Practice-Based Coaching: What Teachers Want to Know!

What is Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)?

Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is a coaching framework that supports practitioners in using specific practices (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2022). PBC occurs within a collaborative partnership. Coaching is delivered in cycles that always include action planning, observation, reflection, and feedback to support a teacher's use of recommended practices.

Why would I want to participate in PBC?

PBC is a job-embedded, professional development strategy that helps you, within your current teaching context, use effective teaching practices. A coach can bring an outside perspective and new ideas for strategies you can use in your classroom. PBC is predictable, supportive, and non-evaluative. It's designed to help practitioners (e.g., early educators) strengthen specific practices (e.g., Pyramid Model) that improve child outcomes. In PBC, practitioners receive coaching that is supportive and focused on a partnership that honors their strengths and professional goals.

What can I expect in the PBC process?

A goal of PBC is to ensure that coaching is a safe place where teacher growth is the priority, and conversations are confidential. In PBC, you will work in a collaborative partnership with a coach. The process begins with the coach learning more about you and your teaching by conducting an observation in your classroom. You will meet to review your strengths and needs and collaboratively develop goals for implementing specific practices that are important to you and your classroom. Once you have goals, your coach will work with you to create a step-by-step action plan to implement them.

Your coach will observe you as you work on your goals, then meet with you to reflect on your implementation, note what is going well, and discuss how to improve your practice. These components – goals and action plans, focused observation, reflection/feedback meetings – are referred to as coaching cycles. Coaching cycles are ongoing, and once your initial goals are met, the coach will work with you to develop new goals for continued coaching cycles.

How is the observation in PBC different from my performance evaluation?

PBC and performance evaluations both involve observation, but they serve entirely different purposes (i.e., professional development versus accountability to an employer). PBC is built on a collaborative partnership designed to support your growth, learning, and skill development in your implementation of evidence-based practices. Observations are focused on the specific practices you are working on in your action plan. A performance evaluation is based on a supervisory relationship that evaluates all aspects of your job performance.

How do we get started?

The first step is to meet your coach and develop a coaching agreement about what you can expect from the coach and what the coach will expect of you. Your coach will explain the process for the strengths and needs assessment, as well as the process you will use to develop goals and your action plan. Below are some tips that may help you as you work with your coach.

1. **Share information** with the coach about your class, what is challenging, and what you think is going well. The more your coach knows about your teaching and your classroom, the better they can provide the support you need.
2. **Be assertive about your teaching goals.** Are there routines or activities that are challenging? Do you need new ideas for preventing behavior or for helping children develop social-emotional skills? Have you heard about a practice that you would like to use in your teaching? Are there some children who seem to need more support? Remember that the coach's role is to help you meet your goals.
3. **Be honest with your coach.** Let your coach know what aspects of coaching you might feel apprehensive about and what you are excited about. Be clear with your coach about the strategies you are comfortable with and those you do not want them to use. For example, do you want them to model during their observation, or would you rather they watch while observing? Would you want them to pitch in and help when you need extra assistance? Are you OK with a brief conversation during the observation, or would you prefer they slip in and out without talking to you while you are teaching?
4. **Ask for the assistance you need to meet your goals.** Let your coach know what you will need to meet your goals. If you are unsure what materials to use, ask your coach to help you create the list or find the resources. If a suggestion your coach has made doesn't work for you, ask the coach to help you figure out another strategy.
5. **Be ready and open for reflection and receiving feedback.** Your coach will ask you to reflect on your teaching and efforts with the practices in your goals and your action plan. Be ready to share your thoughts. Your coach will also provide both supportive and constructive feedback. It's helpful to have the coach's perspective on how what you are doing positively affects children's engagement and behavior. It is also helpful to have a coach provide concrete suggestions for improving your practice or supporting an individual child.

Helpful Resources to Learn More

Connecting with Coaching—Wisconsin Pyramid Model. Video on the use of PBC in support of early educators. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2driU03KVY

NCPMI Practitioner Coaching Resources. Many resources, including videos and tools related to practitioner coaching. https://www.challengingbehavior.org/implementation/coaching/pbc/

Head Start Practice-Based Coaching Resources. Many resources, including videos and tools related to practitioner coaching. https://headstart.gov/professional-development/article/practice-based-coaching-pbc

Reference

Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M. L., & Fox, L. (2022). *Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching. Supporting effective practices in early childhood.* Brookes Publishing.

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