instructional practices for their teachers (56%). Survey respondents also report spending considerable time helping teachers fine tune aspects of their instruction, such as pacing and incorporating appropriate learning objectives.



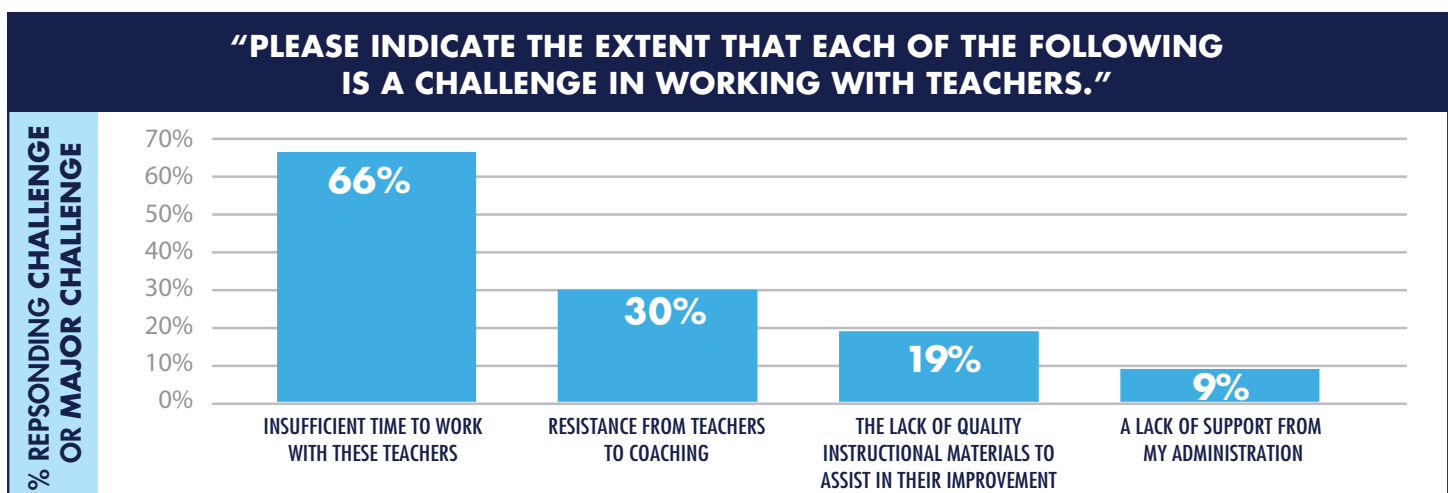
Instructional coaches who responded to the survey believe their work impacts teaching and learning, but they feel less certain about the expectations of their role.

Instructional coaches were asked a series of questions regarding their understanding of the impact and purpose of their work. Nearly 100% of respondents believe that their efforts lead to improvements in teaching and in student achievement. However, fewer respondents feel that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.



Among 2018 survey respondents, a lack of time presents the most significant challenge to instructional coaches.

Despite experiencing overall satisfaction in their work, survey respondents acknowledge some challenges they face. Nearly 70% of instructional coaches who responded to the survey believe that a major challenge in their work is insufficient time to work with teachers. About one third of respondents also report resistance from teachers as a challenge in their work. On the other hand, only 9% of instructional coach respondents feel that lack of support from their administration was a challenge, suggesting that they likely have a positive relationship with their school leaders.





NEXT STEPS FOR RESEARCH

Results from the 2018 survey provide a useful overview of the work of instructional coaches throughout the state. Instructional coaches are tasked with a variety of jobs, and spend a good portion of their time working with data and helping teachers gather materials for instruction. Among 2018 survey respondents, coaches believe that the work they do matters for schools and are generally satisfied in their roles. However, through survey results, we also see that some coaches experience ambiguity about their responsibilities and many do not feel they have enough time with teachers to do their job effectively.

Given their direct role in supporting teachers, continuing to examine the experiences of instructional coaches helps provide valuable insights into teacher improvement and professional learning experiences. Future TERA research will explore these connections more deeply.

REFERENCES

Bailey, I. (2017) Educator Insights: Takeaways from the 2017 Tennessee Educator Survey. Tennessee Department of Education.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The Tennessee Educator Survey is an annual joint effort by the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) to gather information about schools across the state. Open to all teachers, administrators, and certified staff, the survey is a way for educators to provide feedback about what's working and where improvements can be made in areas like school climate, educator evaluation, and other state initiatives. Survey responses directly inform state research and decision-making processes and are a tool for schools and districts to inform their practice.

In this series, TERA will provide a broad look at responses and trends from 2018 in several key areas relating to educators in Tennessee. Topics include job satisfaction, hiring patterns, growth and professional learning, educator evaluation, aspects of school support roles (assistant principals and instructional coaches), and more.