

## Voices from the Field: Denise Binder



### Q1: What is practice-based coaching?

Practice Based Coaching (PBC) is a key strategy to use with primary caregivers and other adults to facilitate positive adult-child interactions. Coaching is a relationship-based method of professional development that has several different formats. You may have heard things like expert coaching, or peer coaching, or maybe even self-coaching. Coaching primarily involves a practitioner and a coach who helps facilitate the practitioner's implementation of some sort of evidence-based practice, or DEC Recommended Practices, that may lead to or hopefully leads to positive outcomes for children. The PBC process uses the Live or Expert Coaching Model and is adapted from the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning (2012). <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ttssystem/teaching/center/development/coaching.html>. PBC is widely used by Head Start and Early Head Start as well as other early childhood programs.

PBC occurs within the context of a collaborative partnership. A skilled coach will take time to respect and nurture their partnership through the use of researched strategies that prepare practitioners for the coaching process. Research of the PBC model has shown that it is within this goal-focused partnership that we see long term change of instructional practices. When practitioners feel supported to use Recommended Practices, all children get the assistance they need to become engaged in the learning environment. It is the goal of PBC to move practitioners from a place of hearing and learning about Recommended Practices to actually feeling confident and prepared to implement Recommended Practices in their classrooms or early childhood programs. PBC can also be used to support practitioners when implementing any type of initiative, e.g., pre-literacy, numeracy, or social skills initiative.

### Q2: What are key qualities to look for in a coach?

When a program is considering implementing PBC there are some critical decisions that need to be made. First of all, who will be the coach? The person that is chosen to be the coach, first and foremost must have a good understanding of the initiative, or in this case, the DEC Recommended Practices. They should have access to trainings and resources around the PBC process. They must have flexibility in their work schedule, so they can conduct the PBC cycle with practitioners. They must have the communication and organizational skills to create that collaborative partnership that is so important with their practitioners. Finding the right person to fill the coaching role will be critical to the success of your overall implementation!

### Q3: What three components are included in the Practice-Based Coaching Cycle?

The PBC cycle includes three specific components that must be completed as part of the collaborative partnership. The coaching-cycle components are:

- First, planning goals and action steps,
- Second, engaging in focused observations, and
- Third, reflecting on and sharing feedback about instructional practices.

Coaches will complete the PBC cycle with each of the practitioners they are coaching, after they have established a collaborative partnership. The first component of the cycle is developing shared goals and action planning with the practitioner. The goals are determined after a comprehensive needs assessment is completed in the classroom or the natural environment. A needs assessment could be the Recommended Practices Observation Scale. Once the practitioner's strengths and areas of support are determined, the coach and the practitioner set goals for implementing Recommended Practices in the classroom or the natural environment. The goals might include trying a brand-new practice or expanding on a practice that is already somewhat in place.

The second component allows the coach time in the classroom or natural environment to observe the practitioner using the identified practices and strategies with the child or children. The coach schedules the observation during a time when the current goal or action steps are sure to be implemented. The coach takes notes on the use of the practices reflected in the current goals and plans for feedback to the practitioner.

And lastly the coach and practitioner meet to debrief around the practices that were observed. They provide feedback to each other on the success of implementing the new strategy or practice. The practitioner and the coach will decide if the current goal has been met and if it is time to start working towards a new goal. The coach will close the meeting by revising the action plan and scheduling the next observation and debrief. The coaching team continues the cycle until implementation fidelity is fully achieved!