Triad Peer Coaching
The National Educators' Institute

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Contents

Introduction to Peer Coaching

It is now a ubiquitous understanding that teacher quality is the most influential, in school, factor to student learning (Hattie, 2019). This heightens the responsibility of educators to engage in a continuous cycle of learning to improve practice. Importantly, the learning educators undergo must connect to their needs, the needs of students, and school improvement plans. This offers a reasonable expectation that educator learning should have an explicit connection to the classroom.

Enquiry learning formats rooted in sound research and documented positive results best complement the continuous educator engagement needed for effective professional learning. Peer coaching is one such learning model. Not only does it place learning into the classroom, which Cerbin (2011) informs is the best place for educator learning to occur, but Joyce and Showers (1982) indicate that peer coaching heightens the transfer probability of learning into the classroom when it occurs in an external environment.

Joyce and Showers (1995, 2002) and Calhoun (2010) assert that for educators to render impactful knowledge acquisition, training systems should be intentional. Therefore, when developing new learning, education professionals should:

- Explore theory behind or the description of concepts, skill or strategy, and
- Experience a demonstration or modelling of skill, and
- Practice the skill in an immersive, simulated classroom, and job setting, and
- Engage in structured and open-ended feedback about performance and process, and
- Implement/transfer the new knowledge or skill via peer coaching into the classroom

The power of the peer coaching component, in this system, is seen in the well-known graphic below. Joyce and Showers depicts the rate of learning and transfer into the classroom when combining the components for professional development.

Components	Knowledge	Skill	Transfer
Study of Theory	10	5	0
Demonstrations	30	20	0
Practice	60	60	5
Peer Coaching	95	95	95

Rate of Learning Outcomes (Joyce & Showers, 2002)

Six Essential Components of Peer Coaching

Jarvis and Dempsey et al (2017) identify six essential components of peer coaching. They are:

1. Establishing and maintaining trust
   a. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) identify the contributing factors to establishing trust as benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness.
2. Designing differentiated professional learning for all
   a. This supports the authors' assertion that all educators, novice and experienced, have the capacity for growth and the improvement of teaching practices. When educators select the focus of their peer coaching it affords the personalisation of their learning.
3. Establishing coaching configurations to maximize learning
   a. Educators should be an integral part of the design of their peer coaching team. These configurations may extend beyond grade level and discipline.
4. Calibrating individuals' skills and needs
   a. When the focus is known, educators must identify and align what they know and what they need to know when designing next steps.
5. Using reflection as an integral part of coaching
   a. Skillfully crafted questions that induce critical thinking are vital facilitators of the reflection needed during effective peer coaching. Trust and non-judgmental, non-evaluative peer coaching environments are key for a beneficial level of openness to ensue and to bolster levels of commitment to the process.
6. Providing descriptive feedback
   a. When providing descriptive feedback educators must use specific, non-judgmental language that encourages reflection and invites further enquiry into and revision of beliefs and practices.

What Peer Coaching is and is not

Central to peer coaching's construct is a non-judgemental reciprocity, critical reflection, and co-created experimentation in the classroom embodied in what Fielding, Bragg, Craig, et al. (2005) calls Joint Practice Development (JPD). Hargreaves (2011) describes JPD as a process that is truly collaborative. Of the execution he states,

> The practice is being improved, not just moved from one person or place to another.
> Joint practice development (JPD) gives birth to innovation and grounds it in the routines
> of what teachers naturally do. Innovation is fused with and grows out of practice, and
> when the new practice is demonstrably superior, escape from the poorer practice is expedited. (p. 11)

This is an essential factor for the NEI's support of peer coaching for professional learning. It is for the improvement of practice, rather than a mere sharing of best practices. We must clearly understand the parameters to deem collegial collaboration as peer coaching. The chart below helps to distinguish what peer coaching does and does not entail.

Peer Coaching	
IS NOT	**IS**
• Advising or fixing	• Asking knowledge building questions that prompt reflection
	• Asking knowledge building questions that encourage answers
• Transferring knowledge to each other	• Learning from each other
• Mentoring - Providing solutions	• Coaching – Helping peers to find solutions
• Evaluative	• Safe, non-evaluative, and collaborative learning partnerships
• Sharing best practice to improve practice	• Improvement of practice through reciprocity and practice

Sources: *Jearni Re-Imagining Learning (n.d.), Hopkins & Baumber (2019)*

Morley (2017), of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, outlines actions colleagues engage in when coaching versus mentoring to support professional learning.

Peer Coaching	
DOES NOT LOOK AND SOUND LIKE	**LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE**
• Making suggestions	• Listening to understand
• Offering guidance	• Reflecting
• Giving advice	• Paraphrasing
• Instructing	• Summarising
• Telling	• Asking questions that raise awareness
• Providing evaluative feedback*	• Providing descriptive feedback*

*While Morley (2017) does not make the distinction between evaluative and descriptive feedback, the NEI supports the stance of Hopkins (2018) that peer coaches should engage in descriptive feedback. This form of feedback describes observed practices and processes and their impact on students, rather than individualizing the teacher. This approach and language of a coach might sound like "when teachers do X, then students do Y." This supports the non-evaluative and non-judgmental conditions of peer coaching.

When to Use Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is effective when education professionals:
1. Have a desire to improve their teaching
2. Share common goals to refine a practice
3. Want to transfer knowledge and skills acquired in a workshop setting to the classroom
4. Have an implementation/practice problem they are trying to solve

The Triad Model

While many variations of peer coaching exist, the NEI embraces the Triad Model. Hopkins and Baumber (2019) assert that, "Peer coaching teams of two or three are much more effective than larger groups." The triad model concept posits that teachers best learn together when they draw on and draw out each other's strengths.

The work of Joyce and Showers (2002) and Hopkins, Munro, and Craig (2011) undergirds the triad approach the NEI implements. It assumes that "teacher – lead teams are best prepared to respond to the instructional needs of their students, and that teachers using this approach will be more motivated and supported to strengthen their instructional practice" (Jarvis, Dempsey, 2017). They state that the triad coaching model re-empowers educators to lead and take charge of their learning and that it enhances a culture of professionalism and continuous learning in schools. Again, this is to be a non-evaluative and non-judgmental process.

Whole School Configuration
In Unleashing Greatness: A strategy for school improvement, Hopkins (2020) outlines criteria, inclusive of meeting schedule, for triad teams.

- Ideally each educator within the school is a triad member. Members can be self-selected or assigned. Triads are often of mixed ability, cross – curricula, or cross year groups.
- Regularly scheduled peer observations are a part of the time-table.
- Observations can be 15 – 20 minutes followed by timely discussion of gathered data

Meeting Schedule
- Triad member A observes Triad member B in week one
- Triad member B observes Triad member C in week two, and so on

The triad should meet once every half term as a group of three to record progress and plan the next half terms observations. Using these reports, the school improvement team then reviews progress overall.

Teacher Initiated Configuration
The NEI recognises that there may not be whole school adoption of Triad Peer Coaching. Educators interested in participating in triad peer coaching can form their own triads voluntarily. These Triads can also be of mixed ability, cross-curricular, or include teachers from different year groups.

Scheduling Peer Observations
Triad members should schedule regular peer observations as per their availability and time constraints. The observations can be 15 to 20 minutes long, followed by timely discussions to share gathered data and reflections.

Communicating with School Leadership
It is crucial for teachers engaging in triad peer coaching outside of the whole-school model to communicate with their head of school or PD development officer about their activity. This communication ensures that the school administration is aware of the initiative and can provide any necessary support or resources.

Additionally, informing school leadership about triad peer coaching allows them to see the commitment of educators toward their professional growth and development. It also opens up opportunities for potential integration of triad peer coaching into the school's broader professional learning initiatives.

Effective Implementation of the Triad Model

Specific conditions support the most effective implementation of the Triad Model.
1. *Whole School Support* – The Triad Model can positively impact the culture of learning within a school. Hopkins and Baumber (2019) note that these teacher teams are most effective when:
    a. approached in a whole school format
    b. heads of schools and deputies also participate in peer coaching training

    Steve Barkley (2017) in a keynote to the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA) noted that Instructional Coaches can assist in the formation of teacher teams by identifying common professional growth goals and shared student concerns.

2. *Sufficient Time for Practice and Sustained Application* – The allotment of dedicated time for peer educators to practice innovations is crucial to them becoming proficient and expert in their execution. In fact, the opportunity to practice must be embedded into the ways of doing for the school's culture of educator learning. This realization is an essential benefit of having school administrators participate in peer coaching training.

    The specific benefits of having school administrators participate in peer coaching training is that they:
    a. Develop an understanding of the scheduling flexibility required to support peer coaching
    b. Obtain an awareness of the amount of practice teachers must engage in to master peer coaching

Hopkins and Baumber (2019) state that "Without regular timetabled opportunities for professional collaboration such as peer coaching or triads that are developmental rather than judgemental, it is unlikely that the teaching and learning culture of the school will change" (pg. 19).
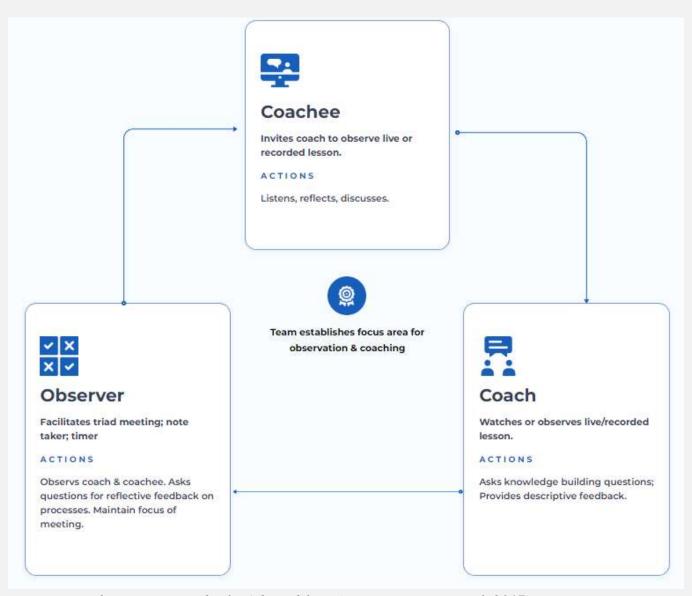
3. *Safe Environment* – It's like Vegas. What's said in the triad, stays in the triad. Trust and confidentiality are foundational to the enquiry and reflective processes of peer coaching. Each triad member must know that their queries, concerns, and areas of vulnerability will remain confidential and received without judgement. Each member of the triad must agree to any shared information.

The Triad Peer Coaching Roles

The three roles of Triad Peer Coaching are the coach, the coachee, and the observer. The image below, an adaptation from the McREL White Paper, Peer coaching that works: The power of reflection and feedback in teacher triad teams (Jarvis, Dempsey, et al, 2017), describes the functions of each role. Note that each educator rotates through each role.

Peer coaching process and role. Adapted from (Jarvis, Dempsey, et al, 2017)

Triad Team Qualities

Education professionals might ask, "Which of my colleagues shall I select as a member of my triad?" Some believe educators are best served, especially as it relates to the trust factor, by selecting already known colleagues. However, there is some evidence that this comfort, may lead to complacency in some instances. Educators must consider that peer coaching is a time for professional dialogue, rather than socialising (Robbins, 1991).

Relational Qualities

When considering the relational qualities of a coach, Morley (2017) highlight the following characteristics:

- Values people
- Open and honest

- Supportive and challenging
- Has organisational awareness

Attitudes and Skills

What skills should one possess to be an effective peer coach? Knowing these qualities guides us towards self-assessment to identify our strengths and areas where we can improve. Morley (2017) identifies the attitudes and skills as:

- Being present
- Questioning
- Listening

- Summarising
- Observing
- Managing the silence

- Being open minded
- Using a structure

Sample Process

A suggested process to support this method is laid out by Rouleau (2019) in an article entitled Tapping into the Expertise in the Building. Below is an adaption of Rouleau's format.

1. Educators agree on their focus—the strategy, specific learning, or segment of the lesson to be worked on—and develop a plan for teaching the lesson.

2. One teacher—the first coachee—volunteers to teach the lesson.

3. The team agrees on the look-fors—the standards of practice they are aiming to achieve—and the kind of feedback they will provide.

4. The coachee teaches the lesson. The coach and observer are in the room for the lesson (or lesson segment), or it is recorded for later viewing.

5. The coach's role is to observe and take notes on bright spots and areas to infuse knowledge building questions and innovation, based on the agreed-upon look-fors.

6. The observer's role is to collect data about student actions, and add additional observations focused on the look-fors.

7. Once everyone has taken notes and reflected on the lesson, the triad meets.

   The observer:
   - facilitates this meeting
   - prompts descriptive feedback and reflection
   - focuses the group on the intended outcomes of the meeting
   - invites the team to reflect on the process

   The coach:
   - poses knowledge building questions to the coachee
   - provides descriptive feedback to the coachee, being careful not to interpret data and to provide questions and opportunities for reflection

   The coachee:
   - reflects with an open mind
   - responds

8. The trio determines what adjustments will be made and their next steps to further develop the selected practice in all of their classrooms.

9. The NEI adds a final step. The trio discusses whether and how sharing of any new learning significant outcomes in their school community, or beyond, should occur. The trio asks, "Who needs to know?" "Who might like to know?" and "Who might benefit?"

Question Bank

The quality and levels of questioning during a peer coaching session greatly influences the effectiveness of the experience. The sample question below are not exhaustive. The sources are The Moray Council (n.d.), Jearni Re-Imagining Learning (n.d.), and Jarvis and Dempsey et al (2017).

To Establish Focus, Ask:
• What is the problem?
• How do we/you know this is the problem and not a symptom of a deeper problem?
• What do we/you want to master?
• What do we/you want to be able to do?
• What do we/you already know?

To Prompt Reflection, Ask:
• What would you like to highlight first?
• What's another way you might…?
• How well were you able to execute elements of ….?
• What went well?
• What was challenging?
• How do you view this occurrence/situation?
• What evidence do you have that your strategy/approach is working?
• I made observations on (select two or three things). Tell me about (select one).
• Let's explore (select an observation) some more.
• How could (insert thought) contribute to (the practice, the learner experience)?
• How do you feel about (select an observation)? Why?
• If (explain the condition) causes (explain outcome) in this scenario, why would it/would it not work in (explain another condition)
• Since we last met, have you been applying this approach consistently? What gains do you see?
• What do you observe happens to student learning when you (describe action)?

To Strengthen a Case for Change, Ask:
• Why do you think this is/is not important?
• Paint an ideal picture of this scenario.
• What do you think would change for you/your students if you do/continue/discontinue (insert strategy/practice?
• What could you do that would make a difference?
• What is the most important thing to work on?
• What does research say about this?

To Consider Lessons Learned, Ask:
• How has the planning process/teaching experience/professional dialogue, impacted what you believe about teaching and learning?   • What did you learn about yourself as an education professional?   • What is there to learn here?
To Determine How to Move Forward, Ask:

• What will you continue to do differently?
 • I agree that you when you (describe event), it was effective. Where do you believe you can improve? What are some possible ways that can occur?
 • Who can help you?
 • How can I help?
 • What resources might provide more information/support?
 • What might prevent this strategy/approach/solution from succeeding?
 • What is a SMART goal you can develop to (state desired outcome)
 • Now that you have decided to (state decision) what is the first step to putting this in play?
 • What will you look for as signs of success?
 • How will you persist/stay engaged until you have success?
 • What will it look like and sound like when you reach your goal?
      o What will you be doing/saying?
      o What will your students by doing/saying?

To Determine How to Share Your Learning, Ask:
• Who needs to know what we learned?   • Who might want to know what we learned?   • Who might benefit from what we learned?   • How will we let them know?

Coachee Triad Peer Coaching Template

Name
Click or tap here to enter text.

Date
Click or tap here to enter text.

Observable Focus of the Lesson
Prior to teaching the lesson, discuss and agree upon the specific strategies, learning, or behaviour goals you will work on during the teaching and peer coaching session? There are times when you might also consider co-designing the lesson with the team.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Agreed upon Look -Fors in the Lesson
Provide the observable teaching or learning behaviours, strategies, or outcomes you are aiming for. Provide the specific action you will take to support the aim.

Look For	Supporting Activities or Techniques
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Reflection on the Lesson
After teaching the lesson, consider each goal and reflect on your experience. Use the following questions as starting prompts for your reflection:

Consider your look for items. What went well during the lesson? Describe any bright spots or successful aspects.
Click or tap here to enter text.

What challenges did you encounter, and how did you handle them?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What student action/reactions, if any, stood out to you? What actions or inactions may have contributed to it?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Next Steps for Development

Based on your reflections, identify any adjustments or improvements you would like to discuss in your peer coaching, with a view to further develop the selected practice in future lessons.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Potential for Sharing Learning:

Consider if there is any significant new learning or outcomes from this coaching experience that could be shared within your school community or beyond. Who needs to know? Who might benefit from this learning?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Coach Triad Peer Coaching Template

Coachee Name
Click or tap here to enter text.

Date
Click or tap here to enter text.

Agreed upon Look -Fors in the Lesson
Prior to teaching the lesson, discuss and agree upon the specific strategies, learning, or behaviour goals you will work on during the teaching and peer coaching session. There are times when the team might decide to co-design the lesson.

Provide the observable teaching or learning behaviours, strategies, or outcomes the coachee is aiming for.

Look For	Supporting Activities or Techniques
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Observations and Feedback
During the lesson, take notes on bright spots and areas where the coachee demonstrated effective practices. Also, jot down any knowledge-building questions for discussion during the peer coaching session.

Look For	Supporting Activities or Techniques	Bright Spots	Knowledge Building Questions
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Additional Notes
Click or tap here to enter text.

Descriptive Feedback and Probing Questions
When asking probing questions and providing feedback to the coachee, focus on descriptive observations and avoid interpreting data. Use the following queries and relevant prompts in the Question Bank to guide your coaching:

I noticed that you were able to...
Your approach to... was effective because...
What can you considered trying in order to...
How might you further develop...

Additional Questions
Click or tap here to enter text.

Reflection on the Coaching Process:
Take a moment to reflect on your role as a coach during this session. What strategies or approaches were helpful in supporting the coachee?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Next Steps for Supporting Development:
Based on the coachee's reflections and your observations, consider how you can continue to support their professional growth in future coaching sessions.

Observer Triad Peer Coaching Template

Coachee Name   **Date**
Click or tap here to enter text.   Click or tap here to enter text.

Agreed upon Look -Fors in the Lesson
Prior to teaching the lesson, discuss and agree upon the specific strategies, learning, or behaviour goals the coachee will work on during the teaching and peer coaching session. There are times when the team might decide to co-design the lesson.

Provide the observable teaching or learning behaviours, strategies, or outcomes the coachee is aiming for.

Look For	Supporting Activities or Techniques
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Data Collection
During the lesson, focus on student actions and collect data that aligns with the agreed-upon look-fors and standards of practice.

Look For	Related Student Action(s)
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Additional Observations
In addition to student actions, include any observations you have regarding the coachee's teaching practices related to the look-fors.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Facilitating the Peer Coaching Session

As the observer, your role in the post-lesson meeting is to facilitate the discussion. Use the following prompts to guide the conversation:

- Let's start by sharing your observations and feedback.
- Coachee, please share your reflections on the lesson.
- Coach, pose knowledge-building questions to prompt further reflection and to inspire problem solving by (Coachee's name).

Intended Outcomes and Next Steps

Ensure that the group stays focused on the intended outcomes of the meeting. Encourage the trio to determine adjustments and next steps based on their reflections and feedback.

Potential for Sharing Learning

Discuss with the group if there are any significant new learnings or outcomes from the coaching session that could be shared within their school community or beyond. Who needs to know? Who might benefit from this learning?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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