

Leading *with* Questions: The Potential of Coaching in Irish Schools

Who am I?

- **Coran Swayne:** Deputy Principal in East Cork Community Special School and PhD Student in UCC
- **My PhD:** Currently in year 2, focuses on the role of school leaders, teachers and policymakers in cultivating coaching cultures in schools.



What is coaching?

- **A Multifaceted Approach:** Coaching is positioned as a **style of leadership, a form of collaborative Professional Learning (PL), and even a habit** (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; CUREE 2004; Stanier, 2016).
- **Beyond Mentoring:** Coaching focuses on **unlocking potential** and maximising performance, rather than offering direct advice (Whitmore, 2017).
- **Key Skills:** Effective coaching relies on **asking questions and active listening** to foster growth and reflection.

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Coaching and the role of DP?

- **Empowering & Challenging:** Coaching helps **appropriately challenge and empower colleagues** in a **supportive way** (van Nieuwerburgh, 2017).
- **Sustainable:** IPPN Sustainable Leadership project. Coaching Cultures = Distributed Leadership.



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Leading *with* Questions: How can coaching benefit us?

1

Coaching for us

“Coaching **gave me the confidence** to do the job and **enjoy it**” (Nora)

“Through coaching, I learned not to give instant solutions. **Instead, I ask:** *‘What do you think? How could we approach this?’*

That shift changed everything” (Brendan)

2

Coaching for our schools

“What we’ve changed is a moaning culture into a **problem-solving culture**” (Sarah)

“A coaching culture is where **people aren’t afraid to show their weaknesses**: they want to improve, and they know they’ll be supported in doing so” (Pippa)

3

Making it happen

“*Looking at Our School* is a fabulous document, but there’s a massive gap between the aspiration and the reality” (Brendan)

“You have to be a knowledgeable, brave leader to say, *‘This is what we’re doing,’* because **nobody else is going to make it happen** for you” (Sarah)

Thank you! Please reach out:

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