RESEARCH BRIEF

Summary of Findings: COACHING SUPERVISION

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Child360 is working toward a model of effective coaching supervision which encompasses the underlying theories of the Child360 coaching model (Appreciative Inquiry, Process Consulting, Servant Leadership) and incorporates research-based, effective strategies and procedures to develop and sustain quality practices among coaches. This report looks at current research related to coach supervision and offers recommendations to Child360's coach supervisors.

High-level findings from this report include:

- Coaching supervision is not a "one-size-fits-all" activity or role. Effective coach supervision is situational and dependent on the coach and/or coachee, and should be tailored to meet the coach's needs.
- Differences in the frequency and content of coaching supervision may contribute to differences in the quality of support and coaching that teachers receive from their coaches.
- Critical elements of an effective supervisor-coach relationship include trust, genuine care and interest in the coach, and willingness to communicate.
- Coaching supervision was most effective when it was consistent, enabled a reflective space, provided opportunities for professional growth, and targeted specific areas that informed practice, in addition to monitoring and evaluation.

Supervision of Instructional Coaches

The research on the supervision and ongoing support of instructional coaches, whether in K-12 or in early education environments, is very limited. Within an educational context, early childhood or K-12, the literature on supervision of coaches is mostly composed of studies and other sources of information (i.e., websites) describing methods for evaluating coaches and their practice, or describing necessary coach qualifications and competencies. Supervision is often interpreted or depicted as an evaluation activity that takes place once or twice during a school year. Evaluation activities may include one or more of the following: performance evaluation of the coach (similar to a personnel evaluation); evaluation of the implementation of coaching activities (or meeting competencies); evaluation of coaching by analyzing outcomes (e.g., improvements in quality of teacher-child interaction); and evaluation of the qualifications of coaches (e.g., coursework, experience, credentials). Some of the research literature also addresses advances in the professional development of coaches, such as statewide efforts to include ECE coaches in professional development registries and training systems, and the implementation of coaching credentials in some states (Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance, 2017).

Studies on coaching supervision in an educational context primarily focus on K-12 school site principals and, if coaching was in practice, on the relationships between principals and coaches and their effects. There were fewer studies on coaching supervision in the ECE context and, overall, even fewer that discussed or researched coaching supervision as an ongoing process. In a study of coaching in ECE settings, researchers found that while performing a literature review, over 43% of the studies examined provided no information about how the coaches were supervised or how progress was tracked. Based on the findings of their own data collection, the researchers stated that "effective supervision" of coaches in ECE settings "…should offer support for delivering the coaching model with high fidelity as well as opportunities (individually or in peer groups) to reflect on practices, process experiences and discuss approaches to difficult issues" (Isner, Tout, Zaslow, Soli, Quinn, Rothenberg, & Burkhauser, 2011, p. 32). Picucci, Laughlin, and Young (2019) touched on ongoing coach supervision by mentioning that leaders could use data from tracking of coaching activities, frequency and duration of interactions, tools used, etc., to design ongoing supports for coaches.

Using the QSLA Framework (Quality Start Los Angeles, 2017) and the Isner et al. (2011) study as background, Child360 evaluators studied coach supervision practices as part of a larger coaching evaluation for the 2018-19 program year. The evaluation examined supervisory strategies and practices, alignment to the Framework, effectiveness as measured by coach perceptions of support and development, and recommendations for improvement. This evaluation is not only the most relevant to Child360 coach supervisors, given the context, but is one of the few studies to be found in the coaching literature specifically related to supervision of coaches. Findings showed that coach supervisors conducted ongoing supervision and support activities well in accordance with the QSLA Framework. Further, coaches believed supervisors respected them, were committed to their wellbeing, and communicated effectively (Banuelos, Zepeda, & Doerfel, 2020).

Non-Instructional Coaches

There are several types of coaches outside of the educational or instructional arena. Generally, the coaching literature defines a coach as an experienced person who supports another (a less experienced learner, client, or coachee) in achieving personal or professional goals by providing some type of training and guidance. These coaches may be athletic coaches, life coaches, leadership or executive coaches, employers as coaches, or coaches who serve in a counseling or therapeutic capacity. Of these types, the research literature on supervision for coaches of a counseling or therapy-type activity is the most prevalent. This research comes predominantly from international studies, as this type of coaching appears to be broadly implemented in Great Britain and Australia. Many of these studies approach and examine effective supervision of coaches within therapeutic models or frameworks. While the international research addressed coach supervision in a counseling context, these studies have revealed findings, discussions, and recommendations that are potentially translatable into an instructional context. To more fully understand the relevance of this research, it is important to consider how instructional coaching and counseling-type coaching are similar and how they are different.

Similarities and Differences in the Two Coaching Types

What do instructional coaching and counseling-type coaching have in common? Both coaching types use strategies such as specific feedback, reflective conversations, observation, and modeling in their practice with coaches. Both have intended outcomes that include increased ability to self-reflect and improved coach practice. Coaches are expected to undergo training, meet qualifications, and achieve specific competencies. Maintaining professional standing and continuing professional development are expected throughout the coaches' careers. Finally, there are clear benefits to the coach from developing and sustaining positive relationships with supervisors. Both types of coaching are relationship-based and rely on trust and communication.

The few notable differences between the two coaching types are less about their practices and more about the context of their work. Instructional coaches are typically employed through a district or educational organization, whereas counseling-type coaches are largely independent contractors or may be part of a small consulting firm. For this type of coaching, there are models and strategies of ongoing coaching supervision that have been documented, researched, and practiced. As we have seen, this is not the case for supervision of instructional coaching. However, the similarities between these two coaching types are strong enough to warrant serious consideration of the research on counseling-type supervision by educational supervisors, in order to glean useful information for developing a supervision model.

What Is Coaching Supervision?

The research literature includes varying descriptions of coaching supervision. In the context of instructional coaching, supervision is often associated with monitoring and evaluation activities. Supervision is often less about support to the individual coach, and more about assessing the quality of the program as a whole. Such activities are a valuable component of supervision. Activities such as reviewing documents and logs, monitoring dosage (time spent in coaching activities), and overseeing achievement of teacher goals can serve to ensure the program and its model are being implemented effectively. Activities related to supervision of coach competencies and fidelity can serve to determine training and professional development needs of coaches. While monitoring and evaluation activities may be necessary and useful, however, they are only one aspect of coaching supervision.

Broader View of Supervision

The majority of the research on coaching supervision (regardless of type) provides an expanded description and definition of supervision, in addition to monitoring and evaluation, that includes supervisor provision of support, guidance, and development. Isner et al. (2011) described the provision of additional resources when a coach was lacking expertise in a content area or knowledge as a beneficial component of supervision. Gray (2007) defined supervision as a formal collaborative process intended to help coaches maintain standards (ethical and professional) and enhance creativity. Moyes (2009) added that supervision is a formal process of professional support for the coach's development and for the effectiveness of their process. Hawkins and Smith (2006) described coaching supervision as serving developmental, resourcing, and qualitative functions. Researchers have also studied how elementary school principals balance the role of coach support with their supervision and evaluation activities, defining supervision as supportive and formative feedback intended to improve instruction, targeted professional development to promote growth, and ongoing support (Mette, Anderson, Nieuwenhuizen, Range, Hvidston, & Doty, 2017).

Research on Coaching Supervision

Presented here are highlights from the research on coaching supervision, both for counseling-type coaching and instructional coaching, where relevant.
        • The influences of organizational culture and context are a significant factor in supervision, in that the role of supervisor may additionally serve to handle tensions between the coach, coachee, and the organization (Gray, 2009).
        • Best practices in coaching supervision include consistency, provision of continued PD to coach, generation of organizational learning, and management of ethical and confidentiality boundaries (Hawkins & Turner, 2017).
        • Supervision is situational and dependent on factors specific to the coach (and potentially the coachee). It is not a "one size fits all" responsibility (Mette et al. 2017). A critical element in coaching supervision is the extent to which the relationship is tailored to the coach's needs (Gregory & Levy, 2010).
        • Successful supervisors acknowledged overlap between supervision and evaluation, which allowed them to support and monitor, target areas of improvement, and develop a collective effort toward improvement that informed practice (Mette et al., 2017). The more successful principals, as coaching supervisors, were those who supervised with this understanding and differentiated their improvement efforts based on individuals' levels of expertise and experience.
        • The supervisor/coach relationship should include genuine care for and interest in the other person. Other critical elements were the coach's levels of trust, comfort in working with their supervisor, and willingness to communicate their needs and goals (Gregory & Levy, 2010).
        • In an ECE multi-site study, it was found that differences in the frequency and content of coaching supervision likely contributed to differences in the quality of support and coaching teachers received from their coaches (Isner et al., 2011).

From a coach's perspective, there are many reasons for coaching supervision.

Instructional coaches in the US often work in districts or organizations where supervision is largely focused on monitoring and/or evaluation, and is not optional. Meanwhile, coaches in the UK and Australia often work independently and therefore seek out supervision on their own. This suggests that coaches find supervision to be valuable, meaningful, and effective to improving their practice. Presented below are some reasons why coaches sought supervision, as reported in multiple studies:
        • Lawrence and Whyte (2014) found that coaches sought supervision for professional development, support and self-awareness, maintaining ethical practice, and navigating coachee needs.
        • Passmore and McGoldrick (2009) found that coaches had faith in supervision as an influencing factor in their practice. The perceived outcomes of coaching included confidence, professionalism, and an increased ability to persevere when faced with challenges in coaching/coachee relationships.
        • Coaches with supervision sought positive intrinsic motivation (Hawkins & Turner, 2017).
        • Supervision led to coaches' development of an "internal supervisor," which in turn led to greater self-monitoring and accountability (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009).

The following research findings from studies of ECE coaches show the desire and need for effective supervision.

> • A study in Nebraska found that ECE coaches wanted more training and information on evaluating the coaching process for self-monitoring and informing their own practices. Further, coaches often sought out coaching from seasoned or more experienced coaches (Schacter, Jackson, Knoche, & Hatton-Bowers, 2019).
> • In a multi-site study of ECE coaching, researchers found that supervisors' provision of support and resources when a coach was lacking in specific knowledge or expertise was an essential component of supervision, and one which coaches most often reported that they desired, but did not sufficiently receive (Isner et al., 2011).
> • One Child360 study of ECE coaching showed that coaches and their supervisors demonstrated a shared interpretation of how support and supervision were defined and what they looked like in practice. Coaches felt respected and supported by their supervisors, but were less positive about how their supervisors helped them grow and achieve their potential, which they believed would be helpful to them (Banuelos, 2019).
> • A later Child360 study showed that both coaches and their supervisors reported that effective supervision was needed to implement the coaching model (Banuelos et al., 2020).

Supervisors play an important role in Child360's coaching model.

Prior to developing a model of effective coaching supervision, it is important to summarize the role of supervisors within Child360's coaching model. This model is grounded in Appreciative Inquiry, Process Consultation, and Servant Leadership, all of which focus on collaboration, asking questions, promoting reflection and critical thinking, and facilitating goal achievement in an environment of positivity and strength-building. Coach supervisors engage in Cycles of Improvement with coaches, which parallel the strengths-based coaching supports that coaches provide to teachers at their sites.

Coach supervisors perform the following activities, all of which align to the definitions and descriptions of coaching supervision, as described in the research literature and in the QSLA Framework expectations for coach supervisors:

> • Shadow Visits (observations of coaching practice in classrooms with providers to assess strengths in coaching competencies)
> • Coach Log Reviews (and other required documentation)
> • Check-In Meetings
> • Progress Tracking
> • Feedback and Debriefing
> • Opportunities for Reflection
> • Professional Development and Growth
> • Communication
> • Collaboration
> • Ongoing Support

Child360 coach supervisors are already using these research-based strategies and methods for monitoring, evaluation, support, and development of Child360 coaches. The next step in developing a concrete coaching supervision model is to organize these methods into a systematic protocol.

Rationale for Coaching Supervision Model

Moyes (2009) posited that if coaching is considered a distinct profession (as opposed to one of many roles a person might have in the workplace), then it is important to have some type of developed model of supervision, with activities and goals unique to supervision, to distinguish the supervisor from the coach. The objectives below contribute to the rationale for developing and following a coaching supervision model at Child360:

> • To ensure consistency in how each supervisor works with coaches, both individually and as teams.
> • To ensure that research-based supervisory strategies are implemented.
> • To ensure that the model of supervision aligns to the same principles and underlying theories of the coaching model in practice.
> • To ensure that supervision is an ongoing process, not an occasional activity.
> • To ensure that there is an effective balance of support strategies, monitoring, and evaluation.

The following recommendations are provided for Child360's Coaching Supervision Model.

These recommendations are based on a review of the research literature on coaching supervision in both instructional and counseling-type contexts, as related to developing and sustaining a model of effective supervision for the Child360 coaching program.

Involve coaches in the development of a model of coaching supervision, and include the supervision model in the coaching manual. Coaches and supervisors should share a common understanding of what can be expected from the supervisory relationship, and these expectations should be clearly documented (Isner et al., 2011). According to Hanover Research's (2014) review of K-12 coaching models, the research literature recommends the inclusion of coaches in the development of any supervisory or evaluative processes, to establish buy-in and to ensure shared understanding of expectations.

Elevate the effectiveness of coach supervision and coaching practice by teaching coaches strategies for self-monitoring and self-evaluation. A review of early childhood coaching in Nebraska found that coaches wanted to learn more from supervisors about how to monitor and evaluate their own effectiveness to inform their own practice (Schacter et al., 2019).

Maintain consistency and thoroughness in supervisory activities related to monitoring, evaluation, and tracking progress. The strategies used for overseeing coaches in the field and for documenting and tracking the progress of coaches and providers are critical components of coaching models (Isner et al., 2011).

Use data systematically and consistently to monitor and track progress. Picucci et al. (2019) found that using data allowed leaders to design supports for coaches more effectively. Developing a standard protocol for how data is reviewed and used would be an initial step in ensuring that data use is systematic, especially when there is more than one supervisor for a particular team. Similarly, creating a timetable for using these data to monitor and track progress would ensure that it was done consistently.

Ensure that there is time and space for reflection and processing. Supervision should allow for opportunities, either individually or in peer groups, to reflect on practice, process experiences and emotional responses, expand thinking, and discuss approaches (First 5 Alameda, 2012; Isner et al., 2011; Lawrence & Whyte, 2014). Passmore and McGoldrick (2009) found that the quality of supervision increased along with the coach's ability to openly reflect and share information with the supervisor.

Incorporate room for individual differences. Mette et al. (2017) found that successful supervisors understood the need to provide situational supervision, that is, to differentiate individual improvement efforts based on the expertise of a given coach.

Include steps to ensure that supervisors spend time on their own professional growth and development. Effective supervision should inform the supervisor's practice as well. The supervision environment should be one of constant learning and growth, providing stimulation and expanded thinking (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009).

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