



PRACTICE-BASED COACHING: **COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIPS**



Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) focuses on improving teachers' use of evidence-based practices to support children's progress toward school readiness goals. This document provides information about collaborative coaching partnerships, a key element of PBC.

WHAT IS A COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIP?

A collaborative coaching partnership is the foundation of all coaching interactions. It provides the context to base coaching on the teacher's strengths. Coaching is collaborative in that the teacher and coach plan and execute it together. A collaborative coaching partnership is reciprocal and respectful because the teacher and coach are equal and active partners. The goal is to provide support to the teacher as he or she attempts to try new things.

The collaborative coaching partnership is built on the premise that the coach and teacher have a shared vision and trust. The teacher and coach share the vision that the purpose of coaching is to support implementation of evidence-based practices. Shared trust is built through predictable and transparent interactions between the coach and teacher. Together the coach and teacher define the guidelines of the partnership, including what practices the teacher will work on, when and what the coach will observe, what will be shared about the observation, how the coach will support the teacher in the classroom, and what obligations the teacher and coach will have in the coaching partnership. Consistency in following these guidelines builds shared trust.

For shared trust to be established, coaching must also occur in a "safe place" for the teacher to be vulnerable, take risks, and try new teaching practices. Coaching may not feel safe when the coaching activities are tied to evaluation or compliance activities associated with supervision. When possible, coaching and supervisory roles should be separated to ensure that the collaborative coaching partnership can be developed. Additionally, the plan for communication between the teacher, coach, and supervisor should be transparent to all parties.

For more information about separating coaching and supervision, see Page 13 of the *Program Leaders' Guide to Practice-Based Coaching*.

HOW DO YOU BUILD A COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIP?

A collaborative coaching partnership is built and sustained through ongoing communication. The coach initiates the partnership by getting to know the teacher and classroom and identifying the teacher's strengths, learning style, and needs. The coach also recognizes the teacher's strengths and challenges in implementing teaching practices. Coaches can learn about teachers' strengths and needs by spending time in the classroom. By lending support during these classroom visits—for example, by helping out in the classroom or preparing materials—the coach shows the teacher that he or she is there to provide support, which further builds the partnership.

A collaborative coaching partnership is also built through shared ownership of the coaching process and active decision-making on the part of the teacher. In a collaborative coaching partnership, the teacher and coach decide the content or focus of coaching (what teaching practices to focus on), how coaching will occur (what supports the teacher will receive), and when and how the coach will observe the teacher (live or videotape). A coaching contract that describes the commitment of each partner helps to establish the shared ownership of coaching.

See the Additional Materials and Resources section following for an example of a coaching contract and refer to Page 24 in the *Program Leaders' Guide to Practice-Based Coaching*.

A final important way to build a collaborative coaching partnership is through shared celebrations of success. Throughout the coaching process, teachers take risks and try new practices. It is important for the coach to acknowledge these efforts.



WHAT DO COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIPS LOOK LIKE IN DIFFERENT COACHING FORMATS?

The table below describes how the collaborative coaching partnerships may be built and maintained with different coaching partners. For example, in an expert model, it is important that the coach and teacher follow through on agreed-upon plans and activities for achieving the teacher’s goals—for example, the teacher tries to use a teaching strategy the coach and teacher discussed, and the coach arrives on time and prepared to observe the teacher’s use of the strategy. In both reciprocal peer and self-coaching deliveries of PBC, a mentor coach should be available to support the coach partners with both the content and the coaching process as needed. It is important that a partnership be developed and maintained between the mentor coach and peer coaches or self-coach.

Collaborative Coaching Partnerships with Different Coaching Partners		
Coaching Partner	Building the Partnership	Maintaining the Partnership
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and coach plan together how to deliver coaching (when and what the coach will observe, what supports the coach will provide, how feedback will be provided). Coach spends time in the teacher’s classroom helping out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coach and teacher communicate regularly. Coach and teacher follow through on plans. Coach provides supportive feedback.
Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers work together to review action plans and determine how they will support each other (when they will observe, what data they will collect, etc.). The mentor coach meets with peer coaches to provide resources and answer questions about the practices and coaching process. The mentor coach and peer coaches plan together for ongoing support from the mentor coach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers communicate regularly. Teachers follow through on all plans. Teachers provide each other supportive feedback. The mentor coach communicates regularly with the peer coaches and follows through on providing any resources or support requested.
Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentor coach meets with the self coach to provide resources and answer any questions about teaching practices or the PBC coaching model. The mentor coach and self coach plan together for ongoing support from the mentor coach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentor coach communicates regularly with the self coach and follows through on providing any resources or support requested.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Program Leader’s Guide to Practice-Based Coaching

Buyse & Wesley (2005). *Consultation in early childhood settings*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.



SAMPLE COACHING CONTRACT

I, as the Coach, agree to:

- Support the teacher to assess his or her strengths and needs in effective instructional practices.
- Develop an individualized plan with the teacher that includes goals related to improving school readiness outcomes for all children. The plan will include steps for achieving goals and the coach's and teacher's responsibilities related to each step.
- Schedule, plan, and facilitate onsite visits and coaching sessions.
- Provide support in forms of sharing resources, providing models of effective practices, observing the teacher's current practices, and providing supportive and constructive feedback.
- Remain supportive rather than evaluative and to maintain, however possible, a separation between coaching and performance evaluation.

I, as the Teacher, agree to:

- Actively engage in coaching sessions through assessing my strengths and needs, asking questions, sharing pertinent information, reflecting, listening, and identifying goals and the means to achieve those goals in collaboration with the coach.
- Be open to being observed and receiving feedback.
- Apply and analyze new teaching practices with the support of my coach.



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