



Implementing Practice-Based Coaching: Considering Systems Implications

Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is a proven strategy for supporting the professional development of classroom teachers. Programs that implement PBC most effectively take steps to ensure that the strategy meets the needs of the program and their selected PBC method is implemented with fidelity. Before implementing PBC, program leaders consider ways that the coaching may impact ongoing operations and existing systems. In the sections that follow, we suggest a number of questions related to the Head Start management systems that program leaders can use to prepare for the smooth introduction and operation of Practice-Based Coaching. The list is not exhaustive; programs may think of other questions that they wish to address in their planning. We have divided the questions into 5 stages: Stage 0: Decision-Making; Stage 1: Getting Ready; Stage 2: Implementation; Stage 4: Evaluation and Stage 4: Continuing.

STAGE 0: DECISION-MAKING

In this initial stage, the management team and other program leaders consider the professional development needs of staff and weigh the merits of implementing PBC as a staff development strategy. The conversation requires activity in several Head Start management systems including planning, fiscal management, governance and human resources.

Planning

- Will PBC address program needs identified during the annual planning process?
 - If yes, was PBC included as a goal in the program plan?
 - If no, will PBC replace, or be combined with, other professional development efforts?
- Which PBC format best addresses our needs?
- Will we implement a PBC pilot program or introduce PBC across the entire program?

Fiscal Management

- Can we implement the chosen format with current resources?
 - If yes, is it included in our approved budget or will we need to submit a budget modification?
 - If no, how will we raise additional resources and/or shift funds in our current approved budget? Can we use T/TA resources?

Governance

- Have we obtained the support of the governing body and Policy Council (PC) for the PBC initiative?
 - If no, what steps does the management team need to take to get the groups on board?

Human Resources

- How will the Head Start and/or Early Head Start director support the PBC initiative?
- Who will coordinate the initiative?
- How will the PBC fit into the organization's overall professional development strategy?
- How many teachers need this type of support?
- How many teachers or education leaders are potential coaches?

STAGE 1: GETTING READY

Once the activities of the decision-making phase are complete and a program decides to implement Practice-Based Coaching, program leaders begin to prepare for implementation. This is Stage 1, Getting Ready. During this stage, program leaders ask questions related to activities in most of the management systems.

Planning

- What role will the director and management team have in developing the PBC implementation plan?
- Who will sign-off on the implementation plan?
- How will the program evaluate the implementation and impact of the PBC?

Fiscal Management

- What changes (if any) do we need to make in our financial management systems to track revenues and expenditures related to coaching?
- Who will approve expenditures related to coaching?

Governance

- How will the management team keep the governing body and PC informed of PBC implementation progress?

Human Resources

- What steps will we take to identify only highly-qualified coaches among internal and external candidates (e.g., develop a coach job description, interview potential candidates)?
- How will participating teachers be selected? By location? By qualifications? Using an application process?
- How will coaches and supervisors work together to support teachers' professional development? How will their roles differ?
- What changes need to be made in existing teacher, supervisor, and education manager job descriptions to reflect changing responsibilities?
- Who will supervise/support the coaches? How will they be trained?
- What adjustments, if any, will we make in the participating and non-participating teachers' schedules?
- How will the performance review process address coaching responsibilities?
- In unionized programs, what changes (if any) will we need to make in the collective bargaining agreement.

Recordkeeping and Reporting

- What new process and outcomes data will we need to collect to track the progress of the PBC initiative?
- How will the new data be collected? Electronically? By hand?
- How will we integrate the data collection processes into existing systems?

Ongoing Monitoring

- How often will the education manager and other team leaders review data from Practice-Based Coaching activities?
- How will information be used to make mid-course corrections to improve PBC implementation?

Facilities and Equipment

- Where will coaches and teachers meet for feedback and reflection sessions?
- What additional equipment and supplies will we require? Video cameras? Classroom materials?

Communication

- How will we share information about the PBC initiative with staff, the Policy Council (PC,) governing body, and other stakeholders? A detailed written description? Q & A sessions with staff? Other?
- How frequently will we share updates with stakeholders?

STAGE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

In Stage 2, the program begins to carry out the plans it developed in Stage 1. Although many planning activities are complete, the PBC coordinator and other program leaders remain vigilant for unanticipated systems issues. We suggest a number of questions related to several systems.

Planning

- Who will develop a PBC schedule to ensure adequate observation and reflection periods for coaches and teachers and identify times when classroom substitutes are needed to maintain required teacher/child ratios?
- How will the program ensure that participating teachers have enough time for classroom planning and record-keeping?

Fiscal Management

- Will PBC expenses be coded and tracked separately from other professional development efforts? If not, how will expenses be tracked?
- What is the frequency of the financial reporting on PBC? Will it be monthly or quarterly?
- Who will receive the PBC financial reports beyond the governing body and PC?
- Will the management team review and monitor the financials on PBC?

Governance

- How will the PC and governing body receive updates on PBC progress?

Human Resources

- How will the PBC coordinator or other designated manager ensure that questions and concerns expressed by participating coaches, teachers, and supervisors are quickly addressed and resolved?

Recordkeeping and Reporting

- Who will ensure that coaches and participating coaches enter data in recordkeeping systems?

Ongoing Monitoring

- What processes will the program use to ensure that the PBC initiative is implemented with fidelity to the selected format?

Communication

- How will the management team provide regular updates to stakeholders on PBC progress?

Self-Assessment

- What ongoing monitoring data about the PBC initiative will be shared with the Annual Self-Assessment team?

STAGE 3: EVALUATION

In most programs, Stage 3, Evaluation will begin after several months' worth of data has been collected. In most cases the PBC activities will still be in progress. Program leaders will review ongoing monitoring results, Self-Assessment findings, and cost data to determine the merits of continuing with and/or revising current PBC activities. Decision makers should know that most studies using Practice-Based Coaching have provided coaching for at least one year (c.f., Pianta et al., 2008; Snyder et al., 2007). While small effects may begin to appear in just a few months, research seems to suggest that sustained coaching is necessary for lasting and measurable change (Snyder et al., 2011; Snyder et al, 2012).

Planning

- Who will participate in the PBC evaluation team?
- What additional data should be collected through participant focus groups and interviews?
- Who will prepare recommendations and a rationale related to continuation, revision, expansion, and/or discontinuation for the PC and governing body?

Fiscal Management

- Who will calculate overall cost of PBC initiative (including costs for coach fees, additional teaching hours, costs for substitutes, salary of the coordinator, and equipment and supplies) on behalf of the management team?

Governance

- How and when will PBC evaluation data and recommendations for continuation be shared with the PC and governing body?

Recordkeeping and Reporting

- How can data collected during ongoing monitoring and the recommendations of the Self-Assessment team be formatted and shared to promote meaningful review and discussion by the PBC evaluation team?

STAGE 4: CONTINUATION

After coming to conclusions about the continuation of PBC, as is, or in a revised format, program leaders are ready to begin the planning process again.

Planning

- If we decided to continue with Practice-Based Coaching, what changes do we need to make in our original PBC plans, procedures, and related documentation to accommodate decisions to continue, revise, and/or expand the PBC method?
- If we decided not to continue with Practice-Based Coaching, what other professional development approaches will we implement to continue to support staff needs?

References

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