

Making time to discuss instructional practice sets high expectations and yield positive results. It allows teachers to continually expand their knowledge base and work with their trusted colleagues, aka the coach, to make data-driven decisions that influence student learning. In our lexicon, we call this the BDA cycle of consultation and feedback. The “B” or *before* session is a time for co-planning and co-designing effective instructional practices to enhance student learning. The “D” or *during* session is the evidentiary trail where the agreed upon co-constructed data tool is used to collect the data. The “A” or *after* session is where both parties reflect on the class visit and discuss how the goals for that lesson were met. This is the time where the coach and teacher offer feedback to each other that is timely, specific, non-judgmental, and descriptive and is critical in determining what kinds of adjustments in practice are necessary.

The BDA cycle of consultation is situational. Here the coach, “facilitates rather than dominates the conversation allowing the teacher’s voice to be heard. It promotes an environment for collective problem solving where high expectation for effective instructional practices are the norm” (*Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools* , p. 24-25). The *before* and *after* phases seem easier to navigate with the coach and teachers meeting regularly to plan and visit. The third component, the *after*, phase seems to be the most difficult of the three components (think of a 3-legged stool) for the coach and teacher to regularly commit into practice yet this feedback loop may be the most important.

Sometimes, the coach has a part-time coaching schedule and cannot return to the teacher for several days; sometimes, the teacher has additional responsibilities and cannot schedule time to meet with the coach for this debriefing. Sometimes, the importance of this reflective time is minimized and the time for processing “what happened” is replaced with moving ahead and thinking about what to do next. Whatever the reason for missing the *after*, coaches need to emphatically remind teachers that making time to meet and reflect on the classroom visit is the moment where internal scrutiny and potential adjustments occur. It is the process by which we think about “what happened” as it leads to metacognition; that is, why did I do what I did? It is what Schon says, “... is a dialogue of thinking and doing through which [one] becomes more skillful (*Educating the Effective Practitioner* , p. 31).

Coaches need to reiterate consistently and frequently the significance of engaging in an after conversation with the teachers. Very often, this *after* becomes the *before* for the next planning phase of their coaching interaction. That's because this time for reflection is not a report documenting what happened in the class but rather the "rationale behind the actions and learning that guides the next steps" (

Instructional Coaching in Action

..., p. 47). What happened in this class that the teacher can build on, refine, improve, or re-direct if necessary? Having a specific, deliberate time to revisit the goals set for that class and how those goals were met gives both the teacher and coach time to review aloud and make his/her thoughts visible about the expectations of the class and what needs to be strengthened the next time around.

Joellen Killian says that "Feedback is a process that engages the learner in review, analysis, reflection, and planning of future action. When learners actively engage in constructing feedback rather than passively receiving feedback, they are far more likely to own the information generated and to take responsibility for future actions" (*The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning*.

p 22). All coaches need to help their teaching colleagues reach their fullest potential and take ownership of their learning. That happens when the coach and teachers collaborate in planning sessions and in debriefing sessions.

So, even part-time coaches need to reiterate the need for the debriefing and feedback process with their teaching colleagues. It is a systematic approach to engage colleagues in transparent conversations that are reflective, trusting, relevant, and transformative.