

Coaching for School Improvement

What can you expect to get from this module?

This module seeks to build in coaches the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that are facilitative, helping the school team learn, uncover and build on their strengths while productively addressing their weaknesses. Ironically, the best coach may be the one about whom a school leader says, “Jim helped, but we pretty much did everything ourselves.” By the end of this module, participants will be able to establish a clear, trusting, productive relationship with school teams in which the coach is a facilitator of change, helping teams to learn and grow so that they may diagnose problems, identify opportunities, choose appropriate strategies, implement strategies and monitor continuous improvement.

What shouldn't you expect from this module?

This module does not include information for content coaches, such as literacy coaches or teachers who are focused primarily on helping fellow teachers with instructional practices.

Who should take this training?

This module is designed for people who serve as external coaches focused on school improvement. These are people who are working with school teams within the larger context of the school to raise student achievement.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

This module is most appropriate for those who have a strong background in data analysis, curriculum, assessment and instruction, and culture (SREB foundational modules).

What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must commit to completing a prework assignment and attending three days of training. The three training days are held about six weeks apart, with homework assignments between them. It is important for participants to have time to reflect and apply what they have learned between the initial training and the follow-up session.

Big Ideas in This Module

- Coaches should not be directive, pushing for certain solutions. Instead, they should be facilitative, helping schools identify their own values, goals, opportunities and approaches.
- Coaches should be well-versed in the school improvement process, so they can go into a situation and quickly diagnose where the school is and what the appropriate next steps should be.
- Coaches should aim to work themselves out of a job, building capability within the school so that new leaders emerge who can sustain improvement.
- Coaches should be very clear — in their own minds and with their clients — about their roles.
- Coaches need a toolbox of strategies and techniques to facilitate teams and individuals.
- Effective coaches are confident, committed to team collaboration, inspiring and hopeful, disciplined, honest, passionate about learning, well-versed in using data, comfortable asking hard questions, patient but persistent, self-motivated, curious and assertive.

Module Design. *Coaching for School Improvement* is a three-day workshop (1+1+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework (about three hours). Participants read several selections and answer questions about the role of the coach, the potential value of a school improvement coach, expectations of others and the key attributes, behaviors and skills that define a successful coach. They also reflect on their current strengths and the areas they would like to explore more.

Introduction: The Opportunity to Make a Difference (one hour, 20 minutes). Participants hear a story about a school in need of help. Drawing on their thoughts from the prework reading, they think of personal strengths that they could bring to the school if they were the school improvement coach. Then, participants think of various people/functions involved in the school improvement process and complete a four-corners activity to determine how each of them would define success.

The School Improvement Process (two hours, 10 minutes). Participants look at a flowchart that maps the school improvement process and identify the “look fors” in each step. Then, they look at some case stories and ask themselves, “Where is this team in the school improvement process?” and, “What are the most important issues they face?”

The Role of Coaching in the School Improvement Process (five hours, 30 minutes). Participants work in small groups to sort through a variety of definitions of coaching and a list of possible roles. They identify which roles are most appropriate for school improvement coaches and construct a metaphor for school improvement coaching. Next, they complete a jigsaw activity on three phases of coaching and a carousel activity around four different coaching styles. They pull all this information together by looking at the case stories

and determining appropriate roles, styles and steps.

Homework Between Days One and Two. Participants research one of three strategies: communications and creating dialogs, helping faculties work collaboratively, or facilitating the school to stay focused on important issues. Along with others, they prepare a 10-minute presentation on their topic.

School Improvement Coach’s Toolbox (six hours). Participant groups give their presentations from the homework. After the presentations are complete, the whole class discusses how these strategies would apply to a case story. The focus then shifts to techniques. Based on a series of prompts, participants determine an appropriate technique to address a given situation, and the group that studied that technique role plays a demonstration, with other participants playing members of the school community.

Homework Between Days Three and Four. Participants research one of six sections in the Coaching Toolbox and prepare an overview or demonstration of one or more of the techniques in the section to present on Day Three.

Putting It All Together (one hour). In closing, participants create a personal development plan.