# Effective Coaching Practices

COACHING TO IMPROVE TEACHER PRACTICE AND LEARNER OUTCOMES

Research on professional development shows that teachers need long term support in order to improve their practice. Coaching can be one method for providing that support (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). However, not every form of coaching is effective. In fact, just four specific coaching practices are linked to improvements in teacher practice and learner outcomes. These practices include ongoing cycles of observation, modeling, providing performance feedback, and using alliance building strategies (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Wehby, Maggin, Partin, & Robertson, 2012). They are the recommended practices that should be central to the every-day routine of coaches.

Alliance-Building Strategies

Observe → Model → Feedback
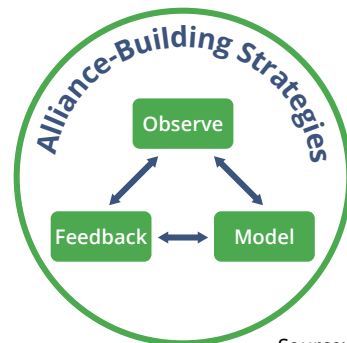
Source:
Pierce, 2015, p. 27

FACTORS OF ALLIANCE AND ALLIANCE BUILDING STRATEGIES

Alliance is the relationship between teachers and coaches. At least three factors shape alliance (Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000). These factors and strategies to build alliance are shown below.
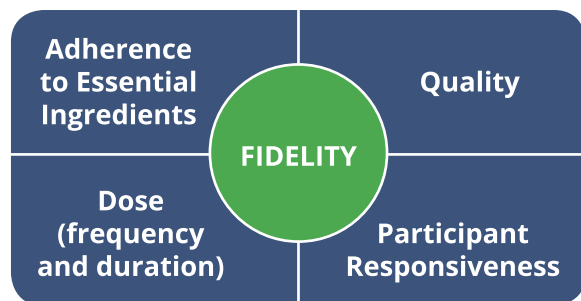
Interpersonal Skills: Effective communication. Building trust. Nonevaluative & nonjudgmental language.	• **Summarize:** "What I hear from your comments is…" • **Open-ended questions:** "Can you tell me more about that? • **Affirm difficulty of change:** "This is really hard!" • **Nonevaluative language:** "Coaching is about supporting your teaching practice, not about evaluating how you teach."
Collaboration: Meeting needs & goals. Conveying that improving teaching is teamwork.	• **Refer to past accomplishments:** "This week you hoped to accomplish…" • **Refer to current goal:** "Your goal for this week is… • **Help teacher progress toward goal:** "Let's talk about what we'll do to meet that goal. I can… What do you think you will try to do."
Expertise: In teaching in the content area. *Source: Pierce, 2015, p. 138*	• **Refer to effective teaching practices:** "Learners who struggle to show mastery benefit from explicit and systematic instruction. Explicit means…" • **Convey deep content-area knowledge:** "We know that effective reading instruction focuses on the five pillars of reading. These include…" • **Explain complex concepts succinctly:** "The Tier 3 learner may show challenging behavior because…"

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COACHING

In order for coaching to improve teaching practice and learning outcomes, it is important to examine how it is implemented (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, 2004). Like any other educational innovation, coaching must be used with fidelity in order to achieve its intended outcomes (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003; O'Donnell, 2008).

Adherence to Essential Ingredients | Quality | FIDELITY | Dose (frequency and duration) | Participant Responsiveness

The NCSI offers tools that can be used to guide the implementation of coaching, including a measure of fidelity. Visit http://ncsi.wested.org/resources/tools-publications to learn more about effective coaching and implementation.