



# Coaching

## *Strategy Guide 2.1*

### Strategy Vision and Description

In this guide, we define teacher coaching as a partnership between a teacher and an expert that is focused on improving teacher performance. We define feedback as information provided to teachers about student learning in their classrooms and/or their performance toward professional goals. Effective coaching and feedback results in changes to teacher practice and student achievement.

Research has shown that the following components support effective teacher coaching and feedback. It is important to note that while there is evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of each component, these components are most effective when implemented together. For instance, if a school or district decides to analyze data to determine coaching needs but does not establish roles, systems, and structures to support an effective coaching model, coaching and feedback efforts will likely yield limited results. The following ideas were found to significantly impact the quality of coaching practices:

1. **Roles, Systems, Structures, and Training**
2. **Foundational Elements and Common Practices of Effective Coaching**
3. **Data Analysis to inform Coaching**
4. **Cycles of Effective Feedback**

### Evidence Base

ESSA defines levels of research based on the quality of the study (Levels 1-4). CDE requires that schools and districts identify the research base for strategies that they select for their Unified Improvement Plans, and for applications for school improvement funds in the EASI application.

The research on **Teacher Coaching and Feedback** that is cited here meets the threshold for **ESSA Level 1-3**.

### Necessary Preconditions

**Prerequisite Strategies: None.** Coaching is a foundational practice at schools. Provided that the school is functioning at a baseline level and staff culture is healthy enough to support strong and trusting relationships between coaches and teachers, no additional systems or strategies are required before implementing a coaching strategy. On the other hand, an established coaching strategy can significantly enhance a school's ability to implement future strategies.

**Recommended Follow-Up Strategies: Data-Driven Instruction.** Since strong coaching practices are data-informed, having key assessments or data practices in place can enhance the impact of the coaching strategy. Since coaching and data-informed instruction both aim at system-wide shifts requiring fundamental changes in knowledge, skill, and behavior, it is unlikely that a school will be able to implement both strategies

simultaneously. It is recommended that a coaching strategy be implemented first, with data-driven instruction being the focus of a later school year or improvement plan cycle.

## Contextual Fit

Possible Root Causes include inadequate, inconsistent or ineffective...

- Coaching culture
- Adult culture and beliefs
- Post observation follow-up
- Implementation of practices

Is this strategy a good fit for your district/school?

- As mentioned above, coaching is a foundational practice at schools. As long as the school is functioning at a baseline level and staff culture is healthy enough to support strong and trusting relationships between coaches and teachers, a coaching strategy is a good fit for any school.

## Core Components, Elements & Activities

Core Component 1, below, provides the necessary foundation for all other components, so it should be in place before the other components. The elements of Core Component 1 should be put in place before the school year begins. The remaining Core Components may be approached concurrently, as they work in concert and are mutually supporting.

### Core Component 1: Roles, Systems, Structures, and Training

Elements or Activities	Description
Coaching Role, Relationship, and Expectations	<p>Coaches have expertise in identified areas of focus, as well as additional coaching-specific skills, that enable them to build the skill and capacity of teacher. They may be teachers' peers, veteran teachers, school leaders, or external consultants.</p> <p>Expectations for coaches and coachees should be clearly articulated and communicated. These should include how the partnership relates to the teacher's evaluation. For example, it may be important to indicate that the coaching experience is independent of any evaluative relationship, if this is the case.</p>
Coaching Records Systems	<p>Coaches need to document not only what or how they work with colleagues, but also what their next steps are for providing ongoing, job-embedded professional development. Establish a consistent format for capturing this information, as a way for both the coach and teacher to keep track of their work together.</p>
Coaching Structures	<p>Coaches will need opportunities to observe and meet with teachers regularly, and these opportunities should be taken into account when staff schedules are being built. A strong coaching cycle enables coaches to observe teachers on a regular basis and meet with them to provide timely, supportive, and constructive feedback. Studies of effective coaching programs often include coaching sessions that occur at least every other week.</p>

Elements or Activities	Description
Professional Development for Coaches	Coaches should receive ongoing professional development in effective coaching practices (see Core Component 2 for effective practices). They need adequate training before beginning work with teachers each school year, especially if there are new coaching initiatives or focus areas for the year.

## Core Component 2: Foundational Elements and Common Practices of Effective Coaching

*There are myriad approaches to teacher coaching (e.g., Elena Aguilar’s cognitive coaching; Diane Sweeney’s student-centered coaching). This core component synthesizes practices that are shared across many coaching approaches and defines common coaching practices in school improvement. For the purposes of this guide, the term ‘new practice’ is used to describe the focus of coaching; interpret this as needed for the coaching and context at your school. The term includes, but is not limited to, classroom management strategies, instructional moves, curriculum implementation and data-informed instruction. Coaching should be tailored to the needs of each individual teacher at any given time; strong coaches adjust as needed.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Foundational Element 1: Setting the Vision	Coach and teacher establish a clear, shared understanding of excellence of a new practice. Some strategies to set the vision: (1) discussing shared reading or research; (2) watching videos; (3) modeling by coach or another teacher, (4) co-teaching; (5) creating or analyzing exemplary student responses.
Foundational Element 2: Implementation	Teacher applies the new practice in the classroom. Teachers can also benefit from attempting new practices during a coaching meeting for an initial round of feedback and reflection before applying it in the classroom. Coach may observe the teacher’s implementation.
Foundational Element 3: Reflection and Feedback	Teacher reflects on implementation of new practice, identifying strengths and areas for growth. If the coach observed the practice, the coach can provide additional feedback. <i>Note: Repeat the cycle of implementation and reflection until the teacher’s practice reflects the vision of the new practice set in Foundational Element 1.</i>
Foundational Element 4: Incorporation	Once the new practice meets the vision set in Foundational Element 1, coach supports teacher to incorporate the new practice fully into their repertoire so that it becomes a strong habit.
Approach: Observation Feedback	<p>Observation Feedback is a coaching approach that focuses on a teacher’s instructional practice and has two parts: an observation of teaching and a feedback meeting.</p> <p><b>Observation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The coach observes the teacher during instruction, usually for 15-30 minutes.</li> </ul>

Elements or Activities	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The coach determines a bite-size action step to support the teacher’s development based on evidence from the observation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The coach and teacher meet as soon after the observation as is feasible; meetings are usually 20-45 minutes</li> <li>The teacher reflects on instruction; the coach guides the teacher to the bite-sized action step and establishes the vision for excellence.</li> <li>The teacher immediately practices the next step and the coach provides feedback in the moment.</li> </ul> <p>Observation Feedback cycles are often on a weekly or bi-weekly cadence. However, the cadence can be more or less frequent depending on the needs of the teacher.</p> <p><b>Resources for Observation Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Leverage Leadership</i> by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo</li> <li><a href="#">Observation and Feedback: Six Steps to Effective Feedback video</a></li> <li><a href="#">Giving Effective Feedback</a> from Uncommon Schools</li> </ul>
Approach: Data Meetings	<p>Data Meetings are a coaching approach that focuses on analyzing the results of an assessment of student learning, identifying students misconceptions that led to errors, and planning to address those misconceptions in the classroom. <i>Note, data meetings can focus on quantitative (e.g. multiple choice questions) or qualitative assessment data (e.g., constructed response).</i> Coaches may meet with teachers individually or as a teaching team, if a common assessment is used.</p> <p>Data meetings are most productive when participants, teacher(s) and coach(es) complete the data analysis beforehand. This means that the data meeting time is primarily spent on deepening understanding of student learning and determining actionable next steps to support students.</p> <p><b>Data Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants analyze assessment data, looking for trends in responses by standard, student group (e.g., multilingual learners) and/or class period.</li> <li>Participants identify standards and/or assessment items where the data indicates that students need additional support to master. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Note: it is useful to look at items that students struggled with generally, as well as looking at data to identify which individual students need more support. For this guide, we will focus on responding to general trends.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>Participants identify possible student misconceptions on those standards and/or assessment items by analyzing incorrect answer choices and /or representative student constructed responses.</li> </ul>

Elements or Activities	Description
	<p><b>Data Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants share which standard(s) and/or assessment items they want to focus the time on. Once everyone has shared, prioritize as a group, if needed, which to focus on</li> <li>• Discuss and align on student misconceptions to address.</li> <li>• Create an action plan to address the misconceptions and build it into lesson plans to make it concrete.</li> </ul> <p>In order to ensure that students’ mastery of the learning improves, reassess the standard or use a similar assessment item. If possible, revisit the reassessment in the following data meeting.</p> <p><b>Resources for Data Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Driven by Data 2.0</i> by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo</li> <li>• <a href="#">Using Data: Data Inquiry Teams</a> from EL Education</li> <li>• <a href="#">How to Run a Data Meeting</a></li> </ul>
Approach: Real-Time Coaching	<p>Real-Time Coaching is a coaching approach that helps teachers improve their practice as they are actively teaching by giving feedback at the point of error. It is especially useful to help teachers build automaticity with new practices. Effective real-time coaching requires a pre-meeting, the live coaching session, and a debrief.</p> <p><b>Pre-meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach and/or teacher identifies an instructional skill for the teacher to focus on developing.</li> <li>• Coach and teacher determine the best way to give real-time feedback on that skill. Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Visual Cue. A hand signal or a word written on a white board.</li> <li>○ Verbal Cue: A word or short phrase that the coach says to the teacher. <i>Note: some real-time coaches use radios and headsets; others share the cue in a way that students can also hear. Both are effective.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher and coach practices the skill and the feedback cue; a coaching session is planned for a time when the teacher will be using that instructional skill.</li> </ul> <p><b>Live Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach is in the classroom at the predetermined time and usually stays 15-20 minutes.</li> <li>• Coach gives feedback using the cue, as needed to ensure the teacher is mastering the skill.</li> </ul> <p><b>Debrief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach shares celebrations from the live coaching session</li> <li>• Teacher shares what worked and what didn’t during the live coaching session</li> <li>• Coach and teacher determine whether to continue focusing coaching on that skill, or to determine a new one.</li> <li>• <i>Note, the debrief can be conducted as the first part of a pre-meeting.</i></li> </ul>

Elements or Activities	Description
	Some practitioners worry that real-time coaching will distract students. When done in a matter-of-fact way, students acclimate to it very quickly.

### Core Component 3: Data Analysis to Inform Coaching

Elements or Activities	Description
Ongoing data analysis	Teacher coaching should be informed by an ongoing analysis of student performance data to determine areas of strength and areas for growth. Performance data can be obtained through summative assessments, formative assessments, student work, and observations.

### Core Component 4: Cycles of Effective Feedback

Elements or Activities	Description
Feedback is consistent and aligned.	Coaches and leaders should coordinate their feedback to ensure teachers receive consistent or compatible messaging from both. Consider having regular meetings with coaches and school leaders to ensure observations are normed and messages are aligned. Furthermore, coaches' feedback and suggestions should align with and support the school's priorities, goals, and expectations.
Feedback is goal-referenced and effective	Provided feedback should be goal-referenced and provide teachers with information about their progress toward a goal – possibly a yearlong professional goal or a short-term student achievement goal for the coaching cycle. Either way, the goal should be clear to both the teacher and the person providing the feedback (e.g., the coach, an evaluator) and should focus the feedback so it is not too broad or vague.
Feedback is timely and actionable.	<p>Effective feedback includes concrete, specific, and timely information about what the teacher can do better next time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feedback should be descriptive and free of judgment.</i> For example, feedback may provide information about specific numbers of students that met learning targets or engaged in a task, rather than a judgment such as “students did great.”</li> <li>• <i>Feedback may include tangible, measurable next steps.</i> Teachers may find feedback particularly useful when it includes these types of clear suggestions. For example, rather than telling a teacher to “engage more students,” provide feedback with specific strategies such as, “try using wait time of at least five seconds after each question, cold call students at least three times each lesson,</li> </ul>

Elements or Activities	Description
	and allow more than one student to answer the same question through use of turn and talks or think-pair-shares.” Furthermore, such next steps allow the observer points to reference during subsequent observations and a means to hold teachers accountable for implementing feedback.

## Guidance for Implementation

Implementation Element	Description
<i>Staffing and Teams</i>	<p>Coaches should have content or practice expertise relevant to their role (e.g., coaches with an instructional focus vs. those with a culture or behavior focus will need different kinds of expertise and experience) and should have (or get development in) key coaching skills and competencies. Coaches are often lead teachers, veteran teachers, school leaders, or even external consultants.</p> <p><b>Key Competencies:</b> One of the most critical competencies for coaches is the ability to build strong and trusting relationships with those they coach. Other key competencies include a consistent focus on student needs, data-informed decision-making, asking questions and taking risks (i.e., pushing beyond what is familiar or beyond one’s comfort zone for the sake of growth), and a knowledge of effective or high-impact practices.</p>
<i>Training &amp; Resources</i>	<p><b>Training for Coaches:</b> Coaches will need to be trained in effective coaching practices, with particular attention given to approaches that are prioritized in a given school year. Coaches should be trained before they begin working with teachers, so this will likely need to occur over the summer (before teachers return for the school year). Training should be differentiated based on the type of coaching being established to ensure that sessions are relevant to the kinds of work different coaches will be doing.</p> <p><b>Training for Teachers:</b> Teachers who will be coached will also need to be introduced to the coaching model, expectations, and relationship with their coaches. This should be done during the beginning-of-year orientation so that coaches and teachers can begin building working relationships immediately.</p> <p><b>Leaders’ Support for Coaches:</b> Especially in the early stages of implementation, school leaders should regularly review coaching data and meet with coaches to monitor the progress of the strategy. The focus of this monitoring should not be punitive but should rather be aimed at identifying where coaches, teachers, or particular coaching relationships may need additional support as practices and mindsets are shifting.</p>
<i>Pacing</i>	<p><i>These elements will need to be in place before the beginning of the school year:</i></p> <p><b>Systems, structures:</b></p>

Implementation Element	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the school schedule and staff assignments allow coaches to observe and meet with the teachers they coach regularly.</li> <li>System for capturing coaching observations and other data, as well as topics and outcomes of coaching conversations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Roles:</b> Coaches should be identified and trained in expectations, procedures, and effective practices before teachers return for beginning-of-year training.</p>
<i>Progress Monitoring</i>	Consider additional data sources, such as observation data or teacher experience, to determine which teachers are in need of teacher coaching and the type of coaching and feedback that will be most valuable. For example, if there are teachers new to teaching, these individuals may require more targeted support and coaching from the onset.
<i>Change Management</i>	Communicate the coaching model with its underlying philosophy that will be used both verbally and in writing. Identify the purpose of teacher coaching, ensuring that stakeholders understand that teacher coaching is focused on improving teacher performance and student achievement.

## Sample Implementation Plan

*Context: The following Sample Implementation Plan assumes that a school does not currently have a coaching system in place and is installing one for the first time. Note also that the dates given in the table below are suggested approximate ranges for the given activities. A true action plan should specify precise dates and date-ranges for each activity.*

Name	Description	Start/End Date	Key Personnel
<i>Identify Coaches</i>	Identify or hire coaches. Identify or prioritize teachers to receive coaching supports.	April-May	School leadership
<i>Coaching Assignments and Adjust schedules</i>	Make preliminary coaching assignments. Adjust schedules as needed so coaches are available to observe and meet with their teachers regularly.	June -July	School Admin
<i>Create data trackers</i>	Create data collection systems, observation protocols & trackers, and coaching trackers.	June-July	Implementation Team
<i>Confirm Implementation Benchmarks</i>	Revisit and refine Implementation Benchmarks to ensure they capture key aims/benchmarks during plan.	July	School Leadership



Name	Description	Start/End Date	Key Personnel
<i>Train Coaches</i>	Conduct summertime professional development for all coaches.	July	Internal expert (or external contractor)
<i>Introduce coaching model to teachers</i>	Session during BOY orientation to introduce new coaching model to all teachers and clarify aims/expectations, followed by time for teachers to meet with their coaches 1:1.	Late July/ Early August	School Leadership
<i>Weekly classroom observations</i>	Coaches observe each teacher they coach at least 15 minutes per week; complete observation tracker after each observation.	August through May	Coaches
<i>Weekly coaching meetings</i>	Coaches and teachers meet 1:1 to debrief coach's observation and/or teachers' practices from that week,	August through May	Coaches, Teachers
<i>Monitor Implementation</i>	Use Implementation Benchmarks (and schedule reflection meetings) to track implementation of strategy throughout year	August through May	Implementation Team, School Leadership

## Sources

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### Additional Sources Supporting Implementation of the Strategy

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