

Practice-based Coaching: Reflection and Feedback

[Music]

Teacher and children: One, two, three, four, five.

Narrator: Teachers want to implement effective practices that support children's learning. Practice-based coaching helps achieve that goal when a teacher and coach come together and target an identified set of teaching practices. After they share and set goals, engage in action planning, and carry out a focused observation, the teacher and coach have a debriefing meeting that includes both reflection and feedback.

Dr. Kathleen Artman Meeker: The reflection and feedback is what really makes the action plan come alive, that it really helps you translate what you put on paper into what actually happens in the classroom. So you get a chance to step back and really – you try it out, you see how it feels, and you step back and you talk about it with somebody and you have a chance to reflect on whether it felt good to you or it didn't feel good to you. And it gives you that chance to have that conversation that moves you forward and keeps you trying those new things.

Coach: I'm not sure how that's going to help them to share.

Narrator: During that conversation, the coach and teacher both take time to reflect, something a teacher doesn't often have time to do.

Katie Eide: They are so busy doing so many things – planning and paperwork, all these other things that they're doing, crisis, crises that happen – that to have a coach come a couple times in the month, or however often the coach can come out, and just sit for 30 minutes and talk about their teaching practice, reflecting on what's happening, the teachers have become so much more reflective themselves.

Narrator: In addition to reflection, coaches provide two different types of feedback which support teachers as they learn to implement practices as intended.

Dr. Pat Snyder: The first is supportive feedback. So if we're learning something, we all like to know, we like to receive descriptive information about what we did in terms of our teaching practices that were as intended. So, "Hey, you really did a great job providing descriptive feedback to that child today when they were engaged in the activity at circle time." Very supportive, very descriptive, very specific.

Tiffany Powers: What I really appreciate about practice-based coaching is that you are building on their strengths, and that is the key to keeping that relationship going. If it's always negative, they're not going to feel comfortable when you come in, they're not going to want to partner with you. And as a teacher, I wouldn't have wanted to hear that myself. So I try to think of what I would like as a teacher, what kind of things I would like to hear. And if they do need to tell me, "You need to work on this," they've already built me up so much that I'm like, "Yeah, that's going to make me better."

Narrator: In addition to supportive feedback, specific, constructive feedback helps guide the teacher as she moves forward with using an effective practice.

Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter: "Today I saw you do this five times, and I could tell that it was working because the children were smiling and they were engaged." So we're giving them that kind of feedback as well as, "But even when you were doing that, this one little boy didn't seem to be engaged. Let's think about what we need to do to support that one little boy." And so that process of reflection and feedback is both the teacher reflecting on how things are going and the coach reflecting on how things are going, but also being explicit in giving teachers feedback about things that the teacher could do differently or better to better support the children in her classroom.

Soleil Boyd: You know, sometimes she will point out, you know, something that didn't go so well, but I usually already knew that anyway, and then give me some ideas or ask me to think about, okay, how could I tweak that? So I'm just going to update the action plan.

Narrator: Educators say receiving supportive and constructive feedback is beneficial.

Niki Webber: They let you know things that you're doing really well in your classroom and things that you need to continue doing and things that you can build on. The support's there because they're offering tons of resources to you. They're offering their support, their modeling. You're able to brainstorm together to talk about things that you'd like to change or do or keep doing or things you want to tweak.

Soleil: It felt really good to come up with new ideas together. And also sometimes my coach brings in some new resources as we reflect that help me do whatever new thing we brainstorm together.

Tiffany: So I'm just going to kind of walk through what I saw as far as teacher-child interactions.

Narrator: Reflection and feedback can look different depending on the model. Expert coaching, when the teacher and coach are in the same room, or...

Katie: So I was thinking about what you might want to work on next.

Narrator: At a distance, where a teacher and coach might use Skype to reflect on the focused observation and provide feedback. Self-coaching, where a teacher might rely on website support to help structure feedback to herself. And finally, live peer coaching.

Dr. Lise Fox: What our teachers have told us about peer coaching is it doesn't feel intimidating, it really cements their relationship with a colleague, and it gives them a chance to go in someone else's classroom. And we don't think much about the state that teachers find themselves in, but they don't have an opportunity to go in someone else's room to learn from them. And so that sharing of information and really developing that collegial relationship, they found really valuable.

Soleil: I don't know if you want to hear some ideas from other teachers.

Narrator: Once a teacher and coach reflect and the coach provides feedback and resources, and other supports are identified to promote continued growth around that targeted set of teaching practices, the cycle is complete and a new one begins.

Dr. Crystal Bishop: There's usually this kind of logical progression of, okay, well, we feel like we've made a lot of progress on this goal, and it's kind of leading into this new practice that we want to work on. And so, I've never found that it's hard to identify, you know, how we're going to cycle back around. So I think that that is one thing that's really nice and helpful about practice-based coaching is it never really is – you don't just stop at one thing, but it's also a pretty fluid movement from one practice to the next.

Coach: We've got a lot of goals here. I think that's probably what our challenge is.

Narrator: Practice-based coaching is like a road map for the teacher, with support from a coach who has deep knowledge of identified practices and how they should be implemented to effectively support teachers and, as an extension, young children.

Dr. Snyder: I think practice-based coaching is among the more contemporary approaches to providing professional development that's meaningful for practitioners, that supports them to be more effective teachers, and that also will result in better child outcomes, which is our ultimate goal.

Dr. Maureen Almaz Conroy: The practice-based coaching model is one of the projects that I have worked on where I can say, at the end of the day, I actually really do make a difference. This makes a difference for teachers, makes a difference for children, makes a difference for families.

Katie: How are things going in the classroom?

Niki: Things have been going really well.

Narrator: Developing that collaborative partnership forms the foundation and drives the practice-based coaching cycle: shared goals and action planning, focused observation, reflection and feedback, all in a safe, supportive, and non-evaluative environment.

Katie: And I didn't realize how much I love working with adult learners. I love training them and giving them more information. I love having that partnership and watching them grow. I love watching their children grow because the teacher has grown and their practice has increased.

Niki: Teachers generally – you know, we have a way of doing things, and if we think that it's working, you don't often want to try different things because what you're doing is working, but it's amazing when you get someone else's opinion in your classroom what can happen if you try different things.

Narrator: Practice-based coaching: efficient and effective, resulting in teacher change in practice...

Teacher: Let's jump.

Children: One, two, three, four...

Narrator: with better outcomes for children.

Teacher: How many?

Children: Five! [Music]