

Practice-Based Coaching: Collaborative Partners

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Katie Eide: Hi, Niki, how is it going?

Niki Webber: It's going good.

Narrator: Educator Niki Webber begins her day at Community Action Head Start in Hillsboro, Oregon, just outside Portland.

Niki: We have had the kids really engaged in our lessons that we have been doing.

Narrator: Now a program area supervisor, Niki spent years teaching pre-K learners in this program. Her teaching was supported by professional development. That development included a type of coaching called practice-based coaching.

Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter: Practice-based coaching is an approach to coaching that is focused on supporting teachers to implement a specific set of practices. And so where some coaching models might be about providing support to teachers or helping teachers feel like they have support, practice-based coaching is a model that's more intentional than that, that's more focused on making sure that teachers have the support they need to be able to implement a set of practices. And so the outcome of practice-based coaching would be teachers implementing some set of practices with fidelity.

Woman: But it's really important to choose an approach that you feel comfortable with.

Narrator: The practice-based coaching model is unique. It was developed after looking at other teaching supports.

Dr. Pat Snyder: We became very interested in practice-based coaching because many of us who had been working in the area of professional development for many years in early childhood became increasingly frustrated by approaches to professional development that we called such things as "train and hope," "sit and get," where practitioners or teachers would come to a learning event, sometimes within the context of the program in which they might be working, but oftentimes even off-site at a distant location.

Teacher: Good morning, boys and girls.

Narrator: But those sessions on effective teaching practices don't necessarily translate into helping teachers in their everyday instruction with young children.

Teacher: How many?

Children: Six!

Dr. Lise Fox: What we have learned over decades of training teachers is that training alone doesn't result in an implementation of practices. And so many people have looked at, well, how do we provide teachers with in-classroom assistance to help them translate what they learned in teaching into the

classroom? And so many — people have used coaching to help people, after they have trained them, install those practices within their classrooms. And that literature indicates that of the folks who have done this kind of work, that what works most effectively is to know exactly what you are helping teachers install, to give them focused feedback, targeted feedback on their ability to implement those practices.

Narrator: Colleagues compared practice-based coaching to traditional forms of professional development around different sets of targeted teaching practices: two sets around social-emotional teaching practices to either prevent or address challenging behavior in young children, and a set around focused teaching practices to support the development and learning of young children with disabilities.

Dr. Snyder: Our data showed that teachers who participated in professional development that included a practice-based coaching component, so again, taking those practices and supporting teachers' implementation of those practices in their classrooms, those teachers' teaching practices improved significantly, to a significantly greater extent, when compared to teachers who received just typical professional development around those types of teaching practices.

Narrator: So what does practice-based coaching look like? The model is a cycle with distinct components: shared goals and action planning, focused observation, and reflection and feedback, each component integral to achieving positive teacher outcomes.

Niki: Okay, you guys, well, today we have a new material that I want to introduce to you.

Narrator: For teachers like Niki, having a coach in the classroom can be a little intimidating at first.

Niki: Are they going to be judging me? Things that I think are going well, are they going to come in and tell me that they want me to completely change the way that my classroom is being run? What types of things are they going to want me to do or to stop doing? Are they going to like what I am doing? There is a lot of uncertainty when someone's coming in to observe you in your own classroom.

Teacher: She just saw two and two, and she knows that makes four.

Narrator: That's why the coaching collaborative partnership, which forms the foundation of practice-based coaching, is crucial.

Woman: What does it look like to have a collaborative coaching partnership?

Dr. Kathleen Artman Meeker: It starts with having these kind of shared understandings about what the coaching process is and what the teacher can expect from you and what you can expect from the teacher. And so having a really transparent process about what coaching is, is really important to having that collaborative coaching partnership.

Woman: And how to pull them into daily activities within their classrooms. I think that's another strategy that's tough on many teachers.

Narrator: Coaches agree, establishing the partnership is priority number one in practice-based coaching.

Dr. Crystal Bishop: This model really focuses on a collaborative partnership because it implies, I think, that two people bring something to the table, or that the coach and whoever is being coached are both coming with something to contribute. And what the coach brings to the table is a real knowledge about whatever practices we are trying to help teachers implement, whereas the teachers are coming with all of their many — or whatever experience they have in their classrooms and also just knowledge of what their classroom is looking like right now.

Denise Binder: For me as a coach, establishing that relationship and that partnership is my main focus. I really spend a lot of time making sure that the teacher knows that I am not there to give them instruction and tell them what to do, but I am there to support them through the process.

Katie: Really just trying to build that relationship so that they learn that the coaching relationship is a trusting one and that I am really there to support them in their professional development. I am really only there to make them better and to help them get to the next point of their teaching and their practice. You really set that up really nicely.

Niki: Okay, good.

Narrator: For Niki, jitters about coaching support quickly went away once the partnership formed.

Niki: So the partnership with my experience was really... you know, they had — a different view on things than we did. So me as a teacher saw things a little bit differently, and it was good to have them come in and to be able to give us kind of an outsider point of view, work together. We would collaborate on our ideas and build off of one another, off of a teacher's strengths and weaknesses, coming up with ideas that we were comfortable with, trying new things, implementing new things into the classroom that we hadn't necessarily tried before.

Teacher: I have a really great book to share with you today.

Narrator: Practice-based coaching helps teachers feel supported in the classroom. Transparent and teacher-directed, practice-based coaching begins when a coach and teacher form that critical, foundational collaborative partnership, which successfully paves the way for the rest of the cycle to take shape: shared goals and action planning, focused observation...

Katie: Some of the things that you are doing when you are teaching the children...

Narrator: and reflection and feedback.

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