

Article Summary from Mentor Modules: Coaching Cycle and Approaches

Podsen, I. & Denmark, V. (2006). Components of a coaching cycle. Coaching and mentoring first year and student teacher, 2nd ed. (pp. 76--85). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Coaching provides the beginning teacher with feedback on those practices that should be continued and those that should be changed with specific evidence to back up this recommendation. The evidence shared comes from a systematic five-stage coaching cycle that is linked to standards of teaching, to annual school improvement goals, and ultimately to summative evaluation.

Stage One: The pre-observation conference is an important first step in the cycle and an effective way to build trust and increase collaboration between mentors and mentees. This conference provides you with the opportunity to ask specific questions about the lesson, the teaching strategies selected, the assessment methods, the materials chosen or developed, the classroom management techniques, and the relationship of this lesson to the previous and subsequent lessons.

Stage Two: Follow the pre-observation conference by observing the lesson discussed, using the observation instrument selected in the conference to collect data. Be sure to take short, objective, and descriptive notes of the performance. If possible, incorporate videotaping: this is a strong tool for improving performance. It allows the mentor and the mentee to review the lesson and stop the video at various points to reinforce strengths and address problem areas in the lesson.

Stage Three: Once you have collected the data, you must now analyze your notes and prepare for the feedback loop in the cycle. Your task might be tallying the number of times the novice did something, looking for patterns of behavior, noting a significant event in the lesson, or assessing which performance indicators were demonstrated and which were not. Based on specific data and concrete examples, you are now able to interpret the impact of the teaching performance.

Stage Four: You both come together for a post-observation conference after each of you has had an opportunity to reflect on the lesson. You, as the mentor, must now provide feedback that is helpful without being judgmental. Some ways to communicate to novice's areas of needed improvements without presenting communication roadblocks include:

- Describing the behavior in specific rather than fuzzy terms
- Limiting yourself to behavioral descriptions
- Stating your description in objective terms, noting the impact of the behavior

Stage Five: This last stage of the coaching cycle is reflection. This gives both the mentor and the beginning teacher an opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of the mentoring process. When both parties share in the analysis, it brings to the surface behaviors that didn't work as well as expected and provides a mechanism to share concerns and reinforce effort.

Podsen and Denmark talk about the importance of **Post Observation Conferences Stances:**

In the post-observation conference, determine the appropriate stance to take with the beginning teacher based on their individual knowledge and skill.

Approach: Nondirective

The purpose of the nondirective conference approach is to create an active sounding board for a high-level thinker and creative professional.

- **Conference Outcome:** Novice self-assesses and develops improvement plans
- **Description:** Your role is to facilitate the novice's thinking in assessing lesson planning, presentation, and classroom management tasks. Novice develops a follow-up action plan for the next lesson. When the new teacher possesses knowledge and skill, Glickman (1990) suggests using the following behaviors:
 - Listening until the novice completes analysis
 - Reflecting and paraphrasing the novice's analysis, views, and feelings
 - Clarifying to probe for underlying issues and understanding
 - Encouraging the novice elaborate
 - Problem solving by asking the novice to generate solutions, actions, and possible consequences of these actions

Approach: Collaborative

The purpose of the collaborative approach is to develop mutual decisions and courses of action.

- **Conference Outcome:** Mentor and mentee assess performance and develop improvement plans.
- **Description:** In the collaborative approach, you both share information and discuss strengths and problem areas as peers. Follow-up action is developed together. When the conceptual level of the novice is moderate to high, Glickman (1990) suggests using the following behaviors:
 - Clarifying strengths and growth areas as viewed by the novice
 - Listening to the novice's perspectives
 - Reflecting and verifying the novice's perceptions of performance
 - Presenting the mentor's point of view
 - Problem solving mutually suggested options, negotiating differences
 - Standardizing the plan by agreeing on the details of follow-up actions

Approach: Directive Informational

The purpose of this type of conference is to establish a clear understanding of what needs to happen to help the novice correct and or modify teaching behaviors.

- **Conference Outcome:** Mentor assesses performance and suggests plan after soliciting novice's input.
- **Description:** In this type of conference approach, you need to provide the focus and the parameters of the lesson assessment. You allow the novice to select choices within your suggestions as you develop follow-up improvement plans. When the conceptual level of the novice is low to moderate or when the novice feels confused or at a loss of what to do, Glickman (1990) outlines these behaviors during the conference:
 - Presenting strengths and growth areas
 - Clarifying and asking for teaching input
 - Listening to understand the novice's perspective
 - Problem solving to determine possible actions
 - Directing the alternatives
 - Asking the novice to make a choice
 - Standardizing the actions to be taken
 - Reinforcing the follow-up plan

Approach: Directive Control

The purpose of this type of conference is to specify what must happen to achieve an acceptable performance and clearly outline the consequences for failure to bring performance up to expectations.

- **Conference Outcome:** Mentor assigns the plan.
- **Description:** In this approach, you need to tell the novice exactly what is to be done. There are no choices offered. When the conceptual level is low or the novice fails to show the awareness, knowledge, or desire to act on suggestions previously given to move him or her to an acceptable performance, Glickman (1990) suggests this approach:
 - Identifying and presenting the problem(s) with the greatest negative impact on performance
 - Clarifying the problem with the novice
 - Listening to the novice's point of view
 - Problem solving to see best solution
 - Directing specific expectations
 - Standardizing expectations and the possible consequences for noncompliance
 - Reinforcing and monitoring the action plan