



Measuring the Effectiveness of an ESL Coaching Model

Annala Teemant
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

This project is supported by a National Professional Development grant from OELA.

Identifying professional development models that result in accelerated academic and linguistic development among English language learners (ELLs) is a pressing educational concern, especially in an era demanding that teacher performance be directly linked to student achievement. Classroom-based coaching has proven effective in helping teachers to expand skills, sustain change over time, and improve student achievement (e.g., Speck & Knipe, 2001). Coaching provides teachers with a “chain of assistance” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 83) in their efforts to implement research-based practices. This article describes the growth targets, process, and outcome data of the ESL (English-as-a-Second Language) Effective Pedagogy (EEP) Coaching Model. This is a new, sociocultural, performance-based coaching model (Teemant, Revelles, & Tyra, in prep) focused on research-based practices known to improve ELLs’ student achievement.¹ The EEP coaching model is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978) premise that learning is social, and that through dialogue and interaction with more knowledgeable others—coaches and peers—classroom teachers receive assistance in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to gain the knowledge they need to competently promote the academic development of mainstreamed ELLs.

The Growth Targets for Coaching: Teacher Pedagogy

Teachers want to understand more deeply how their instructional decisions and practices impact student opportunities for meaningful learning. This teacher concern defines the EEP coaching model. EEP coaching is goal-directed, performance-based (observable), and centered on student learning. It calls for teachers to move away from predominantly whole-class, teacher-directed instruction to the use of multiple and differentiated small group activity centers.

The growth targets for EEP coaching are drawn from research disseminated through The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California, Berkeley.² CREDE has articulated a set of five enduring principles of effective pedagogy for working with culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, and Yamaguchi, 2000).

These five enduring principles call for teachers to (1) focus on assisted and sustained language use by students and literacy development across the curriculum (Language and Literacy Development—LLD); (2) ensure that learning experiences cognitively challenge students with clear expectations, feedback, and assistance (Cognitive Challenge—CA); (3) hold regular, small group, goal-directed, evidence-based, student-dominated conversations with students (Instructional Conversation—IC); (4) collaboratively create shared representations of learning with students (Joint Productive Activity—JPA); and (5) purposefully connect new academic concepts directly to the knowledge and expertise students already possess from home, school, and community (Contextualization—CXT).

When applied to coaching, teachers phase in use of each of these enduring principles while simultaneously moving toward increasingly differentiated small-group configurations. A valid and reliable rubric (Doherty, Hilberg, Epalouse, & Tharp, 2002), called the *Standards Performance Continuum* or SPC, outlines concrete, observable levels of teacher implementation. As teachers progress in their attention to these principles, they (1) design activities to use at least three of the principles simultaneously, (2) improve skills in assessing and assisting student development while in small groups, and (3) use differentiation to maximize student learning on a daily basis.

The Coaching Process

The EEP coaching process begins with a 30-hour workshop focused on CREDE’s principles of effective pedagogy. Using the SPC rubric, teachers view and critique multiple video clips of classroom instruction, then collaboratively practice designing units that rely on multiple and differentiated activity centers, including the teacher instructional conversation.

The intensive workshop is followed by extensive classroom-based coaching with individual teachers. Seven coaching sessions (i.e., approximately 14 hours of coaching) are held across the school year. These instructional coaching sessions have four steps (Revelles, 2005): (1) a 30-minute pre-conference during which the teacher and

¹ See for example Doherty et al. (2004), Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp (2003); Saunders & Goldenberg (1999).

² For more information on the CREDE program please see: <http://crede.berkeley.edu/>

coach collaboratively plan a lesson to be observed; (2) a 45-minute observation, during which the coach collects data about the interactions generated by designed activities; (3) a 30-minute post-conference, during which the coach and teacher collaboratively analyze and reflect upon what can be learned from the observational data and generate next steps for improving practice; followed by (4) a period of independent practice by the teacher before the next coaching session. The dialogue between the coach and teacher leads to ongoing cycles of preparing, implementing, assessing, and assisting teacher growth. The ultimate goal is for teachers to regularly have all students, meaningfully grouped for academic purposes, rotate through the teacher's instructional conversation center while the other students work with peers on challenging, meaningful, and language-rich academic tasks.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The EEP coaching model of professional development has been in development for four years (Teemant, Banks, Tyra, & Revels, in prep). Most recently, a quasi-experimental design was used to investigate the effectiveness of EEP coaching with 29 elementary school teachers (11 teachers in the control group; 18 teachers in the coaching intervention) during their 90-minute language arts blocks. Three pre- and two post-intervention observations (30 minutes each) were conducted using the SPC rubric, which captured teachers' use of effective pedagogy and activity centers. A teacher can score as high as a 4 on each principle, for a total of 20 possible points on the SPC scale. In addition, the highest level of cognitive challenge was recorded for each observation using Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (i.e., where 1 = know, 2 = comprehend, 3 = apply, 4 = analyze, 5 = synthesize, and 6 = evaluate).

Three findings demonstrate that the EEP coaching model led to radical and statistically significant changes in mainstream teacher pedagogy. First, Table 1 shows the baseline and post-intervention change score means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for control and experimental group teachers on the SPC observation rubric. While there were no baseline group differences, coaching did lead coached teachers to make significant improvements in their use of the five principles of effective pedagogy.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Use of Effective Pedagogy by Teacher Groups

Groups	Scale	Pre-Intervention Baseline Scores			Post-Intervention Change Scores		
		n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Control	JPA Joint Productive Activity	11	2.33	.49	7	-1.19	.74
	LLD Language & Literacy Development	11	1.64	.69	7	-.21	.74
	CXT Contextualization	11	1.42	.34	7	.83	.66
	CA Cognitive Challenge	11	1.48	.90	7	-.10	1.17
	IC Instructional Conversation	11	.76	.58	7	.43	.86
	TOTAL	11	7.64	2.20	7	-.24	2.16
Experimental	JPA Joint Productive Activity	18	1.79	.57	18	1.74	1.09
	LLD Language & Literacy Development	18	1.85	.63	18	1.93	.73
	CXT Contextualization	18	1.30	.51	18	1.97	1.14
	CA Cognitive Challenge	18	1.72	.85	18	1.78	1.27
	IC Instructional Conversation	18	.74	.52	18	2.76	1.13
	TOTAL	18	7.40	1.78	18	10.16	4.19

Note: All post-intervention change scores between groups are statistically significant: $F(1, 23) = 42.11$ (JPA); 42.68 (LLD); 6.07 (CXT); 11.40 (CA); 24.06 (IC); and 38.46 (Total), $p < .05$.

Second, baseline data demonstrated that teachers used whole-class, teacher-directed instruction during the literacy blocks for 75% of the time, with only 25% of instruction being in small groups. Significant differences were shown in post-intervention observations. Coached teachers used significantly more activity centers ($F(1, 24) = 11.22, p < .01$), spending 86% of time in small-group configurations and only 14% in whole-class instruction.

Third, prior to coaching, 62% of observations showed that teachers used activities at the lowest levels of cognitive challenge—know/recall (43%) or comprehend (19%)—with no group differences ($M = 2.29$ on a six-point scale; $SD = 1.07$). Significant group differences resulted from coaching, with coached teachers ($F(1,24) = 8.81, p < .01$) using activities requiring higher levels of cognitive challenge (pre-to-post change score $M = 1.87$; $SD = 1.43$).

Taken together, these quantitative findings demonstrate that the EEP coaching model results in substantially transformed mainstream classrooms. Teachers differentiate instruction, contextualize new learning by using students' previous knowledge, value and promote student talk and interaction, require cognitively challenging work, and provide assistance and feedback that improves student learning. This professional development model, designed especially for coaching mainstream teachers, holds promise for helping all teachers to meet the needs of mainstreamed ELLs.

References

- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives, Handbook I: The cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.
- Doherly, R. W., Echavaria, J., Estrada, P., Goldenberg, C., Hilberg, R.S., Saunders, W.M. & Tharp, R.G. (2004). *Research evidence: Five standards for effective pedagogy and student outcomes*. Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research, Diversity & Excellence. Retrieved March 25, 2010 from http://gse.berkeley.edu/research/crede/pdf/g1_2004.pdf
- Doherly, R. W., Hilberg, R. S., Epalouse, G., & Tharp, R. G. (2002). Standards Performance Continuum: Development and validation of a measure of effective pedagogy. *Journal of Educational Research*, 96(2), 78–89.
- Doherly, R. W., Hilberg, R. S., Pinal, A., & Tharp, R. G. (2003). Five standards and student achievement. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 1(1), 1–24.
- Revels, C. (2005). *Instructional coaching cycle*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Saunders, W., & Goldenberg, C. (1999). *The effects of comprehensive language arts/transition program on the literacy development of English learners* (Technical Report). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research, Diversity & Excellence.
- Speck, M., & Knipe, C. (2001). *Why can't we get it right? Professional development in our schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Teemant, A., Banks, J., Tyra, S., & Revels, C. (in prep). *A sociocultural coaching model for teachers of ELLs: A mixed methods study*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Teemant, A., Revels, C., & Tyra, A. (in prep). *Understanding teacher change through performance-based instructional coaching*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Tharp, R. G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. New York, NY: Cambridge University.
- Tharp, R. G., Estrada, P., Dalton, S. S., & Yamaguchi, L. (2000). *Teaching transformed: Achieving excellence, fairness, inclusion, and harmony*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Trans. and Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

