

## *COACHING COMPETENCIES* for COLORADO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### Introduction

#### Why and how the competencies were developed

In the Spring of 2007, representatives from various early childhood education coaching initiatives in Colorado began meeting monthly with a goal of gaining 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 Colorado Coaching Consortium.

A survey of coaching initiatives statewide showed that a significant amount of coaching is being done, with common broad goals but great variability in practice. The Consortium determined that a set of shared standards, in the form of coaching competencies, could be helpful in guiding coaching work around the state.

In a day-long work session in December 2007, a group of 34 coaches, program supervisors, and other representatives of diverse coaching initiatives joined with Consortium members to begin crafting a definition of coaching and a set of coaching competencies for the early childhood field in Colorado. Using business and life coaching competencies developed by the International Coach Federation as a springboard, this work group completed an in-depth analysis of the skills and dispositions required for effective professional development coaching with early childhood educators seeking to provide high quality services to children and families. Consortium members then took the results of this day's work and synthesized them into the attached document.

The competencies described are not meant to be used as requirements for hiring or by which coaches would be evaluated, but rather as a description of best practice. The Consortium believes that these Early Childhood Education Coaching Competencies can be a useful resource to support coaching work in the following ways:

- As a professional development tool for programs and initiatives that employ coaches
- 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
- As a tool for promoting coaching as a profession
- To inform ongoing conversation on the role of coaching in early childhood education professional development and how to support coaching efforts in Colorado

There is still a great deal to be learned about "best practice" in coaching. Under what circumstances is coaching likely to be most effective? Are specific approaches more effective with coachees who have particular backgrounds? How long does it take to create sustainable change and what other factors contribute to success? Given these and other unknowns, this is meant to be a "living" document. We expect that as we learn more about what works and why in this relatively new profession, the competencies described here may change and grow. As we share this document around the state, the Consortium will be

seeking avenues for all stakeholders to continue to share what is being learned from our collective experience.

## Core Values

Some underlying themes are woven throughout each section of the competencies that have emerged as core values and beliefs. 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. 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.

The Consortium welcomes your feedback and comments. Please contact any of the members on the attached list.

## Definition of Coaching:

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 to effectively implement the best practices for the development of young children and their families.

At present, early childhood coaching initiatives in Colorado typically are designed to achieve specific outcomes for children, teacher/administrator professional development, and program quality, with the understanding that there are various ways to achieve these outcomes and that they may be expressed in different ways in different programs. Coaching activities may include technical assistance or consulting, collaborating, or cognitive coaching. Technical assistance includes providing information, expertise, or resources to a coachee. Collaborating refers to working side-by-side with a coachee as a teaching strategy, for example, to arrange interest centers in a classroom). In cognitive coaching, the coach is facilitating the coachee’s problem-solving processes by supporting self-reflection, and clarifying and testing ideas. Any one interaction between a coach and a coachee may include any or all of these approaches.

As defined here, 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.



## COMPETENCY DOMAIN: Setting the Foundation

**Rationale:** A coaching philosophy communicates how an individual’s coaching values and principles inform and guide his/her professional practice. A code of ethics is one of the criteria that set professionals apart from other workers (Katz and Ward, 1991). Coaches may have to make difficult decisions that have moral and ethical implications during their work coaching early childhood providers. The importance of a code of ethics is to provide guidance when there are ethical problems in areas of “power and status, multiplicity of coachee’s; ambiguity of data base; role ambiguity” (Katz, 1978).

Categories	Level I	Level II	Level III
<b><i>Philosophy, Ethics &amp; Codes of Conduct</i></b>	Can recognize and describe aspects of a coaching philosophy and identify the aspects that are important to their work.	Is able to articulate their philosophy of coaching and identify when their philosophy may guide their practice.	Uses their philosophy of coaching to describe and guide their coaching interactions and decisions.
	Describes and refers to the NAEYC Ethical Code of Conduct and the Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Learner.	Uses and aligns coaching practice with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct and the Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators.	Uses relevant ideals and principles NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and the Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators to guide professional conduct in coaching interactions and facilitate resolution of ethical dilemmas.
	Describes and refers to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Philosophy of Coaching and Standards of Ethical Conduct.	Uses and aligns coaching practice with the ICF Philosophy of Coaching and Standards of Ethical Conduct.	Uses relevant elements of the ICF Philosophy of Coaching and/or Standards of Ethical Conduct to guide professional conduct in coaching interactions and facilitate resolution of ethical dilemmas.
<b><i>Needs of Adult Learners</i></b>	Recognizes that adults have unique learning needs.	Recognizes the value of the coachee’s prior knowledge and experience.	Describes adult learning principles and theories and consistently applies these to support adult learners.



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<b>Establishing the Coaching Agreement</b>	Effectively explains the goals and parameters of the coaching initiative in which the coach and coachee are partnering. These may include time commitment, logistics, expected outcomes and measures of success, reporting requirements, resources available, confidentiality, roles of other parties, etc. (e.g. funders, project coordinators, evaluator).	Uses a needs assessment to align the coaching partnership with the coachee's and the program's current goals and philosophy.	If the coachee is participating in more than 1 coaching initiative, assists in coordinating coaching efforts.
	Reaches agreement about roles and responsibilities of the coach and the coachee, and expectations for coaching interactions (e.g. norms related to missed appointments, giving and receiving feedback, follow-through on tasks, etc.).	Co-creates mutual expectations with coachee to ensure coachee's perspective is explicitly reflected in the Coaching Agreement.	Periodically refers to and reflects on the Coaching Agreement with coachee to determine if coaching interactions align with the agreement.

## COMPETENCY DOMAIN: Co-Creating the Relationship

**Rationale:** To establish a truly collaborative relationship the coach must be able to create a safe, reflective, and supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust. This requires being present and in relationship with the coachee in the moment, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident. Through this process, the coachee is invited to participate as a full partner with the coach.

Categories	Level I	Level II	Level III
<b>Establishing Trust with the Coachee</b>	Shows genuine concern for and interest in coachee's well-being and professional development.	Continuously demonstrates personal integrity, honesty, sincerity, and sensitivity to coachee as an individual.	Provides ongoing encouragement and support for new behaviors and actions, including risk taking.
<b>Coaching Presence</b>	Recognizes own coaching strengths, coaching/learning needs, goals as a coach, and cultural identity.	Is aware of how own coaching/learning needs and cultural identity and biases may impact the coaching relationship.	Demonstrates the ability to adapt coaching approach based on an awareness of own coaching/learning needs, cultural identity and biases, and the learning needs of



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		coachee.
Recognizes coachee’s individual strengths, learning needs, goals, and culture.	Identifies some opportunities to embed coachee’s strengths, learning needs, and goals, and is mindful of the coachee’s culture. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses language that is non-sexist, non-racist, non-technical, non-jargon</li> <li>• Uses teaching tools that match coachee’s learning needs (e.g., concrete examples, charts and other visuals, metaphor, etc.)</li> </ul>	Consistently and intentionally embeds coachee’s strengths, learning needs, and goals and is mindful of the coachee’s culture in all coaching interactions.
Recognizes themselves as a lifelong learner.	Is open to learning and begins taking risks. Enters into the coaching relationship with the awareness that learning will occur for both the coach and the coachee.	Models openness to learning and taking risks, thereby demonstrating a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development.
Maintains clear agreements regarding the coaching relationship.	Demonstrates appreciation for the coachee’s perspective, even when it is different from coach’s perspective.	Remains focused on the coachee’s needs when disagreements or conflicts surface.
Maintains professionalism by being on time, organized, and prepared for each coaching session.	Establishes and maintains professional boundaries determined and agreed upon in the Coaching Agreement.	Is fully attentive, shifting perspectives and coaching approaches, as needed, in the moment.
Describes and refers to the NAEYC Ethical Code of Conduct and the Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Learner.	Aligns with and uses the NAEYC Ethical Code of Conduct and the Supplement of Early Childhood Adult Learner to identify ethical responsibilities.	Facilitates the resolution of ethical dilemmas using the NAEYC Ethical Code of Conduct and the Supplement of Early Childhood Adult Learner.
Celebrates coachee growth and capabilities and maintains a	Verbally recognizes the importance of coachee ‘self-discovery’ regarding their	Consistently focuses on learning opportunities including when challenges



strengths-based stance regarding coachee capacity for professional development.

professional development.

arise.

## CORE COMPETENCY DOMAIN: Communicating Effectively

**Rationale:** Effective communication is critical in all aspects of a coaching relationship. A coach must be able to focus completely on what the coachee is communicating to understand the coachee’s intent in the context of their values and goals, and to support the coachee self-expression. Thoughtful inquiry is used to gather information and to stimulate thinking in support of the coachee’s learning and goals. Ultimately, a coach seeks to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the coachee.

Categories	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Active Listening</b>	Listens without judgment and makes coachee’s communication the focal point of the interaction.	Summarizes, paraphrases, and restates to reflect back what coachee has said for clarity and understanding of coachee’s perspective.	Attends to coachee’s words AND tone of voice AND body language to better understand and respond to coachee’s underlying messages.
	Listens for different perspectives.	Summarizes, paraphrases, and restates to integrate and build on coachee’s perspective.	Uses re-framing to extend the thinking and perspective of coachee.
<b>Powerful Questioning</b>	Asks questions that elicit coachee’s perspective.	Asks questions that create greater clarity.	Asks questions that facilitate vision and prompt new thinking.
<b>Direct Communication</b>	Is clear, articulate, and direct in communicating coaching objectives, providing feedback, and making recommendations.	Develops communication pathways that specify how information will be shared with administrators, teachers, families and funders.	Uses established and identified communication pathways effectively and responsively to address critical issues and barriers to progress.



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## COMPETENCY DOMAIN: Facilitating Learning & Results

**Rationale:** Learning is accomplished when the coaching relationship promotes reflective practice and utilizes an intentional continuous quality improvement process. The ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information and to make interpretations that help coachee to gain awareness in support of their goals; to develop and maintain a strengths-based, effective coaching plan with coachee; to create with coachee opportunities for ongoing learning and actions that will most effectively accomplish agreed-upon goals; and, to maintain focus on coachee’s stated priorities while recognizing coachee’s responsibility for action and progress.

Categories	Level I	Level II	Level III
<b><i>Creating Awareness</i></b>	Supports coachee to express their perspective of their values/beliefs, goals, and actions.	Facilitates coachee’s self-reflection on connections between coachee’s values/beliefs and their actions.	Collaboratively explores the values/beliefs behind coachee’s underlying concerns and how those concerns impact their goals and actions.
	Supports coachee to identify new techniques/strategies to address current goals.	Supports the coachee to explore possible techniques/strategies by engaging in mutual exploration and problem solving.	Invites and supports exploration as a “thinking partner” for the coachee, offering potential solutions only when necessary.
	Supports coachee to identify major strengths and major areas for learning and growth.	Supports coachee to use strengths as a support in addressing areas for learning and growth.	Collaboratively explores insights and broader perspectives to support the coachee to see different but interrelated factors that affect their learning and growth.
<b><i>Planning and Goal Setting</i></b>	Supports coachee mutually define and prioritize goals that are attainable, measurable, specific, and time bound.	With coachee, collaboratively analyses and consolidates collected data to create a coaching plan, which includes goals to address major areas for learning and growth.	Engages coachee to relate goals and plans to other professional development activities desired by the coachee, thereby broadening the scope of learning and growth.



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	Supports coachee to identify resources needed to achieve their goals.	Supports coachee to identify, access and utilize resources within the program and community needed to achieve their goals.	Supports coachee to identify, access and utilize resources within the region and/or state needed to achieve their goals.
	Supports and encourages celebration of early successes that are important to the coachee in order to promote further engagement in reaching more challenging goals.	Supports coachee in the understanding of the connection and integration of identified goals into the coachee's current practice.	Supports coachee in the identification and documentation of potential new areas of learning and growth that arise in relation to current goals.
<b><i>Designing Actions for Implementation</i></b>	Supports coachee to define actions that will enable them to embed new learning into their practice.	Models and rehearses new practices with coachee to help coachee achieve their goals.	Promotes active experimentation, self-discovery, and self-reflection that deepens learning and enhances practice.
	Uses consultation strategies to suggest actions that will best achieve the coachee's goal.	Uses collaborative skills to partner with the coachee in identifying actions to achieve and implement new learning associated with the goal into practice.	Chooses coaching mode(s) most appropriate for implementation of the identified goal and learning needs of the coachee. Uses consultation, collaboration, or coaching as needed.
	Supports coachee in identifying any conflicts to coachee implementing new learning.	Supports the coachee in reflecting on differing perspectives to address conflicts regarding implementation of new learning.	Harmonizes seemingly conflicting perspectives to evolve creative solutions to integrate coachee's goals and new learning.
	Engages coachee to explore alternative ideas and solutions, to evaluate options, and to make decisions related to the implementation of their new learning and practices.	Supports coachee to focus on and systematically explore specific concerns and opportunities that are central to the implementation of their new learning and practices.	Supports coachee in acting strategically to take advantage of activities, partnerships, and/or environmental conditions that will support the implementation of their new learning and practices.
<b><i>Managing Progress and Accountability</i></b>	Creates a communication plan with coachee to monitor progress/implementation and efficiently address needs that may arise (e.g. coaching plan and outcomes, agreed-upon course of action).	Supports coachee to engage in dialogue with appropriate parties regarding identified needs related to the on-going implementation of goals, and supports coachee to fully participate in the solution discovery process and implementation of	Continuously works to align coachee's goals and actions with best practices for children and families and supports the coachee's self-reflection on these.



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		agreed upon options with fidelity to that agreement.	
	When barriers to achieving goal(s) occur, engages coachee to explore alternative actions and solutions, to evaluate options, and to make decisions.	Advocates for the coachee to make decisions, address key concerns, determine priorities, and consider additional needs to support continuous individual and program improvement.	Supports coachee in self-reflection on progress: what has been learned and/or accomplished.
		Encourages coachee to engage in dialogue with appropriate parties regarding identified needs related to progress on goal.	Supports coachee to fully participate in the solution discovery process and implementation of agreed upon options.

## CORE COMPETENCY DOMAIN: Assessing Success of the Coaching Partnership

**Rationale:** An effective coach engages in continual self-reflection on their professional practices and how their practices influence the coachee’s performance and outcomes. Additionally, competent coaches foster a conversation that facilitates the coachee’s determination of measurable criteria for success and the coachee’s ability to clarify and determine gains in their thinking, skills, knowledge and practices. The coachee’s ability to assess progress on their goals will depend on their own ability to self-reflect. It is part of the coach’s role to foster this. In the initial meetings, it is important to mutually identify specific criteria for success of stated individual and programmatic goals and outcomes.

Categories	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b><i>Assessing Coach Practice</i></b>	Uses a self-reflection tool such as: The Coaching Competencies for Colorado Early Childhood Education: A Self-Evaluation Checklist to identify strengths and areas for growth. Participates in Reflective Supervision/Consultation.	Requests and reflects on feedback from coachee regarding the coachee’s experience of, and satisfaction with, the coaching partnership. Makes needed adjustments to coaching practice based on the feedback.	Maintains an Individual Professional Development Plan focused on ongoing learning as a coach including opportunities to reflect and receive feedback from peers and supervisors (such as peer video review and/or 360 reviews).



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<p><b><i>Assessing Coachee Outcomes</i></b></p>	<p>Uses observation and other data related to coachee goals to determine if goals are being met.</p>	<p>Using mutually agreed upon criteria and measures for success, the coach and coachee regularly reflect on changes in coachee's skills and knowledge.</p>	<p>Provides tracking tools, and in partnership with the coachee, develops criteria for success and regularly assesses progress in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of the coachee's ability to self-analyze and self-modify</li> <li>• Shift in coachee's dispositions (beliefs, attitudes and/or thinking) in relation to their practices and/or program framework.</li> </ul>
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