

## PRACTICE-BASED COACHING: COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIPS



Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) focuses on improving coachees' 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 coachee's strengths. Coaching is collaborative in that the coachee and coach plan and execute it together. A collaborative coaching partnership is reciprocal and respectful because the coachee and coach are equal and active partners. The goal is to provide support to the coachee as he or she attempts to try new things.

The collaborative coaching partnership is built on the premise that the coach and coachee have a shared vision and trust. The coachee 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 coachee. Together the coach and coachee define the guidelines of the partnership, including what practices the coachee will work on, when and what the coach will observe, what will be shared about the observation, how the coach will support the coachee in the early learning setting, and what obligations the coachee 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 coachee to be vulnerable, take risks, and try new practices. Coaching is not a safe place 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 coachee, coach, and supervisor should be transparent to all parties.

For more information about separating coaching and supervision, refer to the *Program Leaders’ Guide to Practice-Based Coaching*.

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## 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 coachee and early learning setting and identifying the coachee’s strengths, learning style, and needs. The coach also recognizes the coachee’s strengths and challenges (space limitations, challenging behavior, staff interactions, etc.) in implementing practices. “Coaches can learn about coachees’ strengths and needs by spending time in the classroom. By lending support during these 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 coachee. In a collaborative coaching partnership, the coachee and coach decide the content or focus of coaching (what practices to focus on), how coaching will occur (what supports the coachee will receive), and when and how the coach will observe the coachee (live or videotape). A coaching agreement 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 agreement and refer to 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, coachees take risks and try challenging practices. It is important for the coach to acknowledge these efforts.

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## 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 coachee follow through on agreed-upon plans and activities for achieving the coachee’s goals—for example, the coachee tries to use a teaching or home visiting strategy the coach and coachee discussed, and the coach arrives on time and prepared to observe the coachee’s use of the strategy. In both 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 |  |  |
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| COACHING PARTNER   | BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP   | MAINTAINING THE PARTNERSHIP  |
| EXPERT   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach and coachee plan together how to deliver coaching (when and what the coach will observe, what supports the coach will provide, how feedback will be provided).</li> <li>Coach spends time in the coachee’s early learning setting helping out.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach and coachee communicate regularly.</li> <li>Coach and coachee follow through on plans.</li> <li>Coach provides supportive feedback.</li> </ul>  |
| PEER   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coachees work together to review action plans and determine how they will support each other (when they will observe, what data they will collect, etc.).</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coachees communicate regularly.</li> <li>Coachees follow through on all plans.</li> <li>Coachees provide each other supportive feedback.</li> <li>The mentor coach communicates regularly with the peer coaches and follows through on providing any resources or support requested.</li> </ul> |
| SELF   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mentor coach meets with the self coach to provide resources and answer any questions about practices or the PBC coaching model.</li> <li>The mentor coach and self coach plan together for ongoing support from the mentor coach.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mentor coach communicates regularly with the self coach and follows through on providing any resources or support requested.</li> </ul>   |

**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 AGREEMENT: COACH**

I, as the Coach, agree to:

- Support the coachee to assess his/her strengths and needs in effective instructional practices.
- Develop an individualized plan with the coachee 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 coachee’s responsibilities related to each step.
- Schedule, plan, and facilitate on-site visits and coaching sessions throughout the year.
- Provide support in forms of sharing resources, providing models of effective practices, observing the coachee’s current practices, and providing supportive and constructive feedback.
- Remain supportive rather than evaluative and to maintain, to the maximum extent possible, a separation between coaching and performance evaluation.
- Discuss and determine with the coachee what coaching data, if any, will be shared with others. I will keep the content of our discussions confidential.
- Recognize that the coachee’s time is valuable and will be on time and prepared for coaching sessions.
- Revisit coaching on a regular basis with the coachee to determine if the coaching process needs to be adjusted to better fit her/his needs.
- Meet and discuss any concerns with the coachee prior to discussing with the supervisor.

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## SAMPLE COACHING AGREEMENT: COACHEE

I, as the Coachee, agree to:

- Actively engage in coaching sessions through assessing my strengths and needs, asking questions, sharing pertinent information, reflecting, listening, and identifying goals and 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.
- Participate in the coaching sessions throughout the year.
- Meet on a consistent basis.
- Recognize that my coach's time is valuable and will be on time and prepared for coaching sessions.

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## SAMPLE COACHING AGREEMENT: SUPERVISOR

I, as the Supervisor, agree to:

- Provide support to both the coach and coachee through monthly email, in-person, or phone check-ins
- Address any questions regarding progress related to coaching goals to both the coachee and the coach
- Discuss monitoring/evaluation data with the coachee prior to communicating with the coach.
- Acknowledge that coaching data and activities are not used for supervision and the coachee determines what coaching data will be shared with me.
- Provide coverage for the coachee for coaching meetings.
- Ensure the coach is not removed from coaching duties to fill-in for classroom absences or administrative responsibilities.