



PRACTICE-BASED COACHING: SELF-COACHING

There are many ways to deliver professional development (PD). They range from PD experiences that increase awareness or knowledge to PD that supports implementation in the classroom (McCollum and Catlett, 1997). To determine which type of PD to implement, it is important to take into consideration the characteristics of those who will receive the PD as well as the desired outcomes of the PD (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, 2008).

Coaching is a PD strategy that can be used to support teachers' implementation of teaching practices. PBC focuses on improving teachers' use of evidence-based teaching practices to support children's progress toward school readiness goals. It is intensive and has proven to be effective.

PBC is cyclical in nature and involves three components: 1) shared goals and action planning, 2) focused observation, and 3) reflection and feedback. Each component is necessary to implement PBC, and each component builds from the previous component. For example, reflection and feedback cannot occur without conducting a focused observation, and an observation cannot be focused without setting goals and developing an action plan to support teachers' implementation of practices.

The PBC model can be implemented in various formats to accommodate program resources and needs. PBC often involves a coach and teacher or a coach and group of teachers (expert coaching). But teachers might also coach each other (reciprocal peer coaching), or a teacher might act as his or her own coach (self-coaching). Depending on program needs, PBC can occur on site or at a distance. Regardless of the delivery format, all three components of the PBC model must be applied within the context of collaborative coaching partnerships to produce positive outcomes for teachers and children. This brief focuses on how to implement PBC within a self-coaching format.

WHAT IS SELF-COACHING?

In self-coaching, participants guide themselves through the coaching cycle to improve their use of self-selected, evidence-based practices in the classroom. In self-coaching, teachers do a needs assessment, set goals and develop an action plan, access resources to support their knowledge of teaching practices, conduct a focused observation of their own attempts to implement the practice, and then reflect on that observation. Materials and programmatic supports are provided to help teachers navigate the process of self-coaching.

HOW IS SELF-COACHING IMPLEMENTED?

Self-coaching offers a way for teachers to support themselves to improve their implementation of a defined set of targeted teaching practices (evidence-based practices which programs identify as important on needs assessment forms). Self-coaching can be used as a follow-up to other professional development activities, such as trainings or workshops. If such professional development is not available as a foundation for self-coaching, teachers can use the self-coaching process as a way to learn more about evidence-based practices on their own and then to implement them in their classroom.

For self-coaching to work, teachers need access to high-quality materials for learning more about practices, such as NCQTL's 15-minute in-service suites (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/iss-library.html>), journal articles, and research-based web materials. They also need access to forms and support material for self-coaching. Materials should be easily accessible, via a website, to all teachers participating in self-coaching. The materials also should be maintained to ensure the information is up-to-date.



In addition, teacher training in the self-coaching process is necessary for successful implementation. Teachers should be prepared to choose practices of focus, develop goals and action plans, observe themselves and collect data, and reflect on their practice implementation. Teachers will also need a coaching leader and the support of others to assist with solving problems, to provide motivation and encouragement, and to keep self-coaching on the “front burner.” All of these activities take time, which must be allotted for self-coaching. Teachers will need time to complete the steps in self-coaching for multiple goals during the school year, and they will need time to meet on a consistent basis to discuss progress and share ideas.

HOW DOES EACH OF THE PBC COMPONENTS LOOK IN THE SELF-COACHING FORMAT?

COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIP

Although the application of each of the key components of the PBC model is directed primarily by the teacher, it is critical for programs to provide a leader or “guide” for self-coaching. The role of this person is to help facilitate the self-coaching process through training, to provide access to high-quality resources and materials, to organize and lead consistent (at least monthly) meetings focused on self-coaching, and to be a cheerleader for teachers’ continuing implementation of self-coaching.

COMPONENT 1: SHARED GOALS AND ACTION PLANNING

Shared goals and action planning involves (1) conducting needs assessments, (2) setting goals for coaching, and (3) creating an action plan to guide coaching. In self-coaching, the teacher conducts a self-assessment of coaching needs, determines his or her own goals, and develops an action plan to achieve these goals without direct guidance from an external coach. Although the targeted areas for coaching (for example, language and literacy teaching practices) might be determined by program leadership or in collaboration with other PBC recipients, the teacher chooses practices to focus on while developing an individual action plan. The teacher also sets his or her own criteria to determine when the goal is met. The teacher needs support for the self-coaching process (training to determine and write goals and action plans) from a coaching leader, such as an administrator, curriculum specialist, or expert coach. But the teacher assesses needs and develops the action plan. If teachers ask for assistance with this or any other step in the process, it should be readily given.

COMPONENT 2: FOCUSED OBSERVATION

Focused observation is the process of gathering and recording information about a teacher’s implementation of an action plan and progress toward achieving his or her goal. In a self-coaching model, the teacher might videotape himself or herself to view implementation of the teaching practices specified by the goal or action plan steps. In this case, the teacher collects data about his or her implementation of teacher practices while watching the video. Alternately, the teacher might take data on implementation of the practice (for example, counting the number of open-ended questions asked during story time) while doing it or shortly thereafter, or he or she might have an observer collect data. It is important for teachers to set aside time weekly to collect data on their goals.

COMPONENT 3: REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

To engage in meaningful self-feedback, a teacher will need to examine good data about how he or she is implementing a practice and then self-evaluate that progress. In self-coaching this involves reviewing data the teacher has collected about implementing a teaching practice and comparing progress to the criteria for goal achievement identified in the action plan. This process involves the teacher providing his or her own supportive and constructive feedback and evaluating whether to continue implementing the action plan, whether to revise the action plan to include additional action steps (such as seeking out additional resources or professional development opportunities), or whether to move on to a new goal and action plan for a different practice.



For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.
SUMMER 2015

WHEN IS SELF-COACHING APPROPRIATE?

Self-coaching is most appropriate for teachers who are self-motivated to improve practice. For this reason, it is best to have teachers participate on a voluntary basis. Additionally, program-provided incentives for participating in self-coaching and improving practice can help to maintain momentum in the self-coaching process. Teachers who participate in self-coaching will need to meet at least monthly to discuss issues, share resources for learning, monitor progress, review materials, and revise action plans. Therefore, it is imperative that self-coaching is facilitated by a skilled and dedicated leader who will take the steps necessary to help make it work.

REFERENCES

- McCollum, J. A., & Catlett, C. (1997). Designing effective personnel preparation for early intervention: Theoretical frameworks. In P.J. Winton, J.A. McCollum, & C. Catlett (Eds.), *Reforming personnel preparation in early intervention: Issues, models, and practical strategies* (pp. 105–125). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.
- National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. (2008). *What do we mean by professional development in the early childhood field?* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Author.
Retrieved from www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci



For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.

SUMMER 2015