

STUDENT-CENTERED COACHING

FROM A DISTANCE

Coaching Moves for Virtual, Hybrid, and In-Person Classrooms



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CORWIN

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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Student-Centered Coaching From a Distance* by Diane Sweeney and Leanna S. Harris.

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Hopefully, as coaches and teachers think through the purpose of the work they're asking students to do, it will become clear that giving feedback doesn't have to feel like such an overwhelming task, even when teaching from a distance. The following list of questions can guide coaches in conversations about gaining clarity around learning and purpose.



Tool: Language for Gaining Clarity

- What is the intended learning for this unit or lesson? What standard(s) does it address?
- What will it look like if students are successful in this learning?
- How can students demonstrate their understanding, either digitally or in person?
- Is there anecdotal evidence we can collect?
- What is the purpose of the work students are creating? How will it be used?
- If students are receiving feedback, will it be descriptive or evaluative (such as a letter grade)?

MOVE 3: LOOK FOR AND BUILD ON STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

Another way coaches can support teachers in getting the most out of using student evidence is by helping them take an asset-based approach to the process. This holds true whether learning is virtual, in person, or hybrid. One way of thinking about this is as a strengths-based perspective, or focusing on what students can do and building on those strengths. But taking this approach goes beyond just acknowledging what students already know and can do. According to the California Department of Education (2020), an asset-based approach to teaching views “the diversity that students bring to the classroom, including culture, language, disability,

socio-economic status, immigration status, and sexuality as characteristics that add value and strength to classrooms and communities” (para. 1).

So what does this mean for coaches? We believe in modeling an asset-based approach through our own language. When looking at student evidence with a teacher or team, we can frame the conversation around first uncovering students’ schema and the skills they already have. This will lead into planning for how to celebrate and build on those strengths. This is not to say that we ignore the gaps or misconceptions in understanding; rather, we don’t make students’ deficits the sole focus of our work.

Taking an asset-based approach also applies to collecting anecdotal evidence during lessons. Do we listen for what students are doing or what they aren’t? Do we keep our eyes trained on the learning target, or do we look beyond the teaching of the day? It can be easy to slip into a deficit mindset in these situations, as many of us have experienced. A fourth-grade teacher and coach were co-teaching a lesson that focused on the learning target “I can repeat a powerful line to add writer’s craft.” All around there was evidence of the students trying to meet the learning target, and as a result, they were doing some great writing. Yet during the planning conversation, the teacher kept coming back to the students’ lack of paragraphs—something that wasn’t the learning target for this or any recent lesson. She was so busy noticing what wasn’t there that she had a hard time seeing what was there. To respond, the coach brought the teacher back to the student evidence and asked her to narrow her focus to the learning target itself. In doing so, the teacher was able to see that students were actually attempting what they had been taught in the lesson.

We share this story because if we get stuck in the rut of looking only at what’s not there, we risk missing the good stuff, and we risk our students disengaging and giving up. Bemoaning the lack of paragraphs made the teacher feel hopeless. Seeing that her lesson inspired the students to try something new made her feel just the opposite.



Tool: Language for Staying Asset-Based When Looking at Student Evidence

IF I HEAR OR NOTICE ...	THEN I CAN SAY OR DO ...
A teacher says, "I don't know what kind of math these kids learned in their home country, but they sure don't get the way we do it here."	You can respond, "It's so fascinating that sometimes different approaches and strategies are taught in different countries. I wonder if we could ask them to show their approach in a Flipgrid to the rest of the class. That would give us insight into what they already know, and it might give the other kids some new ways of approaching the problem. It would also give these newcomers a great way to shine."
When looking at student work, a teacher complains that a student doesn't know "anything" about the concept that's being taught.	You can remind the teacher that all kids come to school with a variety of schema and that part of our job is to uncover what they already know and to build on their strengths.
A teacher says, "I just get depressed looking at my students' work because it's a reminder of how far behind they are and how much ground I have to try to make up with them."	You might say, "Even though many students in your class are below grade level, it will be helpful to figure out what each one is bringing to the learning. That way, we can address the specific things they each need, which will help accelerate their learning."



Message From Coach Carrie

Dear Teachers,

Coaching is for *everyone*. Coaching is not about "fixing" teachers.

We are all a part of a team working together for the benefit of our students. A common misconception about coaching is that it's only for teachers who need some extra

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