

Practice Makes Productive: Coaching and Mentoring for Professionals and Parents

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Introduction

To positively affect EHDI services in Texas and throughout the country, deaf education preparation programs must train university students to coach and guide parents to use language elicitation strategies. Faculty at the Deaf Education and Hearing Science (DEHS) Program at the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio use reciprocal peer coaching and mentoring (RPCM), a method designed to help develop these skills in teachers in training. RPCM is a process by which graduate students practice new teaching methodologies, perfect existing techniques for mastery, utilize shared problem-solving skills, and receive feedback from a peer evaluator. Critical for the success of peer coaching colleague teams are mentors (professors) who initially demonstrate teaching strategies to students while working with a child and/or family in a practicum setting. Graduate students are coached in real-time by faculty, cooperating mentors, and peers regarding implementation of language elicitation and coaching strategies.

Early-intervention content is woven into every semester of the DEHS Program. Graduate students learn early intervention concepts and then apply these concepts via practicum-embedded coaching using RPCM. This process positively impacts the ability of graduate students to provide effective services to young children with hearing loss and their families. As a result of this training, new graduates are ready to help caregivers develop the language of their children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In the Program

In 2009, Drs. Trautwein and Ammerman initiated a reciprocal peer coaching/mentoring program, which entails

- A one-hour/week, two-semester language tutoring lab with
 - A young child with hearing loss
 - Either Dr. Trautwein or Dr. Ammerman
 - Two graduate students
- Professor and students meet prior to the session to discuss
 - Session goals
 - The activity
 - Coaching competencies to elicit the child's goals
- Professor leads first 4-6 sessions; students gradually assume the leadership role
- Students then rotate leadership from mid-fall through spring
- Professor and students meet post-session to discuss
 - Child's goals successfully elicited
 - Competencies used
 - Goals that could have been elicited better
 - Competencies to consider for next session
- Leader initiates an online journal that reflects further on the session; other members respond
- Format is extended into
 - parent-infant placements
 - student teaching rotations

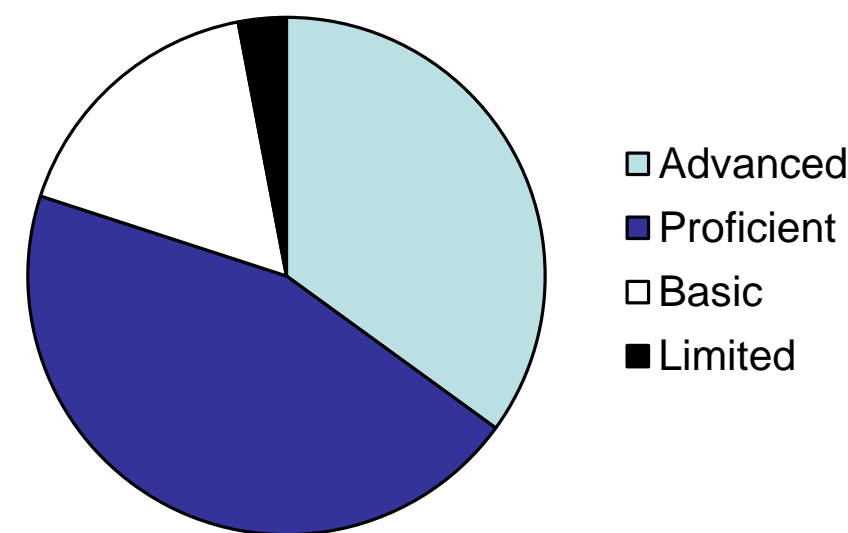
In the Field

2013 graduates:

- First group to be provided mentoring and peer coaching in the first year of professional practice
- Graduates surveyed after the first few months in the field

Results:

- Graduates rated themselves as "advanced" or "proficient" with 80% of teaching/coaching competencies



- Needs/challenges
 - Lack of on-campus mentoring
 - Knowledge of local IFSP/paperwork procedures
 - Navigating various campuses (itinerant)
- Mentoring provided via Google Hangout, email, phone, Skype, or face-to-face, depending on graduate's location and preference
- Website established
 - Graduates post questions to peers and mentors

In the Future

- Collect data from supervisors on graduates' teaching/coaching abilities and strategy implementation
- Make curricular changes based on graduates' needs
- Further develop interactive, online platform for all graduates
 - Mentoring
 - Interactive discussion among graduates and mentors

Strategies/Competencies:	
A Sample	
Goal	Description
Acoustic highlighting	Verbally emphasizes words with omitted targets
Auditory sandwich	Begins with speech, supports with prompt, returns to speech
Differentiating instruction	Uses a variety of questions, techniques, and probes
Execution	Consistently reinforces targeted language and follows plan
Modeling	Uses another adult or peer to demonstrate a developmentally appropriate task (experience or language)
Recasting	Restates utterance in a syntactically correct form
Self talk/ parallel talk	Provides narrative of own or child's actions
Speech targets	Reinforces targets w/o interrupting communication flow
Vocabulary depth	Increases understanding of word characteristics
Wait time	Allows child opportunity to formulate thoughts before requiring a response