

Preparing for the coaching conversation

In preparation for the post-lesson discussion or conversation, try to pull together your thoughts on the following points.

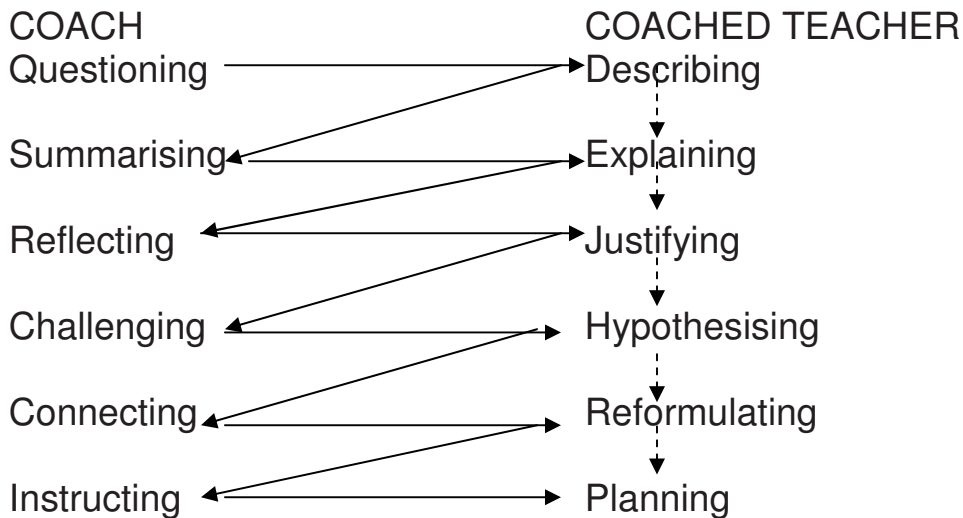
- What the teacher planned to do or develop in the lesson – the action points. You have to consider whether the coaching conversation will focus solely on these or pick up on other interesting issues.
- Patterns in the lesson – high or low frequencies of particular phenomena that one might expect to see in this type of lesson, especially related to the action points.
- Critical episodes of the lesson that you think are potentially rich learning opportunities. They may be episodes where things went well but they are more likely to be where there were unexpected reactions from pupils, or interactions between pupils, or where the teacher may have been unaware of what they were doing (unconsciously competent or unconsciously incompetent). These bits of detail should relate to the big picture of what this pedagogy or skill is about.
- Think of occasions or experiences that you might use to exemplify, console and inform, but remember this is not about you, don't become a show-off or a bore.
- Think of what they might need to know or do to move them on – 'What you could try is...', 'There's something in (some book, article, training unit, etc.)'
- If the lesson was video recorded, then both parties need to watch the video. This is the sort of detail that makes coaching more time-consuming BUT it multiplies the value. Remember the video allows the teacher to do much of the analysis. Without it they are dependent on your observation, which gives you power and it is much harder for them to do the work and become independent.

Basically you end up with a list of issues and episodes that you want to explore, if time and circumstances allow. However the coached teacher may also have their own list, which needs accommodating.

Source:

Sustaining improvement: A suite of modules on Coaching, Running networks and Building capacity Ref: 0565-2003 Module 2: Coaching (Part B) p. 61

Model of a coaching conversation (After the work of Ovens and Dunne)



The zigzag pattern of arrows indicates the coach responding to the coached teacher and moving them on in terms of reflection, analysis and generating new ideas.

- The conversation episodes start at low levels of thinking (describing) and proceed to higher levels (hypothesising).
- The double arrowheads indicate that it is possible for the coach to ask supplementary questions to get more detail at a certain level before moving on.
- The dashed line indicates a coached teacher doing nearly all the work and moving to higher levels without the intervention of the coach.
- The pattern suggests the coached teacher at first describes episodes, then explains them in terms of the events of the lesson, then justifies them more broadly, then starts to hypothesise about possible alternatives or ways of repeating successes and putting these ideas into a new theory about their teaching. Finally they may do some planning for future lessons based on these new ideas.
- The model is a generalisation – there will be much variation.

Source:

Sustaining improvement: A suite of modules on Coaching, Running networks and Building capacity Ref: 0565-2003 p. 64

Observation prompts post-lesson coaching conversation

Context

Is the setting and environment relaxed and comfortable?
Is the climate conducive to discussion, with fairness, tolerance and mutually supportive relationships?
Do coach and coachee establish the right tone for discussion (relaxed but purposeful)?
Has the conversation been carefully prepared to be tailored to the teacher involved?
Is the mode specialist or co-coaching or a combination?
Is the conversation supported by a video recording?
Is it informed by learners' attainment, progress and attitudes?

Achievement

Are successes in the lesson identified? By whom? How well are they backed up by evidence?
Is there a clear focus on pupil progress and learning?
If video is being used, what is the impact on the conversation?
How does the coach elicit comments from the coached teacher?
What is the balance of the conversation?
What kinds of questions are used? By whom?
How well does the coach listen?
Does the coach give sufficient time for comments and responses?
Does the coach use appropriate conversational techniques, including reassuring non-verbal communication?
Does the coach offer personal examples?
Are comments or details recorded? If so, by whom?
Is there a clear rapport and understanding between the coach and coached teacher?
Does the coach challenge assumptions in a constructive way?

Development

How are areas for development identified? How appropriate are they?
How positive and solution-focused is the discussion?
Is the coached teacher involved in agreeing next steps and 'signed up'?
What is the timescale for action (days, weeks, months)?
Are planned actions recorded? If so, how and by whom?
Do coach and coached teacher discuss accessing further specialist guidance? If so, how appropriate is it?
How well does the conversation conclude with a feeling of joint professional learning?

OBSERVATION FORM

Context

Coach	Coachee
Achievement	
Development	

Year 9 German lesson Coaching notes

Coached teacher _____ Coach _____

Achievement

Some of the many strong features of this lesson that could be brought out in the conversation include:

- Clear learning objectives, which worked well together to support the pupils in completing the task and making progress.
- Clear outcomes for the lesson and success criteria for the task which were used to remind pupils of what they needed to do and gave them a means of judging the standard of their work (extended sentences, connectives, past tense, expression).
- Role-play task provided audience, purpose and context for the languages work.
- Excellent relationships and climate for learning, with respect and appreciation of pupil responses.
- Very positive engagement of pupils.
- Well-structured lesson, broken down into distinct **episodes** with good variation in activity and a balance between whole class and group work.
- Well-prepared lesson with good, targeted use of materials, which provided sufficient preparation and scaffolding of independent task (tape, worksheets).
- Effective questioning and whole class instruction, at times probing answers for more detail. Questioning effective in guiding pupils to focus of task and criteria for progress.
- Good modelling of task with MFL colleague (coach) and exemplary modelling of pronunciation.
- When deployed, use of target language very effective.
- Excellent scaffolding of task (combination of modelling, whole class discussion, materials).

Development

Focus of pre-lesson conversation was **intervening in groups**.

Could single out the effective impact of intervening by moving pupils on in the task, enabling them to make faster progress. Opportunity for some tailored instruction. (Example of group of boys could be used.)

Group intervention an opportunity to shift focus and balance of dialogue from being teacher-dominated to being teacher-managed as a member of the group, so that pupils' contributions are extended and build on each other's comments (from 'ping pong' to 'basketball'). Also a chance to probe pupils' understanding and thinking, and how they are working, as well as focusing on the task.

Some areas for reflection in the conversational dialogue might include the following:

Questioning largely focused on task or on points that the teacher wants to convey. Some probing used to justify and extend pupil comments, but could this be extended?

If so, how? Possible techniques to be extended in group intervention:

- **Higher order questions** to do with justifying or generalising (how and why).
- Could use more **open and genuine** questions of pupils.
- Alternatives to questions. **Invite pupils to elaborate.**
- **Non-verbal cues**, eye contact, nods, facial expressions.
- **Wait time** (the double wait – after question from teacher and after response from pupil).

Additionally, it might help to get **more on their physical level** or even to sit among them as you circulate.

Some of these interactions may **require more time with particular groups.**

The idea of sitting among the group could then be extended into the area of **guided learning**, where **more time** is spent to develop a structured dialogue with particular groups of pupils.

Possible resources to use to develop the quality of dialogue would be *The Secondary National Strategy Assessment for learning MFL* online nugget and **the MFL example of guided learning** in module 9 of *Pedagogy and Practice: teaching and learning in secondary schools*