

Culture of Coaching

Joyce Escorcía: Hello, everyone. I'm Joyce Escorcía with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or the NCECDTL. Thank you so much for joining us today for the latest installment of the Coaching Corner Webinar Series.

I'm joined today by Mary Louise Hemmeter from Vanderbilt University, and we'll get to hear from her in just a few minutes. So, we're excited to have this time together and to talk to her about establishing a culture of coaching in your program. Just a reminder that our webinar series, that it occurs every other month, and we invite you to go ahead and mark your calendar for the next episode that's going to be on March 20, 2020, at 3 p.m. Eastern.

And this is a reminder that really, the goal of every webinar is to support you as a coach by exploring different topics that are relevant to you in your role, really digging in, identifying resources and strategies that could be helpful to you, and then having a chance to put things into practice that we talk about, whether it's through a scenario, through group chat, through videos, through opportunities to ask questions, just finding different ways to connect with each other.

And before we begin, I just kind of want to go over some information regarding the webinar itself for those of you that maybe aren't familiar—as familiar with the platform. So, we'll be using some of the features of the ON24 platform for this webinar to help us interact. So, at the bottom of your screen, you're going to notice some windows, and so if you have any questions during the webcast, you can submit them through that purple Q&A widget. We're going to try to answer those during the webcast, and just please know that we do capture all the questions even if for some reason we didn't get to answer your specific question. If you have any tech questions, please put those there, as well. We have someone that is in the background handling that for us today.

And then a copy of today's slide deck, and other resources, are available in the resource list, so that's going to be that green widget that you see, and so we really encourage you to download those and print those out or keep those digitally because they could be really helpful for our time together today and for you moving forward. And so, throughout this session, we're going to just have opportunities to kind of talk to each other and just explore what it is to establish a culture of coaching in your program. And so, throughout the session, we may use those different widgets at the bottom.

You can also find additional answers to some of your common questions in the yellow help widget at the bottom of the screen. And so, then you can also find the closed captioning widgets in both English and in Spanish. So, just know that all the widgets are resizable and movable, so you can kind of customize your own viewing experience. So, just click on the widget, move it, you know, by dragging it around screen and then dropping it where you want it, and then you can resize by grabbing on those arrows on the corners.

So, finally, if you have any trouble with viewing this webinar, try refreshing your browser by pressing F5 and also be sure to log off of your VPN or exit out of any other browsers. Sometimes that can also help if you experience any lag.

So, let's get started here. We are so excited to have Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter again with us today. Welcome, Mary Louise. Again, thank you for taking the time out to talk with us and our community about coaching today. If you wouldn't mind, for those in the community that maybe aren't as familiar with you and some of your work, can you just share some of your background and experiences and kind of what brings you to our conversation today?

Mary Louise Hemmeter: Sure. Thank you, Joyce. Yeah, so I'm Mary Louise Hemmeter, and I teach at Vanderbilt University and I was one of the developers of the practice-based coaching model and have done a lot of research on coaching because I've always been interested in what are effective practices with children, but also how do we support adults to implement those practices, and so that's what's brought me to the topic of coaching, and I'm really pleased to be here today to talk about this topic because I think this topic could make or break—could make a coaching model more successful in a program than if you don't start with thinking about how to create a culture.

Joyce: Yes, definitely. Thank you for that. Thank you for all of your work and for kind of letting us pick your brain and hear from all of the experiences and things that you've had. So, we're going to go ahead and kind of get going through our PowerPoint deck here and so just a touch here to kind of let you know what we're going to be talking about today and what we really want you to leave with. We want you to just kind of be able to take some time and explore the importance of building a culture of coaching within your program and then be able to walk away and think about, what does it mean to really kind of talk and discuss how to promote that culture of coaching, and then also identify resources and strategies that support building that culture of coaching in your program.

And again, you have resources in your resource list there on the ON24 platform, as well, that you can download from today. And so, when we think about a culture of coaching, it's really built in kind of two ways, and so one is for programs to be thoughtful about their policies, planning and communication regarding coaching, engaging in appropriate management systems, and communicating about coaching, setting up those systems to implement coaching and engaging stakeholders in the process. It's really important to building the culture of coaching.

So, for our time together today, we're going to focus in on building a culture of coaching at that coach and coachee level, but just know that for more information about building that culture of coaching at the program level, you can find information and resources in our newly updated program leader's guide, PBC Program Leaders' Guide, which can be found in the resource widget for this webinar.

And some of you may be familiar with the PBC Program Leaders' Guide, but it has been recently updated, so it's kind of hot off the press and definitely something that could assist you and your program and implementing coaching. And so, one strategy that we can find to support coaches to use is to be thoughtful about how they introduce coaching and kind of where they begin,

starting with those who self-identify a need for coaching and are ready to engage in coaching can really be a good strategy to demonstrate successes quickly and, you know, with those who are ready and enthusiastic about coaching, and so that's definitely one way to kind of approach it. For example, we've worked with programs that have, you know, chosen to build their coaching by first including coachees for intensive coaching that have a need and, you know, have expressed an interest and want to participate in coaching.

And then that program would kind of provide coaching to kind of that volunteer group that's been identified and then kind of work with them to promote coaching within their program as far as giving them opportunities to share, you know, what has been the benefit for them about coaching. So, that's just kind of one idea to think about when establishing that culture of coaching and how to communicate that out to others and other stakeholders in your program. Other ways that you may ensure that you're building that culture of coaching is to consider how your coachees and coaches can be involved in coaching without taking away from time or other important components of their job because we know time is one kind of factor that comes up when we talk about coaching, you know, things like, you know, arranging schedules, you know, in a way that they're convenient for coaching to happen, thinking about substitutes for classroom coverage, those kind of things.

And then knowing that the coach can also promote that culture of coaching by entering into that coaching partnership with really that posture of support and collaboration. So, again, it's really important that all involved see coaching as a part of professional development that supports staff to continue to grow in their skills and help children and families develop and learn.

So, we're going to dig in and talk about a lot of different kind of examples and strategies today. We connected with our MyPeers community, and we asked you there, "What do you think is an essential ingredient for creating a culture of coaching in your program?" And these are just some of the words that we've heard from you. You know, we've heard things like trust come up quite a bit, that it's a reflective process, that it's multifaceted, that it's trusting. It's positive, that it's nonjudgmental, so those were just kind of some of the kind of initial ingredients that our community felt was essential in establishing that culture of coaching. And we know that kind of in order to promote that culture of coaching, that it's really important to understand what that means. And so, ML, how would you define that culture of coaching if someone were to ask you, "What is the culture of coaching?"

Mary Louise: Well, I would say that's a complicated answer, but I'll give it my best shot. So, I think that one of the things that we have to do within programs is to create a culture where people want to be coached, and I think that a lot of times we have done coaching as a way to address people who aren't doing well around a certain set of practices, and then it feels a little punitive, but if we reframe coaching as something that people—everybody needs. Everybody needs coaching to get better, and some people need more coaching about how to teacher-lead, literacy skills, and some people need more coaching about how to do good math talk in the classroom and others around good home visiting practices, whatever, and that we think about ... You get the support you need to be able to do whatever we need to do well to support children's outcomes.

So, we create a culture where people see coaching as something they want, that something that's positive. I think in terms of thinking about those—those words you just flashed up, Joyce, that one of the things that sticks with me is the idea of being transparent, and I think that when we're doing coaching, we need to, as a program, be transparent about why we're doing it and what our goals are and what we expect from people so that people don't feel like coaching is something that's happening to them or that they've been picked to do it because they need more help or whatever. But that is a transparent process, and it's just seen as part of our culture for supporting teachers or home visitors or child care providers to be able to meet the needs of all children in their classroom or at their home.

Joyce: Thank you for that, ML, and I know one thing that's kind of always stuck with me is when we've been together at other events is just kind of the thinking about establishing that culture of coaching is really just that openness and also that it's a process that everyone's involved in and that it's something that you kind of stress a lot, and that's something that I kind of take away. So, thank you for sharing that. And then here, we kind of reached ... Kind of thinking about, what are some of the questions that we've seen kind of on MyPeers, and we wanted to put this out here for our coaching corner community today. And so, why are some coachees not engaged in coaching?

And so, we're going to invite everyone that's on the webinar today to use your Q&A widget just to tell us, why do you think some coachees aren't engaged in coaching? And so, again, you're going to use your Q&A widget, and we have Sarah Basler, who is helping us man our Q&A today. So, we're going to give you just a few minutes kind of there to kind of think about and respond, you know, why do you think that some coachees aren't engaged in coaching? Now again, when we kind of asked this in MyPeers, as we're waiting for things to come in, we heard things like, "Just not having enough time," or, "Having negative past coaching experience," or, "It just, you know, it feels punitive. It doesn't feel like something that is supported." And then also the other thing that we've heard was, you know, "Just not understanding the process." Some people don't really understand what, you know, what the purpose and the focus of coaching is," that that can also be seen as a barrier.

And then I see some of the responses are starting to flood in and, you know, things like insecurity or just a fear of failure and that's so true. That can be part of it, too, just that fear, fear of the unknown, being defensive about coaching or just that lack of trust in the process. Not having enough support, Blanca shared. Stephanie shares that sometimes it's just a matter of time, and then Sherri is sharing that some teachers just feel it takes away from other things that they have to do. And those are all definitely kind of real and valid points to be made there. And then coaches may not have a supportive, you know, supervisor, lack of confidence, so we've got a lot of answers just kind of coming in, and then I'm clicking on a few of these here to see.

Saying that sometimes coachees feel like they're being judged, and again, kind of one thing that kind of keeps popping up here, as well. And, ML, I just kind of want to loop you in here and say, is there anything else that you would like to add concerning why some coachees aren't engaged in coaching?

Mary Louise: Yes, first of all I want to say that the participants took away everything that I was going to say, pretty much. I would agree with most of what people said. I want to just highlight a couple of things. I think one thing is that, well, you can see some things on this screen, but one thing is that I think that sometimes coaches already think they're doing whatever it is we're coaching them on, and I know in our work, where we coach teachers around how to prevent challenging behavior, a lot of the practices we coach teachers on, they really feel like they're already doing.

So, I think that's on us as coaches to think about, how do we help them see the difference in what they're doing and what they could do, right? But I think that's one reason people aren't engaged. And then the other thing, I think, is that—and this goes along with what some of y'all said about previous experience, but I think that lots of early childhood educators have had negative experiences with what has been called coaching, so it's either been punitive, or it's been what I might call drive-by coaching where someone kind pops in, leaves you a note about things you can do, and then you don't see them again for six months. And I think that what they don't get is if people are doing coaching well it's going to be ongoing. It's going to be supportive. It's going to be about something you want help with. It's going to be consistent and predictable, all those things we talked about earlier. But I don't think that's what people's typical experience has been with coaching.

Oh, and one more thing, the other thing I was thinking about is that sometimes I think that people are reluctant or not engaged because the coach lacks credibility. So, I think a lot of times in our programs that we elevate a teacher or a home visitor to the role of coach, and so they go from being someone's colleague to being someone's coach, and it's not clear what experience or qualifications that they have that will make them a good coach, so sometimes it might be just a lack of understanding about whether the coach is qualified to be able to support them.

Joyce: Great point, ML, and so would you say that kind of communicating even before the coach goes out, say, by the program, the ed manager, the PVC implementation team, all of the above, kind of really communicating, like, who the coach is, kind of their experience and kind of what their role is, do you think that that could be helpful in kind of establishing that culture of coaching?

Mary Louise: Yeah, I mean, I think it's about how we go about doing that. So, it's about saying, you know, maybe posting a job, and people can apply if they think they have the skills that the job descriptions includes or whatever. But too often I think someone gets chosen to be that coach, and it's not transparent why that person was chosen. So, I think there are ways that we could be transparent about we need to hire a coach, so we're going to post a job description, and we need someone who has these skills versus just all of a sudden dropping it on people that they've hired a coach, and it's the teacher who teaches next door to you, and you don't know why they are the coach, versus why you weren't asked to be the coach, right, something like that.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely. I think it goes back to that point of just being transparent. So, even being ... What I'm hearing you say is even being transparent in kind of the process of selecting—when identifying that you have an aid—in selecting the coach.

Mary Louise: Yeah. I mean, and probably people are going to get tired of hearing me say the word transparent, but I'm going to say that a lot today because I think when we're transparent about things, it creates a safer space, right? People don't have to make assumptions about things because we're just clear about it on the front end.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely. Thank you for that, and that's kind of a great segue into kind of where we want to go, I'm minimizing my Q&A widget here so I can move forward, but that's a great segue kind of going into talking about the importance of having and creating that collaborative partnership and how that's being essential in kind of establishing and maintaining that culture of coaching within a program.

And so, we really know that it's a key strategy for engaging coachees and again to your point, of creating that safe space where, you know, people feel, you know, open to kind of trying and being transparent. All those things fit within that collaborative partnership, and all of those things, I think, are key in establishing that culture of coaching. And so, when we're thinking about that collaborative partnership because we know that's kind of the context in which, you know, everything related to PVC in the cycle where everything happens. ML, could you share some of your strategies to strengthen those collaborative coaching partnerships?

Mary Louise: Sure. So, I think that, you know, there's some basic big picture things. So, one is give people time to build those partnerships, right? So, if we—if we say, "Oh, coaches can see a coachee five times across the year," well, that doesn't really create time to build a partnership, right, because it's not like you do one digit, and all of a sudden, you've got a partnership. So, we have to create time for building that partnership. I think that one of the things the coach can do early on is to establish both the coach as an expert, so if you're going out to coach teachers around teaching early science, the coach might be an expert in coaching and in strategies for promoting children's early science experiences, but we also need to promote the coachee as an expert.

And so, if you're coaching a teacher in a classroom, then what the coachee, the teacher, is an expert in the classroom and in her children and in the expertise of this step in her classroom, and so if we can set up right at the beginning that we're both experts, it's just we're bringing something different to the partnership, I think that can go a long way. I think giving coachees choices. So, if you're coaching a home visitor, giving that home visitor choices about which family you come to observe them with.

They're giving a teacher choices about what action-plan goal they're going to work on first or giving a coachee a choice about whether you're going to do a live observation, or you're going to let the coachee submit a video observation, that there's all sorts of ways we can give coachees choices, and I think that will help to build the partnership. I think a lot of what is on this slide is, once again, about transparency, so I think being transparent about what data we're collecting as part of coaching and who that's going to be shared with from the very beginning.

I think ensuring coachees that what we talk about in the coaching process is confidential, that there might be—and this is again back to the management systems piece—that there might be things that the coach has to share with the PVC leadership team or with the grantee leadership team around how many sessions you're doing and those kind of things, but specific content on

how the coachee is doing would not be something you shared, right? So, it's about being transparent about that. And then I think it's also always about being positive and building on strengths so to focus on giving positive, supportive feedback based on strengths first but also not to be afraid to give coachees feedback that will help them implement practices better because that's also important, but it's important to do that in the context of a relationship or a partnership where the coachee feels comfortable receiving that kind of feedback.

Joyce: Thank you for that, and we had a question pop up in the Q&A that kind of fits within here and all of these strategies to develop that collaborative partnership, and so what would you say to a coach who says, "You know, I'm struggling because I'm younger than the majority of my coachees," and so kind of establishing that collaborative partnership, they were struggling there, so what would you say to our coaches out there that kind of find themselves in that place?

Mary Louise: That's a really good question and I think a very common issue. So, I think, one, it goes back to what we talking about a minute ago, which is for the program leadership to be transparent about why that person was selected, right? So, that person brings some expertise that's important to us around—in our coaching work, right, whatever that expertise is. You know, I think that if you're coaching home visitors, it always helps to have been a home visitor. If you're coaching teachers, it always helps to have been a teacher, right? And so, I think sometimes it's about who we hire and how we sell them—or, not sell them, but introduce them to the coachees that matters.

But I also think it's about the things that we've already talked about, right, which is for the coach to say, "You know, you've been teaching a long time, and I guess that you have lots of experience in this classroom, and I also understand that you're struggling with how to support kids who have more severe disabilities," or something, and, "I used to be a teacher of children with severe disabilities," right? So, it's, again, going back to that idea that you're both establish—the coach is establishing themselves as an expert but also establishing the coachee as an expert.

And then the last thing I would say about that, that gets way probably too much in the weeds around what the practice of safe coaching is, is that we've got to use data, right? So, the best way to be objective and for the teacher to feel like you're being helpful, or the coachee, is to use data about what you've observed, right? So, it's not just your opinion, but it's rooted in data, and it's rooted in something you and the coachee have decided to work on. So, it's hard, but it also ... I think the notion of the PVC cycle helps establish the coach as an expert and the coachee as an expert.

Joyce: I love that, and I think that kind of ties into, you know, acknowledging that you're working with, you know, with adults, and those adult learning principles are very relevant there. So, thank you for all that, and then to kind of pick your brain a little bit more, one of the other things we kind of get a lot of feedback from coaches is really looking for solutions to engage coachees in the coaching process, and so what are some of the solutions that maybe you've seen be successful to address kind of non-engagement to really get coachees engaged in the process?

Mary Louise: I feel like I've been sitting in meetings all week where we've been talking about how to get people engaged in the process. I think this is a really common issue in coaching, as well, and I want to just kind of give you some really concrete suggestions, and there's, you know, more here on the slides in a minute, but I think one thing is to think about how you can celebrate wins with the coachee, right?

So, it's one thing for you to say to the coachee, "Wow, when I was in your classroom, I saw you do blah, blah, blah, whatever you're working on, and, the children were really responsive to it." It's another to say something like, "The way that you introduced that concept to those kids was really engaging to the children, and the children were really responsive, I wonder if you would mind if I shared that with the other teachers I'm coaching?" So, it's not just that you're, as a coachee, doing a great job, but it's so good I want to share it with my other teachers. That will go a long way towards establishing a win for the coachee, right? So, there's things like that. I think that we need to do a better job of helping people see that even the best of the best people have coaches, right?

So, if you think about sports, you know, like, you think about Tiger Woods, who's a golfer, or Tom Brady, who's a football player, and they probably have the best coaches in their sports, right, and so if we can get out of thinking of coaching as something to fix a deficit and more as, how do we make really good people even better at what they're doing, that will change, right, I think—but I also think ...

One other thing, and then—you know, I think, is that we have to really be clear that we're meeting teachers where they are, and so I think if we can think about this as a parallel process and think about, what would we do if children weren't engaged in the classroom to get them engaged? And think about, "Oh, we'd build on their interests, or we'd build on things they're already good at, or we would give them ..." You know, if we could think about teachers in that same way or coachees in that same way about, how can we give them choices, or how can we focus on something that's more salient to them, or how can we use data to give them a good example of how this could make a difference for children? All those kind of pieces.

Joyce: Wow, all of those are really great suggestions. Thank you for sharing all that, and I'm sure we could spend a lot more time right there. One other thing that's kind of come up in our MyPeers community and within other webinars is kind of this notion of—or kind of the thought of coaching and supervision.

And so, first, we kind of want to kind of poll our audience here and just find out, who would today kind of serve as both a coach and a supervisor? And then just in the Q&A, if you want to share kind of what's been your biggest challenge as being both a coach and supervisor because we know that this is kind of a common struggle and, you know, something that is kind of a part of reality for some of us—for some who are here on the webinar today. So, again, we want to hear from you as far as, you know, one, are you a coach and a supervisor? And you can answer that via the poll question, and then, two, just in the Q&A if you want to share kind of what's been your biggest struggle with being both the coach and the supervisor.

We're going to give you just a couple of minutes there to respond, and we'll take a look at our ...

We'll take a look and see kind of what the responses are. And I see some saying that they are fortunate that they are just the coach and not the coach and the supervisor, so that's also great and something that, you know, we really encourage. And some say, you know, "We started out ... I started out as being both the coach and the supervisor." That's Jennifer sharing that, who said, "Now that's changed." And here we see where someone said, you know, just keeping supervision and coaching roles separate for individuals, so that's kind of been a struggle there. Alison shares that really not bringing things in that are related to supervision into coaching, that that can be a struggle at times.

And I'm just flipping through some of these responses here. Kind of some of those same things, so just really struggling with, you know, kind of keeping those roles separate or kind of communicating that, building trust, those kind of things. So, let's check in with our poll and see how things are as far as our audience for today, and it looks like we're pretty close to half and half, so we have about 53% of you—54—that say, you know, you're just the coach, and we have about 46 that say you're the coach and the supervisor, so we kind of have a mixed group here and just to kind of talk on that a little bit and then kind of get your thoughts on that, Mary Louise, we really know that it's important to establish coaching as a safe place, and so we know that when coaching is a safe place, the coachee is really able to, say, try out new things or kind of get supportive and constructive feedback and when possible, really choosing coaches that don't serve kind of in that role of supervisor. We find that that can work best, but again, we know that for many here on our webinar today that, you know, you're both the coach and the supervisor. That's something that you can do, but it definitely can be challenging at times. I'm going to talk about that for a just a few minutes.

And so, you know, if supervisors do serve as coaches, it's really important that when the supervisor or the coach visits, say, the teacher's classroom or the, you know, family child care center, or goes to—on a home visit, that their purpose is really clear. You know, so say for example when the supervisor or the coach, when they come to, say, a classroom or they, say, join a home visit as a supervisor, that that's known that, "Hey, I'm here for supervision," but say if they're there for a coaching visit, that that coachee, that home visitor, that teacher, that they know that beforehand, that they know that this visit on this certain day is going to be all things related to what we're doing that's specific to coaching and specific to my action plan. And so, I think really kind of being clear on what's happening when is really important.

And so, whether a coach is a supervisor or not, there really needs to be kind of clear information about what happens when things occur in the classroom or during a home visit that, you know, might be harmful to children or the adults present that, you know, kind of have to kind of be sure that we communicate and kind of going back to something that you've brought up a lot, ML, is really about being transparent. And so, here, what suggestions do you have, ML, about being both the coach and the supervisor?

Mary Louise: Thanks, Joyce. So, I think this is a really complicated issue that we could probably do a whole webinar on, so I just want to say a couple of things. I think in the best of all possible worlds that people wouldn't have to do both of those jobs, and—and—and I also know that there are lots of situations where we don't have any choice but to have both of those roles. And so, I think there's a few things, so I think one thing to be aware of as the coach/supervisor is

that, you know, you'll often feel like when you're going out to coach a teacher or a home visitor that you're going to take off your supervisor hat and put on your coach hat, but that coachee still knows you're their supervisor.

So, even if you're there to coach them, they're still a little worried that you're also their supervisor, so I think it's important to be aware and sensitive to the fact that even if you're trying to take off the hat, that people are still going to see that hat, right? So, that's an important thing to take into it. But having said all that, I think that there are some—as Joyce said, it's all about transparency, right, and being transparent about what happens when you're there as a coach versus what might happen if you're there as a supervisor, and there are some basic things. Like, right? Like, if you're—part of your role as a supervisor is to do a performance evaluation, or an observation as part of a performance evaluation that's going to affect someone's raise or that kind of thing, that when you're there as a coach you don't use that information in a negative way around someone's job performance.

That's because coaching should be a place where you can try new things, and they might not go so well, but you want to be able to try new things, and you can only do that—or the coachee can only do that if they don't feel like doing it is somehow going to put their job in danger, right? So, there's things like that that really is back to the part about being transparent. We're going to talk in a few minutes about using coaching agreements, and I think that's another thing that will help with the coaching and supervision roles. And then the last thing I want to say about this, and then, Joyce, if there's something else, jump in here, is that I think we can get creative about how to split up these roles in a lot of programs.

So, do you have administrative staff who half of them—one can coach half the teachers, and the other can coach the other half, and then when there's any kind of job performance, you switch roles, right? So, the other thing to do is just think about if there's a different way to allocate those responsibilities across the staff that you have.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely, and I think we've seen some programs as we've been out in the regions supporting different events where that's where they've kind of come to, right? They've ...

Mary Louise: Right.

Joyce: Having coaches and supervisors and said, "OK. Maybe we can kind of move things around to where, you know, we can divide things up a little bit better."

Mary Louise: Can I ... Joyce, can I just say one more thing, which is that I think that a lot of us have had the experience of thinking that people can play that same role, and we've all had experiences where that's been really hard for the person to navigate, you know, for the person to navigate, "I'm here to coach this teacher, but I saw them violate the dress code, so what do I do about that?" Right? You know, there's those kind of things.

And so, I just think it's hard to do them both, and I want to say that there are also examples of people who have been able to navigate that well. So, I don't think it, you know, it can't work, but I just think it's harder than most people think to try to navigate both those roles at the same time.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely. Thank you so much for that, really. And so, now kind of moving onto another question that kind of pops up within the MyPeers community and then also within our webinars, you know, people are really looking for guidance, and so what advice would you offer to a coach on really how to help coachees prepare for coaching?

Mary Louise: Oh, that's another good question. So, you know, I feel like all my questions have to have a two-part answer. The first part is, part of the responsibility of preparing coachees for coaching is the role of the program, not the role of the coach, meaning how we decide who gets coaching, how we decide who gets intensive coaching, how we decide what people are getting coached on, how we decide when people are getting coaching. All that stuff is stuff—are things the program needs to decide.

That shouldn't fall on the role of the coach, but assuming all that is in place—let's just assume for the sake of answering this question more directly. Then I think the first thing that we need to do to prepare coachees for coaching is to help them understand what coaching is and what coaching isn't. And so, we talked earlier, and some people actually had some comments earlier about previous experience with coaching. And so, what we need to do as part of this coaching process is to say, "This is what coaching is going to look like, and this is what you can expect from me as your coach, and here is what I'm going to need for you to bring to the table," right? So, as a coach, I'll always be here when I say I'll be here. I'll always use observation or feedback from you in my thoughts about making suggestions to you. I won't share your data with anyone. Anyway, here is all the things I'll do.

But what I need you to do is I need you to be willing to help me develop action plans. I need you to think about what kind of feedback you want from me so that coachees see that they have a really active role in the coaching process, and it's not just, "I'm going to come do coaching to you, but together, we're going to work on things." So, I think that—making that part really explicit is important. I think, you know, if ... Several of us right now are involved in some coaching where coachees are making videos of themselves, either working with home visitors or teachers, and they're uploading those for the coach to review before they do a debriefing session, and we're having tons of issues with technology.

And so, I think if we're using that kind of a platform that we need to know that part of our time with our coachees is going to be about helping them learn how to use the video camera or if we're going to coach via Zoom, how to turn off their phone from airplane mode so that they can call into a Zoom call and to not assume that people know how to do all those things. So, it's not about preparing coachees for coaching, it's just basic, how are we going to do this? What is it going to look like? And some of it is about, what's your role in this, and what's my role in that? And then I think the last thing, I could go on and on about this, is that we want to prepare—or we want to work with coachees to figure out what will most make the coaching process most comfortable for them.

So, let me give you an example. So, when we do—in our work when we go out to do observations in classrooms—we let the coachee decide what we, as the coach, are going to do when we're in their classroom. So, some coachees want a coach to come in their classroom and sit back and observe and then talk with them afterwards. Sometimes coachees are working on something where when a child is not engaged, they're going to work on using some

engagement strategies, and so they might ask the coach to actually give them a signal if they see that there's a certain child who's not engaged. But we wouldn't do either of those without working out with the coachee ahead of time what we we're going to do when we were in their classroom. So, those are just some examples of how we would prepare coachees.

Joyce: And thank you for all those, and again, I think this is kind of a great segue way into something that you mentioned earlier, which is the coaching agreement. And so, this is another great kind of tool or resource that could be used to prepare for coaching to actually happen and can really help to support that culture of coaching. And so, just ... So, we want to talk about those for just a few minutes here. And so, for those of you who maybe aren't familiar with what a coaching agreement is, that it's just another way to really support that culture of coaching again.

That coaching agreement kind of really helped to kind of delineate what coaching partners and administrators agreed to as a part of coaching, and all parties sign the agreement at the beginning of the coaching partnership, and then supporting coaches develop and using coaching agreements is really another way to support them in engaging coachees kind of in the process and also to kind of maintain that collaborative approach. And so, just as a reminder, you have a sample coaching agreement within the resources for this webinar.

And so, when we're thinking about those coaching agreements, it's just really a document that outlines the coach's and the coachee's responsibility in the coaching partnership and should always be included within—should always be a part of that coaching agreement, and also something else to think about is, you know, even though you may have a coaching agreement that's program-wide, there should be flexibility in how the coaching agreement is modified for individual partners. So, for example, say coaches and coachees may want to include, like, more specific details, including some of those you just mentioned, Mary Louise, there. For example, you know, thinking about, you know, when observations are going to happen, you know, what coaching strategies that they're most comfortable with, those kind of things. So, those are all just kind of things to think about when we're looking at using coaching agreements. And then, Mary Louise, kind of coming back to you, why do you think that coaching agreements are so important?

Mary Louise: Well, I mean, I think you said a lot of it, but I think if you think about kind of everything we've talked about today from, you know, how you prepare coachees for coaching, how you build the culture of coaching, all those kind of things, that what a coaching agreement does is it kind of puts that in writing. It kind of establishes the expectations for coaching. It establishes what coachees can expect from their coach. It builds in transparency, right? It's all written down.

And so, ... And I think it creates some consistency around what we're doing in programs so that everybody is getting something that is similar, that we're implementing a common model, all those kind of things, which all of that also serves, I think, to build transparency. But I think the biggest thing is that if you think about, as I started to say this, about all those things we've talked about, about preparing coaches and all that, in some ways a coaching agreement that's been developed by the program and agreed on by the program, it gives the coach a document

to use to do the things that we've been talking about, right? So, it kind of is a tool for the coach to use in building the partnership with the coachee.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely, and so do you think that that coaching agreement is something that can be edited kind of throughout the year, or do you think it's more of kind of a closed-ended document?

Mary Louise: Oh, that's a good question. So, I think it—I think that programs should decide. A program-level decision is what is in the coaching agreements that are not flexible, so they're nonnegotiable, and what is negotiable, so we decide that as a program, right? But I think more than ... I'm kind of thinking off the top of my head here that I'm not sure when you would go back to modify it, but you might go back to the coaching agreement when ... One thing I wanted to say earlier that I didn't say was that I think it's a good idea to give the coachee an opportunity to reflect on how coaching is going for them, and one way to do that is to revisit the coaching agreement, right?

And so, if there's a struggle, we might go back to the coaching agreement to see where the breakdown is, right? So, I could imagine using it as a tool like that, but I would never think of the coaching agreement ... My kind of struggle about this is that I'm OK if the coachee wants to change something about it, but I would struggle ... I want the coachee to think that what I've said in this I'll stick with and won't change my mind about, right, as the coach. So, I don't know if that makes sense, but I wanted to think about that from both angles.

Joyce: No, that sounds great, and I agree. I think the coaching agreements can be a great tool to kind of keep things within, you know, kind of the parameters of that collaborative coaching partnership and just a good reminder of, "Hey, remember this is kind of what we kind of said that we were going to do, and this is kind of my kind of commitment to the process," so thank you for kind of sharing a little bit more about that. And so, now we know that in our community we love resources, and our coaches out there are always looking for things that can help them and support them in their role, and so we want to kind of just share a few resources with you and kind of see, you know, maybe how you're using some of these things out in the field and just know that we're here with any feedback that you have, please just put it the Q&A for us, and we'll kind of keep an eye there, as well.

So, just a couple of things that we wanted to share kind of wrapping up our time together is, one, again, our MyPeers community, and we are at, I want to say, around 1,400 members now in our PBC community, and so again, that's a place to really get together and share resources and ask question with your, you know, fellow coaches across the country. So, we encourage you to, if you're not a part of MyPeers, to join us on MyPeers, and you can find more information about MyPeers that will come up at the end of the webinar. And also something else we wanted to share with you is iPD PBC online modules, and that's a newer resource, and so those PBC online modules are now available via the individualized professional development portfolio or what we refer to as the iPD on the ECLKC, and so these online modules were really designed to provide participants with a overview of practice-based coaching and its components, so it's a great tool that could be, like, a refresher.

Say, you know, I've been to coach training, but I just feel like I want some more support and kind of a refresher of those things that I learned to help me along the way, so you can definitely dive into those. Or maybe that you're waiting for an upcoming coach training to happen, so this would be another resource that you could use in the meantime while you're getting prepared to go to a coach training.

And then also, pre-CUs are offered via the iPD online module, so we encourage you to kind of get connected there. The other resource that you'll see kind of noted on the screen is the Head Start Coaching Companion, and it's kind of an online kind of video-sharing platform, and you can use the Head Start Coaching Companion to kind of set up coaching cycles. You can upload your existing—your existing action plans, or you can use the platform itself to create action plans and cycles, and you can also use it for group and individual coaching.

So, for those of you that have TLC groups, that throws together learning and collaborating groups, you could use the Head Start Coaching Companion for that, as well. It also includes a video resource library, and it also includes other resources that you can find on the ECLKC and also resources for you as a coach that were pulled from the practice-based coach training so some really great things there that you could use to help you in your role. And also just to note that with the Head Start Coaching Companion that we did hear you, and we made some recent updates to the Head Start Coaching Companion that has an updated more user-friendly design, and that there's guided kind of page-by-page instruction and guidance there, that there's a little where am I now on the PBC cycle boxes that you're going to see that you can search and sort your cycles there, that you have the ability to archive past cycles.

So, all of those are resources that are there for you to use. We just kind of wanted to point those out. And I want to come back in just our last couple of minutes, Mary Louise, and just kind of connect with you and say, you know, are there any kind of final thoughts, or kind of what would you want to leave our community with related to establishing that collaborative partnership within their program?

Mary Louise: How long do I have? No, I'm just kidding. I mean, you know, it's kind of where I started today, which is that I think that creating a culture of coaching is really going to be key to having a successful coaching approach, or an effective approach going on in your program, and I think too often we hurry into innovations, whatever they are, in our programs, and when they don't ... When they're not successful, I think it's sometimes because we haven't built the foundation to make them successful, so we try a new curriculum, but we don't really give teachers the support to implement them, whatever it is.

And I think we should think about the collaborative partnership and the culture of coaching as the foundation of coaching, and so if we hurry past that and try to get to, how many cycles of coaching have you done, and are you doing one every other week, that we lose—that we don't build the foundation we need to be successful. And so, I think in our work, we try to jump into coaching too fast and learn in subsequent projects to give a little more time to both creating a culture and building the collaborative partnership, and it seems like every time we run into an issue with coaching, it's all about the partnership, or it's about the culture in our program around coaching.

So, if teachers aren't engaged or if teachers aren't responding, or whatever it is. The answer is always either a programmatic issue, or it's a partnership issue, and so it might feel like we need to hurry into something, but really we need to take the time to be sure we create a culture where it's going to work.

Joyce: Great, and thank you for that. So, kind of what I'm hearing you say is that issues kind of come up, as far as buy-in or engagement and those kind of things, and when you have issues, it's maybe a great time to do a pulse check on, so how, you know, what does our culture of coaching look like? That's kind of what I'm hearing you say. Is that right?

Mary Louise: Yeah, and I would say I kind of want to get us away from thinking about coachees who aren't engaged and think about what are we doing to build a culture where coachees want to be engaged because I'm pretty sure that I don't know anyone who doesn't want to do what they do better, and it's just how we create a culture where that's a good thing.

Joyce: And I love that, and I think that is a great way to end our time together. Thank you so much for taking the time to really have this conversation, and we look forward to maybe having you on again in the near future, so thank you for joining us today. And before we wrap up, I just want to kind of point out some of the other great things that we have going on, as well. So, we're getting ready for the Dual Language Learner Celebration Week, and so you'll notice on your ON24 platform there's going to be a link there that you can click, and that's going to take you to log into the iPD. So, kind of logging in there, you're going to look for this in the catalog, and so you'll be able to participate.

Now courses and materials to the celebration week, the DLL Celebration Week, will be available when they kick everything off, so just know that so you have access to that, and so while you're in there with that link also check out, again, those PBC online modules that are there for you. And we thank you so much for joining us today. We ask you to please fill out your evaluations.

We really look forward to hearing back from you, and just know after you complete your evaluation, you'll be able to download a certificate saying that you were here with us today.

So, thank you so much for joining us, and we look forward to seeing you on MyPeers.