**Peer Assisted Coaching Model**

# **Purpose**

The purpose of the Peer Assisted Coaching Model (PAC) is to support educators in developing high quality early education and out of school time programs which meet expectations of state standards as defined by QRIS, Workforce Competencies, and Early Learning Standards and positively impact child outcomes. The model uses a peer to peer coaching approach that supports educator’s growth and change.

# **Research**

Peer to peer coaching has proven effective in enriching professional development efforts by building a sense of teamwork and providing a structure for educators to share their knowledge and work together to achieve coaching goals that lead to changes in teacher skills, knowledge and dispositions, instructional practices and ultimately to positive changes in children’s skills and development. Results from several recent studies show that teachers who had a coaching relationship – that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences – practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires. Members of peer coaching groups exhibit greater long-term retention of new strategies and more appropriated use of new teaching models over time.

The research that drives the PAC model’s approach to coaching and the instructional tools employed is highlighted below.

* The drivers of quality in early education and care settings are defined in the research as intentional selection of supports for EC providers, initial and ongoing training and reflective supervision of coaches, use of data systems to monitor progress and evaluate strategies for improving quality and supporting positive child outcomes. (Child Trends, 2015)
* Research identifies these features of an effective coaching model:
  + A theory of coaching
  + An evidence based approach
  + Clearly defined coach qualifications and competencies
  + Support for coaches
  + Training on the coaching model ( Early Childhood Associates, 2014)
* An effective Coaching model emphasizes relationship building and goal setting, then focuses on the implementation of action plans with clear roles, provision of feedback and reflection and finally provides an opportunity to assess the process and plan for sustainability. (NAEYC, 2011)
* Coaches need a framework and clear parameters to guide their work with providers and programs toward meeting the goals of quality improvement and improved child outcomes. (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2014)
* Videotapes are powerful tools that can help coaches and teachers identify areas for improvement, set goals, and work toward those goals. Video technology can be of great value because it results in records of teaching that allow for repeated viewings and discussions and allow trained off site evaluators and coaches to “look into” classrooms. (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

# **Participants**

The PAC model involves collaboration among Consultant Teachers (CTs) or Consultant Administrators (CAs), Mentees and, where appropriate, Mentees’ Instructional Leaders. Participants represent a variety of early childhood settings including center-based, FCC, preschool, Head Start, and OST programs. To be eligible to participate in the Project, CTs, Mentees and Instructional Leaders must have access to the internet for use of video support technology, currently working directly in a program participating in the MA-QRIS at level 2 or higher and exhibit the following qualifications:

* **Consultant Teachers:**
  + Associate’s degree in early childhood education or a related field (a Bachelor’s degree is preferred) and EEC Lead Teacher Qualified or above;
  + At least three years of experience working as an educator; and
  + Support of Program/Instructional Leader to participate (if applicable).
* **Consultant Administrators**
  + Associate’s degree in early childhood education or a related field (a Bachelor’s degree is preferred) and, for center-based administrators, be EEC Director Qualified or above;
  + At least three years of supervisory or coaching/mentoring experience; and
  + Currently providing direct supervision or coaching and mentoring to educators.
* **Mentees**
  + Working directly as an educator or administrator, full or part time, in a licensed or license-exempt early education and care program; and
  + Have the support of their Program Director/Instructional Leader (if applicable).
* **Instructional Leaders**
  + The Program/Instructional Leader varies by setting. For center-based and OST programs, this will be the program or site director. For FCC educators that are part of a contracted FCC System, the program leader should be either their home monitor or another person assigned by the System (such as a person assigned to support professional development or QRIS within the system). Independent FCC Educators may choose to identify an individual to serve as their Program/Instructional Leader. An example may be a more experienced FCC educator from a FCC support group.

# **Implementation Plan**

The implementation plan for the PAC model defines roles and responsibilities for CTs, Mentees and Instructional Leaders; identifies training resources and schedules; identifies coaching activities, and features a turn-key, video based teacher observation, feedback and data analytics platform. The online platform captures a wide range of daily in-classroom interactions to help increase effectiveness of teachers through facilitated structured and unstructured feedback from mentors and peers via a school branded, private social network. The feedback in turn provides qualitative and quantitative data to analyze teacher interactions and instructional patterns through video.

* **Roles and Responsibilities**
* **Consultant Teachers and Administrators and Mentees**
  + - Attend pre-service orientation training;
    - Jointly set up the initial meeting to develop a relationship, and then to review the data identifying the Mentee’s needs and develop an action plan, including recommended professional development and coaching strategies designed to increase knowledge and skills in identified areas of need;
    - Participate in the cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow-up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon detailed evaluation criteria;
    - Work with Mentee and Program/Instructional Leader to refine the Mentee’s professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for practice application;
    - Utilize the coaching checklist and survey at least monthly;
    - Maintain confidentiality;
    - Consultant Teachers and Administrators must also participate in ongoing training and monthly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
* **Instructional Leaders**
  + - The expectation for Program/Instructional Leaders is that they will be invested in the PAC project by being engaged, involved, and demonstrate ongoing support for the Mentee and/or CT.
* **Coaching Processes**

Mentees receive a *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* observation prior to beginning the coaching process, whichis used to frame the coaching (see more on the CLASS in the evaluation section). The CLASS links to professional development that supports knowledge building. It supports the development of engaging learning environments, effective teaching and interactions and positive child outcomes.

Based on the information obtained from the CLASS, a set of goals is developed that guides the creation of an action plan. Goals are clearly defined, measureable and achievable within a defined time frame. During planning, the steps, resources and supports needed to reach a goal are specified. The plan also includes a time frame to review progress on goals. The steps included in an action plan are small, observable tasks or strategies that support accomplishment of the goal. The goals and action plan provide a roadmap for the support and feedback that occurs as part of the other components in the coaching cycle. Coaches use a variety of strategies to provide support to improve and refine teaching practices and to improve children’s engagement. These strategies include: 1) Analyzing, interpreting and using assessment data; 2) Modeling techniques through video or in person; 3) Providing feedback; 4) Co-teaching; 5) Sharing materials and resources; 6) Watching and discussing video of best practices; 7) Engaging in coaching conversations; 8) Observing providers and classroom settings; 9) Promotion of reflective practice, and 9) Using data to inform coaching.

It is important to think about the dosage (frequency and duration), venue (face-to-face or video-coaching) and intensity (the “strength” of an intervention or how much of a particular component of an intervention is delivered within each session) of services in any coaching model. The PAC model is working with evaluators to identify the appropriate amounts of each of those components (see more in the evaluation section).

* **Implementation Supports**

The CTs participate in intensive training to build and improve content and coaching skills. Mentees receive support from both the CTs, the Program/Instructional Leaders and EPS Facilitators.

* **Training**

Coaches receive 42 hours of training on Relationship Based Coaching and on Using the CLASS Assessment Tool to guide coaching. Training takes the form of a series of workshops, broken into 6 days that includes developing learning-focused relationships between professional colleagues prior to beginning their work with Mentees and CLASS™-based professional development tools to structure the coaching approach in order to:

* increase teacher effectiveness;
* help teachers focus on positive interactions with students to improve outcomes for children and achieve higher levels of quality;
* ensure a common language for discussion, feedback and evaluation rubrics.
* **Ongoing Support**

Coaches participate in regionally-based professional learning communities. PLCs are held monthly and are facilitated by EPS Grantees in each region.

* **Fiscal Support**

Participants receive support in the form of funds to cover substitutes for time spent out of the classroom. In addition, Mentees receive funds to purchase items for their classrooms and Coaches receive a stipend for their work. All participants also received ipads to support the use of the video-based instructional platform.

* **Technology**

To minimize time out of the classroom, there is technology support to allow CTs and CAs to be able to observe their Mentees through a video-based instructional platform provided by Torsh, Inc. (there is no cost to PAC participants) named TALENT. TALENT is an online platform which has the ability to capture a wide range of daily in-classroom interactions to help increase effectiveness of teachers through facilitated structured and unstructured feedback from CTs and CAs. The feedback provides qualitative and quantitative data to analyze Mentee interaction and instructional patterns through video.

TALENT coaches who are providing mentoring services are able to easily and quickly input their coaching log data, have that data available to their instructors and supervisors, enable teachers to track their progress over time, and create a portfolio of videos, and have the evidence used as a part of their evaluations.

# **Evaluation**

The purpose of the Evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the PAC Model, assess the design and implementation factors that contribute to or detract from the effectiveness, and ensure continuous quality improvement. It assesses both the processes used to establish and implement the PAC model and the resultant effectiveness. Impact is determined by changes in (1) quality of classroom environments, instructional practices and teacher-child interactions, (2) CT and Mentee knowledge, skills and beliefs, self-efficacy, confidence and appreciation for the peer coaching role, (3) retention and job satisfaction and 4) QRIS ratings. The following Program Quality and Mentee/CT Outcome tools are used to gather evaluation data.

* **Program Quality.**

The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* is the primary tool used to measure Quality of Instructional Practices. The CLASS is a research based approach to defining and measuring effective interactions in early childhood classrooms. The CLASS uses three broad domains of effective interactions—Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. Each domain is comprised of multiple dimensions of effective interactions known to contribute to children’s success in school. The CLASS is administered by observers from Early Childhood Associates (ECA), two times yearly. Changes in QRIS ratings over time can serve as an additional measure.

* **Mentee and CT Outcome Measures.** The following tools assess Mentee and CT outcomes:
  + Coaching Checklists noting the number of goals addressed and achieved, venue and duration of coaching, use of evidence based practices and content covered in each coaching session.
  + CT Knowledge, Skill and Belief Survey measures perceived changes in knowledge and skills.
  + Efficacy Assessment including items to measure change in self-confidence and perceived value of the coaching process as implemented in the PAC Model.
  + A **CT/Mentee Survey** is designed to elicit CT and Mentee perceptions of the Mentee’s knowledge, performance, skills, and attitudes and the role of the CT in supporting the Mentee in transforming practices. The CT and Mentees are asked the same questions yielding information of the Mentee’s self-perceptions and the CT’s perceptions of the Mentee as well as the usefulness of the PAC model. The instrument is administered at the end of the project year.