Piloting a Leadership Group Coaching Program for Pediatric Division Chiefs

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Background
- Leadership skills must be continuously developed, honed and cultivated at all levels, especially for newly appointed leaders.
- Executive coaching is an effective tool for enhancing leadership performance in organizational settings.  
- Group coaching for leadership development acknowledges the social context of leadership and capitalizes on the shared experiences of peers facing similar challenges.  
- Accountability partnerships improve outcomes for those participating in goal-based coaching programs.

We piloted a leadership development group coaching program among a cohort of newly appointed pediatric division chiefs and assessed the impact via a mixed methods assessment.

Methods
- Participants: 8 new division chiefs (new defined as < 3 years in the role)
- Administration: Six 2-hour virtual sessions over 3 months facilitated by a professional organizational development coach (Mira Brancu)
- Components:
  - Each session included didactic content and discussion of real-time challenges based on the strategic leadership pathway (Figure 1)  
  - DISC® leadership style assessment completed prior to first session followed by 1:1 debrief with coach
- Peer accountability partners matched based on complementary leadership styles.
- Each participant was asked to complete a leadership development plan
- Evaluation:
  - Pre- and post-program surveys
  - 60-minute focus group 2 months after program completion

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and rapid thematic analysis, respectively.

Results

OUTCOMES: Comparison of Pre-Program and Post-Program survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pre Mean</th>
<th>Post Mean</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have peers who hold me accountable for my leadership role</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a leadership development plan with individualized leadership goals</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to advocate effectively for my division</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to optimize teamwork</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know how to remain authentic to myself while aligning with senior leadership</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<th>Post Mean</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable describing my personal leadership style</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel prepared to create organizational change</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel supported in my leadership role</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel prepared to lead in times of uncertainty</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel burned out from my work</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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</tbody>
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Participant Quotes

“Great experience in a very practical way of “this is how it’s done”,” but in a very relatable and personal way. It was a very freeing thing…in terms of “you should do this,” and it’s hard to get feedback in our work environment. It’s hard to get feedback, but have all these things, but in a coaching environment, it’s a little bit easier, a little bit more comfortable. It’s a very brave thing to do, but also a good opportunity to identify personal weaknesses and personal strengths. It’s hard to go through it alone, so that’s why I think group coaching is so beneficial.”

“Knowing the people in my division, knowing their strengths and weaknesses…taking that understanding to the table has been very helpful and very beneficial.”

“Great experience! I learned something new in every session.”

“I have more information about the way I lead and the way my group leader leads and sharing that information is very helpful.”

“I have a very strong mentor in the group, and that has really been helpful in the way I have approached my work.”

1 year follow-up

- All 8 division chiefs remain in their roles
- Participants have continued to meet monthly as an informal peer coaching group
- Participants invited 3 new division chiefs to join their monthly peer coaching meetings

Conclusions
- A pilot leadership development group coaching program proved beneficial to participants in developing both leadership skills and a community of peers to help navigate shared challenges.
- The impact of this intervention has been longstanding, as participants continue to rely on their community of peers for ongoing peer leadership support, and new division chiefs have been invited to join the community of peers (now > 12 months after completion of program).
- Results of the program have been presented across the School of Medicine to other department leaders, who have expressed interest in this method of leadership development.
- Next steps include scaling facilitated group leadership coaching for new leaders across Clinical Departments within the School of Medicine.

Learn more

References: