TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULA
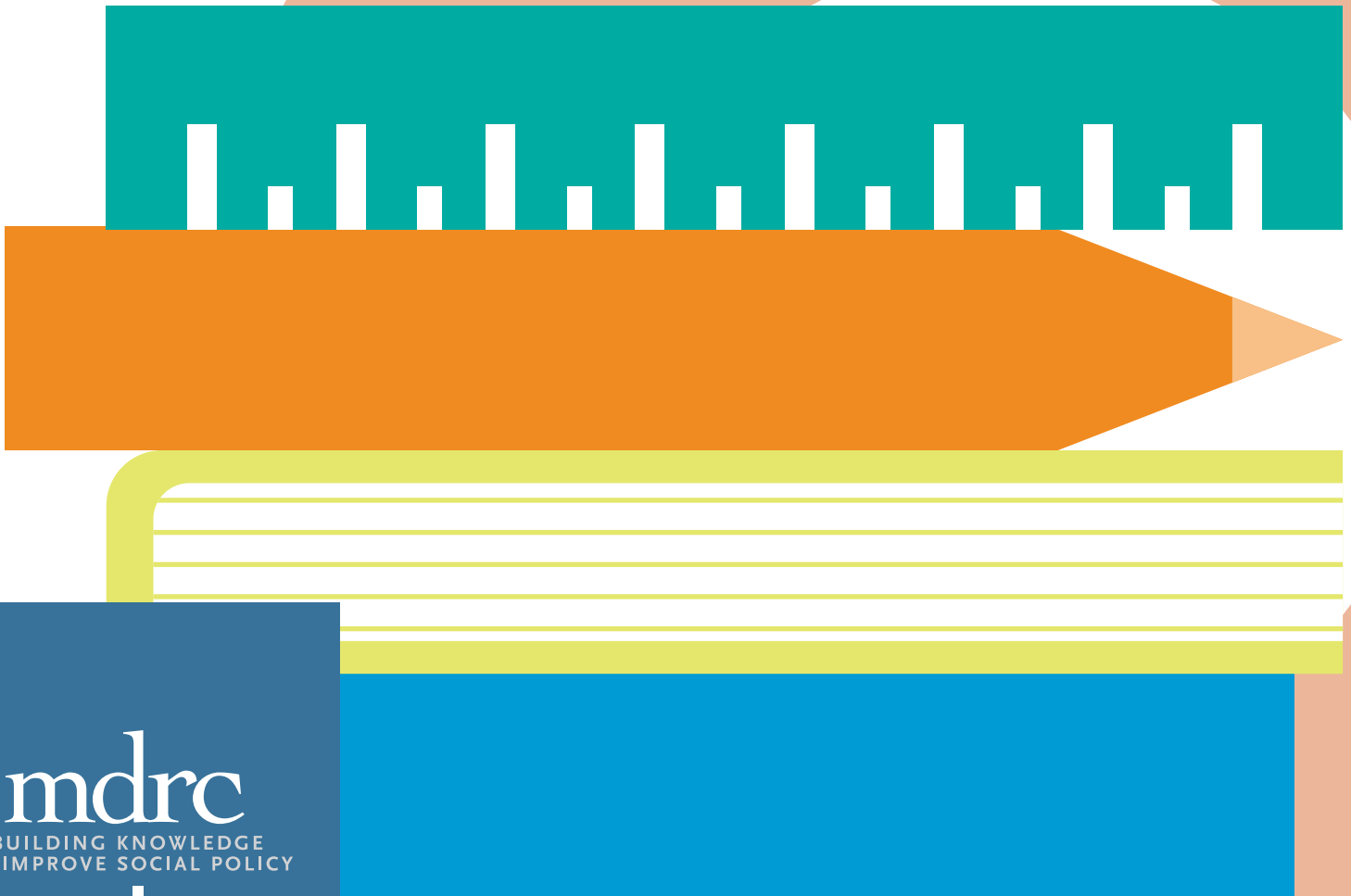
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TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Introduction

This brief is designed for school-based and community-based organizations interested in implementing evidence-based early childhood curricula.[1] It provides practical guidelines and tools for four stages of implementation:

1 **Preparing the system**

2 **Hiring and training coaches**

3 **Getting teachers ready to implement the curriculum as intended**

4 **Providing ongoing monitoring**

The resources in this guide are derived from the technical assistance MDRC has provided to coaches and programs in several large-scale studies that have evaluated early childhood supplemental curricula and found positive effects on children's outcomes. Programs interested in using these resources can pull out individual tools or guides that meet their specific needs.

MDRC Studies of Supplemental Curricula

From 2006 to 2015, MDRC conducted three large-scale demonstrations of supplemental preschool curricula supported by training, coaching, and data monitoring around the country. Together, these studies represent the experiences of about 1,100 preschool lead and assistant teachers and 83 coaches who participated in a total of 255 training sessions.

Foundations of Learning, a replication study, tested the effects of a classroom behavior-management model that used an adapted version of the Incredible Years Teacher Training Program plus support from master's-level clinical classroom consultants. It was implemented in 91 classrooms in Newark, New Jersey, and Chicago, Illinois.

Head Start CARES tested three curricula designed to support children's social-emotional development: Incredible Years Teacher Training Program, Preschool PATHS, and Tools of the Mind—Play. It was implemented in 307 Head Start classrooms from 17 Head Start grantees located in 10 states.

Making Pre-K Count examined the short- and long-term effects of Building Blocks, a math curriculum, in 173 preschool classrooms in New York City public schools and community organizations.

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[1] While the resources in this toolkit are useful for individual centers, it was designed for larger systems and agencies.

Preparing the System

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CURRICULUM FOR YOUR PROGRAM

The first step is to choose the curriculum that makes sense for your program, that fits with what your program needs. Explore the options and consider your priorities in relation to the students and teachers in your program and the larger system. Here are some questions to consider when choosing the curriculum.

Children:

- How can you address the cultural and language diversity represented in your children?

- What are the children's learning and developmental needs?

- Are there priority areas to be addressed?

- What concerns have parents shared?

- What areas of learning is the current curriculum not addressing?

Teachers:

- What are the current demands on teachers?

- What are their recent experiences with adopting new classroom approaches?

- In what ways can a new curriculum advance teachers toward their instructional goals?

Evidence base:

- Is there existing rigorous evidence that the new curriculum you are considering has positive effects on the priority children's outcomes and teacher practices you have identified in response to the previous questions?

System priorities:

- How does the new curriculum fit with other priorities and expectations?

- Does the new curriculum complement what is already happening or address a missing need?

- Does the curriculum place added demands on the system, or does it meet other needs already existing in the system?

Once you have reviewed these questions and have a summary of your program priorities, it can be helpful to review how the curriculum you are considering aligns with other standards, benchmarks, or initiatives within the system. This review will give you an idea of how well the curriculum fits with your program and will also help to get your staff invested in the idea of adding it.

MAKING THE MOST OF LEADERS' SUPPORT

Administrators' commitment, full understanding, and active participation is critical for the high-quality implementation of a curriculum. Leaders can promote implementation in three main ways:

Sending a positive message and building excitement about the new curriculum by: (1) showing enthusiasm for the new curriculum, (2) emphasizing the benefit to the children, (3) giving teachers the message that implementing the new curriculum is a learning process and opportunity for professional growth, and (4) setting expectations that the administration will encourage teachers as they learn.

Building their own knowledge of the new curriculum so they can provide appropriate resources and specific advice to teachers by: (1) trying to attend the introductory training in the new curriculum, (2) reviewing the new materials, and (3) talking with coaches and teachers to understand how the curricular materials differ from current practices.

Providing day-to-day support for implementation by: (1) ensuring there is time in the day to implement the new curriculum, (2) giving teachers time and space for coaching, and (3) encouraging teachers to integrate the new curriculum into other program requirements.

Building a Coaching Team

An important step in the process of implementing an evidence-based curriculum is hiring and training the coaches. Coaches help teachers learn and implement a new curriculum. They do not provide supervision or review teachers' performance, but they do collaborate with teachers to set goals, identify strategies together for how best to implement the new curriculum, and give teachers feedback so they can improve their practice. Additionally, coaches can enhance their work with teachers by collecting data about curriculum implementation to bolster the coaching process and by championing the new effort to teachers.

FINDING AND TRAINING COACHES

It is helpful for coaches to have classroom experience, so they understand what it is like to be a teacher. Additional relevant skills to look for include:

- The ability to build relationships and communicate effectively
- The ability to collaborate: to offer expertise while sharing responsibility and not controlling the direction of the coaching
- The ability to stay focused on the main task of implementation
- Comfort with giving constructive feedback, promoting reflection, and helping teachers set goals
- The ability to collect data in a timely manner
- Comfort with joining a new program and becoming integrated into that program
- General knowledge of early childhood curricula

Train coaches before teachers start implementing the new curriculum so they are ready right from the start to help teachers learn. If you are implementing a program on a large scale and have many coaches, an initial training session for coaches also allows you to create a collaborative community of learners who can share resources and lean on each other.

The coach training can cover several areas:

Learning the
curriculum

Playing a role
in training

Understanding
the model and
skills

Using data

Managing
relationships
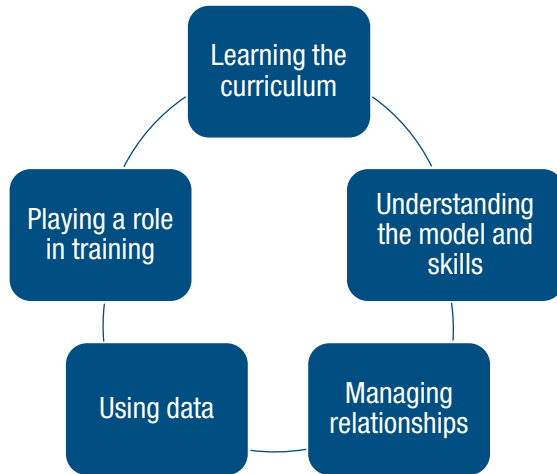
1. **Learning the curriculum** to be implemented, which can include opportunities to practice the curricular activities with real children

2. **Understanding the coaching model and the skills** of coaching

3. **Managing relationships** within the center and classroom, including coaches' relationships with teachers and the director and supervisors

4. **Using data** to bolster the coaching process

5. **Playing a role** in teacher training

Among these potential topics, it is important to identify those that address the program's priorities and coaches' learning needs. To determine a focus for the training, it can be helpful to gauge coaches' existing knowledge and the areas where they could learn more.

Resource 3: Coach Self-Assessment

Adapt this coach self-assessment tool and use it before coach training (to identify areas to focus on) and afterward (to assess what coaches learned).

Resource 4: Coach Training Content

Use this sample overview to get ideas for topics and learning goals for your coach training.

SUPERVISING COACHES

Supervision provides an opportunity for coaches to take stock of how implementation and coaching have been going. It allows coaches to slow down and share their successes, and to review challenges they have encountered. Supervision can serve three core functions for coaches:[2]

- **Normative (accountability):** The first area of supervision can be viewed as quality assurance. Supervision ensures that coaches are carrying out their job as expected, operating within the guidelines of the chosen coaching model, and meeting professional and administrative requirements.

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2 Brigid Proctor, "Training for the Supervision Alliance: Attitude, Skills and Intention," pages 25-46 in John R. Cutcliffe, T. Butterworth and Brigid Proctor (eds.), *Fundamental Themes in Clinical Supervision* (London: Routledge, 2001).

- **Formative (education):** Supervision also aims to help coaches continue developing their knowledge and skills. Supervision activities allow coaches to identify areas where they need to improve and to change their approach based on the comments they receive.

- **Restorative (support):** Supervision serves a supportive function by offering coaches a forum to discuss challenges they encounter and to ask questions. It can also serve to validate coaches' ideas, successes, and experiences.

Different types of supervision can serve different purposes for coaches:

TYPE OF SUPERVISION	PRIMARY FUNCTION(S)	PURPOSE
Individual supervision	Normative Formative Restorative	• Develop coaches' awareness of their own strengths and areas where they could improve • Aid coaches in developing effective coaching strategies to apply in the classrooms they visit • Set goals for coaching practice and detail steps to take to achieve those goals • Help coaches deal with issues specific to particular classrooms or teachers
Peer-to-peer group meeting	Formative Restorative	• Build networks among coaches, normalize coaching experiences, and contribute to a sense of professional community • Establish consistency between the coaching model and actual coaching practices across all coaches and classrooms • Deepen coaches' understanding of effective coaching practice
Curriculum study	Formative	• Deepen coaches' understanding of the curriculum • Identify a focus area and prepare for a coaching session • Clarify questions with other coaches and curriculum developers, if given the opportunity

Resource 5: Individual Supervision Strategies

Use these strategies to make the most of your supervision sessions with coaches.

Getting Teachers Ready

TEACHER TRAINING

The next step is training teachers to implement the new curriculum confidently and well. Training is your chance to create an experience relevant to teachers' day-to-day experiences, so the material does not end up on a shelf but is brought back to the classroom. Moreover, if you train lead teachers and assistants together, teachers can share the burden of implementing something new in their classrooms.

Creating a Meaningful and Active Learning Experience

Once you have teachers in the training session it is essential to make the experience worth their while. Moreover, if you plan to offer ongoing training, you want them to come back excited for more. Using a "Learn, Do, Reflect" framework for training can provide opportunities for teachers to connect their new learning to real classroom experiences.[3]

LEARN: Teach new content or material from the curriculum engagingly.

1. Provide video examples that reflect the diversity of the classroom and impart information about the curriculum content.
2. Limit the amount of time spent in lectures.

DO: Provide hands-on experiences that allow teachers to use what they learn.

1. Give teachers a chance to try out small lessons with each other right after they have learned the new material.
2. Have teachers produce materials during the training that have real applicability to their work (for example, classroom materials, plans for the coming weeks, and plans for creating professional learning networks).
3. Seat teachers with their coaches so they can do the hands-on activity together.

REFLECT: Give teachers time to reflect on what they have learned and plan how they will bring that learning back to the classroom.

1. Invite teachers to talk about what they learned in the session and where they will need assistance in implementing the new curriculum.
2. Ensure the teaching team is leaving with clear goals and next-step action items.

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3 For more on the "Learn, Do, Reflect" framework, see Samantha Wulfsohn and Jennifer Miller Gaubert, "Sustainable Change: Upping Your Staff Training Strategy," In Practice (blog), December (www.mdrc.org/publication/sustainable-change, 2019).

Boosting Teacher Attendance

Training is only successful if teachers are there to receive the new information. Address logistics, and also consider how teachers experience the training and the ways you can draw on relationships to get them to come. Teachers will probably attend something if they feel that the organizers have taken care to plan and execute the training well. Consider these tips:

Offer training sessions at times that work for teachers.

- Schedule training just before the start of the school year or on professional development days.
- Explore the possibility of providing weekend training sessions with incentives for attendance.

Choose a convenient and welcoming location.

- Use a location that is easily accessible.
- If there is security at the building, plan ahead to minimize the amount of time it takes to get inside.
- Welcome and direct teachers when they arrive and set a positive and professional tone for the rest of the day.

Make it easy to get there.

- Send an email reminder with explicit details of the time and location, along with directions to the training venue.
- Provide cell phone numbers of people who will be available on the day of a training session to assist with directions, confirm information, or answer questions.
- Consider calling teachers to check in if they are late.

Make the experience professional.

- Plan and confirm training events before the start of the school year to show you are prepared and that these dates are important.
- Set standards of participation and professional behavior up front.
- Give teachers a preview of what to expect at each training event.
- Prompt teachers to set goals that connect to the upcoming training experience.

Harness teachers' relationships.

- Ask coaches to remind teachers to attend the training.
- Find ways for teachers to encourage each other to attend.
- Ask coaches to acknowledge and celebrate attendance.
- Seat coaches with teachers so they can participate together.
- Ask coaches to put down their computers or phones during the training.
- Invite both lead and assistant teachers.

Resource 6: Sample Training Agenda

Adapt this sample agenda to plan a training session that incorporates opportunities for learning, doing, and reflecting.

Resource 7: Sample Training Invitation

Use this sample teacher training invitation and adapt it so that it effectively communicates details about your training.

Resource 8: Teacher Training Logistics Form

Use this logistics template to keep track of details as you plan your teacher training.

Resource 9: Teacher Training Task Timeline

Use this sample timeline to keep track of who will be responsible for the activities that will prepare you for your training.

COACHING TEACHERS

Curriculum-focused coaching is a vital professional development strategy for teachers as they learn to implement a new curriculum. It offers the teaching team individual professional development with a focus on implementing the new teacher practices and curriculum in real time. It also reinforces what teachers have learned during training.

Determining Whom to Coach

Provide coaching to assistant and lead teachers together. Doing so can help assistant and lead teachers develop a collaborative working relationship and can make it more likely that they will implement a curriculum successfully. It can help to increase morale and empowers assistant teachers by encouraging both them and lead teachers to see them as professionals.

In doing so, leaders and coaches should:

- Set the expectation that assistant teachers are full partners in implementation by including them in all training and coaching sessions.

- Understand that it takes time and encouragement for lead and assistant teachers to make a big shift in their expectations of the assistant teacher role.

- Help the team to identify each teacher's strengths and harness them (for example, if the assistant teacher is comfortable with technology, encourage that person to take on and "own" a computer component of a curriculum).

- Find a way to give assistant teachers a sense of autonomy in the process, to the degree that they are comfortable being involved. If they can make at least one part of implementation "their own," it will go far.

- Ensure that assistant teachers are available to participate in coaching meetings and attend all the training sessions.

- Actively include the assistant teacher in all parts of the coaching (for example, ask both teachers questions during meetings and give both comments and suggestions), and encourage the lead and assistant teachers to collaborate.

Building a Learning Relationship

It is widely accepted that a collaborative relationship between teachers and coaches lays the foundation for a successful coaching partnership, and beginning the coaching process with this focus is important. However, once coaches have built rapport with teachers, it is important to shift focus quickly to helping teachers acquire new knowledge and implement the new curriculum. At the same time, teachers will get the most out of coaching if coaches tailor their approaches to teachers' individual needs. The coach-teacher learning relationship can be defined in various ways. How it is defined will determine what the coach and teacher focus on.

Sample Defining Characteristics of a Learning Relationship

Child-focused

Children are at the center of coaches' work with teachers. Coaches promote teachers' awareness of how children develop in various areas of learning, which strengthens teaching practices and ultimately promotes child development.

Data-driven

Coaches help teachers gather and interpret information about children's learning through observations and formative assessments (assessments teachers do in the classroom to inform instruction). Teachers use this information to make decisions about instruction.

Collaborative

The implementation of the new curriculum is an endeavor shared by coaches, the lead and assistant teachers in the classroom, site leaders and administrators, and the research team if there is one. Each party has a distinct and important role in ensuring successful implementation.

Goal-oriented

Coaches work with teachers as they develop goals for their own practice and for children's learning, and as they determine the steps they will take to reach those goals.

Constructive

Coaches provide routine constructive feedback on the teachers' practice, which leads to the development of effective strategies that teachers can apply to their work in the classroom.

Nonsupervisory

Coaches are not supervisors, but partner with teachers in their efforts to learn and implement the new curriculum. They recognize that they are joining teachers in their classrooms.

Culturally competent

Coaches are committed to learning about, listening to, and responding to different cultural viewpoints, while also reflecting on and questioning their own practices in relation to cultural issues.

Reflective

Coaches encourage teachers to slow down and think about their implementation and teaching practices. Rather than telling them what to do, coaches provide a "scaffold" for the teacher, one that is slowly removed as teachers discover answers for themselves.

Teacher-focused

Coaches recognize and respect teachers' expertise, knowledge, and skills. They meet teachers where they are, and counsel them based on their unique strengths and needs.

Establishing a Coaching Cycle

A successful coaching model provides a structure for the coaching experience but is flexible enough to meet the needs of the individual teacher or classroom. Coaching can occur as a cyclical, two-part process that repeats on a regular basis: (1) coaching in the classroom and (2) coaching meetings outside the classroom. Interactions among coaches, teachers, and children during classroom coaching provide the content for the conversations in coaching meetings, which in turn inform the next in-classroom coaching sessions.

Coaching in the classroom refers to the time spent working with teachers as they implement instructional activities in their classrooms. During this time, coaches use a variety of methods to help teachers implement the curriculum as intended, while also observing and taking notes on specific teacher and child behaviors.

Through in-classroom coaching, coaches can **reinforce teachers' application of new knowledge and skills by:**

- Encouraging teachers to apply suggestions and recommendations from past meetings; and
- Assisting teachers as they try out new or challenging instructional strategies.

They can also **gather information about implementation and the factors influencing progress (for example, classroom schedule and teacher management style) in order to:**

- Prepare observations on implementation to share with teachers; and
- Inform the suggestions and reflections they offer teachers during their next meeting.

Coaching meetings occur with the coach, lead teacher, and assistant teacher after they have worked together on implementing the curriculum during classroom coaching. Using the coach's and teachers' observations from the in-classroom session, the coach guides the teachers through a process of reflection, constructive feedback, and instructional planning. This process leads to the creation of concrete plans for future instruction.

During coaching meetings, coaches can **promote high-quality implementation by:**

- Providing teachers with resources (knowledge, objective information, and data) and motivation;
- Anticipating barriers to implementation and trying to come up with ways to overcome them; and
- Planning for activities in the following week (or beyond).

Coaches can also **develop teachers' awareness of how their instruction affects children's learning by:**

- Guiding teachers in reflection on their own practices and children's reactions to instruction; and
- Offering constructive feedback that teachers can apply to their work with children going forward.

Resource 10: Strategies for Different Stages of Change

Use these strategies calibrate your coaching approach based on how ready the lead and assistant teachers are to change.

Resource 11: Coaching Methods to Foster the Learning Relationship

Select coaching strategies based on where teachers are in the learning process and extent to which they prefer to take the lead.

Resource 12: Observation Guide

Use this observation guide to set a strategy with teachers and to plan what you will observe during in-classroom coaching.

Resource 13: Note-Taking Template

Use the template to take notes during the in-classroom session, so you can keep track of goals, action steps, and observations.

Resource 14: Coaching Meeting Checklist

Use the checklist and accompanying questions as a guide to make sure you cover important content over the course of the meeting.

Resource 15: Email Templates

Use these templates to create your own emails reminding teachers about upcoming coaching sessions and following up after sessions.

Providing Ongoing Monitoring

USING DATA

Early childhood programs collect a wealth of data on everything from teachers' attendance at training to ongoing assessments of children's learning. You can use that information to determine what is going well in your implementation of a new curriculum, and what obstacles may get in the way. Consider what types of data you already collect and how you can use the information to improve your program or to lessen burdens on your staff. Do not limit yourself to quantitative information but consider any source that helps you to listen, see, feel, or understand what is going on in your program from different perspectives, including informal observations from staff members and parents. If you determine that additional data collection is warranted, try to keep it simple and find ways for staff members to see the benefits of the additional data collection.

Improving Your Training Series

A few simple and focused pieces of data can inform and improve your next training session. Consider these questions and how to get answers using data.

1. Are teachers coming to the training?

   a. Review attendance data from the last training session.

   b. For teachers who did not attend, try to get information about why they did not. Note any patterns.

2. Are the training space and technology adequate? Can teachers focus on the training without distractions?

3. Is all the planned content delivered so that teachers learn the information they need?

4. Are teachers engaged and active during the training session?

5. Do teachers find the information useful? Do they know how they will use the material when they get back to the classroom?

You can gather a lot of information using a simple observation form completed by coaches or a survey completed by teachers at the end of the training.

Buttressing Teachers' Implementation of the Curriculum

Collecting and monitoring timely implementation data can help coaches tailor their support to teachers' needs, can help administrators address logistical needs, and can help leadership teams use resources more thoughtfully by showing them where additional help could be useful or where teachers need different kinds of coaching. Consider these questions about implementation:

1. Are teachers implementing an adequate amount of the curriculum?

    a. Teacher records can provide information about how much of the curriculum they are implementing.

    b. Coaches can track implementation based on conversations with teachers.

2. Are teachers implementing the curriculum as it was intended?

    a. Teachers can complete self-assessments, noting their successes and where they need help.

    b. Coaches can observe teachers and take notes.

DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR PROGRAM MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

There are several steps your program can take to develop a process for continual monitoring and quality improvement, helping you to identify issues and guide your responses to them. It is important to frame this monitoring as a positive process that provides your staff with an opportunity to grow and learn. Consider inviting teachers to participate in the planning process.

STEP ▶

1
Set benchmarks

Identify what you think is most important for (1) curriculum implementation and (2) coaching. What do curriculum developers recommend regarding how components of the curriculum should be implemented, how often, and when? How often and for how long should coaching sessions last, what should coaching focus on, and where should coaching occur?

Set benchmarks for curriculum implementation and coaching based on those expectations. Take into consideration your program's priorities alongside what curriculum developers consider to be optimal implementation. Benchmarks can set high expectations, but should also be realistic.[4]

STEP ▶

2
Determine how you will measure implementation

To monitor how implementation is going relative to your benchmarks, you will need to develop a plan for gathering data. Examine what information is already collected as part of your program and determine whether you will need additional information.

Decide who will collect the data, what it will be and how often you will collect the information.

STEP ▶

3
Develop a quality-assessment process

Try to find a simple and useful way of summarizing important data in an easy-to-read table for review, and designate a person or people responsible for reviewing information on an ongoing basis. This information can also be shared with teachers so they can reflect on their own implementation.

Determine how often to review the data and what threshold to use for identifying classrooms in need of the most assistance, as well as those that need only little nudges toward successful implementation.

Consider using a color system for different levels of need, highlighting aspects of implementation that are not meeting benchmarks with one color and those that require short-term support with another color.

STEP ▶

4
Follow up with a quality-improvement plan

Develop a plan for following up with classrooms to clarify the strengths they are showing and the barriers to implementation they are facing. This information can be used to generate hypotheses about possible reasons for the barriers to implementation, which can in turn guide your response.

Develop a plan that addresses the hypothesized reasons directly.

Determine how you will gauge whether that plan is working, and when you will decide whether it makes sense to continue with same strategy or to change strategies.

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4 Sharon Rowser, "Setting Strong Benchmarks," *In Practice* (blog), April (www.mdrc.org/publication/setting-strong-benchmarks, 2019).

Resource 17: Data-Monitoring Process Template

Use this template to plan how you will monitor your data. You can adapt the template to your own program needs to help you determine who will be responsible for the process and to ensure that the team agrees on goals and procedures.

Tools
for Implementing Evidence-Based Early Childhood Curricula

1 Program Needs Action Planning Table and Questionnaire

Use the action table to summarize your program needs. Adapt the questions below it to help you understand important details about your program and arrive at decisions about the right curriculum.

Sample Action	Notes	How does the new curriculum address this need?
Review the needs of the children and summarize areas of learning that need to be a priority		
Summarize parents' priorities		
Understand teachers' current demands and how changing the curriculum will affect those demands		
Understand teachers' past experiences with new initiatives		
Summarize how the current priorities, standards, and expectations are being met		
Summarize what requirements or components are not being addressed		

CURRICULUM CONTENT AND TRAINING IN THE DISTRICT'S PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

- What curricula are currently in use? _____

  ○ Do any address children's behavioral issues?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

  ○ How widely are they used? _____

- What is the current protocol for managing children with challenging behavior? _____
_____

  ○ Is there an explicit disciplinary policy?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

  ○ Is there an assessment mechanism for special education placement?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

- What qualifications are required of preschool teachers? _____

- What professional development is in place for teachers? _____

  ○ How many days/hours of training?   _____ Days   _____ Hours

  ○ Is it mandatory or voluntary?   ☐ Mandatory   ☐ Voluntary

  ○ Who provides the training? _____

- What staffing support is available to teachers? _____

  ○ To what degree do teachers have access to staff members with mental health training? _____
_____

- What is the role and training of the "resource teachers"? _____
_____

  ○ What are the qualifications of the resource teachers? _____

- What other preschool initiatives are going on or planned that might advance or interfere with our intervention? _____
_____

  ○ What is the timing of those interventions? _____

STRUCTURE OF THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

- Are these programs full day or part day?   ☐ Full day   ☐ Part day

  ○ Is there a summer component?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

- What is the ratio of students to teachers? _____

  ○ Do programs have a teaching assistant in addition to a head teacher?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

- What are the retention rates for teachers? _____

- What is the retention rate for children (the number of children who stay in the program for the full school year)? _____

ENROLLMENT/RECRUITMENT

- What recruitment and outreach efforts are used to make parents aware of the preschool programs?
  _____
  _____
  _____

  ○ What seem to be the major barriers to enrollment? _____
  _____
  _____

- When do parents enroll their children in preschool programs? _____

CONTEXT

- How many children are served in preschool programs? _____ How many preschool classrooms are there? _____ In how many schools/centers are these preschool programs? _____

- How many preschool children does the school district currently serve? _____

  ○ How many are served by other community-based organizations (including Head Start)? _____

  ○ Are there any major service providers to be aware of?_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Which preschool programs are under the jurisdiction of the school system? _____
  _____
  _____

  ○ How many classes are there? _____

  ○ Are these programs all housed in the school buildings with elementary grades?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

  ○ Are there any special or unique features of the district's program? _____
  _____
  _____

- For programs run through community-based childcare providers or Head Start,

  ○ how is the control of the programs managed? _____
  _____

  ○ What are the requirements for the qualifications of the teaching staff and the curriculum (compared with district-run programs)? _____
  _____

  ○ How many classrooms are there? _____

  ○ In what settings are these classrooms? _____

- What funding streams currently support the preschool programs and which of these flow through the school district? _____
_____
_____

- Are there any specific issues affecting the preschool service providers that might have implications for a new curriculum? _____
_____
_____
_____

ASSESSMENT

- What data are collected on children to assess their readiness for preschool? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- What data are collected on children in the classroom to make instructional decisions? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- What data are collected at the classroom level to measure progress? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2 Leader Checklist

Use this checklist to keep track of the things you can do to promote the new curriculum within your program.

SENDING A MESSAGE

☐ I have identified opportunities to show my own enthusiasm for the new curriculum.

☐ I have developed a list of ways the new curriculum can benefit the children.

☐ I have communicated with all teachers that this new curriculum is an opportunity for professional growth, and have encouraged them to learn new things.

☐ I have identified other administrators, teachers, and coaches to be champions of the new curriculum.

BUILDING MY KNOWLEDGE

☐ I have attended an introductory training session on the new curriculum.

☐ I have reviewed the new materials.

☐ I have set up time to talk with teachers to understand how the new curriculum is similar to and different from what they were doing previously.

☐ I have set up time with coaches and supervisors to make sure we are consistent in how we talk with teachers about the new curriculum's content and approaches.

DAY-TO-DAY SUPPORT

☐ I have provided teachers time and space for coaching.

☐ I have provided teachers with resources to help them integrate the new curriculum into other program requirements.

☐ I have encouraged teachers to attend training in the new curriculum and have provided substitutes so they can do so.

☐ I have given teachers uninterrupted time to review the curriculum and plan lessons.

3 Coach Self-Assessment

Adapt this self-assessment tool to help you identify the areas where coaches will need training.

Rate your agreement with the following questions

1 Strongly disagree   **2** Disagree   **3** Neutral   **4** Agree   **5** Strongly agree

1. I have an understanding of the new curriculum and important aspects of the existing program.

    O   O   O   O   O
    1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

2. I know how to implement the curricular activities accurately (that is, as written in the curriculum, or with appropriate adaptations, without making mistakes).

    O   O   O   O   O
    1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

3. I know how to be a positive presence in all classrooms, even in challenging situations.

    O   O   O   O   O
    1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

4. I can help teachers tailor instruction to different students (for example, by using observations and data about children to plan instruction appropriate to different individuals and to various small groups).

    O   O   O   O   O
    1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

5. I am able to adjust my coaching as teachers improve in their implementation, to help them continue to make progress.

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

6. I know how to provide effective, constructive comments to teachers.

    (A constructive comment is specific, focused on a particular behavior, based on observations about a person's performance of a task, and to be used for improvement. It is not a personal judgment, opinion, or feeling about the teacher.)

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

7. I know how to guide teachers in reflection so they can learn and grow.

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

8. I know how to help teachers implement all components of the new curriculum as expected (for example, I can provide the appropriate tools, ideas, and motivation to spur teachers into action).

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

9. I know how to work with lead and assistant teachers to create a team dynamic that facilitates high-quality implementation of the curriculum.

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

10. I know how to apply personal knowledge of and experience in early childhood education to my coaching. I try to be a credible source of information for teachers in a broad range of areas (for example, best practices for parent-teacher communication).

O 1   O 2   O 3   O 4   O 5

4 Coach Training Content

You can use these ideas as you pull together a training plan for coaches in preparation for implementing the new curriculum. Adapt the learning goals and training content topics to meet the needs of your program.

AREA 1: NEW CURRICULUM/PROGRAM

Tract 1.1: The "*New Curriculum*" Program

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will have a breadth and depth of knowledge about the new curriculum content to ensure they are able to assist and guide teachers as they learn it.

TRAINING CONTENT/APPROACHES

- Training with a trainer knowledgeable about the curriculum
- Curriculum review and hands-on practice opportunities
- Peer-to-peer learning experiences
- In-classroom practice

AREA 2: COACHING

Tract 2.1: Coaching Processes and Strategies

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will understand how to implement the coaching model and hone the skills they need to bolster teachers' ongoing implementation of the curriculum.

TRAINING CONTENT:

- Reviewing the coaching model and implications for coaching
- Moving teachers forward and supporting independent practice
- Using reflective practice and constructive comments more effectively
- Responding to teacher apprehension and motivating teachers
- Tailoring coaching for teachers with different needs

Tract 2.2: Classroom-Management Techniques

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will deepen their understanding of how to use coaching to promote good classroom management.

TRAINING CONTENT:

- Setting up for successful classroom management early in coaching
- How and when to focus on classroom management

Tract 2.3: The Context for Coaching in Early Childhood Settings

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will understand the contextual issues that affect their work with teachers and the research team.

TRAINING CONTENT:

- Integrating the new curriculum into other aspects of the classroom
- Communicating with different systems
- Working with dual language learners
- Considering issues of diversity and equity
- Understanding the community's early childhood education landscape
- Using organizational strategies/creating tools and forms
- Entering and joining a new system

Tract 2.4: Using Data to Guide Coaching Practices

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will understand how to collect, review, and interpret data to help teachers implement the new curriculum effectively.

TRAINING CONTENT

- Learning how to collect and report data in the database
- Using observational data in the classroom in coaching
- Using observational data as a tool for formative assessment and to monitor goals

Tract 2.5: Self-Reflection and Supervision of Coaches

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will understand how they will be supervised and how that supervision will operate.

TRAINING CONTENT

- Exploring the supervision model and developing useful approaches for enhancing coaching practice

- Understanding what to work on independently and what to bring to supervisors

- Using data as a part of supervision to improve coaching practices

AREA 3: TEACHER TRAINING

Tract 3.1: Understanding How to Create and Facilitate Effective Small-Group Training

LEARNING GOAL: Coaches will understand how to create and facilitate an effective small group training session.

TRAINING CONTENT:

- Leading a small group and creating a professional learning community

- Working with groups of adult learners

- Running an effective training session

- Making decisions about how to create small groups

- Preparing teachers for small groups

5 Individual Supervision Strategies

As you plan individual supervision with a coach, review these different strategies to guide your work together.

Strategy	Description	Purpose	Plan for Supervision
Verbal report	Review and discuss the main coaching issues in each classroom	• Brings the supervisor up to speed • Organizes information, puts problems in context, and helps the coach identify strategies and next steps for all classrooms • Makes the coach more aware of the coach's own effectiveness • Ensures all classrooms get adequate coverage and review	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Review data	Review and discuss data documenting coaching and the implementation of the curriculum	• Ensures data-collection expectations are met • Provides quality assurance for coaching	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Live observation (by a supervisor/ mentor)	Observe the coaching process	• Allows supervisors and mentor to see coaching in action • Provides the coach with concrete responses to coaching implementation	_____ _____ _____ _____
Video recordings	Review video recordings of coach-teacher meetings and in-classroom coaching sessions	• Allows coaches to learn from each other in group supervision • Makes it possible to review verbal and nonverbal communication occurring in meetings with teachers • Documents the coach's skills • Allows the supervisor to see coaching in action • Provides a basis for one-on-one and group discussion about how to promote fidelity to the curriculum and the coaching model	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Role-playing	Role-play a coaching situation	• Lets the supervisor observe and assess the coach's skill • Creates a safe space for coaches to practice, try new skills, and develop new strategies	_____ _____ _____ _____

6 Sample Training Agenda

> **Adapt ideas from the annotated agenda and use the agenda template to plan a teacher training session that incorporates the "learn, do, reflect" strategy.**

SAMPLE AGENDA

Objectives

Working in groups, teachers will be able to:

- Deepen their understanding of the learning trajectories associated with number sense

- Consider where students are on their learning trajectories and use this information to plan for the up-coming weeks of Small Groups

- Share strategies for peer-to-peer learning, implementing both Small Groups and Computers each week

- Reflect on their own learning processes

A. Introduction (12:00–12:05)

- Introductions *Whole Group*

  ○ Group facilitators choose how to approach introductions, keeping it brief.

  ○ Reintroduce each person by name.

  ○ Make a note to the group if there is a new person joining the group.

- Review expectations *Whole Group*

  ○ The expectations will be placed in the middle of the table and labeled *Working Group Expectations*.

  ○ Facilitators remind the group of the expectations, which include:

    Be respectful. Listen to each other; take turns talking; turn off cell phones; take emergency calls outside.

    Be open-minded. It is okay to have different points of view; listen to others' ideas.

    Take a risk. It is okay to be wrong; it is more important to try out new things and learn from others.

Ask questions. If you don't understand something, ask! Someone else probably has the same question as you have.

Have fun. This process should be interesting and fun.

- Quick overview of the afternoon *Whole Group*

  We will:

  ○ **LEARN:** Look at developmental levels for Measurement.

  ○ **DO:** Plan for weeks 21–22 Measurement by considering how you may group your children and practicing some activities with ideas for differentiating instruction.

  ○ **REFLECT:** Review what was learned and plan for how to take the learning back to the classroom.

B. Learn: Review the Curriculum for Weeks 21–22 (12:05–12:30)

- Brief read-through of curricular materials on Measurement for weeks 21–22 *Individual*

- Review of developmental levels for Measurement *Whole Group*

  ○ Use *Measurement Developmental Progression 3* and *Planning Guide Weeks 21–22* to recall the measurement activities done last year and how children reacted to them.

  ○ Consider the following questions to help teachers better understand how kids think about these activities:

    What was easy/what was difficult?

    What strategies did you use with your kids last year and how did they respond?

    Did children understand the need to align two objects physically to compare them?

    Could children correctly lay units end to end?

    Could they use a ruler correctly?

- Teachers' opportunity to try out the activities *Small Group*

- Chart of reflections, ideas, and adaptations *Whole Group*

C. Do: Plan for Weeks 21–22 (12:30–1:00)

- Introduction to the activity *Whole Group*

  ○ Let teachers know that they will use blank assessment sheet and:

    Look over the small group activities.

    Review the choices of Length Riddles and think about how they will implement them with their children. What did they do last year?

    Group children.

    Note opportunities to adapt materials to individuals.

    Use the materials to try out adaptations.

- Teachers' plans for weeks 21–22 *Individual or Partners*
  - Encourage teachers to make notes indicating the type of language/words they want to use.
  - Have teachers make a note answering, "What is the point of this activity?"
  - Remind teachers that they need to prepare ahead of time and have the items ready for length riddles.

D. Reflect: Strategies for Next Steps in the Classroom (1:00–1:15)

- Teachers' descriptions of how they will bring the learning back to the classroom, noting: *Individual*
  - One idea to tailor instruction to individuals
  - How planning in training has affected their work in the classroom up to this point
  - What else trainers can do to help teachers translate training into classroom practice
  - How they will share information with their co-teachers
- Chart of strategies and ideas *Whole Group*
- Final questions *Whole Group*

7 Sample Training Invitation

When creating a training invitation, you can communicate most effectively if you make sure to highlight the most important information up front, include a reason why the reader should attend, and provide specific actions that the person needs to take.[1]

Join your fellow teachers from around the city!

Making Pre-K Count January Teacher Training

Executive Conference Center
1601 Broadway (at 48th St.)
New York, NY 10019

Take the elevator to the 8th floor and walk down the stairs to the 7th

Thursday, January 30th
8:45 a.m.–3:15 p.m.

☐ Confirm your attendance with your coach by **Friday, January 17.**
☐ Bring **Volume 2** of your Building Blocks Teacher's Edition set.
☐ Plan how you will get there.
☐ Get a stipend for attendance at training sessions that occur outside of working days or professional development/pre-K nonattendance days.

Don't miss out on free food! Breakfast, lunch, and a snack will be provided.

We look forward to seeing you there!

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1 Ilana Brody and Rekha Balu, "Getting Your Message Across with the Effective Communications Checklist," *In Practice* (www.mdrc.org/publication/getting-your-message-across-effective-communications-checklist, 2020).

Public Transportation to the Executive Conference Center

1601 Broadway; New York, NY 10019

The building is on the corner of 48th and Broadway and the entrance is on 48th St. The sign says "American Management Association."

Subway

B D F M to 47th-50th Streets—Rockefeller Center

C E to 50th Street

1 to 50th Street

N R to 49th Street

6 to 51st Street (*If you need to take this train, you can transfer at 51st St. and take the downtown E to 50th St. The walk is much shorter.*)

Bus

M104, M20, M16, M7, M50

Insert Photograph

A photo of the building where the training will be held would be very helpful.

8 Teacher Training Logistics Form

Use this training logistics template to keep track of details as you plan your training. Adapt it to include the things that are important for your needs.

SITE AND TRAINING FACILITIES INFORMATION

Site: _____

Name of program: _____

Training location: _____
_____

Training dates: _____

Room(s) needed: _____

Person responsible for room set-up: _____

Contact person at the training location (general/contracts/ logistics, etc.): _____

Phone number/email: _____
_____

Contact at the training location on the day of training: _____

Phone number/email: _____
_____

Arrangement for parking at training location? _____

Cost per hour/day and number of days: _____

Total cost of training facilities rental: $_____

TECHNOLOGY

IT contact at the venue: _____

IT contact at the venue on the day of training:_____

IT contact for the training planning team: _____

Facilities meet electrical specifications (see tech specifications)?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Facilities meet connectivity specifications (see tech specifications)?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Specs for computer set-up on the day of training: _____

_____

_____

Number of computers required: _____

Who is responsible for computers? _____

Sending computers to training facility?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    Shipping address: _____

    _____

    Ship to: _____

    Who will send computers? _____

    Date sent: _____

    Plan for returning computers:

    Ship to training planning team address: _____

    _____

    Who will return computers? _____

    Date sent: _____

Other A/V and tech equipment required from the venue: _____

_____

Who is responsible for confirming A/V and tech equipment at the venue (one week before and the day of the event): _____

TRAINING ATTENDEES

Number of teachers attending: Day 1 _____   Day 2 _____

Number of members of the training planning team attending:
                                   Day 1 _____   Day 2 _____

Number of trainers attending: Day 1 _____   Day 2 _____

Number of coaches attending: Day 1 _____   Day 2 _____

Number of others attending: Day 1 _____   Day 2 _____

Total Attendees: _____

Who will arrive early (the afternoon before
training) to assist with setup?   _____

Who will arrive early on the day of training to
help set up the room and check attendees in?   _____

Who will stay (one hour) after training to help
pack up/ship materials (at least two people)?   _____

Flights for trainers (the latest time they can stay at training):   ☐ No   ☐ Yes   ☐ Done

Car service for trainers: ☐ No   ☐ Yes   ☐ Done

Hotel for trainers: ☐ No   ☐ Yes   ☐ Done

FOOD: BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND SNACK

Food provider/provider contact information: _____

_____

Special food needs: _____

_____

Additional food: _____

_____

Cost: _____

TRAINING MATERIAL

MATERIALS	TOTAL COPIES NEEDED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
For Teachers		
For Trainers		
For Coaches		
For Training Planning Team		
For Venue		

Who will check that all training materials have arrived? _____

Who will have electronic copies for backup? _____

Who will bring or ship additional materials/supplies (markers, tape, pens, etc.)? _____

_____

Cost of producing/shipping materials: _____

TOTAL COST (facilities, technology, food, other materials): _____

TEAM MEMBERS AT TRAINING

Name	Phone Number	Days at Training	Responsibilities at Training (Setting Up, Presenting, Taking Notes, etc.)

TOTAL:_____

9 Teacher Training Task Timeline

Use this sample timeline and task list to keep track of who will be responsible for the activities in preparation for your training.

A MONTH BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Check in with trainer about training agenda	_____
☐ _____	Share agenda with coaches to learn more about what kinds of support teachers currently need	_____

3 WEEKS BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Receive recommended additions/revisions from coaches on the agenda and share them with trainers	_____
☐ _____	Incorporate recommendations from coaches and finalize the agenda	_____
☐ _____	Send email invitation and flier to teachers	_____
☐ _____	Send teacher-commitment-signature pages to coaches	_____
☐ _____	Plan for transporting materials (manipulatives, computers, notepads, etc.)	_____
☐ _____	Email trainers to get a list of materials they need	_____

2 WEEKS BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Send finalized agenda to coaches	_____
☐ _____	Plan and list materials needed	_____
☐ _____	Draft announcements for the morning of training	_____
☐ _____	Set up a call for trainers and coaches to talk about training	_____
☐ _____	Make small-group and table assignments	_____

1.5 WEEKS BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Plan for the day of training: confirm attendance, finalize small groups, seating, etc.	_____

1 WEEK BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Follow up with teachers to make sure they have RSVPed to coaches	_____
☐ _____	Finish making materials for small groups and the whole group	_____
☐ _____	Finish drafting printed instructions for review (instructions for registration, small groups, sign-out, public transportation vouchers, etc.)	_____
☐ _____	Get registration list	_____
☐ _____	Create materials for teachers (binders/folders, toolkits)	_____
☐ _____	Make folders for coaches and trainers	_____
☐ _____	Have a call with trainers and coaches	_____

3 DAYS BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Make name tags	_____
☐ _____	Create attendance tracking form	_____
☐ _____	Prepare sign-out sheets	_____
☐ _____	Prepare incentives and for attendance and receipt form if offered	_____

2 DAYS BEFORE TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Send a reminder to teachers	_____
☐ _____	Send day-of assignments to coaches and training support staff (with agendas and table assignments)	_____
☐ _____	Create a list of people with incomplete payment information and prepare forms for those people to fill out on the day of training	_____

TRAINING DAY

2 BUSINESS DAYS AFTER TRAINING

Complete/ Date	Task	Person Responsible
☐ _____	Report on attendance to coaches and directors	_____
☐ _____	Organize materials that were used and that may be needed for future training	_____
☐ _____	Coordinate/facilitate small-group discussions with coaches and trainers to review training	_____
☐ _____	Send thank-you notes to administrators and teachers who attended	_____

10 Strategies for Different Stages of Change

Teachers come in to the classroom and program implementation at different stages of being ready to make change.[1] Matching your coaching strategy to a teacher's stage of change can help you to customize and plan coaching sessions.

Stage of Change[2]

1 PRECONTEMPLATION

Teachers are not considering making changes in their practice.

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Teachers overwhelmed by other issues in the classroom, surviving from one day to the next Sensitivity and resistance to being told to try new things Refusal to come to coaching meetings or teacher training Active refusal to implement, telling the coach it is not part of the job Inability to hear the coach, actively ignoring the coach, coach sharing things with teachers and seeing them "roll off"	**Reducing sources of stress and highlighting the benefits of the new curriculum:** • Share ideas or facts about the new curriculum, frame them as something teachers know and then leave them to think about it. (Try to avoid getting into a debate.) • Use empathy and collaboration to reduce defensiveness and create a safe learning environment. • Raise teachers' awareness about the benefits of the new curriculum and point out ways teachers' beliefs fit with the new curriculum. • Find informal opportunities get more information about teachers' goals and explore with them how the benefits of implementing the new curriculum address those goals. • Gently try to raise questions about ideas that do not fit with the new curriculum.

1   Shira M. Peterson, "Readiness to Change: Effective Implementation Processes for Meeting People Where They Are," pages 43–64 in Tamara Halle, Allison Metz, and Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, (eds.), *Applying Implementation Science in Early Childhood Programs and Systems* (Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, 2013).

2   James O. Prochaska and Carlo C. DiClemente, "Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 51, 3 (1983): 390–395.

2 CONTEMPLATION

Teachers are thinking about making changes in their practice.

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Very little implementation, done in a cursory way when it does happen A lack of energy or investment in trying the new curriculum Teachers thinking, not acting Teachers listening to the pros of the new curriculum and examining the cons, but with a lot of reasons why it will not work A lot of "yessing" and listening, but no follow-through	**Increasing teacher confidence:** • Focus on helping teachers feel competent in one or two areas. Take small steps and focus on one thing if necessary. • Acknowledge systemic challenges if necessary, but then focus on what is in teachers' control by pointing out changes in children's learning. • Encourage them to talk to other teachers who have had success. • Have other teachers talk about why it is such a great curriculum, giving examples. • Help them to weigh the pros and cons—explore barriers (cons) try to reduce them and highlight/show the benefits (pros). • Have teachers try out one small piece of the curriculum or one activity.

3 PREPARATION

Teachers are actively planning to make changes in their practice, but may be ambivalent.

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Testing the waters, doing some implementation, but not moving outside the curriculum guide Asking a lot of questions about the new curriculum, perhaps appearing to challenge ideas, but open to hearing about the new curriculum Wanting to implement the new curriculum, but not sure how to do it, needing help with the first steps Teachers looking to the coach for help, needing lots of assistance and encouragement, or attempting things on their own and pulling back if they think they are getting it wrong Trying out the curriculum, but inconsistently	**Bolstering teachers' commitment to the new curriculum:** • Actively encourage teachers to try out different components of the new curriculum each week. The planning focuses on actions. • Provide clear but sensitive, constructive feedback on what went well, and offer specific ideas of what else to try. • Use coaching in the classroom as an opportunity to demonstrate activities and to point out children's successes. • Encourage teachers to learn from little failures and celebrate lessons learned from the experience. • Have teachers talk specifically about their ideas and things they want to try. • Remind teachers you are there to help and show it through your behavior (for example, help teachers look for missing materials). • Focus on getting things organized so teachers can get going. • Provide concrete strategies and celebrate successes. • Help teachers to see how curricular activities or practices matter for children's outcomes in their classrooms.

4 ACTION

Teachers are actively making changes in their practice.

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Taking more ownership for learning, being motivated to learn the new curriculum; coming to meetings with plans in hand and questions for coaches Teachers trying out different things and being flexible in their approach to implementation Enthusiasm for adapting and using new ideas	**Advancing teachers' ongoing development and understanding of the new curriculum:** • Suggest teachers reflect more deeply on how they are changing their practice and ideas of education. • Use these reflections to help teachers try out new things or improve implementation. • Encourage teachers to talk together about the changes and learning that have happened. • Encourage them to keep going, cheerleading and asking them to point out the successes of children. • Use constructive feedback as a back-and-forth dialogue. Coaches may provide feedback but can also get teachers to appraise their own performance, which makes problem-solving a joint process.

5 MAINTENANCE

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Teachers planning ahead, able to implement the new curriculum with minimal support Initiating things rather than waiting for the coach	**Promoting teachers' independence in implementing the new curriculum and solving problems:** • Use reflective questions rather than direct comments. • Celebrate teacher creativity and risk-taking. • Encourage lead teachers to help assistant teachers take more ownership of the curriculum and do some co-teaching. • Promote the teaching team's joint responsibility for implementation. • Help teachers plan for future barriers to implementation, and to identify resources in their program in preparation for overcoming them. • Make coaching more about improving teachers' practice than learning the new curriculum.

6 BACKSLIDING

What It May Look Like	Coaching Strategies
Loss of motivation in teachers who have been making progress in learning or implementing the new curriculum	**Helping teachers get back on their feet:** • Identify barriers to implementation and advise teachers on how to overcome them. • Show patience and give teachers time try to understand what is going on. • Try to understand the whole story about what got in the way of implementation. • Help teachers anticipate ways of continuing in the face of unexpected challenges each week. • Help teachers advocate for themselves within the system so they can maintain their work.

11 Coaching Methods to Foster the Learning Relationship

Use these coaching methods to plan coaching sessions in the classroom based on teachers' needs and interests.

	Coaching Method	Description	Best used when
↑ More directive	**Demonstration**	A form of modeling in which the coach first implements an activity or uses a teaching strategy while the teacher observes, then the teacher performs the same activity or uses the same strategy	Teachers are unfamiliar with an activity or instructional strategy or find it difficult.
	Joint problem-solving	A form of modeling in which the coach shows an activity, or part of it, after observing the teacher first trying something out; the coach "jumps in" temporarily to try out a different approach with the goal of exploring together more effective ways to do the activity	Teachers are trying out activities with new content knowledge or instructional strategies and would benefit from seeing different ways of doing something.
	Constructive feedback	Specific comments focused on particular behaviors, based on observations, and to be used for improvement, not personal judgments, opinions, or feelings about the teacher	Teachers try to implement activities or instructional strategies but need or want concrete suggestions about the implementation process.
	Prompting	Brief, discrete reminders provided to the teachers about the accurate implementation of activities or the use of teaching strategies, while a teacher is engaged in implementing the activity or strategy	Teachers are comfortable with an activity but may need additional verbal assistance to get to a higher level of implementation.
	Running commentary	Describing the actions of the teacher and children as they occur, with the intent of summarizing what is happening and drawing attention to how the teacher influences children's behaviors	Teachers are implementing well and can make adjustments themselves using the information presented to them.
↓ Less directive	**Reflective questioning**	Open-ended questions posed soon after activities that assist teachers in developing an awareness of effective (and ineffective) teaching strategies used during instruction	Teachers are unsure about implementation and need support, or teachers have the ability to think deeply about what they have discovered about their implementation and make changes in implementation based on these discoveries.

12 Observation Guide

Use this observation guide to set a strategy with teachers and plan your time during in-classroom coaching. Consider how the data can help teachers collect evidence and assess whether they are reaching their goals.

OBSERVATION TOOL	Description	Example of Data Collection During a Small-Group Activity
Anecdotal record	Description of events that occur during a chosen period	You write down everything that happens in the small group during a designated period, including what children and teachers are doing and saying.
Verbal flow	Written or visual record of who talks to whom, how the conversation flows	You make note of when the teacher talks to the children, when the children talk to the teacher and when the children talk to each other.
Event count	Record of how many times an event occurs	You tally some relevant event or behavior. For example, you tally every time someone interrupts the teacher and also tally every time the teacher responds to the interruption.
Duration	Record of how long an event or activity lasts	You record how long children are engaged during the group and how long they are distracted.
Time sample	Record of specific events over time intervals	You choose relevant behaviors (for example, looking at/attending to teacher, looking away, engaging with materials) and record whether the behavior occurred during each chosen period (for example, every minute).
Transcription	Record of everything that is said in a conversation.	You make a note of everything that is said during the group activity.
Selective transcription	Record of what is said related to a specific area of focus or issue	You record questions the teacher asks related to the child's knowledge of a topic, along with the child's response.
Map of the classroom	Record of where everything is located and how the traffic flows	You make a picture of where the small group is relative to other areas of the classroom and how children move around the room during the small-group time.

13 Note-Taking Template

The ideas from the list that follows can help teachers and coaches consider what goals or action steps they hope to address during in-classroom coaching sessions. Coaches and teachers can choose from the list of topics below to help focus the observation.

Coach name: _____

Teachers or other classroom staff members present: _____
_____

Date/start time: _____

Video recording: ☐ Y   ☐ N

Notes for Coaching Meeting	Observation Notes	Video Time Elapsed
Goal: _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Action step(s):	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Summary of evidence observed:	_____	_____
1. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Teacher and Environment	Child
• Physical arrangement of space and children where activity takes place • Setup of materials/manipulatives • Transitions used to move children from one activity to the next • Process for giving each child opportunities for math exploration on a computer and at centers	• Length of time taken for all children to transition from one activity to the next • Demonstrated understanding of meaningful classroom routines (for example, knowing where to go and what to do when an activity is announced) • Demonstrated understanding of the teacher's expectations for behavior and of the consequences attached to misbehavior

CHILD ENGAGEMENT

Teacher	Children
• Ways teacher displays enthusiasm for the topic • Encouragement offered for children's efforts/persistence • Ways teachers incorporate children's ideas into activities • Ways teachers offer children choices based on interest • Checks made for student understanding	• Number of children actively participating in activities (at different points) • Number of opportunities children have to engage in independent activities at centers • Demonstrated understanding of teacher directions/instruction (for example, "You said, '2 + 2 = 4.'")

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING

Teacher	Children
• Pacing of content delivery • Questions asked to assess understanding—whom questions are directed to and the types of questions • Ways teacher addresses children's misconceptions or errors • Ways teacher emphasizes learning objectives in a lesson • Ways teacher challenges children who are further along in their understanding of math	• Responding to questions from teachers accurately • Ability to explain their logic to solve a problem; ability to explain "why"

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Teacher	Children
• Organization of small groups (based on children's skill levels) • Adjustments made to activities to accommodate individuals or groups of children	• Ability to complete activities independently, with minimal support • Signs of child affect (for example, boredom; excitement)

14 Coaching Meeting Checklist

> **Use this checklist and accompanying questions as a guide to make sure you cover important content over the course of the meeting. You can adapt this document to meet the needs of the teacher.**

STEP 1: GENERAL CHECK-IN AND REVIEW OF GOALS FROM PREVIOUS SESSION

☐ Find out what curricular activities were implemented in the past week and what went well or was difficult.

☐ Ask teachers where they want to focus the session.

☐ Look over the agreed-upon goals and action steps from the previous meeting.

> *What do you want to make sure we talk about today based on your experience with the new curriculum this week?*
>
> *What were you able to accomplish and where do you want support?*

STEP 2: REFLECTION ON OBSERVATION AND COACH COMMENTS

☐ Focus on one goal at a time and prompt teachers to (1) describe how they applied (or did not apply) the action steps and (2) how children responded.

☐ Review objectives for the activities observed during in-classroom coaching.

☐ Discuss observation notes about whether goals, action steps, and activity objectives were achieved.

☐ Ask reflective questions and offer constructive comments to support teachers' growth.

> *What evidence did you see that the goal(s) were met?*
>
> *What evidence did you see that the children understood and were able to meet the objective of the activity(ies) implemented during the coaching session?*
>
> *Was there anything about the children's reactions to the activities that you had not anticipated? How did you handle these surprises?*
>
> *How did you feel about your instruction compared with the description of the activity in the curricular materials?*
>
> *What motivated you to adjust the activity, if applicable?*

STEP 3: TARGETED, IN-DEPTH PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION

☐ Preview activities for the next five days and review the developmental levels targeted by the curriculum.

☐ Determine instructional modifications based on the needs of individual children.

☐ Develop classroom-management strategies, if applicable.

☐ Determine modifications to class themes, if applicable.

What are the objectives for the activity(ies) for next week?

What is your plan for making sure children are able to follow directions and complete activities?

How can you tie the activities to your class theme?

What do you already know about the children in your class when it comes to this topic (using data from the previous week's small-group record sheets, if applicable)?

What modifications do you need to make for specific children? Will you use different materials for certain children? Why?

STEP 4: SETTING GOALS FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND TEACHER PRACTICE

☐ Develop goals for children and action steps for both teachers and coach.

☐ Determine what evidence teachers (and the coach) need to assess goals.

☐ Determine the focus of in-classroom coaching for the following week.

Given what we've discussed, what specific developments do you want to see in the children? What do you want to work on?

How will we know when the goals have been met?

How can you support the children in attaining the goals through instruction, classroom management, or other interactions?

What do you need to do to prepare to carry out these steps?

What information or resources do I, as a coach, need to provide for you?

Based on the goals, what would you like me to focus on when I coach you next week, and why?

What can I do to help keep track of progress on goals and action steps during the next session?

15 Email Templates

SAMPLE EMAIL REMINDER ABOUT AN UPCOMING COACHING SESSION

Directions:
- Send a reminder email with the goals and action steps to both teachers at least one day before the scheduled meeting.
- The subject line can read: Our next coaching session: <Day of the Week, Date>
- Personalize this email as you see fit. For example, you may want to use bullets or you may want to write in complete sentences. The email should contain all of the following information. Keep in mind that people are more likely to read an email that is concise when they are short on time.

Dear <Lead Teacher and Teaching Assistant>,

Last week, we developed the following goal(s) and action steps:

Goal: _____

Action steps:

- _____ <Teacher Name>
- _____ <Teacher Name>

I will be visiting your classroom on <Day of the Week, Date> at <Time>.

[You may want to pose a question or offer a prompt that elicits a response from the teachers. For example: We'll take a look at your notes of individual child behavior during our meeting. How did small groups go yesterday? Was every child able to participate in small group this week?]

Please let me know if you have any questions about my next visit. I look forward to being back with you and your students and continuing our work with *<the new curriculum>*.

Sincerely,

<Coach Name>

SAMPLE EMAIL AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE COACHING SESSION

Directions:
- Send a reminder email with the goals and action steps to both teachers one to two days after the scheduled meeting.
- The subject line can read: Coaching session: week of <Date>, thank you!
- Personalize this email as you see fit. For example, you may want to use bullets or you may want to write in complete sentences. The email should contain all of the following information. Keep in mind that people are more likely to read an email that is concise when they are short on time.

Dear <Lead Teacher and Teaching Assistant>,

Thank you again for welcoming me into your classroom and for all your work with *<the new curriculum>*. This week, I observed Ms. _____ lead whole-group activities and Ms._____lead a small-group activity _____.

<Here add a detail about a strategy that worked well for one of the teachers. For example, Ms. X modeled two times before asking the children to work on their own—it seemed very helpful!>

Goal: _____

- _____ <Teacher Name>
- _____ <Teacher Name>

Next week, I will return on <Date> at <Time> and will observe:

- _____
- _____

Please let me know if you have any questions about my next visit. I look forward to being back with you and your students and continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

<Coach Name>

---

16 Teacher Training Observation Form

Adapt this teacher training observation form to collect objective data about logistics, training content, and teacher engagement.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Date of training session: _____   Training session name: _____

Name of observer(s): _____

Observation start time: _____   Observation end time: _____

Total # of teachers: _____   Total # of coaches: _____

Total # of trainers: _____   Total # of other staff: _____

Facilities and Technology:

Was the training space sufficient and comfortable for participants? Could they see, hear, and participate?

Facilities		
Category	**Sufficient?**	**Provide a brief description of the issue for all "no's." Also explain the resolution, if there was one.**
Room size	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
Room arrangement and seating	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
Noise level	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
Lighting	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
Temperature	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____

Category	Sufficient?	Provide a brief description of the issue for all "no's." Also explain the resolution, if there was one.
Computers for attendance	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
A/V for large group	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
A/V for working groups	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	_____
Computers/internet for working groups	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
Other:	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	_____

SECTION 2: TRAINING CONTENT

Directions: Based on your observations and trainers', please mark the level of completion for each agenda item during this training day. Note the actual start time for the main agenda items.

Scheduled Time	Actual Time	Agenda Item	Agenda Item Covered			Format** (T/G/P/I)
			Fully	Partly*	Not at All*	

*For any agenda item above that you have marked "partly" or "not at all," please describe the situation in the following notes section. Include details about the planned content that was not actually covered.

**T = trainer presentation, G = group discussion, P = pair/subgroup, I = individual

Notes: _____ ■
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SECTION 3: PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Directions: Based on your observations and opinions, please rate the approximate percentage of participants highly involved in each training activity. Participants' overall level of participation should be considered based on whether they: (1) respond to solicitations for participation (questions, group activities, etc.) and (2) are attentive (not distracted) during training activities. In the second table, select reasons for variation in participation levels throughout the day and explain your observation(s).

Approximately what percentage of participants were engaged throughout (on average):	25% or less	25% to 50%	50% to 75%	about 100%
Whole-group activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small-group activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paired activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Individual activities	☐	☐	☐	☐

Was variation in the level of participant engagement or participation due to the following (check all that apply):	Provide a brief explanation
☐ Training strategy (for example, lecture, role-playing, small-group discussion)	_____
☐ Which trainer led the group	_____
☐ Topic/activity being discussed	_____
☐ Time of day (for example, more engagement in the morning)	_____
☐ Length of presentation/timing of breaks	_____
☐ Other:	_____

NOTE BELOW:

1. Any issues that need follow-up.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Any additional information you consider necessary to capture the activities or logistics of this training session. Include comments on any feature of the session that may help to improve future sessions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Lessons for the next training session.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17 Data Monitoring Process Template

Use this template to plan how you will monitor your data. You can adapt it to your own program needs to help you determine who will take responsibility for the process and to ensure that the team agrees on goals and procedures.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Name of person/people responsible for managing the data _____

_____

1. Data reports will consist of the following sources of information (list data sources)

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Data reports will be produced every ☐ week ☐ other week ☐ month ☐ other _____

3. Data reports will be saved under the file name _____

4. Files will be saved in (identify location that is accessible to the team) _____

   _____

5. Classrooms will be highlighted in yellow (monitor) if they miss the benchmark for _____ (enter the number of weeks)

6. Classrooms will be highlighted in blue (in need of support) if they miss the benchmark for _____ (enter the number of weeks)

SYSTEMATIC DATA REVIEW

Name of person/people responsible for reviewing the data _____

1. Briefly review classrooms highlighted in yellow (note frequency) _____

   _____

   _____

2. Discuss classrooms highlighted in blue (note frequency) _____

   _____

   _____

DOCUMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP PLAN

Name of person/people responsible for documentation and follow-up plan

1. Document any major changes in classrooms and whether issues have been resolved (note name and location of log)

   _____

   _____

2. Document challenges and strengths (note name and location of log)

   _____

   _____

3. Document action steps to be taken (note name and location of log)

   _____

   _____

4. Discuss information and next steps with (note individuals and frequency)

   _____

   _____

ABOUT MDRC

MDRC, A NONPROFIT, NONPARTISAN SOCIAL AND EDUCA-TION POLICY RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, IS COMMITTED TO finding solutions to some of the most difficult problems facing the nation. We aim to reduce poverty and bolster economic mobility; improve early child development, public education, and pathways from high school to college completion and careers; and reduce inequities in the criminal justice system. Our partners include public agencies and school systems, nonprofit and community-based organizations, private philanthropies, and others who are creating opportunity for individuals, families, and communities.

Founded in 1974, MDRC builds and applies evidence about changes in policy and practice that can improve the well-being of people who are economically disadvantaged. In service of this goal, we work alongside our programmatic partners and the people they serve to identify and design more effective and equitable approaches. We work with them to strengthen the impact of those approaches. And we work with them to evaluate policies or practices using the highest research standards. Our staff members have an unusual combination of research and organizational experience, with expertise in the latest qualitative and quantitative research methods, data science, behavioral science, culturally responsive practices, and collaborative design and program improvement processes. To disseminate what we learn, we actively engage with policymakers, practitioners, public and private funders, and others to apply the best evidence available to the decisions they are making.

MDRC works in almost every state and all the nation's largest cities, with offices in New York City; Oakland, California; Washington, DC; and Los Angeles.