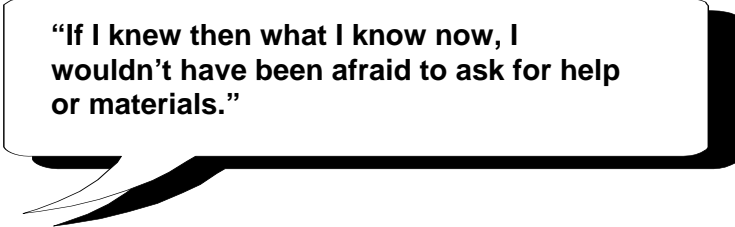


Coaching Cycle: Stage III

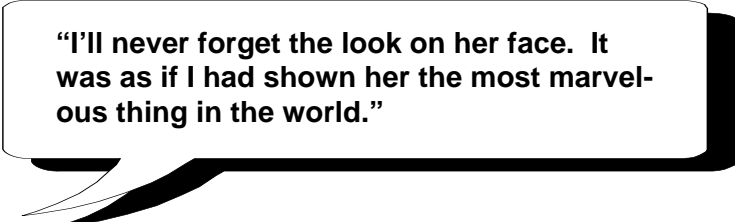
Reflection is a key element in stimulating professional growth and improving professional practice. After the classroom observation, it is important that both the mentor or mentor support team member/coach and teacher have time to reflect on what took place. Mentors and new teachers should begin to think, ponder, and reflect about past actions as a means of designing productive problem-solving strategies.



“If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn’t have been afraid to ask for help or materials.”

The Teacher

The teacher should be asked to review the information that he/she provided in the preobservation (planning) conference and reflect on what actually took place in the classroom as a way of preparing for the debriefing conference. The mentor may even suggest certain areas for reflection or leave the teacher with several questions or ideas to consider.



“I’ll never forget the look on her face. It was as if I had shown her the most marvelous thing in the world.”

The Coach

During the time allotted for reflection (a day or two), several questions can/should guide the coach’s reflection:

1. What teaching behaviors were expected in this lesson?
2. What were the expected behaviors of the learners?
3. What actually happened in the lesson?
 - Was there a discrepancy? What was the discrepancy?
 - What do I think are some of the causes or effects of what I observed?
 - How do I know?
 - What do I mean by each cause or effect?
 - What makes me say that _____ caused _____?
 - What makes me say that _____ resulted in _____?
4. How do I communicate this to the teacher?
5. What questions might I ask to facilitate the teacher’s reflection?

(Above adapted from Dantonio, M. (1988). *Teachers Coaching Teachers*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa)

Coaching Cycle: Stage IV

“**F**eedback” provides a means for helping another person to consider changing his/her behavior. It involves communication with a person to provide information about how he/she affects others. Feedback can help a new teacher keep his instruction “on target” and thus enhance student learning more effectively. Some criteria for useful feedback follow.

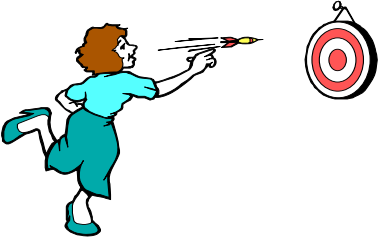
- 1. Feedback should be descriptive rather than evaluative.**
By describing one’s own reaction, the individual is free to use the feedback or to modify it as he/she sees fit. Avoiding evaluative language reduces the need for the individual to react defensively.
- 2. Feedback should be specific rather than general.**
Saying someone is “dominating” a group discussion is probably not so helpful as explaining the behaviors that were dominating: for example, “Just now, when you were instructing the boys, you did not listen to what they were saying, and they accepted your explanations possibly to avoid the threat of a heavy homework assignment.”
- 3. Feedback should take into account the needs of both the mentor and new teacher.**
Constructive feedback must consider the needs of both parties. Feedback can become destructive when it serves only the provider’s needs and fails to consider the receiver’s needs.
- 4. Feedback should be directed toward behavior that the receiver can affect.**
Frustration is increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which he/she has no control. Planning classroom intervention strategies should be the natural outcome of feedback regarding behavior management problem. Long conversations about things “the administration should do” will not improve behavior in the classroom.
- 5. Feedback should be appropriately timed.**
Feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity following the behavior (depending, of course, on the person’s readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.).
- 6. Feedback should be designed to ensure clear communication.**
One way of ensuring that the communication is clear is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback he/she has received to ensure that the message was accurately interpreted. Feedback is a way of providing assistance; it is a corrective mechanism for the individual (or group) who wants to learn how well his/her behavior matches his/her intentions.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Helpful feedback is a process of sharing data with a person in such a way as to help him improve his performance in achieving his goals. The mentor should reflect upon the following questions about feedback before sharing impressions with the new teacher.

1. Why do we want to give feedback to another person?

- To help the new teacher achieve his/her goals effectively
- To help the mentor achieve his/her goals effectively



Giving Purposeful Feedback

- ⇒ Set a good climate.
- ⇒ Get together within two days.
- ⇒ Refer specifically to collected data.
- ⇒ Encourage the teacher to talk.
- ⇒ Listen, listen, listen.
- ⇒ Generate ideas.
- ⇒ Be empathetic.
- ⇒ Summarize and plan the next steps.

Joanne Quinn/Gayle Gregory
Mentoring New Teachers, 1997

2. What about the new teacher?

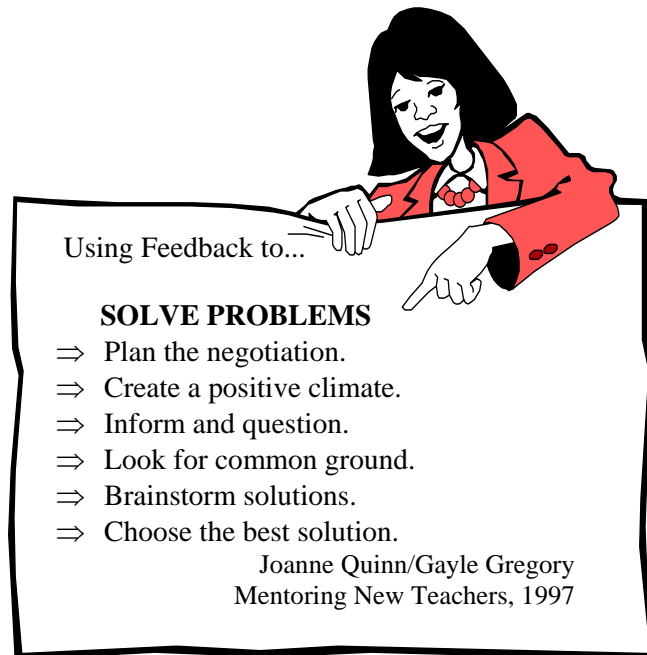
It is difficult to give feedback to a new teacher who is not ready to receive it. The new teacher may be requesting feedback but has not yet received it because

- the mentor or mentor support team member feels the new teacher is not ready or the conditions are not right;
- the mentor or mentor support team member feels the feedback will not be particularly helpful at that time.

3. How do people commonly react to feedback?

If successful feedback is to be provided, the barriers between “giver” and “receiver” need to be broken down, and a relationship of confidence and trust needs to be established. Since feedback may be interpreted as criticism, people may react in defensive ways by

- choosing NOT to hear what is said—selective reception;
- doubting the motives of the person giving the feedback (e.g., “The mentor’s telling me this just to get even”);
- denying the validity for the feedback data;
- rationalizing why he/she behaved the way he/she did;
- attacking the person who is giving the feedback; pointing out some of his faults.



4. What kind of feedback is helpful?

Objective data: Documentation of actions that one observes which are external to his/her feelings: e.g., “I saw you talk for five minutes continuously; you talked with only one student.”

5. When and how should feedback be given?

Feedback is generally most helpful if connected with a specific incident. While there are certain arguments for giving feedback as close to the incident as possible, experience indicates that adults can recall and learn from feedback attached to incidents that happened some time earlier—provided that the recall is accurate.

Guidelines For Conducting The Debriefing Conference

Adequate time must be spent preparing for the Debriefing Conference. Many of the following questions may be used/asked by the mentor in preparing for or conducting the Conference.

Congruency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was expected to happen in the lesson? 2. What actually happened in the lesson? 3. Why do you think <u> ?</u> happened?
Events and Behaviors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did you (the teacher) observe? 2. What do you think was/were the reason(s) for this? 3. Do you see a connection between <u> </u> and <u> </u> ? 4. What does <u> ?</u> remind you of ?
Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think your lesson strengths were? 2. What do you think was the reason for this strength? 3. Can you tell me more about <u> ?</u>? (Clarification of data/information observed in the classroom should be shared.)
Planning for the Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would you do differently next time? 2. Why would you do <u> ?</u> differently? 3. How else could you do <u> ?</u>? 4. Why would you do <u> ?</u> the same? 5. How will that provide the outcome you want? 6. What should be the focus of our next observation?

After reflection, the mentor or mentor support team member and the new teacher reconvene for a meeting to examine and analyze the data. During the debriefing, the mentor and new teacher analyze and interpret any data cooperatively. The mentor or mentor support team member elicits the teacher’s reactions to the data and then considers the possible causes and consequences. Together, the teacher and mentor formulate decisions about future actions. Decisions about alternative teaching strategies, use of different objectives, or modification of the teacher’s own goals for self-improvement can then be made.

As the mentor listens attentively at the debriefing conference, perception of what the new teacher shares may differ from what the new teacher means. Before developing a strategy to solve a problem, the mentor should offer the new teacher an understanding of what was said. Any misinterpretations can then be corrected. Paraphrasing can include the following:

- “Did I hear you correctly? You said....
- “What I think you are saying is....
- “My understanding of what you said is....
- “Help me understand. Let me try to repeat what you just told me....

Purposes of the Debriefing Conference

- A time to share observations and reasons for observed actions
- A time to clarify and obtain verification of observations
- A time to share all data collected including script or videotape of teaching, goals and objectives, future lesson plans, lesson logs, student work, student assessment tasks, and student behaviors or feedback
- A time to ask questions that evoke reflective thinking by the new teacher
- A time to search with the new teacher for cause-effect relationships and solutions to problems

Use of the Assistance Period Postobservation Conference Form

When the mentor or mentor support team member conducts a full, advisory observation, the Assistance Period Postobservation Conference form should be used to summarize the observation and report to the new teacher. At this time, one of the mentor's major responsibilities is to provide the new teacher with information about his/her classroom performance in relation to the Components of Effective Teaching. Questions such as those listed above may be used to assist the teacher in his/her self-analysis of the lesson. However, the mentor should **plan feedback** and questions that are targeted to address specific Components and/or Attributes. Refer to *Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Assessor Training Manual* for additional information about the use of the Postobservation Conference form.

Further Readings

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