

Benefits of Mentoring: Head Start Teacher Perceptions of the effectiveness of a Local Implementation of a Teacher Professional Development Initiative

Grace Onchwari

University of North Dakota

Abstract

The study examined the extent to which a national Head Start early literacy staff development mentor-coach initiative model was effective in local Head Start Programs. The assessment of the initiative was based on analysis of 44 teacher interviews across two mid-western states. The analysis of the outcomes identifies teachers as being positive about the initiative and implementing literacy practices presented in the initiative in their classrooms. The research results point to the positive effectiveness of the mentor-coach model and support similar initiatives in the future for enhancing teacher instructional practices.

Purpose of the Study

There is a current focus on continuous improvement in teachers' knowledge, skills, and teaching methods so as to enhance student academic performance. With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) in place, educators are looking for ways to ensure that all teachers are well trained to produce the expected learning outcomes (Tugel, 2004). Since most of the new reforms and policies place high demand on teachers to produce desired outcomes, educators are continually investing in programs that promise to help teachers achieve this goal.

One such program that was aimed at improving the quality of Head Start teachers' knowledge and skills in literacy development was the STEP Early Literacy Mentor-Coach initiative model.

Background: The Mentor-Coach Initiative

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush emphasized the need for schools to prepare children to read to succeed in school as one critical step in education reform (White House, 2002). Recognizing the importance of the early years in shaping the success of children, the President initiated the *Good Start, Grow Smart* early childhood initiative and implored Head Start programs to start implementing strategies that can significantly prepare children for school. In response to this initiative, the Head Start Bureau began focusing on ways to improve its services, specifically in early literacy skills.

A major initiative decided upon by the Head Start Bureau was to provide national staff development training to all Head Start teaching staff in order to improve the quality of teachers serving children in each and every Head Start classroom (ACYF, 2002). The training was to center on improving socio-emotional development, working with children whose first language

is not English, and literacy mentoring. The training was also intended to provide appropriate resources for enhancing early literacy development.

The Regional Quality Improvement Center (QIC) was hired to provide training and technical assistance to Head Start programs in Region Vb (Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois). At the time, the QIC was in the last year of a six-year contract to provide training to Head Start staff (Zorn, Marx, Sullivan, & Bowe, 2003). In this last year, trainers were instructed by the Head Start Bureau to focus their strategies on providing literacy resources to Head Start programs. These resources would support the Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches, who were teachers who had received instruction in Washington, DC, in providing training to Head Start teachers in their programs as part of the Strategic Teacher Education Program (STEP).

The STEP model was “a comprehensive, multifaceted, sequential professional development endeavor that was aimed at training teachers on research based literacy practices that would lead to positive child outcomes and school readiness” (ACYF, 2002, p. 3). The Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston was hired to develop the training model and materials that would be used by STEP.

Head Start programs were asked to select a few teachers from their programs to attend the CIRCLE training, which was held in Washington during the summer of 2002. The teachers who attended the Washington training were to act as the Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches for their respective Head Start programs. The STEP training focused on ways of providing appropriate literacy environments and routines, phonological awareness, written expression, language development, print and book awareness, motivation to read, read aloud, letter knowledge, and literacy mentoring areas (Zorn et al., 2003). Once the Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches had returned to their programs, they were required to provide support to two or more teachers in their programs. The support was to be based on appropriate literacy practices as outlined in the STEP model.

The (QIC) provided Mentor-Coach Specialists to provide support and further training to the early literacy mentor-coaches on the STEP materials. The Mentor-Coach Specialists were individuals deemed to be qualified in the field of child development and early literacy. These Mentor-Coach Specialists received the STEP training in the months of November 2002 to January 2003 in Washington. The Mentor-Coach Specialists were expected to visit Head Start programs and provide on-site support to the Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches twice a month for four hours for each visit. This on-site training was carried out during the months of February 2003 to June 2003 when the mentor-coaching initiative came to an end (Zorn et al., 2003). This study focuses on assessing the effectiveness of this mentor-coach initiative on impacting teacher literacy practices.

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions of effectiveness of the initiative, how successful the initiative was in reaching teachers across programs, and how it has been implemented in their various programs.

Mentoring and Teacher Instructional Practices

Since the mid-1970s, great attention has been paid to mentoring. Because mentoring has been widely used in the business world, it is helpful to compare its use in the educational institutions. Companies have credited their successful growth among their workers to mentoring. Managers have realized that mentoring is one of the best ways to dramatically enhance employee skills and motivation (Murray & Owen, 1991). In addition, business organizations also see mentoring as one important element that greatly contributes to a company's survival. Odiorne (1985) described mentoring as an American management innovation strategy that has provided a mechanism through which organizations have regenerated themselves from within (Odiorne, 1985).

The need for facilitated mentoring continues to grow in contemporary corporations. Due to the complexity of today's organizations and the increasing emphasis on cost containment, mentoring is an attractive, low-cost strategy for developing a skilled work force (Murray & Owen, 1991). For example, a business report that ranked the success of organizations in human capital development indicated that out of the top 100 U.S. companies, 77% had mentoring programs in place (Galvin, 2002). In many companies, mentoring programs play a significant role in the career, retention, and leadership development of employees. Similar benefits have been reported in teacher education programs. Particularly in the early childhood education, mentoring provides a means for teachers to enhance their skills. This is especially important for unqualified teachers (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). Mentoring provides that possibility of enhancing their qualifications (Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede, 2004). Apart from being a vehicle for accelerating the education reform process (Maynard & Furlong, 1993), mentoring provides a medium through which professional development activities can be made available to teachers on a continual basis (Tugel, 2004).

In education, mentoring and its benefits have been explored intensely, especially in supporting new teachers into the field. The need for exploring mentoring benefits for experienced teachers and as a cost effective strategy when compared to other in-service professional development activities is also important. This article provides an example of a mentoring initiative program that was provided in Head Start programs and how teachers perceived it is effectiveness.

Mentoring

The concept of mentoring and the term itself date back to ancient Greece. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus' son Telemachus receives care and counsel from family friend Mentor while Odysseus is away in the siege of Troy. This concept has contributed greatly to the way the term is and has been perceived (Murray & Owen, 1991). Murray and Owen contend that many individuals define a mentor as a teacher, adviser, or friend. The central quality of modeling found in mentoring has evolved from Odysseus's act of bestowing an individual with the responsibility for nurturing, educating, advising, and protecting his son (Whitaker, 2002). Following this model, mentoring has often been portrayed as an intentional, nurturing, instructive, and supportive activity by an older, more experienced person that helps shape the growth and development of a younger, less experienced person. In recent years, the term has come to refer to a person who serves as a trusted friend, guide, teacher, adviser, and helper to another (Shea, 1994). However, mentoring is "a learning opportunity in which an experienced colleague, the

mentor, socializes the learner or the protégé to the larger context of an organization, profession, or industry” (Sisakhti, 1998, p. 57). Jeruchim and Shapiro (1992) identify mentoring as “a close intense, mutually beneficial relationship between someone who is older, wiser, more experienced, and more powerful with someone younger or less experienced” (p. 23). Further, Jeruchim and Shapiro note that mentoring is a complimentary relationship, within an organizational or professional context, that is built on both the mentor’s and the protégés needs.

Tracing the Origin

While mentoring is a very common business and policy buzzword (Parsloe & Wray, 2000) in supporting employee development, its benefits are also seen in other institutions such as schools and colleges. In business organizations, mentoring helps companies achieve specific goals they desire, such as advancing the interest of special groups and populations, conserving and transferring special know-how to new employees, or encouraging mentee contribution to the workforce. In addition, it helps bring employees together in a new social environment and assist them to reach their full potential. In general, it helps to develop a more civil society.

After mentoring gained wide popularity in the business world during the 1970s, other professionals began to promote its use (Odell, 1990). In education, it is widely used to support novice teachers and also to reduce attrition rates (Feiman-Nemser & Paker, 1993), but its use as an ongoing in-service activity for teachers to acquire new skills has not been greatly explored. Summers (1987) and Odell reported on the positive impact of mentoring in enhancing teacher instructional strategies and increasing student motivation.

Why Mentoring?

Given the current pressure for educational reforms, mentoring can be an effective way to train teachers to adopt new practices (Weaver, 2004). Change cannot arise spontaneously from externally imposed expectations or mandates, or solely from one-time training sessions or in-service courses (Barth, 2001). Professional development practices such as mentoring that provide one-to-one guidance and ongoing on-site support can be more successful because learning depends on the collegiality among teachers. Other than this, collegial models enable teachers to talk about practice, observe others’ practice and work together to plan, design, research, evaluate curriculum, and teach each other what they know about teaching and learning. A sense of collegiality also makes less experienced teachers feel safe to make mistakes, study themselves, and share learning with each other to create excellence in their delivery (Dantonio, 2001). Understanding that judgments about instructional effectiveness and decisions about how to change come from teachers themselves makes mentoring an effective strategy for achieving this goal.

One of the goals of using mentoring in teacher professional development activities is to assist teacher protégés to adopt forms of reflective practices that support best instructional strategies (Schon, 1987). However, since mentoring itself is a form of professional development to which teachers bring all sorts of existing ideas, assumptions, and capabilities, it is important that teacher mentors also adopt a reflective approach to their own activities and learning so as to effectively contribute to their mentees’ learning and growth. Tomlinson (1995) states that “mentoring, like teaching, involves a continual reflective cycle where mentors aspire to be

reflective coaches” (p. 38). Without the guidance of reflective mentors, teacher mentees may be hampered in the development of self-reflective processes.

Induction programs such as mentoring and coaching have been used as ways of transmitting research-based teaching practices to classrooms for teachers to improve quality of instruction (Gertsen, Movant, & Brengelman, 1995). McLaughlin (1990) supported the notion that classroom practices can change or improve if teachers receive the ongoing on-demand support that they need continuously. The benefit of using a knowledgeable colleague in supporting teacher practices is documented by various researchers. For instance, Cruickshank (1998) noted that teachers who received such support developed a reflective aspect that caused them to examine their roles as teachers. This practice positively impacted their teaching practices and in turn contributed to an increase in student learning.

Mentoring is an important teacher professional development strategy that can produce a pool of quality early childhood educators. Cummins (2004) argues that teacher education programs alone may not be enough to train effective teachers, especially in the field of early childhood education. Personal, ongoing relationships can make a difference in teacher quality.

The most positive aspects of mentoring is that it gives inexperienced teachers the opportunity to tap into the wide experiences and knowledge of experienced teacher mentors (Westerman, 1999), especially on subjects such as using integrated learning, classroom management strategies, and how to identify students’ needs.

The support for mentoring in teacher training is rallied for in supporting teachers in keeping up with the constant demands of new educational reforms that require them to adopt new practices (Weaver, 2004).

Benefits of Mentoring

How much can mentoring do in the education field? If structured well, mentoring has far greater potential to reform the education system, especially with the current federal accountability demands. Murray and Owen (1991) reported increased productivity, cost effectiveness, improved recruitment efforts, increased organizational communication and understanding, maintenance of the motivation of senior employees, enhancement of services offered by the organization, and improvement in strategic and succession planning as some of the benefits to the organizations as a result of mentoring their employees. Mentoring has also been credited with creating managerial benefits such as faster learning curves, increased communication of corporate values, reduced turnover at a time when new recruits may be hard to find, increased loyalty, improved one-on-one communication and a sense of team within the work group, increased employee productivity and so on (Stone, 1999). These benefits can also apply to mentoring in the field of education.

Mentoring is a powerful development technique that socializes learners to the larger context of an organization (Sasikhti, 1998). Fabre (2003) reported the benefits of mentoring in the training of new staff in the nursing field. In this study, the mentoring process provided a means through which employers could spot employee dissatisfaction early, thus improving patient safety. Through mentoring, nurses received the support and guidance to help them take

stands that could save patients' lives. Mentors empower staff to solve safety problems and create safe patient care systems. These findings point to the great benefits of mentoring that can apply to the teaching field, such as working with teachers closely to listen to their needs and spotting dissatisfaction early so that efforts are channeled toward appropriate support.

Cautions in Using Mentoring

Mentoring programs have been found to be effective in encouraging beginning teachers to remain in the teaching profession and in persuading new teachers to adopt pedagogical beliefs and techniques that are felt to be vital in the classroom (Whitaker, 2000; Moore, 2001). However, cautions must be taken if mentoring is to be effective. For mentoring to be successful it must be built on mutual trust and commitment, patient leadership, and emotional maturity. "It is only when commitment and trust have been established that patience can be maintained as mentors also realize that an effective mentor is able to control her emotions for the sake of effective leadership" (Hendricks, 1996, p. 132).

Effective mentoring has to be focused and structured (Holloway, 2001). Prospective mentors should participate in professional development to learn about the process of mentoring and what is expected of them before they assume the duties of mentoring (Kyle, Moore & Sanders, 1999). Appropriate training given to mentors expands the teaching role and thus improves the quality of mentoring. The mere presence of a mentor is not enough; the mentor's knowledge of how to support new teachers and skill at providing guidance are crucial factors (Holloway, 2001). Mentoring is likely to be of no value if mentors do not improve in their knowledge and expertise and change teaching practices to reflect current research (McIntyre & Hagger, 1993). Cummins (2004) proposed that mentoring could only be effective if both parties are willing to grow and learn and base their relationship on mutual trust and openness.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) caution schools and those interested in using the mentoring approach that just the thought of having a mentor present does not necessarily cause an effect – it is the consideration of the mentor's knowledge and skills that can provide teachers or mentees with an individual who understands the way they can provide the support. Palmer (1998) noted two primary sources that teachers need to go to in order to grow in their practice: "the inner ground from which good teaching comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft" (p.141). Thus, it is necessary to recognize the community around teachers' work environments to provide support during times of trial in the teaching craft.

Methodology

Participants

The participants for the study were 44 Head Start teachers across two mid-western states. The goal was to find out how far this initiative that started with a few teachers had progressed. The sample comprised of both teachers that participated in the mentor-coach initiative and those that did not during the year period 2002-2003. Twenty two of these teachers received support from the early literacy mentor coach during this period and the others did not. The early literacy mentor coaches were Head Start teachers that had received training at Washington and given the responsibility of continuing this training in their respective Head Start programs. This group of teachers also received on site support from a mentor coach specialists. The mentor coach

specialist was a well knowledgeable individual in child development and early childhood education provided by the Head Start Bureau to provide onsite support to the early literacy mentor-coach specialists. This specific of February to June 2003 period was focused on because during this time, early literacy mentor coaches received on site support from mentor coach specialists who were sent to centers for at least two visits per month.

Data Collection Methods

Teacher interviews were carried out during the months of January to March of 2005. Participating programs were visited and 30-minute, one-on-one interviews with each participating teacher were held. The interviews focused on obtaining the teachers' views about the success of the mentor coach initiative in their programs. Classroom observations were also carried out after interviews to ascertain aspects of the training teachers had implemented in their classrooms. There were six open ended questions

1. Is the mentor-coach initiative continuing in your program?
2. What forms of training and materials did you receive or have you received in the process of mentor-coach initiative?
3. How often did you receive this support during the mentor coach process?
4. How helpful was the mentor-coach initiative in supporting and enhancing your literacy practices
5. What are some of the aspects of the mentor-coach initiative training have you implemented in your teaching and classrooms?
6. What challenges did you face in implementing the strategies learned in the mentor-initiative; what other concerns do you have about the initiative?

Findings

Continuity of the Mentor-Coach Initiative

Question 1 sought to discover whether the mentor-coach initiative was continuing in the Head Start programs. Since the early literacy mentor coaches who had received training both in Washington and from onsite support were expected to continue it in their programs, the goal was to find if it was possible to use this model toward that goal. Teacher interviews revealed that about three-quarters of the teachers (34 out of 44, or 77%) agreed with the statement that mentoring was continuing in their programs either fully or in some way. Data indicated that both trained and untrained teachers were experiencing the continuity of the mentor coach initiative in their programs. This indicates that the training was growing and reaching more teachers than it initially did. However, 10 of the teachers did not agree with this statement. Two and a half years after the initiative was implemented, it was progressing in some programs. Some programs embraced the idea and continued while some did not. This could be explained by the challenging factors described by teachers which will be discussed later.

It was gratifying to learn that teachers from both groups were getting support and that the initiative was widening. However, while such professional development activities are effective, it is important that ongoing support and guidance is provided over a longer time to make an impact. For teachers to develop their skills, professional development activities such as mentoring must be provided. Most teacher comments suggested that mentoring was being provided in some kind in relation to STEP literacy materials.

Literacy Training Received: What Literacy Training/Materials Did They Receive?

One question in the interview asked what type of literacy training activities teachers had been involved in within the past three years. Specifically, the researcher focused on the STEP literacy training. Teacher responses were categorized into four specific major forms of training that emerged: a) training on the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation toolkit (ELLCO); b) use of STEP literacy book; c) literacy workshops; d) receiving handouts or articles on literacy. Data revealed that teachers did receive some form of training in relation to the STEP literacy. This form of training included either being provided with the STEP literacy activity book or being given support on how to use activities in the book to supplement their daily lesson plans (30 out of the 44, or 69%). Attending general group literacy workshops was also mentioned as one activity most participated in. Thirty-four of the 44 (77%) teachers agreed on being trained on the ELLCO toolkit as to how to assess their classroom environments to meet the ELLCO specifics. In addition, 34 teachers (75%) agreed on attending various workshops on literacy, and 25 of the 44 teachers reported receiving handouts and articles on how to support children’s literacy learning in the classroom.

Table 1: Literacy Training Activities

Type of Literacy Training Received	No. of teachers who agreed	Disagreed
1. Training on ELLCO	34	10
2. Support on use of STEP Literacy book	30	14
3. Attending STEP literacy workshops	34	10
4. Received literacy Handouts/articles	25	19

N=44

In observations made during the visits, it was evident that classrooms had been supplied with the materials as outlined in the ELLCO toolkit. Close to half of the classrooms observed had the same supplies of the STEP literacy materials stocked in shelves. A difference was noted, however, in the use of materials. While most of the classrooms had the same materials, most of the materials were stocked up in shelves. It is important that teachers are given training and support that encourages them to adopt materials into their teaching effectively.

Some teachers noted that their Head Start grantee or Head Start Bureau has made it a requirement that classes are checked for STEP literacy materials at least once every month. The early literacy mentor carries out this duty. Other programs have also made it a requirement that teachers use one activity each week from the STEP literacy book. At one site, teachers reported receiving monthly check-ups from ELMC of specific items they have in the learning centers so as to meet the ELLCO requirements and STEP literacy training. The danger with this approach is that two specific roles, supervision and mentoring, are tied together. Combining mentoring with supervisor roles is likely to render this professional development activity ineffective. It is important that mentoring be differentiated from supervisory roles because it can only be successful when mentors act as mentors and not supervisors. Since the roles, responsibilities, and functions of these two duties are quite different, combining them is likely to jeopardize the mentee’s relationship with the mentor to the extent that mentees are not comfortable sharing their weaknesses and strengths.

Amount of Training Provided: How Often Did You Receive Training?

Teachers were asked to recall the number of times they had received the STEP literacy training per year during the two years since it was implemented. Their responses implied that in some way they have been participating in the STEP literacy workshops. Out of the 44 teachers interviewed, 7 indicated they had received the training about three to four times a year, 5 mentioned two to three times a year, 12 mentioned twice a year, 11 once a year, and 9 could not remember (Table 2). All of the teachers stated they had received some form of training on the STEP literacy, either by being provided with the STEP literacy activities book that they were using in supplementing activities in their daily lesson plans, having had general group workshops, or having been trained on the ELLCO and how to furnish their classroom environments to fit the ELLCO requirements. Many Head Start programs have purchased materials required in the ELLCO or per the STEP literacy training. Teachers who had participated in the mentor-coach initiative and teachers who had not were furnished with these materials, which are resources for teaching literacy.

Table 2: Teacher Report on amount of Training received

Number of times received training	# of teachers who agreed
1. Once a year	28
2. Twice a year	25
3. Two –Three times a year	11
4. three – four times a year	16
5. Could not remember	20

N=44

While other literacy aspects continue to dwindle behind such as the amount of reading sessions or one to one adult reading in preschool programs, presence of books seems to be doing well. One specific reason for this is provided by Dickinson et al., who argue that reading activities in preschool programs are determined by children’s current interest or needs. Dickinson et al. noticed that the literacy activity such as book reading was one activity that was sometimes omitted in most preschool programs because either the children were tardy or other activities took too much time to allow room for book reading. However findings from the study revealed that most Head Start programs are well supplied with books, what is needed is to enhance teacher skill in using book reading activities.

How Helpful Was the Mentor-Coach Initiative in Enhancing Teacher Literacy Practices?

The researcher inquired whether the mentor-coach initiative was helpful. About half of the teachers were very positive about the initiative; 23 of the teachers mentioned it was very helpful, 15 of them stated it was somewhat helpful, and 6 of them indicated it was not helpful (see Table 3). Teachers who indicated the initiative was not helpful did state that the initiative was beneficial to teachers who had no specialized college education, suggesting future personalization of such initiatives to individual teacher needs. This group of teachers felt that the initiative provided content they had already been presented with in the literacy classes they had taken in college. In addition, the group of teachers who did not find the program helpful noted that the literacy training content in the STEP literacy book was not appropriate for the preschool programs. Teachers commented that they did not see how they could implement some of the

suggestions and activities provided in the initiative because they were meant for elementary students rather than preschool children.

Table 3: Teacher report on Helpfulness of initiative

Was the Mentor Coach Initiative Helpful?	# of Teachers who Agreed
1. Very helpful	23
2. Somewhat helpful	15
3. Not helpful	6

N=44

Implementation: What Things Have You Implemented in Your Classroom from the STEP Literacy Mentor-Coach Initiative?

Teachers were asked to identify some of the things they learned from the STEP literacy training that they had implemented in their classrooms. Most teachers mentioned activities like word walls, puzzles with pictures, and books in all learning centers, take home activities, sentence strips. This was summarized in one teacher’s words: “The word walls, the kids really like that, the question of the day; they like to play the rhyming of words, with one question of the day we make graphs out of them.” They also mentioned the take-home activity ideas from the STEP literacy book, story time and strip literacy activities, daily news activities, graphic activities, how to journal with children and why it is important, read-aloud activities, and science activities. One of teachers stated, “Daily news is something new and word wall, this I learned from the STEP literacy book.” Another teacher remarked, “It helped. I wouldn’t have known how to do the word webs, how to journal with children and why it’s important.” While teachers appreciated the positive aspects of the initiative, some felt they would do better if they had one-on-one support.

What Challenges Did You Experience in the Process of Implementing the Mentor-Coach Initiative?

The teachers were asked about some of the challenges they faced or face in the process of implementing the STEP literacy training in their classrooms. Their responses were grouped into common themes. Once again, time was one of the major concerns mentioned as a great challenge in accommodating the literacy aspects presented in the mentor-coach initiative. While most teachers agreed they liked the STEP literacy activities, they also felt they did not have enough time to implement the activities. Teachers of the half-day classes mentioned that the time available for half-day classes does not enable them to plan and include most of the activities in the STEP literacy books. Other challenges mentioned were having so many tasks at the beginning of year, lack of money to buy supplies or resources, differences in ages of children in their classrooms, different levels of knowledge of children, and providing activities that are age-appropriate for a group with various ages.

Some teachers were worried that the many materials in the learning centers provided as per the STEP literacy initiative would confuse the children. One teacher’s comment was, “At first I was very scared - like all this stuff! The children were so excited and loud but after some time they got used to it.” Another teacher said that she wished the mentor had had one-on-one time with individual teachers. She pointed out that teachers are at different levels depending on

education level. The training could have been more helpful if it was one-on-one so that teachers who did not have the background would benefit more. One teacher from the group of teachers that did not have a mentor at the beginning of the initiative mentioned she was only trained once at a pre-service workshop and wished she had more training provided.

Implications and Conclusions

Even though this mentor-coach initiative was implemented for a short period of time, the impacts seem to be evident. While it started off with only a few teachers from each of the Head Start programs receiving the training and support, the effects widened, reaching most teachers in the Head Start programs. It is possible that mentoring can be an effective tool toward enhancing teacher instructional practices and practices for educational programs (Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede, 2004). The mentor-coach initiative approach used a “train the trainer” concept that trained a few individuals to provide training to the rest of the teachers in their own programs. This approach renders mentoring a cost effective strategy of enhancing teaching pedagogy. The important element in mentoring is the relationship that is developed between the mentor and the mentee. Through relationship-building, mentors are able to understand teachers’ areas of needs and support them toward achieving those goals. Above all, the mentoring relationship enhances teachers’ change of attitude towards changing pedagogy. Through ongoing support and dialogue between the mentor and mentee teachers are likely to see the need for change in their instructional practices.

The goal of the initiative was to enhance teacher pedagogy. For further success of such efforts, it is important that teacher needs and stages of development are identified. While this was a very enriching professional development activity, some teachers felt they did not benefit much because they had already learned the content in college. Structuring mentoring in line with teacher needs would be more helpful. In addition, teachers have many duties. Some of the early literacy mentor coaches were also performing other duties related to their jobs as teachers and center supervisors. It was difficult to wear multiple hats and at the same time render coaching effectively for four hours as was required. Because this approach required intensive mentoring from the MCS and then delivering it to teachers, it was sometimes difficult for ELMCs to grasp this duty and as well as handle their regular daily duties such as being the center director or early childhood coordinators.

Future research should focus on the challenging issues that teachers identified such as dealing with different age groups in the same class and how to provide appropriate strategies. Teachers of half-day classes experienced difficulties in integrating these practices due to the short time they had with children. Researchers need to develop ways to compress activities so that they can be used in shorter time frames.

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