Webinar 5: Handout 11

Resources and tools to support coaching

Coaches need resources to support their work and to collect data and information. These resources should align with coaches' specific responsibilities, skill level and the context, and should only be used if sufficient training and ongoing monitoring support on how to use them can be provided.

Common tools used to support pedagogical coaching in early grade reading programs are described below. (Note the names of resources and tools may differ depending on a particular program or context.)

Lesson observation instrument

What is it and how is it used? Coaches use a lesson observation instrument to guide their observation of teacher instruction of an early grade reading lesson at the classroom level. The observation instrument helps to focus coaches' attention on key components of instruction, and to guide their feedback to teachers. In early grade reading programs, the observation instrument usually includes a list of items the coach should pay particular attention to when observing a teacher. These items are linked to the reading program objectives and lessons.

For example, the observation instrument may include items about the teacher's instruction of letter sounds or reading comprehension. These items may be binary, requiring just a "yes" or "no" answer, or they may require the coach to evaluate the quality of the instruction. Coach observation instruments also usually ask the coach to provide information about the learning resources available.

Guidance and considerations: One size does not fit all when it comes to lesson observation instruments. Some key considerations when developing the instrument include:

- ***Purpose of the observation tool***: A tool designed to help coaches and teachers will be different than one designed specifically for program M&E, although there may be some areas of overlap. An instrument designed for coaching should be focused on teacher instruction, with the aim of assisting the coach in providing useful feedback to the teacher.

- ***How data will be used:*** The main purpose of a lesson observation form for coaching is to assist coaches in providing feedback to teachers. To some degree, coach lesson observations tools are also used to monitor the implementation of the reading program, but that aspect of the tool's use should be modulated. The tool (and coaches' completion of it) should not become so focused on fidelity of implementation or other aspects of the program's M&E that it becomes too time-consuming and difficult for a coach to complete, and at the expense of focusing the visit on providing feedback to teachers. (Rather, projects should conduct classroom observations separately, using a different observation tool designed specifically for M&E.)

- ***Coach capabilities vis-à-vis classroom observations.*** A lesson observation tool is only useful if coaches are able to use it well. This means the items and language need to be understandable to the coach. A coach needs to be able to reliably record information, and to translate the information recorded into tangible, useful feedback to the teacher. It's important to realize that the "best" lesson observation tool in terms of content may not be the "best" in terms of whether coaches in a given context are able to use it well.

New coaches are likely to benefit from a simpler classroom observation instrument, with fewer items. This will enable both coaches and teachers to focus on key areas. "Yes/no" options are likely to be preferable during the initial stages of implementation of a new instructional approach, as coaches are learning how to observe lesson delivery and provide feedback. Such options will enable coaches to more quickly identify whether teachers are implementing new instructional strategies and following the lesson plans.

Nuanced evaluations of the quality of instruction (such as using a Likert scale or a rubric) may be more feasible once both teachers and coaches are more experienced. For example, after an initial stage of implementation, coaches may have the skill level needed to assess the relative quality of the teacher's instruction, and to in turn provide teachers with specific guidance. Instruments that are too long will likely result in "information overload" for both coach and teacher. Such tools are likely more suited to the purpose of program monitoring, and not coaching.

- ***Time available for lesson observation and coach visit.*** The amount of time available to observe a teacher's lesson and conduct the coach visit are key considerations when developing instrument content. The number of items should be appropriate for the length of the lesson, as well as for how much time the coach will have after the lesson to provide feedback to the teacher. An instrument with too many items will likely result in a coach completing it quickly, and perhaps inaccurately.

- ***Time available for coach training and support.*** Rigorous training is needed to teach coaches to use a lesson observation instrument correctly, uniformly and effectively. This means that coach training needs to incorporate a significant amount of hands-on practice with the instrument. This can include observing a mock lesson or observing a video of a lesson that has been recorded. Time should be spent reviewing coaches' responses to the items to identify if they understand the items and are recording information correctly and reliably. Attention should also be paid to how much time coaches need to completely and accurately complete the observation form. If possible, coaches should have the opportunity to visit a school to try out the observation form "in real life."

Programs are encouraged to consider having coaches complete a lesson observation form on paper (as opposed to on a handheld tablet), since they may be more familiar with that medium. This will help to focus coaches' attention on the content of the observation, as opposed to the medium they are using for recording information.

<u>Teacher feedback form</u>

What is it and how is it used? This tool is for coaches to record the feedback they plan to (or do) provide to a teacher. This feedback is based on the lesson observation or other activity (such as assessing students) that a coach may conduct during a visit with a teacher. The purpose of the tool is to help the coach identify key areas of feedback to guide the post-lesson observation discussion with the teacher. The coach can take notes during the lesson observation, or immediately after, so that he or she has a list of items to talk about with the teacher. In some cases, a carbon copy duplicate of the feedback form may be provided to the teacher, so he or she can refer to it between coach visits. It may also help the coach and teacher to monitor progress.

Guidance and considerations: A feedback form should not require significant time to complete prior to the coach's discussion with a teacher. Programs may want to consider providing a carbon copy so that coach may keep one copy and give the other to the teacher. Electronic versions of a feedback form may be useful for monitoring the types of feedback coaches are providing, but coach capabilities vis-à-vis technology and the amount of time it may take to complete an e-form should be carefully considered.

Student assessment tools

What is it and how is it used? Tools for assessing students often range from formal (e.g., children are asked to read a pre-determined list of letters, words or sentences while the coach records their responses) to informal (e.g., a coach circulates amongst students and listens to them reading, or asks them to read something from their lesson book). The primary purpose of coach-conducted student assessment tools is to inform feedback to the coach. For example, a coach could note whether the sample of students he or she listened to could not read a passage from the student book or predetermined list of items with the level of fluency that would be desired. This information could then be used to identify areas where the teacher needs to provide additional, improved or targeted instruction. Secondarily, student assessment data collected by coaches help to inform ongoing teacher professional development.

Guidance and considerations: Learning to accurately assess students, correctly interpret the results and effectively use the results to help teachers improve their instruction is a significant skill for coaches to learn. It is recommended that programs introduce student assessment protocols and tools once coaches are familiar with their role, have had time to learn how to conduct an accurate student assessment and have established a positive relationship with the teacher.

Other resources for coaches

What are these and how are they used? Resources for coaches can include training manuals and reference sheets that can be used before, during and after coach visits. Topics should be related to what the coach is expected to know and do during the coach visit. The information should also be covered during the coach training (see **Handout 5: Guidance and considerations for training, supporting and monitoring coaches).** Topics may include:

- early grade reading pedagogy
- how to provide effective feedback to coaches
- how to foster positive rapport with teachers
- protocols and guidance for observing teachers and providing feedback
- "talking points" for certain topics
- how to facilitate a group coaching session
- how to assess students
- how to co-teach or demonstrate instructional practices
- case studies and examples

Guidance and considerations: Resources provided should be based on need and should be tailored to coaches' needs and skill level. Too many resources may be overwhelming, but too few may result in coaches feeling like they do not have the support and information they need to be effective. Throughout the course of the program, monitor how resources are used (or not used) and adjust accordingly.