

Educators face a puzzling variety of materials, technology, goals, and advice. These workers help schools piece them together.

# Instructional coordinators

by Hall Dillon

**W**hat do directors of instructional material; educational consultants, specialists, and technologists; instructional designers; and staff development specialists all have in common? They fall under a broader job title—instructional coordinators.

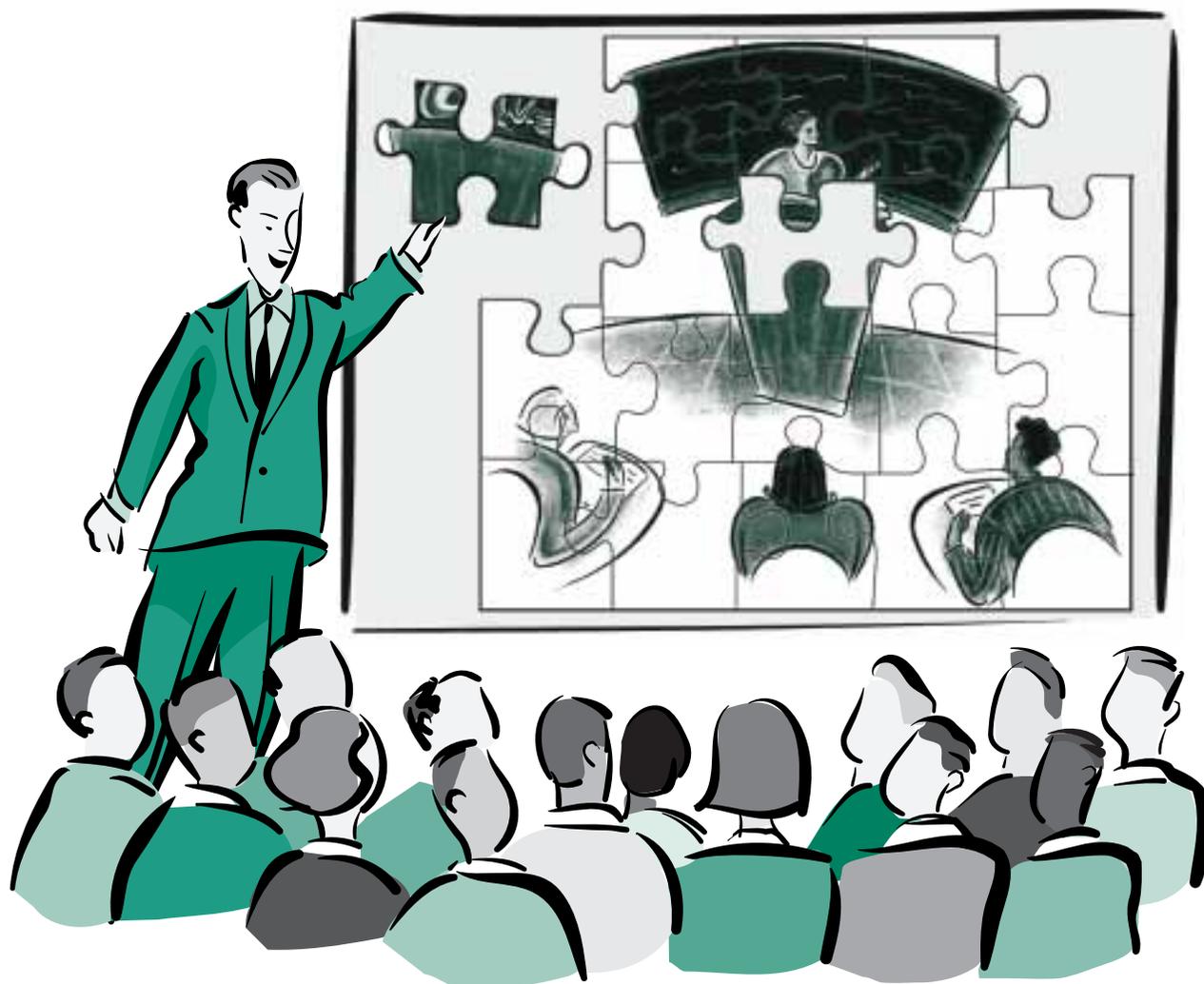
But why do they share that designation? And what, exactly, do they do?

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If you don't know, you're not alone: there is often confusion within the occupation itself. Instructional coordinators wear many hats. They evaluate school curricula, develop educational materials, and recommend and monitor curriculum and material changes introduced into school systems.

This article describes in more detail what instructional coordinators do, how many are employed, what their employment outlook is, what they like and dislike about their jobs, and how they train to enter this career.



## Nature of the work

Despite confusion over their job title, there is little confusion about instructional coordinators' chief responsibility: to ensure that educational programs comply with school board and Federal, State, and local government regulations. Their tasks include evaluating school curricula and recommending changes, coordinating equipment review and purchase, and assisting in the use of new technology in schools.

Instructional coordinators evaluate how well a school's curriculum meets students' needs. They research teaching methods and techniques and develop procedures to determine whether program goals are being met. To aid in their evaluation, they may meet with members of educational committees and advisory groups to learn about subjects—English, history, or mathematics, for example—and to relate curriculum materials to these subjects, to students' needs, and to occupations for which these subjects are good preparation. They also may develop questionnaires and interview school staff about the curriculum. Based on their research and observations of instructional practice, they recommend instruction and curriculum improvements.

Another duty instructional coordinators have is to supervise workers who catalog, distribute, and maintain a school's educational materials and equipment. To accomplish this, instructional coordinators review educational materials, such as videotapes, slides, and texts, for educational content and recommend purchases of materials. They also monitor materials ordered and the ways in which teachers use them in the classroom.

Instructional coordinators find effective ways to use technology to enhance student learning. They monitor the introduction of new technology, including the Internet, into a school's curriculum. In addition, instructional coordinators might recommend installing educational computer software, such as interactive books and exercises designed to enhance student literacy and develop math skills. Instructional coordinators may invite experts—such as computer hardware, software, and library or media specialists—into the classroom to help integrate technological materials into a school's curriculum.

Many instructional coordinators plan and provide onsite education for teachers and administrators. They may train teachers about the use of materials and equipment or help them to improve their skills. They also mentor new teachers and train experienced teachers in the latest instructional methods. This role becomes especially important when a school district introduces

new content, program innovations, or different organizational structure. For example, school districts that want to introduce computers into the curriculum may first consult with instructional coordinators and sponsor workshops on computer literacy.

## Employment and outlook

Instructional coordinators held about 76,870 jobs in 1999. The majority worked in the educational services industry—which includes elementary, secondary, and technical schools and colleges and universities—or for State and local departments of

*An instructional coordinator works with educational curricula and materials and monitors their introduction into schools.*

education. Some worked as educational consultants or instructional designers for private companies that develop educational materials sold to schools. Others worked for civic and social associations, job training centers, religious organizations, and research and testing services.

Employment of instructional coordinators is expected to grow in response to increasing school enrollments, student services, and efforts to improve educational quality. The public, businesses, and State and local governments have demanded more quality and variety in school curricula to meet the educational needs of young people in a rapidly changing society.

Job growth for instructional coordinators also will stem from the increasing emphasis on lifelong learning and on programs for students with special needs, including those for whom English is a second language. These students often require more educational resources and consolidated planning and management within the educational system.

## Benefits and drawbacks

Like most workers, instructional coordinators enjoy some elements of their jobs more than they do others. Whether they consider something about their job to be a benefit or a drawback may depend on experience, work situation, or personal preference.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, instructional coordinators had median earnings in 1999 of \$41,730,

with 80 percent earning between \$22,240 and \$69,140. Like most teachers, most instructional coordinator earnings are based on a 10-month school year.

People are attracted to the occupation because of the opportunity to improve the quality of schools, to participate in

*Not surprisingly, many instructional coordinators start out as teachers or in related educational occupations.*

academic life, and to help young people mature and develop. Instructional coordinators usually receive typical benefits, including insurance. In addition, instructional coordinators usually work indoors in a safe and comfortable environment.

However, some instructional coordinators find the work stressful because the occupation requires long hours, continual accountability to school administrators, and frequent travel from school to school. Perceptions of deadline pressure and burdensome paperwork also are drawbacks. And instructional coordinators may become frustrated if their efforts to improve curriculum are stifled by bureaucratic concerns such as budget constraints.

### **Qualifications and training**

Instructional coordinators must be able to make sound decisions about curriculum options and to organize and coordinate work efficiently. They should have strong interpersonal and communication skills. Familiarity with computer technology also is important for instructional coordinators, who are increasingly involved in gathering and coordinating technical information for students and teachers.

The minimum educational requirement for instructional coordinators is a bachelor's degree, usually in education. Many instructional coordinators begin their careers in teaching or related positions and prepare for a job as an instructional coordinator by completing a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, educational technology, or instructional technology. Some have doctoral degrees.

Courses in curriculum development and evaluation, research design and evaluation, and computer literacy are recommended. Instructional coordinators may be required to take continuing education courses to keep their skills current. Some

school districts provide continuing education for instructional coordinators and other educators. For example, the Montgomery County, Maryland, school system has a staff development academy to train instructional coordinators and education administrators in teacher evaluation techniques. Courses include curriculum training, new teacher induction, consulting and teacher support, and observation and analysis of teaching.

Depending on experience and educational attainment, instructional coordinators may advance to higher positions in a school system or to management or executive positions in private industry.

### **Related occupations**

Instructional coordinators are professionals involved in education and training and development, which requires organizational, administrative, teaching, research, and communication skills. Occupations with similar characteristics include preschool, elementary, and secondary school teachers; college and university faculty; education administrators; counselors; trainers; and employee development specialists.

### **Sources of additional information**

Information about employment, outlook, earnings, training, and more for occupations similar to instructional coordinator, as well as over 200 others, is in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2000-01 Edition*. The *Handbook* is available in most public libraries and school counseling offices and online at <http://www.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>.

For information about training programs for instructional coordinators and a list of colleges and universities offering master's and doctoral degree programs in curriculum and instruction and instructional technology, contact:

The American Association of School Administrators  
1801 N. Moore St.  
Arlington, VA 22209  
(703) 528-0700  
<http://www.aasa.org>

For information about continuing education, employment opportunities, and, for online visitors, links to related resources for educational technologists, contact:

The International Society for Technology in Education  
480 Charnelton St.  
Eugene, OR 97401-2626  
1 (800) 336-5191  
<http://www.iste.org>

