

# Preliminary Analysis: Coaching to Fidelity Pilot Study

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## Abstract

Early childhood researchers suggest employing Practice-based Coaching model enhances coaches' ability to effectively coach early childhood educators and impact child learning outcomes. This six-month pilot study explores the coaching process of implementing an evidence-based comprehensive preschool curriculum in state-funded programs in the Pacific Northwest, with the goal of discovering effective methods and dosage of coach support to preschool teachers. Participants in this pilot study were 8 coaches and 3 preschool teachers in 8 state funded preschool programs using Creative Curriculum for Preschool at least for a year.

A sequential explanatory mixed-method approach was used in this evaluation study. Quantitative baseline classroom level implementation fidelity data were collected by coaches, followed by various qualitative data sets including site visit forms, focused observation notes, shared goals and action planning sheets, coaching logs, phone interviews, and focus group recordings.

Results support the components of the Practice-Based coaching model such as building trust, creating positive relationships, setting shared goals and action plans, and parallel processing are the key ingredients for maintaining the practice of implementing curriculum to fidelity.

To propel continuous quality improvement, programs and agencies must agree upon the role of coaches in early childhood settings, support coaches to explore their own beliefs and attitudes about collecting and using data, and encourage them to incorporate data driven decision making into their coaching practice.

### Quick Facts

- > **1500+** state funded WA Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program preschool professionals trained in Creative Curriculum
- > **7** state funded ECEAP preschools in this pilot study
- > **6** baseline curriculum implementation fidelity collected
- > **27** coaching evidence collected
- > Overall Moderate (50-75%) to High (75+ %) fidelity level
- > **Relationship building** and **Trust**: Key ingredients for continuous quality improvement

## Research Questions

- To what extent do teachers implement the evidence-based comprehensive curriculum (Creative Curriculum for Preschool) with fidelity?
- What are the coaching components and strategies used by coaches to support teachers on implementation practice?
- How do coaches use fidelity data or other data sets to inform coaching to fidelity?



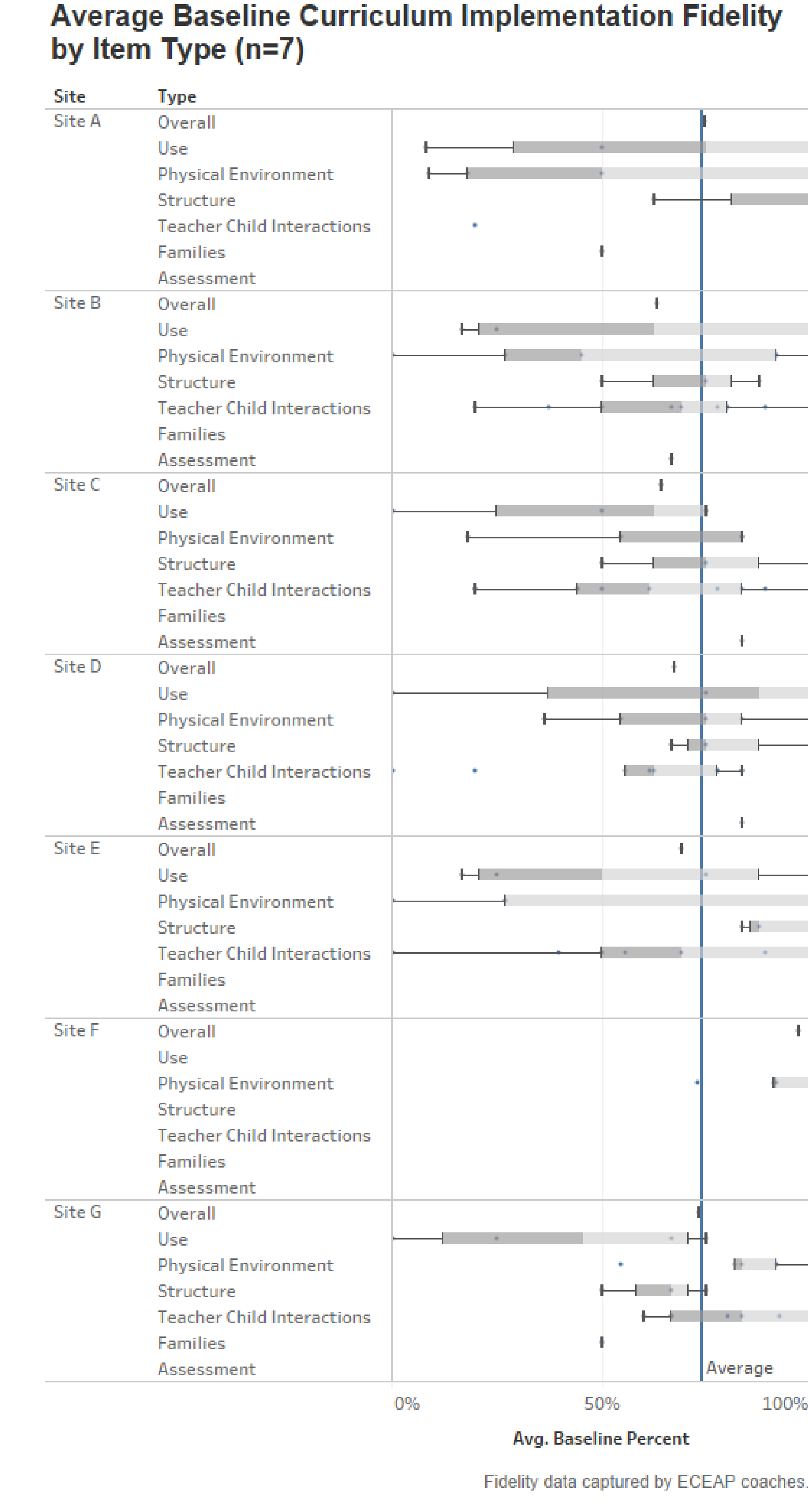
## Methods

Among three core mixed methods designs, the **sequential explanatory design** (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) was applied in this study.

The researchers were particularly interested in exploring why the sites achieved following fidelity level, how those fidelity outcomes varied among participants by analyzing qualitative contextual information, and eventually what are ways to implement the project at scale to the statewide level by communicating with participants to revise the structure of the pilot study including the revision of the fidelity tool.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sets Collected		
Type	Name	Description
QUANTITATIVE	Baseline curriculum implementation fidelity checks	Global curriculum implementation fidelity assessment results
	Site visit forms/contact notes	Description of coaching activities during a site visit
	Coaching logs	Description of coaching activities (i.e. hours spent on coaching activities and type of coaching sessions
		Goals and action plans determined by both parties (coaches and teachers)
qualitative	Practice-based Coaching Shared goals and action plan worksheets	Back-up documents describing the progress of agreed action steps
	Follow up shared goals and action plan documents	Documentation describing the use of fidelity assessment, observed teaching practices, and reflections on how to proceed to next level of implementation
	Reflection of fidelity assessment and shared goals and action planning session	Transcript from the final focus group
	End-of-project focus group transcript	

## Findings: Fidelity Level



## Findings: Focus Group

"We \*(Site scored overall 97% fidelity level) worked with these teachers for about four years and we're in a constant conversation through this practice based coaching cycle... because they had to **build trust** in us (coaches) that we knew what we were talking about to prepare them for that [focused] observation. So that was done, and they were successful. We're all level 4 [Early Achievers] program...they want to hear what we have to say. But stuff that we're going to leave them in a positive direction. So when we practice **practice-based coaching**, it just feels natural.

"I was impressed by her (teacher) **intentionality in planning** because she has such limited time, it was a fast-paced morning! I was able to mark the majority of the boxes on the checklist and had great conversations about the ones I couldn't mark in our post observation interview. The teacher set a goal around being more intentional about incorporating the **goals** she sets for children in **collaboration with parents**. She meets the majority of goals, but would like to be more mindful of them during her regular planning."

## Implications

If coaches, directors, or teachers have noticed a change by using the fidelity data, planning based on the practice-based coaching cycle, making on-going connections with intentional teaching practice, and a sense of trust in the classroom, as presented in the qualitative analysis, achieving the Early Achievers points no longer is considered as a challenge or an issue. Rather, the standards or the checklists are viewed as one of the ways to evaluate ongoing teaching and coaching practices.

Yet to address the current issues of early childhood workforce support and measuring quality in the early childhood system, all actors of the system should be invited to the table and discuss what matters the most to them.

The question that we still need to address: How can we innovate and sustain the current coaching and teacher support to the next level of the early childhood education system applying strategies and tools of implementation science?

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