

See [Coaching Practitioners of Children Who Are Deaf-Blind](#) for additional resources.

COACHING BEST PRACTICES

Coaching teachers and other educational practitioners to implement instructional practices with fidelity requires detailed planning and the use of effective strategies. This document summarizes current research on coaching to help state deaf-blind project personnel prepare for and use coaching as part of their technical assistance.

The information should be helpful in the following ways:

- When coaching individual practitioners
- To guide the development of a standardized coaching process
- To evaluate your current coaching practices

Preparation

Review student data

Review data regarding the student and instructional context (e.g., IEP, assessment reports, lesson plans, schedules, teacher interviews).

Assess practitioner

Conduct a pre-assessment of the practitioner and classroom to evaluate the extent to which the targeted strategies are currently used.

Create a coaching plan

Develop a formal coaching plan that includes:

- Measurable goals for the practitioner's performance
- Coaching methods
- Frequency of coaching
- How feedback will be delivered
- How coaching effectiveness will be measured (see "Coaching Self-Evaluation" on the [Coaching Practitioners of Children Who Are Deaf-Blind](#) webpage for an example)

The practitioner is given an opportunity to express what he or she wants from the coaching process and provide input into the goals.

Describe the strategy

Provide detailed information about the instructional strategy on which the practitioner is being coached:

- A rationale for its use, relevance, or importance
- A written or verbal description of each step of the strategy required for correct implementation (this can be incorporated into a checklist and used both to describe the strategy and evaluate whether each step is followed)

Use a coaching form

Coaching forms provide a way to track a practitioner's progress over time on a variety of competencies and write observational notes for each session. The following examples can be found at [Coaching Practitioners of Children Who Are Deaf-Blind](#):

- "Teacher Coaching Form"
- "Intervener Coaching Form"
- "Coaching Session Summary"

Coaching Techniques

Establish rapport

Introduce yourself, greet the practitioner, ask a few questions to get to know him or her, and review the agenda for the coaching session.

Review feedback from the previous session

Based on your notes or a coaching form (if using), describe what you observed during the previous coaching session, what you think the practitioner did well, and what needs improvement. Review each step of the instructional strategy:

- Give specific praise for good implementation
- Give targeted feedback for poor or inconsistent implementation

Evaluate progress toward goals and discuss the practitioner's needs for the current session (e.g., help with specific competencies, a component of an instructional strategy).

Feedback can be verbal, written, or graphic (e.g., charting the practitioner's performance of a skill across time).

Note: If this is the first coaching session, use this time to review the coaching form and select interventions or competencies on which to focus.

Evaluate the practitioner’s understanding of the strategy

Ask the practitioner to do a verbal “walk through” of the steps of the strategy.

Model (in-person or via video) the instructional strategy

Demonstrate appropriate use of the intervention. This should always be done before the practitioner tries it for the first time, whenever you as the coach feel it is needed to improve the practitioner’s understanding, or if the practitioner requests it. Modeling can be done with the practitioner’s student, a different student, or with the practitioner acting as the student. It typically takes about 5 minutes.

Practice the strategy in a simulated setting (role play)

When role playing, you—the coach—take on the role of the student, while the practitioner demonstrates the strategy. This helps you gauge the practitioner’s understanding and use of the strategy. Role playing should continue until the practitioner is able to implement all steps with 100% accuracy.

Observe practitioner working with a student and provide feedback

Observe the practitioner working with their student during typical activities. Observation should last for at least 30 minutes. During this time, the expectation is that the practitioner will incorporate the focus strategy into these activities, which are likely to vary over the 30-minute timespan. You can provide verbal feedback as necessary during the observation period, but speak quietly to avoid interrupting the practitioner’s engagement with the student.

Discuss the practitioner’s performance

After the observation period, take time to sit with the practitioner to discuss his or her performance. Ask how they felt implementing the strategy, what they did well, and what they would like to improve. Share your own observations and notes from the coaching form.

If it is not the first session, compare the overall quality of implementation between sessions and evaluate progress toward goals. On an ongoing basis, monitor the integrity with which the practitioner implements skills, to determine when goals have been met and coaching can be modified or discontinued.

Provide written feedback after the session

Following the session, email the practitioner with feedback (based on your observations) on the specific instructional strategy addressed during the coaching session, as well as their overall progress on the competencies. Attach the coaching form and a note that includes:

1. An opening positive statement
2. Performance-based feedback on correct use of the strategy
3. Suggestions for improvement stated using constructive feedback
4. A request that the practitioner acknowledge receipt of the email and let you know if they have questions or concerns
5. A closing positive statement

Encourage the practitioner to self-monitor

Practitioners should complete their portion of the coaching form to collect data on their own performance. Together, you and the practitioner can compare your perspectives to identify and discuss any discrepancies.

Create a coaching script

Write a script, based on the techniques above, to use with each practitioner. This is a way to ensure fidelity of your coaching practice and increase the likelihood that practitioners will learn to use the instructional strategies as intended. See “Coaching Best Practice Examples” on the [Coaching Practitioners of Children Who Are Deaf-Blind](#) webpage.

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