

Plan a Coaching Conversation

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Title of Scenario: Elementary educator in need of feedback and/or professional development

The setting of Conversation: Empty kindergarten classroom, after school

Conversation:

Me (cheerfully): How are you, Miss A? Do you have some time for a quick chat? We could sit in this reading corner if you are okay!

Paraeducator (Miss A) (nervously): Good, thank you. How are you? Yes, sure. I am free now.

Me (maintaining eye contact with her): That's great! I'm well, thank you. Miss A, you have been doing an excellent job nurturing students in the classroom, and we have also noticed the attention and support you give Susie during lessons. I would love to hear more about how Susie is adjusting in class and her participation during lesson time.

Paraeducator MA (getting up to fetch her notes and returning to her seat...thinking): Thank you. I love working with students. Susie and I do share a special bond. Overall, Susie has been adjusting well, but I have faced a few challenges with behavioral issues, especially her anxiety. She also has difficulty staying focused and following the teacher's instructions. She finds sitting on the carpet extremely challenging.

Me (listening attentively, silently nodding to show understanding, waiting for Miss A to share)

Paraeducator MA (worried): It's beneficial that we share a strong bond, so she's willing to listen to me. However, finding the right approach to address her behavior without disrupting the entire class is difficult.

Me (appreciatively nodding): First, I commend you for keeping notes of student observations as it helps you to consistently observe, reflect, and make necessary changes to improve their outcomes. You shared with me some genuine challenges that are difficult to deal with but need immediate attention. So, you mentioned that Susie finds sitting on the carpet challenging (clarifying by restating Miss A's points). Does this happen during large-group instruction? Can you elaborate on what triggers her anxiety and how you manage Susie's behavior?

Paraeducator MA (nodding in agreement and engaged in reflecting): Yes, she gets anxious during large-group instructions. For example, during a whole-group Phonics lesson on the carpet, Susie finds it challenging to sustain attention, she moves around, and tends to distract her peers. When I make her sit on my lap, the touch helps to calm and comfort her; she's her happiest! So, I tend to sit with her on my lap at the back of the carpet so that we don't hinder their view of the lesson other students in class. Now, hearing myself talk about how I manage her behavior, something feels not quite right. I'm problem-solving for now but have a feeling that I am not thinking about it long-term. It will be constructive to hear your suggestions regarding this.

Me (nodding in agreement, encouragingly): Miss A, I completely understand your intentions, and it's evident that you care deeply for Susie's well-being. The problem-solving process you've

adopted works to calm and comfort Susie. However, you're also on the right track regarding your doubts about the correctness of your adopted method. From your file, I can see that you attended an orientation that helped you understand the types of disabilities of the students you work with. It also oriented you of the privacy/inclusion laws for all students. Am I correct?

Paraeducator MA (nodding in agreement but unsure): Yes, I did participate. It was helpful but not thorough enough. I want more help with relevant strategies (accommodations and modifications) to help with student needs and behavior in the best way possible and not do anything that would cause them harm.

Me (hands over a copy of privacy laws and Susie's IEP to Miss A): You're doing great. The orientation ought to have been more thorough in equipping you with all the necessary skills for addressing the needs of the children. Let's review the privacy laws and Susie's IEP together and discuss how your method may have affected Susie's right to feel included with her peers and impacted her inclusivity (pointing to the section which has been highlighted)?

Paraeducator MA (thinking intently): I can now see how Susie sitting on my lap can prevent her from interacting with her classmates. It may also project Susie as being babyish or immature, and this can unintentionally isolate her from her peers! Also, sitting on my lap may also be impacting her engagement in lessons. She doesn't look at the teacher or show interest in participating or engaging appropriately during lesson time! I now strongly feel that I should find ways to encourage Susie to sit on the carpet on her own while I am next to her to improve her outcome academically and socially while protecting her right to privacy and inclusion.

Me (encouragingly): That's some in-depth reflection on your part. We must always refer to a child's IEP to ensure that what we do is a needed accommodation for the child. Let's brainstorm alternative strategies to encourage her engagement while maintaining her independence. But since you're well-versed in Susie's interests and needs, it will be your decision regarding what will work best for her (looking for non-verbal clues to see Miss A's reaction).

One option to consider is to provide proximity support, then transition from this to staying in her vicinity (eventually fading support completely to increase independence). You can provide prompts or redirection to keep her focused. Pairing her with a partner can facilitate inclusion and enhance her learning potential through active participation. We can explore strategies (visual supports, active communication strategies) to promote her engagement while developing her independence without compromising her privacy.

Paraeducator MA (excited, animated nods of approval): Thank you for your guidance, these are great options, and I can adopt a combination of both and observe to see how Susie progresses. I'm committed to positive changes and ensuring Susie feels included and respected.

Me (taking notes, reminders to follow up while talking): I appreciate your openness and willingness to learn, Miss A. I will provide you with resources and professional development opportunities to create inclusive environments and support students' privacy rights. We can also schedule regular check-ins to discuss your progress, address concerns, and provide ongoing support. Let's continue working together to create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment for Susie and her peers.

Title of Scenario: Secondary Paraeducator in Need of Feedback and/or Professional Development

Setting of Conversation: Empty kindergarten classroom, after school

Conversation:

Me (cheerfully): How are you, Miss Jane? Do you have some time for a quick chat? We could sit in this reading corner if you are okay!

Paraeducator (Miss Jane) (smiling): Good, thank you. How are you? Yes, sure. I am free now.

Me (maintaining eye contact with her and ensuring that she's relaxed): That's great! I'm well, thank you. Miss Jane, you have been doing an excellent job nurturing the students in the classroom. From the attention and support you give Jonathan, it is evident that you want him to do well in school. I've had a chance to review the concerns raised by the math teacher, and I would love to hear from you about how Jonathan is working towards improving his independence with his daily routines and his notes taking skills in school.

Paraeducator (MJ) (Getting up to fetch her notes and returning to her seat...thinking): Thank you. I do love working with students. Jonathan and I have known each other since he was in elementary school, and I also have a good relationship with his mother. Overall, Jonathan has been adjusting well. He takes a long time to take his pencil out to write, he is also slow in writing his notes down, and he sometimes forgets or misses writing down all the necessary information. So, this causes anxiety, and he gets overwhelmed.

Me (listening attentively, nodding) These are some genuine challenges that are difficult to deal with but need immediate attention. You mentioned that Jonathan gets overwhelmed easily and takes time to get ready for work (clarifying by restating Miss Jane's points). Can you share your perspective on how you support Jonathan with his challenges during class?

Paraeducator MA (thinking intently): I have promised Jonathan's mother that I will ensure that he does not get overwhelmed. I've been helping him by turning his book to the right page and giving him a pencil. Since he sometimes misses to write details during notetaking, I also help him take notes. However, telling these aloud to you gives me the impression that I may have been preventing him from learning to do his work independently (looking worried).

Me (hands over a copy of privacy laws and Jonathan's IEP): (appreciative) First, I commend you for keeping notes of student observations as it helps you to consistently observe, reflect, and improve their outcomes. You're also on the right track regarding doubts about your actions hindering Jonathan's independence. It is vital that we gradually increase his independence. During Jonathan's academic team meetings at the beginning of the year, there were discussions with you regarding the goal and accommodations (pointing to the highlighted section of his goals) he needed to promote his independence as a student. Am I correct?

Paraeducator (MJ) (apprehensively): I did attend but admit I didn't contribute much. I was given a copy of Jonathan's IEP, but I wasn't aware of how my actions could potentially hinder his progress. Since I was unclear on how to respond, I was quietly but actively listening.

Me (reassuringly): We can address these concerns together, Miss Jane. Understanding the impact of our actions is crucial in providing adequate support. Our focus and Jonathan's goal in the IEP are all geared toward promoting Jonathan's independence. Let's revisit our discussion to reflect on the steps you've taken to promote his independence. What must we do differently?

Paraeducator (MJ) (thinking intently, looking at the IEP): I understand that Jonathan does not need help to find the correct page in his textbook and he has all the necessary things, like a pencil holder right in the front of his notebook. Going forward, I need to stop doing things for him and provide the motivation he needs to become independent. I now understand that Jonathan may be slow, but he can keep up with the class.

Me (appreciative nod): It's wonderful that you can reflect on your actions and are open to trying out strategies to support Jonathan. Our goal is to make our students feel accepted, ensuring that nothing we do makes them feel stigmatized or isolated (pointing at the section highlighted). Do we agree? Let's reflect on how our actions may have negatively impacted Jonathan's inclusivity.

Paraeducator MA (nods in agreement): I agree. I can see how helping Jonathan, even though he could have managed with some difficulty, can make him look incompetent, as someone who is incapable of doing things independently in front of his peers. I need to find ways to support Jonathan's needs while respecting his privacy rights and fostering his inclusion.

Me (encouragingly): You're spot on in your reflection. We must always refer to a child's IEP to ensure that what we do is a needed accommodation for the child. To address the concerns raised by the math teacher, we can plan professional development sessions (*Promoting student independence and inclusive classroom environment* - gradually fading support, fostering independent learning skills, and self-reliance) for you to attend but you may choose what sessions you want to attend. First, I suggest conversing openly with Jonathan and his mother about your intentions to support his independence, involve them, and seek their input. Developing his confidence is a slow process, but with your encouragement, he will gain the confidence that he can do it on his own. If you're worried about him falling behind in his notes, we can provide him with a copy of the notes afterward or supplement with the information he has missed out on. However, ensuring that he is not penalized, praising him, and rewarding him points for independent notetaking and his efforts is crucial.

Paraeducator (MJ) (very excited and nods with approval): Thank you for your guidance. I am eager to implementing them soon. I want to attend both the sessions and I am committed to Jonathan progressing toward his goal, feels included and respected.

Me (taking notes to follow-up): I appreciate your openness and willingness to learn, Miss Jane. I will organize the professional development opportunities and will schedule regular check-ins to discuss your progress, address concerns, and provide ongoing support. Together, we can create a more inclusive and independent learning environment for all students.