
Putting the Pieces Together: A Logic Model for Coaching in Head Start

From the Descriptive Study of the Head Start
Early Learning Mentor Coach Initiative

OPRE Report # 2014 -06

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OVERVIEW SUMMARY

In September 2010, the Office of Head Start (OHS), in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF), awarded 17-month Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) grants to 131 Head Start grantees. In March 2011, ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation awarded a contract to American Institutes for Research, and its partners MEF Associates and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, to conduct a descriptive study of the ELMC initiative. A key task of the ELMC study was to develop a conceptual model of coaching both to provide a framework for the study and to help identify factors to consider when designing and implementing a coaching initiative.

We chose a logic model framework to portray coaching because it allowed us to characterize the entire coaching initiative—not only the structure and processes of coaching approaches, but also the assumptions and resources, intermediate outputs and potential outcomes, and the contextual factors that may influence the implementation and success of a coaching initiative. To help move the field forward, we refined this logic model so that it would have broader application both to early care and education administrators that are considering a coaching initiative and to researchers tasked with evaluating these initiatives. Dimensions of coaching discussed include:

- goals of coaching
- staff selected for coaching
- coach qualifications
- duration
- logistics
- workload
- coach/staff ratio
- coach staffing and qualifications
- process for establishing individual goals and action steps
- observation schedule and methods
- format for reflection and feedback on practices and behavior

Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Introduction.....	1
Coaching Approach: Dimensions of Coaching.....	3
Where to Begin? The Basic Dimensions of Coaching.....	4
Structuring the Coaching Initiative	5
How It Is Done: The Process of Coaching.....	7
Putting the Pieces Together: A Program Logic Model for Coaching.....	11
Conclusion	15
References.....	16

Acknowledgments

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We are grateful to many research and administration staff at American Institutes for Research (AIR) and MEF Associates who helped in numerous ways throughout this project. We particularly want to acknowledge Dr. James Taylor, an AIR staff member, whose theoretical work on the dimensions of coaching in K–12 school settings provided a solid framework from which to build our conceptual work. We are also particularly grateful for the advice, management support, review comments, and insights of AIR Vice President Deborah Parrish.

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Introduction

In September 2010, the Office of Head Start (OHS), in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services's Administration for Children and Families (ACF), awarded 17-month Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) grants to 131 Head Start grantees. This included Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start programs (AIAN).

Traditionally, coaching in HS and other early childhood education settings is conceived to serve numerous professional development purposes, including building the capacity of teaching staff for self-reflection, refining existing skills, implementing new skills, and promoting positive relationships among staff (Gallacher, 1997; Rush & Shelden, 2005). The ELMC grantees were given wide discretion to develop mentor coaching¹ approaches that met their individual program goals.

In March 2011, ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation awarded a contract to American Institutes for Research, and its partners MEF Associates and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, to conduct a descriptive study of the ELMC initiative. The overarching purpose of the study was to describe the ELMC initiative, highlighting what coaching approaches HS grantees used in their programs. The findings from that study can be found in *The Descriptive Study of the Head Start Early Learning Mentor Coach Initiative* (Howard et al., 2013). The report includes extensive details on the nature of the coaching efforts implemented.

A key task of the ELMC study was to develop a conceptual model of coaching both to provide a framework for the study and to help identify factors to consider when designing and implementing a coaching initiative. At the outset of the study, the research team used its expertise in HS, ECE, and coaching, and conducted a review of the early childhood and K–12 literatures, to identify the dimensions of coaching relevant for describing the approaches adopted by the ELMC grantees. We chose a logic model framework for portraying coaching because it allowed us to characterize the entire coaching initiative—not only the structure and processes of various coaching approaches, but also the assumptions and resources undergirding the particular coaching approach adopted, the outputs and outcomes expected if the coaching was successful, and the contextual factors that may influence the implementation and success of a coaching initiative.

To help move the field forward, we refined this logic model so that it would have broader application to early care and education programs considering implementing a coaching initiative and to researchers tasked with evaluating these initiatives. By drawing on information from Federal staff, an expert consultant group, recent research, and what we learned from Head Start grantees, coaches, and staff who participated in the ELMC study, we revised this logic model throughout the project. This brief presents the resulting logic model.

¹ Although the ELMC initiative used the term *mentor coach*, for simplicity in this brief we use the term *coach*.

The purpose of this brief is to describe the dimensions of coaching inherent in any coaching initiative and to present a logic model for coaching in Head Start and other early care and education programs as a framework for identifying key program decisions that need to be made when designing and launching a coaching initiative. Program evaluators may want to use this framework to guide the development of research questions and data collection efforts regarding the implementation and effectiveness of coaching in early care and education programs.

First, the brief focuses narrowly on the coaching approach itself. It describes key dimensions of coaching reflecting the “basics” (e.g., which staff receive coaching, qualifications sought in coaches), the structure of coaching (e.g., the ratio of staff to coaches), and the actual process of coaching (e.g., identifying staff needs and establishing goals, observing staff practices, providing feedback and opportunities for reflection).

After the indepth examination of the dimensions, the brief presents a broader framework of coaching using a program logic model. The model illustrates how underlying assumptions (e.g., why coaching is needed) affects all subsequent decisions regarding the resources necessary to implement the coaching initiative and the coaching approach adopted. The model also illustrates that the outcomes sought depend on the “outputs” of coaching (e.g., dosage, the staff–coach relationship, and staff engagement), and that, if staff and classroom outcomes are achieved, then children and families are likely to benefit. Finally, the logic model identifies aspects of the broader program and community contexts that can affect the implementation and success of the coaching initiative.

The conclusion highlights the utility of this conceptual model for Head Start and other early care and education programs that are considering implementing a coaching initiative and for researchers who are seeking to evaluate such initiatives.

Coaching Approach: Dimensions of Coaching

The dimensions of any coaching approach can be organized into three main categories: basic, structural, and procedural (Taylor, 2008). Key dimensions of coaching are listed in Exhibit 1 and further described in this section.

Exhibit 1. Dimensions of Coaching

Dimension	Considerations
The Basics: Where to Begin?	
Goal(s) of coaching	Program goals of coaching may include effective use of assessment tools, improving instructional practices, improving classroom organization and management, improving work with families, continuing education, staff support, and organizational goals.
Staff selected for coaching	Considerations for which staff should receive coaching include staff experience, staff education credentials, the needs of staff, position, or age group of children staff serve.
Coach qualifications	Coaches may be selected based on their personal characteristics (e.g., interpersonal skills); professional skills; experience in ECE and/or coaching adults; educational credentials; commitment to ECE; multilingual skills; and whether they are or were once employed by the program.
Duration	Coaching efforts may last less than one year, one year, multiple years, or ongoing as part of an organization's operations.
The Structure of Coaching	
Logistics	Program administrators need to address logistics relating to where coaching will take place, coach and staff travel demands, scheduling, and arranging for classroom coverage while teaching staff meet individually with coaches.
Ratio/span of control	A coach may be assigned to a single center or to multiple centers, or there may be multiple coaches assigned to a single center or to multiple centers.
Coach staffing	Program administrators will need to decide whether to hire coaches full-time or part-time, as an employee or a consultant, and whether to hire from outside the program or utilize one or more current staff who also work for the program in another capacity.
Supervision of coaches	Coaches may be provided formal, informal, or no supervision.
The Process of Coaching: How is it Done?	
<i>Establish goals and outline action steps based on identified needs</i>	
Identify staff needs	The program administration may identify individual staff needs, or needs may be identified through self-report or assessment tools.
Select goals and outline action steps	The coach works with the staff member to select one or more individual goals for coaching and to identify concrete action steps toward those goals.
Topics/content of coaching	Content of coaching may include knowledge and skills/strategies (e.g., on instructional strategies), effective use of assessment tools, and encouragement/support.
<i>Engage in focused observation of current practices and behavior</i>	
Modes of observation	Observation can occur in person, through video recording, or through staff self-reports.
Frequency of observation	Observation can occur less frequently or more frequently.
<i>Reflection and feedback on practices and behavior</i>	
Coach strategies for facilitating reflection and providing feedback	Coach strategies include, but are not limited to, direct feedback, encouragement of self-reflection, modeling/demonstrating, role-playing, or assigning homework.

Dimension	Considerations
Modes and format of feedback	Feedback can be for the individual or team, in person or virtual, in real time or time delayed.
Frequency of feedback	Feedback can occur less frequently or more frequently, on a consistent or more ad hoc basis.
Other supportive strategies	In addition to providing individual feedback, coaches may share materials, conduct group workshops, or peer discussion groups.
Role(s) of coach	The coach may serve as a technical advisor, collaborative partner, problem solver, advocate, practical support, interpersonal support, or staff supervisor.

Where to Begin? The Basic Dimensions of Coaching

In devising a strategy for coaching, each program must first decide the basics—namely, the goals of coaching, whom to coach, whom to hire as coaches, and how long to provide coaching.

The Goals of Coaching

The overarching purpose of coaching is to improve staff skills, knowledge, and practices in working with children and families. Programs that decide to provide coaching should identify explicit goals so that they can better plan and monitor progress toward these goals. Program goals for coaching can include the following:

- Effective use of assessment tools (e.g., use of child progress data in lesson planning)
- Improving instructional practices (e.g., pedagogy, implementing a specific curriculum)
- Improving classroom organization and behavior management
- Improving communication with and engagement of families
- Fostering staff’s continuing education, training, and professional growth
- Staff support (e.g., stress reduction, personal growth)
- Organizational goals (e.g., increasing the use of technology, reducing turnover)

When setting overarching goals for the coaching initiative, programs should consider the particular needs of their staff and the children and families that they serve. Overarching goals should be linked to specific measureable progress on targeted outcomes.

The Staff Selected for Coaching

Programs must decide which staff will receive coaching. The program could decide to provide coaching to all staff. Alternatively, the program could consider criteria for identifying staff that need or could benefit from coaching. Depending on resources, program directors may decide to use child or classroom assessment tools to identify staff in greatest need of coaching. Programs may select new staff or include veteran staff. They may decide to focus coaching on staff who work with infants or toddlers, or they may target coaching to staff who work with preschool-age children. In addition to focusing on staff members who work directly with children and families (e.g., lead and assistant teachers, home visitors), programs may decide to have other program

staff (e.g., education coordinators, family support workers, program directors or supervisors) receive coaching.

The program should consider that the more types of staff included within one coach's workload, the more demanding the work may be because each type of staff may require coaching in different skills and content areas. For example, coaching a family service worker will likely require different goals, formats, and approaches than coaching aimed at staff working directly with children and families. Further, programs need to consider whether the staff members who receive the coaching are working with infants, toddlers, preschool children, or other adults (e.g., parents, teachers, other staff) because this may affect both the qualifications sought in the coaches and the content and topics covered in the coaching sessions.

Coach Qualifications

Programs must decide what qualifications they are looking for in a coach. Some characteristics—such as good interpersonal skills, knowledge of child development, and experience in Head Start or other early care and education programs—may be universally sought. Other characteristics may depend on the particular goals of the coaching initiative and the needs of the staff selected for coaching. For example, programs with a strong home-based component may seek coaches with experience working with families, while center-based preschool programs may seek coaches with knowledge of certain curricula or assessment tools.

The qualifications to consider include personal characteristics (e.g., good interpersonal skills); professional knowledge and skills (e.g., pertaining to adult learning, specific curricular or topical areas, or relevant child or program assessment tools); experience (in early childhood and education, Head Start, working with families, coaching adults); education (e.g., degree level, area of study and any early childhood education certifications and licenses held); commitment to early care and education as a career; and cultural match or an ability to speak another language.

Duration

A coaching initiative that is expected to extend across multiple years may look different or may require different staffing than an initiative lasting one year or less. The duration of coaching should reflect the program administrator's assumptions regarding how long it will take to effect lasting change in the skills and practices targeted by the coaching initiative. In addition, the greater the breadth of skills and practices targeted for improvement, the longer the initiative would take. The duration of coaching also depends on available resources.

Structuring the Coaching Initiative

After decisions have been made regarding the basic dimensions of coaching, programs must decide how best to structure their coaching initiatives. Program administrators need to address logistics relating to where coaching will take place, coach and staff travel demands, scheduling, and arranging for classroom coverage while teaching staff meet individually with coaches. Depending on how many staff are selected to receive coaching and where the coaching will take place, program administrators will need to decide how many staff will be assigned to each coach,

whether coaches will work with staff at more than one center, how many and which coaches to hire, and how to supervise the coaches.

Logistics

Coaches may face logistical challenges in a number of areas when providing coaching. Coaching can take place on-site where the staff person works (in their classroom or elsewhere in the center) or off-site (in another center or in families' homes during home visits). The location of coaching has implications for scheduling, travel demands, finding adequate space for individual coaching sessions, and classroom coverage.

Out-of-classroom coaching sessions requires adequate space for private meetings. Locating and scheduling a room for individual sessions can be difficult. In addition, program administrators will need to arrange for classroom coverage, either by other staff or a substitute teacher, while classroom staff meet individually with coaches.

Scheduling sessions with multiple staff, possibly at multiple locations, can be one of the most time consuming efforts of coaching. For those working across multiple centers, travel time and coordination could undermine coaching work. Program leadership might consider providing administrative staff support to aid in scheduling and coordinating coach efforts.

Coach-Staff Ratio and Span of Control

Given the number and the location of staff to be coached, programs will need to decide whether (1) a single coach will work with the staff at a single program location, (2) multiple coaches will work with staff at a single program location, (3) a single coach will travel to multiple program locations, or (4) multiple coaches will work across multiple program locations.

Each of these layers may add to the complexity and the challenges of the coaching work. The greater the number of staff, the greater the time needed for individualization of coaching feedback and support, so coaches and program directors should plan accordingly. The coach–staff ratio, the time spent traveling between program locations to visit staff, the differences in center needs, and the different coaching styles needed for different staff types or to meet individual needs have implications for how much time and focused attention the coach can provide to each staff member. These complexities, in turn, may affect the frequency and potentially the effectiveness of in-person coaching sessions—all of which have implications for cost. However, working in multiple centers could allow for greater dissemination of innovative teaching practices, and broader improvements in program quality.

Coach Staffing

The number of centers, classrooms, and staff requiring coaching, as well as the resources available, will drive decisions about how best to staff the coaching initiative. This entails decisions about how many full-time and part-time coaches will be required, as well as whether to hire from within or outside the organization. Depending on the local labor market and the qualifications and the interests of current staff, a program may use current staff as coaches (either in addition to or replacing their current roles within the organization), hire new staff as coaches,

or contract with outside consultants as coaches. New hires and consultants may have previously worked for the program, or they may be new to the center or to Head Start altogether.

In staffing the coaching initiative, some programs may consider using the staff's supervisor as a coach, and others may find such a combination of professional relationships challenging. Alternatively, programs may request that the coach report to the staff's supervisor about performance and progress, though some programs may decide to limit what coaching information is shared with supervisors. On the one hand, combining the supervisor and coaching roles or reporting staff progress to supervisors may be an effective way to monitor staff performance, acknowledge progress and effort, and to ensure additional coaching support in areas needing improvement. On the other hand, staff may not be as forthcoming with challenges, or feel comfortable taking a risk if they think it might be perceived negatively by their supervisor. Programs need to consider what will work best for them—keeping in mind that whatever they decide, it is important that the staff member, the coach, and the staff member's supervisor are clear on what information will be shared with the staff member's supervisor.

Oversight of Coaches

Programs will need to decide whether and how to provide oversight to their coaches. They may take a lenient or passive approach and trust that the coaching is progressing as intended. However, some form of oversight may make the coaches more accountable, and there are many ways this oversight can occur. Programs that hire a consulting organization to provide coaching may rely on the organization's internal controls and supervisory structure to ensure quality coaching services are being provided. Programs hiring freelance coaches may establish a formal supervisory relationship, designating a staff member as the coach's supervisor, or they may rely on informal methods, such as periodically touching base on how the coaching is going. Programs can also elicit feedback from the staff receiving coaching on the helpfulness of the coach and the perceived effectiveness of the coaching methods. This information could be used to inform coach supervisors and improve and refine coaching practices. Administrator involvement in the oversight of the coaches may lead them to be more effective when challenges arise and may result in greater staff buy-in to the overall coaching initiative.

How It Is Done: The Process of Coaching

The Head Start National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning proposed a “practice-based” model of coaching consisting of three main components: (1) identifying needs, establishing staff goals, and outlining action steps aligned with these needs; (2) engaging in focused observation of current practices and behavior; and (3) fostering reflection and providing feedback on practices and behavior (Head Start National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning, 2012). The process is cyclical and is developed through a collaborative coaching partnership, as shown in Exhibit 2. Descriptions of the key dimensions for each component follow the exhibit.

Exhibit 2. Practice-Based Coaching



Source: Head Start National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning, 2012.

Establish Shared Goals and Action Planning Steps Based on Identified Needs

The first component of the coaching process involves identifying individual needs of the staff chosen to receive coaching, developing goals and outlining action steps, and deciding on the content of coaching for each staff member.

Identify Staff Needs. An important step in the coaching process is to assess the professional development needs that will be addressed with coaching. Needs can be defined by program administrators (e.g., based on the most recent performance review for the staff); from informal or formal assessments of the staff, classroom, home visit, or children; or by staff members themselves. The needs will likely change as the coaching progresses, so the coach should consider reassessing staff needs on a regular basis. Accurate identification and reassessment of needs is often considered to be important to maintain staff engagement and forward progress.

Develop Goals and Outline Action Steps. After the needs of the staff have been identified, the goals, content, and action steps for the coaching can be established. The goals may focus on a wide variety of topic areas, depending on the overarching goals of the programs and the current needs of the staff. Individual goals should be specific and clearly defined based on observable behaviors and ought to link to action steps that lead to success. Staff who meet or exceed their goals are likely to become more engaged in coaching and improving their professional skills.

The number and the nature of the goals established and the frequency with which these are revisited may have implications for the success of the coaching. Selecting which goals to tackle and their corresponding action steps can be done collaboratively with the staff or can be decided by the coach or the staff's supervisor, or a combination of people. The goals and the action steps should align with any overarching program goals for the coaching initiative. If no overarching program goals are established, then the coach and the staff may have greater latitude to identify individual priorities.

Content of Coaching. Coaching involves equipping staff with the knowledge, skills, strategies, resources, tools, and the constructive feedback necessary to improve practices. There are a substantial number of topical areas which coaching can readily address, so coaches will need to decide what content to focus on with staff. Examples of common ECE coaching content include the following:

- Strategies for using child progress data in lesson planning
- Instructional strategies
- Behavior management skills
- Information on education and training opportunities
- Strategies for working with families
- Encouragement and support with professional and personal challenges

Final selections of coaching content should align with the overarching program goals and ought to derive from the particular goals and outcomes sought for individual staff.

Focused Observation of Current Practices and Behavior

The second component of the coaching process entails using one or more modes of observation to assess the current practices and behavior of the staff.

Modes of Observation. Observing current practices and behavior on a regular basis is considered critical for providing accurate feedback and guidance. Coaches can use a variety of methods for observing staff practices and behavior, and they should consider which methods will work best in their programs. In-person observation, with or without the use of formal assessment tools, is commonly used. Coaches may also request that the staff submit videotapes of their work, or coaches may take videos themselves to inform later coaching discussions. However, in-person coaching and videotaping may not be possible in some situations. For example, some families in home-based HS programs may not be comfortable having the coaches observing or videotaping interactions, so coaches of home visitors may need to find other ways of assessing the home visitor's performance in the home and providing feedback. Coaches should consider providing staff with materials and information on how to approach families regarding coaching during home visits. A thoughtful process for approaching families regarding coaching should be developed.

Though not based on direct observation of staff practices, coaches also typically encourage the staff to share mistakes they have made and the challenges they encounter in their work. This staff report could be based on informal recall or by keeping a log or a checklist as "homework." Families could also be asked to report on staff skills and strategies when working with them and their children. Such reports can be a helpful source of information that can feed into staff practice of self-reflection and improvement.

Frequency of Observation. Coaches should consider scheduling observations at regular intervals or whenever a new skill has been introduced. Whatever the mode, more frequent observations allow for more frequent self-reflection and feedback on practices and guidance on solutions to challenges. However, frequent in-person observation is time intensive, expensive, and can be

disruptive to staff activities. For this reason, programs and coaches must decide on the mix of observation strategies, perhaps balancing frequent, less invasive modes (such as self-report logs and videotapes) with in-person observations.

Engage in Reflection and Provide Feedback on Practices and Behavior

This component of the coaching process involves using a variety of strategies and modes to provide feedback, opportunities for reflection, and other support deemed necessary to meet the established goals. The frequency of various reflection and feedback strategies may depend on the frequency of observation and mode of feedback as well as the role(s) played by the coach.

Strategies for Facilitating Reflection and Providing Feedback. Coaches use a variety of strategies for facilitating reflection and providing feedback on current staff practices. Coaches can be directive, providing information, guidance, and suggested strategies. They can demonstrate a new skill or an effective practice by modeling the new skill either during a coaching session in the home or in the classroom. They can provide constructive feedback, verbally or in writing, and elicit self-reflection. Having the staff members view a videotape of themselves at work can provide similar opportunities for self-reflection, active discussion, and problem solving. The staff could role-play a skill and receive additional feedback. Coaches can have the staff members observe a peer, either live or videotaped, and ask them to reflect on strategies that appear more and less effective. The coach may ask the staff members to practice a skill or a strategy and report back on how it went.

Modes of Feedback. Coaches have many options for providing feedback. Coaches can provide feedback one-on-one, to a classroom team, or with staff members in a larger group session or meeting. This feedback can take place in-person or through other modes of communication, including written reports, telephone calls, e-mails, online postings, or even texting. Some feedback—such as constructive feedback—may best be done in person. In addition, feedback can be provided immediately in real time (e.g., in-person during classroom instruction, modeling, role playing), or there may be a delay between when the action has occurred and when feedback is received (e.g., coach feedback on staff logs, on videotape of staff practices). The modes of feedback may also need to be adjusted based on what works best with particular staff or in a particular setting.

Frequency of Feedback. Feedback can be provided more or less often, and the frequency of feedback may depend in part on the mode of feedback. For example, face-to-face feedback may be consistently and frequently scheduled if this is the preferred mode by the coach and the staff and if it is not impractical. Telephone calls, e-mails, and other virtual modes of feedback can be more frequent. There may be an optimal level of feedback that differs for each staff, in order to allow opportunity for self-reflection and skill development.

Other Supportive Strategies. In addition to providing feedback on staff practices and behavior, coaches can support the staff in other ways that may improve their ability to work effectively in the classroom or the home, such as sharing knowledge, materials, and resources; by conducting staff trainings and workshops; or by facilitating peer discussion groups about skills and practices that are being implemented across a program.

Roles of the Coach. Coaching can take several forms depending on the various roles that the coaches play. Technical coaching involves the sharing of expertise. Collaborative coaching engages the staff in identifying needs, setting goals, and directing the focus and the content of the coaching. As a problem solver, the coach can help the staff brainstorm possible solutions to the challenges they face, or the coach can play a less directive, more facilitative role by prompting the staff to reflect on and solve problems themselves based on this introspection (e.g., cognitive coaching). Coaches can also play a supportive role, providing interpersonal support, stress reduction, and even advocacy.

Coaches may also sometimes find themselves helping the staff with classroom preparation, administration, and scheduling, along with assisting in the classroom or the home (e.g., helping to manage a child). These roles may be greatly appreciated by the staff, and can serve as opportunities for modeling good practice. However, coaches should guard against becoming regular assistant teachers or spending an inordinate amount of time on paperwork and logistics.

Putting the Pieces Together: A Program Logic Model for Coaching

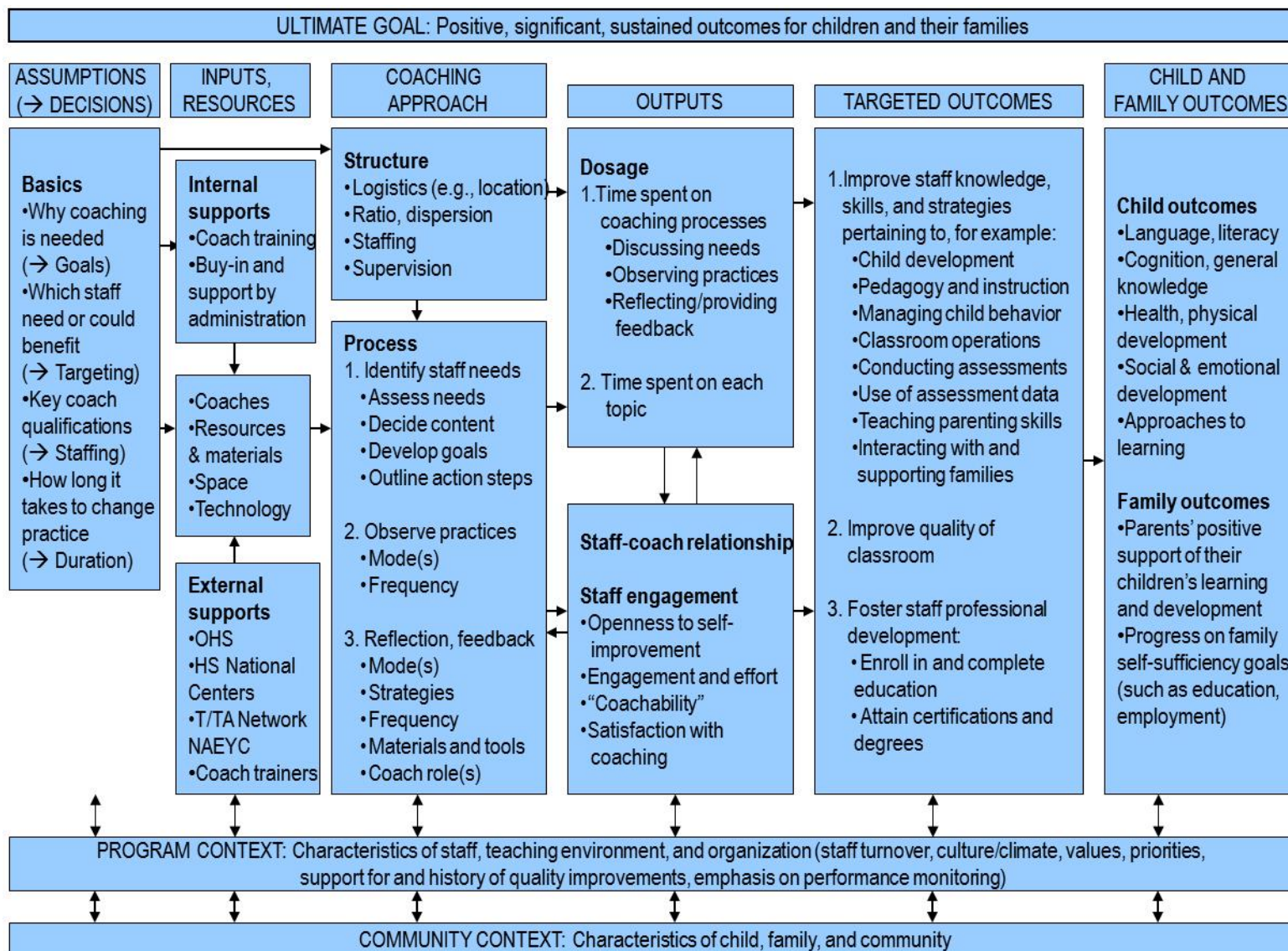
The particular coaching approach is embedded in a broader coaching initiative that can be portrayed as a program logic model. A program logic model is a pictorial representation of what a program is and how it is expected to produce the hoped-for outcomes. Exhibit 3 illustrates a program logic model for coaching in Head Start and other early care and education settings, which includes and expands upon the dimensions discussed in the previous section.

Underlying Basic Assumptions. The model depicts the importance of program administrators' underlying assumptions about why coaching is needed (e.g., to improve instructional practices), which staff need or could benefit from coaching (e.g., novice versus veteran teachers), the qualifications sought in coaches (e.g., interpersonal skills, experience coaching adults), ongoing training and support for coaches (e.g., on the part of program administration and other staff), and how long it takes to change staff practices and behavior (e.g., months or years). These assumptions drive basic decisions regarding the overarching goals of the coaching initiative, which HS centers and which staff will receive coaching, whom to hire as coaches, and the duration of the coaching initiative.

Inputs and Resources. As shown by the arrows, underlying assumptions shape decisions about the inputs and resources necessary to implement the particular coaching approach. The inputs include not only the coaches but also meeting space, technology, and may include a variety of internal and external supports available to the coaches.

Programs may provide their coaches with training or an up-front orientation and ongoing support throughout the initiative; coaches new to the program or to Head Start may need additional guidance and support. Time demands of staff can be very high, so it can be difficult to make coaching sessions and self-improvement a priority. Administrative buy-in and support may improve active staff engagement in coaching efforts. Administrators may consider

Exhibit 3. Program Logic Model for Coaching in Head Start



how they will endorse the need for and support overall quality improvement and how they will acknowledge both effort and progress over time.

In addition, coaches using particular curricula or assessment tools may need training and oversight from curriculum developers, if such a system of support is available. Finally, Office of Head Start's national centers (such as the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning and the Early Head Start National Resource Center), and state training and technical assistance centers may provide resources and other supports that coaches can use in their work.

Coaching Approach. Program administrators also need to decide the structure of the coaching initiative, including the location of coaching, the coach–staff ratio, the geographic dispersion of staff receiving coaching, whether coaches are employees or consultants, whether coaches should be part-time or full-time, and how coaches are supervised. Logistical challenges relating to space, scheduling of coaching sessions, and classroom coverage must also be addressed.

In turn, such structural and logistical considerations, along with the inputs dedicated to the coaching initiative, can influence the process of coaching with respect to how staff needs are identified, how the goals of the coaching sessions are established, which strategies the coaches will use to observe or otherwise assess staff practices and behavior, and which strategies the coaches will use to foster reflection and provide feedback to staff.

Outputs of Coaching. This refers to the “dosage” received by staff with respect to time spent discussing needs, being observed, reflecting on practices, and receiving feedback and resources, as well as the time spent on various topics. The structure and the process of coaching can affect the dosage received.

Outputs of coaching can also include the quality of the staff-coach relationship and staff engagement in coaching. Staff have multiple demands on their time and energy, yet their engagement in a coaching effort is essential to its success. Coaches must first develop rapport with the staff members if they are to gain their trust and respect. For staff members to engage in the coaching process, they need to not only trust the coach and believe that the coach can help, but also be open to self-improvement, want to make the effort to improve, and be “coachable” (i.e., able to self-reflect, share mistakes, make use of coach feedback). This can be a cyclical process: Staff begin with a certain degree of openness to coaching and a readiness to change that can affect their initial engagement in the coaching process, and a positive experience with the coaching process can foster further staff engagement. In this way, the coaching process can shape but also be shaped by the staff-coach relationship and the staff's engagement in the coaching process, as shown by the double arrows in Exhibit 3.

Targeted Outcomes. Sufficient dosage of coaching should improve the outcomes targeted by coaching—namely, staff knowledge, skills, strategies for working with children and their families, and classroom quality. Depending on program and staff goals, targeted outcomes may also include staff pursuit of additional professional development, education, and training. Assessing and tracking targeted outcomes may provide useful information regarding the success of the coaching and ways in which the coaching initiative may be improved.

Child and Family Outcomes. Coaching is expected to result in improvement in the quality of staff and in program services. Better skilled staff and higher-quality program services are, in turn, expected to improve children’s development and family outcomes. Program theory suggests that through effective coaching and continual service improvement, the ultimate Head Start program goal of positive, significant, sustained outcomes for preschool-age children and their families may be realized.

Contexts. As with any intervention, the successful implementation and effectiveness of coaching may depend on the immediate *program context*, including organizational support for coaching (e.g., ensuring staff schedules can accommodate the time demands of coaching), history of quality improvements, and provision of staff professional development opportunities. Program administrators who actively foster a learning community in which multiple efforts are aimed at continual professional growth and quality improvement may be more successful in implementing and sustaining coaching efforts.

Also potentially influential is the broader *community context*, such as the characteristics of the program and the children and families served, as well as the available educational and training resources in the community. Moreover, these contextual factors may not only shape the coaching initiative and the outcomes achieved, but the initiative itself may in turn affect the program organization, influencing the sustainability of coaching and, potentially, staff openness to future quality improvement efforts in general.

Conclusion

Head Start and other early care and education programs that are considering the provision of coaching to their staff can use the coaching dimensions and the program logic model presented here to identify the decisions that need to be made regarding how best to structure their own coaching initiative. Such decisions should be grounded in their overarching goals for the initiative and the specific child and family outcomes targeted for improvement.

The Program Logic Model for Coaching in Head Start presented in this brief is consistent with the practice-based model of coaching proposed by the Head Start National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning (Exhibit 2), which highlights three key elements of the coaching process: identifying individual staff needs, observing staff practice, and fostering self-reflection and change. Programs should provide sufficient support and oversight to ensure that the coaches and the staff are engaging in the process and that staff professional development needs are being met.

This program logic model is based on conceptual work and on the expert advice of academic researchers and practitioners. However, many aspects of this model have not been examined in rigorous research. Therefore, the model may also be useful to program evaluators by identifying important dimensions of coaching and the factors that may be critical to its success. It can help evaluators decide on the focus of an implementation evaluation, specify outcomes for an impact evaluation, and design studies that would allow the empirical testing of the causal links suggested by this model. For example, researchers could examine the effects of variations in “outputs” on targeted outcomes. To explore this link, an evaluation could explore whether the frequency, duration, or overall “dosage” of coaching provided is, in fact, related to improvements in staff knowledge, skills, and practices in the classroom and in the home. Findings from such evaluations could suggest to Head Start and other early care and education programs which aspects of the coaching initiative appear most beneficial and where to focus improvement efforts.

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