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“Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.” (Peter Drucker)

The nature of a BDA coaching cycle where a teacher and coach plan together, the coach visits the classroom, and then they debrief the lesson together suggests an inherently reflective process. The purpose of one-on-one coaching is to encourage teacher reflection with the goal of improving practice. What, then, makes the coach/teacher conversations really reflective?

The four step reflection tool published by *Learning Forward* describes the “anatomy” of the reflection process. When skillfully addressed, the four key questions (What happened? Why? So what? Now what?) ensure a reflective experience. Probing into the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘so what’, ‘now what’ requires a sequence of well-designed questions which a coach can pose to elicit thoughtful analysis of teaching practice and lesson design. The

### *Learning Forward*

tool suggests a series of questions to accompany each step in the process. Coaches should examine this and other documents found on the PIIC Instructional Coaching Resource Guide ( <http://www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org/> ) to select questions appropriate to the matter at hand. By the teacher responding to questions of why certain teaching moves were made, how feelings and behaviors affected choices for action, what was learned from the given situation, and how this instance will impact on subsequent instructional decisions, the coach/teacher conversation will be genuinely reflective. Questioning in the BDA cycle should not be one way; a collegial exchange involves the teacher posing questions for the coach as well. In ideal circumstances, the coach should plan questions in advance and share them with the teacher to allow time for analysis of data the coach may have collected in the classroom visit. However, coaches should not be locked into a rigid script. An often overlooked element of reflective conversation is intense listening; the coach should have the agility to adjust questions based on teacher perceptions. If a coach is responsive to teacher concerns, then follow up visits will be welcome.

PIIC mentors support coaches in developing their ability to engage teachers in the reflection process. In one instance, a mentor used a modified version of the *Learning Forward* tool to facilitate a session with a coaching team where they reflected on their experiences of working with teachers in the BDA cycle. The selection of guiding questions from the tool moved the conversation from just a report of ‘what happened’ to an authentic reflection of ‘why’, ‘so what’

and 'now what'.

This cycle of reflective planning, purposeful classroom visits and quiet, probing questioning will, as Peter Drucker states, lead to even more effective actions.

Reference: Four-step reflection process from Tools for Learning Schools, *Learning Forward*, Winter 2013

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