

Considerations for Providing Ongoing Coaching Support

Coaching occurs across a continuum of high, medium, and low intensity. These levels of intensity are defined by data indicating a specific need. These data may include (but are not limited to) observation fidelity checks, self-assessments, and student-level outcomes and should be used to determine how an educator or system is performing in implementing MTSS/DBI practices. Continued coaching support at a high-intensity level may not always be possible due to barriers related to resources and available personnel. The flowchart in Figure 1 shows how coaching across the continuum can be maintained over time. The level of coaching intensity should depend on the data collected, expertise, and student outcomes. For example, a teacher who implements, with fidelity, a new evidence-based practice as part of the teacher’s tiered instruction—and sees positive student outcomes as a result—may only need low levels of coaching support to sustain the intervention. Conversely, an MTSS team that is new to implementation and scores low on an initial needs assessment and fidelity checks may require a high-intensity level of coaching to start. Data, in these scenarios, are used to move educators or teams through the continuum. The flowchart in Figure 1 visually depicts how data are used within the coaching continuum to determine the level of intensity.



Example: (Using the flow chart). A teacher attends a schoolwide professional development session on implementing a Tier 1 phonics program that addresses early literacy skills for Grades K–3. The teacher returns to the classroom and is assigned a dedicated coach who begins one-to-one coaching and team teacher coaching (high-intensity supports). During observations, the coach uses a fidelity checklist to monitor the teacher’s implementation. During the post-observation debrief, the coach and teacher discuss the data the teacher is collecting, as well as the teacher’s reflections on implementation. The data show that the students are making consistently positive gains. The coach also finds that the teacher has a high fidelity of implementation and is excited about the prospect of continuing the intervention (high score on fidelity measure during data collection phase). They mutually decide that the teacher does not require as much support, and the coach decreases the frequency of classroom observations related to instruction and intervention fidelity (move from high- to medium-intensity interventions). After this change, the teacher’s fidelity of implementation begins to decrease, as do the initial gains made by the students (low score on fidelity measure). The coach and teacher mutually decide to increase the intensity of supports again (move the teacher back to high-intensity supports). Again, the teacher’s scores improve (high fidelity, student scores, and motivation), so the teacher is moved back to medium supports. This time, the teacher’s scores remain high, so the teacher is moved to the lowest supports. Even at the lowest supports, the teacher continues to score well, so the lowest level of support is maintained. Due to the teacher’s progress and mastery of the subject matter, the coach believes that the teacher may, in time, transition into being a teacher leader.

Figure 1. Maintaining Coaching Over Time

