



Coaching by Contract

TARGET

Elementary ✓ Middle School/High School ✓

Ideally, every time a teacher asks a coach for help, they enter into a goal-centered agreement before beginning one-on-one coaching, also known as a coaching cycle (see “The Coaching Cycle” on page 54). The teacher’s goal is usually straightforward: to gain new knowledge, learn new instructional techniques, or problem solve about an existing classroom issue. The coach’s role is more complex.

First, you want to fulfill the teacher’s specific request for help, but you also want to lay the groundwork for the teacher to continue to grow and learn independently after the cycle is over. In addition, while you are working with one teacher, others may also be asking for support. Caring, committed literacy coaches are famous for taking on too much, leaving the coaches feeling burnt out and teachers feeling underserved.

Entering into a formalized agreement—an actual written contract—can make it easier for the coach to provide the necessary support, to build independence, and to balance commitments with other teachers. Finally, without a specific plan, coaching cycles can go astray even if you have the best of intentions.

Using the following Coaching Contract form, the coach and teacher collaborate and agree on and carefully note the answers to the following questions:

- What is the teacher’s learning goal for the students? Answering this question keeps the focus on students and learning instead of on instruction or strategies.
- Is there documentation or evidence of the need for change? For example, has the teacher collected written literature responses that suggest comprehension problems, documented consistently low spelling scores, or analyzed test data that confirm problems with vocabulary development?
- Given the learning goal, what specific forms of coaching support—such as modeling, feedback, identification of new resources, or study through readings—will the teacher need?
- When will the coaching support begin and end?

- When will the teacher and coach meet to monitor progress toward achieving the students' learning goal?
- Will the teacher be willing to share the desired changes in student outcomes with other teachers?

Working one-on-one with teachers is an important part of the coach's job. Careful, written documentation can help structure a coaching workload that allows for both coaching cycles and the support for groups such as grade-level meetings (see "Organizing Grade-Level and Department Meetings" on page 188), school literacy teams (see "Creating a School Literacy Team" on page 181), and study groups (see "Planning a Teachers' Study Group" on page 192).

References for further learning

Spark+Innovation: <http://www.sparkinnovate.com/pubs.html>

Sweeney, D. (2007). Mirror, mirror, in the lab—process shows coaches clear reflections of their own practices. *Journal of Staff Development*, 28(1), 38–41.

GOALS

- To achieve a student learning goal identified by the teacher.
- To document the goal and roles of both the teacher and the coach.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Solicit, encourage, or respond to a teacher's request for a coaching cycle.
2. Schedule a time with the teacher to fill out the Coaching Contract.
3. Work with the teacher to identify the students' learning problem, prompting the teacher for specifics that help clarify the source of the issue.
4. Establish a learning goal that could alleviate the problem. For instance, if a teacher notices that students do not demonstrate the ability to infer in a written response after reading, a student learning goal might be: "In a written response to reading, students will demonstrate at least one inference that either combines two pieces of information from the text to infer or combines a piece of information from the text with their own background knowledge."
5. Examine existing baseline documentation that the students are not currently exhibiting the goal.

6. Note how you will support the teacher—such as through modeling, forming a study group, watching a video, or providing feedback—to reach the learning goal for students.
7. Agree on time lines for both the length of the coaching cycle and how often you will meet.
8. Establish whether the teacher needs additional resources. For example, a coaching cycle to support small-group guided reading cannot proceed unless the teacher has enough instructional-level reading materials for the lessons.
9. Determine how and when you will measure progress during the coaching cycle and what students will have to demonstrate at the end of the cycle to suggest that they have reached the learning goal.
10. After the cycle, schedule a meeting to reflect on the components of the contract and what aspects you could adjust for future cycles.

REFLECTION, EVALUATION, AND PLANNING

1. Did you achieve the learning goal? If not, was it realistic? How could you have adjusted it?
2. Were the planning sessions adequate to understand each participant's role? Did you need more or less time?
3. Were the forms of coaching support appropriate to the learning goal? For example, did the teacher need more modeling? Did you need to observe more or provide more feedback on the teacher's implementation? Did the teacher need to read or study more to better understand the changes?
4. Is the teacher willing to share the cycle's lessons and outcomes with other teachers? If so, would it be most effective to share that information at a grade-level (see "Organizing Grade-Level and Department Meetings" on page 188) or all-school meeting?

Coaching Contract

Teacher _____ Coach _____

Dates of Coaching Cycle: From _____ to _____

Student Learning Goal:

Student data supporting need for student learning goal:	Meeting dates and times (to plan, debrief, monitor, etc.):
Instructional practices to learn, refine, and continue after cycle is completed:	Coaching strategies needed (modeling, observation, discussion, study group, etc.):
Coach responsibilities:	Teacher responsibilities:
Gradual release of responsibility from coach to teacher:	Documentation that student learning goal is achieved:
Date for end-of-cycle reflection meeting:	Possible opportunities to share student learning with other teachers: