

STANDARDS IN ACTION

IMPLEMENTING A RESEARCH-BASED,
COORDINATED COACHING STRATEGY, 1302.92(c)(1)-(5)



THE CURRENT SITUATION

Growing Wonders Early Head Start/Head Start Program has been using the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) model since the Head Start Program Performance Standard (HSPPS) required them to implement a research-based coordinated coaching strategy in August 2017 [1302.92(c)(1)-(5)]. Roberta, director of the program, will give an overview of the program's coordinated coaching strategy at the next board of directors meeting. To prepare for the presentation, she schedules time with her implementation team (representatives from the teaching staff, content managers who handle professional development, key managers and fiscal program leaders, and representatives from the policy council) to review where they started when they began their coaching strategy and where they are now.

Before the meeting starts, Roberta reflects on how she felt at the beginning. She was excited and a little bit nervous about introducing coaching into her program. Though she knew coaching is a highly effective form of professional development, she was not sure how to make it all work. Getting started, she had a lot of questions and some great ideas. She smiles as she thinks about how far the program has come! Roberta and the team members discuss their journey selecting and implementing PBC. They list key steps along the way and questions that helped them make decisions. This discussion informs the narrative that Roberta shares with the board members.

THE SOLUTION: FIRST THINGS FIRST

The journey started with exploration. The team reviewed data on the various professional development education staff had received. The results from training evaluations and follow-up classroom observations that supervisors had conducted were good, but the team knew they could be better. They were excited to start coaching. But they also wanted to find an approach that would likely strengthen staff's teaching practices, helping children make progress toward the program's school readiness goals. They noted that although many types of support are often called "coaching," coaching that does not follow a research-based model is much less likely to be effective. With that in mind, they identified the following questions to answer:

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- What do the HSPPS say about implementing a coordinated coaching strategy?
- Who should be involved in choosing the model?
- What criteria (in addition to the HSPPS) will help the team decide which model to choose?
- How will they ensure that the model they choose is research-based?
- How will the budget impact implementation?
- What regional and national center training and technical assistance is available to help staff prepare and implement the model?

After answering their questions and reviewing various models, they chose PBC because it is

- research-based;
- attuned with the program's training and professional development design; and
- well-suited for their program's budget.

They were pleased to find that PBC has resources available, such as those posted on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website. They planned to take part in PBC trainings and support provided by their regional training and technical assistance system.

Since this was a new approach for this program, the team decided to start small with teachers in one center who would benefit most from intensive coaching. They planned to use classroom observations and a strengths/interests/needs assessment survey to identify staff who would benefit most from intensive coaching. Staff could choose to participate in coaching or were chosen to participate if they

- were relatively new to their position;
- showed interest in fine-tuning skills or learning new teaching practices;
- needed help fine-tuning or implementing new practices; or
- had concerns about child outcomes based on data collected.

The team also considered other approaches to professional development for staff who were not going to receive intensive coaching.

Next, the team considered some questions about PBC and its effectiveness in their program. For example:

- Will PBC align with program goals, including school readiness goals? How will PBC address these goals?
- How will we ensure program and staff buy in to the new coaching system?
- Who will be responsible for coaching? What characteristics and skills should a coach have?
- Will this be a new position or will existing staff who have the required skills and education degree take on coaching responsibilities?
- How will our budget affect these decisions?
- Who will supervise the coach? How will the coach communicate with teachers' supervisors?

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- How will the program ensure the coach has adequate training and experience in adult learning and using data to inform decision making?
- How will the program identify strengths and areas where coaches and teachers need support?
- What PBC delivery methods will coaches use (e.g., expert, group, distance, in-person)? How often will PBC cycles occur for each delivery method?

Before hiring the coach for the first center, the team needed to create a system to collect data about the effectiveness of the coaching. They considered the following questions through this process:

- How will the program ensure that the coaching model is implemented with fidelity?
- How will the program gather feedback from coaches and teachers about the effectiveness of coaching? What data will be collected, who will collect it, and when? How will the data be analyzed? Who will analyze it? How will it be shared and with whom?

The team also realized they would need to revise program policies to make sure they align with PBC. They recognized that policies would need to support regularly scheduled opportunities for coaches and teachers to meet to prepare, develop goals and action plans, conduct focused observations, and time for reflection and feedback. Policies would also have to allow time and classroom coverage for preparation, shared goals and action planning, and reflection and feedback.

Next, the team identified the additional steps they needed to take:

- Develop a classroom coverage plan so that teachers and coaches could meet during a week that a focused observation occurs.
- Use data they already collect from *CLASS*® Pre-K observations, infant/toddler and preschool curriculum implementation fidelity tool checklists, and career development plans to make decisions about which staff would benefit the most from intensive coaching, beyond the one center.

THE SOLUTION: NEXT STEPS

The implementation team used PBC materials and resources to clearly define the practice and identify data that helped them track the fidelity and effectiveness of PBC implementation. The team worked with their regional technical assistance provider and requested support on PBC. The team also agreed on program-wide communication processes and schedules to gather ongoing feedback to use in next steps.

With a plan in place, the program implemented their research-based, coordinated coaching strategy, knowing there would be lessons learned along the way. The team was hopeful that this approach to professional development would result in higher quality, effective teaching practices.



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THE SOLUTION: THE STORY CONTINUES

Roberta asks the team what they would like her to share about their progress in implementing the coaching strategy. Team members suggest the following:

- Implementation takes time, effort, patience, open and regular communication, and a willingness to course-correct as needed. Having a plan was extremely important—but so was flexibility.
- Using PBC resources on ECLKC, participating in PBC trainings, and getting support from regional training and technical assistance providers helped us implement our coordinated coaching strategy.
- It was a good idea to start small with one center and one coach using the in-person delivery method. We learned a lot about what it takes to provide intensive coaching to teachers and about the skills and support a coach needs to do the work. We were fortunate to have a staff member with the appropriate credentials and experience become the first coach. Based on that experience, we hired a second coach from outside our program and began providing intensive coaching in our other two centers. We are thinking about adding a third coach to reduce the coaches' caseloads.
- It is essential to provide ongoing support to the coaches. The coaches told us they feel they were more effective in their role because of this support.
- Based on surveys we gave the teachers who received intensive coaching, we know they had positive experiences working with their coaches. We have identified positive changes in their teaching practices using *CLASS*® Pre-K observations and our infant/toddler and preschool curriculum fidelity checklists.
- When our coaching strategy was aligned with our program goals for professional development and school readiness, we could stay focused on our efforts to strengthen effective teaching practices and the effects they had on children's development and learning.

Now Roberta has the information she needs to share their coordinated coaching strategy journey with the board members. She and the implementation team feel good about where they have been and where they are going as they continue to support effective teaching practices through coaching.

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SELECTED RESOURCES:

Practice-Based Coaching Resources

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/practice-based-coaching-pbc>

- Practice-based coaching videos
- Program Leader's Guide to Practice-Based Coaching (under "Guides")
- Coaching Corner Series
- Top 10 Tips for Coaches (under "Additional Resources for Coaches")
- Coaching Companion

A Tour of MyPeers Coaching Community

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/tour-mypeers-practice-based-coaching-community>

MyPeers: A Collaborative Platform for the Early Care and Education Community

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community>

- Practice-Based Coaching Community
- Coaching the Home Visitor

Content that may be used to support intensive coaching

- ELOF Effective Practice Guides
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/introduction>
- 15-minute In-service Suites
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/15-minute-service-suites>



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