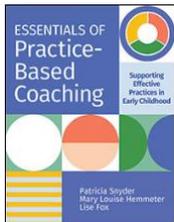


Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood

Reviewed by GG Weisenfeld



Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood

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One of the features of high-quality early childhood education programs is teacher access to regular professional learning opportunities, including coaching (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2022). *Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood* expands the conversation on the importance of coaching and its impact on early childhood classrooms to strategies on *how* to implement a specific coaching model with fidelity. Practice-based coaching (PBC) is a widely used, empirically based coaching model that does not simply strive to form relationships, but rather a collaborative partnership that “is formed so the coach can support the coachees’ practice-focused goals” (p. 3).

The three editors all have extensive backgrounds in early childhood education research and practice, but also PBC specifically. For example, Patricia Snyder “and her colleagues have been conducting research on practice-based coaching and its application in a variety of early childhood contexts for the past 16 years,” (p. ix). Mary Louise Hemmeter “was involved in the development of the Pyramid Model of Supporting Social emotional Competence in Young Children and the practice-based coaching model,” (p. ix) and Lise Fox “has developed and managed numerous technical assistance, research, model demonstration, and personnel preparation projects in the...implementation of the Pyramid Model...” (p. x). The editors co-wrote each of the chapters with the support of invited contributors. This allows for a smooth transition between chapters and continuity throughout the book as well as assurance that the PBC model is being described as intended by those responsible for its development.

The first chapter serves as a literature review, presenting a table of various coaching frameworks defined by delivery method and duration by coaching purpose or desired outcomes. This is followed by a more careful look at PBC, presenting a theory of change and a summary of the research (experimental and single-case design) that has included PBC in its design. Table 1.3, “Characteristics and outcomes of studies using practice-based coaching,” presents an overview of the studies, including PBC delivery format and dosage, practitioner outcomes, and child outcomes. This is accompanied by text that provides a brief description and analyses of the studies.

The following chapters focus on PBC. Chapter 2, “Introduction to the Practice-Based Coaching Framework,” defines professional development (PD) “as an important mechanism or driver to support the competence and confidence with which coaches implement effective practices with fidelity to advance young children’s developmental and learning outcomes” (p. 21). The remainder of the chapter describes how PBC fits into this definition of PD. Table 2.1 is especially useful at dissecting the components of PBC with references to relevant research.

The intended audience for Chapters 3 through 8 and Appendices II through VI.IV is coaches. The complexity of the content shifts from being more basic, albeit critical coaching components (Chapters 3 and 4, Appendix II) to more specific PBC implementation strategies (Chapters 5 through 8, Appendices III through VI.IV). Chapters 3 and 4, provide a solid foundation, especially for those beginning coaches in understanding specific coaching techniques, coupled with templates and checklists that would assist a coach in implementing the PBC framework. However, it is important to note that many of the “tips” go beyond PBC and would be useful for all coaches, including but not limited to building a collaborative coaching partnership, differentiating between constructive feedback versus problem solving, and facilitating reflective conversation.

Chapters 5 through 8 are again directed at coaches but are more technically connected to PBC. Appendix II.D, “Designing Your Strengths and Needs Assessment: Being Intentional About Response Options and Anchors”; Appendix II.E, “Key Considerations for Strengths and Needs Assessments”; and Appendix II.F, “PBC Coach Training Strengths and Needs Assessment” should be read hand-in-hand with Chapter 5. One of the bonuses for purchasers of the book is that they “may download, print, and/or photocopy appendices for professional and educational use” (p. vii). Table 5.3 provides a helpful set of actions and prompts the coach can use when conducting a strengths and needs assessment with the coachee. Chapter 8 dives deep into different types of feedback coaches could provide (supportive versus constructive) and types of questions they may ask (objective, interpretive, or comparative).

Chapters 9 and 10 and Appendices VI.V through VII shift the audience those implementing coaching systems. This could apply to those at the program level or even states’ early education systems. Key decisions include identifying professional and interpersonal skill competencies of the coaches, supporting coaches with ongoing PD, and determining coaching caseloads. Table 9.2 has information that could be especially useful in determining the “approximate time allocations for group and individual practice-based coaching formats” (p. 151). Appendix VI.S is a checklist a supervisor could use when observing the coach implementing identified “essential”

and “enhancement” strategies during a PBC cycle (pp. 238–239). Chapter 10 focuses on using technology to support PBC but could be applied to any coaching model, such as video recording teachers, video conferencing, web-based coaching platforms, and coaching apps.

Looking at the book as whole, its format may appeal to different readers. Chapters are formatted to include visual descriptions and call-out boxes as well as relevant references. Most chapters include brief case studies to support its content coupled with “questions for further reflection and discussion” that could be used in small group discussions or homework assignments. Appendix I has more descriptive case studies that illustrate the implementation of PBC. The case studies also provide a model on ways to complete the many templates included in the appendices.

The Authors of *Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood* have carefully crafted a text that can reach multiple audiences. It could easily be used in early childhood leadership courses or to guide PD workshops for school leaders or early childhood center directors. Each chapter could be a standalone conversation about understanding the research behind PBC, designing a PD system that integrates PBC, techniques for developing collaborative partnerships, or building out a coaching system. This book is written with coaches in mind, respecting their work and the crucial role they play in supporting early childhood classrooms. However, the content is differentiated and would benefit those newer to coaching as well as those more experienced.

Reference

Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., & Jost, T. M. (2022). *The state of preschool 2021: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research.

Author Biography

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