Effective Practices in Coaching for Distance Learning

As coaches, we know that our work depends on building strong professional learning communities. We foster productive collaboration between teachers and their colleagues, as well as between teachers and ourselves. The CELP has been your guide to effective practices in coaching that help to build PLCs and foster collaboration. You use the CELP as a way to plan for quality coaching, and set goals for your professional learning and growth. Below are descriptors that apply to effective practices in Coaching for Distance Learning. Some come directly from the CELP as they are just as relevant to Coaching for Distance Learning, others originated in the CELP and have been adapted for Coaching for Distance Learning, and others are new descriptors (designated with asterisks) that are specific to the distance learning environment.

Building Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are the group discussions and activities through which we establish the goals and learning at the center of our work with teachers. Effective procedures, rapport, and reflection are all necessary elements of strong professional learning communities.

Rapport

Coach demonstrates responsibility by being prepared and ready for group discussions in designated digital platform

Coach contributes to building a positive culture in the professional learning community by encouraging resourcefulness, flexibility, innovation, and a respect for standardized procedures

Coach is committed to helping teachers reframe and address problems as they arise, encouraging teachers to recognize multiple solutions and pathways to any given goal or issue

Coach builds collaborative relationships and acts as a thought partner when a teacher wishes to share instructional dilemmas and new learning

Coach celebrates successes within the professional learning community by vetting and sharing with others effective distance learning practices as they are enacted and reported by teachers

* Coach plans facilitation with attention to how participants will respond and interact on digital meeting platforms, including what limitations and opportunities the platform offers for specific types of communication.
  • Coach ensures that the platform and technology matches the meeting objective. (e.g., for a meeting about establishing group culture and rapport, the coach selects a platform that allows participants to see each other all at once. Refer to CLI's Distance Learning Glossary for more information on available tech tools.)
  • Coach utilizes the chat feature by sometimes having participants respond to questions verbally, and sometimes type responses, and then verbally summarizes trends in responses.
  • Coach utilizes other software to encourage collaboration, for example, a digital whiteboard
  • Coach encourages the recording of meetings, with the group's permission, so that groups can return to them if necessary
  • Coach often paraphrases participants' responses and reactions by acknowledging, clarifying, summarizing, and organizing their statements into groups or categories

Reflection

Coach demonstrates eagerness for ongoing learning of research, trends, curriculum, and effective practices

Coach sets short and long term goals with a recognition of new opportunities for recording, enacting, and reflecting on goals in a digital space

Coach is self-reflective, taking a "learner's stance" as they recognize the extent to which they and the teachers they work with are new to the processes of distance learning and teaching

Coach asks questions and seeks support when necessary

Coach is open to new ideas, practices, and change

Coach is driven by high expectations

* Coach understands and communicates aspects of digital literacy and blended learning relevant to distance learning
- Coach understands basic principles of online pedagogy and can communicate how to adapt said principles when moving from an in-person environment to a virtual one
- Coach understands and can communicate how digital texts are best read, comprehended, created, shared, and discussed at different grade levels
- Coach understands and can communicate about instructional practices for blended literacy learning, in which both distance and analog modes or methods of teaching are utilized for reading, writing, and other literacy instruction
- Coach understands and can communicate effective methods for delivering distance and/or blended learning to a home environment
- Coach understands and can communicate some basic principles and guidelines for converting in-person curriculum and lessons into distance curriculum and lessons
- Coach understands and can communicate how to differentiate for diverse learners' needs in a digital format (e.g., providing language supports for children who are ELLs)
- Coach recognizes that synchronous and asynchronous forms of presentation are the "vocabulary" or "building blocks" of online learning, and can help teachers make choices around what combinations of synchronous and asynchronous presentations to use to deliver instruction
- Coach models and invites **inquiry** into the question of what makes a good distance lesson, and series of lessons

Fostering Collaboration

Good collaboration does not just happen spontaneously. Rather, it needs to be deliberately fostered through practices that take into account time management, rapport, and language. When we intentionally think about how we are using time management, rapport, and language to build effective structures for collaboration we are more likely to establish an environment in which teachers can work well with each other and us.

Time Management & Organization

Coach is respectful of teachers' time constraints, particularly as distance learning shifts when and how teachers plan and deliver instruction

Coach reliably follows through on agreed-upon work

Coach stays in regular communication with the teacher and other school staff

Coach establishes an effective digital system for organizing coaching materials

Coach has reviewed teacher's progress and needs before coaching session through one or more digital modes (e.g., in emails, recorded teaching sessions, or programs for multi-user collaboration, such as Google Drive or OneNote)

Coach is prepared with materials related to area of focus for coaching session

Coach has access to, and shares, relevant professional resources through well-organized digital platforms

* During an online meeting, coach strategically uses engagement tools such as the chat function, polls, and annotation of shared docs to support both the quality of the discussion and participants' level of interest

* After an online meeting, coach shares useful screen shots, recordings, and/or notes from a saved chat

Rapport

Coach respects and validates the teacher's knowledge and skills as they get to know the new field of distance learning and literacy instruction

Coach sees working with teachers as a partnership and collaboration in which the coach and teacher are co-learners in a new field

Coach invites teachers' input in formulating agenda in a collaboration platform like OneNote or Google Drive

Coach can flexibly accommodate changes to schedule or plans, as teachers work to juggle their professional and family lives from home

Coach instills confidence by creating a climate of risk-taking, encouraging teachers to try familiar classroom instructional practices in the new context of distance learning, and also learn new instructional practices unique to distance learning

Coach helps to create a heightened sense of professionalism and excitement about distance learning and teaching, while realistically acknowledging the "lift" it requires for many teachers

* Coach demonstrates and encourages a flexible mindset as educators, administrators, parents, and children adapt to distance learning

* Coach demonstrates and encourages innovation as they figure out new ways to address instructional problems they have not encountered before, and encourage teachers to do the same

* Coach demonstrates and encourages empathy and compassion as they work with teachers, and inspires teachers to extend the same high levels of empathy and compassion to themselves, their students, and their students' families as they work in the new environment of distance learning

Language

Coach displays enthusiasm through positive verbal and non-verbal language

Coach is an active listener

Coach asks open-ended questions (e.g. questions that invite elaboration or that invite action) to promote reflection

Coach has natural conversations, balancing between asking for information and offering information

Coach uses the language of "we" in order to foster collaboration

Coach offers choices and suggestions, instead of directives

Coach validates the teachers' ideas by clarifying and/or rephrasing

Coach models self-reflection

* Coach adapts their active listening behaviors to a virtual environment, where it is more difficult for teachers to "read" their face, by using direct listening sentence stems to add necessary clarity:
  * So what you are saying is…
  * Can you tell me more about…?
  * I agree with you because…
  * Another way we might look at this is…
  * I had a different reaction to this, which was…
  * Now, that you have said that I am thinking…
  * I had not thought of it that way, but let's consider….