Coaching
CHAMPS

Building a System of Support for All Teachers

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A Context for Coaching

When I was hired as a coach in Jim Knight's original project in Topeka, Kansas, I wasn't sure what I was walking into. As a middle school teacher, I hadn't had a coach. Coaching was a relatively new concept in the field of education. In fact, at the time the job position was "Instructional Collaborator." Coach wasn't even in the name. I was learning by doing. I also had access to my colleagues, expert coaches who were able to coach me in turn.

During my first 3 years as a coach, I was in a building that was facing incredible challenges. Leadership had become a revolving door, with almost every leadership position turning over more than once in that time frame. Because leadership was ever changing and expectations for students and staff seemingly shifted by the minute, students finally looked around and realized there were more of them than there were of us. And the students quickly took control, realizing that our standards for behavior were so inconsistent that there was a high probability most of them wouldn't be called out for any violations.

Jim Knight had been working to figure out how we as coaches could address behavior concurrently with providing instructional support. A colleague of his, Jodi King, had recommended Randy Sprick's work, specifically *CHAMPS*, a resource that provided tools and strategies for classroom management. Jim took the copy Jodi provided and read it on a plane ride home. He was convinced this was just the ticket we needed, as coaches, to bring to our teachers.

Susan Isaacs, now my colleague and friend, came to Topeka, Kansas, to provide a one-day overview with Jim, the coaches, building administrators, and some lead teachers. At the end of the day, the coaches and Jim debriefed. I'm not sure about my fellow coaches, but I was largely unconvinced. With the heart of a secondary teacher, I am typically skeptical of anything from an "expert." First of all, there was an acronym. Secondary teachers tend to shy away from acronyms, believing

them to be so cute as to be ineffectual. I thought, "This will never work with *our* kids," again falling prey to the idea that our students are somehow averse to every research-based resource available.

I was convinced *CHAMPS* was another flash-in-the-pan, of-the-moment resource that would quickly fade. I didn't want to bring something to my teachers that I doubted would work and that would be one more thing added to their already overflowing plates. So I did what anyone in my position at the time might do—I set out to sabotage its implementation.

Jim had requested that we take a couple of things we'd learned and apply them with a couple of teachers. Just to get our feet wet. Just to get some experience and expanded learning on what the CHAMPS model could do. I took that directive straight to a teacher who'd already informed me she was quitting. At the time, I thought this was an excellent plan. "She's leaving anyway," I thought. "What harm will this do? She's not entirely bought in, I'm not entirely bought in, but when it fails and she leaves, I can tell the team, 'See, I told you it wouldn't work.'" No flaws in that plan, right?

She and I worked through two things together. We started by defining and teaching her expectations for teacher-guided instruction. We both shockingly realized there might be some ambiguity in her expectations for students. She made them explicitly clear through the process of applying the CHAMPS acronym. Then she asked, "Now what?" I said, "I don't know. I haven't read that far in the book." We figured it out together, creating a lesson plan that she delivered the next day.

Once we did that, we started collecting data on her interactions with students and thinking of ways to improve the amount and quality of attention she paid to students who were following her expectations. When I say that the impact was immediate, I'm not exaggerating. The climate of her classroom changed dramatically, though it was still far from perfect. She didn't leave the profession. She stuck with it, staying in the classroom because she knew how to start off better the next year.

It's probably one of the most authentic coaching experiences I've been a part of. It was a true partnership. I wasn't the expert—I was only slightly ahead of what we were learning. It was truly a reciprocal endeavor. While I wouldn't recommend that coaches always coach what they *don't* know, the experience helped me realize that coaching can be effective when you stop believing you have all the answers. I had a plan, but I still came to the table with an open mind. I was expecting it to fail, but willing to believe that it could succeed. And so was the teacher.

We were both shocked and thrilled that such simple steps, both powerful and easy, could make a difference. The difference could be felt—by both us and the students. I became a rabid believer in the potential for classroom management design to have a huge impact on student behavior and learning. I started training staff on the campus and in the district, working and learning right along with them. I was modeling lessons and being observed by my peers so they could provide feedback. They coached me so I could be a better coach to the teachers in my care.

—Tricia Skyles

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is about building a schoolwide program for implementing proven, research-based classroom management practices through coaching—and seeing that plan through to success. This is not, nor is it intended to be, a general classroom management book; there are already many fine ones. In fact, the intended audience for this book is not the classroom teacher per se, but rather anyone charged with helping teachers—including principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, counselors, mentor teachers, behavior management coaches, and instructional coaches. If you're a coach or leader who has realized poor behavior management systems are getting in the way of your teachers being able to provide quality instruction, we believe this resource will be a game changer.
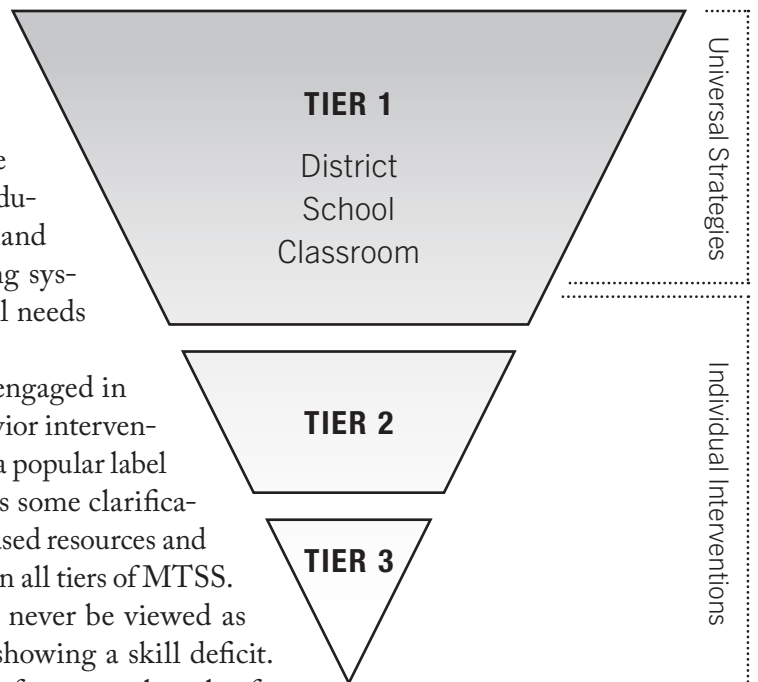
COACHING WITHIN MTSS

We've designed this book around the MTSS framework. MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports) is an effective framework that helps educators provide academic and behavioral support for all students. MTSS models often refer to levels of support in three tiers:

- Tier 1: Universal support (for everyone)
- Tier 2: Targeted support (for some)
- Tier 3: Intensive support (for a few)

What we know about effective support for students in all tiers can be translated into a guide for supporting teachers. By creating tiers for educators, just as we do for students, we can adapt and modify professional development and coaching systems to meet both the collective and individual needs of all teachers.

Many districts and buildings are currently engaged in some process aligned with PBIS (positive behavior interventions and supports). Note that PBIS has become a popular label that is used in a variety of ways and so warrants some clarification. PBIS is simply the collection of evidence-based resources and research-based practices that would be included in all tiers of MTSS.

It is important to note that MTSS should never be viewed as a support system intended only for educators showing a skill deficit. Instead, MTSS should be viewed as a system of support that also fosters growth in teachers who are highly skilled and want to further hone their abilities. The intent for both groups is to increase the likelihood of teacher retention, which in turn increases the skill level of all educators. If the goal of

TIER 1

District
School
Classroom

TIER 2

TIER 3

Universal Strategies

Individual Interventions

classroom management is to develop a classroom of students who are responsible, motivated, and highly engaged in meaningful tasks, you need a large group of highly skilled educators who are also responsible, motivated, and highly engaged in meaningful tasks to ultimately hit this target. Coaching is a vital piece of this framework in all three tiers of support, and it's how we've organized this resource.

Section 1: Coaching as Universal Support for All Teachers. This section begins by outlining an effective system of support for the whole team, in this case classroom teachers. Administrators and coaches are guided in building a system of support for all staff to address behavior. This section discusses how to drive change effectively, how to choose a classroom management model, and how to prepare not only for initial implementation but also for ongoing professional development. Setting up a system of regular observations will help provide objective feedback to staff and identify and assist staff who may require more targeted coaching support.

Section 2: Coaching as Targeted Support for Teachers. This section discusses how to provide more formal, structured coaching support to teachers whose needs have not been met with Tier 1 universal supports. This coaching approach relies on the process of continuous improvement and a set of benchmarks (the Basic 5) that coaches can use to provide support to staff. Staff members identified in need of targeted support include those who are showing a skill deficit in behavior management practices as well as those who are continuing to build on an already exceptional skill set, whether for enriching their practice, becoming a model classroom, or working toward their own administrative degree. Additionally, this section embeds strategies for assisting teachers within the STOIC framework (see below).

Section 3: Coaching as Intensive Support for Teachers. This section focuses on building a formal plan of improvement. Again, built around the idea of the STOIC variables, this chapter helps a support team create an intentional plan of assistance. Included in this section is a story about hope. Tier 3 efforts should not be seen as the final hoop before a teacher is removed. On the contrary, building an effective Tier 3 level of support is about teacher retention. It hinges on the belief that we expect staff to have for all students: With enough support and the right resources, improvement is always possible.

ONLINE Download

REPRODUCIBLE FORMS

Throughout the three sections you'll find examples of reproducible forms that are provided as downloadable PDFs. These will make it easier to implement the supports outlined in each section and also ensure consistency in the coaching process. Purchasers of this book have permission to print and copy the forms as needed to use in their own coaching practice. To download all of the reproducible forms, go to download.ancorapublishing.com and enter access code 978-1-59909-115-0.

FORMALIZING A STRUCTURE FOR COACHING

Having those in leadership work together to build an effective coaching system is vital. And so, too, is the quality of the information and resources being used within that system. All tools and suggestions in this book are compatible with the research literature. More importantly, they are intended to enhance the flow of instruction, streamline every aspect of school functioning, cultivate partnership learning, stimulate new thinking, and replace misunderstanding with respectful dialogue. To succeed, any structure designed to support instructional and behavioral coaching must consider all these things.

Formalizing a structure within a school for collaborative coaching is a first step toward creating a positive climate and common purpose among staff and students. However, some of the processes for building and sustaining a positive, supportive schoolwide environment fall outside the scope of this book. Although many of the intervention techniques described here may help the behavior of individual students, the design of behavior support plans for students is a topic for another time. Nor will we focus on how coaching can facilitate improvement in schoolwide concerns such as dress code or behavior in halls and restrooms.

In this book, the Basic 5 Benchmarks are used to assess classroom teachers and determine the level of structured coaching support needed across all tiers. The Basic 5 get their name from the five categories of behavior, or benchmarks, that represent indicators of classroom functioning:

- *Opportunities to Respond*—chances given by the teacher for students to engage in teacher-directed instruction
- *Ratio of Interactions*—ratio of positive to corrective interactions between the teacher and students
- *Disruptions*—unwanted or inappropriate behaviors that interrupt the flow of instruction for the teacher or another student or students
- *On-Task Behavior*—amount of on-task behavior exhibited by students
- *Alignment with Expectations*—the daily reality of student behavior compared with posted expectations and classroom rules

The Basic 5 Benchmarks (Reproducible 3.5 on p. 66) and the Basic 5 Observation Tool (Reproducible 7.1 shown on pp. 209–210) helps coaches gather preliminary data about each of these benchmarks in the classroom. Based on observation data, each Basic 5 benchmark is categorized into one of three classifications:

- Level 1: Classroom skills are functioning at a high level, and the teacher should proceed with what they already have in practice.
- Level 2: Changing or augmenting current management techniques is recommended.
- Level 3: Immediate intervention is necessary to secure the learning environment of students.
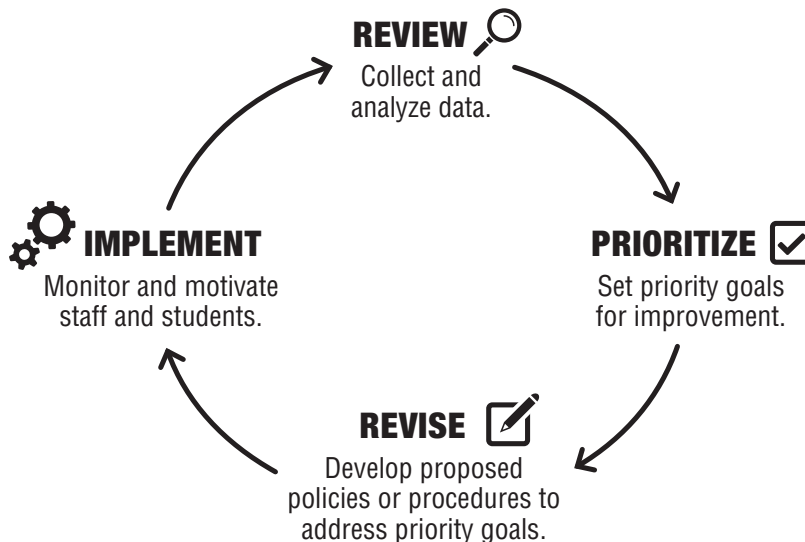
If a teacher's performance falls into Level 3 on one benchmark, a coach can gather more specific data regarding this variable and work to help the teacher attain proficiency in that area. If the teacher's scores tend to fall into Level 2 overall, the coach and teacher might choose either to focus on one or two skills or to attack all of them directly, using the coach's discretion and relationship with the teacher as a guide.

These levels align somewhat with the idea of tiers, with Level 1 indicating a low need for support in the benchmark and Level 3 indicating a high need for support. While no professional is ever finished making finer distinctions within each benchmark, mastery of these five variables will put any teacher along the path to being an effective classroom manager.

THE IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Structured coaching is about supporting teachers' continuous improvement. The most effective teachers are those who engage in the process of continuous improvement throughout each year and from year to year, continually refining and adjusting their practices to fit the needs of the students they are currently working with. They accomplish this by committing to the Improvement Cycle (Figure I.1), which involves reviewing data, prioritizing goals for improvement based on those data, revising aspects of their classroom management plan to address those goals, and implementing new plans while monitoring the efficacy of any changes. The Improvement Cycle is continuous because the process of evaluating how things are going in the classroom and adjusting plans is never finished.

Figure I.1 *Improvement Cycle*

REVIEW
Collect and analyze data.

PRIORITIZE
Set priority goals for improvement.

REVISE
Develop proposed policies or procedures to address priority goals.

IMPLEMENT
Monitor and motivate staff and students.

The Improvement Cycle also offers a way for coaches to use data to make meaningful decisions and support teachers in refining their classroom management practices. The cycle discussed in this book directly matches the Improvement Cycle introduced to teachers in *CHAMPS* as an ongoing cycle of reflection and growth in the classroom. In this book, the Improvement Cycle embeds the Basic 5 Benchmarks, providing coaches with a framework for defining measurable targets and delivering crucial feedback for teachers working to improve their classroom management skills. In the context of coaching, this format will allow coaches and teachers to work collaboratively yet efficiently to create classroom environments that help all students reach their highest potential.

THE CHAMPS APPROACH

In this book, the term *classroom management* encompasses classroom-based discipline and behavior support, classroom organization (as it relates to student behavior), and all practices designed to reduce student misbehavior, increase responsible behavior, or increase motivation.

This book draws many concepts and examples from the CHAMPS classroom management approach set forth in *CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management* (3rd ed., Sprick, J., et al., 2021), for teachers of grades K–8, and *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management* (4th ed., Sprick, R., et al., 2021), a CHAMPS-based approach for grades 9–12. (For brevity, these books will hereafter be referred to as *CHAMPS* and *DSC*.)

The conceptual framework that underpins the CHAMPS approach speaks directly to teaching expectations. CHAMPS addresses five categories in which expectations should be precisely taught for any given classroom activity:

C	**Conversation**	*Can students talk to each other? If so, with whom can they speak, about what, and for how long?*
H	**Help**	*How do students get their questions answered? How do they get your attention?*
A	**Activity**	*What is the task or objective? What is the end product?*
M	**Movement**	*Can students move about?*
P	**Participation**	*What does the expected student behavior look and sound like? How do students show they are fully participating?*
S	**Success**	*If students follow the CHAMPS expectations, they will be successful.*

> **Note About the CHAMPS Acronym**
>
> *Some teachers use S to indicate Special instructions for a particular activity or transition.*

For teachers of high school students who would prefer a more sophisticated mnemonic, *DSC* introduces a variant, ACHIEVE:

A **Activity** *What is the task or objective? What is the end product?*

C **Conversation** *Can students talk to each other? If so, with whom can they speak, about what, and for how long?*

H **Help** *How do students get their questions answered? How do they get your attention?*

I **Integrity** *What are your expectations regarding students doing their own work and avoiding copying work or plagiarizing sources? When is collaboration appropriate or inappropriate?*

E **Effort** *What does appropriate student work behavior during the activity look or sound like? How do students demonstrate their full participation?*

V **Value** *How will participation in this activity be of value to students? How will student efforts on this activity contribute to their success in your class?*

E **Efficiency** *What tips or suggestions can you give students for getting maximum benefit from this activity?*

The concepts represented in ACHIEVE can serve as a basis for teaching more complex or philosophical classroom expectations to mature students.

STOIC FRAMEWORK

The best behavior management strategies address five areas of behavioral intervention: prevention, teaching expectations, monitoring, encouragement, and correction. To bring these variables more easily to mind, we have encapsulated them in the acronym STOIC:

- *Structure* for success.
- *Teach* expectations.
- *Observe* and monitor.
- *Interact* positively.
- *Correct* fluently.

Teachers *structure for success* by organizing classrooms and class activities to discourage misbehavior and encourage student engagement and motivation. In this context, *structure* encompasses both physical and logistical considerations. Teachers may also assign to each class a customized level of structure, depending on the students' prevailing age, maturity, independence, and self-motivation.

Teachers *teach expectations* for how to function successfully within that structure. To be successful, students need to know the teacher's clear expectations for all major instructional activities and transitions. No two teachers have exactly the same expectations and no two students have had exactly the same experience with teachers, which is why attending to expectations early and often reaps dividends of reclaimed time and productivity.

Teachers *observe and monitor* by circulating throughout their classroom unpredictably and scanning frequently, remaining physically and visually aware of what's going on in the room at all times. They use proximity to nip early-stage misbehavior in the bud. When appropriate, they collect observational data on student behavior to spot trends and patterns and inform interventions.

Teachers *interact positively* by providing both contingent praise and feedback and noncontingent positive attention. Students will always behave better and work harder for someone who they perceive values them and cares about their success.

Teachers *correct fluently* by responding to undesired behavior calmly, consistently, briefly, and immediately. They precorrect anticipated misbehavior beforehand and re-teach appropriate behavior afterward. A fluent correction does not disrupt the flow of instruction. Gentle corrections by exceptionally fluent teachers "fly under the radar," often going unnoticed by students other than the one targeted.

Together, the STOIC variables represent five essential aspects of any classroom management plan. Teachers who excel at managing their classrooms tend to accomplish the feat in their own individual and unique (and often unconscious) ways. Consequently, while many variables that influence student behavior are known, legitimate means of addressing them vary as widely as teachers themselves. Do not fall victim to the promise of a canned, one-size-fits-all solution. Were there such a quick fix, the smorgasbord of coaching, mentoring, and professional development options we have would hardly be in demand. Using the CHAMPS approach and STOIC framework, you can craft effective, research-based classroom management plans as individual as the classes they are designed for.

GOALS OF COACHING FOR EQUITY

Coaching for equity involves helping teachers identify and take concrete actions to ensure that each child receives whatever they need to develop to their full academic and social potential. Coaching for equity includes encouraging educators to analyze existing practices, reveal hidden norms, identify gaps, and consider meaningful supports for students who might otherwise fall through the cracks of the schooling system.

Teachers are primary agents of change toward achieving more equitable educational environments. Teachers' daily interactions with students and decisions about instructional practices exert a major influence over the trajectories of their students' education. The responsibility to provide equitable access to classroom instruction goes beyond the teacher's skill in delivering content through best instructional practices. Teachers must actively work to avoid equity traps, which McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) define as "ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing their students of color can be successful" (pp. 601–602). Teachers fall into equity traps when they hold assumptions, stereotypes, and deficit thinking patterns about students and families of color.

Many schools and districts have begun important work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many have developed a cultural competency lens. While this is not specifically a book on coaching for equity, we believe this resource and *CHAMPS* can support the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Safe & Civil Schools fully supports and encourages this difficult and important work and recommends that you read seminal texts in this area, such as *Coaching for Equity: Conversations that Change Practice* by Elena Aguilar (2020).

As a decision-making framework designed to help teachers create a classroom where all students can thrive, this book and *CHAMPS* can support the implementation of best practices focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. These resources promote a continuous improvement process where teachers have the ability to adapt their systems if they are not meeting the needs of their students. Teachers can apply cultural competency training by taking into account the varied cultures within their classroom.

Changing the mindset of teachers not only to recognize the inequity of certain practices, but also to become someone willing to act as an agent of change is a challenging task. However, working with teachers to collect data on how classroom practice impacts students, examine these data to understand if students or groups of students are not finding success, and replace problematic practices with those that are more equitable can meaningfully transform classrooms into environments that are culturally safe for students, make students feel more empowered and less threatened, and increase the likelihood that each child will realize their full potential (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Voltz et al., 2003).

Coaching for equity involves helping teachers:

- Examine whether their classroom rules and expectations are meeting the needs of all of their students. Do the rules meet the needs of all students? Are rules explicitly taught so all students understand how to be successful in the classroom?
- Are there hidden norms? Does the teacher need to reevaluate their classroom expectations because the expectations are not actually aligned with the expectations that have been taught to students? Has the teacher actually taught the posted classroom rules?

- Is the teacher actively and positively engaged with every student? Is the teacher inadvertently using more corrective interactions with certain racial groups, for example?
- Are there individual students who are struggling more than others? If so, are the numbers disproportionate based on race or ethnicity?

These are the questions we can't shy away from when engaged in a true dialogue centered around the collaborative exploration of data. Again, we repeat, this is not a book about coaching for equity, but it is a book centered on data collection. And we cannot collect data without having the willingness to confront sometimes uncomfortable realities. This is a book about partnership. And through true partnership, any conversation is possible.

DISPELLING THE MYTH OF "MAGICAL" CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Often, the myth of "magical" classroom management is what leads to a teacher needing the more targeted support provided in Tiers 2 and 3. One disservice done to preservice educators is to have them student-teach with master teachers after the school year is already in progress. They don't get to see what happens during the first 2 weeks of school. They don't see all the preplanning or the hoops a master teacher jumps through to set up a successful classroom. Once in place, such a system is often so effective as to be nearly invisible to an inexperienced outside observer. Many new teachers enter the field believing these two myths: 1) good classroom management is a magical thing that either happens or doesn't, and 2) whether a class is well behaved or unruly depends on the kind of kids assigned to it.

For teachers who have bought into these fallacies, coaches are an integral resource at any level. When classroom management mastery doesn't magically occur, coaches will be equipped to bring resources to bear and break down complex phenomena into a series of manageable tasks and a well-thought-out system that affords all students the opportunity to be successful.