September 16, 2015

To: Student and School Success Coaches Fr: Michael Merrin and Craig Shurick

Re: Guidance for Success Coach Portfolios for 2015–16 (Revised from 2014–15)

Many of you have inquired about expectations for Success Coaches Portfolios for 2015–16. This guidance is designed to respond to your questions and clarify intended purposes for the portfolio and expectations for content. Please recall that the submission of a portfolio, including the Theory of Action anchoring the portfolio and evidence of impact, is a deliverable in each Success Coach contract; the portfolio is due **Wednesday**, **June 8**, **2016**.

This guidance is divided into the following sections:

- I. Success Coach Portfolios Purpose, content and format, and submission date (page 2)
- II. Theories of Action (provides the foundation for the Portfolio) What are they, why are they important, what do they look like, and how are they created? (pages 3–6)
- III. Example of a Theory of Action and related evidence for a Success Coach Portfolio (pages 7–8)
- IV. Timeline to create, implement, monitor, and revise the Theory of Action (page 9)
- V. Resources, including access to Success Coach Portfolios from 2014–15 (page 10)
- VI. Success Coach Review Tools (pages 10–12)

As appropriate, coaches are encouraged to focus their Theory of Action on the "themes for improvement initiatives" for 2015–16: (a) strengthening the core instructional program*; (b) using data to surface and address inequitable outcomes and practices; and (c) applying research (e.g., Active Implementation Frameworks) to move evidence-based practices and interventions to full implementation so they reach ALL students who can benefit. Note that these align with this year's areas of emphasis for Success Coach Professional Learning. *The Instructional Core is the primary instructional program in which at least 80% of students reach/exceed standards. It's what all students receive as a Tier I application of learning.

We presented a webinar on January 5, 2015 to support coaches to develop and revise their Theory of Action. The link to the PowerPoint and recorded presentation is http://www.k12.wa.us/StudentAndSchoolSuccess/Webinars.aspx. We will review portfolio expectations and respond to questions during the September Regional Improvement Network (RIN) meeting. Subsequent Success Network meetings throughout the year will include opportunities for peer review of the Theory of Action and strategies for gathering evidence for the portfolio that will be submitted in June.

We understand that Success Coaches who developed a Theory of Action in 2014–15 may choose to continue to implement that Theory of Action this year. Please revise as needed to reflect your school's current work and the three areas of focus for 2015–16 (i.e., strengthening the core, using data to surface/address inequitable outcomes, and applying research).

As always, please be sure to contact us if you have questions or concerns!

At the heart of the coach's Theory of Action are the planned interventions and intended impacts that will interrupt inequities in student outcomes and educator practices and move toward the vision of a high-achieving and equitable school.

-Coaching for Educational Equity (The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, 2008)

I. Success Coach Portfolios for 2015–16

The process of developing the Theory of Action was powerful!

I wasn't sure about this at the beginning of the year...but now I know what a difference it has made to my work.

-Success Coach Comments, June 2015 Statewide Convening

Why do Success Coaches submit a portfolio?

Success Coaches create, share, and submit a portfolio for several reasons:

- They use their portfolio to describe and share evidence of coaching moves (their "Theory of Action") in one of their assigned schools and the impact of those moves on educator practices and student learning in that school.
- Coaches can learn from the experiences and expertise portrayed in the portfolios of their peers. Understanding the problems of practice and coaching moves in one setting can inform coaching moves in another setting.
- Our office gains a deeper understanding of problems of practice in Priority and Focus schools across the state and the theories of action coaches employ to address those problems of practice. Together, these inform the professional learning we offer to Success Coaches, school and district leaders, and teachers.
- Finally, coaches use the portfolio to satisfy one of the deliverables in their contract.

What is the expected format and content for the Success Coach Portfolio?

Coaches provide a **2-3 page narrative** that includes the following elements.

• Theory of Action: Describe both the Theory of Action for their selected school AND how the theory evolved over the course of the year.

Their summary statement would include the following: (a) problem of student learning, (b) problems of educator practice addressed by the Theory of Action, (c) school's S.M.A.R.T. Goals addressing this problem of student learning and related educator practice, and (d) summary of coaching moves ("If I do...then I impact...that results in...)

- Expected Indicators/Tasks: Identify and list Expected Indicators and/or tasks that align with the Theory of Action and for which there are data that show changes over time. For example, Expected Indicators from Principles 1, 2, 4, and 5 could be used for the example in Section III.
- Evidence in Indistar: List and describe specific evidence uploaded in Indistar® by their school that supports moving those goals toward full implementation. Evidence should demonstrate measurable changes in educator practice aligned with the Theory of Action (e.g., increased use of identified instructional practices [GLAD strategies] as demonstrated through Learning Walks). See Section III for additional information.

What is the submission date?

Coaches submit their portfolio on Edmodo by **June 8**, **2016** (instructions to follow). Time will be provided during the meeting for coaches to share their portfolio with other coaches and receive feedback.

While developing their theory of action, coaches collaborate with principals and school teams to develop goals.

This collaboration increases commitment and accountability and ensures that changes in practice are informed by multiple perspectives.

-Coaching for School improvement: A Guide for Coaches and Their Supervisors (Laba, 2011)

II. Theories of Action

Problems of change are problems of learning, and each person and each institution enters the learning trajectory from a different starting point.

-Coaching for Educational Equity (The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, 2008)

What are theories of action and why are they important?

Theories of action are stories "based on evidence that tell the specific steps that will be taken to achieve a desired outcome" (Center for Educational Leadership [CEL]). Theories of action are important for Success Coaches, because they offer them a way to plan, clarify, think critically about the assumptions that may underlie their work, and reflect on their practice.

What does a Theory of Action include?

Theories of action begin with a straightforward statement anchored in research and local data: "If I/we (action or evidence-based strategy), then I/we impact (educator practice), that results in (improvements in student learning)."

Figure 1. Key Components of a Theory of Action



What does a Theory of Action look like from the perspective of a principal and school team?

Sample initial theories of action for Priority and Focus schools follow:

- If we adopt a new literacy curriculum, then we impact the content with which teachers and students interact, that will result in students becoming stronger readers and writers.
- If we provide PD focused on using Interim Assessments in ELA, then we impact instructional decisions, which will result in students becoming stronger readers and writers.

The challenge with these succinct statements is that they don't provide the *storyline* (sequence of evidence-based actions and strategies) that link "*If*" to "*Then we*

impact" to "That will result in." That is, just adopting a new literacy curriculum won't necessarily result in students becoming stronger readers and writers.

Because of this, the school's initial Theory of Action will evolve to include evidence-based strategies to ensure the adoption of a new curriculum results in the desired outcomes. In this example, strategies incorporated in this Theory of Action (or storyline) might include:

- Ensure curriculum is aligned with Washington State Learning Standards,
- Provide professional development to support effective implementation, and
- Monitor implementation of the curriculum.

What does a Theory of Action look like from the perspective of a Success Coach?

The Theory of Action below was created by a Success Coach working with a school that identified "engagement in the content" as a central problem of learning for students. To address the problem of learning, the coach created a Theory of Action anchored in strengths of the administrative team: conducting Learning Walks and providing feedback to staff.

The central theme for this coach's "story" or draft
Theory of Action is "engaging administrators in regular
Learning Walks focused on specific classroom
practices." The coach articulated specific coaching
moves around this theme; these moves are intended to
result in improved student outcomes and educator
practice. The Theory of Action evolved to become:

 If I engage the principal in (a) conducting weekly learning walks focused on specific classroom practices (e.g., engaging students in the content) AND (b) analyzing data around those practices AND (c) providing and participating in

- professional development around these classroom practices...
- Then I impact (a) the principal's capacity to keep a focus on instructional improvement and (b) the principal's and teachers' knowledge and skills to effectively implement these practices...
- That will result in improvements both in educator practice and student outcomes and in closing achievement gaps.

Over the course of the year, the principal and school team will implement their action plan. As the coach learns more about the school, context for the work, and progress toward intended outcomes, the coach may need to revise and/or build on the initial Theory of Action. The strategies (coaching moves) used in this Theory of Action will relate directly to the district's chosen Leadership and Instructional Frameworks and S.M.A.R.T. Goals in the school's action plan. (See Section III for an example of a Coach Portfolio aligned with this Theory of Action.)

How is a Theory of Action created?

Coaches anchor their Theory of Action in the *problem of learning for students, problem of practice for teaching, and problem of practice for leading.* The essential questions for each step of the process are "What needs"

to change, and what new learning is required?" The steps Success Coaches follow align directly with those in the action-planning process for schools and districts (Figure 2 below).

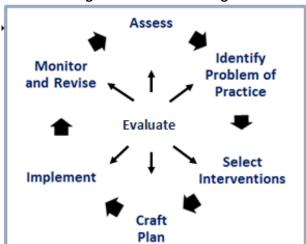


Figure 2. Action-Planning Process

- Step 1: Assess Need for Change
 - **Understand** *problem of learning for students*: The storyline begins with a clear understanding of a central problem of student learning the school seeks to address in its action plan. This understanding will inform next steps in identifying educator practices that support or hinder student learning.

- Step 2: Identify Problems of Practice
 - Understand problem of practice for teaching: Next, the coach needs to understand how teacher
 practices are affecting this problem of student learning. This understanding includes (a) strengths of
 current practices and (b) ways current practices may be hindering or not positively impacting student
 learning.
 - Understand problem of practice for leading: Similarly, the coach needs to understand how leadership
 practices are affecting teacher practice. This understanding includes (a) strengths of current leadership
 practices and (b) ways current practices may be hindering or not positively impacting teacher practice.
- Step 3: Select Evidence-Based Strategies (Interventions) and Create Theory of Action (Plan)
 - Select strategies that reflect connections between coaches, principals, classroom teachers, and students. Coaches begin creating their Theory of Action by focusing first on problems of student learning. They then work backward from there: consider (a) how classroom practices and (b) how leadership practices impact the problem of student learning. Finally, coaches consider evidence-based strategies they will implement to impact educator practice.

The direct line from *Leadership Coach* to *Principal* in Figure 3 emphasizes that the Leadership Coach has the most interaction with and influence on the principal. The Leadership Coach also engages with the school's Leadership Team, supporting the team as it guides the school through the continuous improvement process. Because of these connections, Leadership Coaches anchor their Theory of Action in *evidence-based strategies that build leadership capacity for improving teaching and learning*. The dotted line acknowledges that these coaches also impact and influence classroom teachers.

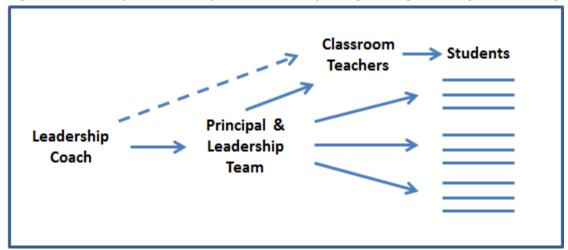
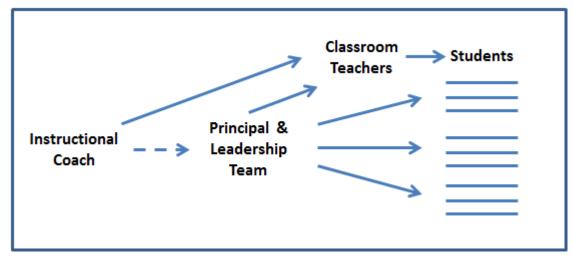


Figure 3. Leadership Coach Theory of Action for Improving Leading, Teaching, and Learning

In contrast, the direct line from *Instructional Coach* to *Classroom Teachers* in Figure 4 acknowledges the coach's primary role as providing professional development and technical assistance to teachers. Hence, theories of action for Instructional Coaches will include *evidence-based strategies that build instructional capacity for improving teaching and learning.* The dotted line emphasizes that these coaches also impact professional learning for principals and leadership teams.

Figure 4. Instructional Coach Theory of Action for Improving Teaching, Leading, and Learning



- **Create Theory of Action:** Clarity around *problems of student learning, problems of teaching, and problems of leading* enables coaches to draft their initial Theory of Action.
- Step 4: Implement, Monitor, and Revise Theory of Action. Similar to school leadership teams, coaches implement their evidence-based strategies and collect evidence to monitor progress. Also similar to leadership teams, they may find they need to revise and/or build upon initial Theories of Action.

Coaches engage in a variety of coaching interventions—strategies identified as high leverage based on their theories of action. They employ a wide range of processes such as: developing agendas, goal-setting and strategic planning, facilitating meetings, leading data-based inquiry, networking and resourcing.

-Coaching for Educational Equity (The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, 2008)

III. Example of a Theory of Action and Related Evidence for a Success Coach Portfolio

Overview

Success Coach Portfolios include both the coach's Theory of Action and specific evidence of changes in educator practice and student learning linking directly to (a) the Theory of Action, (b) Expected Indicators in the school's Student and School Success Action Plan, and as applicable, (c) Leadership/Instructional Framework Criterion. Please see "Success Coaches 2015–16" folder on Edmodo for sample Theories of Action for 2014–15.

Sources of Evidence

Possible sources for evidence include:

- Coaching Comments
- Coaching Critiques
- **Documents in "Document Upload" folders in Indistar for the school and/or district** (e.g., Classroom Walkthrough data showing increased use of specific instructional practices over time, Interim Assessment data)
- Other documents identified by Success Coach

Example

Steps a Leadership Coach might use to develop his or her Theory of Action and possible evidence that may be used follow. Note that the Theory of Action aligns with specific Expected Indicators and S.M.A.R.T. Goals in the school's Action Plan. Additionally, steps in this process are similar to the steps in the action-planning process used by schools.

- Assess Need for Change (Problem of Student Learning identified by Leadership Team): Lack of student engagement in content. Data supporting this need include disaggregated student achievement data and perceptual data.
- 2. (a) Identify Problem of Practice (Principal and Teacher Practice identified by Leadership Team): Lack of consistent use of instructional strategies to engage students in the content, promote content discourse, and support students to understand relevancy of content. Date supporting these problems of practice include: Learning walk data, perceptual data, and data from formal observations.
 - (b) Identify Expected Indicators with S.M.A.R.T. Goals in Action Plan addressing this problem of learning and problems of educator practice:
 - Principle 1 P1-IE06: The principal keeps a focus on instructional improvement and student learning outcomes.
 - Principle 2 P2-IF12: School provides all staff high-quality, ongoing, job-embedded, differentiated professional development.
 - Principle 4 P4-IIA03: The school leadership team regularly monitors and makes adjustments to continuously improve the core instructional program based on identified student needs.
 - Principle 5 P5-IID08: Instructional teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses
 of the curriculum and instructional strategies.
- 3. Select Interventions (Coaching Moves identified by Leadership Coach in collaboration with Principal) and Create Plan (Theory of Action):
 - If I engage principal in providing and participating in professional development to increase effective implementation of these classroom practices AND conducting weekly learning walks focused on evidence-based classroom practices (e.g., engaging students in the content) AND analyzing data around those practices...
 - Then I impact the principal's capacity to keep a focus on instructional improvement AND the principal's and teachers' knowledge and skills to effectively implement these evidence-based practices...
 - That will result in improvements in student learning and educator practice and closing achievement gaps.
- **4. Implement and Monitor/Revise Plan (Theory of Action):** Similar to the school's leadership team, the coach will implement this interventions (coaching moves) described in the Theory of Action, collect data (evidence of implementation and impact), and revise if needed. Possible sources of evidence follow:

Coaching Comments:

- September comment notes need for focus for Learning Walks (e.g., specific instructional practice), lack of consistent use of Learning Walks and reporting summary data from Learning Walk to staff.
- October comment outlines possible Learning Walk protocol and timeline for team to engage in Learning Walks.
- November comment notes team's use of protocol and increased number of Learning Walks; coach indicates team has yet to provide summary data to staff and to upload evidence to "Document Upload."
- December comment notes use of protocol, weekly Learning Walks, summary data sent to staff around specific instructional practice, and documents uploaded to "Document Upload."
- Coach Critiques: October 30 submission: Critique noted lack of evidence in "Document Upload" around the protocol and data collected in Learning Walks. February 28 submission: Critique notes that both protocol and data from weekly Learning Walks have been uploaded.
- o **Documents in "Document Upload" folder:** Learning Walk protocol, data analysis protocol, documents showing percentage of increased use of specific instructional practice from first to second semester.
- **Leadership Criterion Webform:** Lists related documents uploaded in Indistar that satisfy Leadership Criterion.

In each of their interventions, coaches pay particular attention to developing leadership for equity: the process of building the will, skill, knowledge, capacity and emotional support of leaders as they transform who they are and how they support others in the school to take responsibility for nurturing and inspiring every student.

- Becerra & Weissglass (2004) in *Coaching for Educational Equity* (The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, 2008)

IV. Timeline

Table I below provides a suggested timeline for coaches to consider. Again, we understand that continuing Success Coaches may choose to implement/revise their "2014–15 Theory of Action" in 2015–16. Please revise based on the school's current initiatives and areas of focus for improvement in 2015–16 (e.g., strengthening the core instructional program).

Table 1. Suggested Timeline for Crafting/Revising Success Coach Theories of Action and Portfolios

Month	Coaching Activity						
August/ September/ October	Coaches are getting to know schools, reviewing data, guiding Indicator assessment, discussing Instructional Service needs, etc. This knowledge supports coaches to revise/craft their draft Theory of Action. This Theory of Action provides the foundation for the portfolio and evidence of impact						
November	coaches collect during the year. Coaches implement their Theory of Action (interventions/coaching moves) and identify evidence in the school's action plan in Indistar for their portfolio. They review the Coach Critique for possible additions to the portfolio. Questions to consider from the Critique: What guidance was given to the school team regarding strengths and challenges of the plan? What assistance was offered to support the team to implement the themes for improvement initiatives (i.e, strengthening the core, using data to surface/address inequities, and applying research)? What changes in "coaching moves" will you consider now that you know school issues and have reviewed the plan submitted in October? What edits in the plan did you suggest that would result in changing educator practice and moving tasks and practices (Indicators) to full implementation? Why did you suggest these 						
December/	edits? Coaches continue to support their schools; they identify changes and progress toward implementing						
January/	and sustaining goals and tasks. They continue to revise their Theory of Action and receive input from						
February	peers in their RIN. Coaches reflect on ways in which their Theory of Action is leading to changes in educator practice; they also identify evidence of these changes to list/describe in the portfolio.						
March	Coaches continue to implement, and as appropriate, revise their Theory of Action; they also review their Coach Comments and Critique for additions to the portfolio. Peer reviews focus on the question: How is this effort moving the school forward? How do you know?						
April/ May	Coaches continue to implement and, if necessary, revise the Theory of Action for their school. During RINs, coaches engage in a peer review to share and reflect on coaching affirmations or pushes for the principal, leadership team, and the school's plan. Coaches continue to collect evidence of the impact of their coaching moves.						
June	Coaches submit their portfolios on Edmodo by Wednesday, June 8, 2016. They also bring an electronic copy of their portfolio to the statewide convening to share with peers. Prompts for the dialogue during the convening include: What was strength of the coaching moves from your Theory of Action? Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? 						

V. Resources

The sources below informed development of this document; coaches may find these sources also support them as they develop/revise their Theory of Action.

- Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) Webinar: "What¹s Their Theory of Action? How Effective School Leaders Plan for Improvement" (recorded December 10, 2014). The link to the presentation: http://info.k-12leadership.org/webinar-what-is-their-theory-of-action-how-effective-school-leaders-plan-for-improvement. If you want to download the PDF version of the presentation, fill out the form (if necessary) and click "watch now." The presentation will be under "Resources" on the top right.
- Coaching for Educational Equity: The BayCES Coaching Framework. Prepared for The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) Oakland, California by Kathleen Osta and Margaret Perrow 2006; revised 2008. Available at http://nationalequityproject.org/research/research-coaching-as-an-education-reform-strategy
- Abeo Website: "What's a Theory of Action and why do we need one?"
 (http://www.abeoschoolchange.org/blog/whats-a-theory-of-action-and-why-do-we-need-one/).
- **Edmodo Website**: Several Success Coaches from 2014–15 are posted to Edmodo in the "Portfolio Theory of Action Guidance" folder in the "Success Coaches 2015–16" folder.

VI. Success Coach Review Tools

Our office developed the following tools to support coaches as they craft and review their Theory of Action and Portfolio.

- Success Coach Portfolio Peer Review Tool #1: Success Coaches can use this tool to assess alignment of their portfolio with attributes of high-quality Success Coach portfolios developed by leaders in our office (Column 1 in the table). Coaches may also ask colleagues to use the questions in Column 2 as part of a "peer review" process. Formative feedback from trusted colleagues can assist coaches as they finalize their portfolio for submission in June. Note: Attributes in Column 1 are not intended to serve as a "menu" that includes all possible attributes; rather, coaches consider both these attributes and others appropriate to their school and context.
- Success Coach Portfolio Peer Review Tool #2: We encourage coaches to engage in a peer review of their Theory
 of Action and Portfolio during their RINs. This enables coaches to reflect on their own Theory of Action and to
 learn how other coaches are addressing problems of student learning, teaching, and leading in their schools.
 This tool can support the peer review; the tool will also be used by the Office of Student and School Success
 when reviewing Theories of Action/Portfolios submitted in June 2016.

What is the impact coaches are expected to have on the recipients of their services?
One impact is whether coaching is raising the capacity of school teams to lead positive change and enhancing the team's ability to execute an effective process that leads to continuous improvement.

-Coaching for School Improvement: A Guide for Coaches and Their Supervisors (Laba, 2011)

Success Coach Portfolio Peer Review Tool #1

Column 2 Column 1 **Attributes of High-Quality Success Coach Portfolios Questions for Coach and Reviewer to Consider** Summary Statement for Theory of Action: Includes clear statement "If I (evidence-Questions for the Coach to consider: based coaching actions), then I impact (educator practices), that results in • Summary Statement for Theory of Action: Does the Summary Statement (improvements in student learning and educator practice)." include evidence-based Coaching Moves aligned with the identified Problems • Assess Need for Change - Problem of Student Learning: Articulates specific Problem of of Student Learning and Problems of Educator Practice? Learning for students; describes evidence used to identify this Problem of Learning for • **Problem of Student Learning:** How does the evidence validate the Problem of Student Learning identified by the school team and coach? students. Identify Problems of Educator Practice: Communicates specific Problem of Educator • Problems of Educator Practice: How does the evidence validate the Practice for teaching and leading that influence the Problem of Learning for students; Problems of Educator Practice and their connection to the Problem of describes evidence used to identify these Problems of Educator Practice. Student Learning identified by the school and coach? • Select Interventions – School's S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s): Identify school's S.M.A.R.T. Goals • School's S.M.A.R.T. Goals/Tasks for specific Expected Indicators: Do the that address the Problem of Student Learning and related Problems of Educator Practice. coaching moves directly relate to the school's Action Plan, including • Select Interventions – Expected Indicators/Tasks: Identifies and lists Expected S.M.ART. Goals/tasks for specific Expected Indicators? Indicators and/or tasks from the school's Action Plan that align with the Coach's Theory • Coaching Moves: Are the coaching moves sufficient to ensure the principal of Action and for which there are data that show changes over time. and school team effectively implement their Action Plan and achieve Create Plan (Theory of Action) – Coaching Moves: Articulates specific coaching moves intended changes in educator practice and/or student learning? (interventions) implemented to address Problems of Educator Practice; moves align with • Progress Monitoring: Does the portfolio list/describe a variety of evidence the school's S.M.A.R.T. Goals/tasks. showing impact of the coaching moves on educator practice and student Monitor Progress and Revise Plan: Lists and describes variety of specific evidence learning? uploaded in Indistar® by their school that supports moving those practices toward full implementation. Evidence should demonstrate measurable changes in educator practice Questions for the Reviewer to consider: aligned with the Theory of Action (e.g., increased use of identified instructional practices How does the Success Coach's Theory of Action support the principal and [GLAD strategies] as demonstrated through Learning Walks). Possible sources of team to install and implement initiatives and strategies that will lead to evidence include: Coaching Comments, Coach Critique, and documents in "Document sustainable improvements in student learning and educator practice? Upload" folder. • What evidence of impact does the coach provide that demonstrates progress toward the intended goal of building leadership and instructional capacity in order to close gaps and substantially raise student outcomes? Reviewer Feedback:

Success Coach Portfolio Peer Review Tool #2

	Attributes of High-Quality Success Coach Portfolios						
Questions for Reviewer	Articulates specific problem of learning for students; describes evidence used to identify this problem of student learning	Articulates specific problems of educator practice (leading, teaching) that influence this problem of learning; describes evidence used to identify these problems of educator practice	Identifies specific evidence-based coaching moves aligned with problems of student learning and educator practice	Describes alignment of coaching moves with school's S.M.A.R.T. Goals and Expected Indicators	Lists and describes variety of evidence uploaded in Indistar that support moving educator practices toward full implementation; evidence demonstrates measurable changes in educator practice aligned with Theory of Action		
Question #1 What is the Theory of Action (i.e., "If I, then I impact, that results in")?				Optional for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt		
Question #2 What Problem of Student Learning anchors the Theory of Action?		Optional for this prompt	Optional for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt		
Question #3 What Problem of Educator Practice anchors the Theory of Action?	Optional for this prompt		Optional for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt		
Question #4 What measurable evidence in Indistar® reflects the impact of this Theory of Action on educator practice and student learning?	Not applicable for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt	Optional for this prompt	Not applicable for this prompt			

Reviewer Feedback:		