

## 4.

## THE COACH NEEDS A CONFIDENTIAL WORK SPACE

Mia had an awesome office with a view of the tree tops, but the walls were paper thin! She could hear everything said in the office next door and vice versa. She overheard phone calls, sensitive conferences, and her colleague's radio. Mia didn't feel comfortable having her own confidential conversations because of the thin wall, so even though she had a great office, she couldn't spend much time using it.

Space is very often limited in a school. Doubling up in an office (or closet!) is a common scenario. Coaching often requires confidential spaces for meeting with a teacher, for instance debriefing a lesson, or having sensitive discussions with colleagues and peers. Just like any other member of the school staff, a coach needs appropriate space to conduct business to their fullest ability, but will often be forced to employ all their flexibility and creativity in order to find it.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How does the lack of a confidential space impact your ability to be effective?

Are other confidential spaces available throughout the building? (e.g. conference rooms, empty classrooms)

Who else might you consult, aside from the principal, to find a better space? (e.g. secretary, custodian, librarian)

Do you have the opportunity or freedom to choose where you work?

Is your administration aware of the situation? What alternatives have they already offered?

## PLAN A: COACH DOES HAVE ACCESS TO A SPACE

Do you have your own office? If so, great! That is a rarity.

### START HERE

- Make your space inviting and calm: have a diffuser, plants, comfortable seating, and adjustable lighting.
- Keep your office door open most of the time unless conducting confidential conversations or needing to work without interruption.
- Be mindful of which conversations should be done in private, such as discussing sensitive student data or meeting with a teacher for a coaching cycle. Consider conducting non-sensitive or informal conversations outside of the office.
- Alternately, consider opening up your space for meetings: formal (PLCs, leadership meetings) or informal (drop-ins, conversation space).

If you don't have your own personal space, ask a colleague if you can "borrow" their space when it is not in use. Calendar out a schedule or plan ahead to ensure that no one is caught off guard or without the space they need.

## PLAN B: COACH DOES NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A SPACE

If a coach lacks a designated space to have private and uninterrupted coaching conversations, do not give up hope. Many schools experience overcrowding and shared working spaces and a coach must still find ways to provide a confidential environment for teachers to discuss their practice, as well as the coach having a space to complete their own individual work.

### START HERE

First, prioritize work and determine when a confidential space is an absolute necessity:

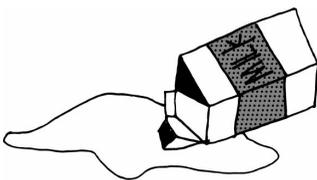
- For business related calls or work
- For private/confidential conversations with teachers

When a confidential space is needed to work with a teacher (and time allows), consider possible meeting locations within the building, district facilities, or even off-site:

- Reserve a conference room
- Meet a teacher at a coffee shop or public library
- Set up a virtual meeting (via Zoom or Google Meet)
- Ask to borrow the principal's office, when available

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### WORST CASE SCENARIO



If there are no alternatives, consider asking about flex-time or working from home to complete business.

## FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

- ☆ Be proactive
- ☆ Be creative
- ☆ Be flexible

## PITFALLS

- ✘ Whining
- ✘ Thinking the problem will solve itself

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### YOU GOT THIS!

We acknowledge that not every coach will have a defined office space, but you can build welcoming environments for collaboration in all sorts of unexpected ways. Some coaches have transformed the staff lounge into places where they can have meetings around meal times, and we've even seen amazing transformations of custodian closets. The trick is to think creatively!



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### READ THIS

Diane Sweeney, "Why Coaching Shouldn't Be Kept Confidential" from Diane Sweeney (May 19, 2017).

Jim Knight, *The Impact Cycle: What Instructional Coaches Should Do to Foster Powerful Improvements in Teaching* (2011), p. 84.

