

**Moves for Launching  
a New Year of  
Student-Centered  
Coaching**

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# Moves for Launching a New Year of Student-Centered Coaching

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 CORWIN

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# About the Authors

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**Diane Sweeney** is the author of *The Essential Guide for Student-Centered Coaching* (2020), *Leading Student-Centered Coaching* (2018), *Student-Centered Coaching: The Moves* (2017), and *Student-Centered Coaching From a Distance* (2021), published by Corwin. Each of these books is grounded in the simple but powerful premise that coaching can be designed to more directly impact student learning. Diane spends her time speaking and consulting for schools and educational organizations across the

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**Leanna S. Harris** is the author of *The Essential Guide for Student-Centered Coaching* (2020), *Student-Centered Coaching: The Moves* (2017), and *Student-Centered Coaching From a Distance* (2021), published by Corwin. She has worked as a teacher and coach and is now a senior consultant with Diane Sweeney Consulting, where she helps schools and districts implement Student-Centered Coaching. Her work is based on the belief that professional development for teachers is most effective when it is grounded in outcomes for student achievement—

for every child, every day. Leanna is a passionate skier and cyclist and lives in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and three kids.



**Julie Steele** has been in public education since 1998 as an elementary teacher, instruction specialist, and consultant. In 2019, she chose to pursue a full-time career in consulting to have a broader impact on students and teachers around the country. Her consulting projects include in-person and online support related to the implementation of Student-Centered Coaching. In addition, Julie has a passion for continuous learning that has led her to present at numerous educational conferences, provide professional learning for school districts around best practices and high-impact

instruction, and author several blogs on equity. Julie resides with her husband and kids in the Kansas City, Missouri, area and she spends as much time as she can in her second home in Buena Vista, Colorado.

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# Section I

## Build Relationships

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# Move 1

## Be Visible

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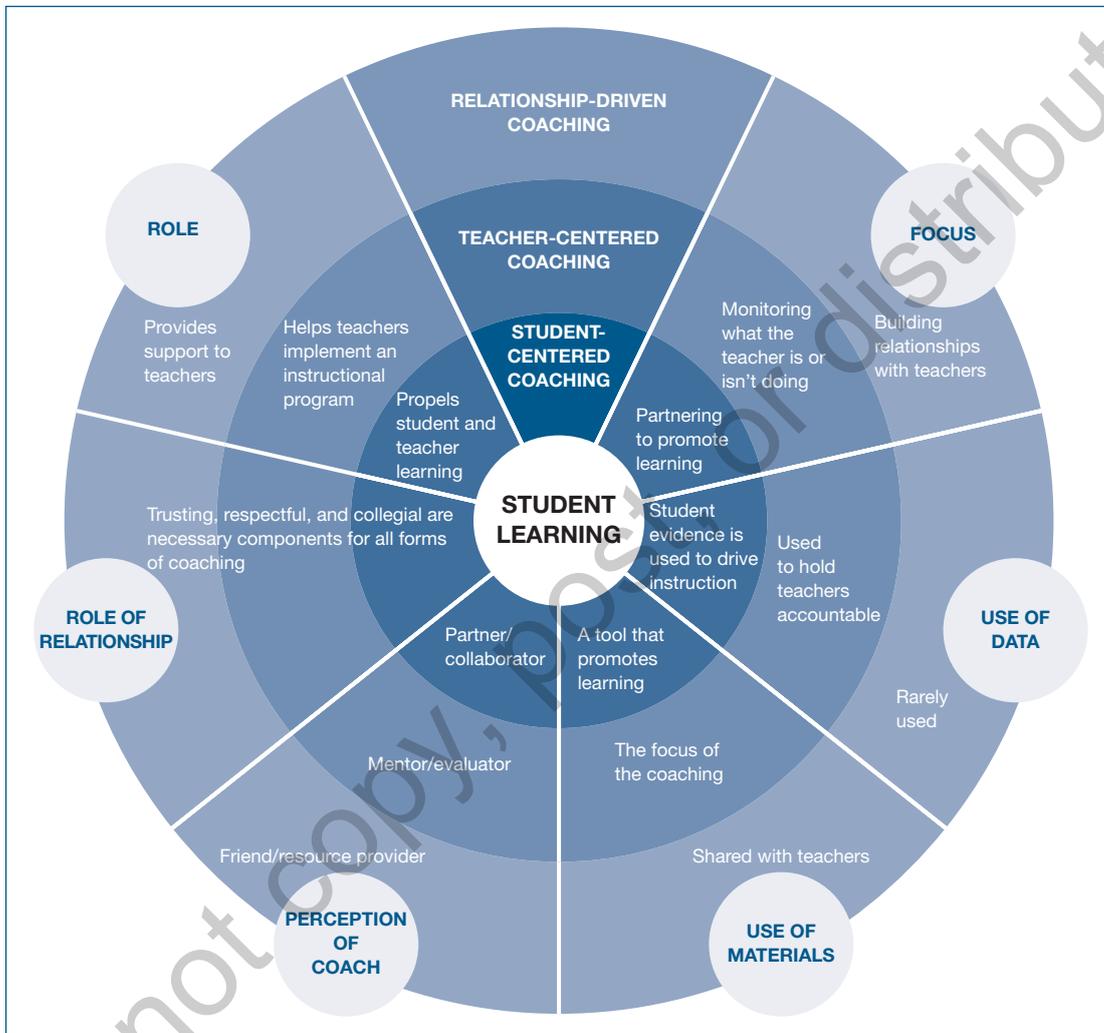
Relationships are the foundation for all coaching. Whether you are new to a school, new to the role, or have been in the position for a while, now is the time to be known and visible throughout the school community. This might include helping teachers set up their classrooms, organizing materials, greeting students and families, and supporting the establishment of the day-to-day operation of the school.

In *The Essential Guide for Student-Centered Coaching* (Sweeney & Harris, 2020), we introduced the following figure to compare Student-Centered Coaching with other approaches to instructional coaching. You'll notice that we use the language of *relationship-driven*, *teacher-centered*, and *Student-Centered Coaching* to describe what we've seen in schools as we've supported coaching over the past decades. This figure describes the role, focus, use of data, and other common coaching behaviors in each type of coaching. We like to think of it as a dartboard. When playing darts, we aim for the bullseye at the center; in this case, the center is student learning. The closer our darts are to the bullseye, the bigger the impact that will be made on teacher and student learning. While it would be nice if we could hit the center every time, we may find ourselves in the outer rings at the start of the school year. This can feel scary because we know that we don't want to get trapped there forever. To avoid this, it's helpful to think of this move as an investment that we make early on with the knowledge that a shift to coaching cycles will soon come.

It's also important to point out that conversations with the principal are an essential step in creating norms and expectations around the

coach’s duties. We often hear from principals and coaches that anchoring your focus in the following graphic is a concrete way to clarify that while right now a coach may be serving as a resource provider, deeper coaching is right around the corner.

Student-Centered, Teacher-Centered, and Relationship-Driven Coaching



Source: Sweeney and Harris (2020).

## Reflect



What does *being visible* mean to you?

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## What This Move Looks Like

The following strategies are about building relationships and cultivating your identity as a coach. Pretty soon, you won't need to actively work toward being visible because you will have established strong partnerships with teachers.

### 1. Create a Welcome Letter or Video

Whether you've already been a coach in your school or are just getting started, a welcome letter or video is a great way to introduce yourself, share your beliefs, and build excitement around coaching. Because every year introduces new members of the school community, it's important that this strategy isn't overlooked just because you may have been in the school for a while. Possible audiences for welcome videos include teachers, students, and even families who might be interested in the coaching program. In the Tools and Artifacts section, we share a few examples of welcome letters.

### 2. Help Teachers Set Up Classrooms and During Transition Times

One of the best times to be out and about in a school is during transition times. Rolling up your sleeves and helping with these kinds of duties sends the message that you are a team player. This includes

welcoming students each morning, being present during passing periods, and supervising drop-off and pick-up. Coaches can also help teachers get their learning spaces ready for students. All you need is an informal sign-up sheet, like the example we've provided in the Tools and Artifacts section. Teachers will appreciate all the help they can get as they race to prepare for the arrival of their students.

### 3. Help With Beginning-of-the-Year Assessments

While we caution against becoming full-time testing coordinators, this doesn't mean we can't help out with assessments at the beginning of the year. When it comes to supporting assessments, we recommend that coaches cover classrooms rather than directly administering the assessments themselves. This reinforces the importance of teachers getting to know their students as learners and protects the coach from becoming an interventionist. Coaches can also support new teachers in understanding how district assessments are administered, where to find necessary resources, and how to input testing data.

### 4. Be a Learner

One of the most important ways that we can build relationships is by maintaining a learning stance. Being curious and open sends the message that we aren't there to "fix" teachers or tell them what to do. Seek opportunities to spend time in the classroom of an unfamiliar subject, grade level, and so on; doing so reinforces this learning belief because it means a coach recognizes that teachers have something to teach them. Spending time in classrooms as a learner is a great way to make connections with more veteran teachers as well as with those in grade levels you may not have worked with in the past.

## How to Partner With the Principal on This Move

It's vital that we work with the principal to create boundaries around these early-in-the-year tasks or we run the risk that they will become our core work. We recommend the coach and principal talk through the following questions to ensure that they are set up to shift to coaching cycles as the school year gets up and running.

- What are some early-in-the-year tasks that the coach can help teachers with?
- What is the start date for kicking off coaching cycles?
- How will we monitor the tasks the coach is involved in?





## Tools and Artifacts

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### VIDEO

Student-Centered  
Coaching in the First  
Few Weeks of School



### SAMPLE

Sign-Up Sheet for  
Informal Support



### SAMPLE

Welcome Letters

[www.dianesweeney.com/launching-tools](http://www.dianesweeney.com/launching-tools)

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