

The Impact of Coaching on Academic Success: A Focus on University Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

A Pilot Study conducted at The Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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LD/ADHD College Coaching: A Wellness Model Celebrating Diversity

Research Team

- Dr. Theresa E. Laurie Maitland, CPCC, Principal Investigator
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Erica Richman, MSW, Doctoral candidate, Project Manager
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Dr. David Parker, Research Consultant, CRG, Inc.
Wayne State University
- Kristen Rademacher, M.Ed, CPCC
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

What the Literature Says:
College Students with LD/AHD

- Largest and fastest growing group of disabled students on college campuses (NCES, 2000; Henderson, 2001; Harbour, 2004)
- Take longer to complete degree than non-disabled peers (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005, Jorgenson et al., 2003).
- Graduate at a lower rate than non-disabled peers (NCES, 2003; Wagner et al., 2005)
 - 64% non disabled, 53% disabled (all types)
- May graduate at a lower rate than peers with other disabling conditions (Beginning Postsecondary Longitudinal Study Second Follow up, 2001).
 - 13.1% LD/ADHD versus 24.8% other disabling conditions (after 4 years)

What the Literature Says:
Possible Reasons for Performance Problems

- Academic skill weaknesses
 - Lower GPAs, more likely to be on probation, (Gerber, 1998, Heiligenstein et al., 1999, Rabiner et al., 2008)
- Underdeveloped Self Determination Skills
 - "a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior (Field et al., 1998)."
- Underdeveloped Executive Functioning Skills
 - "An umbrella construct reflecting self-regulatory functions that organize, direct, and manage other cognitive activities, emotional responses and behavior (Gioia, Isquith & Guy, 2001). "
- Coexisting psychological and/or psychiatric issues can impact their attitudes, reactions and coping skills (Barkley et al., 2007, Hoy, C. et al., 1997)

What the Literature Says:
Best Practices for Serving College Students with LD/ADHD

- Provide a continuum of services beyond what the law mandates (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002)
- Didactic Methods (Well-suited for students with LD)
 - Explain correct answer, process or model a process
 - Content tutoring
 - Learning strategy instruction (Deshler, D. et al., 1996, and Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002)
- Promote Self-Determination
 - To increase self awareness, self advocacy, goal setting, problem solving and decision making
- Transition Supports
 - Bridge experiences
 - Peer Mentoring Programs

What the Literature Says:
Current Research on Coaching

Coaching suggested as a new intervention model

- Hallowell and Ratey, (1994), Quinn et al., (2000)
 - Limited research
- Zwart & Kalleman (2001)
 - Peer coaching; control group
 - Improvements on LASSI in time management, anxiety, motivation and test taking
- Swartz, Prevatt, & Proctor (2005)
 - 8 week program, graduate students
 - Case Study
 - Gains in many self regulation skills ; LASSI

**What the Literature Says:
Current Research on Coaching (cont'd)**

- Reaser, A. (2008)
 - older college students, graduate student coach
 - 8 weeks of coaching
 - Case Study
 - Gains on LASSI and in goal attainment, organization, positive outlook, overall control of their lives
- Parker & Boutelle (2009)
 - 54 students, certified coaches
 - Qualitative study
 - Coaching promotes self directedness and self awareness

What Does Coaching Students Look Like on a College Campus?

- Regular, 30-60 minute in-person appointments (generally weekly)
- Regular phone appointments
- Supplementary check-in phone calls between appointments
- Email check-ins
- "Body-Double"

Coaching Definition for UNC

A creative, action-oriented partnership based on model created by Whitworth et. al. (2007) in which students:

- Set goals in any area of their life in which they desire change (i.e. academics, balance between study and recreation, etc.)
- Work with their coach to develop systems and structures to reach these goals
- Design the format of their coaching sessions (in-person, phone/email check-ins, etc.)
- Agree to be held accountable for commitments made during sessions
- Deepen their learning about themselves – including their values and ambitions – which helps to define and refine future goals

Coaching Definition for UNC (cont'd)

- Coaching is not therapy, counseling or learning strategy instruction.
- An important principle in coaching is the belief that students are expert on their lives and are creative, resourceful and whole.

Coaches:

- Do not provide solutions and strategies for students
- Listen and ask questions in a way which will elicit solutions and strategies from students
- Occasionally share information, observations and suggestions for students' consideration, students are ultimately responsible for their own decisions

Research Questions:

What We Wanted to Learn in Pilot Study

- 1. Does coaching increase participants' levels of self-determination?
- 2. Does coaching improve participants' executive functioning skills?
- 3. Does coaching improve participants' overall life satisfaction?
- 4. From students' perspective, what are the key benefits and limitations of coaching?

Pilot Study Goals

- Using the frameworks of executive functioning, self-determination and life-satisfaction, determine trends or statistical significance on the impact of coaching.
- "Dress Rehearsal" for more extensive study planned for Fall 2010
 - Try out viability of instruments
 - Try out recruitment methods
 - Try out communication with research team re: procedures of study (two members of team juggling pilot study while also fulfilling regular job responsibilities)
 - Determine next steps for future study

Methodology: Participants

Demographic of Participants n=13	
Total Participants	13
Gender	5 male 8 female
Race	8 white 3 African American 2 Latino 0 other
University Status	7 undergraduates 6 graduates
Disability	8 with ADHD only 5 with ADHD and LD
Other documented mental illness *62% had co-morbid diagnoses	6 with anxiety disorder 4 with depressive disorder 1 with anxiety and depressive disorder

Participants - Demographics

Theresa's Caseload	Gender, Race, Univ. Status	Disability
Student 1	Male, White Graduate	ADHD, LD in Reading
Student 2	Female, Latino Undergraduate	ADHD Generalized Anxiety Disorder Depressive Disorder
Student 3	Female, White Undergraduate	ADHD Anxiety Disorder
Student 4	Female, African American Undergraduate	ADHD
Student 5	Female, Latino Undergraduate	ADHD Anxiety Disorder
Student 6	Female, African American Graduate	ADHD Anxiety Disorder NOS
Student 7	Male, White Graduate	ADHD, LD in Reading Depression

Participants - Demographics

Kristen's Caseload	Gender, Race, Univ. Status	Disability
Student 1	Female, White Graduate	ADHD, LD Math Depressive Disorder
Student 2	Male, White Undergrad	ADHD, LD Reading Depressive Disorder
Student 3	Male, African American Graduate	ADHD, LD Reading and Math
Student 4	Female, White Undergraduate	ADHD Anxiety Disorder
Student 5	Male, White Undergrad	ADHD
Student 6	Female, White Undergrad	ADHD

Background of Coaches

- Both coaches have comparable types/amount of coaching training
 - Theresa Maitland, CPCC and Kristen Rademacher, CPCC were trained and certified through The Coaches Training Institute. <http://www.thecoaches.com/coach-training/>
 - 116 hours of training followed by 6 month certification program requiring successful completion of written and oral competency exams
- Theresa earned her certification in 2003
- Kristen earned her certification in 2007

Methodology: Procedures

- Eligible participants:
 - All students with documented LD and/or ADHD who were interested in coaching
 - Willing to commit to at least 8 weekly sessions of coaching
 - Agreed to complete the pre- and post-intervention surveys
- Students were recruited to be in the study through email and the ASP web site
- Incentives: coupons for free coffee and drawing for prizes
- Before receiving coaching, each participant took 3 pre-intervention surveys (web-based surveys @ 45 minutes total time)
- Participants received 8-13 coaching sessions throughout spring 2010 semester
- After 8 coaching sessions, participants re-took the 3 post-intervention surveys
- Project Manger conducted qualitative interviews with 6 participants during Week 9.

Study Participants' Coaching Goals

- Make changes in overall life balance and structure
 - 100% of participants wanted to balance social life with academics, plan more deliberately, prioritize better.
- Have a more positive mental or emotional state
 - 61% of participants wanted to improve focus and attention, become more reflective and fully present, reduce anxiety and perfectionism.
- Improve in academics
 - 54% of participants wanted to stay on top of work, set and keep regular study times, become more active learners, improve grades.

Study Participants' Coaching Goals (cont'd)

- Explore plans for the future
 - 30% of participants wanted to make a plan to use career center, talk with others, identify options and submit applications.
- Protect time for fun and recreation
 - 30% of participants wanted to reserve regular time for "quiet time," or for a hobby or passion such as painting, fly fishing, music.
- Improve money management
 - 1% of participants wanted to save money, keep track of spending, pay off credit cards.

Methodology: Intervention

- Structure of Coaching Sessions
 - Student met with coach for initial 60 minute "intake" session.
 - Focus of meeting:
 - Student set specific semester goals
 - Coach asked student to reflect on strengths, values, passions
 - Coach and Student "designed their alliance"

Methodology: Intervention (cont'd)

- Student met with coach weekly for 30 minute sessions (face-to-face or phone)
 - Student and coach reviewed progress on goals
 - Coach guided students to reflect on both their progress and setbacks within the context of their strengths, values and passions
 - Coach also guided students to deepen their understanding of their disability as they reflected on their goals
 - Student set goals for following week

Quantitative Measures Pre- and Post-Intervention Surveys

- Life Participation Scale (LPS-A; Saylor, Sutton, & Khan, in press).
 - 28 likert scale internet based survey measuring executive functioning skills in adults
- Self Determination Student Scale (Hoffman, A., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. 2004)
 - 92 yes or no internet based survey measuring self determination
- Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI, Peterson, 2005)
 - 24 multiple choice internet based survey measuring students' overall life satisfaction

Analysis of Quantitative Results

- Statistical tests were run to see if any results were statistically significant
 - None of our findings were statistically significant, possibly due to small sample size (13)

Qualitative Measures

- Purposive sample
 - 6 students (3 per coach)
 - Balance of characteristics (undergrad/grad, gender, race/ethnicity, GPA, S-DSS scores)
- Individual Open-Ended Interview
 - 1 hour, with Project Manager
 - 11 prompts generated by team
 - Audio-recorded and transcribed

Qualitative Measures (con't.)

- Analysis
 - Hand-coding by Research Consultant to generate initial set of codes
 - Initial inter-rater reliability check between Research Consultant and Project Manager (63% agreement)
 - Refinement of codebook, 2nd inter-rater reliability check (84% agreement achieved)
 - Final refinement of emergent themes in consultation with the research team coaches.
 - <http://www.thecoaches.com/coach-training/>
 - Results speak to coaching's ability to enhance self-management of thinking, emotions in manner that promotes students' self-determined achievement of goals on campus and in their lives.

**Results of Research Question 1:
Self-Determination**

- Quantitative Results (Self-Determination Student Scale, Hoffman, A., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. 2004)
 - Scores increased, although they were not statistically significant (likely due to small population used in Pilot Study)
 - Mean pre-intervention score: 71.50
 - Mean post-intervention score: 78.67
 - *significance level of .059* – an important trend in the data although not statistically significant

**Results of Research Question 1:
Self-Determination (cont'd)**

- Qualitative Results (Interview with Project Manager)
 - Students report increased:
 - Understanding of strengths, weaknesses, patterns
 - Autonomy
 - Self esteem
 - Goal attainment skills
 - Ability to observe and redirect their actions

**Results for Research Question 2:
Executive Functioning Skills**

- Quantitative Results (Life Participation Scale, LPS-A; Saylor, Sutton, & Khan, in press)
 - Scores increased, although they were not statistically significant (likely due to small population used in Pilot Study)
 - Mean pre-intervention score: 69.67
 - Mean post-intervention score: 78.00

**Results for Research Question 2:
Executive Functioning Skills (cont'd)**

- Qualitative Results (Interview with Project Manager)
 - Students reported improved ability to
 - set clear and realistic goals
 - remain focused
 - problem solve
 - planning in chunks
 - use positive self-talk to reduce stress
 - observe and manage emotions without necessarily being controlled by them.

**Results of Research Question 3:
Overall Life Satisfaction**

- Quantitative Results (Authentic Happiness Inventory, Peterson, 2005)
 - Scores increased, although they were not statistically significant (likely due to small population used in Pilot Study)
 - Mean pre-intervention score: 3.03
 - Mean post-intervention score: 3.33

**Results of Research Question 3:
Overall Life Satisfaction (cont'd)**

Qualitative Results (Interview with Project Manager)

Students reported:

- Coaching impacted many dimensions of their lives
- Increase in quality of life due to improvements in academics, emotional control, relationships, financial habits, and plans for the future
- Enhanced life satisfaction due to their new ability to alter reactions and perspectives
- More enjoyment in life because of greater awareness of strengths, interests, passions and making time for these in their lives
- Success in reaching goals led to more positive beliefs and hope for the future

**Results for Research Question 4:
Benefits and Limitations of Coaching**

Qualitative Results – Benefits (Interview with Project Manager)

Students reported that overall, coaching:

- allowed them to develop skills that they will use on their own, even when they are no longer participating in pilot study.
- has improved their life overall.
- helped to clarify career choices that will enhance their life in the future.
- helped them make better decisions.
- helped them feel better emotionally.
- helped enhance their financial decisions/behaviors.
- helped them improve relationships with others.

**Results for Research Question 4:
Benefits and Limitations of Coaching (cont'd)**

Qualitative Results – Limitations (Interview with Project Manger)

Students made the following suggestions to make coaching more effective:

- add more coaches to the staff
- allow longer sessions
- provide coaches with greater knowledge of graduate programs
- "house" coaches in a student classroom building
- teach study skills within coaching sessions
- help students learn more about disability

Discussion: Limitations

- Small sample size
- Short intervention phase
- Measures
- Accounting for other variables (i.e. other interventions participants may have used, co-morbid conditions)
- Lack of comparison group
- All data was self-report
- Possible variations in coaching styles
- Interview questions and process

Discussion: Next Steps for ASP

- Would we use same instruments?
 - S-DSS (Hoffman, A., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. 2004) appears well-suited for future research at ASP
 - The BRIEF (Roth, R., Isquith, P., & Gioia, G. 2005) may be a better measure of EF skills that include affective dimensions of problem-solving
 - Research other measures of life satisfaction to compare to AHL (Peterson, 2005)
- Future studies for ASP?
 - Larger sample size (control group design?)
 - Use of coaching with at-risk students who do not have disabilities?
 - Does coaching minimize impact of daily anxiety?
 - Is "self-talk" the internal dialogue that helps students become more self-determined?
 - Study the impact of coaching groups?

Discussion: Tentative Implications

- Service Providers should consider moving away from didactic service delivery models to a more holistic, collaborative model
- Service Providers should consider adding coaching to existing services
 - Train staff
 - Refer students to outside coaches
- Service Providers should include coaching in high-school and summer transition programs
- Parents and professionals should create opportunities for students that promote self-determination
- Students should understand the differences between coaching and other traditional services

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Coaching Resources

For training or to find a coach

- ❑ Coaches Training Institute
 - ❑ <http://www.thecoaches.com>
- ❑ Edge Foundation
 - ❑ <http://www.edgefoundation.org>
- ❑ International Coach Federation
 - ❑ <http://www.coachfederation.org>
- ❑ JST Coaching LLC
 - ❑ <http://www.jstcoach.com/>

Thank you!

- Contact Information for The Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD
 - ▣ aspinfo@unc.edu
 - ▣ www.unc.edu/asp
 - ▣ tmaitlan@email.unc.edu
 - ▣ krademacher@unc.edu
