

Georgia's Early Learning Coach Competencies

Guiding Principles

1. Honor both the needs of the professional being coached and the children they serve
2. Reflect an understanding that the coach and the professional being coached are equal partners in the coaching relationship
3. Value and respect the autonomy and voice of the professional being coached
4. Reflect a belief that the professional being coached has a choice in what and how they learn
5. Are based upon evidence-based practices in approaches to relationship-based professional learning
6. Value the need for the professional being coached to apply learning in real-life practice, while also creating a safe place for taking risks and practicing new skills
7. Value the importance of continuous reflection by both the coach and the professional being coached
8. Are grounded in principles of adult learning and theories of change
9. Include core competencies, skills, and observable behaviors needed for coaches in a variety of settings
10. Take into account the continuous development of skills from novice to expert coaches
11. Respect the need for trust and open dialogue in the coaching relationship
12. Recognize the importance of respect for various cultures, languages, abilities, learning styles, and communication preferences of both the coach and the professional being coached

Competency I: Building Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of effective coaching and require coaches to create a climate of trust and respect. Learning can only occur when the learner feels safe enough to take risks, reveal gaps in knowledge, and make mistakes. Skilled coaches recognize that learning is reciprocal – both the coach and the professional being coached (PBC) can learn from one another as they work together on improving practice.

I.1 Creating a safe, culturally responsive, and supportive climate that results in mutual trust and respect

- a. Demonstrates respect for and interest in the PBC
- b. Uses language that is free of jargon and overly technical terms or, if such terms must be used, ensures the understanding of the PBC
- c. Uses language that is gender-neutral, racially and ethnically inclusive
- d. Develops communication pathways that specify how information will be shared with administrators, teachers, families, and other key stakeholders
- e. Respects and maintains confidentiality

I.2 Intentionally maintaining coaching presence in the interest of the learning relationship

- a. Sets and maintains appropriate, healthy boundaries
- b. Employs a style that is open, flexible, and confident
- c. Is fully attentive, shifting perspectives and coaching approaches as needed in the moment

I.3 Honoring and valuing the autonomy, voice, and choice of the PBC.

- a. Recognizes the PBC's and program's unique characteristics and adjusts methods and strategies accordingly
- b. Remains focused on the PBC's needs when disagreements or conflicts surface
- c. Appreciates the PBC's perspective, even when it is different from one's own
- d. Actively seeks the PBC's input on learning process
- e. Provides opportunities for choice in the learning process whenever possible or practical

I.4 Collaboratively creating a written coaching agreement

- a. Has an initial conversation that effectively explains the goals and parameters of the coaching initiative in which the coach and the PBC are partnering
- b. Revisits the coaching agreement on an ongoing basis, revising as needed

Competency 2: Communicating Effectively

Coaches build relationships with the professional being coached (PBC) by interacting and communicating in a way that builds the trust and respect needed for learning to occur. Regardless of the mode of communication used, skilled coaches prioritize listening and understanding the PBC's perspective through reflective dialogue.

2.1 Effectively and respectfully using direct communication

- a. Is clear and articulate in communicating coaching objectives, providing feedback, and making recommendations
- b. Uses a range of both verbal and non-verbal communication techniques
- c. Employs sensitive communication strategies based on PBC's culture, lifestyle, linguistics, and values

2.2 Actively listening and remaining focused on what and how the PBC is communicating

- a. Asks questions that elicit the PBC's perspective
- b. Clarifies understanding by summarizing, paraphrasing, and restating what the PBC has said
- c. Encourages, explores, and accepts, without judgment, the PBC's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, and ideas
- d. Makes the PBC the focal point of the interaction by integrating and building on their perspective

2.3 Effectively using questions to stimulate thinking, promote reflection, and invite dialogue

- a. Asks questions to explore the root cause behind the PBC's concerns
- b. Asks clarifying questions
- c. Asks questions that demonstrate and provoke curiosity
- d. Uses reframing and reflective thinking to challenge the PBC to take multiple perspectives
- e. Asks open-ended questions to help the PBC explore and create a vision for their practice

2.4 Fostering communication that upholds individual preferences and cultural values

- a. Uses language that is gender-neutral, racially and ethnically inclusive
- b. Explores and honors, when possible, the communication preferences of the PBC, administrators, and other partners
- c. Identifies and reflects on personal values, experiences, ethics, and biases (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and class) in order to become self-aware and more effective in working with different groups
- d. Demonstrates cultural humility in relationships by avoiding assumptions and working to understand the PBC's perspective on how their culture influences and informs their practice

Competency 3: Facilitating Learning and Change

The goal of coaching is to create meaningful, sustainable change in daily practices that results in improved outcomes for children. In order for this to happen, the coach works alongside the professional being coached (PBC) to develop a plan for learning. The coach facilitates growth by supporting and challenging the PBC, offering feedback, and fostering reflection. Coaches must be flexible and willing to modify the plan as the PBC's needs and priorities change over time.

3.1 Effectively and collaboratively setting goals that align to child or program outcomes

- a. Supports the PBC in creating goals that address desired learning outcomes for children or for program level outcomes if appropriate
- b. Mutually creates goals that meet the PBC's needs while also aligning with the early childhood program in which the PBC works
- c. Collaborates with the PBC to ensure goals are attainable, measurable, specific, and have target dates for completion

3.2 Developing and maintaining a strengths-based, effective coaching plan that evolves based on priorities, progress, and needs

- a. Integrates and interprets data, information, and resources to establish a coaching plan with the PBC that builds on strengths and addresses opportunities for learning and growth
- b. Supports the PBC in prioritizing goals and actions
- c. Uses valid and reliable assessment tools as needed to assist the PBC in identifying strengths and opportunities for learning and growth
- d. Models openness to learning and taking risks
- e. Promotes active experimentation and self-discovery, assisting the PBC in identifying opportunities to demonstrate, practice, and deepen new learning
- f. Revisits and revises the coaching plan with the PBC as needed to realign with changing priorities and needs

3.3 Collaboratively creating learning opportunities that will most effectively accomplish agreed-upon goals

- a. Acknowledges early successes connected to goals
- b. Uses appropriate teaching tools and coaching strategies for the learning needs of the PBC
- c. Helps the PBC identify and access different resources needed to achieve their goals
- d. Engages the PBC in exploring alternate ideas and solutions, evaluating options, and making decisions when barriers to progress are identified

Competency 4: Monitoring Progress and Assessing Outcomes

To recognize learning has occurred, coaches and the professional being coached (PBC) must continuously monitor progress toward learning goals. Effective coaches reflect regularly on their coaching practice to ensure they are meeting the PBC's needs. In addition, skilled coaches support PBCs in assessing progress toward learning goals and the impact on child outcomes, adjusting the coaching plan as needed.

4.1 Regularly assessing and monitoring professional effectiveness

- a. Gathers feedback from the PBC regarding their experience in and satisfaction with the coaching partnership
- b. Builds collaborative relationships with peers to maximize their professional growth and continued contribution to the practice of coaching
- c. Uses a structured method of self-reflection to assess alignment with coaching competencies, impact on the PBC's goals and child outcomes, and shifts in the PBC's disposition in relation to individual and program goals
- d. Uses information from self-reflection and other relevant data to adapt practice and plan for continued growth
- e. Regularly engages in conversation with the PBC regarding her feelings related to progress, coaching plan, outcomes, and priorities

4.2 Supporting and encouraging an ongoing cycle of self-reflection and continuous improvement

- a. Facilitates the PBC's engagement in continual self-reflection to assess progress and examine key concerns and priorities
- b. Supports the PBC in using relevant data to make decisions about adaptations to the coaching plan and/or practices when needed
- c. Celebrates the PBC's successes and capacity for future growth

4.3 Collaboratively using data to assess PBC and child or program outcomes

- a. Supports the PBC in identifying measurable criteria for assessing attainment of goals
- b. Supports the PBC in developing a structured, systematic data collection plan
- c. Supports the PBC in using relevant data to understand progress toward goals and the impact on child or program outcomes, as appropriate
- d. Provides ongoing support for new behaviors and actions, focusing on learning opportunities even when outcomes are disappointing

Competency 5: Professionalism and Ethics

5.1 Engaging in professional and ethical behavior

- a. Models and provides leadership to others relative to Georgia's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood and School-age Professionals
- b. Enrolls and maintains accurate documentation of professional learning in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)
- c. Adheres to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and the supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators
- d. Coaches only within areas of content knowledge and expertise and refers the PBC to other experts when knowledge gaps exist
- e. Respects and maintains confidentiality for children, families, PBCs, and partner programs
- f. Develops communication pathways that specify how information will be shared with administrators, teachers, families, and other key stakeholders.
- g. Maintains professionalism by being on time, remaining organized, and following through on commitments

5.2 Demonstrating a commitment to ongoing professional learning

- a. Seeks out and selects appropriate professional learning opportunities based on assessed knowledge, skills, and interests
- b. Reflects on own practice and growth of the PBC for the purposes of continuous improvement
- c. Applies new knowledge and skills gained from professional learning experiences and reflection
- d. Intentionally develops a professional network system for support and feedback

5.3 Using evidence-based strategies for working with adults

- a. Assesses alignment between own knowledge, experience, skills, coaching methods and the needs of a potential PBC, program or initiative.
- b. Recognizes the impact of language and culture on practice
- c. Integrates appropriate cultural, linguistic and inclusion methods into own practice
- d. Understands theories of change and supports PBC through the change process
- e. Demonstrates knowledge of adult learning theories and adapts strategies based on PBC and program needs

Glossary

Boundaries	Personal boundaries are guidelines, rules, or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe, and permissible ways for other people to behave toward them and to identify how they will respond when someone exceeds those limits.
Clarifying questions	Clarifying questions are simple questions of fact. They can usually be answered quickly without a lot of thought. The answers to clarifying questions are typically brief.
Coaching	"Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group" (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011).
Coaching presence	Coaching presence is "the ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident" (International Coaching Federation definition). The ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship means that the coach is paying full attention to what the person being coached is saying, not just in their words but also including their tone of voice, word choice, and body language. Coaches who are fully present in this way are curious about the person being coached and how they see the world, not just focused on their own interpretation of the client's communication. (https://carlyanderson.com/listening-and-coaching-presence . Accessed January 18, 2019).
Cultural humility	Cultural humility is having a sense that one's own knowledge is limited when it comes to truly understanding another's culture. We are limited because we can't possibly know everything about every culture, and because the people we coach are complex human beings. https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/insitu/diversity/cultural-humility-a-lifelong-practice/
Culturally responsive	Cultural responsiveness is "the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures" (Dimensions of Culturally Responsive Education, NIUSI-LeadScape)
Data collection plan	Includes specific data to be collected, when and how data will be collected, and use of existing data that informs the coaching plan/as well as analysis of collected data
Reframing	Reframing is a technique used in coaching to help the person being coached create a different way of looking at a situation, person, or relationship.
Reflective thinking	Reflective thinking is a process in which the practitioner stops to think about their practice, seeking to analyze what happened and why it happened, in an effort to apply this learning to future experiences.
Relationship-based Professional Learning	A mode of professional learning where the relationship itself is the vehicle through which practitioners grow in knowledge and practice. (Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota)
Written coaching agreement	A written coaching agreement helps the coach and the person being coached to come to agreement about the coaching process and relationship. A good coaching agreement documents what the PBC wants to accomplish, why it's important to them, how success will be defined, and what needs to be addressed along the way. Written coaching agreements should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Roles and responsibilities of the coach and professional being coached▪ Expectations for coaching interactions (e.g. norms related to missed appointments, giving and receiving feedback, follow-through on tasks, etc.)▪ Time commitment▪ Logistics▪ Expected outcomes and measures of success▪ Reporting requirements▪ Resources available▪ Confidentiality▪ Roles of other parties, (such as funders, project coordinators, and evaluators, etc.)