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What is This?
Supporting New Teachers of Students With Significant Disabilities Through Virtual Coaching: A Proposed Model

Maya Israel1, Christina R. Carnahan1, Kathleen K. Snyder1, and Pamela Williamson1

Abstract
New teachers of students with significant disabilities are expected to use evidence-based practices that build academic and functional skills from their first day on the job. Yet, these teachers may struggle with applying information learned in their preservice coursework to their daily instructional practices. One widely accepted means of supporting new special educators is mentoring and coaching. However, geographic and time constraints often limit the amount and quality of mentoring and coaching. This article provides a framework of virtual coaching for supporting new teachers working with students with significant disabilities in a way that addresses these access to coaching issues and describes means of incorporating multiple, integrated online technologies.

Keywords
virtual coaching, online mentoring, significant disabilities, induction

From their first days in the classroom, special education teachers working with students with significant disabilities are expected to implement evidence-based practices that build academic and functional skills. Yet, these teachers may struggle with applying information learned in their preservice coursework to their daily instructional practices. One widely accepted means of supporting new special educators is mentoring and coaching. However, geographic and time constraints often limit the amount and quality of mentoring and coaching. This article provides a framework of virtual coaching for supporting new teachers working with students with significant disabilities in a way that addresses these access to coaching issues and describes means of incorporating multiple, integrated online technologies.

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The purpose of this article is to offer a framework for using online technologies to coach new special educators working with students with significant disabilities and highlight how induction programs can incorporate multiple, integrated online technologies to do so. Although many of the practices described in this article can be used to support teachers of all students, we have specifically targeted students with significant disabilities in our discussion because of the chronic shortage of teachers (Simpson, McKee, Teeter, & Beytien, 2007), lack of mentors within schools with experience teaching students with complex support needs (Jameson & McDonnell, 2007), and the complexity of these learners’ needs (Lang & Fox, 2004).

Supporting Teachers of Students With Significant Disabilities

In their first years, special educators begin to develop the teaching practices that will guide them for years to come (Billingsley et al., 2009; Leko & Smith, 2010). These first years are critical for developing effective and efficient teaching practices that support active engagement in meaningful learning activities, a key factor for promoting learning (Iovannone, Dunlap, Huber, & Kincaid, 2003). However, many beginning special educators cite work climate, workload, curriculum, and lack of materials as significant challenges (Billingsley et al., 2009). Rather than focusing on developing and implementing motivating lessons that incorporate evidence-based practices, they frequently spend the majority of their time managing collaborative relationships, students’ behaviors, and organizational tasks.

For educators serving students with significant disabilities, the challenges are even more complex. In addition to paperwork, collaboration, instructional best practices, and the general education curriculum, these special educators must demonstrate competence in instruction related to personal care (e.g., feeding and toileting), health, mobility, positioning needs, augmentative communication devices, and other adaptive technologies (Eichinger & Downing, 2000). While working toward building their students’ academic competencies, they must also develop students’ social-communication skills and understand how to build fluid lessons that incorporate systematic instruction and high levels of reinforcement for their students (Downing, 2010; Westling & Fox, 2008). Developing these skills takes time, practice, and support. Thus, even after completing a special education teacher preparation program, many beginning special educators struggle to connect their university learning to the requirements of the field. In addition, many schools address the chronic shortage of special education teachers by hiring noncertified teachers enrolled in alternative licensing programs. These teachers working toward alternative licensure directly in the field may have even less special education experience than their peers from traditional preparation programs (Delano, Keefe, & Perner, 2008). In either case, new special educators who have yet to develop extensive experience and background knowledge in designing high-quality services for students with significant disabilities can be even more overwhelming (Jameson & McDonnell, 2007).

New special educators must also address an ever-growing focus on the use of evidence-based practices for students with autism and other significant disabilities (Simpson, 2004, 2008). As Simpson and colleagues (2007) suggested, it is not enough to provide students with access to evidence-based interventions; rather, a skilled instructor must deliver that instruction for such teaching practices to be successful. Thus, in addition to evidence-based practices, all students, including those with significant disabilities, need academic instruction from skilled teachers (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004).

Although many skills needed to be an effective special educator of students with significant disabilities can be taught individually (e.g., writing an Individualized Education Program goal, strategies for programming a voice output device), developing quality instructional practices is much more complex (Lang & Fox, 2004). Yet, it is the more sophisticated skills (e.g., problem solving, reflection) combined with experience that improve practice and promote student learning (Larwood, 2005). Consequently, induction strategies must do more than help teachers feel supported and manage the day-to-day details of teaching. Induction activities must provide beginning teachers with supports that build critical problem solving and guide teachers in developing efficient and effective routines that promote engagement and learning (Billingsley et al., 2009). One powerful means of doing so is through coaching and mentoring specific to each teacher while engaging in the practice of teaching (Rock et al., 2009). In this article, we (a) highlight synchronous and asynchronous technologies to enhance mentoring and support in a process of virtual coaching, (b) describe a conceptual framework of comprehensive virtual coaching, and (c) propose a model of implementation for teachers of students with significant disabilities.

Virtual Coaching

Coaching Overview

Providing new special educators with the necessary support and skills to be effective can be challenging for school administrators. As schools and school districts recognize the limitations of traditional “one shot” professional development, increasing emphasis is placed on coaching as a means of supporting P-12 teachers (Knight, 2009). Although providing special and general education teachers with tools and best practices through single professional development opportunities alone has not been an effective approach,
supplementing these activities with ongoing, embedded support may increase teachers’ capacities to integrate best practices within their teaching contexts.

This critique of professional development is not new and certainly does not apply only to special educators participating in such workshops. For example, Whitehead (1929) criticized education that focused on “inert knowledge,” which he defined as “ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations” (p. 13). Instead, Whitehead suggested that applied and relevant knowledge ought to replace education that is separate from experience.

Guskey (2002) argued that professional development should directly target outcomes. Nearly all professional development opportunities seek to change teacher attitudes and beliefs, classroom practices, and student outcomes. However, as Gusky contended, the order in which these changes occur is critical. Professional development has traditionally targeted teacher beliefs and attitudes first, with the assumption that enthusiasm and buy-in will lead to changes in teacher practice followed by improved student outcomes. Gusky suggested an alternative model, in which teacher practices are targeted first with the goal of improving student outcomes. Improved students results, or the evidence of the value of the teaching practice, ultimately affect teachers’ attitudes and beliefs.

Coaching programs embedding learning within practice offer a promising approach for supporting critical change in teaching practices. “Coaching” refers to a process wherein a teacher receives initial preparation, which is then followed by ongoing, individualized support from an expert mentor (Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). Thus, coaching can provide new teachers with embedded supports directly tied to their classrooms and teaching practices and can be embedded within mentoring programs. Unlike the information learned in workshops and other traditional professional development practices, coaching is ongoing, dependent on relationships between the new teachers and the coaches, and directly relates to the experiences new teachers encounter in their teaching practices. Cornett and Knight (2009), in their review of the coaching literature, suggested that coaching impacts teachers’ professional satisfaction, teaching practices, and self-efficacy. The literature also indicates that teachers take the information learned over time through coaching to improve their practice and beliefs about teaching.

Access to effective coaching. Although the literature suggests coaching positively impacts teachers, it does not adequately address the troubling fact that in many cases, there simply are not enough personnel to adequately support all the teachers in need of coaching. In a field where the number of teachers is relatively small due to the population of students with significant disabilities, finding qualified mentors to support novice teachers is particularly challenging. For example, in isolated rural areas, teachers of students with significant disabilities may not have a mentor or coach available (Smith & Israel, 2010). Likewise, in highly populated urban school districts, a large number of teachers may request coaching and mentoring supports and coaches must balance work with numerous teachers. Thus, school districts must consider not only the challenges of providing high-quality and effective coaching but also the equally pressing issue of accessibility of coaching.

Virtual coaching. One means of remediating the lack of coaching support due to geographic or timing constraints is through integrating web-based online technologies into coaching models originally designed for traditional face-to-face coaching. Virtual coaching, thus, simply involves coaching offered to new teachers through online technologies instead of traditional face-to-face methods. The appeal of exploring web-based technologies comes from its ability to directly address the “access” issues presented in traditional coaching models. Although virtual coaching does not address the shortage of quality coaches, it does allow a coach to work with more teachers in a shorter amount of time by eliminating travel demands. Similarly, obstacles such as distance could be removed in the development of coach/teacher partnerships. Early career special educators in rural or remote settings, for example, would be able to access support from coaches in other settings through the use of online collaborative tools.

Conceptual Framework for Virtual Coaching

The virtual coaching conceptual framework rests on the collaborative relationship between the coach and new special educators. To truly build professional capacity, the relationship must include immediate coaching sessions and ongoing reflection and professional development sessions. Darling-Hammond (1998) emphasized effective teacher learning that promotes self-reflection. Problem solving cannot occur in isolation; it must be tied to real educational context. The literature on situated learning (or situated cognition) offers theoretical justification for the use of virtual coaching in supporting teachers working with students with significant disabilities. Situated learning is defined as “the study of how human knowledge develops as a means of coordinating activity within activity itself” (Clancy, 1997, p. 4). This theory posits that people construct knowledge within action and within a social context. Wilson (1993) argued that adults do not simply learn from experience. They learn in experience. That is, experience itself does not serve as a practice ground for applying knowledge; it is the place in which knowledge is constructed.

Most teacher education programs include supervised classroom experiences, which present opportunities for teacher candidates to learn in experience and apply knowledge in practice. Despite the quality of a practicum and student-teaching experience, however, it is challenging to illustrate fully the nuances and demands of having one’s
own classroom. Schön (1983) suggested that when students transition into their careers, they often have a naive understanding of the problems they will encounter:

To the extent that the academy addresses problems of practice at all, it necessarily presents them as prototypes, simplified and schematized theoretical representations of the much messier and variable particulars of everyday life. When student professionals move out to the fields of practice, they find inevitably that nothing in the real world precisely fits the prototypes. (p. 519)

New special educators working with students with significant disabilities encounter such “ill-defined problems” on a daily basis. Virtual coaches can, therefore, help early career special educators move beyond the “well-defined problems” and simplified “prototypes” typically encountered in teacher education. By integrating coaching into the induction supports for new teachers, these new teachers can be guided through the many complexities they will encounter in their classrooms in a manner that supports their own professional development and student outcomes. However, as suggested by Knight (2005), “coaching leads to implementation (only) when the right conditions are in place” (p. 18). In addition to being situated in the new teacher’s daily work, coaching occurs in the context of the teacher–coach relationship. Hence, it is critical to consider factors that might influence this relationship and, thus, the coaching situation.

For virtual coaching supports to be successful, the selected technologies must somewhat mimic face-to-face interactions that occur within natural personal interactions. The theory of media naturalness frames these technology considerations by positing that human brains have evolved to communicate in a face-to-face manner, and for computer-mediated communications to be natural, they should incorporate mechanisms found in face-to-face communication (Kock, 2007; Simon, 2006). In this way, interactions between virtual coaches and new teachers should utilize online technologies that facilitate natural communication. Otherwise, early career special educators and their coaches may not be able to interact in a manner that truly promotes professional collaboration. For example, online tools that promote synchronous, video-based communications are more natural than those that rely on asynchronous communication pathways such as discussion boards and email. Asynchronous online tools provide an effective way to communicate in a static environment, but they certainly do not allow for a dynamic real-time conversation.

**Virtual Coaching Literature**

Literature related to virtual coaching indicates that providing immediate, synchronous feedback proves effective in influencing teachers’ instructional behaviors (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004). One such emerging immediate-feedback technology is the use of “bug-in-ear” (BIE) devices to provide support to preservice and in-service teachers while they teach. Through these technologies, coaches speak to their mentees/new teachers as they teach. The new teachers hear the coach’s feedback through a wireless BIE headset. In this way, the coach provides coaching such that the new teacher alone can hear. Research on the use of BIE devices indicates that there is great potential in using the technology as a tool for providing immediate coaching and feedback to influence teacher behavior (Goodman, Brady, Duffy, Scott, & Pollard, 2008; Kahan, 2002; Rock et al., 2009; Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010; Scheeler & Lee, 2002; Scheeler, McAfee, Ruhl, & Lee, 2006). Although the amount of research on BIE technology is relatively limited, the implications for practice are promising. Across three different domains (peer coaching, preservice teacher supervision, and in-service teacher support), researchers have found BIE technology to be a flexible, effective, and well-received tool for providing immediate feedback in instructional situations (Giebelhaus, 1994; Goodman et al., 2008; Kahan, 2002; Machalicek et al., 2010; Rock et al., 2009; Scheeler, Bruno, Grubb, & Seavey, 2009; Scheeler et al., 2006; Scheeler et al., 2010; Scheeler & Lee, 2002; Van der Mars, 1988).

An important finding from the literature is that coaching using BIE technology increased teachers’ use of specific teaching strategies targeted by investigators, such as employing three-term contingency trials, learning units, or high-access teaching strategies (Goodman et al., 2008; Rock et al., 2009; Scheeler et al., 2006; Scheeler et al., 2010; Scheeler & Lee, 2002). Feedback and instruction for teacher participants was tied directly to those teaching strategies and their implementation. Considering the positive research implications of BIE technologies on improving teaching practices, a reasonable extension from predetermined practices is to encourage flexible use of BIE by teacher mentors and coaches in response to teacher-specific needs. In addition, in light of literature supporting ongoing cycles of support for teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003), it is important to examine the potential uses of BIE technology in a comprehensive framework of virtual coaching.

**A Proposed Model of Virtual Coaching**

To provide virtual coaching in a manner that is consistent with situated cognition, media naturalness theory, and effective ongoing professional development, as well as facilitates collaboration between new special education teachers and their coaches in an online context using accessible technologies, four distinct but interrelated steps should be considered (see Figure 1). Although our focus is on teachers of students with significant disabilities, these
virtual bug-in-ear.

Figure 1. Virtual coaching model. Note. VBIΕ = virtual bug-in-ear.

same four steps apply for supporting any new teacher within an online context.

Remote classroom observations. Once a new special education teacher has been paired with a coach, the pair can begin the first step of the virtual coaching framework. The first step, remote classroom observations, allows the coach to watch the new special educator in action through computer-based video conferencing. The process of observing provides the coach with the context in which to begin the coaching relationship with the new teacher. It also provides video documentation that can be viewed by the coach and new teacher to facilitate discussions about goal setting and ongoing supports.

Computer-based video conferencing enables these classroom observations as communication occurs via video and audio channels in real time using a webcam and free video conferencing software such as Skype or iChat. This allows video conferencing to occur via the Internet. The classroom observations utilize technologies available to most teachers and school districts. Computer-based video conferencing allows coaches to visit (virtually) either preservice or early career special educators’ classrooms and observe teachers as they instruct students (Israel, Knowlton, Griswold, & Rowland, 2009). As Internet-mediated observations and coaching can occur anywhere in the world, issues of finding quality coaches become less problematic. In addition, because of ever-increasing technological advancements, computer-based video conferencing has become simpler, faster, and less expensive (Gibson, Pennington, Stenhoff, & Hopper, 2010).

In observing new special educators working with students with significant disabilities, several instructional trends have emerged including difficulties with structuring classrooms effectively, missing opportunities for natural communications, and focusing on narrowly defined skill sets for their students. For example, the authors of this article observed a first-year special educator teaching third and fourth graders with significant disabilities during small-group instructional time. Most students participated in the activity by responding to the teacher’s questions and completing tasks as directed. However, instruction was primarily teacher directed and didactic, there were few student interactions, and the instruction targeted lower level skills such as saying the days of the week.

Shared goal setting. The second step in the remote coaching conceptual framework is shared goal setting between the coaches and their mentees. One means of increasing professional capacity is through reflective practice and goal setting. As new special education teachers begin to apply the information they learned in their preservice teacher preparation programs, they may discover they are less proficient than expected in using certain strategies and skills. Rather than simply rely on the coach to provide supports, it is critical for the new special educator to begin developing their own professional capacity and independence. This second step in the model must be carefully broached to ensure that the goals set by the coach/new special education teacher dyad truly reflect not only means of improving practice but also the new teacher’s own personal and professional goals.

Bandura (1997), in his work on self-efficacy, stated that people select and work toward goals based on self-reflective influences. He further stated that the goals they select for themselves at the onset of a task change as they evaluate the level of progress they are making. In other words, the new teachers’ goals change in response to progress and challenges. A focus on shared goal setting recognizes that people change their behaviors and thoughts based on how they are progressing toward personal and professional goals. With a purpose of outlining shared goals, after initially observing the new teacher in his or her natural instructional setting, the new teacher may watch the video of his or her instruction and then individually reflect on professional goals. Then, through shared goal setting, the coach and new teacher discuss the special education teacher’s individual goals and also plan action steps that will result in meeting those goals through shared resources, discussions of instructional best practices, and use of assessment. For example, a first-year special education teacher and a coach could initially develop two shared goals related to social communication. These goals might specifically target increased student interactions and link discrete skills to meaningful academic and social-communication skills. Following the shared goal setting, the teacher might begin to introduce academic vocabulary such as summarizing and linking the vocabulary to personally relevant events such as the schoolwide field day, while also incorporating his or her originally planned calendar activity. In addition, he or she might begin to incorporate communication objectives such as students asking one another questions.

Virtual BIE (VBIE) coaching and ongoing professional development. The third step outlines the simultaneous interplay...
between the cycle of VBIE-assisted coaching and the ongoing job-embedded professional development facilitated by a coach. This step highlights the technological capacity of computer-mediated video conferencing along with BIE technology and online communications to support the needs of new teachers. VBIE, as described through the work of researchers such as Rock and colleagues (2009), integrates Internet-mediated wireless earpieces and microphones with video conferencing to virtually coach through immediate feedback delivered through the new special education teacher’s wireless earpiece. By providing feedback during teaching, coaches can cue during critical instructional moments.

Our virtual coaching conceptual framework considers the VBIE coaching cyclically and extends the work of previous researchers to include individual and collaborative reflection. In traditional observation models, postobservation reflection occurs face-to-face after the observations, either immediately after the lesson or at a later scheduled time. Through the use of technology, a similar process can occur. However, because the observations occur remotely and incorporate video conferencing software, a natural extension of the observation-to-reflection cycle can occur by digitally recording the observation so that the new special educator can view his or her lesson prior to the collaborative reflection (see Figure 1).

The loop of goal assessment and refinement integrates the VBIE experience with individual and collaborative reflection after viewing the video captured during the VBIE interactions. Combining collaborative reflection with immediate feedback offered through VBIE provides the special educators the ability to share ideas and address personal challenges. Connecting VBIE with postcoaching reflection is necessary to provide new teachers with opportunities to analyze and reflect on their teaching. The new special educators evaluate the lesson based on predetermined expectations and goals, and then collaboratively problem solves with the coach. Harrison (2005) described the collaborative reflection process as a means of allowing educators to share ideas in an open way that allows for friendly critique and questioning. As coaches and new teachers cycle through the VBIE and reflective phases of the model, they refine their goals as the new special education teacher becomes increasingly more proficient in meeting those goals.

Ongoing professional development. The second component of Step 3, ongoing professional development, recognizes that although VBIE effectively assists new teachers in learning skills that can be implemented in the moment, many skills must be learned and supported over time (see Table 1). Although coaching provided through VBIE technology allows coaches to help new Special education teachers correct errors as they occur, some teaching practices cannot change in the moment. Table 1 offers examples of skills or concepts that can best be supported using VBIE, and different skills or concepts that may need ongoing professional development or support outside of the instructional situation. For example, complex issues related to planning, classroom organization, and specific teaching strategies cannot possibly be changed based on immediate feedback during instruction. For professional growth in these areas, the coaches provide other mechanisms of job-embedded support in addition to those offered through BIE coaching. The job-embedded professional development that occurs concurrent to VBIE provides strategies to further develop instructional practices. Implementation can then be supported through VBIE coaching during lessons.

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss evidence-based interventions for students with significant disabilities. However, coaching should support new special education teachers’ use of evidence-based interventions. Examples of such interventions include building academic language during instruction, embedding visual supports to encourage social communication, and strategies for increasing motivation and interest. The coach might provide access to web resources, materials, and examples of strategies for addressing these issues (see Table 1 for VBIE and ongoing PD supports).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. VBIE and Ongoing Professional Development Supports.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example of Areas Addressed Through VBIE Supports</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping teachers give enough response time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing immediate behavior situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating effective student communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementing instructional strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementing accommodations and adaptations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modeling and coaching (e.g., think aloud) for students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Example of Areas Addressed Through Ongoing PD Supports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and instructional strategy information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before/during/after reading activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistive technology integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing resources and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress monitoring supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping problem-solves alternate assessments</td>
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</table>

Note. PD = professional development; VBIE = virtual bug-in-ear.

Reflect on initial goals. In the final step of our proposed model, the mentors and new special educators reflect on their initial goals and reevaluate as needed. Often, the new special education teacher will begin to shift his or her goals during the coaching process as new situations emerge. For example, in the authors’ experience it is typical for teachers working with students with significant disabilities to begin focusing on demands related to alternate assessments as they approach the spring semesters. In these cases, the virtual coaching may shift to reflect a more focused exploration on various ways of assessing student progress.
Referring back to the previous example, the new special educator received coaching related to the agreed-on goals. Specific, immediate feedback was provided to help him or her identify and encourage interactions between students, embed academic language throughout the lesson, and help students connect the content to their own experiences. Post-coaching sessions incorporated opportunities to watch the video of the lesson, reflect independently, and then collaboratively reflect with the coaches. Over time, the original goals were modified based on student progress and the collaborative reflection sessions. As students began to initiate interactions with peers, for example, the goal was modified to encourage students to ask each other questions, wait for a response, and then appropriately comment. Despite the effectiveness of the virtual coaching, the new special education teacher identified areas for additional support not best addressed through BIE. She sought support for working with one of her paraprofessionals during the small-group lesson. Rather than “in-the-moment” coaching, ongoing dialog, references to online resources, and material sharing (e.g., providing data sheet examples) were most beneficial.

Implementation Considerations

As with any new initiative, districts must consider the associated resources and costs related to implementation of a virtual coaching model. Fortunately, the technologies utilized in virtual coaching are relatively affordable and simple to implement. Some online video conferencing tools can be used for no cost, whereas webcams and built-in microphones are standard equipment in many computers. For those computers that are not equipped, separate webcams can be purchased relatively inexpensively, as can BIE devices such as wireless headsets (Gibson et al., 2010; Rock et al., 2009). It is important to recognize that issues (such as connectivity) may arise when working with technological tools (Spooner et al., 2007), so it is important for districts to plan for such a possibility.

As many special educators identify work-related time constraints as problematic (Billingsley, 2004), time is certainly an important resource to consider. Observations, as well as ongoing feedback and support are essential components of virtual coaching and require a certain time commitment from teachers and mentors; however, utilizing video conferencing technology affords more flexibility in scheduling face-to-face opportunities for collaboration.

Ethical Considerations

Adding a virtual component to any existing practice introduces a host of ethical considerations. Mention the idea of virtual coaching to a room of academic researchers and school administrators, and you will surely receive a range of responses from excitement to head shaking to strong disagreement. In the authors’ experiences with virtual coaching, coaches must be cognizant of proactively addressing concerns related to diminishing teachers’ professional capacity or “Big Brother” watching. VBIEd technology may elicit images of teachers in classrooms acting like robots, with someone on the other end (i.e., the “voice of reason”) directing their every movement and word. To be sure, this extremely prescriptive coaching behavior could unintentionally happen, especially considering educational contexts that include highly scripted or directed packaged programs. Clearly, building problem solving and critical thinking needs to remain at the forefront of virtual coaching relationships to avoid extremely prescriptive coaching practices that would diminish new teachers’ professional capacity. Therefore, VBIEd practices such as “Say X” should be avoided.

Our four-step model attempts to address these concerns by encouraging the new special educators and their coaches to focus on reflective practice and increased independence. Coaches, for example, should consider ways of scaffolding the VBIEd support by phasing it in and out based on the new teachers’ needs. For example, as a new special educator becomes proficient toward meeting his or her goals, the coach may choose to provide fewer comments and prompts during the VBIEd coaching sessions. During collaborative reflection, the coach can then encourage the new special educator to evaluate his or her own instruction and identify target areas to improve his or her instructional practices.

Given the ever-growing pressures and duties that teachers face in the classroom, the authors have taken great efforts to dissipate new teachers’ fear of evaluation and about Big Brother watching. For virtual coaching to be effective, principals and administrators should help their new teachers feel as if they can participate in coaching without fearing evaluation based on the learning that occurs through virtual coaching. Coaches, administrators, and new special education teachers should have a clear understanding of how digitally captured lesson observations, reflection notes, and coaching feedback will be used in the professional development of the special educators.

To be transparent about the purpose of virtual coaching with teachers, parents, and students, informed consent procedures must be addressed at several different levels. First and foremost, all teachers, students, and others should know they are being observed and digitally recorded, and have a clear understanding of the purpose of the observations. In addition, how the video of the observation will be used should guide the level of informed consent. Consent letters sent to families of students working with the special education teachers, for example, can explain that the purpose of the VBIEd and digital lesson capture is to provide feedback to the new teacher, and it is not focused on individual students. If, however, the focus of the VBIEd observation is to help support a new special educator with instructional or behavioral concerns related to a specific student, the informed
should consider the influence of virtual coaching via BIE technology. Intent to stay in the classroom. Similarly, researchers must examine the relative effectiveness of virtual coaching on new teachers’ job satisfaction or use of evidence-based practices. Moreover, researchers must consider the influence of virtual coaching on student outcomes. Questions related to engagement, social communication, academics, and positive behavior are critical to building our understanding of coaching via VBIE technology.

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