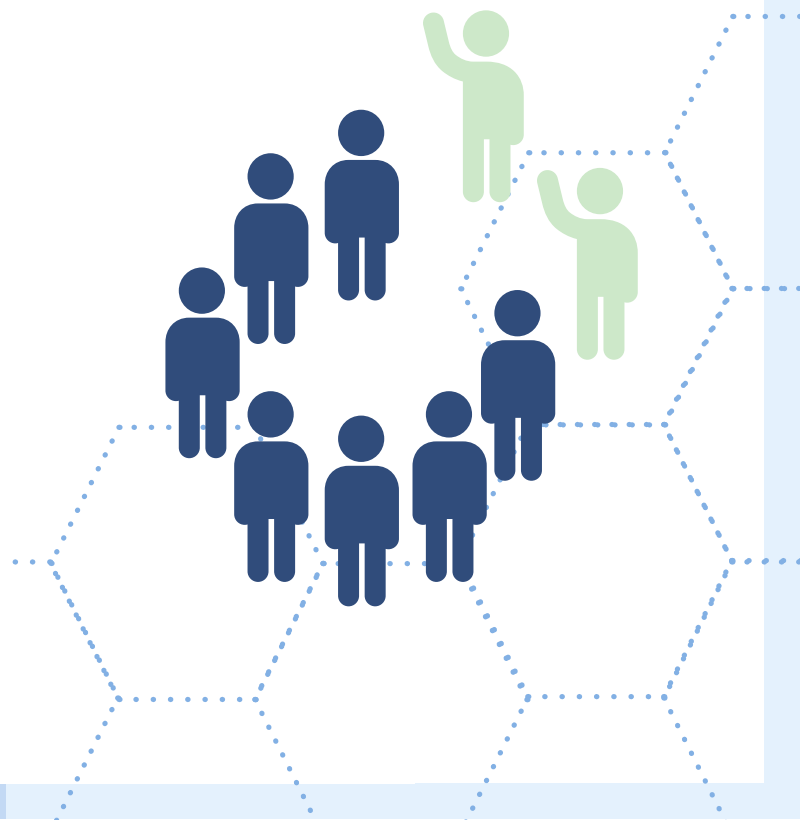




Bridging the Gap in the 603: Implementing a 3 Step Coaching Framework in New Hampshire

Where we are now

In 2020 the New Hampshire Bureau of Special Education Services (BSES) decided to change the focus of its State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) from preschool social and emotional outcomes to literacy. **Data from the previous three years showed that there were many elementary schools in New Hampshire that were struggling with reading proficiency**, some remaining stagnant in the lower 25%, with other schools reporting proficiency rates of 10%. BSES based its decision to change its SSIP on a full review of data including a comparison of the national data for reading proficiency to state data, which identified a downward trend in New Hampshire's reading scores; a review of all stakeholder feedback on how the state might improve implementation of its SSIP improvement strategies; and a review of current literacy initiatives in New Hampshire. Additionally, in the Fall of 2021, the State's Advisory Council on Special Education selected reading proficiency as one of their priority areas. Council members were concerned about the gap between regular education and special education students as well as a general concern about reading proficiency levels for students with disabilities.



PROGRAM DESIGN

In its SSIP redesign BSES recognized that to improve student literacy outcomes, classroom teachers needed ongoing support in the form of coaching to improve their implementation of high-quality literacy practices. However, the coaches involved in the SSIP were unfamiliar with how to effectively coach teachers. BSES recognized that it needed to develop a new infrastructure improvement strategy in its SSIP focused on developing a statewide instructional coaching framework in literacy.

The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) has provided technical assistance for almost four years to BSES in the redesign and implementation of its SSIP. Because of the close relationship that developed between NCSI and BSES Educational Consultants, BSES did not hesitate to approach NCSI for technical assistance as it embarked on an infrastructure improvement

strategy to create a statewide instructional coaching framework model. The coaching framework was initially designed to provide instructional coaching to educators participating in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development in its SSIP pilot schools.

Through implementation science research (Barrett, 2021) and its coaching work with other states, NCSI has identified implementation challenges to using coaching as a strategy for improving teaching and student learning.

These challenges are:

- A lack of clarity about the definition of coaching.
- Minimal professional learning for coaches in effective coaching for teachers.
- A lack of data on coaching to evaluate for fidelity and impact and to support coach development.

NCSI's approaches to improving SEA capacity to address these implementation challenges are:

1. Building SEA readiness for using coaching to improve teaching and student learning;
2. Engaging the SEA as partners for delivering ongoing professional learning for coaches;
3. Collaborating with the SEA to create and use a coaching data system.

BUILDING SEA READINESS FOR USING COACHING TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

In late 2022 NCSI and BSES held a series of calls to discuss different instructional coaching models used in schools. The purpose of these calls was to build the SEA's readiness for implementing a coaching model that would best meet the needs of BSES. Over the next two months NCSI shared research and resources about the 3-Step Coaching Cycle (Pierce & St. Martin, 2023), which has been used by NCSI in its work with other states. The 3-Step Coaching Cycle is a research-based model that emphasizes

effective coaching practices: Alliance-building, Observation, Modeling, and Performance Feedback. These practices have the strongest evidence for improving implementation of practices and processes in school systems.

Critically, because of these calls BSES committed to accomplishing specific milestones to implement coaching successfully.

Milestone 1:

Develop a clear definition of coaching.

Milestone 2:

Provide ongoing professional learning to coaches.

Milestone 3:

Create and use a coaching data system.

For more information about the 3-Step Coaching Cycle, go to NCSI's module, [Effective Practices for Coaches](#), or search [NCSI's Resource Library](#) by using the word "coaching".

ENGAGING SEA AS PARTNERS FOR DELIVERING ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR COACHES

Milestone 1: Develop A Clear Definition of Coaching.

In February 2023 BSES decided to use NCSI's 3-Step Coaching Cycle as a part of the New Hampshire Coaching Framework. BSES and NCSI then began to work on the first milestone, developing a definition of coaching in New Hampshire. BSES created an infographic to visually depict this vision of coaching, which served to operationalize coaching. BSES used this infographic to quickly explain how coaches coach, who is coached, time commitments involved in coaching, and the expected goals of coaching (i.e., improved teaching and student learning).

Milestone 2: Provide Ongoing Professional Learning for Coaches.

BSES then began working with NCSI to create professional learning for coaches. For example, BSES and NCSI developed a virtual training schedule for its Educational Consultants, state-level instructional coach (a new position hired in the agency in August 2023) and school based internal coaches in its SSIP pilot sites. Over the next 6 months, NCSI and BSES co-created supporting training materials and resources coaches could use to coach, including an e-handbook and PowerPoint presentations. In addition, BSES developed easy-to-understand informational handouts on the SSIP for SSIP sites, created a cloud-based site to house coach professional learning materials,

and outlined expectations of internal state coaches who were participating in the SSIP initiative.

NCSI and BSES then launched a series of virtual trainings. The first training was designed to build the capacity of BSES Educational Consultants, including a newly hired state level coach, by providing detailed information about the 3-Step Coaching Cycle ahead of providing training to the school-based internal coaches. This meant that the State Level Coach and BSES Educational Consultants were already familiar with the 3-Step Coaching Cycle and could anticipate any questions/challenges that may arise during the training sessions for internal literacy coaches in the SSIP pilot sites.

NCSI and BSES collaborated over the next three months to deliver three virtual training sessions on coaching for the school-based

internal literacy coaches in the SSIP pilot sites. Attendees were expected to complete pre-work prior to each session. Each session included a range of engagement activities to ensure the training was aligned to research on high-quality adult learning opportunities (Hammond et al., 2017). As the training series progressed NCSI gradually released facilitation of the sessions to the state-level literacy coach to establish her as the expert in the New Hampshire Coaching framework and in LETRS.

Following completion of the virtual coaching training sessions, NCSI and BSES scheduled monthly ongoing support calls with the Educational Consultants and the state level literacy coach. The purpose of these calls is to ensure that coaches are continually developing their skills in coaching.



COLLABORATING WITH THE SEA TO CREATE AND USE A COACHING DATA SYSTEM.

Milestone 3: Create and use a coaching data system.

While working through the second milestone, BSES consulted with NCSI about a coaching data system. For example, BSES worked with NCSI to identify what data they needed to collect, how often they should collect data, and the data collection strategy they should use (i.e., coaching log, direct observation of coaching, focus groups on coaching). Ultimately, BSES created a brief, easy-to-use online coaching fidelity log, mapped out a feasible schedule of when to coaches would submit coaching logs, and tested the system to ensure that data could be readily compiled into reports. Through these efforts, BSES accomplished the third milestone, a coaching data system.

NCSI's external evaluator conducted formative evaluation following each virtual training and prepared a final cumulative report. They evaluated the SEA capacity to support internal school coaches in instructional coaching and the internal school coaches' capacity to deliver instructional coaching. Twenty-three individuals completed some or all the evaluations.

Highlights from the survey responses include the following:

- 96 percent of attendees reporting that the sessions were very relevant or extremely relevant;
- 100 percent of attendees reporting that they would use the content in their work; and
- 95 percent strongly agreeing they would work with NCSI again.

In open-ended comments in response to what was most helpful attendees stated "The protocol sheets, coaching ebook, rubric, videos! The practice sessions and jam boards discussions were great too! This training was excellent! Thank you to all of you who put this together." Another stated that the most beneficial aspect of the training was "The opportunity to go over the coaching handbook and the practice the conversations we will be having during coaching were very helpful." While a third commented the most beneficial aspect was "The discussions, the practice and the opportunity to have all questions answered."



LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1: ENGAGE SEA STAFF AS PARTNERS IN COACHING FROM THE BEGINNING.

Engaging BSES from the beginning in all decision-making helped to create SEA buy-in and ownership of the coaching initiative in New Hampshire. With support from NCSI, BSES staff developed and articulated a vision for coaching in New Hampshire and shared this vision with BSES leadership and with the SSIP sites. BSES educational consultants attended all the training sessions, building their capacity to deliver the coaching training with additional SSIP sites in the future.

LESSON 2: CREATE STRUCTURES TO FOSTER SEA RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Codesigning a clear implementation plan for the coaching initiative helped keep the work on track and made NCSI and BSES roles and responsibilities transparent. Further, NCSI collaborated with SEA staff to develop structured, bi-weekly meeting agendas with well-defined objectives to keep the work on track.

LESSON 3: APPLY A GRADUAL-RELEASE APPROACH TO BUILD SEA CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT COACHING.

NCSI adopted a gradual-release approach across the virtual training sessions, which allowed the state literacy coach to learn and practice the four effective coaching practices with the internal school level coaches. For example, NCSI

facilitated the first virtual training session, then jointly facilitated the second session. The third and final session was primarily facilitated by DESE, with NCSI playing a supportive role. This approach was instrumental in maintaining and strengthening the relationship with BSES and building staff understanding, confidence, and skills in the implementation of the coaching framework.

LESSON 4: DESIGN STANDARD METHODS AND MATERIALS TO BUILD SEA CAPACITY.

Recognizing the importance of a standardized approach, NCSI and BSES collaborated to develop a consistent method for providing coaching training in literacy. This codesigned coaching framework included training materials

(e-handbook, training PowerPoints, and coaching protocols), for the 3-Step coaching cycle and was created to reflect New Hampshire's context and the New Hampshire vision of coaching.

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WestEd is the lead organization for NCSI. For more information about the work of WestEd, NCSI, and their partners, please visit www.ncsi.wested.org and www.wested.org.

PROJECT REACH

- **State Education Agency: 1**
- **Local Education Agencies: 4**
- **Number of Teachers Impacted: 1,000+**