The Alabama Coaching Framework

Dr. Eric G. Mackey, Alabama State Superintendent of Education

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Alabama State Department of Education (2020). *The Alabama Coaching Framework.* RMC Research Corporation.

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Introduction

Introduction to Coaching

Alabama believes that all children will achieve their full potential. *Alabama Achieves: A New Plan for a New Decade* (ALSDE, 2020) is the strategic plan that unites the work of the Alabama State Department of Education and all stakeholders around this effort. State Superintendent, Dr. Eric Mackey states:

> *Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day* is not only our department's motto, but a guiding philosophy about the work that we undertake on behalf of the 725,000 children who cross the thresholds into public schools every day. The state's guiding philosophy is that *every child* should be afforded every chance to succeed in school and, thus, make wise choices every day leading to success in career, family, and life after high school. Indeed, from the first day of kindergarten, all that we do in K-12 schools is designed to empower students through education, to open new opportunities and widen horizons, and, ultimately, to help them to use knowledge and experience to make wise decisions. Alabama's aspiration is that with support, all children will seize the opportunities, rise to the challenges, and overcome any barriers in their way. (p. 4)

To support students and raise achievement for all, it is necessary to support educators as they continuously hone their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the classroom. Coaching is a vehicle for job-embedded growth and support to improve instructional practice. Coaching fosters a community of learners working together toward a common goal: improved student achievement in all content areas.

Educators' knowledge, skills, and abilities must include a thorough understanding of

- what it takes to be a skillful learner of content;

- what can interfere with students' comprehension of content;

- what the research says is necessary to help all students succeed in the content;

- how to determine if students have learned what was taught, how much practice is needed for each student, when to move on, and when to reteach;

- how to provide intervention to support student learning;

- how to determine the relative value of various activities outlined in a lesson plan; when to require faithful implementation of a lesson; when to eliminate certain activities; and when to substitute and/or add a more valuable instructional activity;

- various types of assessment (e.g., formative assessment); the value of progress monitoring assessments; and how to use student data to adjust instruction; and

- effective strategies that will engage students in their own learning.

Coaching provides opportunities for teachers to learn and refine these instructional practices, develop their abilities to reflect on and learn from their own teaching and the teaching of others, and incorporate new practices into their teaching routines.

Coaching Defined

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has consistently been focused on student achievement, as demonstrated through its vision and mission which are both aligned to *Alabama Achieves*, the state's strategic plan. The strategic plan outlines two priority areas which will be supported by coaching: highly effective educators and academic growth and achievement. The research of Kraft and Blazar (2018) found that coaching improves instruction by as much as the difference in effectiveness between a novice teacher and a ten-year veteran. The research identifies numerous characteristics of effective professional development noting job-embedded contexts, modeling of effective practice, providing coaching and expert support, and utilizing feedback.

> **Coaching Purpose**
>
> Alabama coaching will improve outcomes for equitable teaching and learning.

The Alabama State Department of Education defines coaching as *a supportive, job-embedded, ongoing, and differentiated professional learning practice focusing on growth and achievement for ALL.*

Table 1

Alabama Coaching Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Goals

Alabama Coaching Vision

Highly skilled coaches equip and empower educators and leaders through job-embedded professional learning opportunities that result in equitable, high quality, and content-specific instruction so that all learners—adults and students— achieve optimal growth.

Alabama Coaching Mission

Alabama provides a coaching framework to support and develop teachers and leaders to guarantee all students experience high-quality, equitable instruction to ensure optimal growth.

Coaching Purpose and Goals

The purpose for the development of the Alabama Coaching Framework is to improve outcomes for students by providing evidence-based professional learning to educators. Every level of the education system has a responsibility to provide equitable education to all students. Goals set at each level work together to positively impact student learning and growth.

The Coaching goals are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Coaching Goals
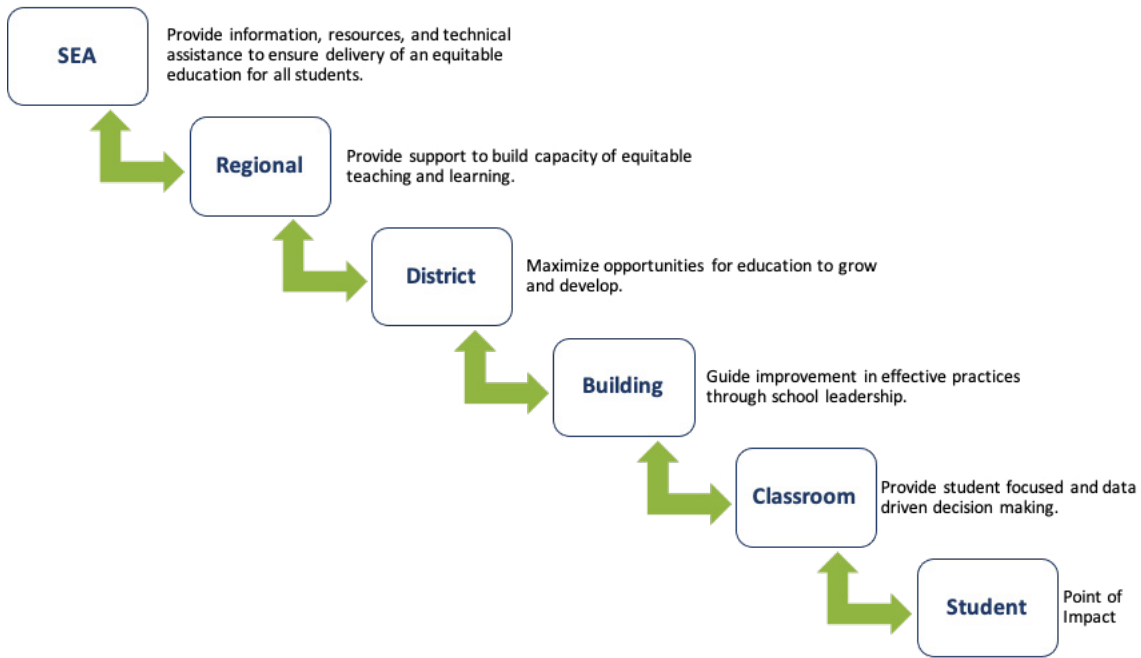
Research on Coaching

The concept of coaching emerged onto the educational landscape as a promising practice with the 1982 research of Joyce and Showers. Since that time, coaching has materialized with a key role among the expanding responsibilities of teacher professional development. The ever-growing body of research continues to inform and refine educators' understanding of coaching and its effects on teacher knowledge and skill, improved instructional practice, and student learning. The information below presents examples of recent high-quality research that guides development of the Alabama Coaching Framework.

Impact of Coaching Role in Professional Development

Professional development offerings broadened beyond trainings and workshops with the upsurge of coaching. Research has noted the positive effects of instructional coaching upon teacher knowledge of evidence-based practices and teacher skill in implementing those practices in the classroom.

- The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality synthesized over 30 research studies to clearly define job-embedded professional development, clarify the role of coaching in teacher learning, and provide an array of professional learning examples. Research acknowledges the importance of job-embedded coaching in enriching teacher knowledge and capacity to prepare and deliver more closely aligned instruction with student learning needs (Croft et al., 2010).

Impact of Coaching on Teacher Practice

Research designates specific processes as crucial to the positive influence of coaching on teacher practice.

- The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) (2019) synthesized approximately 60 research studies to identify critical coaching practices that improve teacher instruction. The critical coaching practices—observation, modeling, performance feedback, and alliance-building strategies—provide a framework for coaches to guide teachers toward evidence-based practices that propel student learning.

- Since 1996, the coaching impact on teacher practice has been brought to light through the work of Jim Knight at The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. More recent research findings clarified distinct steps of the coaching cycle for instructional coaches to help teachers identify and attain measurable instructional goals. This improvement in teacher instruction was followed by instances of increased student learning and average class performance by as much as 50% (Knight et al., 2015).

Impact of Coaching on Student Learning and Achievement

Through teacher practice, instructional coaching impacts student achievement. Research identifies the extent of improved teacher practice needed to make any impact on student achievement.

- A 2017 meta-analysis on the impact of coaching included 60 random control trial and quasi-experimental studies utilizing causal research design (Kraft et al., 2018). Using Robust Variance Estimation (RVE) methods, results found significant pooled effect sizes of coaching on improved instruction (.49 SD), rendering positive impact on student literacy achievement (.18 SD). Coaching effects were also noticeably larger than various systems strategies used for professional development and school improvement. The relationship of coaching to both teacher improvement and student achievement was clarified:

  · *Improved Teacher Practice:* The study's estimated coaching effects on teacher practice were greater than the differences between new and veteran teachers' instructional quality.

  · *Improved Student Achievement*: The effects of coaching on student performance were comparable to the estimated teacher ability to raise student achievement at various points in time within a novice teacher's first decade of teaching (Kraft et al., 2018).

- The total number of coaching hours within the empirical literature ranged from 10 to 60 hours, providing individualized and context-specific professional development opportunities that were sustained over time. At least 90% of the research studies combined coaching with group trainings on relevant topics—including discrete skills—to attain positive results. Researchers noted that any degree of increased student performance required a relatively greater magnitude of teacher instructional improvements. In turn, incremental teacher improvement did not result in student learning improvements (Kraft et al., 2018). Figure 2 illustrates this theory of action for teaching coaching.

Figure 2

Theory of Action for Teaching Coaching
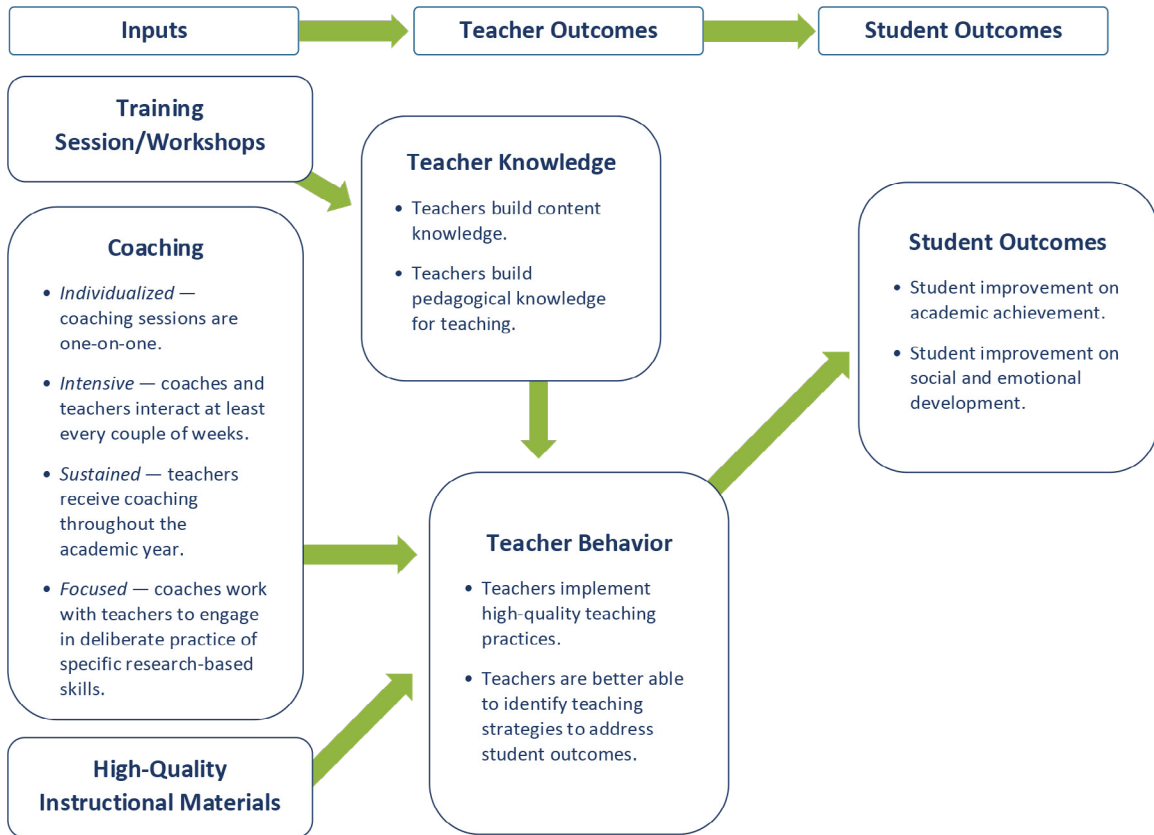
Note. Adapted for this document, this figure produced by Kraft et al., 2018, depicts coaching contributions to teacher and student outcomes. Research noted that the pairing of coaching with group trainings in relevant topics such as curricular materials produced sizeable teacher improvements (.31 SD) and student achievement (.12 SD). From "The effect of teaching coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence", by Kraft et al., 2018, *Review of Educational Research*, *88*(4), 547-588. Copyright 2018 by Sage Journals.

- Thirteen of the research studies included a focus on virtual coaching. Results found no significant difference between virtual coaching and face-to-face coaching opportunities. Kraft et al. (2018) pointed out benefits of leveraging virtual coaching:

  · Increase teacher access to high-quality coaching.

  · Alleviate teacher concerns regarding the potential role of coaching in teacher evaluations.

  · Offset resource constraints.

- A 2020 research study on the relationship between the instructional coaching of teachers and student achievement in both reading and math expanded upon the foundation of Kraft et al. (Darnell, 2020). This randomized control trial study included elementary students (Grades 1-5) located in a Tennessee school district throughout the 2018-2019 school year. Measures of math fluency and

reading fluency gauged student learning improvements over time. Results revealed significant improvement in student math performance as well as the overall achievement of special education students and students in need of differentiation. The author recommended that educators strategically align coaching responsibilities with a school's improvement plan to prioritize time and efforts of instructional coaching in the identified areas of greatest systemic need (Darnell, 2020).

Theory of Action

A theory of action aligns intended theory with the realities of work within an actual organization, connects strategy to the actions and relationships critical to good instruction and student learning, identifies the mutual dependencies required to get the complex work of improvement done, is grounded in research or evidence-based practice, and is powerful enough to transform programs and practices (City et al., 2009). The state education agency (SEA) in Alabama realizes that through the cascading theory of action created and the "set of underlying assumptions about how we move our organization from its current state to its desired future" (Skupa, 2010, p. 1), Alabama will reach the desired outcomes for fidelity of implementation within the coaching framework. The theory of action for the coaching framework is summarized in Table 2, followed by the logic model (Table 3).

Table 2

Coaching Theory of Action

Level of Implementation	Theory of Action	
	IF —> THEN	
STATE EDUCATION AGENCY	If Alabama invests in a coaching framework and is accountable for supporting implementation with fidelity,	then differentiated, regional coaching support will equip all LEAs and schools with the capacity to effectively implement evidence-based practices and raise student achievement.
LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY	If LEA leaders invest in a coaching framework,	then the school leadership can ensure implementation of evidence-based coaching and teaching practices, resulting in increases in educator efficacy and student achievement.
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	If instructional leaders apply the coaching framework,	then coaches and teachers will engage in supportive, job-embedded, ongoing, and differentiated professional learning and practice focused on growth and achievement for ALL.
CLASSROOM: Coaches and Teachers	If coaches and teachers engage in the coaching framework,	then all students' proficiency and growth will increase while closing student learning gaps.

Table 3

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities/Components	Outputs	Outcomes - Impact		
			Immediate Outcomes	**Intermediate Outcomes**	**Long-Term or Impact**
Professional books, articles, vendor specific professional learning materials, and other research-based resources established around coaching	Coaching in every school inclusive of leadership coaching	Documentation of coaching services	LEA and school team develop vision and set goals for enhancing achievement through continuous improvement plan.	Coaches are implementing coaching cycles and building productive collegial relationships.	All students gain proficiency in critical standards of each grade level.
Regional, leadership, and school-based coaches with deep knowledge of coaching, andragogy, content, standards, and assessments	Professional learning for all educators (inclusive of leadership)	Coaching plans	Coaches develop knowledge, skills, and expertise for coaching other educators.	The number of teachers/leaders who have been through coaching cycles increases.	Students performing at or above grade-level proficiency increases by 15% at the end of Year 3.
Models of flexible scheduling, common planning times, and coaching schedules	Consistent, systemic, high-quality professional learning for coaches led by regional specialists	Training materials for ongoing professional learning	Coaches develop their own needed content knowledge and skills.	Educators improve fluency and fidelity in implementation of evidence-based practices.	Performance gap among subpopulations narrows by 15% at the end of Year 3.
Planning and data collection tools required for implementation of coaching cycles	Data-informed collaborative planning for instruction and support within schools through iterative coaching cycles	Guidance documents for coaching	Instructional leaders develop knowledge and skills for providing authentic feedback to teachers and coaches for growth.	Educators report increased efficacy to provide high quality instruction for ALL learners.	Students self-report increased confidence in learning subject-specific content by 50% at the end of Year 5.
Sample strategies to inform continuous improvement planning for alignment of coaching	Determining next steps for coaching informed by data	Analysis of instructional data, reflections, and proposed actions for improvement	Educators use student screening, formative, and diagnostic assessments to identify differentiated evidence-based instruction and intervention.	Educators consistently collaborate utilizing student data to plan explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction and intervention for ALL learners.	Reduction in students taking remedial higher-ed reading courses
Proficiency scales to evaluate progress toward the four-content area learning goals of critical standards	Reviewing continuous improvement plans for alignment of coaching goals		Educators gain knowledge and skills in building family and community partnerships.	Increase in family and community engagement and support that impacts student learning outcomes	Increased NAEP/ACT scores
	Using systematic data processes (i.e., data collection, analysis, and decision making) for continuous improvement of the coaching model				Increased Graduation Rate
	Ongoing communication protocols with a range of stakeholders				Increased Average Daily Attendance
					Increased student engagement
					Decreased student discipline referrals

The Alabama Coaching Framework

Coaching Roles and Responsibilities

Coaching Qualities

Alabama understands that "a culture for learning occurs when the elements that make one-to-one coaching effective are transferred into the practices of the educational institution" (Devine et al., 2013, p.1387). The role of coaching as an avenue to establish a cycle of continuous growth and improvement for educators will keep the objective of student growth and achievement as the focus. Fullan and Knight "call for coaches to be system leaders and change agents" (as cited in Devine et al., 2013, p.1387). Knight (2015) expands on the qualification noting:

> In order to have an impact, coaches in successful instructional coaching programs should: understand the complexities of working with adults, use an effective coaching cycle, know effective teaching practices, gather data, employ effective communication strategies, include effective leadership skills, and are supported by their schools and districts" (p.25).

By establishing the qualities of effective coaching aligned to research, Alabama will provide a standard for quality coaching practices and a basis for defining and articulating the qualifications for coaches in the state to accomplish instructional improvement and student achievement goals.

Figure 3

Pillars of Effective Coaching

Pillars of Effective Coaching

| Leads by Example and Influence | Builds a Relationship Oriented Collaborative Approach | Applies Knowledge and Experience of both Adult and Student Learning | Utilizes Effective Communication to Promote Growth | Incorporates Evidence and Data to Support Instructional Improvement |
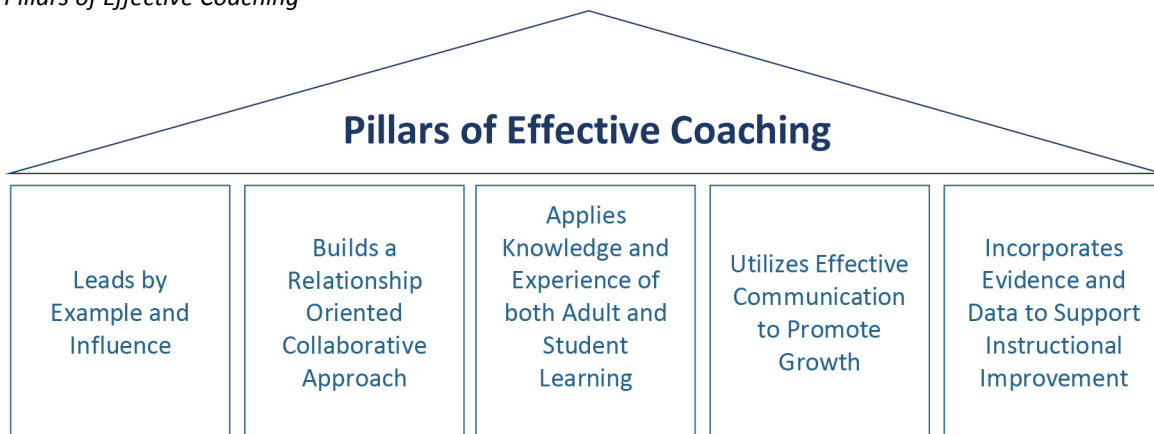
Leads by Example and Influence

Effective coaching requires intrinsic motivation, passion, and vision for guiding educator and student improvement with a servant leadership approach.

- Effective coaches have a desire for the collective team to improve by reflecting passion for supporting others.

- Effective coaches take collaborative ownership for instructional and student improvement working side-by-side, "rolling up their sleeves," to partner with and guide educators toward common goals.

- Effective coaches display independence and innovation to inspire growth and development for educators.

- Effective coaches see all students as their own, believing that ALL students can learn and use language that displays this belief throughout their work.

Builds a Relationship Oriented Collaborative Approach

Effective coaching fosters collaborative relationships that support and empower efficacy in educators to support all students.

- Effective coaches recognize that coaching is relationship oriented and partnership driven.

- Effective coaches positively influence educators, providing support that lifts them up to believe in their own influence.

- Effective coaches recognize that building educator efficacy is an impactful and measurable aspect of coaching relationships.

- Effective coaches advocate for educators and for all students through a partnership approach.

- Effective coaches understand educators need and deserve a positive and safe relationship with their coach for them to be receptive to the coaching process.

Applies Knowledge and Experience of Both Adult and Student Learning

Effective coaching uses expert knowledge and experience to support educators in their continual improvement in knowledge of content, curriculum, standards, and pedagogy to empower educators to be critical consumers of resources and strategies.

- Effective coaches encompass expertise in the content area being coached.

- Effective coaches understand adult and student progression of learning in the content area and the knowledge to determine the most appropriate practices to support the learner.

- Effective coaches have knowledge and experience with content specific evidence-based instructional practices and support other educators to best implement these practices.

- Effective coaches understand how to identify and address student misconceptions to help educators to anticipate and uncover student thinking to drive instructional decision making.

Effective coaching includes the knowledge of and needs for adult learners and applies this mindset to the coaching practice with educators.

- Effective coaches understand the importance and practice of confidentiality and trust when working with educators.

- Effective coaches ensure the focus consistently stays on using best practices to influence adult behavior to meet student needs.

- Effective coaches are flexible, fluid, and adaptive to best anticipate and respond to the needs of the educators they support.

- Effective coaches are reflective of their own practices in working with adult learners.

Effective coaching requires all participants to be ongoing active learners in practice, not just in theory.

- Effective coaches are continually engaged in action research with educators in the implementation of evidence-based best practices.

- Effective coaches are coach-able themselves, understanding and pursuing their own growth needs to best support educators and students.

- Effective coaches recognize that they are learners themselves and focus on continuous professional growth.

Utilizes Effective Communication to Promote Growth

Effective coaching relies on strong communication skills to provide constructive improvement through feedback and questioning.

- Effective coaches actively hear what educators say and possess the ability to ask the right questions in the most effective way to create dialogue and cause reflection which empowers educators to focus and move towards best practices.

- Effective coaches model and encourage active and reflective listening.

Effective coaching provides individualized and differentiated feedback on specific content knowledge.

- Effective coaches identify and honor an educator's professional strengths and what they already know to move them from where they are into a strategic and continuous improvement cycle. This involves collaborating to distinguish learning targets and a process to achieve their goals.

- Effective coaches provide timely and personalized feedback that is responsive to where teachers are in their learning processes.

Incorporates Evidence and Data to Support Instructional Improvement

Effective coaching is evidence informed and uses multiple data sources (e.g., formative, summative, observational) to inform coaching practices.

- Effective coaches are skilled in the collection and organization of data to best support and target instructional practices and learning targets for both educators and students.

- Effective coaches partner with educators and use data to facilitate their thinking towards making connections between content, curriculum, and standards.

- Effective coaches understand that preparation is important when working with data and come to coaching meetings prepared.

Effective coaching includes an understanding of and the ability to analyze data and teach others to do the same.

- Effective coaches know how to best share data with educators and empower them in their own exanimations and uses of data.

- Effective coaches understand and can apply best practices on how to manage their time in order to have meaningful conversations centered around evidence and data.

Coach as Professional Developer

When the Alabama State Department of Education adopted learning standards from the Learning Forward Standards, they aligned them with research on professional learning that includes modeling effective practices, active learning, and takes adult learning theory into consideration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The state also aligned them with the national standards (Learning Forward, 2011). How does the coaching framework align with Alabama's standards for professional learning? The first standard states that professional learning occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective efficacy, and goal alignment. Coaching is job-embedded professional learning which is committed to continuous improvement of all learners. Requiring skillful leaders who enhance capacity, advocacy, and support systems for professional learning is the second standard in which coaches will support this work. The remaining standards speak to goal setting, planning, applying research, prioritizing and coordinating resources, and providing knowledge to educators to engage families and stakeholders. Many platforms and strategies can help coaches deliver professional learning as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Platforms and Strategies for Delivering Professional Learning

How to Deliver Professional Learning		
Face-to-Face		
Coaching Cycles	Co-Teaching/Co-Planning	Mentoring
Job-Embedded	Peer Learning/Coaching Labs	Peer Coaching
Education Camps	Coaching Communities	Professional Learning Communities
Conferences	On-Demand Sessions	Targeted Workshops
Observing Other Teachers	Visiting Model Schools	
Blended or Virtual		
Webinars	Video Conferencing	Bug-In-Ear
Twitter Chats	On-Demand Workshops	Targeted Workshops
Book Studies	Online modules	Blogs
Flipped Classroom	Asynchronous via Course using a Learning Management System	Case Studies

As a coach, professional learning can take on many forms, such as using face-to-face learning, a blended style of learning, remote learning with a coach not in the classroom with the teacher, or not in the building with a principal (Bug-in-Ear), and learning when both the educator and coach are working virtually. Face-to-face professional learning may include engaging in the coaching cycle, co-teaching and planning, and mentoring. Coaches can support peer coaching among educators or between other coaches to improve the coaching practice. Regularly scheduled professional learning communities (PLC) can be time spent providing professional learning, looking at data, and discussing evidence-based practices. A targeted workshop would be scheduled if data showed a need for a specific topic or evidence-based teaching strategy; whereas, an on-demand session may be one requested by an administrator, teacher, or other staff member.

If a coach cannot be in the building during instructional time, either a blended model or virtual model can take place. A blended model may include part of the coaching support to be in person and part of the support to be virtual. This may be practiced if a coach is serving more than one district and/or school. Coaches can also create online modules for educators to complete virtually with discussion boards and activities.

To support effective professional learning, coaches should follow seven key principles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017):

Effective professional learning

1. is content focused,

2. incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory,

3. supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts,

4. uses models and modeling of effective practice,

5. provides coaching and expert support,

6. offers opportunities for feedback and reflection, and

7. is of sustained duration.

Measuring Coaching Effectiveness

Professional learning, including instructional coaching, focuses on student achievement. How will coaching be measured throughout the year to ensure that progress is made toward the goal of increasing student learning? Coaches and teachers will have a role in measuring the effectiveness of coaching and professional learning. Coaches will be responsible for maintaining a schedule and a coaching log, with most of the time being spent coaching teachers in classrooms and conducting coaching cycles. Coaches will expect educators to set personal learning goals, and they will assist teachers in setting learning goals during coaching cycles. Coaches will go on walk-throughs to observe teachers putting the professional learning into practice and look for student engagement.

Measuring the effectiveness of coaching through teacher reflections and surveys will guide the work of the coach during the year. Additionally, coaches and teachers will analyze the data through:

- common assessments

- pre and post assessments (e.g, Early Math and Literacy Assessments)

- proficiency scales (Schoology)

- and student work samples to direct plans for future professional learning.

> *When teachers strive to achieve personal best, their students benefit because instruction improves and because they may be inspired by their teachers' love of teaching.*
>
> **Knight, J. (2013)**

Planning for Professional Learning

Just as a teacher creates lesson plans for their students, a coach must create a plan to present professional learning sessions. Coaches can begin this process by asking simple questions: "What do I need to present the session?" Answers to this question may include technology considerations and active engagement materials, such as chart paper, markers, and room arrangement for increased participant interaction. "Who will be my audience?" Thinking about the participants will make the planning process more productive. "What do I want the participants to know and be able to do when we are finished?" Planning with the end in mind will help the process by focusing on the outcomes of the session. More specific questions should also be considered when planning for professional learning. When planning for the below activities, consider the related questions:

Planning Professional Learning for a School

- Are topics organized so they do not conflict with other initiatives?

- What is the shared vision of the school?

- Is professional learning connected to learning targets?

- What is the expectation for implementation?

- What resources are available to me as a coach?

- Have the professional learning dates been shared in a timely manner so that teachers can be prepared?

- Is there alignment of learning progressions and practices across the grade levels?

- What trends do we see in our student data?

- Are there opportunities for choice for teachers?

Planning Professional Learning for Teachers

- Is this professional learning designed for a schoolwide need, or is this professional learning differentiated based on the needs of this group of learners? What evidence do I have to support this decision?

- What instructional/curriculum adjustments need to be made?

- What diagnostic student work samples are available? (Higher level cognitive demand)

- What does data tell us about students?

- Have I planned a follow-up session?

- What is the "area of practice" teachers would like to focus on?

- What handouts/tools will support implementation of learning?

- What do the most recent assessments indicate about student thinking and skills?

- What are the learning outcomes for the professional learning? And how will we know that the learning is taking place?

- What trends do we see in student data?

- Do teachers know the why behind the professional learning?

- Is the professional learning based on strengths-based learning?

Planning Professional Learning for Student Growth

- What outcomes do we want for students?

- What engages students?

- What current student data is driving the need for this professional learning?

- Which standards are difficult for students to master?

- Do educators address the unique needs of students with disabilities and English learners?

Using Student Data for Targeted Professional Learning

When the new reading coach, Mr. Hawkins, arrived at LES, he reviewed the previous year's reading screening assessment data. During this review, he noticed that students' vocabulary scores were stagnate across the academic year. To further substantiate that data point, he reviewed the state assessment data for third and fourth grade (the school serves K-4) and noticed that vocabulary scores were quite low. He consulted with the school principal to provide the data analysis, as well as to develop a plan to address the concern. The two decided to target the initial professional learning sessions on vocabulary instruction with an intentional plan for teachers to first review the data and brainstorm schoolwide strategies to increase students' vocabulary development, as well as individual classroom strategies that could be utilized.

Coach as a Learner

"Professional development for coaching must focus on refining coaching skills. Deepening a content coach's knowledge of specific instructional practices and curriculum is important for content area coaches, but they also need to learn coaching skills" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 268). Accordingly, coaches should expand their knowledge of professional learning in areas such as content, instruction, assessments, adult learning, core resources, and intervention. Content knowledge should include understanding the standards, the vertical progression, and the rigorous application of learning the standards in the classroom. Consideration of the core curriculum and supplemental materials used in the classroom is a must for aligning the materials to evidence-based strategies and the standards. The types of assessments and their purposes are other areas in which coaches should receive professional learning. How assessments are administered, when progress monitoring happens, what type of data is reported after the assessment, and assisting teachers to use the results to plan instruction should all be part of a coach's skill set. Further, learning about current evidence-based practices for English learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and students in poverty is paramount to effective coaching. Coaches must have competencies to support teachers in areas such as classroom management and serving historically underrepresented populations.

The ALSDE Office of Student Learning is comprised of ARI, AMSTI, Educational Technology, Professional Learning, and Instructional Services, which all provide districts with assistance and professional learning aligned to the work within each section. They have worked collaboratively through this approach to develop a systematic process to provide professional learning to regional coaches, leadership coaches, school improvement coaches, and English Learner (EL) coaches. While each coaching team has pedagogical-specific information, the state coaching framework will ensure that there is a systematic, explicit method of supporting districts and regional supports across Alabama. These coaches will provide support and professional learning to district leaders and administrators as well as local coaches by scheduling time throughout the school year and during the summer. Regional coaches will hold regional sessions for local coaches for continued learning and analyzing data for planning instruction. Local coaches will be supported through a network of coaches within and across regions.

Full support schools will form collaborative relationships with leadership coaches, regional coaches, and school improvement coaches to provide the most impactful guidance and professional learning without overlapping initiatives. The regional coaches will work closely with the local coaches in full support schools to maximize learning by providing the schools with coaching cycles while supporting professional learning communities (PLC), Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS), and interventions.

In Joyce and Showers (2002) study, professional development is more effective in transfer to practice for classroom teachers when coaching is included. Ninety-five percent of participants in the study understand the content, demonstrate proficiency in the instructional practices, and regularly implement instructional practices in the classroom when coaching is a part of the professional development model, as summarized in Table X.

Table 5

Professional Development Elements

Professional Development Elements	Knowledge Level (Percentage of participants who understand content)	Skill Level (Percentage of participants who demonstrate proficiency in the instructional practices)	Transfer to Practice (Percentage of participants who regularly implement instructional practices in the classroom)
Theory Presenter explains content – what it is, why it is important, and how to teach it.	10%	5%	0%
Demonstration Presenter models instructional practices.	30%	20%	0%
Practice Participants implement instructional practices during the session.	60%	60%	5%
Coaching Participants receive ongoing support and guidance when they return to the classroom.	95%	95%	95%

(Joyce and Showers, 2002)

Roles of an Effective Content Coach

In different content areas, Alabama coaching support may be structured differently due to funding and/or legislation. Some content area coaches may offer multiple layers of support while others may offer only a few. Whether there are many layers or just a few, the mission of coaching in Alabama is to improve teaching and learning. The Alabama State Department of Education is working to develop systematic leadership and regional coaching that encompasses ARI's current structure to provide guidance to administrators. Regional coaches provide professional learning, data analysis, and evidence-based resources to local coaches and teachers. English learner (EL) coaches will support the work of administrators, coaches, and teachers across the state by providing evidence-based instructional strategies for students whose first language is not English. School improvement coaches will assist administrators with the most effective use of resources, support the use of data, and guide schools in utilizing interventions for struggling students. Coaching at all levels allows for differentiated, in-real-time support. Table 6 summarizes the roles various content-area coaches have in Alabama.

Table 6

Roles and Responsibilities of Content Coaches

Roles and Responsibilities of Content Coaches *Although these are identified roles and responsibilitiesthere may be times where roles overlap or blend based on need of school, faculty, and, students.	Regional Leadership Coaches	Regional Coaches (Content Area)	English Learner Coaches	School Improvement Coaches	Local Coaches
Study district and regional trend data to determine coaching targets.	•	•	•	•	
Support admin in identifying specific instructional practice related to specific learning targets in classrooms.	•	•	•	•	
Support administrators in leading data meetings to reinforce the use of data to guide effective evidence-based instruction.	•	•	•	•	
Support positive and productive interactions between the leader and the school coach; assist in establishing healthy school structures in support of coaching.	•	•	•	•	
Build an understanding of legislative mandates.	•	•	•	•	•
Facilitate leadership principles.	•	•	•	•	•
Understand and support state standards.	•	•	•	•	•
Understand and support evidence-based instructional practices.	•	•	•	•	•
Work with school leadership to design and develop a shared vision for high-quality instruction materials, teaching, and learning across content areas.	•	•	•	•	•
Support the school leader to advocate and expect high-quality, equitable teaching and learning for every learner.	•	•	•	•	•
Support school leaders in learning to empower and nurture a culture of productive professionalism.	•	•	•	•	•
Monitor implementation of strategies, plans, materials presented through professional learning.	•	•	•	•	•
Work with school leaders in creating schedules that allow time for collaboration (PLC).	•	•	•	•	
Support implementation of AL-MTSS framework.	•	•	•	•	•
Support the implementation and progress monitoring of ACIP (EL interventions and initiatives).	•	•	•	•	

Roles and Responsibilities of Content Coaches *Although these are identified roles and responsibilitiesthere may be times where roles overlap or blend based on need of school, faculty, and, students.	Regional Leadership Coaches	Regional Coaches (Content Area)	English Learner Coaches	School Improvement Coaches	Local Coaches
Provide intensive, ongoing support to the lowest performing elementary schools as evidenced by data.	•	•	•	•	
Provide limited support to elementary schools not in the lowest 5% as evidenced by data.	•	•	•	•	
Use data to guide coaching cycles.	•	•	•		•
Focus coaching on learning outcomes from professional learning in specific content areas and adult learning theory to ensure that coaching goals are met and reinforced.	•	•	•	•	•
Provide differentiated levels of support in correlation with building the coaching level of knowledge and expertise.		•	•	•	
Assist LEAs in developing English Learner Plan.			•		
Facilitate ESL teacher professional learning communities.			•		
Provide ACCESS assessment for ELs, guidance, and support.			•		
Collaborate with other content regional specialists to provide aligned comprehensive support and professional learning.	•	•	•		
Aid schools and LEAs to facilitate effective and inclusive parent involvement supports and activities.			•		
Collaborate with the LEA and school administrators in assigned K-12 schools to assist in assessing the level of services to be provided to each EL, based on proficiency evels.	•	•	•	•	•
Expand what educators know about regular classroom practices by specifically addressing the language demands of students who are developing skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a new language.	•	•	•	•	•
Provide cross curricular support for the integration of strategies and methodologies for meeting the needs of ELs in the regular classroom.	•	•	•	•	•
Provide guidance to LEAs in developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum, and in modeling and improving instruction to improve EL student achievement.			•		
Collect, analyze, and utilize summative and formative assessment data to guide instruction and intervention decisions in LEAs and schools.	•	•	•	•	•
Assist administrators with the most effective use of resources that will support robust and rigorous instruction.	•	•		•	
Monitor implementation of strategies, plans, materials presented through professional learning opportunities.	•	•	•	•	•
Ensure implementation of established non-negotiables.	•	•	•	•	•
Engage in classroom rounds and visitations.	•	•		•	•
Participate in grade level, data, and departmental meetings.		•		•	•
Monitor intervention classes for student progress.		•		•	•
Collaborate with the administrators to create a strategic plan for coaching.	•	•			•
Facilitate schoolwide professional learning and study groups.					•
Model effective instructional strategies for teachers.		•	•		•

| Roles and Responsibilities of Content Coaches *Although these are identified roles and responsibilitiesthere may be times where roles overlap or blend based on need of school, faculty, and, students.	Regional Leadership Coaches	Regional Coaches (Content Area)	English Learner Coaches	School Improvement Coaches	Local Coaches
Coach and mentor teachers daily.					•
Facilitate data analysis discussions and support teachers by using data to differentiate instruction according to student needs.					•
Foster multiple areas of teacher professional learning, including exceptional student education and content knowledge.		•	•		•
Prioritize time for those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest impact on student achievement.					•
Monitor progress of all students a minimum of three times per year and make recommendations for adjustments of instruction according to student specific need.	•	•			•
Attend professional learning opportunities and commit to implementing professional learning strategies.	•	•	•	•	•
Post a daily schedule.					•
Pose questions and provide prompts which focus teacher discussion and action on student thinking and learning.					•
Collaborate with teachers in planning and providing professional learning.			•	•	•
Maintain continuous coaching cycles by reviewing data and providing support.			•	•	•
Inform and include parents and community (math night, literacy engagements, parent newsletter, etc.).		•	•	•	•

Coaching Cycle

Another integral component of the Alabama Coaching Framework is the coaching cycle, a standard process coaches and educators use to implement professional learning to improve student outcomes and educator practices. This coaching cycle is implemented once district and school leadership have engaged in initial planning stages. This planning may include an initial needs assessment and a co-developed timeline and scheduling protocol with the ALSDE coaching staff. Phases of the coaching cycle described below follow a cyclical process; although, at times, the process may be iterative depending on outcomes.

The coaching cycle begins with a needs assessment where different data sources are identified, gathered, reviewed, and analyzed through a collaborative process between the coach and educator. Next, the coach and educator discuss data results and use those outcomes to inform the plan for the coaching session. Once those decisions have been made, the coach and educator implement the plan and begin the coaching session. After the coaching session, the coach and educator meet to debrief and reflect on aspects of the coaching session to assess coaching session outcomes, including student learning and educator practices (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Dantonio, 2001; Dufour, 1991; Goldhammer, 1969). They use this time to plan for the next steps and repeat the process of the coaching cycle. Figure 4 illustrates the cyclical process of the coaching cycle. It is followed by a narrative description of each phase of the coaching cycle, including roles and action steps for the coach and educator.

Figure 4

The Coaching Cycle
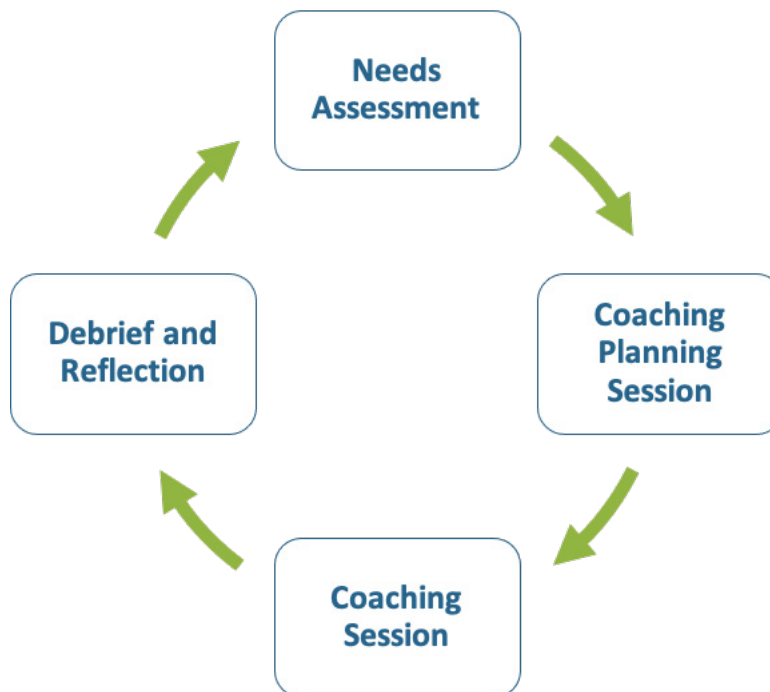
Needs Assessment

To Inform the Plan for the Coaching Session

- Coach identifies how to personalize the coaching conversation (Knight, 2007).

- Coach gathers and reviews data from previous coaching session and prepares objective feedback for the next planning session.

- Coach and educator discuss data to collect and review, including

    · formative and summative student learning data and

    · data to improve educator effectiveness.

Coaching Planning Session/Pre-Conference

To Plan for the Coaching Session

- Coach shares objective feedback (qualitative data) on previous coaching session as part of the partnership dialogue that informs planning.

- Coach and educator discuss identified needs to plan for the coaching session (e.g., student-focused goals, teacher/leader focused goals).

- Coach and educator identify and plan for coaching activities and roles needed for the coaching session (e.g., micro-modeling, side-by-side, observation, co-teaching, co-leading, sharing evidence-based resources on instructional practices).

- Coach and educator use a **scheduling protocol** for setting up the coaching session and the immediate debrief and reflection session.

The Coaching Session

To Implement the Coaching Session Plan

- Coach and educator focus on instructional targets/needs discussed during the planning session that will impact student outcomes.

- Coach and educator implement the coaching plan, including activities, defined roles, and schedule (e.g., micro-modeling, side-by-side, observation, co-teaching, co-leading, sharing evidence-based resources on instructional practices).

Coaching Debrief and Reflection

To Ground the Debrief and Reflection in Data

- As part of the partnership dialogue (Guskey, 2000), the coach asks probing questions after the coaching session to discuss the impact of instructional practice, student learning, coaching support, and the next steps.

- Educator responds to the coach's questioning through reflection, such as assessing session outcomes, questioning aspects of the evidence-based instructional practices that were implemented, and considering next steps (Dantonio, 2001; Portner, 2008)

- Coach provides immediate, objective feedback and shares positive examples of the practices (Crane, 2002; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005).

- Educator identifies an action step for improvement and, if needed, develops a plan to practice the identified action step.

Sample Vignette 2

Coaching Cycle #1: A Pre-Conference Conversation

Ms. Jones, the math coach, meets with a new first grade teacher, Ms. Smith, for the first time. During the pre-conference meeting, her goal is to determine the focus for the lesson observation. Since this is the initial meeting with Ms. Smith, Ms. Jones first asks Ms. Smith to explain her instructional goals for the school year. Ms. Smith shares that she is worried about principal observations since she is a first-year teacher and that she really wants to help her students. Ms. Jones responds with a follow-up question—"Could you provide a more specific goal for your students?" Ms. Smith states, "I really want to be sure that my students are engaged. I feel like I have students at different levels of independence, so I need some help in making sure that I meet all their needs."

To move toward the upcoming lesson observation, Ms. Jones takes that as an opportunity to probe Ms. Smith's thinking about her upcoming lesson, "In the lesson that I will observe, how are you planning to engage all of your students? What do you think I will see?"

Ms. Smith replies that the math coach will observe a lesson on number writing (standard, expanded, and word forms). She will have students rotate through three centers with one center being teacher-led. Ms. Smith states further that she really wants her students to be working in those independent centers…engaged in the learning even when she isn't in the center with them.

Ms. Jones follows up with a question about the center learning tasks, "What would student engagement look like in each center?" The teacher replies that she would want to see some talking about the number forms in a center where students match cards with the expanded form of the number to the standard form of the number or vice-versa based on the cards. Ms. Jones poses this possible focus for the observation, "What if I jot down students' names and record the actual language that I hear students use in this center? Basically, I would record students' actions and language during their time at that center. Then, we can analyze the information to determine how engaged your students were at this center. What do you think?"

Ms. Smith agrees that the plan is a great one!

This pre-conference takes a few minutes but sets the coach and teacher up for success in that it provides the focus for the lesson observation. Focus sets a coaching lesson observation apart from an evaluative lesson observation!

Adapted from Steve Barkley https://barkleypd.com/blog/pre-conferencing/

Sample Vignette 3

Coaching Cycle #2: A Post-Observation Conversation

After a lesson observation that morning, the English Learner coach, Mr. Mason, meets with Ms. Colley, a sixth-grade science teacher. The meeting occurs after the observation during Ms. Colley's planning time that afternoon. During the lesson, Ms. Colley utilized a Dictagloss activity that activates and builds background knowledge by presenting the lesson themes, concepts, and language through dictation prior to reading. These Dictagloss passages model target language forms and functions, vocabulary, and class concepts.

Ms. Colley read a passage two times…with students noting what they heard. After each reading, the students reconstructed a common text in pairs. Below are a pair of students' reconstructed texts.

"Earthquakes are the results of movements within the Earth. When an earthquake occurs, energy travels from the source through the Earth's crust. The strength of earthquakes can be measured in magnitude or how much energy was released by the tremor. Frequently, earthquakes occur near fractures, or faults, in the Earth's crust. Seismologists, or scientists who study earthquakes, plot the location and strength of earthquakes on maps by using latitude and longitude to determine their precise location."

"Earthquakes are the results of movements within the Earth. When an earthquake occurs, energy in the form of waves moves from the source through the Earth's crust. The energy travels in waves of two forms: compression, or p-waves; and transverse, or s-waves. The amount of movement of the ground is called the amplitude of the waves. P-waves travel faster and arrive first from an earthquake, and S-waves travel slower and arrive later. S-waves carry the most energy when they arrive from an earthquake because they have higher amplitude than P-waves."

During the post-observation conference, Mr. Mason first thanks Ms. Colley for inviting him into her classroom. He then goes on to say, "Our goal for the lesson observation was to gather evidence about how you engage students to activate and build prior knowledge." With that in mind, Mr. Mason begins by asking, "What do you think went well with the Dictagloss activity?" After listening to Ms. Colley's response, Mr. Mason prompts Ms. Colley to think about the student work samples by asking, "How did the activity help to build and/or activate students' background knowledge?" Ms. Colley reviews the students' work samples to really discuss how the activity supported her EL students. Next, Mr. Mason asks what other instructional tools Ms. Colley might be willing to try to help support students in building and/or activating background knowledge. Ms. Colley shares a few other instructional tools, and Mr. Mason suggests a couple of instructional tools that Ms. Colley might find helpful. Finally, Mr. Mason asks, "How are you feeling about trying these new tools?" Ms. Colley says that she is really enjoying learning more ways to engage her students and feels quite good about how her students are responding.

To end the conference, Mr. Mason asks, "Why don't you research some of the tools we listed earlier to determine which one you want to use in our next lesson observation?" The two of them schedule the next pre-conference session. Mr. Mason thanks Ms. Colley again and states that her students are more engaged in their own learning because of these new tools that Ms. Colley is using in her lessons.

Virtual Coaching Cycle

Virtual coaching utilizes advanced technology to provide professional learning to educators located in remote locations (Rock et al., 2011). Geographical boundaries no longer confine professional learning. Technology has broadened the access to a variety of digital tools that allow educators to have multiple opportunities for collaboration outside the traditional school setting. This same technology has provided instructional coaches with a myriad of tools to support educators with professional learning opportunities throughout the coaching cycle.

The virtual coaching cycle will mirror the Alabama State Department of Education traditional setting coaching cycle outlined on page 23. Instructional coaching in a virtual setting will follow this standard process of implementing professional learning to enhance and refine educators' instructional practices and skills needed to foster student growth. For this job-embedded professional learning to be effective, coaches must provide continuous highly effective support (Sweeney & Harris, 2020). This level of coaching support can be provided in a virtual setting using technology. With the help of virtual learning platforms, coaches can provide on-demand support by working collaboratively without space and time constraints (Oller, 2019). Table 7 depicts virtual coaching considerations during a virtual coaching cycle.

Table 7

Coaching Cycle Considerations for Blended or Virtual Settings

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Needs Assessment: *A coach should consider….*

- utilizing a virtual chat or conferencing tool to work collaboratively with educators to identify, gather, review, and analyze data to inform the plan for the coaching session.

Coaching Planning Session: *A coach should consider…*

- engaging a virtual chat or conferencing tool to work collaboratively with educators to plan for the coaching session;
- utilizing digital shared document tools to work collaboratively with educators to share and store documents and resources;
- video sharing of evidence-based lessons either from websites or personalized videos from the coach; and
- utilizing virtual conferencing tools to provide real time evidence-based lessons.

Coaching Session: *A coach should consider…*

- connecting virtually to teachers' classrooms to focus on instructional targets and needs discussed during the planning session that will impact student outcomes. *If the coach is unable to virtually join the coaching session, teachers can record the lesson and upload a video to a private platform to share with the coach.

Coaching Debrief and Reflection: *A coach should consider…*

- virtually meeting with the educator to collaboratively assess the coaching session outcomes, including student learning and educator practices;
- utilizing a digital shared document tool to revisit instructional planned practices; and
- utilizing collaborative digital documents to outline the identified action steps for instructional improvement and creating a plan to move forward in the coaching cycle.

The virtual, as well as the traditional, coaching cycle is designed to improve student outcomes and strengthen educators' practices. In a virtual setting, technology and the use of digital resources are an essential part of the learning process (Oller, 2019). With a vast array of virtual learning platforms and digital resources available, educators must ensure curriculum standards and the desired student-learning outcomes drive their virtual instructional practices. Even though technology is essential, it should not be the driving force, but rather a tool that supports instruction (Oller, 2019).

As technology advances and schools adapt to the changing environment, coaches must provide the necessary job-embedded support to educators regardless of the instructional delivery model: traditional, blended, and/or virtual. The Alabama State Department of Education designed its coaching cycle to effectively provide professional learning opportunities to move student learning forward in each of these three models. As coaching practices shift from in-person to virtual, it is imperative that coaches focus on educator instructional improvement and student outcome growth to ensure fidelity of the coaching cycle. **Appendix A** provides a table of suggested coaching actions that focus on achieving the fidelity of the coaching cycle.

Benefits of Virtual Coaching

Virtual coaching offers benefits and opportunities for coaches and educators to work collaboratively in remote locations.

- **Increased access to coaching** - Virtual coaching provides coaching opportunities to educators who may not have access to coaches in the traditional school setting due to factors such as geographical location of school or lack of funding.

- **Elimination of space and time constraints** - Virtual coaching enables the coach and educator to work collaboratively without space and time constraints (Oller, 2019).

- **Focus on coaching** - Coaches often have multiple roles and responsibilities in a traditional school setting. Virtual coaching can help eliminate some of these barriers and allow coaches to focus on providing support to educators (Rock et al., 2011).

- **Immediate support and feedback** - Virtual coaching offers opportunities for immediate support and feedback (Randolph et al., 2020).

Assessment and Data Facilitator

What is the Coach's Role and Responsibility in Assessment?

Coaches perform a pivotal role in assessment as wise consumers of data and facilitators of improvement in teacher practice and student learning. They are enquirers of data and seekers of instructional solutions to impact student achievement. Coaches largely serve as collaborative data facilitators; however, they may train educators to ensure the standardization of assessment administration.

Coaches engage in strategic use of assessment data to guide professional learning across various levels of the educational system.

- Student data analysis results inform coaches of specific coaching topics and actions most relevant to the learning needs of individual teachers.

- Coaches consider student data trends over time—by grade level and by teacher—to identify priority professional learning needs throughout a school.

- Student data trends across schools inform coaches of professional learning needs throughout a district.

- A coach's systematic use of data is necessary to propel systemic improvements and meet data reporting requirements.

Table 8

School Coach Roles and Responsibilities in Assessment

What a Coach Is . . .	What a Coach Does . . .	What a Coach Does NOT Do . . .
Facilitator of assessment and data	• Facilitate data use • Facilitate schoolwide planning of instruction and intervention • Assist with assessment standardization	• Develop or create assessments • Perform as an assessment coordinator • Perform administrative functions
Facilitator of professional learning goals	Provide data feedback to: • inform and guide development of professional learning goals • support implementation and improvement in evidence-based teaching practices that impact student achievement	• Engage in teacher evaluation

How do coaches support educators with assessment and data?

The primary mission of the Alabama coach prevails: *to support and develop teachers and leaders who guarantee all students experience high-quality equitable instruction to ensure optimal growth*. To support this mission, Alabama coaches build teachers' knowledge regarding the integral role of assessment and data in guiding instruction and intervention. Coaches provide daily coaching and mentoring services via planned coaching cycles based on data. The coach acts as a vital partner who supports educators in using and analyzing data to make informed decisions about instruction that will propel student learning forward (Sweeney & Harris, 2020). Through this partnership, educators will gain valuable knowledge of the importance of assessments, data, and using student-data to drive classroom instruction. With support from the coach, educators will use and interpret data to make instructional decisions to improve student learning, such as

- to determine the effectiveness of classroom instruction;

- to refine and adjust instructional methods;

- to identify students' areas of strengths and instructional strategies to aid student progression; and

- to intensify instruction and interventions for students who are struggling in specific areas (Hamilton et al., 2009).

To continuously improve instruction and learning, coaches facilitate the use of data and help educators understand how data can be analyzed to inform, change, and improve student outcomes (Barr et al., 2003). Based on the roles and responsibilities outlined on page 19, Alabama coaches should be involved in assessment and data analysis processes, as well as participating in the district and/or school instructional improvement planning process. At the grade and/or classroom level, coaches support teachers in analyzing student-level data, using student-level data to make instructional decisions, and monitoring the progress toward agreed-upon grade and/or classroom-level academic goals.

Alabama's coaches maintain consistency in assessment processes from school to school. The Alabama State Department of Education presents an annual list of vetted assessments for districts to consider and select. Schools throughout each district are responsible for implementing and using the selected assessments. School coaches train teachers and principals in data analysis and interpretation of assessment results to inform instruction and classroom interventions.

What Do Alabama Coaches Need to Facilitate Data?

Alabama coaches' facilitation of data depends upon a functioning assessment system. The diagram that follows provides an example of a **schoolwide assessment system** with scheduled assessment cycles across the school year. Each assessment process produces data that serves a specific function -- *screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, and outcomes*.

Figure 5

Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) Implementation Guide Progress Monitoring Cycle
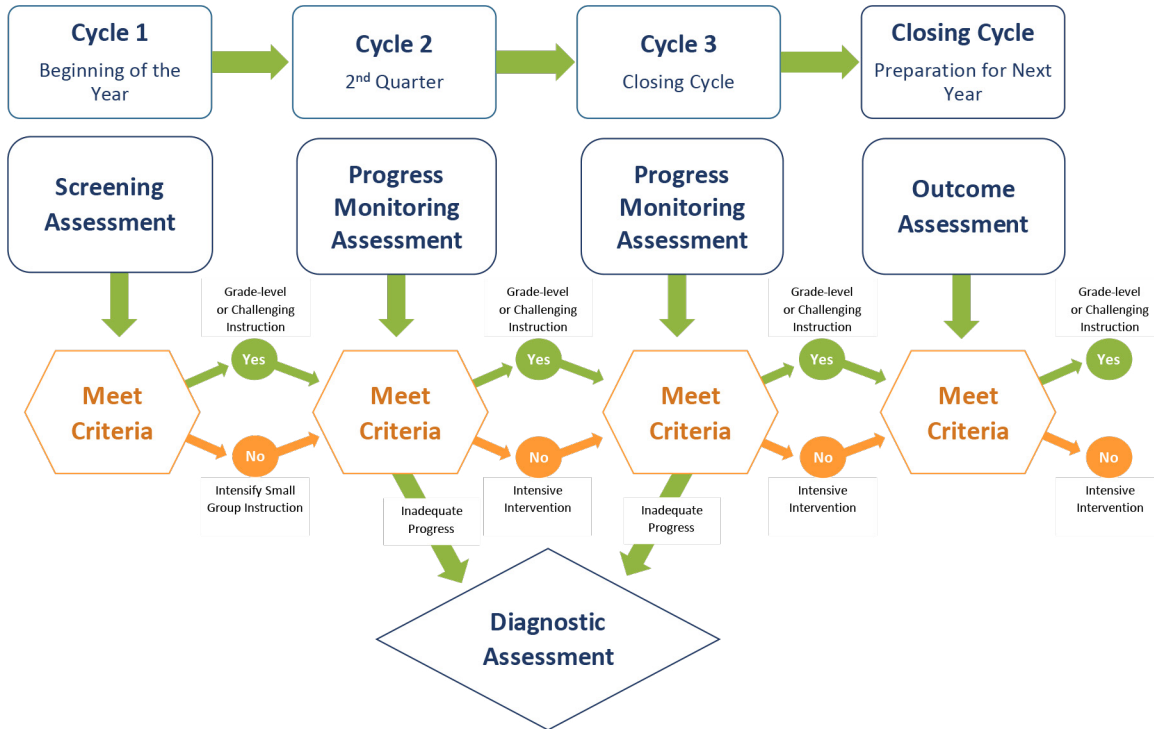
Note. This figure was produced by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) in 2020. It is summarized as: Beginning of Year: Cycle 1, Screening results distinguish the students performing on grade-level from those performing below grade-level. Screening data informs differentiated instruction. Middle of Year: Cycles 2 and 3, Progress monitoring results inform educators of the need to further refine differentiated instruction. End of Year: Closing Cycle, Outcome results indicate (a) annual achievement of individual students and (b) a school's anticipated intervention needs per grade-level for the following year. Adapted from the ALSDE Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020).

Regional and local school coach analysis of screening and progress monitoring data distinguishes students at or above grade level from those in need of additional instructional support and intervention. Diagnostic assessments are administered to persistently low-performing students, and results provide specific details about the source of learning challenges. Collectively, an assessment system's data fully informs Alabama coaches regarding the learning needs, progress, and achievement of a school's diverse student population.

Scheduled assessment cycles provide opportunities for coaches to meet regularly with principals and teachers. Coaches facilitate both grade-level and school-level meetings to analyze student data and make timely instructional decisions that impact students' critical skill development in critical standards. The combination of school data results and relevant contextual factors can indicate a need to provide coaching services that are differentiated, propelling further improvements.

What are the Alabama Coach's Responsibilities in Facilitating Data?

As data facilitator, the coach must be data literate and able to analyze multiple sources of data across multiple stakeholder groups within the district and school, as well as summarize the data analyses to communicate results to the various stakeholder groups. Effective coaches collect, use, and analyze data to identify specific and targeted issues for continuous instructional and learning improvement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform [AISR], 2004). Coaching through the use of data creates coherence within a district and/or school, as well as provides the evidence for focusing more intentionally on identified areas of need versus personal opinions about areas of need (AISR, 2004).

When working with individual teachers, coaches facilitate continuous improvement by using data. First and foremost, coaches use data to identify coaching needs (Kurz et al., 2017). During the coaching process, coaches collaborate with teachers in using student data from multiple assessment sources (screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome) to drive and adjust instruction. Coaches also support teachers in analyzing more informal sources of data, as well as reviewing individual student work to improve teaching and learning. Using multiple sources of data to determine instructional decisions typically leads to more consistent instructional improvement. Teachers set more efficient and attainable goals when data analysis involves a coalescing of different data sources. As teachers and coaches work together to improve student learning, coaches support teachers' abilities to identify root causes, to form new strategies for meeting students' needs, and then return to the data to reflect and evaluate for refining the plan.

Whether facilitating the use of data at the district, school, or classroom level, coaches support collaborative conversations around the data. These conversations revolve around data that is triangulated, aggregated, and disaggregated so that educators trust the data, as well as see the "big picture" and the sub-population results. During data conversations, coaches want to facilitate cross-team and/or feeder-pattern collaborations so that a consensus can be reached on next steps needed to improve instruction and learning. In addition, the coach needs to ensure that the data analysis and summarization are clear and transparent to all stakeholders. During the conversations, the coach also needs to help stakeholders see the positive results, as well as the areas for improvement.

The Alabama coach's role in assessment is consistent across schools. The *Coaching Summary of Assessment Tasks* in the table that follows identifies a variety of coaching responsibilities and tasks of the local school coach. The regional coach supports and may train school coaches in preparation for specific coaching responsibilities. The last item on the checklist—prepare for the following year—is a task that may be conducted by the regional coach.

Table 9

Coaching Summary of Assessment Tasks

Coaching Responsibility	Tasks for the School Coach

Facilitate trainings on assessment data and data use.	• Identify purposes and functions of district-selected assessments and data: screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, and outcome.
	• Identify different assessment data criteria.
	• Identify tools for data collection and analysis.
	• For each data point, identify
	  · instructional targets (example: fluency) and
	  · evidence-based practices and highquality instruction materials as intervention response to data.

Facilitate support of school assessment system.	• Collaborate with principal and school leadership team to establish scheduled timeframes for assessment administration, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. • Support standardization of assessment administration. • Assist with accuracy of student identification information prior to assessment administration. • Facilitate data collection.

Facilitate collaborative data meetings.	• Provide schoolwide support to teachers, administrators, and support staff in understanding all assessment functions and use of data.
	• Prepare data in formats conducive to analysis and collaborative discussion.
	• Establish data analysis protocols.
	• Model how to analyze and utilize data.
	• Collaboratively and systematically work with grade-level teams to analyze grade-level progress monitoring data in order to determine
	  · grade-level priorities in planning grade-level instruction,
	  · student need for differentiated instruction, and
	  · intervention priorities.
	• Collaboratively work with individual teachers and administrators in ongoing data analysis to continuously refine instruction and intervention.

Provide virtual coaching support.	• Assist with researching and determining appropriate virtual assessment(s).
	• Identify any additional meaningful data (baseline, progress monitoring, benchmark) and format for analysis.
	• Utilize virtual data results to
	  · determine virtual coaching priorities; and
	  · support informed teacher planning for virtual instruction, differentiation, and intervention.

Prepare for the following school year.	• Format end-of-year student outcome data for analysis.
	• Facilitate school data analysis meetings to
	  · analyze outcome data; and
	  · determine schoolwide intervention needs for following year.

A Culture for Coaching

How do Alabama Coaches Facilitate Improvements in Teacher Practice and Student Achievement?

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has a tiered system that identifies three levels of support for Alabama schools. Each support level maintains a tiered data schedule for minimum data collection and reporting:

- Full Support (FS): Data is collected and analyzed monthly.

- Limited Support 1 (LS1): Data is collected and analyzed four times per year (quarterly).

- Limited Support 2 (LS2): Data is collected and analyzed three times per year (beginning, middle, and end of the year).

Regional coaches provide supportive coaching services to the identified schools. The ALSDE's level-of-support designation determines a school's schedule for assessment data collection, analysis, and reporting in collaboration with the regional coach.

Alabama coaches prioritize the collection and use of informative data to gauge teacher professional learning progress and to differentiate their coaching services. With consistent monitoring, informed coaching promotes continuous improvements in teacher practice in all settings—traditional, blended, and virtual. Data-informed coaching engages teachers in data-informed planning of evidence-based practices to ensure continuous student learning improvements across the year and across school years. **Appendix A** summarizes key practices for using data within the coaching process.

A Culture of Coaching

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of district leaders, principals, and teachers are critical in creating a cohesive system of support for instructional improvement. A growing body of research literature, including that of Rorrer *et al.* (2008), indicates the influence of districts on systemic reform is often overlooked as a key component in increasing student achievement. Principals, and other school leaders, are also driving forces for change in their schools, "second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.5). If teachers are to implement evidence-based practices in classroom instruction and "facilitate learning by 'posing questions, challenging students thinking, and leading them in examining ideas and relationships'" (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 2), professional learning must be an embedded and sustainable part of the instructional day. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that instructional coaches can only be change agents with the full and strategic support of their administrators and the collaborative expertise and commitment of their teachers. Listed below are recommended practices for these pivotal roles, developed by the Alabama Coaching Framework team, to provide guidance in establishing and sustaining systemic instructional improvement within the coaching process.

Roles and Responsibilities of District Leaders

> *School districts do not experience significant academic improvement throughout the district without meaningful involvement by their central office.*
>
> *(Honig et al., 2010)*

Through a collaborative partnership, district leaders provide targeted support to school leadership to ensure effective implementation of coaching with the goal of increased teacher and leader effectiveness and student outcomes. The district sets the stage by assessing needs and responding with adequate and appropriate resources and guidance to support coaching. These resources include coordination of funds, professional learning, data, communication, and feedback as outlined below.

- Establish expectations for a system of coaching, which aligns with the Alabama Coaching Framework.

- Communicate coaching guidelines clearly and consistently, including an emphasis on the non-evaluative role of coach support and the limits of coach responsibilities.

- Monitor the system of coaching to ensure the fidelity of implementation and accountability at all levels of the coaching process.

- Share data in a timely manner with all participants in the coaching process.

- Provide evidence-based professional learning focused for both principals and instructional coaches, including collaborative opportunities in meetings and trainings.

- Provide access to evidence-based resources for principals, instructional coaches, and teachers.

- Coordinate support with regional specialists (where available) in the development and delivery of evidence-based professional learning.

- Assist building principals in the hiring of effective coaches as outlined in the ALSDE job descriptions for coaching positions.

- Support principals in scheduling that allocates adequate time for evidence-based professional learning, implementation of evidence-based practices, and reflective revision and planning.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principals

While we often attribute the success of coaching to the skillfulness of the coach, the school leader is just as important to get the job done. The leader is essential because coaching is about lifting the learning of every member of the school community. We need everyone working together, taking risks, and committing to do what it takes to get there.

(Sweeney, 2018)

Principals and coaches are critical partners whose shared goal is to build capacity of teachers to increase student learning and growth through the implementation of evidence based instructional practices. The principal leads in establishing the culture of coaching within the school community and helping to create pathways needed for effective coaching to occur, as summarized below.

- Define coaching as an "inclusive" endeavor.

- Communicate a clear and transparent commitment to improving instruction and student outcomes.

- Develop a shared vision of high-quality instruction and learning within the context of a coaching culture.

- Ensure the coaching process is monitored for fidelity to implementation.

- Provide a structure for coaching that includes dedicated time and resources.

- Maintain a clear separation between roles of principal and coach in the coaching process to facilitate the non-evaluative relationship between coach and teachers.

- Focus on the use of data to inform collaborative problem-solving and instructional decision-making as part of the continuous cycle of instructional improvement.

- Commit to a collaborative professional learning process with instructional coaches and teachers.

School Leadership Building a Coaching Culture

During the first week of school-level meetings, the school principal, Dr. Moffatt, began building a coaching culture in her school. She began the meeting by explaining the vision that the school literacy team created for coaching, as well as the student data targets. (It is important to note that the school literacy team sought feedback from staff while creating that coaching vision.) Next, Dr. Moffatt set the expectations for coaching at the school—Dr. Moffatt told the faculty that they would review end-of-year data to reflect on the previous year's performance to set data-informed professional learning goals for this academic year. Dr. Moffatt further explained that she would review the faculty's professional learning goals and would create a professional learning plan to help the faculty meet their goals. The professional learning plan would include sustained professional learning sessions based on those goals, as well as student data. Dr. Moffatt reminded faculty that the school was very fortunate to have Ms. Rhodes, their reading coach, who would provide job-embedded coaching to help faculty reach their professional learning goals. Dr. Moffatt also reminded faculty that Ms. Rhodes would support everyone in meeting those goals. "Remember—the focus is always on improved student learning! It is what drives everything that we do at OES!" Dr. Moffatt returned to this topic later in the afternoon to provide an update on Ms. Rhodes' roles and responsibilities to ensure that faculty understood that the focus was on improved instruction and student learning, not on teacher evaluation. In addition, Dr. Moffatt provided an updated coaching model to ensure that faculty members understood their roles and responsibilities in the coaching process.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Teachers

> *Instructional coaches who operate from the partnership principles enter relationships with teachers believing that the knowledge and expertise of teachers is as important as the knowledge and expertise of the coach.*
>
> *(Knight, 2007)*

Effective teachers and coaches form a collaborative partnership with the goal of increasing student outcomes through improved teacher practice. Embracing the coaching process allows teachers to reflect and improve instruction, which helps them to attain goals at the student, classroom, school, and personal level. The practices outlined below can help facilitate teacher commitment to the coaching process.

- Demonstrate a willingness to continually reflect and improve teaching practices to change outcomes for all students.

- Participate in a collaborative professional learning process with school leadership, the instructional coach, and colleagues.

- Embed the continuous cycle of instructional improvement in reflective practice and instructional decision-making informed by data.

- Expand personal knowledge base of instructional improvement practices through evidence-based resources.

- Honor the coaching process by committing to a collaborative coaching cycle which includes identifying areas of need or refinement, implementing an instructional plan or response, and integrating insights or learning into practice.

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The Alabama Coaching Framework

Appendix

Appendix A. Virtual Coaching Table

The coaching cycle is a process in which professional learning is used to strengthen educator's instructional practices and improve student outcomes. As coaches and educators move through the coaching cycle, it is imperative the focus remains on improving student outcomes. Table 9, developed by a group of Alabama stakeholders, provides actions and suggestions to help educators achieve fidelity of the coaching cycle in different educational arenas.

Table 10

Coaching Actions that Focus on Achieving the Fidelity of the Coaching Cycle

Coaching Cycle Actions	Traditional Coaching	Blended Coaching	Full Virtual Coaching
Needs Assessment			
Collecting and discussing data	• Use data to preplan • Use paper and digital data • Review and analyze multiple types of assessment data: pre/post, summative, progress monitoring data, benchmark data, formative data	• Review data using an electronic data dashboard • Use a digital application to store and view student work samples • Use virtual platforms: Google Classroom, NWEA, iReady, AIMSWeb, Amplify, etc.	• Connect virtually with educators through a video or conferencing tool, such as Zoom, Skype, and/or Google Hangouts • Electronic data dashboard or a shared drive may be needed to review and analyze data
Sharing objective feedback and dialogue	• Frame feedback and conversations around goals for student learning • Set standards-based student goals	• Use digital tools to guide teachers in using data to drive instruction • Loop feedback to focus on propelling student learning forward • Use collaborative documents, such as a Google Docs to document dialogue and feedback	• Use digital tools to guide teachers in using data to drive instruction • Looping feedback to make sure children are moving ahead • Use collaborative documents, such as a Google Docs to document dialogue and feedback

Coaching Planning Session			
Identification of needs	• Review and analyze the data to determine standards-based goals • Set goals that move student learning forward	• Use digital conferencing tools when needed to review and analyze data • Set goals that move student learning forward	• Use digital conferencing tools to review and analyze the data to determine standards-based goals • Set goals that move student learning forward
Modeling	• Model in person evidence-based instructional strategies • Establish routines and structure	• Use a virtual conferencing tool to connect and model activity for the educator to observe • Establish routines and structure	• Establish routines and structure • Model sessions using Zoom or Skype • Ensure the content and instructional practices are the focus and not the technology
Co-Teaching and/or Leading	• Collaborate with educators • Document plans and share with educations • Collaborate with administrators to review data and reflect on how the data drives school's instructional decisions	• Practice the use of technology to ensure all tools are working (If you are attaching a padlet make sure the link is accurate, break-out groups and video features work, etc.)	• Use virtual side by side coaching during the session through Zoom, Skype, etc. • Establish virtual parameters and norms
Sharing evidence-based resources	• Share evidence-based instructional practices and resources • Use data to reveal needed levels of support and create a menu of services for all	• Develop job-embedded learning through PLC • Share evidence-based instructional practices and resources via virtual shared drive (e.g., Google Doc)	• Share evidence-based instructional practices and resources via virtual shared drive (e.g., Google Doc) • Share books, resources, and learning process via virtual platform
Sharing instructional practices	• Identify one common resource • Always set a purpose	• Identify one common resource • Always set a purpose	• Identify one common resource • Always set a purpose
Scheduling protocol (group and individual)	• Consider scheduling challenges due to time constraints of daily tasks and educators' responsibilities	• Consider scheduling time for targeted support on the coaching process	• Reach out often via virtual platforms to offer support • Host virtual PLC • Host virtual problem-solving groups

Coaching Session			
Observations	• Complete meaningful tasks	• Record session for consistency and limit interruptions • Use recorded session for observation purposes • Join virtually to conduct observation	• Use strategies to meet the learning target for planning purposes • Record session for consistency and limit interruptions • Join virtually to conduct observation • Consider allowing time for acclimating to videotaping and reflecting on practices prior to sharing the video with the coach • Scaffold the process
Debriefing and Reflection			
Questioning	• Conduct an in-person debriefing and reflection session • Ask self-reflecting questions that focus on the session, use of evidence-based instruction, established goals, student outcomes and data	• Use a virtual setting, such as Zoom or Skype, to conduct a debriefing and reflection session • Ask self-reflecting questions that focus on the session, use of evidence-based instruction, established goals, student outcomes and data	• Use a virtual setting, such as Zoom or Skype, to conduct a debriefing and reflection session • Ask self-reflecting questions that focus on the session, use of evidence-based instruction, established goals, student outcomes and data
Reflecting	• Collaboratively reflect on the session and outcomes	• Record coaching session and revisiting to have a conversation focused on outcomes of the session.	• Record Zoom coaching session and revisiting to have a conversation focused on outcomes of the session.
Professional learning (sharing examples of practice)	• Lead professional learning communities • Share books and resources • Share your own learning process	• Leading online PLC • Use a virtual platform to provide professional learning (Google Classrooms, Zoom, Skype, etc.) • Share the books and resources • Share your own learning process	• Provide professional learning weekly using a virtual platform such as Zoom or Google Classroom • Host virtual PLC • Share books and resources via a digital shared drive

Table 11

Coaching for Improved Teacher Practice and Student Achievement

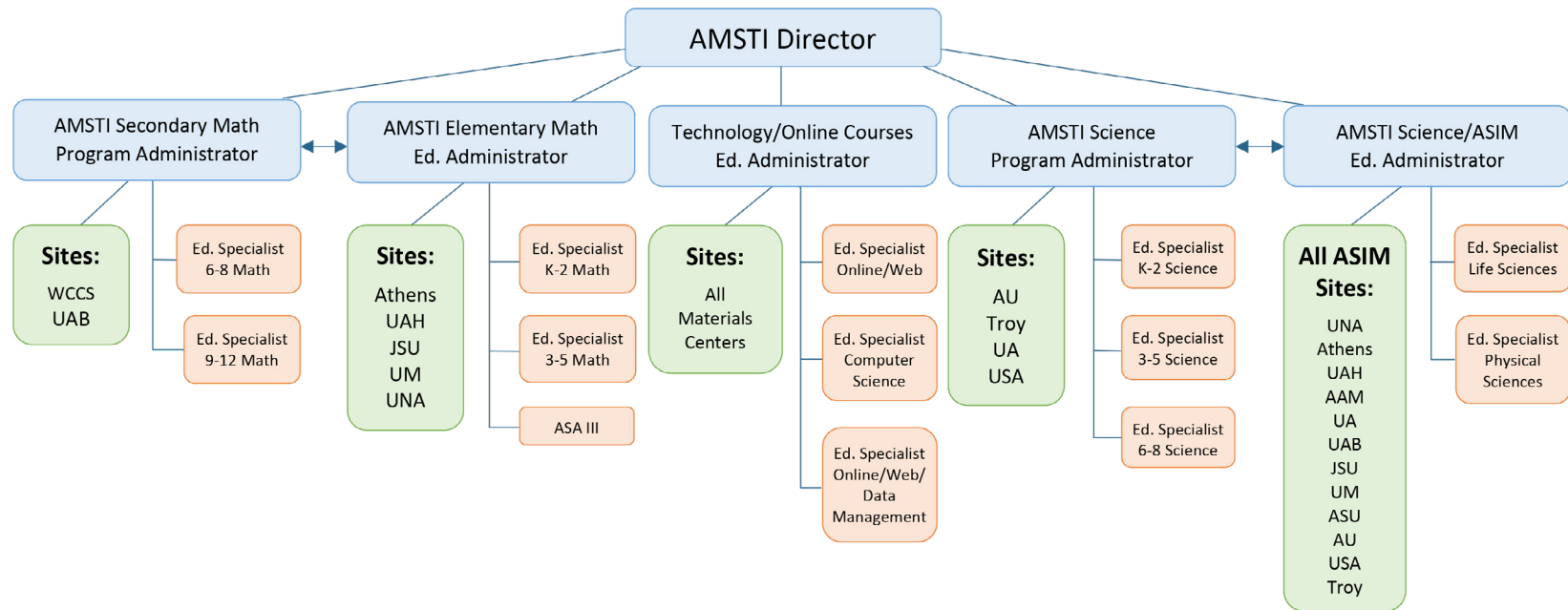| Coach Responsibilities	Assessment			
	Data Selection	*Data Collection*	*Data Analysis*	*Data Usage*
Facilitate teachers' analysis and use of data.	**Data Evidence:** Which of the state-vetted assessments (and corresponding data) has the school district selected to measure and monitor student learning and achievement per grade level?	**Tools:** What data collection tool(s) has the district or school selected to collect and organize student data? **Schedule:** What is the school/district's schedule for collecting, screening, progress monitoring, and outcome data? **Routine:** What data collection routines are in place at each grade level and classroom throughout the school? Does this routine minimize classroom disruption?	**Collaboration to Inform Instruction:** What is the organizational structure and schedule of reoccurring data meetings to analyze student data results per grade level? **Collaboration to Inform Coaching:** With whom is collaboration needed to analyze student data to guide coaching?	**Student Goals:** How will results of the student data analysis be used to establish student growth targets? **Teacher Planning:** How will student data results be used to inform teacher planning for classroom differentiation? **Professional Learning (PL) Planning:** How will student data be used to inform coaching as a schoolwide professional learning intervention to support evidence-based teacher practice?
Monitor progress to differentiate services.	**Additional Data Evidence:** Is additional data needed to monitor and gauge • teacher learning of evidence-based practices and • teacher impact in student progress toward meeting growth targets? **Differentiated Data:** What specific data is needed to inform • coaching services for individual teachers (differentiation) and • diagnosis of potential student dyslexia or dyscalculia?	**Tools:** Are additional data & tools needed to collect and organize • teacher learning progress and • teacher impact on student progress? **Differentiated Schedule:** What is the data collection schedule for monitoring • teacher progress in professional learning and practice and • teacher impact on student progress?	**Collaboration to Inform Instruction:** Are additional collaborations needed to support analysis of student diagnostic results for identification of potential students with dyslexia or dyscalculia? **Collaboration to Inform Coaching:** Are additional collaborations needed to support data analysis of • teacher professional learning progress and • teacher impact on student progress?	**Teacher Goals:** How will data analysis results guide the formation of teachers' individual professional learning goals? **Professional Learning (PL) Scheduling:** Based on data results, • which teachers require more time for supportive coaching in order to improve practice and • which teachers require less coaching time? **Professional Learning (PL) Follow-up:** What variety and combination of professional learning services are needed per grade level based on ongoing monitoring of teacher & student progress data?

Strategically plan for continuous improvement	**Data Evidence:** What data are needed to gauge and provide evidence of • coach impact on teacher practice and • teacher impact on student achievement?	**Tools:** What data & tools will be used to collect and organize • coach impact on teacher practice and • teacher impact on student achievement? **Schedule:** What schedule will be used for collecting coach and teacher impact data?	**Tools and Procedures:** What tools and procedures will be used to analyze coach and teacher impact data? **Collaboration to Inform Coaching:** With whom is collaboration needed to carefully analyze coach and teacher impact data?	**Coach Goals:** How will analysis results guide the formation of coaches' professional learning goals for improved teacher practice and student learning progress? **School Goals:** How will grade-level analysis results guide the formation of schoolwide professional learning goals for improved teacher practice and student learning progress? **District Goals:** How will school analysis results guide the formation of district professional learning goals for improved teacher practice and student learning progress?

Appendix B1. Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative Organizational Chart

AMSTI-ALSDE*

Appendix B2. Alabama Reading Initiative Organizational Chart