

Coaching Strategies

This document provides coaches with a description of the strategies that might be used when providing live coaching support to individual teachers. A critical function of the coach is to provide support to teachers as they examine and reflect on current practices, develop new skills and competencies with feedback, and problem-solve challenging situations.

Observation Strategies

A basic strategy for coaches is to **observe** the teacher and take notes about the teacher's implementation of action plan goals or instructional practices. The strategies listed below might also be used by the coach during an observation.

Side-by-Side Verbal or Gestural Support:

The coach delivers verbal prompts or cues to remind teacher to use specific strategies or uses non-verbal visual or gestural support to prompt/remind teacher to use a strategy. This action can also be used to acknowledge the appropriate use of a strategy.

Examples:

- The teacher is beginning to use a 5-minute countdown glove for transitions. Coach says to teacher, "Let Caleb pull off one of the minute cards from the glove."
- The coach nods her head to confirm with the teacher the successful use of open-ended questions during small group time.
- The coach might tap a watch to indicate that 20 minutes have passed since the start of literacy groups.

Problem Solving Discussion:

Verbal interaction between the coach and teacher designed to lead the teacher through a systematic process involving exchanges and questions in order to: 1) identify the problem; 2) brainstorm and generate options; 3) decide on a possible solution; and 4) implement and evaluate the solution. In an observation, one or multiple steps of the problem solving process might occur.

Examples:

- Identify the Problem - The teacher and coach might have a brief discussion as children transition to small groups, "Do you think Sam knew where he was supposed to go?"
- Generate Options -The coach asks the teacher "Do you think the white board would work for his schedule or should he have something more personal?"
- Deciding on Solutions -The coach can ask questions for clarification, "Do you think Sam would respond to a first-then board?"
- Implementing and Evaluating -The teacher introduces a new mini-schedule into the daily routine for Sam. While the teacher is implementing use of the schedule; the coach observes and takes data on Sam's behavior.

Videotaping:

The coach videotapes an activity or teacher interaction for later review and discussion with the practitioner.

Modeling:

After the teacher and coach have jointly agreed to use this strategy, the coach might demonstrate how to implement specific strategies or instructional practices.

Examples:

- The coach demonstrates how to use an individualized direction or visual schedule by working with a child during a classroom activity, routine or transition.
- The coach demonstrates how to ask questions of varying difficulty during story time.
- The coach demonstrates how to extend children's' play schemes during choice time.
- The teacher and coach notice a group of children having a difficult time at the computer. The coach makes eye contact with the teacher to get confirmation that she can go ahead and model and then prompts the children to use materials to problem solve (e.g., "why don't we see if the solution kit might help").

Other Help in the Classroom:

The coach assists with classroom activities in classroom activities not directly related to the implementation of Action Plan Goals. Coaches might assist the teacher in an effort to strengthen the coach-teacher relationship. This is a strategy that should be used infrequently and only for the purpose of relationship-building or providing needed assistance in an emergency.

Examples:

- The coach might help serve snack
- The coach might facilitate the play of a group of children while the teacher responds to a child in distress

Debriefing Strategies

The debriefing session offers a time for the coach to guide teacher reflection, provide information, discuss the observation, engage in problem solving discussion, and other actions that will support the teacher with implementation. The strategies below are often used by coaches during debriefing meetings.

Problem Solving Discussion:

Verbal interaction between the coach and teacher designed to lead the teacher through a systematic process in order to: 1) identify the problem; 2) brainstorm and generate options; 3) decide on a possible solution; and 4) implement and evaluate the solution. During debriefing, one or multiple steps of the problem solving process might occur.

Examples:

- Identify the Problem - During the observation, the coach notices a target child who has difficulty deciding on something to do during choice time and wanders the room throughout the time. At the debriefing, the coach and teacher talk about the situation and the coach says, "Let's think about some ways to assist Erika to make choices."
- Generate Options - Together they brainstorm a few different ideas; the teacher selects one to try
- Deciding on Solutions - The coach adds a new goal and/or additional resources to the Action Plan
- Implementing and Evaluating - The teacher selects a strategy to implement. The coach makes a note to observe the use of the strategy during the next scheduled observation.

Reflective Conversation:

An active discussion between the coach and teacher with a goal of encouraging the teacher to think about his/her actions, the situation, the strategies she used, the responses of the children, and/or comfort level regarding implementation of Action Plan Goals. No corrective or directive statements are used. Instead the coach offers a question to encourage reflection. Reflective conversations typically focus on perceptions, feelings, interpretations, or use of strategies.

Examples:

- "Let's talk about what happened with Bobby this morning. Why do you think this might have happened today?"
- "So I saw you use the new schedule. How was it? Was it comfortable for you?"
- "Why do you think Stacy didn't stick with Circle today? What do you think is going on?"

Video Review:

The teacher and coach review a video segment from the teacher's classroom and then engage in one of the coaching strategies such as: problem solving discussion; reflective conversation; or graphing.

Role Play:

A simulated situation that happens between the coach and teacher that aims to help the teacher to learn or practice new techniques during debriefing. In a role-playing situation, both individuals take on a defined role and practice the use of a strategy or a response to a situation. The teacher might take on the role of the child while the coach demonstrates a strategy, or the coach might take on the role of the child while the teacher practices a strategy.

Examples:

- The teacher and coach might practice a hypothetical conversation with a parent during a role play before the teacher meets with the parent.
- The coach could use role play to practice the use of Tucker the Turtle or problem solving strategies with the teacher.

Live Demonstration:

In a live demonstration, the coach enacts the teacher's role and provides an example of how to use specific strategies.

Video Demonstration:

The coach shares a short video clip that shows implementation of strategies that are related to the teacher's action plan goals.

Helping with Environmental Arrangements:

Coach assists teacher with creating and/or adapting the environment to support participation from all children. This might include preparing or developing materials, making changes in the classroom, or rearranging the physical space.

Examples:

- The coach might take pictures of the housekeeping area to help create center labels.
- The coach helps create/arrange a visual schedule.

Graphing:

The coach assists the teacher to display, analyze, or interpret data. Assistance might include creating a graph with the data, interpreting the results of the graph, or teaching the practitioner how to interpret the graph.

Example:

- During debriefing, the coach helps the teacher create a graph based on behavior incidence data that the teacher collected. The coach might explain to the teacher how to interpret the graph.

Providing Materials:

Coach offers additional items that might help the teacher learn more about specific strategies and other recommended practices, or the coach might provide materials that might improve implementation of specific strategies.

Example:

- The coach brings an article to read related to the target teaching strategy.
- The coach helps the teacher access an appropriate NCQTL 15-minute in-service video related to his/her goal.
- The coach prepares job aids or visual reminders of ways to facilitate children's' play.