

# The Power of Individualized Coaching: An Interview with ELA Instructional Leadership Specialist Lynanne Lamothe

By Katie Fuchs | Categories: Educator Spotlight, Professional Learning, Collaborative Coach



ELA Instructional Leadership Specialist Lynanne Lamothe describes how engaging in asynchronous, individualized coaching via Collaborative Coach strengthened her work as a coach for teachers implementing SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words).

Lynanne valued her first Collaborative Coach experience so much that she registered for a second learning cycle. “Being coached individually was unbelievably empowering. I got to determine what my goals were, and everything my coach and I did together built towards that goal,” she says.

Collaborative Coach is Collaborative Classroom’s personalized, interactive, asynchronous coaching experience that provides one-on-one, curriculum-specific coaching for individual teachers or coaches in a safe and supportive environment.

### **Tell us a little about yourself and your role at your school.**

My name is Lynanne Lamothe. I live in South Hadley with my husband, our two children, and our energetic black lab, Dude.

I have been a proud educator at Lincoln Elementary School in Springfield, Massachusetts for the last seven years. Springfield Public Schools has been my home since 2008. During these years I have worked as a Behavior Interventionist, School Adjustment Counselor, and Special Education Teacher.

The 2021–2022 school year was my first year as the English Language Arts Instructional Leadership Specialist (ILS) at Lincoln. In my current role I have the privilege of working with both educators and students across all grade levels from preK–5.

### **Describe your initial interest in participating in Collaborative Coach.**

Collaborative Coach was offered to the ELA Instructional Leadership Specialists by our district's Literacy Department for Elementary and Early Childhood Education. As a first year ILS, I jumped on this amazing opportunity to develop and grow.

I had participated in several trainings offered by Collaborative Classroom throughout the years, and knew that Collaborative Coach would provide experiences that would progress my learning as both an educator and a coach.

Little did I know that Collaborative Coach would turn out to be so much more than any other professional development opportunity.

### **Share a bit about your experiences with Collaborative Coach. Tell us about the first time you participated in this learning (Winter 2022 cohort).**

When I first started with the Winter 2022 cohort, I was nervous. While I knew about the SIPPS program and was excited to participate, fear of the unknown kicked in a little bit. What was I going to have to video tape? Were there going to be live zooms while I was teaching? What if it was awkward?

All these questions quickly dissipated as soon as I had my first video from my personal coach, Robin. Completing the assignments was rewarding, and I looked forward to recording my video reflections and receiving Robin's responses and next steps.

I found myself not only implementing routines with my students, but also with my daughter (who attends kindergarten in another district that does not use Collaborative Classroom programs and instead follows a balanced literacy approach). She is now able to independently apply corrective feedback from SIPPS as she continues to learn how to read!

Throughout both of my Collaborative Coach learning cycles, Robin became a friend as well as a coach. She saw my children run in and out of the videos from time to time, and we learned a lot about each other through our recorded "conversations."

Even though I am sad that my individualized coaching has ended and Robin and I no longer video chat, I am forever grateful for the coaching and support that I received — and the knowledge that continued support is only an email away.

### **You participated in two back-to-back cohorts of Collaborative Coach (Winter and Spring 2022). What made you decide to return for the Spring cohort?**

Very early into the Winter cohort, I saw and experienced the sheer power of Collaborative Coach. The platform provided a safe space for personal reflection and growth.

The activities assigned by my coach were so relevant to my goals. At times it was like Robin could read my mind with what I needed and where I needed to go.

Implementing what I learned from my coaching assignments not only impacted how I interacted with the SIPPS lessons, but how the students received them. Reflecting on my implementation and tweaking my teacher moves based on Robin's advice and tips allowed

my students to soar.

Almost immediately I began seeing changes in student engagement, excitement, and success. As my students' confidence grew, my belief in the value of SIPPS became even more steadfast.

As the Winter 2022 cohort of Collaborative Coach wrapped up, I learned about the Spring cohort. I knew that I wanted to continue this learning journey with my coach, as well as introduce some of our teachers to this unique professional development model.

I am super grateful that my amazing principal and leader at Lincoln understood the power of Collaborative Coach. He supported my ambition to continue with the Spring cohort and made it possible for two teachers to also participate.

### **How was the learning different for you during the Spring cohort?**

Moving from the Winter to the Spring cohort was seamless. My coach Robin was already such an integral part of my learning. I was very comfortable with her, and truly felt the trust and respect between us.

In the Winter Cohort we focused on a group I had in Beginning Level SIPPS. During this time, everything Robin was helping me to discover was so useful as I worked with other educators implementing the SIPPS program at Lincoln.

This in turn set the learning purpose for my Spring cohort, in which we delved more into the coaching aspect of SIPPS. The Collaborative Coach assignments I participated in allowed me to work directly with educators both individually and in groups.

The conversations and reflections surrounding implementation and goal setting were invaluable. Collaborative Coach now gave me a greater opportunity to impact the growth of more educators and students, while still developing myself.

The Collaborative Coach model is unique and powerful. The individualized, targeted, and actionable nature of Collaborative Coach has been, and continues to be, integral to my growth as an educator and coach. I absolutely would continue with additional cohorts if given the opportunity.

I wholeheartedly recommend Collaborative Coach to anyone implementing SIPPS and other programs from Collaborative Classroom.

### **Was this the first time you participated in asynchronous coaching versus other types of professional learning? What did you notice about the nature of your learning that surprised you?**

Yes, this was the first time I participated in asynchronous coaching. At first, I was not sure how I would enjoy it or how beneficial it would be. It did not take long for me to realize that Collaborative Coach is probably one of the best, if not THE BEST, experiences that I have had in all my professional learning.

Being coached individually was unbelievably empowering. I got to determine what my goals were, and everything my coach and I did together built towards that goal.

It was effortless to invest in Collaborative Coach because it was so meaningful to what I needed for where I wanted to go. I was surprised at how simple, straightforward, comfortable, productive, illuminating, and worthwhile the entire process was.

### **What is something that you are taking away from your Collaborative Coach experience?**

I am taking away so much from this experience, but I think the biggest thing is to remember to not let the size of the [SIPPS] manual be intimidating. Sometimes we must remind ourselves to take the blinders off in our day-to-day tasks to really remember the intention and purpose behind the routines we are implementing.

Knowing what we are teaching (the skill), why we are teaching it a certain way (the routine), and how we know we will be successful

(student response to instruction) will strengthen teaching and learning for everyone involved. Not only is it important to make time to reflect on our implementation and student response to that implementation, but it is imperative.

Collaborative Coach forced me to slow down, to reflect, to process, and to adjust my implementation. The benefits of this have had far-reaching effects.

**What are the benefits of participating in Collaborative Coach for someone in your role — an instructional coach who works with teachers implementing SIPPS?**

The benefits are limitless. Education, as a profession, is a career in which teaching, learning, and reflecting are cyclical. To be an effective coach, it is important to continue with that cycle. Collaborative Coach provides personal, individualized professional development to further progress intentionality throughout the SIPPS program alongside the experts in the program.

Participating in Collaborative Coach allowed me to internalize the purpose of routines, implement it with my students, and share that information with other educators. This experience supported my own learning surrounding SIPPS and provided a platform for me to extend the learning of others using building-level coaching, common planning times, professional learning communities, and recommendations for educators to engage in their own Collaborative Coach experiences.

Collaborative Coach is a phenomenal opportunity for any coaches looking to build SIPPS capacity and confidence within themselves, their educators, and their students.

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*To learn more about how Springfield Public Schools has used Collaborative Coach to deepen their SIPPS implementation and support their professional learning, read [Investing in Collaborative Coach at Scale: How Springfield Public Schools Built Their Capacity for SIPPS](#).*