

One of PIIC's 4 quadrants is to support reflective and non-evaluative practice as we work with our colleagues. We help our teaching colleagues recognize which instructional practices are effective and which need to be strengthened. We facilitate conversations that help them distinguish which practices are vulnerable and which ones promote increased student engagement. We strive to help teachers meet the needs of their diverse populations and try to ensure that all students are in classrooms with highly effective teachers. And coaches do all of the above in non-evaluative ways as they help teachers reflect in, on, and about practice through the feedback process.

Non-evaluative feedback is descriptive and objective. It is specific, timely, unemotional, and nonjudgmental, helping the "learner" identify and understand what needs to happen for improvement to occur. It is "option-driven" and tied to goals. It should be formative, ongoing, and designed for growth. It is communication that creates opportunities for learning, collective problem-solving, and change. It involves questioning and reflection.

Evaluative feedback is performance based. It is the role of the administrator to observe a teacher's lesson and determine if the objectives for that lesson are appropriate and achieved. It is summative and designed to reveal that administrator's "judgement" on whether the teacher's performance was satisfactory or not.

So, how does the coach fit into this process?

Coaches provide opportunities for their teaching colleagues to engage in the three-pronged process called the B, D, A cycle of consultation. It is through this process that coaches and their teaching colleagues plan, set up their data collection tools, visit, and debrief their collegial experiences. It is an opportunity for coaches and teachers to practice together and be critical friends to one another without the risk or fear of an evaluation, either positive or negative. It is not an evaluative process; it is an enabling process that fosters conversation about practice, makes one's thoughts visible, and creates an opportunity to make adjustments where needed.

When coaches and their teaching colleagues collaborate and practice together, they reinforce the notion that they are all members in a community of learning and practice. They rehearse together and envision what effective classroom instruction looks like and anticipate some challenges they might encounter. They ask each other questions that help get to the root of

effective instruction and clearly indicate what they want students to know and be able to do when they leave that classroom. Coaches help teachers understand how their students learn and ways they can enhance that learning. They encourage conversations about what works in the classroom and what changes are needed to ensure that the goals are accomplished. Coaches and their teaching colleagues work together to determine successful classroom experiences and what they learned from any mistakes that created obstacles to learning.

Learning from mistakes is critical for improvement. As Oscar Wilde said, “Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.” So, try new things, challenge yourself, explore different ways to approach instruction, collaborate with your colleagues, and most importantly, talk about practice.

Do not dwell on what you think are mistakes but rather, let those mistakes become your greatest teacher and share those teachable moments with your colleagues.

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