

Lessons Learned About Peer-to-Peer Coaching (Based on KY SPDG Evidence)

The KY SPDG consistently used **coaching structures**, including **peer modeling**, **linked-team coaching**, and **cohort-based academies**, that provide strong lessons about peer-supported practice. These are the themes that clearly emerge:

1. Coaching Is Most Effective When Integrated Into Existing Team Structures

The project shows that **coaching embedded in MTSS teams**—district implementation teams, school teams, regional teams—creates natural peer-to-peer exchange rather than isolated coaching.

SPDG coaches guided data unpacking, modeling instruction, and continuous improvement cycles within these teams, which created **built-in peer feedback loops**.

Lesson learned:

Peer coaching is strongest when coaches and educators operate within a *linked team infrastructure* so collaborative problem-solving (rather than one-off sessions) becomes routine.

2. Peer Learning Communities Increase Fidelity and Teacher Skill Growth

Both SPDG virtual academies (PBIS Pyramid Model in early childhood and the Mathematics HLP Academy) explicitly highlight the power of **peer cohorts**:

- Teachers met weekly in **learning communities**, shared implementation evidence, completed reflection journals, and asked implementation questions together.
- Teachers described how the **peer discussions** and shared problem-solving **shifted their thinking** about instruction and behavior supports.

Lesson learned:

Peer learning communities—structured groups with facilitators—drive deeper adoption of evidence-based practices because teachers witness each other’s successes and challenges.

3. Peer Modeling Accelerates Practice Change

SPDG coaches frequently **modeled teaching practices** to teachers and teams, but the documentation also shows teachers modeling practices for each other during coaching sessions and implementation checks.

- Preschool teachers shared classroom rules and procedures for peer comparison during Pyramid Model training.
- Math teachers shared multiple solution approaches and instructional strategies within cohorts.

Lesson learned:

Peer modeling reduces implementation barriers by providing live, context-specific examples of what high-fidelity practice looks like in similar classrooms.

4. Peer-to-Peer Coaching Supports Sustainability When Cadres Are Intentionally Built

SPDG intentionally **braided novice content specialists** into virtual cohorts so they could learn from expert facilitators, shadow them, receive coaching, and eventually lead their own cohorts.

Lesson learned:

Developing a *cadre of peer coaches* inside the system greatly increases sustainability because expertise resides within the state—not with temporary external providers.

5. Peer Coaching Must Be Paired With Clear Practice Profiles and Fidelity Tools

Across LINK, LINKED Teaming, and LINK2K, peer coaching was effective because coaches and peer educators used:

- Clear practice profiles (Implementation Science, MTSS, PBIS, HLPs)
- Fidelity tools (LSA, OTISS, DCA, training fidelity checklists)
- Action plans driven by data

These tools help peers give accurate, high-quality feedback.

Lesson learned:

Peer coaching should not rely solely on informal advice; it must be anchored in shared practice expectations and fidelity tools to keep feedback consistent.

Key Data Findings Related to Coaching & Peer Learning

1. Strong Teacher-Reported Impact of Coaching

Across MTSS, PBIS, and mathematics cohorts:

- **94%** of classroom teachers reported that coaching had a significant positive impact on implementing strategies that increased access for *all students*.
- Math teachers (98%) and preschool teachers (90%) reported that weekly cohort discussions with facilitators/coaches significantly improved implementation.

What this shows:

Peer coaching environments dramatically increase confidence and skill, often exceeding performance measure targets.

2. Peer Coaching and Cohort Participation Led to Increased Fidelity

Examples:

- 78 of 85 teachers (92%) showed increased capacity to implement core instructional strategies after academy participation.
- LINK schools demonstrated steady MTSS fidelity increases even following pandemic setbacks, due in part to coaching embedded in peer teams.
- LINK2K districts and schools improved across all domains on capacity assessments.

What this shows:

Peer coaching paired with structured fidelity instruments changes practice across multiple instructional domains.

3. Cohort Model Data Demonstrates Sustainable Statewide Peer Learning

- PBIS Academy: **24 cohorts, 250 graduates**
- Math HLP Academy: **6 cohorts, 113 graduates**

What this shows:

Large-scale peer cohort structures can be delivered statewide and maintain quality across many facilitators.

Implementation & Sustainability Supports That Emerged**1. Linked-Teaming Infrastructure**

The SPDG used a “linked teaming” model—state → regional → district → school—to ensure coaches, administrators, and peers share data, solve problems, and sustain MTSS.

This infrastructure is explicitly cited as the grant’s **primary sustainability strategy**.

2. Continuous Improvement Cycles

Teams used:

- Capacity assessments (SCA, RCA, DCA)
- MTSS fidelity tools (LSA, OTISS)
- PDSA cycles for action planning

These allow peer coaches and implementation teams to make informed adjustments.

3. Sustained Use of Data Systems

Maintaining implementation post-grant relied on:

- Public data sharing at school boards
- Linked action plans
- Use of universal screening, progress monitoring, and discipline data

Peers used common data sources to coach one another.

4. Building a Cadre of Internal Coaches

The grant strategically:

- Trained novice SPDG specialists by embedding them into peer academies

- Developed school/district internal coaches
- Established regional coaches through RTCs

These peer coaching roles **remain in the system beyond the SPDG funding.**

5. Embedding Practices into Policies and Structures

Examples:

- District and school implementation teams became permanent structures.
- Communication plans and sustainability plans formalized routines.
- EBPs and HLPs were embedded into IHE coursework via collaboration with CEEDAR and IHE Consortium.

This reduces reliance on external project staff.