



Google for Education Certified Coach

Coaching Conversations Guide

Adapted from resources in the [Google for Education Certified Coach Curriculum](#) and the [references](#) listed at the end.

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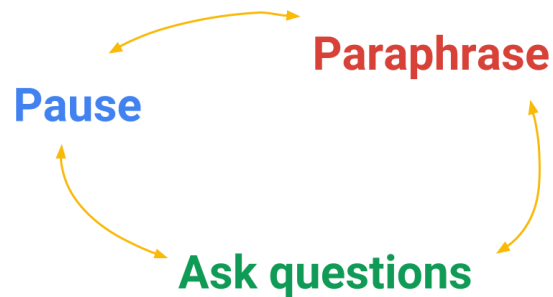
And two bonus resources:

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Pause, Paraphrase, Ask questions



Pause to allow time to think	When to pause: • After asking a question. • After your colleague stops talking. She may think of more she wants to add. • Before you speak. This models the importance of thinking before you respond.
Paraphrase to acknowledge or summarize Tell me more.  I think I heard you say... Is that right?	Acknowledge and clarify • What I hear you saying is... • In other words... • So, you're feeling... • I want to make sure I understand what you're saying... • You're noticing that... • Hmm, you're suggesting that... Summarize and organize • So, there seem to be two key issues here ___ and ___. • For you then, several themes are emerging; ___. • On the one hand, there is ___, and on the other hand, there is ___. • You have a couple areas of concern...
Ask questions to encourage construction of new understanding	• Ask real questions. Avoid questions for which you already have a preferred answer. • Ask honest questions. Don't hide advice as a question. Avoid question that begin with "have you tried..." • Ask open-ended questions that invite thinking. (No yes or no questions!) • Use an approachable voice that invites thinking and multiple responses. • Use plural language. Instead of "What is one goal you have for your students?", ask "What are some of the goals you have for your students?"

Active Listening



Be interested

This is bold because it is the most important piece of advice on this list.

- **Be genuinely interested in what is being said, and you will be an effective listener.**

Give your full attention

- Make eye contact.
- Listen without interruption.
- Avoid distraction.

Listen non-judgmentally

- Avoid answering with “me too” or “I know” or “I would never”. Let your colleague come to an opinion on his own.
- Avoid questions for which you have a preferred answer. These are leading questions and do not allow for more open thinking.

Assume positive intent

- Believe that your colleague has the best intentions rather than jumping to a negative conclusion.
- Use positive language when paraphrasing and asking questions.
- Instead of “Are you doing x,y,z to engage students?”, ask “What are some ways we might use x,y,z to engage students?”
- When paraphrasing for “This curriculum is confusing for my students”, say, “You’re concerned about your students’ success.”
- Paraphrase with an assumption of good will.

Be interested

- **Oh, did we already mention this? It really is the most important thing on this list. If you care about what someone is saying, you’ll have no problem giving them your full attention.**

Questions, Questions, Questions



Questions that prompt thinking

Useful question stems

- How might...
- What would...
- What are some...
- In what ways...
- How might you...
- What seem(s)...

Examples

- Say more about that.
- And that's important to you because
- How might that work for you?
- What might be some things you'd like to try?
- Which of these seem to fit right now?
- What are some of your hunches as to why that may be so?
- What do you suspect your gut is telling you?
- What are you noticing about...?
- How might that work for you?
- How might that look in your classroom?
- As you reflect on . . . , what are some things that come to mind?

Early in coaching cycle

- What's going well?
- What's something challenging that you'd like to get better at?
- What are some goals you have for yourself this year?
- Imagine it is the end of the school year. What will your classroom look like? What are your students doing? What learning has happened in your classroom?
- How have you tried to address this goal or challenge in the past?
- What worked? What didn't work?
- What might be some indicators of success that you've reached one of your goals?
- How might technology support you in your goals or challenges?
- Why is this important to you?

After initial meeting...

	• What have you tried since our last meeting? • What successes have you seen? • What hasn't worked well in the past and how would you do things differently?
After a classroom visit	• How do you feel the lesson went? • What did you like about the lesson? • If you could re-do one part of the lesson, what would it be and why? • Did the strategy you used go as planned? • Last time we talked about _____. How did that go today? • What do you see as a benefit to the technology use for this lesson? Did it deepen student learning? How so? • What are the next steps? • What can I do to support you with _____? • We have a little bit of time now, can I help you get started with...? • When would be a good time for our next meeting?
Building relationships	• Tell me a little about yourself... • People working with you should know... • What are your greatest strengths as an educator? • What's the best way to keep in contact with you? • What is your most favorite and least favorite thing about technology (or other strategy or tool)?
Technology use	• How might technology support your learning goals? • What tech tools could we use to address this challenge? • What other tech tools could we use to address this challenge? • Which tool or tools would you like to try for this lesson? • How will you introduce this tech tool to your students? • How can technology transform student participation in this lesson?
When someone seems stuck or overwhelmed	• I noticed _____ in the observation and it was successful, how might we build on that? • We've been focused on _____, does that still seem to be the most pressing area for you, or have your goals shifted? • How will you know you have been successful in meeting your goal of _____? • What are the challenges that are getting in the way of meeting your goals? • Is there anything I can help you with right now to make you feel more prepared/less stressed? • Would it help to spend a few minutes writing down all the things on your plate right now? Now that we've got a list, which of these items are most important? Which can we accomplish right away? Which are outside of your control? How can I help you get some of these checked off your list right now? • During goal setting you mentioned you wanted _____. What is another step we can take toward that goal? • What tech tools have you been interested in learning about? Would it help to spend some time learning about them together?

Making Suggestions¹	● One thing I've seen other teachers do is... ● A couple of things to keep in mind... ● Something you might consider trying is... ● Sometimes it's helpful if... Follow suggestions with an invitation to the teacher to imagine how the idea might work in their context. ● How might that look in your classroom? ● To what extent might that work in your situation/with your students? ● What do you imagine might happen if you were to try something like that with your class? ● Which of these ideas might work best in your classroom?
Difficult conversations (For discussions around professionalism / meetings / etc - NOT for evaluating instruction. Remember coaching is a non-evaluative role.)	● I noticed ___ and I'm concerned because ___. I wanted to hear from you to help understand how we can [find a solution]. (ex. I noticed you have skipped our past three coaching sessions and I'm concerned because I want to make sure that I am supporting you and our time together feels useful. I wanted to hear from you to help understand how I can best support you this year.)² ● Resource on Difficult Conversations
To dig deeper	● Can you tell me more about this... ● Can you give me an example... ● I'm curious to hear more about...
To encourage reflection	● What went well in your lesson today? What did you do that made this so successful? ● If you were to reteach the lesson, what would you do differently and why? ● How did your students respond to the lesson? How do you know? ● What tools were most effective in helping student learning? What tools were less effective? ● How did technology support the lesson today? Sentence stem completions: ● The most interesting thing that happened this week was _____ ● This week I discovered that _____ ● This week I was surprised by _____

¹ Mentor Academy 8: Teachers of Teachers, New Teacher Center, Chicago (www.newteachercenter.org) Copyright 2010

² Taken from ideas in the book [Difficult Conversations](#) by Stone, Patton, and Heen

General Conversation Tips



- Focus on building the relationship.
- Fight the urge to say “I do it this way” -- Brainstorm with the teacher and let the teacher go first.
- Change perception of you as an ‘expert’ and really make coaching a collaborative experience where there is more of give/take between coach/teacher.
- If the teacher is struggling to identify the actual issue, use "think of a previous time when you were doing something similar, how is this situation similar or different?"
- Avoid “Why” and “Who” questions, which can be off-putting, and focus instead on “What” and “How” questions.
- Start with the positive: ground the conversation in what is working and building on teacher strengths.
- Seek clarity often. Try paraphrasing stems to ensure you hear what the teacher says before moving to the next step of the debrief or conversation.
- Try to ground suggestions in data. Instead of “There was a lot of student engagement today! Good job!” try “I noticed from the data that 95% of your students were on task during the work time. What do you think you did that made this so successful?”
- Practice saying, “I don’t know, but I will look into that.” Model the learner orientation!
- End each debrief with a clear list of teacher next steps and coach next steps.
- Leave each debrief or meeting with a plan of when you will see the teacher next to keep consistency and ensure timely follow up.

Coaching Cheat Sheet

Click to make your own copy of this [coaching cheat sheet](#). You can customize this to include the hints and question examples that YOU need. It is formatted to print nicely on 8.5x11 inch paper.

Coaching Cheat Sheet



Google for Education
Certified Coach

Pause

to allow time to think

After asking a question
After receiving a response
Before responding

Edit this textbox to include the advice YOU need.

Paraphrase

to acknowledge, clarify, summarize, or organize

I think I heard you say... Is that right?
In other words...
I'm hearing two key issues here ____ and ____.
In other words...

Edit this textbox to include the advice YOU need.

Ask questions

to encourage thinking

Real and honest questions
Open-ended questions
Plural language

Examples:

How might...
What are some...
In what ways...
What seems...

Edit this textbox to include the advice YOU need.



When listening...

BE INTERESTED
Give your full attention
Listen non-judgmentally
Assume positive intent
Edit this textbox to include the advice YOU need.

References

Many of the ideas shared here have been adapted from these three books.

Knight, J. (2016). *Better conversations: Coaching ourselves and each other to be more credible, caring, and connected*. Corwin.

Knight, J. (2018). *The impact cycle : What instructional coaches should do to foster powerful improvements in teaching*. Corwin.

Lipton, L., & Wellman, B. M. (2018). *Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships*. MiraVia, LCC.

And here are two other great books to help build coaching skills.

Aguilar, E. (2020). *Coaching for equity : Conversations that change practice*. Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Aguilar, E. (2013). *The art of coaching : Effective strategies for school transformation*. Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.

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And here are some bonus resources for coaches...

Coaching Actions



Here are some ideas of different ways to support educators while you are in and out of the classroom:

- Data Collection/Data Analysis
- Co-Teaching
- Co-Planning
- Model a lesson
- Whisper coach (unobtrusive assistance)
- Plan a visit to another teacher in the school or district
- Analyze student work
- Analyze a video of a lesson taught by the teacher, the coach, or another teacher
- Resource capacity building (spend time building teacher efficacy with a tool, resource, or concept)
- Goal Setting
- Lesson Plan Feedback
- Role play a scenario
- Script out the language for a lesson or a set of directions with the teacher
- Troubleshooting issues
- Shared notebook/blog

Classroom Visit Data Collection Ideas



Here are some ideas of different ways to collect data in the classroom:

- Selective scripting: write down the exact language that a teacher or students is using.
- Video recording: take a video of the lesson you are observing (ensure that you've gotten the teacher's permission first).
- Seating Chart: Ask for a seating chart of the class, and take notes on student behavior.
- Student Conversations: Have a conversation with three to five students about the work they are doing.
- Teacher/Student Movement: Use a seating chart to track student and teacher movement during the lesson.
- On Task: Use a seating chart. Do a sweep of the room every 1-2 minutes, noting on the seating chart which students are on or off task.
- Student case study: Follow one student's actions for the full lesson, noting behaviors, dialogue, and movement.
- Participation: Track student participation on a seating chart during a lesson or discussion, noting who speaks, responds, or asks questions.