



Peer Assistance and Coaching Model for Massachusetts

Context

EEC is committed to helping ensure that all children have access to quality programs. In its efforts to develop high quality early education and care programs, EEC has implemented a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which defines levels of quality for programs and requirements for moving up the four levels within the current system. An integral part to this program quality is providing teaching and learning experiences, based in a framework of birth to age 8, which address the individual and unique needs of children served by early education and care and out of school time programs.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) commonly offer on-site technical assistance (TA) and coaching to help early care and education settings achieve quality improvements and a higher QRIS rating. Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group. Coaching supports the development of specific skills and practices; it is focused on a performance-based outcome(s). Recent studies suggest that coaching, often in combination with group training, is more effective in raising quality than group training delivered without any on-site assistance.

The goal of coaching in Massachusetts is to help programs improve quality as evidenced by their ability to meet criteria on the QRIS. The QRIS Standards are linked to a set of educator competencies and practices which enable educators to support young children's growth in all domains, as defined by the Early Learning Standards¹.

There are different types of coaching models. In Massachusetts, EEC is currently supporting coaching and mentoring through the statewide Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Grant. The EPS coaches are content coaches, or outside coaches/consultants who support program-wide improvement by helping administrators and educators learn to implement new ideas and concepts into practice. The goal is to link theory to practice to improve program quality, teacher child interaction, and outcomes for children and families.

The focus of the Massachusetts peer coaching (PAC) model is to provide access to colleague-to-colleague relationship in order to support individual educator in achieving growth and change in own practice through individualize technical assistance around specific goals and practice.

This type of peer coaching combines the goal of coaching as a strategy to improve quality. It also recognizes that existing early childhood teachers and directors may be well-equipped to

¹ Early Learning Standards may be found at <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/curriculum-and-learning/>

support one another's practices. The MA PAC Model includes elements from the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) coaching model used in many K-12 school districts.

This model developed in the early 1980s in Toledo, OH. In PAR, local teachers union and district administrators jointly managed a program to improve teacher quality by having expert teachers mentor and evaluate their peers. In the past 25 years, other school districts have relied on the "Toledo Plan" as their model for PAR, adapting it to meet their local needs.

Most PAR programs take their main structures from the Toledo Plan. Although the details vary, most programs contain several common elements. These include having a joint labor-management committee, usually called the PAR Panel, running the program. Also, expert teachers, often called CTs, support and evaluate teachers in the program. Finally, many programs include different procedures for novice and veteran teachers.

A recent review of this approach completed by Harvard University's Graduation School of Education (GSE) Project on the Next Generation of Teachers highlighted the work of seven school districts in its "User's Guide to Peer Assistance and Review". The review concluded that PAR programs are expensive, and districts often must be creative and draw on various sources to fund them. However, administrators and union leaders repeatedly said that PAR's benefits – both financially and in terms of its effect on teacher quality – far outweigh its costs. District and union leaders remarked in the Harvard GSE study about the program as an investment in their teachers. Estimates of program costs range from approximately \$4,000 to \$7,000 per participant.

Of particular note is the Rochester PAR Model, as it is most relevant to the proposed model for early childhood in Massachusetts. In Rochester, most CTs are working with one or two teachers on top of a full-time teaching assignment. Each earns an additional salary stipend. CTs need to be experienced and they serve for two years. Only teachers who have achieved Lead Teacher status on the district's four-step career ladder are eligible to become CTs. Aspiring CTs complete and submit five letters of reference, participate in interviews, and attend training.

The coaching model for Massachusetts will differ from the PAR models used in the K-12 Systems in several important ways. It will focus on a Birth to Age 8 framework within the entire mixed-delivery system of early education and care programs, which includes center-based, family child care (FCC), Head Start, and Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) programs. In addition, PAR models are typically used to not only support educators' growth, but also include a review component to determine if an educator is performing at a satisfactory level to continue in his/her role. The PAC model by necessity will not include the review component, but rather will include an evaluative component to determine if the model is having its intended impact.

The Massachusetts PAC Model

The purpose of the Massachusetts PAC model is to develop high quality early education and out-of-school time programs which will meet the expectation of state standards as defined by QRIS, Workforce Competencies and Early Learning Standards. The model includes opportunities to maximize children's growth and development; advance educators' knowledge, skills and abilities; and to transform practice and retain skilled practitioners. Massachusetts initiated a pilot study of a preliminary PAC model beginning in the spring of 2013. The results of this study will inform adaptations to the PAC model.

It is the intent of the PAC Pilot to include educators and administrators from a variety of early childhood settings including center-based, FCC, preschool, Head Start, and ASOST programs. During this initial implementation year, the goal was to have many applicants for these roles enabling the selection of Consultant Teachers (CTs) and Mentees from each of the EEC regions. Mentees were assigned to CTs by program type, location, and learning objectives. The goal for year two is to include two pairs of consulting administrators (CAs) and mentee administrators (MAs) along with eight pairs of CTs and Mentees per region. The goal in the third year is to have 15 pairs in each region

The PAC model involves collaboration among CTs, Mentees, and, when applicable, the Mentees' Program/Instructional Leaders. Mentees in center-based and ASOST programs will be expected to have supervision and/or support from their Instructional Leader (site director or supervisor) to promote progressive growth and improvement in skills. FCC educators that are part of a FCC System will receive this support through their System, which may include their home visitor or another person identified by the System. Independent FCC educators may identify a peer to provide them with this support.

The PAC model for the peer administrators will involve the Consulting Administrator (CA) and Mentee Administrator (MA). The qualifying MA must be responsible for the direct supervision of educators. The CA will provide peer coaching support to refine the MA's supervision and coaching skills, resulting in the enhancement of program quality. This is a support mechanism for program administrators to grow and provide better leadership to educators.

The CTs and CAs will participate in intensive training and support to increase their content and coaching skills. This includes pre-service training and ongoing development through the formation of regional professional learning communities (PLCs). In the educator model, the Mentee will receive support from both the Program/Instructional Leader and the CT to focus on knowledge and skill development and overall improvement in practice. The program will, in turn, have educators who are better able to meet the needs of children and families and staff who are motivated to implement changes in practice.

Growth will be measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™). Research has shown the importance of teacher or caregiver-child interactions that are emotionally

supportive, responsive to children’s individual and developmental needs, and rich in their provision of support for children’s exploration and understanding of new concepts².

CLASS™ helps identify areas in which improvement is needed and covers three crucial domains of high quality teacher–student interaction:

- **Emotional Support:** Social and emotional functioning in the classroom is an indicator of school readiness. CLASS™ evaluates the dimensions of positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives.
- **Classroom Organization:** Classrooms provide the most opportunities for learning when students are well behaved, active and engaged. CLASS™ considers behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats.
- **Instructional Support:** CLASS™ evaluates whether teachers are making the most of opportunities to effectively support cognitive and language development through the curriculum, with its focus on the roles of concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling.

Reliable observers will conduct an initial assessment using the CLASS™ tool. This assessment will be repeated at the end of the school year to help determine effectiveness of the coach and the model. It is anticipated that scores will significantly increase during and at the conclusion of this process, internalizing and thus resulting in a positive impact on programs and improved outcomes for children. In addition, coaches’ evaluations will include survey results of Mentees, Program/Instructional Leaders, PLC facilitators and PAC Advisory Panel Members assigned to CTs and CAs.

To minimize time out of the classroom, there will be technology support to allow CTs and CAs to be able to observe their Mentees through a video-based instructional platform provided through an EEC contract with Torsh, Inc. (there will be no cost to PAC participants). TALENT, provided through Torsh, Inc., is a turn-key, video based teacher observation, feedback and data analytics platform that promotes accelerated student learning. The online platform has the ability to capture a wide range of daily in-classroom interactions to help increase effectiveness of teachers through facilitated structured and unstructured feedback from mentors and peers via a school branded, private social network. The feedback will in turn provide qualitative and quantitative data to analyze Mentee and MA interaction and instructional patterns through video. CTs and CAs will be paid a small stipend for their efforts. Reimbursement for substitutes will be provided to CT and Mentee programs on a limited and as needed basis to offset participation costs. It is preferred that the same substitute be used by those involved to avoid disruption for the children, families, and staff. In addition, programs will be reimbursed for a

² Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., et al. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children’s development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development* 79(3): 732-749.

limited amount of durable goods to improve Mentee classroom quality. Items will be determined by collaborative input from the CT, Mentee and Program/Instructional Leader.

Consultant Teachers

The CT will apply in a competitive process to participate in the PAC Pilot for a minimum of one year term pending 6 month favorable evaluation with a possible second year. The evaluation will include input from the Program/Instructional Leader and Mentee, and will be reviewed by members of the PAC Advisory Panel. Evaluation will include a review of goals established and met, as well as longer term goals. The formative evaluation process will include an ongoing review of data, CT recommendations, observations, conference notes, and periodic interviews by panel members or EEC.

CTs will receive relationship-based training such as developing learning- focused relationships between professional colleagues prior to beginning their work with Mentees. They will receive training on the CLASS™ observation measure to guide professional development. Regional PLCs will be facilitated by the EPS Grantees in each region and will include peer support and content training.

CT Qualifications:

The CT is required to have an Associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field (a Bachelor's degree is preferred) and, for center-based teachers, be EEC Lead Teacher Qualified or above. In addition, CTs must have:

- At least three years of experience working as an educator in a Center-based, FCC or ASOST program;
- Currently providing direct care to children in a program participating in the MA-QRIS at a Level 2 or above (self-assessed);
- Support of Program/Instructional Leader to participate (if applicable); and
- Access to a computer and the internet for use of video support technology.

Note: Supervisors and Administrators are not eligible to serve as a CT.

CT Responsibilities:

- Attend pre-service orientation training (estimated training is 1 day prior to implementation of project).
- Participate in ongoing CT training (estimated 6 days during the year) and the regional Professional Learning Community to share resources, training, expertise, and experience. (estimated 1 hour per month: may be conference call, face to face, or webinar)
- Provide Peer Assistance and Coaching, including:

- Jointly establishing monthly meetings to last between 60-90 minutes with Mentee (may be virtual; phone, email, video clips) to conduct observations and review progress and provide feedback.
 - The initial meetings will be to develop a relationship, and then to review the data identifying the Mentee’s needs and develop an action plan, including recommended professional development and coaching strategies designed to increase knowledge and skills in identified areas of need.
 - Thereafter, there will be a cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow-up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon detailed evaluation criteria.
 - Jointly establish monthly meetings or check-ins with Program/Instructional Leader;
 - Work with Mentee and Program/Instructional Leader to refine the Mentee’s professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for practice application.
 - Provide reports every 30 days using provided template indicating actions, progress, and/or next steps.
- Maintain confidentiality

Application:

The application process for CTs will include the following:

- Educator resume with qualifications and experience;
- Statement of areas of expertise related to coaching skills, the QRIS, MA Core Competencies and Early Learning Standards;
- Current program profile with QRIS Level
- Signed MOU of support from CTs Program/Instructional Leader (if applicable); and
- At least two recommendations: Professional peer, family from program, or support group member.

Application Review Process:

Tier 1: Screening for completed application, minimum qualifications and experience.

Tier 2: Review by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applications that meet Tier 1 minimum qualifications

Tier 3 (if needed): Interview by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applicants based on Tier 2 scores.

Mentees

The Mentee will receive support from an assigned Consultant Teacher over a one year term pending an ongoing evaluation process. This formative process will include a review of goals established and met, as well as longer term goals. The evaluation process will be an ongoing review of data as well as periodic interviews by panel members or EEC.

Qualifications:

The Mentee must be working directly as an educator, full or part time, in a licensed or license-exempt early education and care program.

Also, Mentees must:

- Be registered in the MA EEC Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry;
- Be working in a program participating in QRIS at Level 2 (final, self-assessed)
- Display a commitment to increasing knowledge and skills related to MA Core Competencies, Early Learning Standards and advancing on the QRIS as evidenced by their Individual Professional Development Plan; and
- Have the support of their Program Director/Instructional Leader (if applicable).
- Have access to technology (video, email, and other electronic methods will be used to support the Mentee).

Note: This is not intended for assistant teachers or FCC assistants.

Responsibilities:

- Attend pre-service orientation training (estimated training is 1 day prior to implementation of project).
- Participate in Peer Assistance and Coaching, including:
 - Jointly establishing monthly meetings with CT to last between 60-90 minutes (may be virtual; phone, email, video clips) to conduct observations and review progress and provide feedback.
 - One of the initial meetings will include a review of the data identifying the Mentee's needs with an action plan, including recommended professional development and coaching strategies designed to increase knowledge and skills in identified areas of need.
 - Thereafter, there will be a cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow-up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon detailed evaluation criteria.
 - Jointly establishing monthly meetings or check-ins with CT, and Program/Instructional Leader.

- Work with CT and Program/Instructional Leader to refine the professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for application to practice.
- Participate in recommended training as determined by CT, Mentee, and identified Program/Instructional Leader.
- Maintain confidentiality

Application:

The application process for Mentees will include the following:

- Statement of areas of need related to the QRIS, MA Core Competencies and Early Learning Standards, and preferred ways to utilize peer coaching;
- Current QRIS Level;
- Signed MOU of support from Program /Instructional Leader (if applicable), and
- One written recommendation: either a co-worker, or parent of a child in care.

Application Review Process:

Tier 1: Screening for completed application and minimum qualifications.

Tier 2: Review by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applications that meet Tier 1 minimum qualifications.

Tier 3: Interview by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applicants based on Tier 2 scores.

Mentee Program/Instructional Leaders and Role of Mentee Programs

The Program/Instructional Leader will vary by setting. For center-based and ASOST programs, this will be the program or site director. For FCC educators that are part of a contracted FCC System, the program leader should be either their home monitor or another person assigned by the System (such as a person assigned to support professional development or QRIS within the system). Independent FCC Educators may choose to identify an individual to serve as their Program/Instructional Leader. An example may be a more experienced FCC educator from a FCC support group.

The expectation for Program/Instructional Leaders is that they will be invested in the PAC project by being engaged, involved, and demonstrates ongoing support for the Mentee and/or CT.

Qualifications:

The Program/Instructional Leader must:

- Be the program director or site coordinator for a center-based or ASOST program;
- Be the home monitor or person assigned by a FCC System to support professional development or QRIS for FCC Educators that are part of a contracted FCC System;
- Have early childhood education and experience if selected by an Independent FCC Educator;
- Be registered in the MA EEC PQ Registry.

Responsibilities of Program/Instructional Leader:

- Attend the pre-service orientation training held prior to the implementation of the project
- Work in collaboration with the CT and Mentee in regard to support, time commitment, and completion of requirements of this project.
- Collaborate with the Mentee and CT to refine the Mentee’s professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for application to practice.
- Participate in the cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon details evaluation criteria.
- Support participation in required observations, trainings and other meetings.
- Program/Instructional Leader ***are encouraged to*** attend the monthly PLC and attendance will likely be expected at least on a quarterly basis.
- For Center-based, ASOST, and FCC Educators who are part of a FCC System, Program/Instructional Leader should provide information needed to receive stipends for substitutes. Independent FCC Educators will provide that information directly.
- Maintain confidentiality

Consultant Administrators

The CA will apply in a competitive process to participate in the PAC Pilot for a minimum of one year term pending 6 month favorable evaluation with a possible second year. The evaluation will include input from the Mentee Administrator, and will be reviewed by members of the PAC Advisory Panel. Evaluation will include a review of goals established and met, as well as longer term goals. The formative evaluation process will include an ongoing review of data, CA recommendations, observations, conference notes, and periodic interviews by panel members or EEC.

CAs will receive relationship-based training such as developing learning- focused relationships between professional colleagues. They will receive training on the CLASS™ observation measure to guide professional development. Regional PLCs will be facilitated by the EPS Grantees in

each region and will include peer support and content training to strengthen their supervisory practices.

CA Qualifications:

The CA is required to have an Associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field (a Bachelor's degree is preferred) and, for center-based administrators, be EEC Director Qualified or above. In addition, CAs must have:

- At least three years of supervisory or coaching/mentoring experience working in a Center-based, FCC system or ASOST program;
- Currently providing direct supervision or coaching and mentoring to educators in a center-based, ASOST or FCC program participating in the MA-QRIS at a Level 2 or above (self-assessed);
- Access to a computer and the internet for use of video support technology.

Note: FCC CA applicants must be part of a contracted FCC System and directly responsible for supervision or coaching of FCC educators (such as home monitor/visitor or FCC System coach)

CA Responsibilities:

- Attend pre-service orientation training (estimated training is 1 day prior to implementation of project).
- Participate in ongoing training (estimated 6 days during the year) and monthly regional Professional Learning Community to share resources, training, expertise, and experience. (estimated 1 hour per month: may be conference call, face to face, or webinar)
- Provide Peer Assistance and Coaching, including:
 - Jointly establishing monthly meetings to last between 60-90 minutes with Mentee (may be virtual; phone, email, video clips) to conduct observations and review progress and provide feedback.
 - The initial meetings will be to develop a relationship, and then to review the Mentee's needs and develop an action plan, including recommended professional development and coaching strategies designed to increase knowledge and skills in identified areas of need.
 - Thereafter, there will be a cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow-up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon detailed evaluation criteria.
 - Work with Mentee Administrator to refine the Mentee's professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for practice application.

- Provide reports every 30 days using provided template indicating actions, progress, and/or next steps.
- Maintain confidentiality

Application:

The application process for CAs will include the following:

- Resume with qualifications and experience;
- Statement of areas of expertise related to coaching skills, the QRIS, MA Core Competencies and Early Learning Standards;
- Current program profile with QRIS Level
- Signed MOU of support from CA’s supervisor; and
- At least two recommendations: Professional peer, educator receiving supervision, or support group member.

Application Review Process:

Tier 1: Screening for completed application, minimum qualifications and experience.

Tier 2: Review by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applications that meet Tier 1 minimum qualifications

Tier 3 (if needed): Interview by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applicants based on Tier 2 scores.

Mentee Administrator

The Mentee Administrator (MA) will receive supervisory and leadership support from an assigned Consultant Administrator over a one year term pending an ongoing evaluation process. This formative process will include a review of goals established and met, as well as longer term goals. The evaluation process will be an ongoing review of data as well as periodic interviews by panel members or EEC.

Qualifications:

The MA must be working directly as an administrator providing supervision and coaching to educators in a licensed or license-exempt early education and care program.

Also, MAs must:

- Be registered in the MA EEC Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry

- Be EEC Director Qualified
- Be working in a program participating in QRIS at Level 2
- Display a commitment to refine their coaching skills and advance in QRIS
- FCC MA applicants must be part of a contracted FCC System
- Have access to technology (video, email, and other electronic methods will be used to support the Mentee).

Note: This is not intended for independent FCC providers or educators who are not providing direct supervision or coaching.

Responsibilities:

- Attend pre-service orientation training (estimated training is 1 day prior to implementation of project).
- Participate in Peer Assistance and Coaching, including:
 - Jointly establishing monthly meetings with CA to last between 60-90 minutes (may be virtual; phone, email, video clips) to conduct administrative observations and review progress and provide feedback.
 - One of the initial meetings will include identification of one educator or classroom team that receives support from the MA and the MA's needs with an action plan, including recommended professional development and coaching strategies designed to increase knowledge and skills in identified areas of need.
 - Thereafter, there will be a cycle of evaluation and coaching that includes continuous mutual goal setting using observations and follow-up conferences to analyze and set practical goals for improvement based upon detailed evaluation criteria.
 - Jointly establishing monthly meetings or check-ins with CA.
- Work with CA to refine the professional development plan including identification of recommended training or courses and strategies for application to practice.
- Participate in recommended training as determined.
- Maintain confidentiality

Application:

The application process for MAs will include the following:

- Statement of areas of need related to coaching and supervision that will result in enhancing the program's QRIS level and preferred ways to utilize peer coaching;
- Current QRIS Level;
- Signed MOU of support from your supervisor with current program profile including basic service delivery information; and

- One written recommendation: either a co-worker or an educator in the program receiving supervision.

Application Review Process:

Tier 1: Screening for completed application and minimum qualifications.

Tier 2: Review by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applications that meet Tier 1 minimum qualifications.

Tier 3 (if needed): Interview by Committee of at least 3 people (may include member of Advisory Panel, EEC representative and other representative) of applicants based on Tier 2 scores.

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