

## **Coaching Corner: Using Practice-Based Coaching to Support Behavior Expectations**

Kathleen Artman-Meeker: So, welcome again to this month's Coaching Corner webinar, "Tools for Rules: Using Practice-Based Coaching to Help Teachers Establish and Teach Behavior Expectations." My name is Kathleen Artman-Meeker, and I am a member of the coaching team here with NCQTL and a member of the faculty here at the University of Washington. I'm going to be one of the hosts for the webinar series, and I am going to be joined by Jessica Hardy, who I'll introduce in a second.

But before I introduce our presenter for today while you're continuing to vote, I'd like to share a bit about the series and our time together. So, as some of you may know or remember from last month, this is an ongoing webinar series that's offered monthly. Each month we'll introduce a specific topic and explore practice-based coaching as a form of professional development.

So, today's topic is helping coaches -- helping coach teachers around classroom rules and behavior expectations. Our presenter's going to walk us through the components of practice-based coaching as well as identify approaches and strategies coaches can use with teachers. So, one of our goals is to continue building a community of coaches each month during these monthly webinars. We want to get to know you as we go by throughout these webinars. And we thought we'd start, again, by sharing a bit about ourselves.

This month, as I was reflecting on rules and expectations, I thought I'd introduce you to the member of my family who seems to disregard all of our household rules. This is our 12-year-old family cat who you see on the left. Here you see she's made a nest out of a few cozy but preferably off-limits baby items. So, Jessica, if you have any tips for teaching rules to cats, maybe we can talk after the webinar. But I do want to introduce you to Jessica Hardy, who recently received her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University, where she's currently a research associate. She does research related to social emotional development and early math skills, and she's also a former early childhood teacher. So, welcome, Jessica!

Jessica Hardy: Thank you, Kathleen. Thank you all so much for joining us today. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to talking with you all. And as Kathleen mentioned, I'm a former early childhood teacher, and I was actually a Head Start teacher for a while, so I'm excited to talk with those of you who are -- with all of you who are in the Head Start community. And, Kathleen, unfortunately my area of expertise does not extend to cats. So you're on your own there.

Kathleen: Oh, too bad.

Jessica: I know. So, I have -- there's a picture up on your screen of my dog, and she's my 15-year-old old lady, and she does her best with following the rules, but when you're 15 years old, sometimes it can be a challenge. So, we're going to get started. The objectives for this Coaching Corner are to discuss the kinds of supports teachers might need around teaching classroom rules, to explore examples of practice-based coaching in action and really practice using coaching strategies, and to begin building a community of coaches.

So, you're likely familiar with the practice-based coaching model. This is the framework that we're going to use to think about supporting teachers around classroom rules, and we'll walk through each step of the practice-based coaching framework. And you'll leave the webinar with tools and resources you can use in your work with teachers. And I did want to kind of make another plug for that sign-in. We're going to be giving you these resources, and we're going to share them in a follow-up document. So, if you sign in to the webinar, then you'll get access to all of the resources that we have to share around coaching teachers around classroom rules.

So, we're going to start by looking at two teachers' views on rules. So, Cybil is the first teacher, and Cybil says, "We have four expectations in our center that I talk about in my classroom. They are 'be safe,' 'be respectful,' 'be cooperative,' and 'be an active learner.' Sometimes, I wonder how much my kids understand, though..." And we have Alondra.

Kathleen: And she says, "I am always having to remind children of the rules. For example, at circle, I tell them over and over again to sit crisscross and to raise their hands when they want to talk. I'm getting tired of having to always remind them."

Jessica: So we want to get your input about how often you hear a teacher express an opinion similar to Cybil's and how often you hear a teacher express an opinion similar to Alondra's. So we should have a chat box that's going to pop up where you can -- you can vote in the poll. And we'll give you just a minute to do that. Thank you all for participating in the poll.

Kathleen: Take about five more seconds to log in your vote. All right, Jessica, so it looks like a lot of our participants today have heard Alondra's point of view, that teachers are tired of reminding kids about the rules, and that sometimes they're expressing an opinion similar to Cybil's about kids not understanding the rules. So, is that typical with your experience, Jessica?

Jessica: Yeah, that sounds about right. And I'm glad that -- that you all could share that information with us. And we're actually going to look at some tools for helping both Cybil and Alondra in just a minute. So... so we want to talk about a few guidelines for teaching classroom rules.

The first thing we want to talk about is the difference between behavior expectations and rules, because these are two things that often get confused. So, behavior expectations are broad concepts -- like be safe, be respectful, be responsible -- that apply to all children and all adults in all settings in a center. Whereas rules are used to clarify expectations for a specific setting. And rules are things like use walking feet, use gentle touches. And they usually relate to the behavior expectation.

When you're thinking about creating classroom rules, there are a few guidelines you should keep in mind. Rules should be few in number, so there should be no more than five. They should be positively stated using child-friendly language. We want to always tell children what to do instead of what not to do.

They should be observable and measurable. They should be posted with visuals at children's eye level. They should be referred to throughout the day. They should be actively taught to children. And they should be reinforced throughout the day. And we're going to look at some examples of some classroom rules. So, here's one example. The teacher has -- in this classroom, the teacher has four rules: We use walking feet; we use listening ears; we use nice words; we use gentle touches. And you can see that she's followed the guidelines mentioned on the previous slide about establishing classroom rules.

Kathleen: Jessica, I notice that there's drawing on all of these rules. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Jessica: Yeah, sure, I'm so glad you noticed that. One of the practices that we recommend with teachers is that they really involve children in helping develop the rules, and there are various ways that teachers can do this. So, they could have class discussions where children come up with the rules themselves. And another way they can do that is by demonstr-- physically demonstrating the rules and having the teacher take a picture, include it on the rules poster. And another way they can do that is by helping children decorate, allowing children to decorate the rules visuals.

So, in this classroom, the teacher wanted the children to feel ownership of the classroom rules and to see that they had input in developing the classroom rules. So, the way the teacher did that was by having the children illustrate the rules to the best of their ability before they were posted, before they were laminated and posted in the classroom.

Here are a couple more examples. In the picture, the pink poster on the left, the teacher has a few different classroom rules, but, again, she's illustrating them; she's posting them so the children can see them; she's keeping them simple and observable and measurable. And on the right, in the yellow poster, again you're seeing the similar types of rules: We use our listening ears; we use our quiet voices and kind words -- so similar types of language across all of these examples. And that's because the rules that we have in mind for young children are typically not that different from teacher to teacher.

Kathleen: Jessica, on this one I'm noticing that the pink poster looks like it has 9 or ten different rules. There's lots of different ways of wording on that poster. Can you explain why a teacher might decide that or what the context is for that?

Jessica: Yeah, that's a great observation, Kathleen. And what this teacher on the left has done is she has connected her classroom rules to her schoolwide behavior expectations. So if you remember, behavior expectations are those broader concepts that apply to all children, all adults in settings in a school. So the behavior expectations at this center are be safe, be kind, and be a team member. And the teacher has said, "Well, this is what being safe means in our classroom. It means use listening ears and use walking feet. This is what be kind means." So she's making the real visible connection between the classroom rules and the schoolwide behavior expectations.

Kathleen: What a great strategy to really help teachers -- or help children understand exactly what those kind of broad ideas mean. That's great. Thanks for sharing that.

Jessica: Exactly. Sure. So once you know the practices teachers are likely to need support around, you can begin supporting the teachers through the process of setting goals and developing plans for achieving these goals. And the first step of this is to have a clear understanding of the teacher's strengths, needs, and interests. And this is known as a needs assessment. You can use needs assessment tools for any set of teaching practices, but today we're going to explore rules that can help you support teachers around creating classroom rules.

The tools we'll talk about today can be used by a coach, but they can also be used as a self-reflection tool for the teacher. So here is one example of a needs assessment tool that is readily available to you all. So this is the tools for supervisors around creating classroom rules. And it can be found in the 15-minute in-service suite around classroom rules. And a link to that will be on the follow-up document you'll receive after this webinar, so don't worry about trying to find it.

So we're going to look at a needs assessment for Cybil. So if you'll remember, Cybil said, "We have four expectations in our center that I talk about in my classroom. They are 'be safe,' 'be respectful,' 'be cooperative,' and 'be an active learner.' Sometimes, I wonder how much my kids understand, though..." So, what we're going to do is take a look at a video of Cybil. And as you're watching this video, we want you to think of -- to act as if you're observing her for the purposes of a needs assessment. So, think about in the video what she's doing well, what she could do differently.

[Video begins]

Cybil: -- applesauce, hands in their lap, ready to be an active learner. Let's look at our school rules. I will - our essential agreements. I will commit to number one: Being safe. Number two: Being respectful. Number three: Being cooperative. And number four: Being an active learner. So, when you're sitting crisscross applesauce and your hands are in your lap and you're sitting on your bottom, you are being an active learner, and you are following the essential agreements. Good morning, boys and girls. Children: Good morning, Mrs. Edsel.

[Video ends]

Kathleen: All right.

Well, thank you for contributing your chat into the chat boxes. So as I was reading what you posted, I noticed, Jessica, that a lot of folks noticed the same things about what Cybil is doing really well. That she has rules or expectations posted. That they link to the school, kind of bigger ideas. That she had a calm voice and a warm smiling aspect with the kids. And that she really had the kids' attention from the beginning, as part of that greeting at group time. But a lot of folks also noticed some similar things about engagement in the group time.

That the rule poster, as we can see in the post -- in the comments -- is up really high. So, it's not necessarily at the kids' eye level. And so maybe the kids don't understand. So, some higher level language in those expectations as well.

Jessica: Those are all great observations. Thank you all. We're going to look at the needs assessment that Cybil's coach actually did. And Cybil's coach noted some of the same things that you all did. So, I'll give you a moment to scan the needs assessment. So, as you can see, Cybil has many good practices happening. And her coach wants to open the needs assessment conversation by acknowledging that. What we're going to do next is take a peek at what that needs assessment conversation might sound like.

Kathleen: So I'll be Janelle. "You've posted expectations with visuals, which is awesome! I also noticed you review the behavior expectations at large group, which is a really important strategy."

Jessica: "Yes, I try to review them at every large group time. The children usually say them with me, though sometimes they need some prompting."

Kathleen: "You know, you're being really consistent with the center-wide expectations. And I wonder if you can make them more concrete for your children by coming up with specific rules for the classroom and other areas of the center."

Jessica: "Well, my center director really wants us to all use the same expectations."

Kathleen: And, "You can still use your center-wide expectations. You just might want to think about how to make them specific, so kids understand them clearly. For example, do you think they know what it means to be cooperative?"

Jessica: "Hmm, maybe not. They definitely struggle with taking turns and sharing materials, especially in home living and art centers." So, Janelle and Cybil continue to talk about Cybil's use of behavior expectations. Cybil realizes that she needs to use more child-friendly language. She also needs to post her visual of the rules so it is at children's eye level, which is something that a lot of you noticed. She's going to continue to review the rules at large group times and provide reminders throughout the day, which are practices she's already using consistently.

So, what might be the focus of Cybil's action plan? Well, I'll show you what Cybil's action plan actually looks like. So, her overall goal is to link the center-wide expectations to concrete, observable, measurable rules for various settings. And the specific steps she's going to use to complete these goals are make an expectation rules matrix to clarify what expectations mean for different settings. She's going to create rules posters for the classroom and the playground. She's going to introduce the rules for each setting, connecting them to the center-wide expectations.

So, you see, even though we want her to be more specific about what her rules actually mean using child-friendly language like many of you suggested, we also want her to make that connection to the schoolwide or center-wide behavior expectations. She's going to review the rules at morning meeting and before going on the playground and remind children of the rules throughout the day. And she's going to use the stop/go teaching materials, which are little scenarios printed on cards, and the children each have a stop sign and a go sign, so they can indicate whether each scenario, the behavior exhibited in each scenario is a stop behavior or a go behavior.

So, after developing this action plan, Janelle and Cybil are going to cycle through the PBC model with focused observations and reflection and feedback. But we're actually going to turn now to a different teacher, Alondra, who we met at the beginning of this presentation. And if you remember Alondra, she said: Kathleen: "I am always having to remind children of the rules. For example, at circle, I tell them over and over again to sit crisscross and raise their hands when they want to talk. I'm getting tired of having to always remind them."

Jessica: So, if I remember correctly, this is something that you all experience a lot of teachers saying. So, this is a pretty common phenomenon. And when Alondra's coach did the needs assessment with Alondra, she found that although Alondra feels like she has expectations in her classroom, she has not formally established them as rules and explicitly taught them to children. Her coach cannot check off any items on her needs assessment.

Kathleen: Jessica, I think this brings up such an important point, right? If we asked Alondra what her rules are, she might be able to name off a few, like sit crisscross, raise your hands, and they might even be few in number, positively stated, but if we ask the children what the rules are, I bet they would have a hard time answering. They hear a variety of individual directions from Alondra, but not a consistent message about how to be successful at circle time, for example. So, it seems like Alondra's probably spending a lot of energy reacting to problems, and teaching the rules might actually help free up more time for her to have enjoyable interactions with the kids.

Jessica: I think that's absolutely right, Kathleen. And with children we have to remember that just because we have an idea in our head doesn't mean that the children understand it. And we need to be explicit and crystal clear about helping them understand what the expectations and rules are for specific settings. So let's look at Alondra's action plan. Alondra and her coach came up with this together. And it's a good beginning action plan for getting rules established in the classroom, assuming the teacher does not have rules in place already.

So, her action plan goal is to develop, post, and teach classroom rules and to make rules come alive in her classroom. To kind of get at that issue that Kathleen was bringing up, that sometimes the children don't understand what the expectations are. The specific steps of her action plan are to have a discussion with children where she gets their input on what the rules should be, to create and post visuals, to review the rules during large group time, and to talk about the rules throughout the day, providing rule reminders or praising children for following the rules.

So, now let's imagine you've been working with Alondra, and she's on steps 3 and 4 of the action plan. You've agreed to do a focused observation and to take anecdotal notes on how she reviewed the rules. You've also agreed to tally how many rule reminders she provides and how many praise statements related to the rules she provides. So, we're going to watch a video, and we want you to actually take some data as you watch the video on the number of rule reminders, the number of rule-related praise statements that Alondra shares.

[Video begins]

Alondra: Who remembers what we learned yesterday? Before we start, I'm going to tell you something. We have rules in the classroom, okay? Make sure when we do group meeting, you keep remembering the class rules, okay? Because that's very important. I like to hear you, and I want you to hear me, okay? So tell me, Miracle.

Miracle: Winter.

Alondra: We're learning -- we're exploring wintertime. Yeah. Who wants to tell me something about wintertime? Can you sit on your spot so I can hear you better? Adam, tell me.

Adam: About snow.

Alondra: We're learning about snow. What else?

Child: We're learning about snow because it's wintertime. You need hats, scarves, and gloves and jackets and sweaters.

Alondra: That's a kind of -- that's the kind of outfit that we wear during the wintertime. Thank you, Sivray. Yes, Cordel?

Cordel: You have to be a snowball and play a snowball fight.

Alondra: You can play snowball fights, yes. What else? Who remembers something else?

Yes, Sayid.

Sayid: Snowflakes.

Alondra: Snowflakes. Where are they falling from? Do you remember, we talked about it?

Girl: On the ground.

Alondra: They're coming -- they're falling down all the way.

Girl: To the ground.

Alondra: But where are they coming from?

Girl: From the sky.

Alondra: Why?

Girl: Because it's snow.

Alondra: Because it's snow. But does anyone know where they're coming at from the sky?

[Childrens' overlapping responses] Whoa, we're all talking at the same time.

Boy: Because it's getting spring.

Alondra: Because it's getting spring? But springtime, the weather is different. I thought we were learning about winter. This is about wintertime. Let me hear my friend, Sivray. She's raising her quiet hand, okay? Yes, Sivray?

Sivray: It's falling from the sky. When the clouds fall down, snow comes down.

[Video ends]

Kathleen: All right. Well, Jessica, it looks like in general, focused on more rule reminders and I saw praise statements. So, somewhere in the neighborhood of four to six rule reminders, depending on how we defined it, how each of us defined it individually. And then about one or two praise statements in that video.

Jessica: Yeah, I think that's just about right. So, let's take a second and think about what you might say to Alondra -- after watching this, after doing this observation of her to give her -- to encourage her to reflect on her own use of practices.

Kathleen: All right. Well, so, Jessica, I'm seeing some consistency here in that many of the comments that folks chatted in involve a question mark to encourage reflection, right? So, "How do you think it went today?" "How do you define praise?" "Do you think the children understood and followed circle time rules?" So those kinds of examples.

Jessica: That sounds perfect. And that's -- what we want to do when we're encouraging reflection is often to use these kind of open-ended questions to get the teacher to think about her own use of practices. And the example that we came up with is pretty simple and broad. "How do you think reviewing the rules and reminding children about them went today?"

So just kind of get Alondra thinking about how it went that day, reviewing the rules, to get her perspective before going into the supportive feedback piece. And supportive feedback is feedback that you give to a teacher about things that she's doing well, so things that she should keep on doing. So we'd like for you to share with us some ideas for the types of supportive feedback you could give Alondra.

Kathleen: All right, so, Jessica, it looks like folks noticed a kind of range of things that Alondra was doing really well and would want to give her feedback on. The way she modeled the rules or the expectations for the kids, the way she used multiple ways to give the kids information and give the kids praise.

So she's -- nonverbal directions -- covering her mouth for quiet mouths -- and used the visuals and used verbal praise. She combined praise and a rules reminder. And that she was really consistent with the kids.

Jessica: That's great. Those are all really specific, important pieces of feedback to give Alondra. So what Alondra's coach shared with her was, "I saw you provide rule reminders and praise for following the rules a couple times in circle. Those are great strategies for helping children remember to follow the rules." So after giving -- after giving supportive feedback, it's also important to give constructive feedback. So, constructive feedback is something that the teacher should do differently or should do additionally in order to improve her practices. And we'd like for you to take, again, a few minutes to share some ideas for constructive feedback you could share with Alondra. Things she could do differently or things she could do additionally to improve her practices.

Kathleen: All right, well, thank you all again for contributing your comments. Everyone gave really thoughtful responses for how Alondra might be able to build her skill around rules or expectations. So, Jessica, I see again quite a few reflective questions to help Alondra think a little bit differently or think a little deeply about her practice. Folks noticing ways maybe the children could be more involved. So asking Alondra to think about that, think about ways to help the children understand the rules a little bit better. Or maybe even the ways that Alondra presents the rules. So up front at the very beginning, helping Alondra think about the structure of her activities. So those were just a few of the comments that people had in their responses.

Jessica: Yeah, it was really interesting to read people's ideas. There are a lot of different directions Alondra's coach could take this, the constructive feedback. And what she actually did, what she actually said was, "You reviewed the rule poster at the beginning of circle, which was great. Next time, I would suggest quickly reviewing each rule and showing children the visual so it is clear to them before beginning the activity." So I think some of you had suggestions similar to that. So again Alondra and her coach are going to go through the practice-based coaching cycle, working on this practice until Alondra is able to implement it really fluently.

Kathleen: What great practice that was to think about what supportive feedback I would actually say to Alondra, what constructive feedback I would actually say. So thanks for structuring those prompts for us. That's really helpful practice.

Jessica: Thanks. And I'm so glad that it was helpful, and I was really excited to see all of everyone's great ideas. And I also really appreciated how everyone really seemed to value the idea of helping Alondra be reflective, because that's such an important strategy for teachers to be able to have, is to reflect on their own practice. And that's one of the really important aspects of coaching that coaches can help teachers do. Okay. So we're going to quickly go over -- do a little rules recap. So just to remind you, when you're working with teachers, rules should be relevant to specific settings. They should be few in number. They should be stated positively. They should be observable and measurable. And they should be posted with visuals at eye level.

Kathleen: So, Jessica, I've worked with teachers who are a little different from Alondra and Cybil. So they had rules in place that weren't appropriate, like don't hit. Maybe they even had the kids help develop the rules, and that's what they agreed on as a class. What advice do you have for coaching in those situations? Or also the teacher who talks about the rules but uses them to focus on negative behaviors, like, "You're not being respectful," or, "You're not being safe"? Do you have any guidance for coaches who might be in that situation?

Jessica: Sure. And I think those are both really common things. So I would start by acknowledging that the teacher used a really great strategy when she involved children helping develop the rules. So that's a really impressive, sophisticated practice. I would also tell her that when children come up with the rules, they're often negative. The teacher -- but the teacher can easily shape the child's contribution into a rule that's more appropriate. For example, if a child says a rule should be don't hit, the teacher could say, "That's right. We shouldn't hit. We should use gentle touches with our friends. Let's make that our rule, use gentle touches."

For the teacher who's using rules to reprimand children, I would acknowledge that she's doing a good job embedding talk about the rules into her teaching, but I would also give her feedback that we should always try to keep the talk about the rules positive, and we should focus on acknowledging children for following the rules. When children don't follow the rules, we can still provide them with reminders. We would just frame them differently. "Remember, we are safe in the classroom and we use our walking feet."

It's also really important to, when we're helping coach teachers around the rules, it's important to give them strategies for remembering the complexity of teaching about the rules and remembering the importance of engaging and teaching about the rules throughout the day. So this is actually a visual that I used with a teacher I coached to help her remember some of the different practices related to teaching children the rules. So to remember to review the rules at large group, to remind individual and groups of children of the rules before problem behavior can happen, to redirect children to the rules when problem behavior occurs, to acknowledge and praise rule-related behavior, and then finally encourage kids to think critically about the rules.

So just like visuals work for children and are important for children, they're also important for teachers. So this teacher that I worked with actually posted this visual in her classroom so she could remember the things that she was supposed to do throughout the day.

So we also wanted to share with you some resources related to the rules. And the first one is the 15-minute in-service suite that I mentioned earlier. There is an in-service suite specifically on creating classroom rules. And the links for all of these resources that we're going to talk about are going to be in the follow-up document that you'll get emailed. In addition to the NCQTL 15-minute in-service suite, the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning also has a training module.

They have several training modules for preschools, and the first one, around building relationships and creating supportive environments, has a section on how to establish behavior expectations and rules. And they have some great videos with examples of teachers teaching the classroom rules, talking with children about what the rules mean. So I highly recommend you check out this module if only to see those two really great videos.

The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning also has a What Works brief around acknowledging children's positive behavior, which you can see is really related to helping encourage children to follow the rules. The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention has a resource called Teaching Tools for Young Children, and as part of this resource, they actually have some visuals that you can -- that are in PowerPoint format that you can download and change if you need to and print them. And this resource has the directions written right in it, so it's real easy to use. And again, this link will be in the follow-up document.

Kathleen: And I can just chime in that I use this tool all the time in my coaching. It's so fabulous for having the materials right at your fingertips. So that was a great one, Jessica.

Jessica: Great. There's also some resources related to visuals, specifically around visuals in the classroom in general and visuals specifically for the rules. So the Head Start Center for Inclusion has a Teacher Tools section on their website where they actually have illustrations of classroom expectations. So if you don't know where to start to give teachers some visuals for creating classroom rules, for illustrating classroom rules, this is a great place to start.

There's also a couple of websites that aren't affiliated with Head Start that have resources for visuals. So there's one called ConnectABILITY that can help you develop visuals for a variety of things, including the rules. And then there's something called PictureSET, which you can also use to develop visuals for the rules.

Kathleen: Jessica, this was wonderful. Thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing information to support coaching around preschool classroom rules and expectations. Such an important topic, and something that really has a big impact on classrooms. So I think that we're all really grateful to you for sharing all of this information. As we wrap up our time together today, we'd like to invite all of you to join us for our next Coaching Corner webinar, which is scheduled for December 18th. It'll be at 2:00 p.m. Eastern time, 11:00 a.m. Pacific. And the topic is going to be mindfulness and stress reduction and organizational strategies for coaches. So during this busy, hectic time of year, we'll take a little time together. We'll be joined -- myself and Kristin Tenney-Blackwell will be together to talk with you about strategies that you can use to stay organized and stress less over the holidays. Not the holidays, over this busy time of year in general. So everyone have a great day, a great rest of the week, and thank you so much for joining us and for your participation today.

Jessica: Thank you, everyone. It was a real pleasure.