



# Teaching Skills That Matter in Adult Education



## Strategic Coaching Guide

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# Introduction

The **Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) in Adult Education** project is a professional development initiative of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) that is funded through Education Technical Assistance and Support Services. The project is focused on improving instruction to build the skills adult learners need to meet the demands of the workplace and other domains of their lives. The project, conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in partnership with Jobs for the Future (JFF), is focused on effective instruction and will identify, develop, and deploy high-quality, evidence-based materials and training to integrate transferable skills development in the areas of civics education, digital literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, and workforce preparation skills into adult education and literacy instruction. A critical component of the TSTM program is participant coaching. TSTM coaches will provide instructors, working in state teams, with strategic, in-depth coaching during each phase of the project. This **Strategic Coaching Guide** is designed to guide your technical assistance approach as you support the instructors and states participating in the TSTM project.

**This guide is presented in five sections:**

- Section 1** Initial coaching materials and resources utilized during the in-person September 11–13, 2019, Teaching Skills That Matter Training Workshop
- Sections 2–3** A comprehensive strategic coaching guide designed to support the successful delivery of coaching and technical assistance across the 3-year project
- Section 4** Guidance on and engagement with the TSTM Community of Practice
- Section 5** Coaching strategies and resources to fundamentally support the continued development of good coaching practices

The Appendices provide useful templates and suggestions for further reading.

In partnership with OCTAE, we are working collectively to enhance our education and workforce systems and drive access to economic advancement for all. In that spirit, this strategic coaching guide is grounded in a research-based, learner-centered design framework aligned with the overall goals of TSTM to improve adult education and literacy instruction to address the skills adult learners need for meeting the demands of the contexts relevant to student’s lives, including the workforce, civics, digital literacy, health, and financial well-being. As we build capacity among teachers participating in the pilot, we will lay the groundwork for *scaling the effective integration of the “skills that matter”* into adult education and literacy practice across the field.

For this purpose, we define a coaching framework and set of approaches to strategic coaching, as strong partnership and relationship building that starts with where the teacher is at, with a



coaching framework that is built on working collaboratively to help teachers advance toward full implementation of TSTM practices. All this is done with the goal of positive student impact and changing the field for the better.

AIR and JFF believe that this guide will provide new and experienced subject matter experts (SMEs) and coaches with the tools to enhance and accelerate the work of the teacher teams. Adults learn in different ways, and effective coaches adapt to the needs of the learner. It is important that this guide be viewed as a resource instead of a prescriptive set of instructions that would encompass all adult learning and discount the need to pivot and adapt. The content is purposefully broad enough to apply to a variety of contexts and content areas. Coaches are encouraged to pick and choose what they need for their specific situations.

In addition to this guide, the AIR and JFF team will be creating an online community of practice (CoP) site with more coaching tools, additional resources, and opportunity to share challenges and successes. Additional information about the project's coach CoP is in Section 4 of this guide.



# SECTION 1: Teaching Skills That Matter Coaches' Training Workshop Materials

## Overview of the Project

To build capacity across states, the AIR and JFF team is developing a variety of core resources, including a TSTM toolkit, webinars, CoP, training, and coaching for 25 states over the course of 3 years. The project will start with a pilot of five states and 20 instructors. These efforts will be built out and expanded to Cohorts 2 and 3, with 20 more states and technical assistance (for 80 additional instructors from those 20 states).

The teachers will be implementing the training materials in their own classrooms across five content areas—civics education, digital literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, and workforce preparation—and working as teacher leaders to sustain the effort locally and beyond the project.

### In this project, the skills that matter include:

- Adaptability and willingness to learn
- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Problem solving
- Processing and analyzing information
- Navigating systems
- Respecting differences and diversity
- Self-awareness

Teacher teams (four per state) will receive training and technical assistance in two phases, with an additional field-building plan from coaches.

1. **Pilot.** There will be ten coaches. Each coach is assigned to two instructors. The pilot will include twenty instructors, four per state, from five states, which provides an opportunity to test the structure of the training and technical assistance and the materials developed (September 2019–March 2020).
2. **Cohorts 2 and 3.** There will be twenty coaches. Each coach will work with four instructors. This phase will involve eighty instructors, working in teams of four from 20 additional states (August 2020–March/April 2021).
3. **Field building.** There will be efforts for broad dissemination to the field at large for all other teachers and states, including the development of eight instructional videos and a variety of state, regional, national, and virtual conferences.

## *Providing Coaching and Technical Assistance as a Subject Matter Expert*

**Subject matter experts** will play an essential role in the planning, development, and delivery of the training and technical assistance that provides practical support and useful tools for instructors on how to build knowledge and skills that are transferable and useful to adult



learners in multiple contexts, including civic life, workforce participation, digital environments, and health and financial well-being.

SMEs will have two roles in the project: (1) **content leaders** who assist with training material review, development, and delivery; and (2) **coaches** who provide state teams and instructors with the support needed to effectively implement the training materials in their classrooms and to share the learning locally. We will also have a coach of coaches (CoC) role to help coordinate and provide in-depth technical content and coaching expertise.

## Coaching Overview

The coaches will provide the teacher teams with strategic, in-depth coaching, with a goal of preparing the participants to be leaders in teaching the strategies learned to other individuals in the state.

- AIR and JFF will seek to assign coaches to states based on the alignment between the coaches' experiences and expertise and the teachers' needs.
- The coaches will work together with a state's four teachers to help them use and apply **with strong fidelity**, the TSTM toolkit. This toolkit is the foundation of the entire project. The overall goal for coaches is to support teachers as they select and test the toolkit's robust lesson plans, activities, and materials. Teachers are expected to also test out new instructional approaches such as project-based, problem-based, and/or integrated and contextualized learning, with students.
- Coaches will hold virtual meetings biweekly with the teachers.
- Coaches will have on-site, face-to-face meetings twice during the cycle. These meetings will happen between webinars.
- After receiving training with participants on the development of sustainability plans, coaches will support the teachers in developing sustainability plans and a rollout training in their state to help expand and scale teaching the skills that matter.
- Coaches will provide AIR, JFF, and OCTAE with consistent updates about the progress and implementation of the project with their teachers (a) by utilizing an online coaching tracking tool to document advancements via bimonthly check-in calls and (b) through periodic in-person site visits where coaches will note progress points and challenges and assess changes in instructional approaches (also via the online coaching tracking tool). (See Appendix A for supporting materials.) Coaches will also have engagement in a coaching CoP to provide a real-time platform for problem solving (details further on).

We will launch two types of CoPs, one for coaches and one for participants. These CoPs will play a critical role in the success of the project as a whole and the sustainability of the effort beyond the project's period of performance.



## Value and Goals of Coaching

Coaching continues to be a valued method for improving teacher practice and learner outcomes across multiple disciplines. As our economy evolves, it will continue to be a way to ensure connections and opportunities for learners and workers, as well as to reinforce the contributions and value of the coaches themselves. Even though a seminal research report by Joyce and Showers (1982) is from many years ago, it still remains one of the most important about the value and potential for coaching in established industries like health care and business as well as emerging technical fields.

Researchers have found that the most common form of professional development, the tool that many adult education and other education programs rely on, is infrequent and decontextualized training that has resulted in the implementation of less than 20% of new practices in the classroom setting. Conversely, Joyce and Showers found that training reinforced by ongoing coaching led to 80% to 90% of implementation of new practices.

Research has identified five key features of effective professional development for educators (Desimone, 2011). These key features: content focus, active learning, sustained duration, coherence, and collective participation, provide the foundation for both the training and the coaching components of the TSTM project. Desimone and Pak (2017) refer to more recent research on coaching (e.g., Knight, 2015) to suggest that when the key features of effective professional development are accompanied by coaching support there is great potential to improve teaching practices.

Drawing from this study, and others, coaching is seen as a strong strategy to improve teaching and learning across the spectrum of adult learners. Consistent support has come from a variety of private foundations: federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor; nonprofit intermediaries like JFF and AIR; and other educational organizations and technical assistance networks. We believe it is time to reinforce the value of coaching as a proven enhancement of the impact of learner outcomes, as well as investments and resources, for the past and for the future.

However, despite the growing value of coaching, there are very few formal certification programs or university preparation programs. In other words, not much exists to help train teachers or other related practitioners on *how* to coach (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Galluci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). Given the flexibility required for good coaching and the expected outcomes for teaching and learning, many, including those in this important project, can benefit from a clear understanding of the value and goals of coaching and strategies and models for how to approach coaching and to coach as effectively as possible.

While there is diversity among coaching approaches, this initiative, Teaching Skills That Matter, and this strategic coaching guide address coaching in three areas:



- Improving teaching practice, with a particular emphasis on the five core Teaching Skills That Matter areas: workforce preparation, digital literacy, health literacy, civics education, and financial literacy. Research indicates that coaching can be highly effective in producing stronger outcomes, including evidence-based practices (Knight, 2009, 2018; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Snyder et al., 2015).
- Improving learner academic and behavioral outcomes through improved teaching practices.
- Supporting the teachers and state leaders in expanding the instructional methodologies and enhanced curriculum from TSTM to reach beyond the initial set of teachers and programs to scale across the state.

### **Coach of Coaches Job Description (Subject Matter Expert)**

The CoC will work collaboratively with project staff and the cadre of coaches. This leader plays an essential role in providing the training and ongoing support and guidance to the TSTM instructional peer coaches as they work with instructors and states.

#### **The CoC will**

- support the initial and ongoing training of coaches during the pilot phase and for Cohorts 2 and 3 across the initiative.
- serve as SMEs and second reviewers if/when coaches wish to share teacher instructional practices via mobile technologies.
- be the first point of contact should a coach have a question or need for guidance.
- co-lead the monthly coaching, peer sharing CoP to accelerate the work across the teaching cadre.
- co-lead and support the online peer coaching project platform where resources, information, assets, and other initiative-related materials will be posted to help coaches share and shorten the learning curve for their teachers.
- serve as a thought partner for ideas or approaches coaches/SMEs might consider.
- help problem-solve issues or challenges.

### **Coach/SME Job Description**

#### **Coaches are**

- current classroom instructors with experience working with adult education students or recent adult education classroom instructors (classroom teaching experience within the past 12 months) who remain working in the adult education field, preferably as an instructional leader or professional developer.
- experienced adult education teachers, trainers, and coaches who can provide real-world instructional insights.



- skilled at building strong coaching relationships and facilitating learning through the use of questions;
- able to help solve issues or challenges.
- knowledgeable of best and current practices in adult education.
- aware of states' strengths and needs.
- able to work through challenges and coach areas for growth with the participants.
- committed to building support from this work with state-level staff for scale and increased impact.
- knowledgeable in high-impact instructional strategies and one or more topics relevant to the project's focus, which include integrating workforce preparation with basic-skills instruction, digital literacy, civic education, curriculum and instructional design, health literacy, and financial literacy.
- able to commit to the timeline of the project and all coaching deliverables.



## SECTION 2: Strategic Coaching Approach

Coaching addresses teachers' needs as they design, implement, and help to scale instructional practices that serve adult learners to meet the demands of the labor market and navigate other essential responsibilities in their lives. Toward that end, this section presents information about strategic coaching strategies and principles and various approaches.

### Strategic Coaching Philosophy

We believe that research-based practices focused on helping the instructors drive these core TSTM areas within learner-centered instructional strategies and approaches will meet the goals of the initiative.

Strategic coaching is characterized by the following beliefs:

- The most powerful expertise is among adult education instructors who work in the classroom, and therefore we approach coaching from an “asset based” place; we build from where teachers are.
- As coaches, we are not the “experts” as much as we are in the role of asking provocative questions and helping teachers and state leaders understand the context for the new work and implement it for the long term.
- Coaching involves courage and strength. We must be able to hold up a mirror to teachers and core stakeholders so that they can acquire new understandings and engage in key change.
- We will thoughtfully communicate with teachers about their progress (or loss of momentum) and be “critical friends” to press for effective instructional redesign, delivery, and flexibility.
- Instructional and programmatic change takes time; the broad involvement of more teachers and the commitment of top state leadership to broad implementation, resources, scaling, and continuous improvement are all required.

*“Coaches can help teachers learn and grow not by telling them what to do but by asking questions and promoting inquiry.” (Knight, 2016)*

### Core Coaching Principles

To support coaches doing this work, our guiding coaching principles include the following:

- **Equity.** Coaches demonstrate and foster a commitment to improving the education and career outcomes of all adult learners and providing subsequent technical assistance and unwavering support for those working in this field as well.
- **Access.** Coaches are committed to ensuring that barriers to access are addressed during instructional and program design and implementation.



- **Success.** Coaches contribute evidence-based strategies and content expertise to help teacher teams strengthen learners' success across the TSTM areas, which in turn further advance the pursuit of economic mobility for students, stronger local economies, and a more effective adult education system.
- **Teacher/learner centered.** Coaching support and technical assistance are customized according to the local context and teacher goals, needs, strengths, and capacity, while remaining true to the goals and core principles and intended outcomes.
- **Aligned.** Coaches work to build coherence and help teachers align the curriculum to other programs and support services to achieve their goals.
- **Responsive.** Coaches are responsive to their teachers and to local and state context and conditions, with the ability to think critically and respond quickly to teacher needs and requests for assistance or information.
- **Accelerating.** Our coaching is designed to accelerate the learning and implementation of TSTM for teachers giving them the ability to leverage our coaching; project team expertise; online resources, strategic support and the toolkit resources.

*“Sincerity drives coaches to become the best versions of themselves and encourages teachers to do the same by illuminating teacher voice and supporting teacher innovation and creativity.”*  
(Lang-Raad, 2018)

Our coaching principles are also informed by and draw from the expansive body of research from Jim Knight's *Principles of Partnership* (2018), which are as follows:

**Equality.** The coaches and teachers each contribute in an equitable fashion toward the solutions, work, and outcomes. All points of view are respected and valued.

**Choice.** Teachers have ownership and choice about the structure and management of their instructional practices and teaching methods. Teachers have the ability, confidence, and comfort to say *yes and no* to recommendations.

**Dialogue.** In coaching partnerships, deeply respectful, empathic conversation is where the important work happens. Open dialogue in the coaching/teacher exchanges will allow teachers to share ideas and test strategies. Inquiry and innovation can occur when teachers share their thoughts, questions, and challenges with the coach, with one another, and through dialogue in the CoP.

**Voice.** The coaching relationship is designed to give every teacher the opportunity to feel heard. Listening is the most important skill for coaches to enhance in working with teachers. Listening can help coaches appear more authentic in their efforts with teachers, thereby creating a better willingness for teachers to share opinions and experiences.



**Praxis.** Praxis has to do with applying one’s learning in practice. The initiative and coaching facilitate the space that will give teachers the opportunity to discuss changes in habits, instructional delivery, designs, and activities, as well as to share whether these are making a difference with students.

**Reciprocity.** The coach-teacher relationship is well suited for coaches to learn from teachers and vice versa. Since the love of the classroom and for student learning is the central theme, we anticipate an exchange that is spirited and lively. In respectful partnerships, our own thoughts and ideas are no more important than those of our partners; everyone has something to teach us (Knight, 2007, p. 64).

**Reflection.** Coaches will be supporting their teachers to reflect on their work—before, during, and after. Similarly, coaches will be reflecting on their coaching experiences and interactions with teachers. The ongoing coaching relationship will provide a space and arc for sharing reflections and sharpening practice.

In this work, coaches position teachers as the key decision makers and know that teachers’ opinions matter.

## Coaching Strategies

The following section will provide tips about forming relationships with the teachers, communicating feedback throughout the coaching process, and supporting teacher-related peer sharing.

These coaching strategies draw from recognized sources, including the National Center for Systemic Improvement’s report, *Effective Coaching: Improving Teacher Outcomes for All Learners (2015)*. (See Exhibit 1.)

**Coaching strategies with the strongest evidence for improving teacher practice include these ones:**

**Performance feedback.** Providing performance feedback is a critical coaching strategy that allows the coach to analyze and present information and data to support teachers in validating and/or enhancing their practice. Performance feedback could include on-site visit observations of teaching with time to debrief afterward about elements that worked or might need enhancement. Performance feedback includes feedback to teachers when meeting on site-visits, and talking virtually. Feedback can be about the implementation of the toolkit’s lesson plans, instructional approach or other observations. Feedback is also needed to review the pace of progress, accomplishment of work-plan goals, ability to work out challenges, or to identify and problem-solve issues or

Exhibit 1. Effective Coaching Strategies



“sticking points.” Feedback is most effective when it is specific, positive, timely, and corrective, if warranted.

**Alliance- and relationship-building strategies.** The development of a positive, trust-based relationship between the coach and teacher is paramount. This strong alliance between teachers and coaches establishes a solid foundation for all subsequent work. A strong collaborative partnership is enhanced through mutual respect, support, and shared expertise. Alliance building facilitates exchanges with teachers on a variety of levels, including an opening for teachers to share when things aren’t going as planned, when they are behind schedule, or when challenges stop progress. We’ll talk a lot about the coach being a “critical friend.” With a strong relationship, both positive feedback and any course corrections can be made.

**Demonstration/observation.** This strategy is best accomplished when observing a teacher deliver elements of the TSTM curriculum or adapt current teaching practices to embed or amplify the content, such as using financial literacy concepts within math lesson plans during an on-site visit. With the cooperation of the teachers, delivery can be filmed using mobile video technologies to record parts of the TSTM instructional delivery for the coach to review and provide performance feedback. A teacher’s lesson could be filmed on a mobile phone and sent to the coach for review, or more complex recordings with a dedicated camera or Webex technologies can be deployed in real time.

**Peer sharing.** This coaching strategy acknowledges and leverages the deep talent and expertise across the entire set of 20 teachers engaged in the pilot project, and more when Cohorts 2 and 3 are launched. Often, when coaching assignments are made and strong and positive relationships are built between coaches and their teachers, teachers go to coaches/SMEs for answers. We encourage coaches to develop a coaching strategy that also supports teachers reaching out and connecting with one another. While teachers will have their own CoP, sometimes the need for an idea, resource, or thought partnership happens outside of the monthly CoP contact points. Coaches should try to empower their teachers to share their questions and learnings and engage in peer sharing. Strategies to do this include e-mail introductions to connect teachers with similar issues, shared accomplishments from a teacher with others to help catalyze outreach, posted questions for the CoP, or case-study examples that encourage an exchange of strategies. Exhibit 2 shows when to use the coaching strategies described above.



## Exhibit 2. When to Use Coaching Strategies

Effective Coaching Strategies	Description	When Used
<p><b>Alliance and Relationship-Building Strategies</b></p>	<p>Using specific strategies that relate to factors of alliance to build a positive relationship in the teacher-coach model</p> <p>Factors that build the relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Expertise</li> <li>• Conveying that coaching is nonevaluative</li> </ul> <p>Examples of relationship-building strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathetic listening</li> <li>• Reflecting, restating and summarizing information conveyed by the teacher</li> <li>• Conveying expertise in teaching and deep content-area knowledge</li> <li>• Identifying and supporting teachers' goals and needs</li> </ul>	<p>Every coaching phase</p> <p>Every coaching phase</p>
<p><b>Performance Feedback</b></p>	<p>Presenting formal or informal feedback and data about the teacher's use of the specific TSTM curricula, program, intervention, or practice and feedback about overall piloting progress.</p> <p>Characteristics of effective feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific</li> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Corrective (if warranted)</li> <li>• Timely</li> </ul> <p><i>Delivery:</i> Verbal, written, or graphical information; research; examples of exemplars presented during</p>	<p>Every coaching phase and possibly during on-site visit, or via mobile phone technologies</p>



Effective Coaching Strategies	Description	When Used
	pre-post observation or via mobile or Webex technologies.	
<b>Demonstration/ Observation</b>	Watching the teacher use specific TSTM curricula in the classroom during a site visit. Observing exercise, activity, or learner-centered practice; or using video mobile phone technology to record the teacher and/or students in action and sending video coach review.	Every coaching phase
<b>Peer Sharing</b>	<p>Encouraging intentional connection points between teachers to problem-solve and accelerate learning and implementation.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing a contact list of teachers and their intended areas of implementation</li> <li>• Providing thought partnership e-mail introductions</li> <li>• Coach sharing key accomplishments and encouraging other teachers to seek details</li> </ul>	



## What is a critical friend?

This coaching guide has stated that TSTM coaches will carry out their coaching work with teachers as critical friends. What is a critical friend?

Tasks	Coach	Expert	Tasks	Coach	Expert
Focus on enabling others to build capacity			Ask questions		
Make decisions			Provide solutions		
Listen, while preparing what to say next			Assist teachers to develop their own solutions		
Guide the decision-making process			Listen actively		
Focus on doing work efficiently			Answer questions		

Costa and Kallick (1993) offer the useful analogy of going to the eye doctor to have one's eyes examined. During an eye exam, the doctor flips through a range of lenses until the patient can see clearly. In a similar manner, a critical friend offers another lens through which to see things more clearly.

Trust is the quintessential quality in any coaching relationship including one in which a coach serves as a critical friend. Costa and Kallick explain that "a critical friend... is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work."



## ***Trust is Essential in a Coaching Relationship***

Jim Knight (2017) has identified five important qualities of trust for coach/teacher relationships.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

A trusted coach ...

- ***Is a Steward:*** The coach ensures the relationship is a safe one. The coach cares about his/her partner and wants what's best for the partner.
- ***Is Competent:*** The coach understands adult learning and has in depth knowledge and experience related to effective instructional strategies. The teacher believes that the coach is going to provide support to enhance the teacher's practice.
- ***Is Reliable:*** The teacher can count on the coach to follow through on commitments and in a timely manner.
- ***Embodies Warmth:*** The coach demonstrates empathy and treats others with kindness and warmth; the coach is readily able to make emotional connections.
- ***Exhibits Good Character*** – The coach is transparent, non-judgmental, and honest.



## Listening as an Essential Coaching Skill

Listening is the most essential skill in coaching. Good listening is humanizing; it is a way to show respect to others. Good listeners show they authentically want to hear what their conversation partner has to say. To listen and ask questions effectively ...

- Commit to listen.
- Be curious.
- Assume people are doing their best.
- Make sure your partner does most of the talking.
- Listen for the “inner voice,” i.e., “the real meaning of what the [teacher] is saying” (p. 76).
- Before speaking, pause and affirm.
- Before speaking, consider “Will this comment open up or close down this conversation?”
- Allow for silence.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Ask, “And what else?”
- Ask for clarification when uncertain.
- Never interrupt. Interrupting even to offer a positive comment can be rude.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Avoid giving advice disguised as a question.
- Avoid giving advice period – unless it’s asked for.
- Avoid judgment. (As Knight (2016) writes, “...judgment destroys equality and creates unsafe environments for conversation” (p. 33).

Source: (Knight, 2018, p. 75, p. 82).

### Tips from experienced coaches:

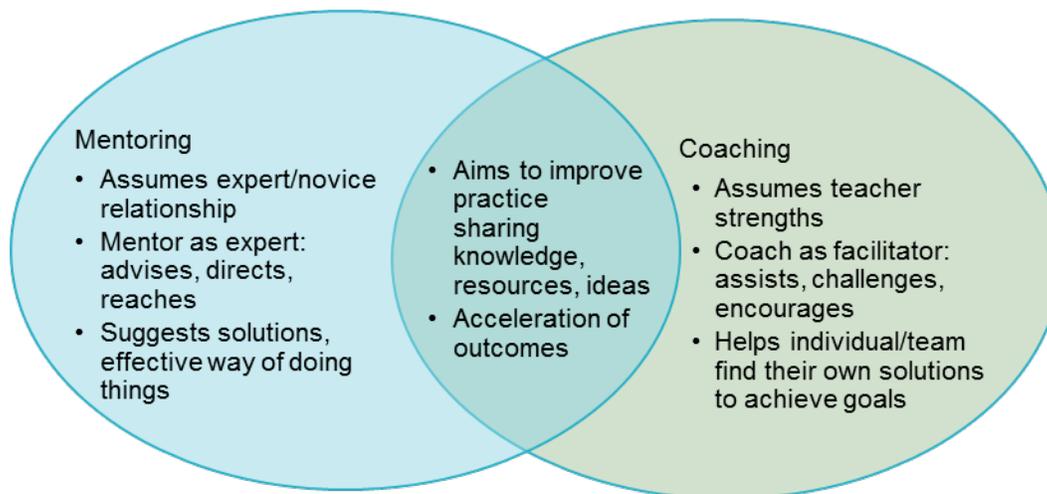
- *Focus the most on what they need to do as a priority and leave the little stuff alone at the beginning.*
- *Don’t do the work for them; they are talented, capable professionals.*
- *Have expectations—this is something they signed up for, and they need to commit the time.*
- *Don’t ignore the warning signs when something is sliding off course; have the strength and courage to address the issue.*
- *Remember to have fun and to celebrate the milestones.*
- *Include questions that help clarify the progress of the work and look for what isn’t being discussed.*
- *Know when to be a cheerleader and know when to be a leader—you need both to be effective.*
- *Get to a deeper level of detail early in the process by asking the important questions and establishing trust.*



## Mentoring Versus Coaching

Coaching shares some commonalities but differs from mentoring in several ways outlined in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3. Mentoring and Coaching Compared**



## Coaching Mini Case-Study Scenarios Depicting Challenges

Often, coaches will be presented with a set of questions, challenges, or changing circumstances that require them to be patient and nimble. To help prepare coaches and SMEs for some possible scenarios that could be challenging, we present the following case studies depicting issues that may arise and offer a set of possible responses. We want to acknowledge that coaching and implementation is sometimes messy work. Human relationships are always complex. While our possible solutions may be helpful as a starting point, nuances and contextual variations always come into play. From a process standpoint, first try to help solve the challenge in partnership with your teacher(s). When needed, the TSTM CoC is also available to consult on challenges, as well as the AIR and JFF project team.

### ***Mini Case-Study Challenge 1 (Progress Challenge)***

Following the TSTM Training Workshop, teachers seem to be off to a solid start—actively redesigning curriculum, talking through how they are going to embed activities that reinforce financial literacy, or working on workforce preparation skills. However, one of the teachers is off to a slow start. While committed to the work, very little is happening. You try motivating, you try extra check-ins, you try a group call to help the teacher see how others are progressing, but no matter what you try, progress is very slow. What now?



### **Possible solutions:**

- Raise the red flag with the CoC and AIR/JFF project leadership team.
- Bring up this challenge and context during the monthly coach CoP calls.
- Ensure that your coaching performance feedback to the teacher is clear about the need to pick up the pace and how the slow start is not consistent with intended progress.
- Keep notes from the bimonthly coaching calls with the teacher, and immediately send a brief e-mail with the decisions or actions the teacher has committed to during the call to help with accountability and support as a follow-up.
- Understand that there may be circumstances that are causing the delay, and if progress is forthcoming, keep at it.
- If the implementation and project are at risk and the teacher is not meeting expectations over a period of time given consistent and clear feedback, have a conversation with the teacher to determine why this project isn't more of a priority, and figure out if the teacher or the contextual environment is not a good match at this time.
- If the coach has a recommendation about the continuation (or not) of the project with the teacher, the overall decision is made by the project leadership team with guidance from the CoC.

### ***Mini Case-Study Challenge 2 (Trust Challenge)***

One of the teachers you are coaching is a little hard to read. During your first site visit, when you are talking about the project with the teacher and starting to get into the details, he seems to be getting more and more resistant about what you are offering. A wall seems to be going up, and you are wondering how to move forward if the teacher is unlikely to engage constructively with you.

### **Possible solutions:**

- A key solution is exemplified by the work of Jim Knight, a leading national researcher on instructional coaching practices. The principles of coaching reinforce your work as a coach in the following ways: Professionals want to make decisions for themselves and be recognized with the status they feel they deserve. They may take it personally when they think others are criticizing their work (even if you are not). For this example, try to ensure that the teacher is able to see how this work and instructional redesign is personally relevant and will improve student success. Consistent with our coaching philosophy, coaches should position themselves as partners by respecting teachers' professional autonomy, seeing teachers as equals, offering many choices, giving teachers voice, taking a dialogical approach to interactions, encouraging reflection and real-life application, and seeing coaching as a reciprocal learning opportunity ( Knight, 2016).



- If trying to build a positive dialogue and constructive relationship doesn't seem to be working, sometimes the coach and teacher match is not a strong one. The CoC and the AIR and JFF teams can talk about making a change if the communication or trust can't be built over a period of time.

### ***Mini Case-Study Challenge 3 (Leadership Support Challenge)***

You've had a really strong start coaching one of your teachers. She has high energy and a great set of ideas for implementing TSTM materials. She just called you and shared that she doesn't have the administrative support from her supervisor as more and more activities and work is unfolding in her program/department. How do you handle this scenario?

#### **Possible solutions:**

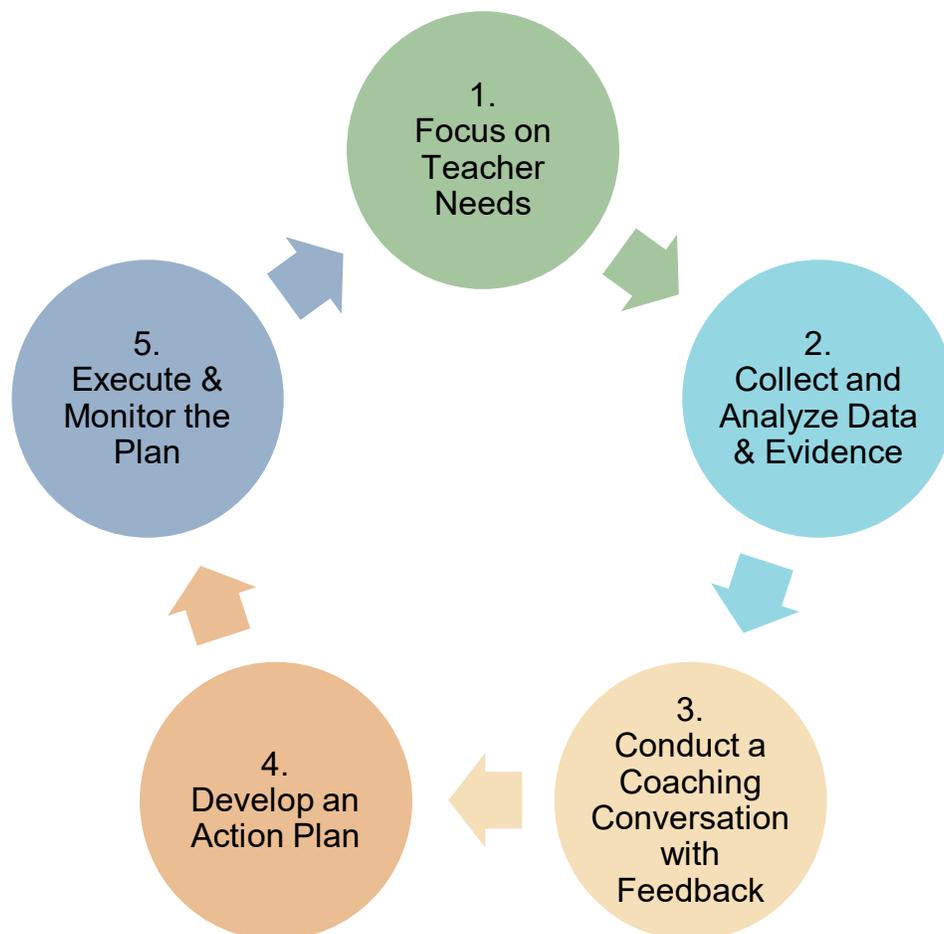
- Raise the red flag with the CoC and the AIR/JFF project leadership team.
- Bring up this challenge and context during the monthly Coach CoP calls
- Encourage the teacher to share data/outcomes/student voice about the positive work coming from TSTM.
- Explore whether the TSTM state leader can help support the implementation at the local level.
- Find ways in which teacher can showcase what other states and local programs are doing as a strategy to amplify the importance of the program's work.



## Coaching Models

As noted, coaching and technical assistance is one of the most well-researched topics across an expanding number of disciplines, including education, business, and health care. For this work, we present a general framework or coaching model with the flexibility to be adapted and utilized in ways that work for coaches and their teachers. Generally, we think about a coaching model within a multistep process, as in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. Instructional Coaching Model



**Focus on teacher needs.** The core curricular goals of TSTM and the implementation of workforce preparation skills including financial literacy, civics education, health literacy, and digital literacy drive the content, and the coaching approach is based on the needs of the teacher. The teachers may be starting from scratch or fairly advanced, but accelerating their work from wherever they are starting is the goal of early coaching. This part of the process doesn't just happen at the beginning of the project. Due to the cyclical nature of coaching, assessing teacher needs is an ongoing component of the coaching process and should be part of every coaching touchpoint along the way.



**Collect and analyze data and evidence.** The coaching process starts with guiding questions from the coach with the teachers and the state leader at the initial training session. The gathering of evidence includes initial assessment questions along the continuum of where the teachers and their programs are. Coaches will then specifically work with teacher teams to craft (a) a detailed work plan, (b) a sustainability plan (to help teacher teams train other teachers and expand the work to more places in the state), and (c) a set of goals to help drive overall implementation and set initial accountability as well as document professional goals the teachers want to accomplish.

**Conduct a coaching conversation with feedback.** This is consistent with the approach outlined earlier about alliance or relationship building. Coaches will schedule bimonthly touchpoints with their teaching teams, via either conference or video call, as well as schedule in-person site visits. The coaching conversation should always include a dialogue and listening for progress points mapped to work plan; challenges, reports on outcomes achieved/any lags; substantive time on change and change management; student receptivity to TSTM interventions/redesigns; communications about the initiative internally and statewide; and update on leadership support, among other subjects.

**Develop an action plan.** Plans will be developed early on that include goals, timelines, expected outcomes and status updates. The action plan is influenced by the approach noted earlier about driving toward coherence with program and state goals. (See Appendix A.)

**Execute and monitor the plan.** Coaches will be reviewing the plan in combination with teacher teams and supporting adjustments along the way. The intent of this action step is not to be continually approaching the work plan from a compliance perspective, but to have a plan in place to document goals and ensure that progress is happening with the teachers and their programs. We approach this element as continuous improvement, without evaluative judgment. This initiative is not about checking the boxes and having the plan, but about undertaking dynamic shifts in a core set of literacy and workforce preparation areas to build the capacity of teachers and the field.

## What Distinguishes These Coaching Approaches From Others?

These coaching approaches are based on research-driven solutions and evidence-based best practices from the field. When coaching and interacting with teachers, there is the need to use data and research to help inform planning and decision making, increase system and field capacity, and advocate for expansion and scale.

Our coaching models are learner-centric and consultancy-based. We meet teachers where they are and move toward full implementation and attainment of sustainable outcomes. We present models that can be customized for the teachers, ensuring that the coaching is there to help them realize their goals.



## Coaching should

- promote changes in teacher practice and focus on core TSTM goals.
- ensure teacher fidelity to the TSTM toolkit and lesson plans.
- emphasize clear specification of goals, methods, and timelines.
- support teacher growth, self-assessment, reflection, and observation to sharpen priorities, build skills and confidence, and monitor progress over time.
- encourage engagement and commitment to long-term sustainability of the skills and goals of the project.
- continually focus teachers on the highest leverage, best-bet solutions when confronted with barriers (unsupportive administration, challenges with resources, or need for confidence building) that are practical and achievable.
- use data and evidence to inform planning, decision making, and execution.
- listen, learn, and engage in a constructive dialogue toward progress.



## SECTION 3: Coaching Process and Best Practices

Now that we have considered the role of the coach, it's important to think about how we are going to approach this work as coaches. The coaching process is a series of tasks using a set of structured tools to guide clients and partners to tackle complex issues and achieve large-scale systems change. TSTM coaches will support teachers and partners in a wide range of areas, such as offering models of best practices and identifying strategies to deepen the impact of programs on practice. Within these areas, TSTM coaches help sites in a variety of ways: developing strategy, drafting plans, conducting research, and setting up professional development opportunities to ensure effective implementation across sites.

### Coaches are most successful when they

- enter this work with their teachers and any new educational community with an open mind, humble attitude, and willingness to learn.
- practice deep listening to understand the teacher, local context, community, and stakeholders.
- clarify roles, set clear expectations, and establish norms for working together up front.
- consistently monitor progress toward goals, outcomes, and metrics.
- create time for reflection and use provocative questions to promote critical thinking.
- highlight teachers' strengths and accomplishments while providing support to address challenges and obstacles.
- identify opportunities for "early wins."

### Characteristics of Successful Coaches

Your experience and expertise are a critical component of establishing credibility with teachers and stakeholders.

#### Some characteristics that are highly valued and sought after in a coach:

- Good listener
- Humble
- Critical thinker
- Ability to build relationships
- Project management skills
- Flexible
- Content expertise
- Ability to work across systems
- Facilitator
- Open minded

*"Coaches who embrace equality position their collaborating teachers as decision makers. They sit beside rather than across from their teachers, make eye contact, listen, and draw out their collaborating teachers' expertise." (Knight, 2016)*



## Coaching Roles and Responsibilities

It is important to recognize that your role is different now. At other times you may have been the decision maker or leader who instructs people what to do, but now you are an advisor and a facilitator. You are helping others make their own decisions, figure out next steps based on their own needs, and develop capabilities to continue doing so in the future.

### Mindset shifts to consider as a coach:

#### As an expert, I would ...

- make decisions.
- focus on doing the work efficiently.
- answer questions.
- listen, while preparing what I will say next.
- provide solutions.

#### As a TSTM coach, I will ...

- guide the decision-making process.
- focus on enabling others to build capacity.
- ask questions.
- listen actively.
- help teachers develop their own solutions.

Your responsibility is helping teachers determine what they need and how they can implement this work that will lead to positive change. Success is measured by how well the teachers perform. You are likely going to take on different roles in your work as a coach—sometimes at the same time. For example, as the coach, you may serve as a facilitator for strategic planning, a connector to research and best practices, a sounding board, a cheerleader, and/or a content expert, etc. Above all, you are there in a supportive role with the goal of building local capacity—not to do the work for them. It is a difficult balance to maintain; you want to show your value-add and be part of the team while at the same time stepping back to allow teachers and administrators take ownership of their own success.

*“Coaches who foster dialogue balance advocacy with inquiry; they actively seek out others’ ideas, and they share their own ideas in a way that makes it easy for others to share what they think. Dialogue sets up instructional coaches as thinking partners with their collaborating teachers.”*  
(Knight, Rvschon Knight, & Carlson, 2017)

## Case Example

*There was a new initiative I joined as a coach. This coaching required time to build the relationships and get them to trust that I had the expertise to support them—that I knew what I was talking about and that when I didn’t, I was more than willing to recognize their expertise. Establishing trust and mutual respect was key because, again, it is all about relationships, relationships, relationships. If people trust you and they think that you have their best interests in mind, then they are willing to go the extra mile to take a risk on some things that they have not done before. Starting with an atmosphere of respect, I came into the first site visit by explicitly introducing myself as a partner in this work rather than presenting myself as an expert. This one shift in the dynamic made it possible, from the very start, to build a relationship, and then commit to maintaining it with regular communication. (JFF staff member Deborah Kobes, 4 years of coaching experience).*



## Starting TSTM

As a TSTM coach in this phase, take time to establish your expertise, explain your role as a coach, and share how your efforts can accelerate progress toward goals. Because many people do not understand what a coach is, share examples of what a coach does and how they can take advantage of your help. Or look for examples where coaches are more often found, like a sports team locker room. Ask them to include you, even when you cannot be there in person, by sharing materials and arranging video or phone access to meetings. Your knowledge of the project and content expertise often establishes early credibility, but it takes time to create relationships and build trust.

The following are some basic early communication points with your teachers and the steps you can take as we launch our TSTM coaching efforts.

1. Explain your role as a coach. Use examples to help teachers understand appropriate ways to take advantage of having a coach for support.
2. Ideally, start right away to schedule bimonthly calls with your teachers. Reinforce TSTM goals more than once. The initial training workshop is one part of the training. The early time with teachers will be to clarify roles, review goals, and be clear about expectations to make sure everyone is on the same page.
3. Listen and be attentive to what they are sharing and what they are not. Take time to understand the contextual environment, work, people, and politics.
4. Leverage existing resources, relationships, and connections that already exist. Have common goals that you can build upon, and help teachers avoid “initiative fatigue.”

*“Coaches are able to create trusting, positive, and sharing environments when they are transparent about their intentions, their goals, and even their own flaws and mistakes in teaching.”*

*(Lang-Raad, 2018)*



## SECTION 4: Guidance and Engagement on the TSTM Community of Practice

Coaches are also expected to engage and participate in a coach CoP.

As noted, there will be two types of CoPs: one for coaches and one for teacher participants. These CoPs will play a critical role in the success of the project as a whole and the sustainability of the effort beyond the project's period of performance.

- **The coach CoP** will be a more traditional CoP. Held primarily as an online forum, this CoP will be led by our CoC. This forum will provide an opportunity for coaches to come together and support one another in their coaching and problem solving. Coaches will be able to share relevant materials and meet virtually on these monthly calls to share their coaching experiences and provide each other with support related to content or coaching issues or acceleration strategies that arise that are outside their professional areas of expertise.
- **The teacher-participant CoP** will be more of an online forum (such as the forums available through LINCS) in which teacher participants will have access to additional online resources and will have opportunities to post questions to be answered by coaches. The CoP will be led by the content SMEs. The CoP for the teachers is to augment the coaching. The CoP will not be intended as an ongoing forum, but rather will have distinct time periods during which activity is requested and expected (e.g., before a webinar, participants may be asked to read a case study related to the topic of the webinar, share with the group about how this situation would have been handled at their program, and problem-solve together). The CoP will be designed so that coaches can maintain a pulse on the types of questions and challenges teachers have.

### The LINCS Community

The TSTM initiative is a blended model of professional development since it features complementary face-to-face components as well as virtual engagement of participants in an online CoP. In reviewing the literature on CoPs, Macia and Garcia (2016) concluded that informal CoPs have professional development value for educators. However, these authors recommend that the online CoP be combined with face-to-face interaction. There are not many studies examining the impact of blended models of professional development. However, Trust and Horrocks (2017, p. 647), who reviewed the few studies that exist, found that blended professional development “facilitated collaboration, enhanced learning, and extended ... interaction beyond face-to-face meetings.” The authors suggest that participation in a blended CoP enhances practitioners’ professional skills through reciprocal interaction with peers.

The CoP for the TSTM coaches is housed within the LINCS Community. This online space is open only to coaches in the TSTM project.

As per the LINCS website, “[t]he [LINCS Community](#) is a community of practice (COP) for adult education practitioners funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career,



Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). This professional learning space brings together adult educators worldwide to work together toward one common goal—providing high-quality, evidence-based learning opportunities to adult students. Our community is a place where practitioners can seek help from experts and peers, collaborate, network, share knowledge and resources, participate in special events, and grow professionally. We provide activities that can help deepen the connections within the LINCS system for practitioners to access professional development materials, reflect on their teaching practices, and apply what they have learned in their classrooms.”

Exhibit 5 below shows the image you will see when you access the CoP for the TSTM coaches. The link to get to the CoP is: <https://community.lincs.ed.gov/> . You will see the log-in button on the top right of this page.

Exhibit 5. The LINCS Community site



In tandem with the goals of the LINCS Community as just outlined, the TSTM coaches will have the opportunity to collaborate and problem-solve with one another about their coaching experiences.

## Strategic framework

The Community of Practice (CoP) for coaches is aligned with the research by Desimone (2011) identified earlier in this guide. Desimone’s (2011) five key features of effective professional development for educators include: These key features—content focus, active learning, sustained duration, coherence, and collective participation—provide the theoretical framework



for both the training and the coaching (see Desimone & Pak, 2017) components of the TSTM project. These same research-based features of professional development are reflected in the CoP for coaches.

### ***Content Focus***

The CoP will have an overall focus on the content of coaching itself. Drawing from the research and the work and resources of Jim Knight and the Instructional Coaching Group, the goal is to deepen coaches' understanding of effective coaching practices through networking with other coaches in the CoP.

Moreover, the TSTM teachers will be focusing on various content areas in their instruction, including financial literacy, civics education, digital literacy, health literacy, and workplace preparation. Coaches will engage with one another in the CoP about the content that teachers are targeting in their classrooms as well as on how adult students learn. The CoP will serve as a repository of valuable resources for coaches, and the coaches will have the opportunity to share additional materials with one another through the CoP.

### ***Active Learning***

The coaches will be actively providing support to the teachers they are working with—for example, through goal setting, observing teachers, and examining student work together. As part of the CoP, coaches will engage with one another on a regular basis by completing assignments related to the work of coaching and posting their thoughts and questions to the community. One of the opportunities coaches will have is to video- or audio-record one or more of their coaching sessions. They will be invited to share their coaching-session recording with the group through the CoP and receive feedback from their peers as well as from the CoC.

### ***Coherence***

The TSTM project is designed to be flexible so that the tasks that teachers and coaches engage in are aligned with OCTAE's goals for high-quality professional development as well as the goals for the states and the local programs where teachers work. Coaches will collaborate with teachers to ensure that all activities address the needs of teachers and adult learners. Similarly, the CoP adds another layer of support to address the learning needs of coaches related to enhancing the skills needed to coach effectively.

### ***Sustained Duration***

The TSTM project will take place over several months, so the teachers will receive regular support from their coaches over time. Similarly, the coaches will also receive sustained support from the coach to the coaches as well as from each other through participation in the CoP. The CoP will be available throughout the TSTM project.



## **Collective Participation**

As Etienne Wenger (1998) notes, “[l]earning in a CoP is a socially constructed process of participation, interaction, negotiation of meaning and developing shared knowledge” (as cited in Trust & Horrocks, 2017, p. 646). Collaboration, reciprocity, agency, and inquiry are central to the TSTM CoP. The teachers in the TSTM project collaborate with one another and with their coaches. Along the same lines, coaches collaborate with each other and with the coach to the coaches. The CoP will be the venue where much of this interactive learning takes place for coaches.

## **Community of Practice Principles**

Wenger, Traynor, and de Laat (2011) define *community* as “the development of a shared identity around a topic or set of challenges” (p. 9). Furthermore, social learning is at the heart of definitions of communities of practice since learning in a CoP is distributed across the group of participants. Through participating in a CoP with other coaches, participants have the opportunity to solve authentic challenges and collaborate on locating and also designing resources in support of their work. Moreover, the communicative interaction taking place in the CoP has the potential to foster the critical thinking required to enhance participants’ skills as coaches.

Jim Knight’s (2007) Partnership Principles, which undergird the work of TSTM coaches with the teachers they are working with, apply equally to the coaches’ relationship to the CoC. These principles are operational in the CoP.

**Equality.** The coaches and the coach to the coaches contribute in an equitable fashion to the online CoP conversation. All points of view are respected and valued.

**Choice.** Coaches can choose the issues they want to discuss in the CoP.

**Voice.** The CoP is designed to give every coach the opportunity to be heard.

**Dialogue.** Open dialogue in the CoP will allow all participants to share ideas with one another. Inquiry and innovation can occur when coaches share their thoughts, questions, and challenges with one another through dialogue in the CoP.

**Reflection.** The CoP will provide a space for sharing reflections with peers.

**Praxis.** The online space will give coaches the opportunity to discuss coaching moves they have tried out and to problem-solve with colleagues about specific issues related to their coaching work.

**Reciprocity.** The online space is well suited for coaches to learn from one another and from the coach to the coaches. Moreover, the space is designed so that the coach to the coaches is learning from the knowledge and experience of all the participants.



## Community of Practice Best Practices

Robert Lucas and John Willinsky (n.d.) published a report outlining recommended practices for creating and nurturing an online community for educators as part of Stanford University's Understanding Language initiative. According to the authors, an online community ideally grows from a community that already exists, so that the members can play a role in determining its organization and ensuring its usefulness. In line with this recommendation, the TSTM online space for coaches is designed to provide support for the members of the coaching team, who will first meet face-to-face. The coaches will have the opportunity to offer suggestions on how the online space can be most valuable to them.

Lucas and Willinsky draw from Howard's (2010) "RIBS Heuristic" to identify a range of best practices to ensure the health of online communities. The health of an online community can be determined by assessing members' feelings related to remuneration, influence, belonging, and significance.

### **Remuneration**

Remuneration is related to how beneficial the community feels to its members. According to Howard, "the key to long-term success is remembering that the most important remuneration you have to offer is the *experience* of socially constructing meaning" (as cited in Lucas & Willinsky, n.d., p. 3).

Some practical suggestions related to remuneration include seeding the discussion and inviting others to pose issues and questions. Building in routine events and assignments will also help members prepare for what is expected. Importantly, the online space will also feature easy access to resources that will be valuable to coaches in their work.

### **Influence**

Members should feel that they have some say in the structure, activities, and resources, etc., of the community.

Coaches are welcome collaborators to ensure that the online space meets the diverse needs of the group. Occasional polling can be used to gather data on the needs of CoP members. If there are coaches who want to join forces to focus on specific concerns, resources, or issues, they can form a subgroup to collaborate to address the concern they've identified.

### **Belonging**

Members should feel a sense of belonging as part of this distinct group of practitioners.

To nurture a sense of belonging, contributors are encouraged to write in a warm and inviting style rather than in academic prose. Encouraging members to share stories related to their work is important. Holding events to celebrate successes in coaching can also foster a sense of belonging.



## Significance

The LINCS online space already has a reputation as significant. Accordingly, many practitioners consider LINCS the “go to” place for accessing resources and networking with adult basic education colleagues across the nation.

The TSTM coaches were selected due to their reputation for excellence, and that is clearly significant. Having the opportunity to interact with other talented practitioners is a great opportunity. Coaches will be encouraged to post their biographies highlighting their previous work to reinforce that this CoP is a special place for accomplished adult educators. Everyone is expected to share their coaching successes (as well as challenges) with others in the CoP.

## Expectations

Since coaching is a fairly new form of professional development in adult basic education, most coaches will be learning and refining a new set of skills. The LINCS CoP for TSTM coaches is a vital component of the project since it gives everyone the opportunity to routinely interact with one another on aspects of coaching and to raise issues and questions of interest and concern.

Coaches are expected to participate regularly in the CoP. They will have monthly assignments to complete on various coaching topics and to post to the CoP. Early on, the topics will focus on coaching skills and will include reading about coaching and viewing videos of teachers teaching as well as videos of coaching sessions. Once coaching begins in earnest, the online conversations in the CoP will focus on debriefing participants’ coaching experiences and problem-solving with the group.

Volunteers will be invited to video- or audio-record their coaching sessions. Naturally, coaches will need to request permission from the teacher to record the session. Those who are interested will have the opportunity to share their video or audio file with the other coaches and receive feedback.

*“For the instructional coach, partnership goes beyond shared power to the joy of shared learning.”*

*(Knight, Rvschon Knight, & Carlson, 2017)*



## SECTION 5: Coaching Supports and Resources

As a TSTM coach, an important aspect of the work will be to help facilitate strategic conversations, meetings, or planning sessions with your teachers and/or state leaders. The following contains key information on facilitative leadership as an aspect of coaching.

**Facilitating meetings and site visits.** Plan carefully and prepare in advance to take full advantage of the time you have for a meeting, site visit, or professional development session. Be respectful of people's time. Logistics can make or break a meeting or site visit.

### *Tips From Experienced Coaches*

- If possible, schedule meetings or site visits off-site to get people out of their usual work site. Find a location to make it feel special and different.
- In advance, always explain the purpose of a meeting or call. Provide a few bullets with expected meeting or call outcomes.
- During your face-to-face coaching session, sit next to the teacher instead of across from him/her.
- Actively engage in the principles of coaching during the site visit with voice, dialogue, equality, etc.

*“At its heart, coaching is about striving to become the best version of ourselves and being committed to continuous and measurable improvements. Think about the feeling you get when you gain a new competency and how motivating that is. That is the very thing deep coaching taps into – the desire we all have to be the very best version of ourselves.*

*(Knight, Rschon Knight, & Carlson, 2017)*

**Reflection activities.** Making time for teacher reflection and debriefing conversations are key to learning and accelerating progress toward goals. Reflection conversations should get to a high level of analysis and address big themes. This is dedicated time to step back, analyze trends, and collectively discuss lessons learned. Often, the biggest challenge is simply making time and being disciplined about doing it regularly. Exhibit 6 shares ideas for questions that promote reflection.

### **Important tips:**

- Be sure to assign a notetaker, or you take notes at any debriefing sessions and promptly send out a meeting summary afterward, including any agreed-upon next steps.
- To allow for reflection activities, consider adding extra time to a previously scheduled call, or add another dedicated time for it.



## Sample Reflection and Debriefing Activities

### Exhibit 6. Questions That Promote Reflection

First 90 Days	Throughout the Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your work plan on schedule?</li> <li>• Are you prioritizing?</li> <li>• Are you spending your time managing problems, solving problems, or dissolving problems?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What opportunities have you used to make faster progress?</li> <li>• What is most challenging and why?</li> <li>• Are you managing the changes needed?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there areas of work where you have not made the progress you expected?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has been the easiest thing about the work to date? Why has this aspect gone so smoothly?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you need to make further progress in this area—e.g., resources, time to brainstorm ideas, examples of best practices, or models from other sites?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the most frustrating issue you've encountered lately, and what steps have you taken to address the issue?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What successes can you build upon?</li> <li>• What is one problem you can tackle today?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who have been your strongest allies in the work? Why do they support you?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is one thing that would make the most difference in meeting your goals if you changed it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you use this (insert topic) to get what you need out of this?</li> <li>• What's worked? What hasn't?</li> </ul>

### Questions to Use for a Coaching Session after a Teacher's Lesson (Knight, 2018)

1. On a scale of 1-10, how close was this lesson to your ideal – with 10 being ideal?
2. What would have to change to move the lesson closer to a 10?
3. What would the students be doing if the lesson was a 10?
4. Tell me more about what that would look like?
5. How could we measure it?
6. If you could hit this goal, would it really matter to you?
7. What teaching technique can you use to hit your goal?
8. Do you want this to be your goal?
10. What are your next steps?



## Additional Potential Questions for Coaching

Asking these questions will depend on the specific context and what has transpired during your current conversation as well as your previous conversation(s) with the teacher (Knight, 2016, 2018).

1. Given the time we have today, what is the most important thing we should talk about?
2. What is the ideal outcome you hope to see?
3. What can we do to resolve the issue?
4. Tell me about what you felt.
5. Tell me a little about this.
6. Tell me more about what that would look like.
7. What leads you to believe ...?
8. What went well?
9. What surprised you, if anything?
10. What did you learn?
11. What will you do differently next time?
12. What do you think about ...?
13. What are you seeing that tells you the strategy is successful?
14. What are some other ways we can look at that?
15. Instead of asking probing questions, ask “And what else?” As Knight suggests, “There is almost always something else”.

**Developing your coaching skills.** New coaches sometimes worry that they need to be a “jack of all trades” with a deep bag of coaching “tricks” in their pocket. Remember that you are not alone in this work. Don’t feel like you need to act as if you know everything. AIR, JFF, and your fellow coaches are equipped with a wealth of internal and external experts and master coaches ready to help when you need them. And thanks to emerging technology and greater access to tools and communication, new tools are being developed every day.

**Tracking Your Interactions.** Coaches are expected to have regular (bi-monthly) check-in calls with teachers. Notes from these calls should be recorded in the online TSTM Coaching Tracking Tool. (See Appendix A.)



## Conclusion

This guide emphasizes the important impact a coach can have in launching a program and building capacity to ensure its success. It is our hope that this TSTM coaching guide and related resources will help new and experienced coaches expand their knowledge of research-based coaching principles and increase their repertoire of practical strategies and tools that they can use in this work.

Remember that, given the diverse range of teachers, states, and systems this project will include, this guide should be viewed as a resource, not a prescriptive set of instructions. We encourage you to approach this work with a willingness to learn and be adaptive, and to actively utilize the array of tools created by AIR and JFF. Another important thing is to actively engage in the project's coaching CoP. We look forward to making this project successful and serving our teachers, states, and students in the most promising ways.



# Appendix A. Coaching Materials

## TSTM Coaching Tracking Tool

Please go to <http://ctt.airprojects.org/> to log in to the Coaching Tracking Tool.

Username: \_\_\_\_\_ Password: \_\_\_\_\_

Basic Information	
<b>Coach's name</b>	Auto-populates when you sign in
<b>Content Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select "No Content Area" if nothing specific was covered.</li><li>• Select one of the 5 content areas, if appropriate, and especially if this interaction should be highlighted</li></ul>
<b>Date</b>	Enter date of interaction
<b>Location of Meeting</b>	Enter where the meeting took place (including virtually)
<b>Length</b>	Enter amount of time of interaction in minutes
<b>State</b>	Select the state so that the questions on materials (below) will pop up
<b>Teacher's name</b>	Select the teacher(s) involved in the coaching
Visit of Call Overview	
<b>Objective of interaction</b>	Describe the objectives of the site visit or call
<b>Interaction Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Observation and Debrief (site visit) <input type="checkbox"/> Off-site Coaching (phone call, email, webinar, etc.)
<b>Notes from coaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin by identifying the content area used</li><li>• These can be bullets</li></ul>
<b>Please share what went well or worked with the use of materials during the coaching interaction (call or site-visit).</b>	Capture stories, shifts, break through moments, qualitative description, quotes, etc.
<b>Please share what did not go well or did not work with the use of materials during the coaching interaction (call or site-visit).</b>	Capture stories, challenges, frustrations, recommendations for revisions, qualitative description, quotes, etc.

NOTE: Please be aware that the system will time out if it is inactive for a period. Please try to complete the Coaching Tracking Tool in one sitting so that your work is not lost.



# TSTM Coach Site Visit and Bimonthly Call Form

Basic Information	
<b>Coach's name</b>	
<b>Content Area</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Location of Meeting</b>	
<b>Length</b>	
<b>Teacher's name</b>	
Visit of Call Overview	
<b>Objective of interaction</b>	
<b>Interaction Type</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Observation and Debrief <input type="checkbox"/> Off-site Coaching	
<b>Notes from coaching</b>	
<b>Please share what went well or worked with the use of materials during the coaching interaction (call or site-visit).</b>	
<b>Please share what did not go well or did not work with the use of materials during the coaching interaction (call or site-visit).</b>	
Coaching Next Steps	
<b>Next steps for coach</b>	
<b>Next steps for teacher</b>	
<b>Next coaching date</b>	
Next Coaching Purpose	



## Instructor's 90-Day Action Plan

Think about where you want to begin implementing the skills that matter. Select two lesson plans from the TSTM toolkit. Identify action steps you'll need to successfully implement the lessons in your instructional context. Keep in mind you are expected to use the lessons in your Toolkit as designed while making adaptations (if needed) to the level of your students.

Consider the resources (e.g., online resources or a person who specializes in this area) that can support you. Determine by when each step should be completed, and how you intend to meet your expected outcome(s).

**Lessons I will focus on from the toolkit:**

- 1.
- 2.

Action Step	Resources	Due Date	Expected Outcome	Status
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				



Next consider your goals for sharing the content and materials from the Teaching the Skills That Matter Toolkit with others in your program, community, and state.

Goals for Sharing and Scaling the Skills That Matter:				
Action Step to Achieve Goal	Resources	Due Date	Expected Outcome	Status



# Sample Coach Site Visit Agenda

*[Note: You may find it more feasible to conduct a half-day visit.  
You can adapt this full-day sample agenda to your needs.]*

## Site Visit Location—TSTM Coaching Site Visit

**November 1, 2019**

**9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (Building/room)**

### Objectives:

- To observe the teacher in a real-time classroom setting to see how the identified domains (such as workplace preparation skills or financial literacy skills) are being taught and integrated
- To gain an understanding of the instructional impact of TSTM and review and discuss teacher lessons plans, proposed learning outcomes, and/or adapted student activities
- To discuss strategies for connecting TSTM to strengthen pathway design and student support structures
- To support TSTM broader implementation and discuss program plans with key organizational administrators

### TSTM coach:

Suggested participants from local program: teacher, program chair, or program administrator, if possible, the organizational chief executive, key student support services staff.

Breakfast on your own

9:00–10:00 a.m.	Welcome and initial check-in between coach and teacher Clarifying questions about TSTM Update on progress of work plan Identify challenges/problem-solve Communications (awareness building across program) Prep/context setting for upcoming class observations Opportunity to clarify with the teacher what she/he wants the coach to focus on during the observation
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- 10:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. Classroom observation time
- Coach observes classes
  - Notes and performance feedback data collected during the class(es)
- 12:15–1:00 p.m. Lunch (coach and teacher)
- Teacher should lead the discussion/reflection
  - Coach listens and offers feedback (including on alignment with TSTM Toolkit lesson plan)
  - Discuss instructional strategies/action plans based on performance feedback (What worked, what could be strengthened?)
- 1:15–2:00 p.m. Project update with program/chair/administration
- Coach updates program leads on overall project status (to highlight the participation of the teacher/program within a broader national context)
  - Discuss institutional support during this initial implementation
  - Talk over strategies for organizational awareness building
  - Update on interactions with state-level leaders
- 2:00–2:30 p.m. Break
- 2:30–4:00 p.m. Wrap-up and next steps (teacher and coach)
- Confirm strongest elements of the site visit.
  - Validate any changes/adjustments needed for future implementation.
  - Decide on any action steps.
  - Summarize key follow-up steps for both coach and teacher.
  - Confirm next call or site visit date and any preparation needed.
- 4:00 p.m. Adjourn



## Sample Email to Program Administrator in Advance of the Site Visit

Dear Colleague,

The purpose of this email is to let you know that I am serving as a coach for (teacher name) as part of the OCTAE sponsored [Teaching Skills That Matter \(TSTM\) initiative](#). As part of this work, I will be making two in-person site visits to your location to work with (teacher name). My first site visit is scheduled for (date); and my second visit is (date).

As you may know, (teacher name) is part of a select group of teachers who is training to implement new curriculum and instructional approaches to eventually share across your state. This is an exciting initiative that will ultimately influence the teaching of adult education across the country.

This site visit is a real highlight! I get to spend the day with (name) and see how the selected curricula and approaches are being tried in action with students. My role is to support (name) in testing TSTM materials. We will have a dialogue around instructional delivery and student responses, and partner to make this implementation the strongest it can be. The site visit is all about support, rather than compliance. I will send a site visit agenda to you and (name) in advance.

I'd welcome the opportunity to meet with you while I am at your location. The purpose of our meeting is to extend our thanks for all of the support you are providing to your teacher, answer any questions you might have about TSTM, give an update on how the pilot work is going, and share what's in store in 2020. Please let me know a good time to meet during my visit.

I look forward to meeting with you and (name) soon!

Coach



## Appendix B. Strategic Coaching Research and Literature

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# Notes



# Notes



