



Anatomy of a Read Liberia Coach

Read Liberia coaches provide support to primary teachers and principals to improve early grade reading instruction, but what makes a great coach? What skills, knowledge, and characteristics do they share?

Here's a look at the anatomy of a Read Liberia coach...

I. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Coaches are trained in:

- Liberian curriculum.
- Structure and use of teacher guides.
- Early grade reading methodology.
- Universal Design for Learning principles.

2. MONITORING

Coaches confirm that:

- Schools are open.
- Teachers and students are in school.
- Principals are at their posts.

3. BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Coaches ensure that:

- Books reach all schools.
- Students have their books in class.

4. ASSESSMENT

Coaches evaluate performance using:

- Teacher assessment rubrics.
- Student oral reading fluency tests.
- Student reading spot checks.

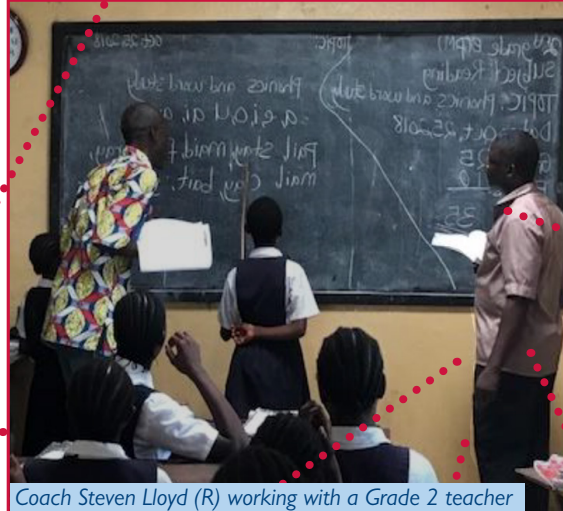
5. LESSON OBSERVATION

Coaches support teacher performance by:

- Observing lessons and giving constructive feedback to teachers.
- Mentoring those who are struggling.



Coach Kilba Korva demonstrating a lesson



Coach Steven Lloyd (R) working with a Grade 2 teacher

6. TRAINING

Coaches facilitate teacher trainings by:

- Helping develop training materials.
- Training teachers, principals, and other staff.
- Leading cluster-based trainings.

7. REMOTE SUPPORT

Coaches provide intensive condensed support to schools that are difficult to reach because of infrastructure (e.g., lack of roads, impassible rivers, extreme distances).

II. CAPACITY BUILDING

Coaching roles are now undertaken by:

- Principals and vice principals of instruction trained by Read Liberia.
- District Education Officers trained by Read Liberia to support, supervise, and monitor principals and vice principals of instruction in their roles as coaches.

10. COLLABORATION

Coaches coordinate collaborative meetings with school administrators, principals, teachers, and Education Officers to build support for and sustain quality classroom instruction.

9. FLEXIBILITY IN EMERGENCIES

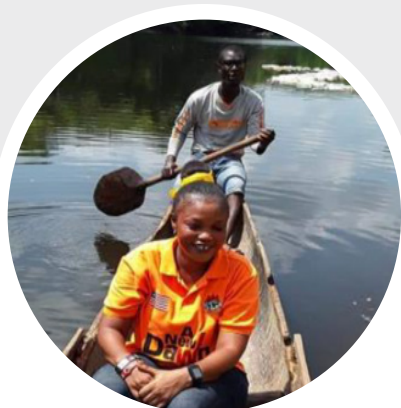
Coaches adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- Providing phone-based support to teachers.
- Promoting Teach By Radio programs to parents.
- Innovating to reach teachers with no cell phone coverage.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Coaches support community engagement by:

- Contributing to parent-teacher association meetings.
- Educating parents on the importance of reading.
- Informing parents on issues of low attendance.



Pictured above is Read Liberia coach Louise H. Massago traveling to Totota Public School. In addition to being geographically difficult to reach, some communities are separated from the general Liberian population by cultural factors. For example, when working with schools within the Poro and Sandy societies, coaches are escorted into the community on Market Day by community representatives. Coaches stay in the community and provide intensive support—covering many lessons and activities from the Read Liberia teacher instruction guide—to teachers, principals, and vice principals of instruction. The coaches are then escorted out of the community on the next Market Day. Additionally, many teachers in remote areas travel significant distances to access cellular service to receive coaching calls. These examples from across Read Liberia show coaches' tremendous commitment to improving children's education.

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Cassius Suah and Stephen McCrownsey are Read Liberia coaches assigned to Nimba County. When observing early grade reading teachers across the 17 schools in their area, the coaches noticed that while some teachers were performing well, others were falling behind. In response, along with their supervisor, Mr. Suah and Mr. McCrownsey engaged District Education Officer Roger Sunyard to co-organize monthly refresher trainings for teachers who were struggling. “Our intention is to make all our teachers to be on par when it comes to lesson presentation,” said Read Liberia Supervisor Wesley Anderson. McCormick Zain is among over 35 teachers who regularly attend the monthly refresher trainings. He stated, “Almost a decade has passed since I started teaching, and there are changes in how students behave, how standards are approached, how one does test and evaluation, and how a teacher manages a classroom. What we did then doesn't necessarily work today.”



Pictured at left is Read Liberia coach Joshua Khaki providing phone support to a teacher in a difficult-to-reach area. During COVID-19 school closures, teachers remained employed by the Ministry of Education and were expected to engage in professional development activities. To pivot to COVID-19 restrictions, Read Liberia introduced instructional support to teachers via phone calls. During these 15–30-minute phone-based support sessions, the coach and teacher focused on specific skills selected from the teacher instruction guide. These skills included how to differentiate instruction for students in the classroom and how to use the “I Do, We Do, You Do” model. The goal was to develop and maintain teachers' understanding of effective early grade reading instruction.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Read Liberia Activity is a five-year (September 2017–September 2022) program that aims at improving early grade reading skills for Liberian students in 640 public schools in grades 1 and 2. Read Liberia also pilot tested a program to develop emergent literacy skills for Liberian students in 60 public kindergarten schools. The Activity is implemented in six targeted counties—Lofa, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Margibi, and Montserrado. Read Liberia is funded by USAID and implemented by RTI International with subcontractors Another Option, Brattle Publishing Group, and Diversified Educators Empowerment Program (DEEP) through direct partnership with the Liberian Ministry of Education.

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