



## COMPONENT 3: REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Quality Teaching  
and Learning



Practice-Based Coaching  
Collaborative Partnerships

# THE THREE COMPONENTS OF PRACTICE-BASED COACHING

There are different types of professional development (PD) experiences: some are focused on *increasing awareness* or knowledge and some are focused on *supporting implementation* of practices in the classroom and home settings. Coaching is one PD strategy that can be used to support teachers' implementation of practices. This model focuses on improving teachers' use of evidence-based practices to support children's progress toward school readiness goals. The components of Practice-Based Coaching can be applied when supporting anyone who works directly with children, such as teachers, teaching assistants, other classroom staff, home visitors, family child care workers, and families. For the purposes of this document, "teacher" is used to refer to anyone who directly works with children.

PBC is a cyclical process for supporting teachers' use of effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children.

The coaching cycle components are:

1. Planning goals and action steps
2. Engaging in focused observation
3. Reflecting on and sharing feedback about teaching practices

Each component is necessary for implementing PBC, and each component builds from the previous component. For example, reflection and feedback between a coach and teacher cannot occur without conducting a focused observation, and an observation cannot be focused without setting goals and developing an action plan for supporting teachers' implementation of practices.

Typically, PBC involves a coach and teacher or a coach and group of teachers (i.e., expert coaching). But teachers might coach each other (reciprocal peer coaching), or a teacher might act as his or her own coach (self-coaching). Depending on program needs, PBC partnerships may occur on-site or at a distance. The key components of PBC are used for each of these coaching formats. To implement a PBC program that produces positive outcomes for teachers and children, all three components must be applied in the context of collaborative coaching partnerships. Let's review Component 3: Reflection and Feedback.

## COMPONENT 3: REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

### What is Reflection and Feedback?

Through Reflection and Feedback, changes in practice are considered, evaluated, and strengthened. In reflection and feedback, progress toward goals and action plan steps are discussed or considered, and new action steps or goals might be identified that become the focus of the next cycle of coaching. The coach guides a teacher's reflection to encourage careful consideration of the implementation of new practices, the success of teaching efforts, and child responses to teacher implementation and classroom activities.

### Why is Reflection and Feedback important?

Through reflection and feedback, teachers learn new strategies and gain ownership over their own professional development. They are encouraged to reflect on their use of teaching practices and the children's responses to implementation of new strategies. Coaches also gain information about teacher and child interactions, a teacher's strengths, and teacher perspectives. Both the coach and teacher have multiple opportunities to reflect and give feedback throughout the coaching partnership.

Reflection and feedback serve an essential link in the Practice-Based Coaching cycle. Reflection and feedback follow focused observation and lead directly into shared goals and action planning. During each of these cycles, teachers continually improve their practice and coaches provide support and direction about what might be next as they help teachers grow in their proficiency and capacity to promote the school readiness of young children.

### How do we do it?

Reflection refers to a process used by both the coach and teacher to formulate thoughts about what is occurring within the classroom. While reflection occurs throughout the PBC cycle, it must always occur prior to providing feedback. During reflection, the coach and teacher think about what was observed and compare those observations to the goals and targeted teaching practices that are the foci of the coaching session. As the coach and teacher reflect on observations, they discuss the effectiveness of practice implementation, the interactions between teaching staff and children, and children's responses to the environment, activities, and instruction.

Reflection can occur in multiple ways. A teacher engaged in self-coaching might use a journal to record thoughts about an observation or might reflect on a video of her classroom practice by responding to a set of reflective questions. The coach might take notes or use a checklist of key practices during the observation that provides information that is used by the coach and teacher for reflection. Often reflection occurs through conversations between the coach and the teacher that are facilitated by questions posed by the coach. Coaches might use objective questions to prompt the teacher to reflect on what happened, interpretive questions to encourage the teacher to reflect and draw conclusions about observations, and comparative questions to support the teacher in evaluating events and interactions (Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004). Sample questions that might be used by the coach to facilitate the teacher's reflection include:

- Describe what happened when you ...? (objective question)
- How did the children respond to ...? (objective question)
- I noticed that you .... Tell me more about that strategy. (objective question)
- What do you think would happen if ...? (interpretive question)
- Tell me how you felt about... (interpretive question)
- What might you try the next time? (comparative question)
- How did that compare to ...? (comparative question)

The following questions might be helpful for teachers using self-coaching:

- What would I do differently?
- Was the activity successful? Was my goal met?
- What improvements would I make?
- Were students engaged?
- Will I use this activity again?
- How did I feel about the activity as we were doing it?
- Are the children still talking about the activity?
- Was it age appropriate?
- Was it child directed?
- Was it appropriately challenging?
- How much redirection was needed?
- Did it meet the needs of the children, or could it be adapted to meet their needs?
- How will I build on the activity tomorrow and beyond?
- Were the children excited to participate?
- What did the children and I learn from doing this activity?

The reflective process is critical to using observation to identify effective practices, children's responses to instructional efforts, the success of efforts to improve practice, how well a practice is implemented, teachers' confidence in using new practices, and teachers' beliefs about how their practices affect child learning. During reflective conversations or exchanges (e.g., if conducting distance coaching and sharing reflections via email), the interaction between the coach and teacher should be reciprocal, positive, and encouraging. During reflection, teachers should be encouraged to think deeply about their practice and feel safe in sharing their thoughts. Coaches pose reflective questions and then use active listening techniques to encourage the teachers to share their observations and ideas. During the reflective conversation, the coach should pose the question or share observations and then create the space and encouragement for the teacher to discuss and share reflections.

**Feedback** both follows reflection and includes reflection in the following manner. Once the teacher engages in reflection, the coach provides feedback to the teacher about what was observed, the quality with which practices were implemented, or the practices needing improvement. Teachers reflect on feedback and develop ideas about next steps, adjustments to their practice implementation, and new goals. In reflecting on feedback, teachers might ask for additional assistance or resources to support their implementation of practices.

There are two types of feedback that are essential to the coaching process: **supportive feedback** and **constructive feedback**. Supportive feedback is specific encouragement to the teacher to affirm strengths, note improvement in practice implementation, or highlight accomplishments. Constructive feedback provides the teacher with objective and specific information on how the implementation of a practice, activity, or interaction can be improved. Both types of feedback are necessary to result in continued growth in teachers' skill development and should always be anchored in data yielded from the observation component of the coaching cycle. The two types of feedback require different delivery approaches:

- **Supportive feedback** refers to commenting on the teacher's correct implementation of the coached skill with specificity and sincerity. It goes beyond saying, "You did so great! Keep it up!" by connecting the observation with the action plan goal and steps or the focus for the coaching session. For example, a coach might provide supportive feedback in the following manner: "You reviewed the rules right before the center time transition, and I did not observe any problems during play time today!" Supportive feedback provides the teacher with concrete evidence of the progress of the teacher toward achieving the action plan goal.
- **Constructive feedback** is delivered to assist teachers in understanding missed implementation opportunities or how to improve implementation of a targeted teaching practice. The coach should be specific and precise about what can be improved and how to make those improvements. For example, the coach might say, "So that children know the expectations, it is important to be consistent across the day with teaching classroom rules, instead of only doing the morning review. Try to review the rules right before children transition to centers." It is very important for the coach to reflect carefully on how to frame and deliver constructive feedback. Constructive feedback is best delivered in a trusting relationship because the teacher can easily misinterpret it as judgmental or evaluative.

There are a variety of ways in which supportive and constructive feedback can be delivered. In addition to a verbal debriefing meeting where coaches describe their observations and feedback, coaches can provide teachers with data about their use of teaching practices. **Data-based feedback** is one way coaches can provide teachers with feedback that is objective and anchored in the teacher's practice. These data might come from the use of a teacher observation tool or by recording data that are related to the action plan goal. Coaches should collect data in this manner only if teachers know that data will be collected and shared with them and agree with the focus of the observation. After data are collected, they might be summarized in graphs to help teachers quickly identify trends in their improvement or to identify areas that might need improvement or additional implementation effort. Once data are shared, both the coach and teacher should engage in careful reflection to come to conclusions about the data. Very often, a review of the data will result in revisions or additions to coaching action plan goals or activities.

An additional way to deliver feedback is through the use of an email communication to summarize a coaching session (see Figure 1). This feedback is supplemental to the debriefing session and offers a synopsis of the observation and debriefing session. Email feedback can be structured to provide both supportive and constructive feedback along with providing a reminder of actions to complete before the next scheduled coaching visit. Coaches send email feedback immediately after the coaching meeting.

**Figure 1: Sample Email Feedback Message**

Hi Barbara & Melanie,

Thanks for welcoming me into your room this week. I could tell how excited the kids were about next week's trip to the farm!

Based on your action plan, we're focusing on increasing peer interactions in the dramatic play area. One of the important elements of your action plan is to use challenging behavior as a chance to teach new skills. Like we talked about, I heard you do this masterfully this week. A new child was upset and you used that as an opportunity. First, you calmly expressed/modeled your own feelings. Then you taught the child to use her words. I also heard you recognize children for being "team players" and ask them to be safe. Great way to tie in your classroom expectations throughout the year!

Our goal for coaching is really to use strategies that will help all kids develop social skills that will help them in school and life. You captured a few minutes of video this week, and we talked about it at the meeting. I edited a short clip that I'm attaching here. We talked about how the boys in the video played near each other but alone for a very long time while all adults were busy in other parts of the room. This would have been a perfect opportunity for an adult to encourage interactive play. Before our meeting next week, we said we would each take a few minutes to watch the boys play in the video. What do you notice about their play? Why is it important to notice that the two boys play near each other but alone? How can we help move them to more interactive play?

We also wanted to focus on adult-child interactions during play. In the video, notice how they responded when one of you asked about the rooster. Do you see how their play changes when you gave a new play idea ("the rooster wakes people up in the morning")? Watch towards the end of the clip and see how they begin to interact around the idea you gave them. With this in mind, how do you think we could help boys increase their interactive play? What do you think would happen if you joined the children in their play? What activities or play props might spark the boys to interact more? Some suggestions that have worked for others: joining children's play to model skills, suggesting play ideas (like you did in this clip), asking children what they will play together when they get to centers (priming the situation), and offering activities that require cooperation like building train tracks or cooking.

I found an article I thought you might like about the importance of play. I thought it was interesting; the rest of the world is finally catching on to what preschool teachers have known forever! The article gives some ideas for helping kids develop play skills and self-regulation. Here's the link: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=19212514>

The next step you put in your action plan is to make sure there are at least 7 social toys available during choice time. I think it would be great for us to take some time to film children playing with a variety of those toys next week. Then we can talk about how it went. Does that sound good?

Could you please write back to let me know you got this message and that all is well? Thank you and see you next week!

Carmen

**Supportive feedback**

**Constructive feedback with reflective questions and suggestions**

**Coaching resources**

The reflection and feedback component of the cycle is typically conducted in a debriefing session. During these sessions, coaches might use a variety of support strategies to provide the teacher with more information, illustrations, or additional guidance on how to implement practices identified in the action plan. Some of these strategies are described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Coaching Support Strategies Used During Debriefing Sessions**

Type of support strategies	Definition	Examples
Problem-solving discussion	<p>The coach and teacher have a conversation to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Identify the problem.</li> <li>2) Brainstorm and generate options.</li> <li>3) Decide on a possible solution.</li> <li>4) Implement and evaluate the solution .</li> </ol> <p>During debriefing, one or multiple steps of the problem solving process might occur.</p>	<p>Identify the problem: During the observation, the coach notices a target child who has trouble transitioning to literacy groups. At the debriefing, the coach and teacher talk about the situation, and the coach says, "Let's think about some ways to make this transition easier for Erica."</p> <p>Generate options: Together they brainstorm a few different ideas; the teacher selects one to try.</p> <p>Decide on solutions: The coach adds a new goal or additional resources to the action plan.</p> <p>Implement and evaluate: The teacher selects a strategy to implement. The coach makes a note to observe the use of the strategy during the next scheduled observation.</p>
Reflective conversation	<p>An active discussion between the coach and teacher with a goal of encouraging the teacher to think about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• His/her actions</li> <li>• The situation</li> <li>• The strategies used</li> <li>• The responses of the children</li> <li>• Comfort level regarding implementation of action plan goals</li> </ul> <p>No corrective or directive statements are used. Instead the coach offers a question to encourage reflection. Reflective conversations typically focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions</li> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Interpretations</li> <li>• Use of strategies</li> </ul>	<p>"Let's talk about what happened with Bobby this morning. Why do you think this might have happened?"</p> <p>"So I saw you use the new schedule. Was it comfortable for you? Did you feel it was effective?"</p> <p>"Why do you think Stacy didn't participant in circle today? What do you think is going on?"</p>
Video review	<p>The teacher and coach review a video segment from the teacher's classroom and then engage in one of the coaching strategies, such as problem-solving discussion, reflective conversation, or graphing.</p>	<p>The teacher and coach view a brief video segment of circle time that the coach filmed during observation.</p> <p>The coach begins by encouraging the teacher's reflection on the video segment and asks, "Tell me how you think the book reading activity went."</p> <p>During the discussion, the coach provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive feedback: "It was great to see the majority of the children being able to respond to the questions you posed."</li> <li>• Corrective feedback: "As you pose questions, try to wait for a response from the children. For example, when you asked Andrew a question and he hesitated; you jumped in and asked another question. Sometimes it helps to just wait and count to five before moving on to give him a chance to process."</li> </ul>

Type of support strategies	Definition	Examples
Role play	<p>A simulated situation that happens between the coach and teacher that aims to help the teacher to learn or practice new techniques during debriefing.</p> <p>In a role-playing situation, both individuals take on a defined role and practice the use of a teaching practice or a response to a situation. The teacher might take on the role of the child while the coach demonstrates a teaching practice, or the coach might take on the role of the child while the teacher practices.</p>	<p>The teacher and coach might practice a hypothetical conversation with a parent during a role play before the teacher meets with the parent.</p> <p>The coach could use role play to practice the use of shared storybook reading strategies with the teacher.</p>
Live/video demonstration	<p>In a live demonstration, the coach acts out the teacher's role and provides an example of how to use specific practices.</p> <p>The coach shares a short video clip that shows examples of teaching practices that are related to the teacher's action plan goals.</p>	<p>The coach demonstrates how a visual schedule can be used to provide choices within an activity.</p> <p>The coach shares video clips of transition activities from other classrooms to provide the teacher with ideas for ways to conduct his/her transitions.</p>
Helping with environmental arrangements	<p>The coach assists the teacher with creating or adapting the environment to support participation for all children.</p> <p>This might include preparing or developing materials, making changes in the classroom, or rearranging the physical space.</p>	<p>The coach and teacher brainstorm ways to reconfigure the space used for large group instruction and then work together to rearrange the space.</p> <p>The coach helps create/arrange a visual schedule.</p>
Providing materials	<p>The coach offers additional resources that might help the teacher learn more about specific teaching practices.</p> <p>The coach provides materials that might improve implementation of specific teaching practices.</p>	<p>During debriefing, the coach shows the teacher resources on a website that could be used by the teacher to implement a targeted teaching practice.</p>

### What does Reflection and Feedback look like in different coaching formats?

Different strategies might be used to engage in reflection and feedback across different coaching formats. In expert and reciprocal peer coaching partnerships, the coach and teacher/coachee might schedule a face-to-face debriefing meeting to reflect and provide feedback following a focused observation. In some coaching partnerships, the coach and teacher/coachee might use technology to engage in reflection and feedback. Email, internet chatting, and other forms of communication can be used. In self-coaching, a teacher may use notes from an observation or watch a video recording of his or her own teaching practice to reflect on practice implementation.

To engage in meaningful self-feedback, however, a teacher will need to collect data or record information about implementation of a practice and self-evaluate his/her progress. This can be done by comparing progress to the criterion for goal achievement identified in the action plan. Based on his/her progress toward a goal, a teacher can engage in supportive and constructive self-feedback. The teacher may seek out resources to support professional growth. Table 2 shows how reflection and feedback might occur within different coaching delivery formats.

**Table 2. Reflection and Feedback Delivery**

Coach delivery format	Coaching partner	Reflection	Feedback
Live	Reciprocal peer or expert	<p>First, the coach reviews observation notes or data collected.</p> <p>Second, the coach poses reflective questions for the coachee in a debriefing session that follows the observation.</p>	<p>The coach says to the teacher, "The transition to center time activities from circle was really effective. All the children knew where to go and their next steps."</p> <p>The coach provides constructive feedback by saying, "It took you a few minutes to find the materials to begin the transition. You might think of a strategy to make sure they are ready and you don't lose any time."</p>

Coach delivery format	Coaching partner	Reflection	Feedback
	Self	Teacher uses a checklist to reflect on his/her teaching practices.	The teacher summarizes observation information or displays data in a graph. The teacher compares progress toward implementation of targeted teaching practice. The teacher notes his/her strengths and success and identifies areas for improvement.
Distance	Reciprocal peer or expert	The coach reviews a video segment that the coachee provides and reflects on the teacher's implementation of the targeted practice. The coachee also reviews the video segment and responds in a journal to a standard set of questions.	The coach provides an email message that includes supportive feedback on how well the targeted teaching practice was implemented and the responses of the children to the practice. The coach provides constructive feedback on ways to improve implementation.
	Self	Teacher enters his/her reflections in an online coaching tool.	The online teaching tool provides the teacher with a progress chart and menu of suggestions that can be selected for practice improvement.

## REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Jerald, C. (2012). *Ensuring accurate feedback from observations: Perspectives on practice*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. [www.gatesfoundation.org/college-ready.../ensuring-accuracy-wp.pdf](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/college-ready.../ensuring-accuracy-wp.pdf)
2. Rush, D., & Shelden, M. (2011). *The early childhood coaching handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.
3. Steps to Success. (2005). *Professional development plan*. Resource for Steps to Success: An Instructional Design for Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches in Head Start and Early Head Start. Available from HHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/video/STS>
4. Hanft, B.E., Rush, D.D., & Shelden, M.L. (2004). *Coaching Families and Colleagues in Early Childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.

## PRACTICE-BASED COACHING SUPPORTING MATERIALS

### Practice-Based Coaching

This document describes Practice-Based Coaching and formats for implementing Practice-Based Coaching. It also explains the components of Practice-Based Coaching. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/practice-based-coaching.pdf>

Buyse, V., & Wesley, P. (2005). *Consultation in early childhood settings*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

### What Do We Know About Coaching?

This short article describes what research says about coaching for practitioners who work with young children, and what research says about key components for the Practice-Based Coaching model. In addition, the article discusses why Head Start programs might consider Practice-Based Coaching as an essential part of professional development.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/center/development>.



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