

Summary: The Hurley School Parent Coaching Project

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Upon the request of a graduate of the Parent Coach Certification® Training Program, who had successfully coached a parent from The Hurley School in Boston, the Parent Coaching Institute (PCI) initiated a pro-bono parent coaching pilot study for the school. In the fall of 2015, three parent coaches attended a meeting of parents and explained the parent coaching project to them. Information flyers were distributed as well. About 15 parents were initially interested in participating. In January 2016, 11 parents signed on for the parent coaching, filling out an agreement to participate in 10 coaching sessions. All coaching was done via telephone by six PCI parent coaches—three local coaches and three from different parts of the country.

Six families completed the parent coaching pilot study at the Hurley School in Boston. Between January and May of 2016, four families received 10 coaching sessions, one received 8 coaching sessions, and one received 12 coaching sessions. The mothers of 4 families, the father of 1 family, and both parents of 1 family completed questionnaires about their parenting experiences before and after participating in the parent coaching pilot study (See Appendix A for a copy of the Pre and Post Questionnaire). The coaches verbally administered the questionnaire to each of the parents/couple during the first coaching session and during the last coaching session. Coaches were instructed on how to give the pre/post questionnaire in a meeting before the coaching began, and given written instructions in order to standardize administration. The couple who participated together were administered the questionnaires in Spanish; all other participants were administered the questionnaires in English.

Analysis

A series of repeated measures analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine if each item on the pre- and post-test questionnaire was different (see Table 1). The scores of the two

parents in the same family who both responded were averaged together to form one composite “parent” score prior to analyses. Given the exploratory nature of the pilot study, no corrections were made for the number of analyses conducted. Items 3 (I know where to find community resources), 5 (I have enough time to take care of myself), 12 (I understand my children’s needs and stages of development), and 17 (I know how to use my strengths as a parent) showed significant improvement ($p < .05$). The extremely small size of the sample participating in this pilot study ($N = 6$) reduces the power to detect differences that may exist in the larger population. Therefore, differences considered marginally significant ($p < .10$) are also noted. Parents reported marginally better outcomes on items 2 (I know effective parenting strategies), 8 (I feel confident as a parent), 15 (I feel comfortable asking for help raising my children), and 16 (I recognize my high value as a parent in my family) after completing their parent coaching sessions. Although the pre-and post-test differences were not statistically significant for all twenty items, the direction of the difference was in the expected direction (i.e., parents reported better outcomes after receiving parenting coaching) on all items except for one (item 4) on which the means were equal. The probability of having 19 out of 20 mean differences in the expected direction is extremely small ($p = .000002$) suggesting that there is a statistically significant pattern of improved parenting outcomes associated with this parent coaching program.

Next, we examined the overall effectiveness of participating in the parent coaching project. First, four items were reverse-coded (i.e., items 1, 7, 11, and 13) so that a higher score on all items indicated better outcomes for each parent. Then, all twenty items were averaged together to get a total score on the pre- and post-test. The items on the pre-test had good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$) and the items on the post-test had very high internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$). Another repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the total scores, $F(1, 5) = 6.34, p = .053$. Although this test did not reach statistical significance (i.e., $p < .05$), the power to detect differences between pre- and post-test responses was low (observed power was 52.8% rather than the desired 80%). In fact, the effect size was quite large ($\eta^2 = .559$) suggesting that lack of power (i.e., small sample size) rather than a lack of difference between the pre- and post-test scores most likely accounts for only achieving marginal significance for this

analysis. Collecting data from a larger sample of people would increase the ability to detect differences in parental outcomes associated with their participation in parent coaching.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-test Items

	Pre-test		Post-test		ANOVA
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Item 1	3.33	1.17	2.58	0.92	$F(1, 5) = 2.46, p = .18$
Item 2*	3.08	1.02	4.17	0.68	$F(1, 5) = 4.88, p = .08$
Item 3**	3.50	0.84	4.17	1.13	$F(1, 5) = 16.00, p = .01$
Item 4	4.33	0.82	4.33	0.82	$F(1, 5) = 0.00, p = 1.00$
Item 5**	2.50	1.10	3.58	0.92	$F(1, 5) = 15.94, p = .01$
Item 6	4.00	1.10	4.50	0.55	$F(1, 5) = 2.14, p = .20$
Item 7	2.67	0.82	2.08	1.02	$F(1, 5) = 1.00, p = .36$
Item 8*	3.25	1.08	4.17	0.98	$F(1, 5) = 4.06, p = .10$
Item 9	3.58	1.28	4.25	0.61	$F(1, 5) = 1.18, p = .33$
Item 10	3.08	0.49	3.83	1.17	$F(1, 5) = 2.46, p = .18$
Item 11	3.00	0.89	2.42	1.28	$F(1, 5) = 1.42, p = .29$
Item 12**	2.50	1.05	4.08	0.66	$F(1, 5) = 8.17, p = .04$
Item 13	3.25	1.08	2.50	1.38	$F(1, 5) = 1.55, p = .27$
Item 14	2.92	0.92	3.75	1.08	$F(1, 5) = 3.05, p = .14$
Item 15*	3.58	0.92	4.25	0.42	$F(1, 5) = 4.00, p = .10$
Item 16*	3.67	1.03	4.67	0.52	$F(1, 5) = 5.00, p = .08$
Item 17**	3.08	0.80	4.33	0.82	$F(1, 5) = 12.10, p = .02$
Item 18	4.17	0.75	4.42	0.49	$F(1, 5) = 0.48, p = .52$
Item 19	4.33	1.21	4.50	1.38	$F(1, 5) = 0.29, p = .61$
Item 20	3.58	1.02	4.00	1.26	$F(1, 5) = 0.84, p = .40$
Total*	3.34	0.44	4.05	0.61	$F(1, 5) = 6.34, p = .05$

*marginally significant $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$

Discussion

There were four areas that improved that are specifically targeted in the PCI parent coaching process:

- Item # 3 Finding community resources when needed
- Item #5 Parental self-care
- Item #12 Understanding of child's/children's developmental needs
- Item #17 Using parental strengths in everyday challenges

In using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, coaches helped parents focus on their strengths while addressing everyday challenges with their children. Using Appreciative Inquiry's four-stage process (Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny), coaches guided parents through a positive change process, enabling them to focus on parenting techniques most appropriate for the specific ages and stages of their child's/children's development. Consequently parents improved their knowledge of what is appropriate for their children's optimal development. During each phase of the four-stage process, coaches emphasized parental self-care, as trained to do so by PCI. This resulted in increased self-care practices and/or more self-understanding regarding what supports parental energy for most of the parents.

Four other areas were marginally significant:

- Item # 2 Knowing effective strategies for cooperative behaviors
- Item #8 Confidence as a parent
- Item #15 Comfort in asking for parental help
- Item #16 Self-recognition of value as a parent

For item 4 (I know what I want for my family), item 18 (communicate with child), and item 9 (enjoy my children), the mean did not change at all or very much from pre-to post-test. However, the means were fairly high at the pretest (all over 4.0), so there might have been a ceiling effect for these items (i.e., the value was so high to start with that there was not much room for improvement).

Three parents returned their feedback forms with comments (See Appendix B). They all reported positive effects from the parent coaching.

One mother reported that as a result of the coaching:

“I have given a lot more thought to my kids as individuals, and I have thought a lot more about my parenting style and personality style.”

Another stated:

“I accomplished more within my family relationships than I had thought possible ever, let alone within the 4-month coaching framework...By the end, I had accomplished more than I had imagined possible in such a short time without even realizing how far outside of my comfort zones I had moved myself. The process is highly collaborative (regular discussions that are very much two-way), very pragmatic (continually applying ideas stemming from our discussions), yet deeply reflective. My coach continually pushed me forward into new ways of thinking and doing, yet she was always extremely caring and respectful of my limits and vulnerabilities. I came away understanding myself better and, consequently, better able to deal with challenging family dynamics and to be the parent I had always hoped but never quite managed to be. It was truly a life changing experience that I highly recommend to all involved in parenting.”

The third parent stated in response to “What were the highlights of your coaching?”

- Feeling a sense of empowerment as a parent.
- Feeling a renewed energy toward my family and friends.
- Not feeling alone in my parenting.
- Feeling a renewed sense of love for my kids and my wife.
- Developing a level of mindfulness and empathy for my children and where they are emotionally and developmentally.
- Learning to talk with my children during their heightened emotional moments without provoking them and even helping to relax/de-stress them.
- Learning to develop my skills to persuade my kids to do the things they don't readily do when told.
- Fearlessness to pursue my own passions/growth.

In addition to self-reports by the parents, the teachers of the children whose parents were coached were given a survey at the end of the project (See Appendix C). They did not know that their students' parents were being coached until they received this survey in May 2016 at the conclusion of the project. Four teachers returned the survey, with three reporting overall positive growth of emotional/social skills in their students; another stated her student improved in cooperation and being less defiant during the four months of the coaching. Improvement academically was also noted. One teacher reported that her student had increased his ability to attend and focus in class and that another student used more independent problem-solving abilities in interactions with classmates.

Conclusion

Overall, parents benefited from the parent coaching. As an initial offering of parent coaching to The Hurley School parents, the pilot project offered a glimpse of the positive changes possible for parents through 8-12 sessions of parent coaching. It is recommended to seek a funded project in the future so coaches, and others involved, are compensated for their work. Also, several coaches thought that if parents had to pay something for the coaching, even a small sum, they would value the coaching more, and be more likely to complete the process.

Appendix A

The Hurley School Parent Coaching Project

January 2016 - April 2016

Parent Pre/Post-Coaching Questionnaire

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neutral

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

1. I find parenting stressful and challenging right now, more than usual.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I know effective strategies to get my child to do what I ask him/her.

1 2 3 4 5

3. I know where to find community resources when I need them.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I know what I want for my family.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I have enough time to take care of myself like I want to.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I have other people who support me in my parenting.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I feel lonely in my parenting.

1 2 3 4 5

8. I feel confident as a parent.

1 2 3 4 5

9. I know ways to reduce the stress of parenting.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I know what to do to stay calm when my child is acting up in a way that stresses me.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Getting my child to do something or to stop doing something overwhelms me.

1 2 3 4 5

12. I have a good understanding of each of my children's needs at their different stages of development.

1 2 3 4 5

13. I feel anxious imagining potential new family challenges.

1 2 3 4 5

14. I can think clearly even in the midst of a challenging situation at home.

1 2 3 4 5

15. I feel comfortable asking for help in raising my child(ren).

1 2 3 4 5

16. I recognize my high value as a parent in my family.

1 2 3 4 5

17. I know how to use my strengths as a parent to deal with everyday parental stress.

1 2 3 4 5

18. I can communicate with my child in a way s/he understands.

1 2 3 4 5

19. I enjoy my child(ren).

1 2 3 4 5

20. I feel satisfied as a parent.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

The Hurley School Parent Coaching Project

January 2016 - April 2016

Parent Feedback Form

DIRECTIONS: Please put an X on appropriate number after each line. 1 is Most Negative and 5 is Most Positive.

	Most Negative		Neutral		Most Positive
I enjoyed this coaching experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I consider my coach competent and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
I gained insight re: my child as a result of the coaching.	1	2	3	4	5
I gained insights re: myself as a result of the coaching.	1	2	3	4	5
I experienced positive changes during the coaching.	1	2	3	4	5

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the three questions below.

1. What were highlights for you during the coaching?
2. Were there any challenges you encountered? If so, please explain.
3. Give 1-3 “evidence indicators” that cause you to think you have grown positively as a result of your coaching:

OPTIONAL

4. I am willing to have the following testimonial quote used with my name on PCI website and/or marketing materials in order to affirm/endorse parent coaching projects such as this one and PCI parent coaching in general:
5. Please add any additional comments below that you think will help us for the final report:

Appendix C

The Hurley School Parent Coaching Project

January 2016 - April 2016

Teacher Survey Form

Dear _____,

As you might know, The Hurley School participated in a parent coaching project through the Parent Coaching Institute. Several PCI Certified Parent Coaches®, skilled and highly trained family support professionals, coached several Hurley parents for 10-12 one-hour coaching sessions from January to early May 2016.

The parent/s of your student, _____ participated in this project. She/he has given us permission to contact you with this request.

In understanding the impact of the parent coaching on student behaviors, your input about the student's progress over this time period can be very helpful to us. In addition, you will notice a question below about your observations of the parent/s as well.

I ask you to take a few minutes to answer the four questions below and then return this form to me, Gloria@thepci.org **before May 20 or at your earliest convenience**. If you have any questions, please contact me at 425-449-8877.

Thank you for taking the time to share your valuable insights!

Best Regards,

Gloria DeGaetano, Director, Parent Coaching Institute



1. During the past 4 months, please share your observations of the student regarding progress with academic abilities and his/her learning process. Were there positive changes that you noticed? If so, please explain.

2. During the past 4 months, please share your observations of the student regarding progress with social/emotional behavior, such as getting along with peers and cooperative classroom behaviors. Were there positive changes that you noticed? If so, please explain.

3. Does the student seem to have grown and changed in any other ways over the past 4 months? If so, please describe your observations.

4. Did you have any interactions with the parent(s) of this student during these past 4 months? If so, did you notice any changes that could be related to the parent coaching? Please comment on them if you did.