

Mentoring and Coaching Models

Peer coaching is a staff development model you can use to help you and your partners develop and try new strategies and determine what does and does not work by critically evaluating your own beliefs about teaching and learning. Peer coaching is built upon trusting relationships that develop between teachers. It is based on mutually working together to improve teaching skills in order to improve student learning.

Role of the Mentor/Coach

- Facilitate exploration of needs, motivations, skills, thought processes
- Facilitate real, lasting positive change
- Observe, listen, ask questions
- Use questioning techniques to identify solutions
- Support goal setting and assessment
- Encourage commitment to action
- Maintain positive, supportive, non-judgemental point of view.
- Ensure mentees develop/improve personal competences and not become dependent on mentor
- Work within your area of personal competence
- Manage the team/project relationships
- Support each other

In other words the Mentor/Peer Coach is a:

- Teacher
- Resource
- Problem-solver
- Advocate
- Facilitator
- Coach
- Collaborator
- Learner
- Assessor
- Trusted Listener

--UC Santa Cruz New Teacher Center

What is Peer Coaching?

Peer coaching is an interactive process between two or more teaching professionals that is used to:

- share successful practices through collaboration and reflective practice
- act as a problem-solving vehicle
- reduce isolation among teachers
- create a forum for addressing instructional problems
- support and assisting new teachers in their practice

- build collaborative norms to enable teachers to give and receive ideas and assistance

Peer coaching can bring about a better understanding of best practices, and better articulated curriculum. Peer coaching has contributed to an overall improvement in teaching and learning in the schools (Becker, 2000).

Peer coaching also provides a mechanism through which teachers can gain deeper insight from workshops. Having a peer coach allows a teacher to try out new strategies learned in a workshop and get feedback on how these strategies worked in the classroom. Peer coaching also helps teachers to internalize what they've learned and to apply it in their own classroom, and then take part in professional discussion about it. This type of follow-up helps ensure transfer of learning. It also helps teacher to share new ideas and strategies with one another.

Robert Garmston, an educator, researcher, and co-developer of the Cognitive Coaching SM model (a type of peer coaching), says in Peer Coaching: An Effective Staff Development Model For Educators Of Linguistically And Culturally Diverse Students that "peer Coaching can further a teacher's individual professional development, for improving school climate.

Collegial Coaching

One model for peer coaching is the *collegial coaching model*.

Collegial peer coaching consists of three basic parts:

- a pre-conference
- an observation
- a post-conference.

During the **pre-conference**, teachers meet and discuss the elements that the teacher being observed wants to focus on. They discuss the specific lesson planned, its context, and other relevant factors that influence student outcomes. The peer coach is responsible only for providing that teacher with another perspective of the learning environment so they can mutually improve teaching and learning.

Next, the peer coach **observes** in the teacher's classroom as an collegial observer. The coach should focus on

Finally, the peer coach schedules a **post-conference**, to discuss the outcome of the lesson. This is a collegial discussion. The observed teacher should take the lead in this conversation, with the observer adding factual information about what happened during the lesson. They may discuss what worked well, what didn't work at all, and what could be changed or improved to have a positive impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom. Important aspects of this stage are

- The observed teacher is in control of the lesson.
- The emphasis is on reflection on what has happened during the lesson and analysis of its impact on student learning.

Please be aware that collegial peer coaching is not.

1. It is **not one teacher acting as an expert** and the other a novice or apprentice. Both teachers should together as equals who are looking to collaboratively improve their teaching skills.
2. It is **not based on evaluating and judging** performance. This is a system for continual improvement and growth for both educators.
3. It is **not just a process for initiating new teachers into the profession**. Instead, it should have a positive impact on all teachers no matter of how long they have been in the profession or what their background may be.
4. It is not intended to be part of an evaluation process. Instead, it should be used to foster a focus on continual improvement in teaching and learning.

Collegial coaching, is built on a trusting relationship between a pair of teachers that is designed to be noncompetitive and mutually respectful focused on the continual improvement their teaching methods..

Pam Robbins, author of the ASCD publication How to Plan and Implement a Peer Coaching Program, discusses a type of peer coaching that “involves two or more colleagues working together around the shared observation of teaching.” In her description, Pam notes that the teacher being observed is responsible for setting the focus of the coaching session:

- his or her expectations for what is to be observed
- how data about that topic will be collected
- how the observing teacher will interact within the classroom.

These three elements are critical to the success of a collegial coaching program because it allows teachers to refine teaching practices, think critically about their teaching practices, and improve engage in ongoing professional dialog. The coach in this model does not need to be a subject area expert. It is important, however that the coach possess skills such as:

- questioning
- observation
- conversation
- facilitation

Collegial coaches help each other reflect on their own teaching practices without passing judgment or making evaluations about their observations.

The implementation of a collegial coaching program is a multi-faceted challenge. In order for a collegial coaching program to be successful, teachers must be well trained in a variety of topics. They must learn and practice facilitation and conferencing skills, they need to have the opportunity to speak with each other, and they need to have opportunities to form teams that will work effectively with each other. Peer coaches must be committed to spending time coaching each other on a regular basis, which means that collegial coaching must be a priority for the entire school in order for it to be effective.

Technical Coaching

The technical coaching model is designed to help teachers transfer what is learned in a workshop environment into the world of the classroom. Technical coaching allows teachers to work together to share and apply professional strategies and techniques learned in workshops and classes. In technical coaching teachers observe and help each other recognize how to use the newly learned strategies as effective teaching and learning tools.

Implementing technical coaching requires that teachers begin with a shared understanding of the topic and skills. It works best when schools send teams of teachers to professional-development workshops. By attending these workshops together, teachers can work together to develop the best way to implement and share the newly learned skills and strategies.

Study groups are a good way to implement technical coaching because study groups allow teachers to engage in a professional dialog.

Challenge Coaching

Challenge coaching involves a group of teachers working together to solve a specific instructional challenge or problem. Often specialists from outside the teachers' subject area who have skills or experiences that can provide insight into their instructional challenge are invited to participate on the coaching team.

Challenge coaching is action-oriented. It involves teachers in developing and testing their own hypotheses about what instructional strategies and techniques would work best for their students.

Challenge coaching includes teaching assistants, specialists, administrators, and other school personnel in the problem-solving process because they can provide a unique perspective that could help the group as they search for a solution. Challenge coaching builds upon the strengths of many to help teachers improve their teaching.

In order to implement effective challenge coaching the teachers and others need to be familiar collection data tools to be used to determine which strategy should be adopted as the solution to the challenge.

Team Coaching

Team coaching involves a teacher who is highly skilled and knowledgeable in a specific area working with another teacher to help him or her develop specific skills and strategies. In this model both teachers plan, implement, and evaluate the success of the lesson. This means that both teachers:

- interact with students

- lead instruction with students
- provide examples for students
- pose questions to the students,
- give instructions to students

Team coaching means that for specific lessons there are two teachers in the classroom. Students are only aware that they have two teachers for this particular lesson. They are not aware that one of the teachers is the more knowledgeable and experienced teacher who is there to support the other efforts to learn and master and refine a new teaching skill.

Effective Coaching

The four types of peer coaching discussed are all very different, but they are built upon effective communication that is honest and open and based on an unbiased attitude and a willingness to help others grow professionally. This involves trust building.

Effective peer coaches must be dedicated to working in a trusting relationship with a partner to continually improve his or her teaching skills. They must also be open to new ideas and willingly share classroom experiences with their partners.

Effective communication means more than just teachers talking with each other. It involves:

- conversation skills
- listening skills
- nonverbal language
- giving constructive feedback
- developing trusting relationships

Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback includes providing your partner with descriptive, specific information that is focused on changing behaviors. Karen Irmsher recommends the following techniques:

- Focus on describing observable behavior without attaching judgment, accusations, or generalizations to those behaviors
- Give timely feedback. Immediate feedback is usually desirable, but it is best to gauge a person's readiness to receive the feedback and the appropriateness of the time and situation.
- Paraphrase when possible to clarify what the teacher meant to communicate as well as demonstrating what he or she gleaned from the conversation or observation. The following statements are good paraphrasing sentence starters:
 - _ What I hear you saying is...
 - _ Tell me what you mean when you...
 - _ Do I understand correctly that you mean...?

Listening Skills

Listening means hearing and understanding what you are being told. It does NOT mean giving advice, adding detail, or even sharing your own experiences. The peer coach's job is to guide the teacher into reflective thought about his or her own teaching practice. Consider the following:

- What kind of body language do you display when you listen? Does your body face toward the speaker? Do you make eye contact?
- Do you interact with the speaker by echoing their words or nodding/shaking your head?
- Do you ask appropriate questions to help clarify or expand on their thoughts and ideas?

Open-Ended Questions

When peer coaching instead of asking closed-ended questions that can be responded to with a simple “yes” or “no,” try using questions that begin with “how” or “what” to open up your conversations such as:

- How did you feel the lesson that you taught today went?
- What do you think would happen if...?
- What might you see happening in your classroom if...?

Cognitive Coaching

Cognitive Coaching is a specific peer coaching model developed by Art Costa and Bob Garmston that focuses on the cognitive processes of teachers. It is “a set of strategies, a way of thinking and a way of working that invites self and others to shape and reshape their thinking and problem solving capacities” (Costa, 2002). It involves mediated thinking, or becoming aware of what is going on inside your own head. This allows the teacher to make his or her own decisions about effective or ineffective about his or her own teaching practice. The role of the coach is to act as a mediator between the teacher and his or her own thinking, by encouraging the teacher being coached to reflect upon what is happening in his/her classroom and how to make changes or improvements. Cognitive Coaching is not intended to be another form of evaluation or performance appraisal. It is on four major assumptions:

- Thought and perception produce all behavior.
- Teaching is constant decision-making.
- To learn something new requires engagement and alteration in thought.
- Humans continue to grow cognitively.

Cognitive coaches are taught to use the five States of Mind, to facilitate or mediate a

teacher's journey through self-improvement. These are described by Jennifer Abrams, a beginning teacher support and assessment coordinator with Palo Alto Schools, in her article "A New Way of Thinking: Beginning Teacher Coaching Through Garmston's and Costa's States of Mind," as:

- **Efficacy:** Knowing that one has the capacity to make a difference and the willingness to do so.
- **Flexibility:** Knowing that one has and can develop options to consider and being willing to acknowledge and demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives.
- **Craftsmanship:** Seeking precision, refinement, and mastery.
- **Consciousness:** Monitoring one's own values, intentions, thoughts, and behaviors.
- **Interdependence:** Contributing to the common good and use of group resources to enhance personal effectiveness.

Cognitive coaching is a three-phase cycle that involves a **pre-conference**, during which the coach helps the teacher to determine the focus of the observation. In the article "Reflections on Cognitive Coaching," Robert Garmston recommends the following four questions as guides for the pre-conference:

- What are your objectives?
- How will you know when you've reached your objectives?
- What is your plan?
- On what other aspects of your teaching do you want information?

Observation is the next step. The coach observes teacher in the classroom teaching the identified focus area for the lesson. The coach is NOT involved in teaching the lesson, in interacting with the students or teacher in any way. The coach only observes and records observable behaviors and actions.

Finally the coach and teacher **meet to debrief the observed lesson**. The coach helps the teacher become more reflective about the learning that has happened by asking questions, providing data, and facilitating the teacher's own evaluation of the lesson. The coach does not evaluate the lesson.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a temporary collaborative relationship between two teachers that is based on a relationship between an experienced teacher or a master teacher and a novice or new teacher. The goal is to provide the new teacher with a support system that can help him/her succeed. Research has shown that there is a connection between teacher collaboration and student achievement and that teachers who are mentored are more likely to remain in the teaching profession than those who are not.

Effective mentors need to have training and practice in working with adults, listening, conducting observations, and solving problems.

Successful Peer Coaching

Peer coaching requires:

- trusting relationships among all participants
- administrative support (emotional, organizational, financial)
- faculty/staff recognition of the need for improvement and formal ongoing learning
- clear expectations for engagement
- assessment methods for measuring the difference and outcomes for the experience
- release time for peer coaches
- funds to pay for training and personnel

Paul Galbraith and Kris Anstrom suggest six strategies for finding time for teacher collaboration during the school day.

- Use administrators to teach a class for one period a day so that the teacher is free to be involved in peer coaching.
- Bring students together into larger groups for appropriate activities. This will allow teachers to visit one another while students were actively engaged in learning activities.
- Arrange for teachers to use the library during class times. This allows both teachers and students to study and research together.
- Enlist volunteer aides.
- Seek out student teachers who might be able to be given limited certificates that allow them to take on legal responsibility for students. (Check to make sure this is legal in your state.)
- Organize and promote team teaching, which would give teachers more flexibility in how they plan and implement a peer-coaching program.

This information is based on the Connected University course: **Using Peer Coaching to Improve Instruction**, Classroom Connect, Inc. <http://www.classroom.com/>

More information on peer coaching can be found on the Web:

Mentoring the Mentor: <http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/janas174.cfm>

The Mentoring Leadership Resource Network: <http://www.mentors.net/index.html>

Listening Skills Self-Evaluation: <http://www.adv-leadership-grp.com/programs/evaluations/listening.htm>

New Roles New Relationships:

http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/199310/toc.html

The Benefits of Mentoring:

http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/200105/holloway.html

Peer Coaching—An Effective Staff Development Model:

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/directions/03.htm>

Peer Coaching and the Improvement of Teaching and Learning:

<http://www.teachersnetwork.org/tnpi/research/growth/becker.htm>