

Frequently Asked Questions



Coach
Development
Network

CONNECTING NEBRASKA'S
EARLY CHILDHOOD COACHES

WHAT IS THE COACH DEVELOPMENT NETWORK?

In the spring of 2017, representatives from various early childhood education coaching initiatives in Nebraska began meeting regularly to identify ways to provide professional development to Nebraska coaches working in a variety of coaching settings and initiatives. As the work progressed, they identified a need to gain a better understanding of the scope and nature of early childhood coaching projects around the state. In addition, the group wanted to explore how a common set of principles or standards for coaching, and more systematic professional development opportunities for coaches, might support our work and promote stronger outcomes for our coaching efforts. The group adopted the name the Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Network (as part of the Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Collaboration Team).

WHAT IS THE COACHING COMPETENCIES GUIDEBOOK?

The Early Childhood Coaching Guidebook: Competencies for Professional Practice at its core is a description of best practices.

It can be a useful resource to support coaching work in the following ways:

- To inform ongoing conversation on the role of coaching in early childhood education professional development and how to support coaching efforts in Nebraska
- As a coach self-assessment tool to review and strengthen skills and dispositions
- As a guide for selection of professionals interested in becoming coaches
- As a tool for strengthening professional identity among early childhood educators who are doing coaching

WHY WAS THE COACHING COMPETENCIES GUIDEBOOK DEVELOPED?

A statewide survey of coaching initiatives showed that a significant amount of coaching is being done, with common broad goals but great variability in practice. The Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Network determined that a set of shared standards, in the form of coaching competencies, could be helpful in guiding coaching work around the state. In 2019, the team began crafting a set of coaching competencies for the early childhood field in Nebraska. Using coach competency documents developed by other states as a springboard, the team completed an in-depth analysis of the skills and dispositions required for effective coaching with early childhood educators seeking to provide high quality services to children and families in Nebraska.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COACH?

Coaching is a learning process based on a collaborative relationship that is intentionally designed to promote sustainable growth in the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the coachee to effectively implement the best practices for the development of young children and their families. Coaching is most effective when it is embedded in a broader professional development system that includes opportunities for practitioners to learn about the theoretical foundations of early childhood education, to see effective instructional and leadership strategies demonstrated, to try out new strategies, and to receive feedback. Coaching is particularly effective in supporting the reflection required to successfully translate new learning into practice.

WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COACHES?

While coaching is viewed as a relationship between “co-learners,” we believe that the coach’s primary role is to be responsive to the goals and needs of the person being coached, in the service of positive outcomes for children and families. To accomplish this, effective communication is critical in all aspects of a coaching relationship.

Additional themes include:

- Coaching requires authentic collaboration; to be effective it must be a partnership.
- Coaching requires respectful, professional regard for the coachee.
- Coaching is not static; being in a learning relationship is a dynamic process.
- Coaching goes beyond the surface of quality practice to explore the roots of what supports children’s growth and development.
- Coaching relies on being open to possibilities and welcoming the unexpected.
- Coaching promotes self-reflection and experimentation as primary learning strategies.
- Coaching is a parallel process. The coach practices and models behaviors and dispositions that support the coachee’s learning.
- Coaching should assist coachees to develop self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-directed action to benefit the children and families whom the coachee serves.
- In short, the coaching strategies are applied in a culturally, linguistically responsive and an individualized manner.
- Coaches are working together with their coachees in a way that recognizes that each person experiences different circumstances. Coaches provide the appropriate resources and opportunities needed to reach an individualized, EQUITABLE outcome for coachees.