

MyTeachingPartner Coaching

Several years ago, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services made a commitment to improve teacher-child interactions in preschools using the CLASS™ system. In consultation with Teachstone®, they observed hundreds of classrooms across the city and provided teachers with in-person sessions introducing them to the CLASS tool. Based on CLASS scores, they selected about 70 teachers to receive intensive professional development through MyTeachingPartner™ (MTP™) Coaching, Teachstone's one-on-one, CLASS-based coaching program.

The city implemented MTP coaching following research-based practices as closely as possible. Teachers conferenced with their coaches an average of 10 times over the course of the school year, and coaches attended frequent support meetings to help them do their best work with teachers. As a result of these efforts, the city saw MTP participants' Instructional Support scores increase significantly, relative to teachers who received only a four-session informational program about the CLASS framework.

How Does MyTeachingPartner Coaching Work at Scale?

In recent years, researchers have made huge advances in understanding what inputs and experiences really matter for children's learning and development and what types of professional development help teachers provide those experiences. Several common principles have emerged from this work that point to core elements of effective professional development. Three of these core elements, fundamental to the MTP program, include focus, intensity and duration, and attention to implementation.

Focus—A good professional development program has a clear, evidence-based, and well-articulated focus that is aligned with learning goals for children (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). MTP coaching focuses on increasing the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions, which are associated with better social, behavioral, and academic gains for children (Mashburn et al., 2008). Coaches set clear goals for teachers from session to session and work, with a consistent focus, on improving interactions.

Intensity and duration—Evidence suggests that more intensive programs and programs of longer duration result in more consistent effects for both teachers and their students (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). MTP coaching is an intensive program; teachers and coaches meet every two weeks during the school year. Teachers also work on parts of the MTP cycles between meetings, keeping the CLASS framework foremost in their minds as they teach.

Implementation—Substantial research suggests that, to achieve program results, you must ensure that the program is implemented well (O'Donnell, 2008). MTP coaching includes built-in supports for implementation at multiple levels. First, through observing their own teaching and meeting frequently with their coaches, teachers gain support in implementing more effective classroom interactions. Second, coaches receive ongoing training and check-ins from Teachstone. The result is that teachers report feeling satisfied and engaged with the program (Downer, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2009).

MTP coaching works at scale because it follows research-based principles—it focuses on a critical element of teaching, gives teachers the intensity they need to improve their skills, and supports teachers and coaches through change. For more information on the MTP program, please visit the Teachstone website (www.teachstone.com).

References

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