

Peer Coaching

Handouts for this chapter include:

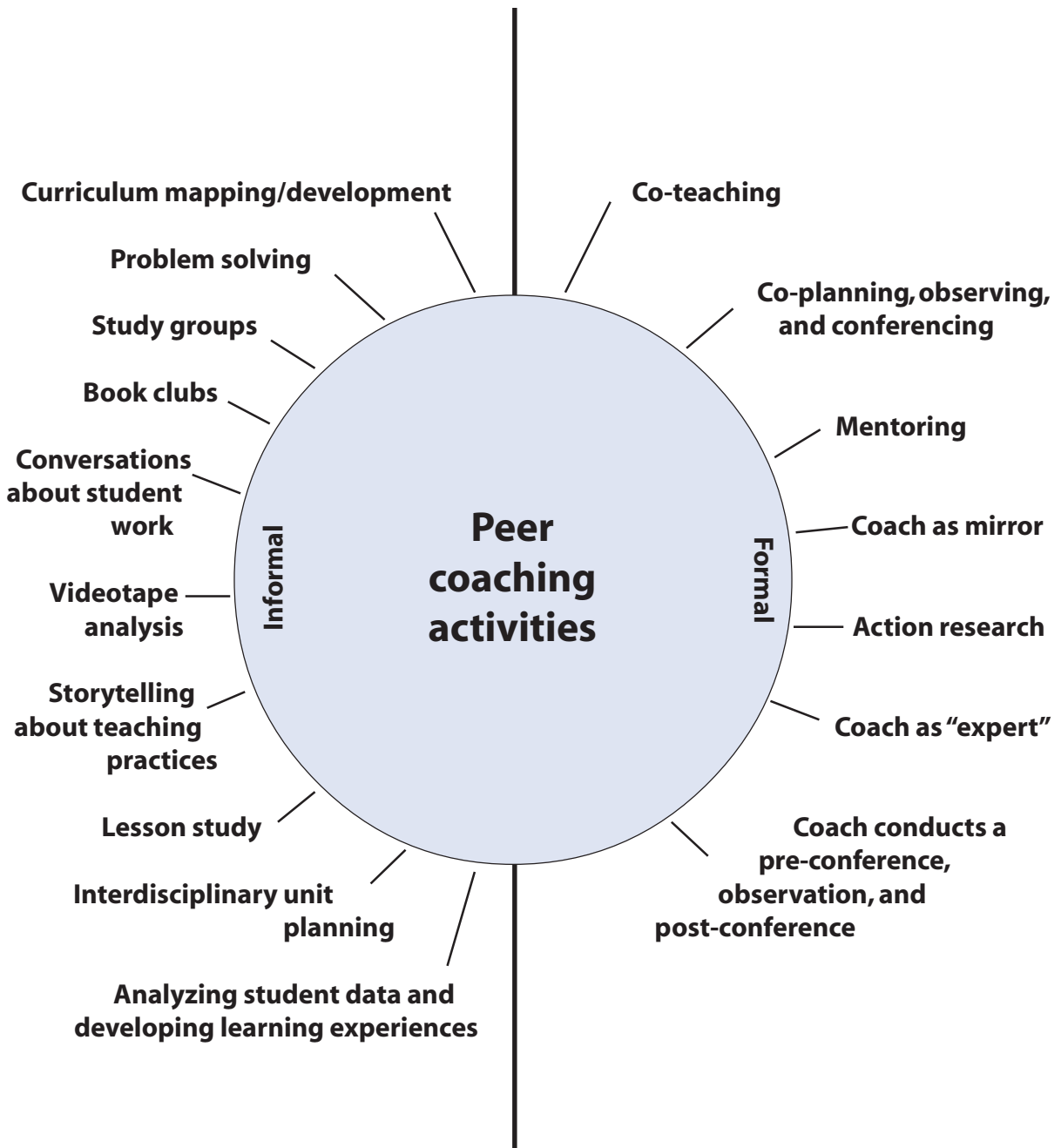
1. Definition
2. Types of peer coaching
3. Benefits
4. Planning a peer coaching program
5. Finding time
6. Logistical considerations
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Definition

Peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.

Source: How to Plan and Implement a Peer Coaching Program, by Pam Robbins. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1991.

Types of peer coaching



Benefits

- Better understanding of teaching.
- Improved self-analysis skills.
- Improved sense of professional skill.
- Renewal and recognition.
- Increased sense of efficacy.
- Increased collaboration/collegiality.
- Improved teaching performance.
- Increased student growth and development.

Planning a peer coaching program

The following guidelines will help you create awareness, develop readiness, build commitment, plan, implement, and maintain a peer coaching program in your school.

1. Set up a planning group to learn about peer coaching, assess your school environment and support for coaching, develop a program plan, and organize activities.
2. Assess the school environment to identify the factors working for and against a successful peer coaching program.
3. Provide information about peer coaching, including the rationale, what peer coaching is and isn't, and the various forms that coaching can take.
4. Provide opportunities for teachers to raise questions and concerns and get answers to them.
5. Solicit input from teachers on what they want the peer coaching program to be like.
6. Analyze the types and levels of support and resources available.
7. Examine other demands on teachers' time and energy.
8. Develop a plan for and provide training in peer coaching for teachers who volunteer to participate.
9. Examine the issue of time for coaching and develop a plan for making time available for planning, conferencing, and classroom observations.
10. Develop a plan for and provide follow-up for teachers in the program — for review and refinement sessions, support and/or study groups consisting of four to six teachers, and celebrations of peer coaching successes.
11. Develop a plan for bringing new teachers into the program.
12. GO SLOWLY! A successful peer coaching program is built over a period of years.

Finding time

Strategies some schools have found effective

1. The principal designs a lesson that he/she can use in several classes. The principal teaches the class, freeing the teacher to work with another teacher.
2. A roving substitute is hired to move from class to class, releasing teachers to work together.
3. Teachers form triads. One teacher takes another's class, releasing that teacher to work with the third member of the triad.
4. Counselors, resource teachers, librarians, nurses, or other specialists take classes to release teachers to coach.
5. Team teaching is organized so teachers can observe and meet on a regular basis.
6. Teachers use prep periods to observe one another. Conferencing is conducted before or after school.
7. Student teachers and/or volunteer aides take over classes to release teachers for coaching activities.

Logistical considerations

1. How will teachers be trained in the techniques of coaching? Who will coach the coaches?
2. How often will workshops be conducted? Will they be held after school, during released time, or in the summer?
3. What will motivate teachers to participate?
4. What kinds of tensions and difficulties may emerge as the peer coaching program is being initiated?
5. Who will schedule the coaching sessions and who will cover teachers while they are coaching?
6. Are there effective ways to encourage administrative support?
7. How can the program be designed with built-in flexibility so it can meet the needs of various teachers within the same school?
8. What is the program's time span? How will it be maintained and evaluated?

Source: "A review of the peer coaching literature," by Robert Ackland, (1991, Winter). *Journal of Staff Development*, 12(1), 22-27.

Action plan

Name _____ School _____

What will you call your program? (peer coaching, colleague coaching, peer assistance, etc.?) _____

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

- Will you work in: pairs trios a team
 Will your coaching partner(s) be in the same grade level or content area? Yes No
 Will you co-plan the lesson? Yes No
 Will you co-teach the lesson? Yes No

II. FOCUS

- The quality of student work
- Essential elements of instruction
- Lesson design
- Motivation
- Active participation
- Bloom's Taxonomy
- Differentiated instruction so all students achieve and succeed
- Student time on task
- Interaction analysis
- Verbal flow
- Class traffic
- Cooperative learning
- Concept attainment/formation
- Specific teaching strategies
- Inquiry
- Classroom management/problem behavior (be specific)
- Content skills (be specific)
- Other (be specific)

Tools for recording

- Specific form or checklist (be specific)
- Script tape
- Audiotape
- Videotape
- Other (be specific) _____

III. LOGISTICS

- How will you arrange released time for coaching?
- Substitute or student teacher takes class
 - Principal or specialist takes class
 - Prep time
 - "Double-up" (One teacher takes another's class)
 - Other _____

IV. ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE

- How will the administrator facilitate coaching?
- Cover class
 - Assist in scheduling
 - Provide funds
 - Develop board support
 - Be a part of a coaching team
 - Other _____

V. ASSESSMENT

- How will you evaluate the results of coaching?
- Frequency of use
 - Increased participation of staff
 - Student achievement
 - Perceived value by teachers
 - Other _____

Criteria for effective implementation

- The school's climate supports innovation and change.
- While all staff members should be invited to participate in peer coaching, in many schools participation will not be unanimous.
- The district or school commits to coaching by providing time, money, and symbolic support.
- Participants share a common language about curricula and/or teaching practices.
- Participants are trained in coaching skills.
- Participants select the partner(s) with whom they will work.
- The person being observed determines which teaching practice his or her peers will observe.
- Coaching procedures are negotiated in detail so partners trust their agreements.
- Feedback is based on specific, objective data.
- The practices and consequences of coaching are examined as thoughtfully as the practices and consequences of teaching.
- Leadership commits to the coaching process with time, money, and symbolic support.

Source: Keynote address by Judith Warren Little and Tom Bird to peer coaching teachers, Napa County Schools, Napa, Calif., May 1985.