Coaching For Competence and Impact

Brief 1: Defining Coaching

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The purpose of this brief is to help build a common language and a common understanding of the critical role Coaching plays in ensuring the EBP/EIIs can be implemented as intended (fidelity) and sustain over time.

Introduction

Everyone can agree that coaches play an important role in the development of an athlete's or team's ability to perform well in their respective sport. Sports coaches serve as leaders, mentors, teachers and objective observers of an individual's strengths, and provide the supports necessary to maximize each individual's potential. Professional sports coaches are clearly accountable for the individuals and teams performance on the field and are expected to reliably produce positive outcomes (i.e. winning the game). The team is only as strong as the weakest player on the team. Team development, cohesion and building mutual respect are key. But, how does this apply to the field of education?

There are many commonalities in the functions described above. A major challenge for educators is the complexity of the various "types" of coaching or philosophies about the roles and functions of coaching that impact developing a common language or framework (i.e. mentors, facilitators, consultants, peers, etc.). Educators may have had positive or less than positive experiences either receiving or providing coaching. And many may not be very clear on the role coaches can serve beyond supporting the implementation of a particular evidence-based Practice (EBP). Building upon the literature of Applied Implementation Science (Fixsen et al, 2005, 2010) this Brief will describe and define the most common functions and the different skills that characterize an effective Coach. It will also highlight the critical role Coaching serves in helping select, support, sustain, and scale-up EBPs across levels of implementation (i.e. staff, team, school, district, community, and state.)

> "The use of effective interventions without implementation strategies is like serum without a syringe; the cure is available but the delivery system is not."
>
> Fixsen, Blase, Duda, Naoom, & VanDyke, 2010

This brief is designed for administrators, coaches and others who are interested in learning more about Coaching. Future briefs will focus on tools to help develop and support Coaching, and tools that coaches may use in their practice and support. For the purpose of this Brief, the word coach may refer to an individual or a team of individuals who are carrying out these functions and the word educator may include teachers, staff, practitioners or school leaders.

Definitions to Support a Common Language

Defining Coaching For Competence and Impact

Coaching for competence occurs at all levels of an organization and refers to an ongoing job embedded professional development process designed to serve three key functions:

1. Ensure Intervention (EBP) Fidelity
2. Ensure Implementation (process) Fidelity
3. Develop Organizational Systems to Promote Professional Judgment and Sustainability

> *Coaching* or *facilitation capacity* refers to a system's ability to organize personnel and resources for prompting and encouraging local school training and implementation efforts.
> **~ Sugai & Horner (2006)**

Ensuring Intervention (EBP) Fidelity refers to the actions coaches take to help teachers, practitioners and school staff build upon their existing skill sets as well as newly acquired skills from a training that are necessary for "implementing" an EBP in the classroom or school setting with fidelity (as intended to be used).

Ensure Implementation (process) Fidelity involves the coach self-assessing the coaching processes and the impact as they provide supports to the educator. This includes reviewing data on the coaching processes (e.g. did we deliver coaching services as intended?) and impact data (e.g. is the training resulting in improved skills and knowledge? Is the coaching improving fidelity?). For more information see Implementation Drivers.

Develop Organizational Systems that Promote Professional Judgment and Sustainability refers to the process and function of coaches helping educators and administrators to understand the theoretical underpinnings for the core components of the EBP being adopted as well as the systems features and infrastructure required for successful and sustained implementation.   Coaches guide implementation and contextualization of the EBP "package" offering a clearer understanding of the "how"; or steps a team takes towards ensuring the EBP fits the school community's context and culture. Coaching occurs in real time and focuses the team to operationalize the implementation processes needed to build educator confidence and competence. Coaches guide the exploration and installation processes, ensuring that the necessary professional development supports are in place and effective (e.g. training, coaching, data systems for feedback). In addition to effective professional development, it is essential organizational changes take place to support educators' ability to use the EBP as intended and

engage in continuous improvement. The coach would be instrumental in assuring these changes occur.

Practice Tip: Using an inventory with a state or district team may assist in setting up necessary structures or systems required to build a coaching workforce. It will be important to document what coaches do and link to desired outcome.

Coaching Staff inventory. Completing this inventory will help you begin to have conversations about coaching functions in your school or district. Gathering this information will help you move from 'silos of coaching' to Coaching for Competence across the levels of implementation. (staff, team, school, district, community, state)

1. Meet with your team and think about all of the individuals in your school or district who play the role of a "coach"
2. Complete the following table and then discuss how the commonalities and differences, resources required, and potential for efficiencies and integration.

| Name of Coach	Briefly describe their role	How many people receive coaching from this coach?	How were they selected to serve as a coach?	Did they receive training for this role?	Was the coach "coached" for this position?	How do you collect information on fidelity of coaching (did it happen, how often etc)and impact of coaching?	Is the work of the coach tied to a particular EBP/EII? Please list	Is coaching a part of this individuals job description

Building the Implementation Infrastructure

From an Applied Implementation Science point of view, systems need to be developed to support the teachers, school staff and/or others charged with the important role delivering the intervention to

students. Implementation drivers are the common features of successful supports needed to make full and effective use of innovations that will benefit students and their families.

Implementation drivers are both integrated and compensatory, meaning that it is important for all of the drivers to be aligned in order to reliable achieve benefits for all students. It's also important to note that if schools or districts don't have all of the drivers in place and functioning, some drivers can compensate for absent or weak drivers. As noted above, building upon current strengths and understanding the relationship of each of the drivers to **ensuring intervention fidelity, ensuring implementation fidelity, and supporting professional judgment and sustainability** are core functions of Coaching. Understanding and using the Implementation Drivers can help Coaches organize their work, action plan with teams and individuals, and ensure that evidence-based implementation practices are being used.
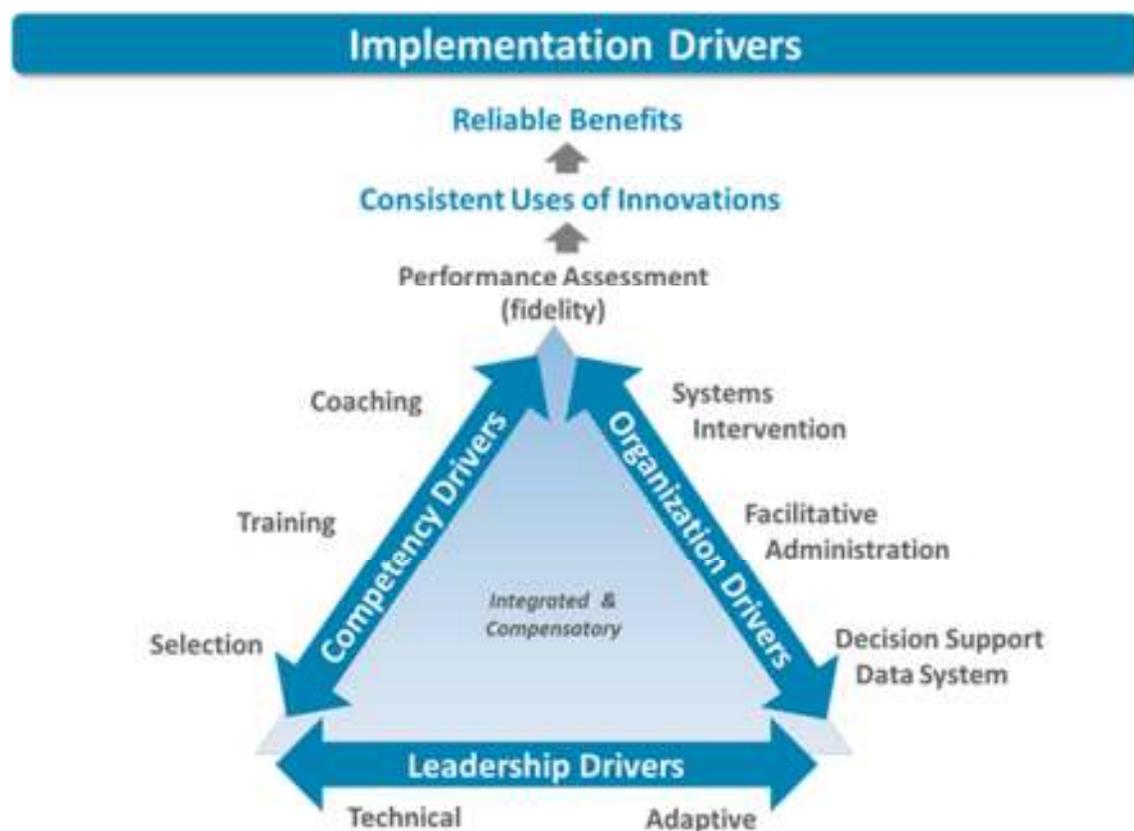
Supporting Coaching Functions

Effective coaching requires a diverse set of skills to work with individuals and teams including the ability to facilitate work across multiple levels of the system. The specific skills needed are dependent on the level of work (e.g. individual, team, system) and the intended outcomes.

Best Practices for coaching at any level of the system include the active and iterative data-based delivery of:

- prompts that increase successful behavior
- corrections that decrease unsuccessful behavior
- frequent and descriptive praise related to achieving and sustaining agreed upon improvements

Coaching is done by someone with credibility and experience with the EBP including the range of specific skill(s) or practices associated with the EBP. Coaches also utilize a repertoire of coaching competencies including the willingness and ability to build relationships, provide positive and specific feedback, develop trust, facilitate learning, and hold themselves accountable for the outcomes. Coaching is conducted on site, in real time…… . The goals for coaching and the level of intensity of support a coach provides evolve over time based on observed gains in competencies and skillful use of the EBP. (Horner & Sugai, 2012).

Common "Types" of Coaching

Coaching has very different functions which requires skills and expertise to match the function. The coach provides support during and after training to ensure that quality implementation occurs. Based on the work of the SISEP Coaching Community of Practice* three broad, yet distinct coaching "types" were articulated. While there are basic coaching skills required across all types of coaching, there are some distinctions that can assist in organizing how we select, and train coaches as well as how we utilize coaching materials and curriculum.

1. **Coaching Individuals for Behavior Change** *(parallels Instructional Coaching)*
   The focus is on skill acquisition and application of the skill in context after training has occurred. Coaches provide support and performance feedback (content specific: academic, behavior) to ensure use, fluency and acceptable adaptation of skills acquired in training.

2. **Coaching Teams or Groups for Team Behavior Change**

The focus shifts from individual behavior change and individual skill acquisition to team or group behavior change and team or group functioning to support implementation and generate outcomes.

3. **Systems Coaching for Creating Organizational Support to Facilitate and Sustain Behavior Change**

The focus is on organizational support and change to a) ensure that the supports needed by teachers to implement well are of high quality and consistently in place (see Implementation Competency Drivers) b) ensure that the administrative environment at each level (e.g. building, District, Region) is creating a hospitable environment (e.g. policies, resources, regulations) that facilitates implementation and c) data and feedback loops are in place for improving systems alignment, action planning, problem-solving, and positive recognition. Systems coaching requires fluency in implementation science in order to effectively engage in these three functions.
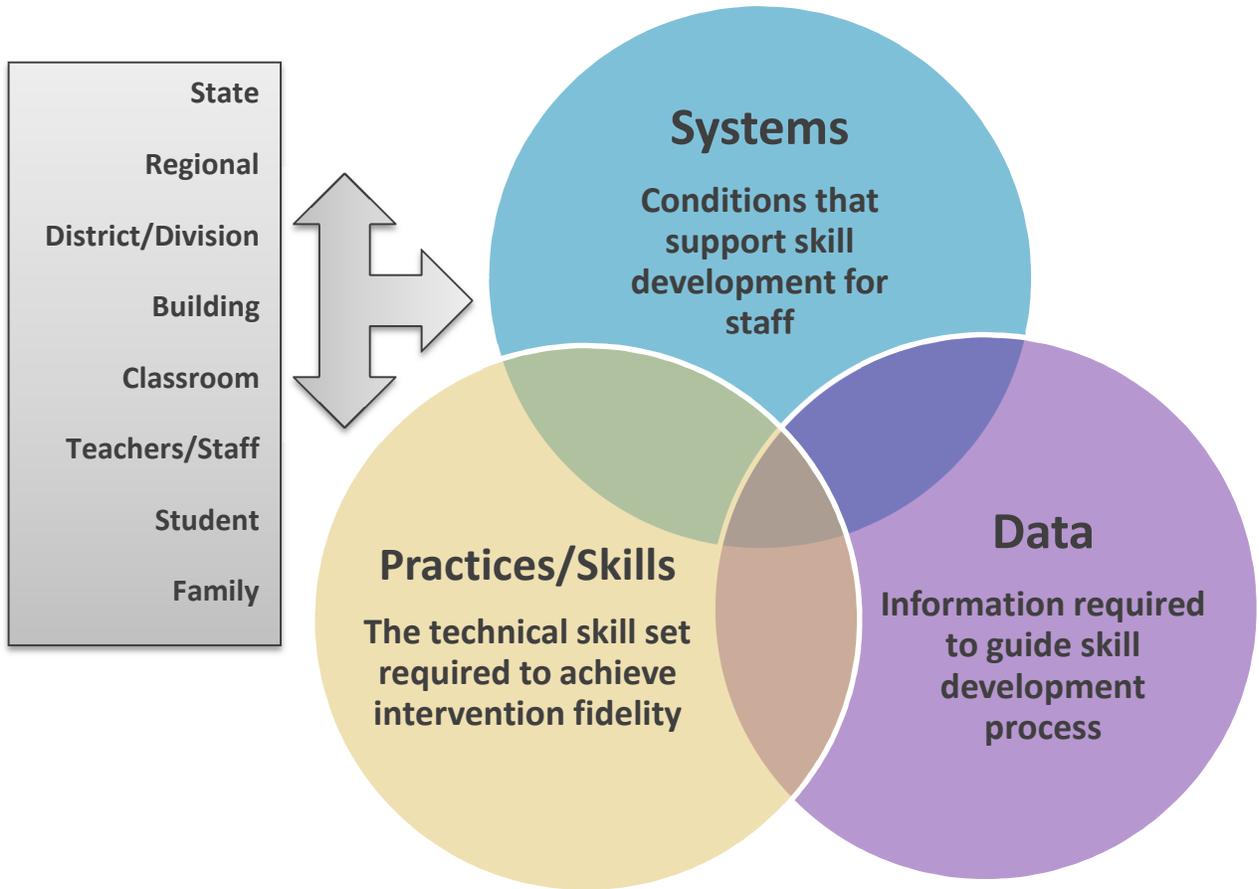
Building Coaching Capacity at all Levels: A Bridge Between Learning and Doing

This diagram reflects three core and overlapping functions of coaching at all levels of the Education System. See next page

Coaching Outcomes

Fidelity of Evidence Based Practice

Practice effectiveness that yields positive student results

State

Regional

District/Division

Building

Classroom

Teachers/Staff

Student

Family

Systems

Conditions that support skill development for staff

Practices/Skills

The technical skill set required to achieve intervention fidelity

Data

Information required to guide skill development process

Systems Coaches will be required have knowledge in 3 core areas: Organizational Structures and Systems, Improving and Sustaining Team
Effectiveness and Using Data to track progress, measure fidelity and demonstrate outcomes. Coaches will be responsible for the following key activities in each of the core areas:

Organizational Structures and Systems

- Policy and Procedure Development
- Budget reallocation
- Implementation Team Support and Development
- Re-purposing of positions to align with initiatives
- Selection, training, coaching and assessment of coaches
- Organizational/Systems Change to train and support coaching and staff
  - Access to training and support
  - Review of Internal infrastructure needed to support coaching role for educator effectiveness

Improving and Sustaining Team Effectiveness

- Active Problem Solving (Implementation Teams, Leadership, Teachers/staff, students)
- Building Team Collaboration
- Delivering Feedback
- Consultation related to core features of EBPs/EIIs

Using Data

- Action plan with short/long term goals
- Coaching service delivery plans
- Self-Assessment (reflective practitioners)
- Process measures/Fidelity checks
- Progress Monitoring Tools
- Student Outcomes
- Data used for continuous improvement (PEP-PIP, PDSA*)
- Decision Support Data systems for both EBP and Implementation process outcomes
- Consumer feedback/social validity
- Social Marketing (cost benefit)

HOW LEADERSHIP CAN SUPPORT SYSTEMS COACHING

Why invest in Coaching for Competence?

Coaching offers a way to ensure that all students have access to effective practices that are implemented with fidelity and sustained over time. Two major costs and disruptions at a system level (school, district) are 1) retaining staff, and 2) training and professional development. Building in durable coaching functions not only allows teachers and support staff to realize the full benefits of training and professional development opportunities, but there are recent data on improved staff retention for individuals receiving coaching in the use EBPs as intended. (Aaron, - I'll find it)

> "For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation"
>
> R. Elmore, 2002

In recent years, there have been several studies that looked at the conditions needed to see how application of best practices took place after delivery of professional development. Joyce and Showers (2002) found that traditional components of training (theory, behavioral rehearsal, feedback) did not lead to actual behavior change in the classroom. Instead, coaching and performance feedback in the classroom increased the percentage of teachers using the new skills from 5-10% of teachers to 95% reportedly using the innovation. Simply investing in training of EBPs so that all students can benefit was not as effective as following up the training with coaching provided in the actual setting where the innovation would be applied. Leadership has the opportunity to ensure a "return on investment" of training, by investing in systematic development of the competence and confidence of staff and building leadership capacity across the system to build ensure high fidelity of the EBP/EIIs.

The role of coaching, in particular Systems Coaching, is too important to simply add to a list of duties assigned without thoughtful consideration of that individual's current responsibilities and capacity. Coaching for competence and impact requires dedicated FTE (time), individuals with matched skill sets (talent) and support from leadership to engage in this work. This brief is intended to help leadership think about how best to organize and align current coaching activities, and articulate current coaching functions.

Lesson From the Field

For the past three years, 31 high school teams in Maryland have had access to a Systems Coach who has provided training and technical assistance with the implementation of EBPs. Coaching

has positively influenced the way teams use data, support staff, communicate to the larger community and support administrators. There have been lessons learned along the way. A Coach must possess and utilize multiple skills beyond strong knowledge of the content. Coaches who have effectively moved teams to action, report the importance of taking time to develop rapport, trust and create a collaborative culture (Hershfeldt, et al.,). In doing so, one must understand the unique culture of the school, know the hidden leaders (those individuals who are influential with peers), and seek visible support from the leadership of the building. Educators understand the need to use data for informed decision making, and do so in many aspects of their job, but an effective coach is able to pull from multiple data sources essentially creating a 'data story' that is both user friendly and represents a broader look at the targeted topic. The data becomes more relevant and the educators more willing to spend the time on collection and interpretation when presented in this way. Lastly, effective Systems Coaches benefit from continuous professional development and networking opportunities themselves. The team of 10 Coaches working in Maryland's high schools have found tremendous benefit in collaborating with one another, drawing upon the diverse skill set of the group, and taking leadership within the group to teach and share new ideas and information.

Summary

It is important for educators to recognize the critical importance that Systems Coaching serves for helping create hospitable learning environments for all adults with the organization. There are many misconceptions of what is meant by "coaching" and a first step is clearly defining coaching roles and functions for the different types of coaching.

As we defined in this brief, coaching is too important to be "add on" activities for professionals and allocated FTE and language in a job description will help establish and sustain coaching positions. Selecting the individuals that have the appropriate skills for the coaching functions you want to achieve is important. It will be important for the organization to provide ongoing training and support for their "coaching workforce" with special attention to performance feedback and link with investment in coaching to fidelity and outcomes. Without this, there is a risk to the system to not be able to achieve the intended results or sustain initial impact of the EBPs/EIIs.

Leadership plays an important role in facilitating the supports need by and for coaches. Typically, leaders and Coaches work in partnership and with Implementation Teams to help remove potential barriers that arise from adopting a new program or practice and to ensure continuous improvement of implementation processes. In addition, Coaches work together and with leadership to establish the supports needed for their own professional development

(e.g. training, coaching for coaches, a community of practice, use of coaching-related data). Skillful Coaches are not born but are developed over time.

Families, school staff and volunteers work with Coaches on a regular basis in order to ensure that communication pathways are being facilitated, accountability structures are established and positive outcomes for all students are being achieved.

Tools that help Define and Support Systems Coaching

1. **Practice Profiles**
   A structured process to help operationally define core components or features of the implementation features and acceptable variations to the ideal set of team and staff behaviors.
2. **Drivers Best Practices-Coaching Edition**
   This measure is based on the Implementation Drivers Best Practices: Assessing Core Components, but is geared towards the coaching driver. This instrument can help assess current coaching best practices for developing a coaching system and guiding the processes to build the capacity of coaches internally.
2. **Coaching Skills and Behaviors Checklist**
   Based on the work of Barrett, this tool described specific coaching behaviors and can be used to track coaching exchanges in real time and on a daily basis.

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Aarons

March

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Acknowledgements

APPENDIX A: Systems Coaching At-A-Glance

Function (Why?)

System coaching helps achieve three core functions:

1. Ensure Intervention (EBP) Fidelity
2. Ensure Implementation (process) Fidelity
3. Develop Professional Judgment

Membership (Who?)

It is recommended that more than one individual within your organization serve the System Coaching functions. Systems coached need to have adequate time in engage in building the capacity of others, building upon current organization and system strengths and ensuring that ultimately student are achieving the intended outcomes.

Capacity Development (What?)

System Coaches work at multiple levels of the system (ie, school, district, region, state) and are accountable for building implementation capacity by specifically attending to and integrating the following three domains.

Systems

- Policy and Procedure Development
- Budget reallocation
- Implementation Team Support and Development
- Re-purposing of positions to align with initiatives
- Selection, training, coaching and assessment of coaches
- Organizational/Systems Change to train and support coaching and staff
  - Access to certificate
  - Review of Internal infrastructure

Practices/Skills

- Active Problem Solving (Implementation Teams, Leadership, Teachers/staff, students)
- Building Collaboration
- Delivering Feedback
- Consultation related to core features of EBPs/EIIs

Data

- Action plan with short/long term goals

- Coaching service delivery plans
- Self-Assessment
- Process measures/Fidelity checks
- Progress Monitoring Tools
- Student Outcomes
- Data used for continuous improvement (PEP-PIP, PDSA*)
- Decision Support Data systems for both EBP and Implementation process outcomes
- Consumer feedback/social validity

For more information please visit.

SISEP Website

PBIS Website

Duda & Barrett (2013). Systems Coaching: Coaching for Competence and Impact. Brief #1