



Practice-Based Coaching: Components and Implementation Strategies

Handout: Tips for Coaches: Reflection and Feedback

Objective

The purpose of this handout is to provide suggestions for successful coaching conversations.

1. **Embed adult learning principles into coaching.**

During the coaching session give examples of when and how the educator demonstrates the targeted goal. This will help the educator connect it to existing practices. Encourage the educator to try new strategies as soon as possible after they are introduced. Be aware of how much you are talking during the coaching session. Encourage educators to discuss and reflect on their own practice. Remember, an effective coach is a *guide on the side*, not the *sage on the stage*.

2. **Share successes: Build on the positive.**

Notice what is going well, comment on it, and then build on it. Using a strengths-based approach to coaching prevents educators from feeling their coach is going to “fix” them. The goal is to work together to become more fluent in existing practices and learn new skills.

3. **Be prepared: Keep some helpful phrases handy.**

Having a few key phrases handy can really help when you are not sure what to say next. Some favorites include:

- *Let's just give it a try.*
- *Tell me more about....*
- *What can we do to make this practice easier to implement?*
- *How do you think circle time went today?*
- *What have you tried so far?*
- *I observed....*

4. **Anchor it: Use data to anchor your observation and feedback.**

Using data is a way to be objective when providing feedback. You can use assessments that your program is already using, such as the ECERS, ITERS, or CLASS. Or, consider collecting data on specific behaviors, such as child engagement or instances of challenging behaviors. Having something to base your coaching on gives you focus and makes feedback more objective and meaningful.

5. **Provide supports: Give materials and ideas to support educator needs.**

Sometimes offering concrete material such as a rules poster or a visual schedule at a coaching meeting helps jumpstart getting a good strategy in place. Be sure to model what to do with the material you provide—or it may end up in a drawer instead of being used. Avoid providing too many materials or new ideas at one time, so the educator can focus on what is most important to implement.

6. **Connect with a community of coaches: Share successes and challenges.**

Network with other coaches to get support along the way. Being able to share “coaching highs” and work through “coaching lows” is crucial. Whether it is bouncing ideas off of each other, sharing materials, or just helping work through an issue, coaches can learn a lot from each other!