

PRACTICE-BASED COACHING

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 learning environment (Snyder et al, 2012). 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 coachees' implementation of effective practices. PBC focuses on improving coachees' use of effective 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 coachees' implementation of practices.

The PBC model can be implemented in various formats to accommodate program resources and needs. PBC often involves a coach and coachee or a coach and group of coachees (expert coaching). But coachees might also coach each other (reciprocal peer coaching), or a coachee 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 coachees and children and families. This brief focuses on how to implement PBC within the self-coaching format. Self-coaching does not meet the requirements for intensive coaching as outlined in the Head Start Program Performance Standards but may be used as a part of the research-based coordinated coaching strategy in a program.

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 learning environment. In self-coaching, coachees do a needs assessment, set goals and develop an action plan, access resources to support their knowledge of effective 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 coachees navigate the process of self-coaching.

HOW IS SELF-COACHING IMPLEMENTED?

Self-coaching offers a way for coachees to support themselves to improve their implementation of a defined set of targeted 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, coachees 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 settings.

For self-coaching to work, coachees need access to high-quality materials for learning more about practices, such as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) Effective Practice Guides (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effectivepractice-guides/effective-practice-guides>), 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 coachees participating in self-coaching. The materials also should be maintained to ensure the information is up-to-date.

In addition, coachee's training in the self-coaching process is necessary for successful implementation. Coachees should be prepared to choose practices of focus, develop goals and action plans, observe themselves and collect data, and reflect on their practice implementation. Coachees will also need an expert or mentor coach 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. Coachees will need time to complete the steps in self-coaching for multiple goals during the program 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 coachee, it is critical for programs to provide an expert or mentor coach to guide 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 coachees' 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 coachee 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 practices) are determined by program leadership, the coachee chooses practices to focus on while developing an individual action plan. The coachee also sets his or her own criteria to determine when the goal is met. The coachee needs support for the self-coaching process (e.g., training to determine and write goals and action plans) from an expert or mentor coach. But the coachee assesses needs and develops the action plan. If coachees 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 coachee's implementation of an action plan and progress toward achieving his or her goal. In a self-coaching model, the coachee might videotape himself or herself to view implementation of the effective practices specified by the goal or action plan steps. In this case, the coachee collects data about his or her implementation of effective practices while watching the video. Alternately, the coachee might take data on implementation of the practice (for example, counting the number of positive statements to the parent) while doing it or shortly thereafter, or he or she might have an observer collect data. It is important for coachees to set aside time weekly to collect data on their goals.

COMPONENT 3: REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

To engage in meaningful self-feedback, a coachee 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 coachee has collected about implementing an effective practice and comparing progress to the criteria for goal achievement identified in the action plan. This process involves the coachee 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.

WHEN IS SELF-COACHING APPROPRIATE?

Self-coaching is most appropriate for coachees who are self-motivated to improve practice. For this reason, it is best to have coachees 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. Coachees 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

Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M. L., Meeker, K. A., Kinder, K., Pasia, C., & McLaughlin, T. (2012). Characterizing key features of the early childhood professional development literature. *Infants & Young Children, 25*(3), 188-212.

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