

Individualized Coaching to Improve Teacher Practice across Grades and Subjects: New Experimental Evidence

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Purpose: The study sought to determine the effectiveness of a coaching model focused on classroom management skills and instructional practices.

Subjects: This study focused on a cohort of 59 teachers working in New Orleans charter schools.

Research methods: The research model consisted of multiple components: a set of core materials, a four-day summer training institute, and one-on-one coaching for the academic year. Teachers read core materials regarding professional development, classroom management, and student potential. The four-day training consisted of 21 hours of content, and teachers were split up into two groups. One group focused on lesson planning and execution while the other group focused on building relationships and classroom management. The training aims to help teachers begin the school year with a common understanding of instruction as well as set classroom practices. Coaches work individually with teachers throughout the academic year to provide feedback and help them achieve their goals.

Findings: Five broad areas arose from the individualized coaching and feedback: behavior management, classroom climate, instructional practices, productivity, and student engagement. Coached teachers scored higher than control group teachers on the Effective Teacher Practices index. Trained classroom observers rated coached teachers on Achievement of Lesson Aim and Behavioral Climate. Teachers who had received coaching were also rated higher by their principals on Principal Evaluation Composite.

Implications: This study builds evidence of the effectiveness of coaching as a means of professional development for teachers seeking to improve behavior management and instructional practices. Districts interested in implementing various forms of teacher professional development must find creative ways to train teachers regarding challenges they face, while also balancing the financial costs of professional development. Districts may seek to develop a cadre of coaches in their workplace, but given the high costs of individualized coaching, districts may be best served by utilizing pilot programs for novice or struggling teachers. There is still little known about what constitutes an effective coach or what a system of selecting and training a team of effective coaches would entail.