Leadership Coaching Guide

OFFICE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT and
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

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Introduction
Leadership coaching is a professional learning experience for school leaders aimed at enhancing their professional practice to improve school performance. Leadership coaching is a strategy used by the Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement that supports Maryland administrators to apply the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders to their work. Coaching provides school leaders with customized support that is tailored to meet their professional needs in a risk-free and non-evaluative environment.

The Maryland State Department of Education’s Leadership Coaching Guide was developed to provide common foundation and clear expectations for the implementation of effective coaching practices. All leadership coaches will participate in training to support the implementation of coaching strategies identified in this guide.

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“Masterful coaches not only stand in a place that a difference can be made, they speak, listen, and act from that place, never indulging in cynicism or allowing others to do so.”
-R. Hargrove
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Design of this Guide and How to Use It
This guide is designed to help Maryland State Department of Education Leadership Coaches foster the growth of effective school leaders. Leadership coaching is designed to provide a customized professional learning experience for a school leader that leads to measurable improvement in performance and improved student outcomes in the schools in which they lead. Research and practice confirms that leadership coaching can provide the type of high leverage, individualized supports that school leaders need to become outstanding instructional leaders who have significant positive impact on their students.¹

- **Section I** presents an overview of leadership coaching. In addition to defining the concept of coaching, the chapter shares key research on the impact of coaching, distinguishes coaching from mentoring, and grounds coaching within a growth mindset.
- **Section II** provides a model for effective leadership coaching, with detailed information about how to acquire and apply coaching techniques, skills, and tools.
- **Section III** organizes a range of essential coaching tools and protocols, organizing them to support coaches before, during, and after the coaching meeting.
- **Section IV** unpacks the process of planning for and facilitating growth-focused conversations. This includes tips and strategies for planning, having, and reflecting on a growth-focused conversation. It also includes sample conferencing protocols to help leadership coaches plan their own coaching meetings. Each section includes key takeaways and resources for learning more about a particular topic.

Section I. Leadership Coaching as a Tool for Continuous Improvement

A Growth Mindset: The Basis of Leadership Coaching

Research on achievement and success conducted by Stanford University psychologists Carol Dweck, Lisa Blackwell, and their colleagues have revealed the power of mindsets—a simple, yet groundbreaking idea (see Figure 1.1). A mindset is a person’s established set of attitudes and beliefs about themselves and the world around them.

FIGURE 1.1

Characterized by the belief that intelligence is static. Characterized by the belief that intelligence can be developed

People try to look smart. Thus, they are likely to... People try to learn new things and work hard. Thus they are likely to...

Avoid Challenges Embrace Challenge

Give up easily Persist in the face of setbacks

These researchers have defined two distinct types of mindsets: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, people believe that qualities such as intelligence or talent are fixed traits that cannot be developed, and that the brain and talent one is born with are responsible for the successes achieved. Figure 1.1, which is adapted from the work of Dweck et al., illustrates these differences. Thus, people with a fixed mindset try to seem smart and skilled, so people will see them as capable of doing a good job. In contrast, people who have a growth mindset believe that the most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. A growth mindset helps nurture a love of learning and a resilience to obstacles and challenges that is essential for great success.

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accomplishments. When superintendents and district leaders approach school leader development with a growth mindset, they help school leaders to see that failures and setbacks are inevitable and can be opportunities for learning. They organize resources and time to support learning, and they provide timely feedback and guidance to nurture their development. School leaders with a growth mindset are open to honest feedback, and resist being defensive when they receive criticism because they are able to see it as a tool for continual improvement. They use multiple data sources and are willing to learn from feedback from both their supervisors and teachers.

When data are gathered and analyzed with a growth mindset, school leaders can set strategic goals based on what is working well and what is seen as a challenge area. School leaders recognize that they may need to work on reinventing aspects of their school, as well as improving as leaders, in order to bring about better results. Growth mindset leaders recognize that in order to make significant improvements in teacher practice and student learning they must grow; they must find new solutions to existing challenges, because doing things the same way they have always done it, will most likely result in the same poor performance.

“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”

– Albert Einstein

The Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement’s coaching model is based on a growth mindset and its structures. It is a year-long cycle grounded in a school leader’s self-assessment based on data, identifying priorities and setting goals for the year. The school leader creates an action plan to bring about the desired change and evaluates progress toward defined goals and outcomes. Despite the clearly articulated process, it must not be forgotten that change can be difficult. School leaders may have great insight and an inspirational vision to make beneficial changes to their school, but “when it comes to changing the world, what most of us lack is not the courage to change things, but the skill to do so.”³ Coaching is a powerful and highly effective way to help leaders develop the skills and strategies necessary for making profound and lasting changes.⁴


What is Leadership Coaching?

Coaching can be described as giving people support and honest feedback in order to help them develop, improve, and achieve their goals. At its core, coaching is about helping people reach their highest potential, by clarifying and then supporting achievement of their goals. The coach is a catalyst for change with well-developed skills, strategies, and tools to help school leaders shift their perspectives and discover different approaches to achieving goals. A coach works closely with school leaders to help them learn new skills, solve problems creatively, and meet challenges and opportunities efficiently and effectively. Much like a gardener tending her plants, a coach cares for and nurtures a learner, or “coachee,” so that the person will thrive.

Robert Hargrove, the author of Masterful Coaching, defines a coach as someone who:
- Sees what others may not as a result of their honed attention or listening skills;
- Is in the position to step back (or invites participants to step back) from the situation in order to gain some perspective;
- Helps people see the difference between their intentions and actions; and
- Helps reveal patterns of self-deception caused by defensive thinking and behavior.

The coaching relationship is transformational. It will help leaders become improved version of themselves, ready to achieve agreed-upon goals. Extraordinary leaders do not just happen; they develop in the process of producing results. In order to improve or reinvent their schools, school leaders must first reinvent themselves as school leaders.

---

The terms mentoring and coaching are often used interchangeably since they both refer to a one-on-one relationship between two people where one person is helping the other develop key knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, the two techniques differ in a few fundamental ways related to the focus of the relationship and the intended outcomes.  

### Coaching vs. Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A coach facilitates a learner’s ability to successfully complete a task or set of tasks, or achieve specific goals or objectives. The coaching relationship has a clear focus, is goal oriented, and includes conversations that are well-defined and occur within specific timelines.</td>
<td>A mentor, a more experienced person, works with a less experienced person (the mentee, or apprentice) to provide general career support or personal development. As a result, mentoring conversations may be philosophical, with a greater focus on attitudes and behaviors than on specific skills and goals. Overall human development is the desired outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since experience is the most effective learning tool, coaching tasks are usually job-embedded and part of the learner’s actual responsibilities.</td>
<td>The mentoring relationship is intended to help generally, improve work and life experiences for the mentee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intended result of a coaching relationship is a measurable improvement in performance and defined outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement leadership coaching model is grounded in fostering coaching relationships with school leaders, rather than a mentoring relationship. Ideally, the coaching relationship is more focused on the development of specific skills and the achievement of discrete tasks and goals. However, the incorporation of some mentoring techniques into the coaching relationship may be beneficial to achieve defined goals.

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The Impact of Leadership Coaching: What the Research Says

There is a growing body of research on coaching in the education sector. When research on coaching in the education sector is coupled with coaching research from the business section, the impact of coaching on leadership development is revealed. Leadership coaching that provides ongoing dialogue, feedback, and reflection may have more impact on improving practice than other professional learning strategies.

Joyce and Showers\(^9\) studied four types of professional learning experiences to determine the effectiveness of each on concept understanding, skill attainment, and application of what was learned to daily work. They found that the presentation of theory or modeling by a trainer results in about a five to ten percent application of that knowledge or skill in daily professional practice. Professional learning experiences involving practicing learned skills increased application of skill by only ten to fifteen percent, which does not support a significant catalyst for change. When this is contrasted with the impact of coaching as a professional learning strategy, the likelihood that concepts and skills are applied increases to eighty to ninety percent.

**FIGURE 1.2 Impact of Training Components on Learning and Applications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Components</th>
<th>Concept Understanding</th>
<th>Skill Attainment</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Theory</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling by Trainer</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice and Feedback in Training</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80-90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2007 Wallace-funded report, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World*, demonstrated that well-prepared principals make a significant difference in their schools.\(^10\) A key finding determined that leadership training should not end once principals are hired. Rather, it should continue with high-quality, job-embedded support for new principals and ongoing professional learning experiences for all principals to promote career-long growth in line with the evolving needs of schools. A meaningful connection between coaching and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) is vital to the continual improvement process.

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Section II. A Framework for Coaching

The aim of coaching is to support school leaders to become highly effective based on the descriptors in the Maryland State Department of Education’s Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Rubric. Leadership coaches are catalysts for change with well-developed skills, techniques, and tools to help people shift their perspectives and discover different approaches to achieving the effective and highly effective levels within the PSEL standards. To accomplish this, coaches must promote trust, learning, and autonomy in order to produce self-directed learners and leaders who are increasingly self-sufficient.

Coaching Adult Learners

Coaching is most effective when it is focused on specific areas an individual wants and/or needs to develop as informed by data. This is why coaching is closely linked with the reflection and goal setting cycle. In order to be open to growth and change, it is critical that adult learners:

- Believe that learning is relevant and immediately applicable to life or work;
- Have an element of control over what and how they learn;
- Believe that experience and competence is respected and valued; and
- Receive feedback that is specific, positive, relevant, growth-oriented, and focused on their goals.

Challenges Related to Coaching Leaders

The relationship between coach and “coachee” presents a unique set of challenges. Principals, used to being leaders, may have a hard time becoming learners. Building an open, honest relationship is essential to establishing an environment for learning to effect change. When coaching school leaders, coaches serve as thought partners, asking thought-provoking questions that guide school leaders to discover the answers on their own. Effective coaches are willing and able to:

1. Help school leaders reach their potential;
2. Guide them to navigate their own courses;

---

3. Engage in growth-focused dialogue that promotes self-reflection, revision, and continual improvement.\(^{(17)}\)

The Center for Creative Leadership’s core principles for coaching provides a framework for values and outcomes for coaches.\(^{(18)}\)

**FIGURE 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIX CORE PRINCIPLES OF COACHING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT:</strong> Create a collaborative and supportive environment that allows the school leader to feel safe and to take risks. Keep an open mind and avoid judgements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. KEEP THE SCHOOL LEADER IN CHARGE:</strong> Let the school leader decide which goals to work on and which strategies to select. Listen, reflect back what you hear, clarify, and provide time and space for thinking and problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. FACILITATE AND COLLABORATE:</strong> Be a catalyst and partner in the school leader’s professional growth. Resist giving direct answers or taking the role of expert, and instead ask thought provoking questions or share suggestions based on data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. ADVOCATE SELF-AWARENESS:</strong> Recognize one’s own strengths and challenges is a key to good leadership. Foster honest reflection and self-assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. PROMOTE EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING:</strong> Help a school leader learn through implementing action plans to achieve goals. Encourage thoughtful analysis of what went well and what didn’t so the school leader can learn from each experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. MODEL WHAT YOU COACH:</strong> Apply these principles in your own leadership development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Adapted from the Center of Creative Leadership 2013


“We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs.”
-Lisa Delpit

Dispositions are defined as a person’s attitude, beliefs, or tendency to act or think in a particular way. A coach’s role include helping leaders cultivate the maturation and development of their own dispositions, which will help students succeed.19 (See FIGURE 2.2) With the growth-mindset model for coaching, it is important for coaches to first assess their own dispositions and reflect on how these dispositions affect their ability to build meaningful coaching relationships and develop leaders.20

FIGURE 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentic in their beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three Essential Elements of Coaching

Effective coaching involves applying three essential functions – techniques, skills, and tools.

FIGURE 2.3

- **Techniques:** Effective coaches apply a range of coaching strategies or approaches. This forms the game plan behind their coaching practice.
- **Skills:** Effective coaches have foundational coaching skills such as relationship building, listening, observing, questioning, and giving feedback.
- **Tools:** Effective coaches bring practical resources that shape the coaching relationship, provide data, and help to compile meaningful feedback.

TECHNIQUES

Effective leadership coaches move fluidly between instructional, collaborative, and facilitative techniques as they attempt to address specific needs and build leadership capacity aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (see FIGURE 2.4). Click on the link to access the PSEL Standards.

FIGURE 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Standards for Educational Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mission, Vision and Core Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethics and Professional Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community of Care and Support for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional Capacity of School Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional community for Teachers and Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Operations and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School Improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coaches move fluidly between three techniques, listed below, as they attempt to address specific needs and build a school leader’s autonomy. Effective leadership coaches should cultivate the ability to quickly recognize which strategy is needed.21

- The **instructional** technique is used when a coach needs a more direct teaching role; typically used to help a school leader learn a new way of doing something.
- The **collaborative** technique is used when a project or task can benefit from shared work; best when the school leader and coach each have a part of what is needed to do the job well.
- The **facilitative** technique is a constructivist method that draws out ideas and solutions from school leaders; and helps them make decisions and develop their capacity through reflective practice.

Coaches rely on a variety of strategies as they implement each of the core coaching techniques listed below (see FIGURE 2.5). The techniques most related to each strategy are noted in FIGURE 2.6.

---

### FIGURE 2.5 Core Coaching Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Instructional | Didactic methods used when a coach needs a more direct teaching role; typically used to help a school leader learn a new way of doing something. | -Develop the knowledge and skills for job success  
-Clarify and commit to goals and take effective action  
-Change who we are, by changing what we do | Modeling, providing resources, and direct instruction | -May encourage dependence, rather than independence  
-May build specific knowledge and skills, but not overall capacity |
| Collaborative | Cooperative methods used when a project or task can benefit from shared work; best when the school leader and coach each have part of what is needed to do the job well | -Provides scaffolding for school leaders to adopt new ways of doing and being.  
-Achieve stated goals  
-Completes these tasks and projects independently | Coach may offer a range of approaches or solutions, but the school leader determines specific processes and tools that will best match his/her school | -May undermine the authority of the school leader  
-May encourage the school leader to give up power when the coach takes over |
| Facilitative | Constructivist methods that draw out ideas and solutions from school leaders, and help them make decisions and develop their capacity through reflective practice | -Create new possibilities by reexamining perceptions and assessments  
-Develop problem-solving skills and an inquiry approach to improvement  
-Build a reflective practice  
-Shift control from the coach to the school leader | Observations, reflection, analysis, reinterpretation, and experimentation | -May take time to do effectively  
-May first require the establishment of a trusting coaching relationship |
### FIGURE 2.6 Effective Strategies for Implementing the Core Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Instructive</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Facilitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay focused on the goal</td>
<td>A coach stays focused on the principal’s situation and avoids sharing personal examples, which may appear disrespectful to the principal’s experience or context.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn the art of offering a suggestion</td>
<td>A coach remains clear and precise when offering advice or proposing solutions. Suggestions are followed with a question that invites the principal to consider the impact.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get permission to instruct</td>
<td>To ensure comfort as a learner, a coach asks a principal for consent before introducing new information, skills, or tools.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask clarifying Questions</td>
<td>A coach asks the principal questions that encourage deliberation and thinking. Questions may be used to gather information, clarify a message, or make connections between ideas.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>A coach restates the principal’s message to ensure shared understanding and clarity. After restating, the coach may insert personal perspective or summarize key points. The paraphrase is important because it communicates that the coach is attempting to understand exactly what the principal is saying. Hearing the coach’s paraphrase may cause the principal to refine the message.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask reflective questions</td>
<td>A coach asks the principal to reimagine potential outcomes of actions. This may include hypothesizing what might have happened, analyzing what worked or didn’t work, or comparing and contrasting what was planned and what actually took place.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give non-judgmental responses</td>
<td>A coach shares data, observations, and feedback in a factual and objective manner, using specific details to provide evidence and illustration.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SKILLS

Researchers have identified a set of coaching competencies that define what a coach needs to do well in order to support the change process. The Coaching methodology embeds four competency areas into an interpersonal process that includes what a coach should do before, during, and after a coaching meetings to fully support the leader’s growth and development.

These four competency areas are:

- **PREPARATION** – reviewing the school leader’s current competencies, goals, and data; structuring the coaching conversation; and choosing appropriate coaching techniques.
- **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** – employing interpersonal skills such as trust and rapport building, non-judgmental responses, and sensitivity/empathy.
- **PUSHING FOR DEPTH & REFLECTION** – a school leader’s self-reflection and analysis that results from a coach’s process of listening, questioning, paraphrasing, and feedback.
- **ACTION/APPLICATION** – goal setting, action/implementation, data collection, and progress monitoring based on what is learned in the coaching meetings.

**Competency Area: Preparation**

Planning is critical to successful coaching. In preparing to coach, consider the individual’s goals and the intended outcomes for the meeting, and then design a plan for achieving those outcomes and supporting the leader’s progress toward attainment of the goal. This requires two vital skills: data analysis and structuring a coaching conversation characterized by a careful sequence of open-ended questions. The questions will be used to initially gather data and clarify what progress has occurred since the last meeting, and then transition to checking current progress related to the individual’s goals.

---


During the Coaching Meeting

Competency Area: Building Relationships

Coaching relationships are based on trust, rapport, and mutual commitment to the relationship. Coaching activities are focused on collaboration rather than management, provide a fresh perspective, authentic feedback, and emotional support and encouragement. It is important for the coach to establish trust and rapport from the beginning of the coaching relationship. This helps minimize anxiousness on the part of the coachee.

ESTABLISHING TRUST

Trust is the foundation of coaching. It is established over time, continually tested and reevaluated. For growth to take place, coaching relationship needs to provide a safe environment for school leaders to reveal vulnerabilities and openly discuss mistakes and/or areas of weakness.

FIGURE 2.7 Key Characteristics that Establish Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Tips for Coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity/Integrity</td>
<td>The coach is genuine, authentic, and honest.</td>
<td>- Do what you say. Make sure your behaviors match what you say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Be aware of what your body language communicates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell the truth and stand by your word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>The coach can be counted on for keeping promises.</td>
<td>- Follow through on commitments and promises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Schedule regular check-ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Meet deadlines and meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Ability</td>
<td>The coach has the knowledge &amp; skills to coach.</td>
<td>- Clarify your role as a coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduce and discuss issues of trust and confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implement a range of coaching skills, strategies, and tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>The coach shows kindness, compassion, and empathy.</td>
<td>- Be familiar with the individual’s culture and background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Connect as people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Address the individual’s issues with empathy and be non-judgmental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BUILDING RAPPORT

Rapport is built once trust has been established. Using deliberate communication strategies, coaches build rapport. Those strategies include:

- **Be approachable, be kind, and communicate acceptance.** The coach should make eye contact during coaching interactions. Be positive, supportive and smile.
- **Be fully present and use active listening skills.** Filter out distractions, ask questions to learn more about the individual’s ideas, experiences, and perspectives. Listen more than speak, aiming to truly understand what is being communicated.
- **Make personal connections.** Get to know the individual personally.
- **Be aware of your body language and environmental cues.** Body language is nonverbal communication where thoughts, intentions, and beliefs are communicated through physical actions (gestures, facial expressions, posture, eye movement, etc.) and significantly impact how a person is perceived. Consider how the seating arrangements and other aspects of the physical environment may influence the comfort level of the individual.
- **Use mirroring strategies.** Mirroring occurs when individuals adjust their actions and words to reflect the person with whom they are speaking. This can include subtly echoing body language, language and speech patterns.

Coaches will know that rapport has been achieved when they feel trusted and respected, and engagement is comfortable during coaching interactions.

**Competency Areas: Pushing for Depth and Reflection**

Research shows that when school leaders attend training or workshops, only a small amount of what they learn is transferred into their daily practice. However, their ability to implement new knowledge, and skills, soars when they are given the opportunity to put these skills into practice with the help of a coach who provides ongoing feedback to guide implementation.

To help school leaders grow and develop their practice, it is essential that coaching that is focused on meaningful dialogue. The primary goal of the coaching relationship is to “build the habits of mind that constitute reflective practice, conversations between a coach and coachee serve as a model for the internal dialogues of a self-reflective practitioner.”

Pushing for depth and reflection happens when the coach utilizes strategies of listening, observing, questioning, giving feedback, and encouraging reflection and critical thinking, and then using the data that emerges from the process to set goals, plan, implement, and assess (see FIGURE 2.8).

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At a basic level, all communication consists of four steps: 1) a message; 2) the transmission of that message; 3) the interpretation of the message by the receiver(s); and 4) a communicative dialogue, or back and forth. To avoid misunderstanding, a reciprocal communicative dialogue is critical to ensure the message is received in the way it was intended. In a coaching relationship, the coach focuses on acquiring data from and about school leaders, and then clarifying what is seen and heard through questioning in order to ensure proper interpretation of meaning. As the school leader responds to the coach’s questions, the coach can learn a great deal by both listening carefully to what is being said and observing the body language.

In a coaching conversation, the school leader will be doing much of the talking, and the coach will be responsively listening. The goal of a listener is to accurately receive the message being shared. That requires looking for inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal messages in order to hear the full message. It is important to listen as much for silences and hesitations, emotions, and deflections, as it is to what is being said in words.

Observing is another way to “listen” to what a person is saying. How the message is communicated is often more telling than the actual content of the message. A coach can learn a great deal about the dispositions and skills of the individual by noticing responses to questions, both verbally and nonverbally. It is important to schedule time to observe the school leader in action. Observing on the job is a powerful data gathering opportunity and opens the door to rich and meaningful feedback.
In a coaching session, it is important to ask questions that clarify, explore, summarize, and probe to extend thinking and expand the depth and breadth of the conversation. Questions are most effective when they are closely built from the content and information shared by the school leader. There are two types of questions: open and closed. The types of questions to ask depend on the type of information sought.

**FIGURE 2.9 Types of Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Question</td>
<td>Questions with no right or wrong answer that help to expand a conversation and find out more about someone or something</td>
<td>What do you think works well in your staff meetings?</td>
<td>Encourages thinking and reflection; may result in a lengthy, free form response describing a problem or challenge, or providing important information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed Question</td>
<td>Questions easily answered with a single word or sentence</td>
<td>When are the staff meetings?</td>
<td>Provides explicit details and clarifies facts, which can help to set goals and solve problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open questions can vary greatly. The examples below are effective for leadership coaching.

**FIGURE 2.10 Effective Open Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitational</td>
<td>Voices a request or encouragement</td>
<td>Would you consider...?</td>
<td>Builds buy-in, ownership, and engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Asks for precise information</td>
<td>How often does...?</td>
<td>Clarifies and explains a situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evocative</td>
<td>Seeks reflection or analysis</td>
<td>What might this mean?</td>
<td>Expands thinking/understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>Encourages substantiation and justification for statements</td>
<td>What evidence...?</td>
<td>Keeps focus on reality, not perception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feedback** is an essential component to the continual improvement process and serves as a catalyst for an ongoing reflective practice. The term feedback describes information that is provided after something has been done, in order to provide information about how well these efforts to reach a goal are working. The coach provides feedback with the goal of helping the school leader make changes in order to improve results. The way a coach shares feedback depends greatly on the quality of the relationship established and the coachee’s readiness to accept feedback.

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receive the feedback. In addition, feedback takes time. Adequate time should be allowed in your meeting to provide meaningful feedback and recognize it may need to be delivered in multiple sessions.

Effective feedback shares a few key characteristics:31

- **It is goal-referenced** – feedback provides information about whether changes are needed to meet deliverables, and compares planned versus actual outcomes.
- **It is tangible and transparent** – feedback describes exactly what was seen and heard in relation to progress toward articulated goals in order to provide a clear vision of progress.
- **It is actionable** – feedback is concrete, specific and useful and should help in the problem solving. Feedback is not advice; it is actionable information about what can be done to achieve goals.
- **It is specific and personalized** – feedback should be user-friendly and delivered in a way that can be fully understood without overwhelming the individual.
- **It is timely, ongoing, and consistent** – feedback is provided so that it can be immediately applied in order to better achieve stated goals.

### Competency Areas: Action/Application

After a coaching meeting, both the coach and the coachee have follow-up steps that include reflecting on and applying what was learned. In this critical phase of the process, the coachee integrates the ideas, strategies, and solutions from the coaching meeting into practice to move progress toward achieving stated goals. The coaching session should include data-based feedback that helps define the next steps for the school leader. The conclusion of the coaching session should include a discussion of next steps and the development of an action plan where the coach and school leader work collaboratively to identify the changes to implement in order to accomplish defined goals. The coach’s role in this process is to help define the action plan that will likely be completed and yield progress toward positive growth. The coach can support the action plan and changes through ongoing conversations and can motivate, assist, and provide meaningful feedback during the process.

### TOOLS

A tool is an instrument that is necessary for the practice of a specific role or vocation or a device that aids in accomplishing a task. Coaching tools are practical resources that help leadership coaches accomplish all aspects of the coaching process, from developing the foundational coaching skills (relationship building, listening, observing, questioning, and giving

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feedback) to implementing the core coaching techniques (instructional, collaborative, facilitative.)

**Before Coaching Tools:**
- **PSEL Rubric**: Helps the leadership coach determine starting points in specific standard areas for school leaders. Knowing a school leader’s starting points will help determine the appropriate coaching techniques to use.
- **Coaching Techniques**: Provides basic tips and strategies for implementing three highly effective coaching techniques; instructional, collaborative, and facilitative.
- **Conferencing Protocol**: Helps the leadership coach structure coaching conversations, guide the school leader through a process of creating goals and plans of action to achieve the goals, acting in pursuit of the goals, and reflecting on the impact of action.

**During Coaching Tools:**
- **Building Strong Coaching Relationships**: Tips and strategies for building trust and rapport with the school leader.
- **Coaching Communications and Feedback**: Strategies for developing the coaching skills of effective listening, observing, questioning, and providing feedback.
- **Coaching Language**: Tips and techniques for implementing core instruction and facilitative coaching moves, including sentence starters and examples.
- **Characteristics of Effective Feedback**: Tips for providing feedback that helps the school leader modify behaviors and get improved results.
- **Responding for Equity**: Strategies for starting an equity conversation.

**After Coaching Tools:**
- **Leadership Coach’s Reflection Worksheet**: A tool to help the leadership coach reflect on coaching meetings and identify next steps for the school leader.
- **Conversation Analysis Tool**: Helps the leadership coach reflect on how actions in the four key coaching competencies (listening, questioning, giving feedback, and non-verbal communication) played out in a coaching meeting. Helps the leadership coach determine how these skills are tied to perceived dispositions, and how these actions and behaviors can affect the coaching relationship;
- **Dispositions Self-Assessment for Coaches**: To be reviewed by leadership coaches periodically throughout the coaching relationship to help reflect on which dispositions may be an area for growth, and how current dispositions are impacting the coaching relationships.
Section III. Tools for Coaching

Section III provides specific tools that leadership coaches can use to plan coaching sessions; build effective coaching relationships; implement effective and differentiated coaching techniques; give actionable feedback; and plan for continual improvement.

These tools are designed to support leadership coaches in engaging school leaders in collaborative, improvement-focused conversations, which is an essential component of continuous improvement.

The tools are organized into three categories:

| Tools to help to plan the coaching meeting. | Tool 1: Professional Standards for Educational Leaders  
Tool 2: Leadership Coaching Techniques  
Tool 3: Conferencing Protocol |
| Tools to help facilitate the coaching meeting. | Tool 4: Relationship Building  
Tool 5: Pushing for Depth and Reflection  
Tool 6: Leadership Coaching Language  
Tool 7: Responding for Equity |
| Tools to use to reflect on what happened after the coaching meeting. | Tool 8: Leadership Coach’s Reflection Worksheet  
Tool 9: Conversation Analysis Tool  
Tool 10: Self-Assessment for Coaches |

In the remainder of this section, each tool is introduced, explained, and provided.

Tools to be Used for Planning BEFORE the Coaching Meeting
The following tools provide background knowledge the coach may find useful in preparing for the coaching session.

**Tool 1: Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Rubric**

In February 2017, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). PSEL maintains the priority of instructional leadership while elevating the attention to the overall success and well-being of each student. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders contains ten standards that focus on mission, vision, and core values; ethics and professional norms; equity and cultural responsiveness; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; community of care and support for students; professional capacity of school personnel; professional community for teachers and staff; engagement of families and communities; operations and management; and school improvement.

**Description:**
The PSEL defines the practice of an effective leader. There are ten interdependent standards in the PSEL which reflect leadership work that research and practice suggest are essential to student
success. The Maryland PSEL rubric builds off of the practices identified for an effective leader in the PSEL document by expanding the definition to include practices of highly effective, developing, and ineffective administrators. MSDE collaborated with the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC), educational leaders from Maryland school systems, and administrator preparation faculty from Maryland institutions of higher education to develop the rubric.

**Tips:**

**PSEL Rubric**
The rubric conveys how each standard manifests across four levels of practice: highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective. Please refer to the document for additional information and clarification.

**Tool 2: Leadership Coaching Techniques**

This tool shows a continuum of coaching techniques that support school leaders’ movement toward autonomy, sustainability, and change. Often referred to as the I-C-F, it introduces: INSTRUCTIVE techniques, COLLABORATIVE techniques, and FACILITATIVE techniques.

**Description:**
The leadership coach determines which technique to apply depending on where school leaders are with respect to experience, competency, and dispositions in a specific issue; how quickly an issue needs to be addressed; and whether something would be best done through side-by-side collaboration work, or when it is time to build the school leader’s capacity and autonomy.

**Tips:**
After reviewing the Coaching Techniques Tool, the leadership coach determines the best fit technique to use based on the school leader’s competency level and needs, the content of the meeting, and the intended outcomes.

When using instructional techniques, the leadership coach should stay focused on the goal, learn the art of offering a suggestion, and ask permission to instruct.

When using collaborative or facilitative techniques, the leadership coach should ask clarifying questions and paraphrase to ensure understanding, ask meditational questions to imagine potential outcomes of action, and be sure to respond nonjudgmentally.

A follow-up tool would be the Conferencing Protocol to plan the questions to ask to frame a coaching session.
### Leadership Coaching Tool 2: Leadership Coaching Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructive</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Facilitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Coach directs the interaction based on assessed needs</td>
<td>-Coach guides interaction without directing it</td>
<td>-Coach acts as a facilitator of the school leader’s thinking and problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Coach provides information</td>
<td>-Coach and coachee contribute ideas somewhat equally</td>
<td>-School leader actively directs the flow of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Coach offers suggestions and solutions with rationale</td>
<td>-Coach and coachee construct solutions and materials</td>
<td>-Coach self-assesses and self-prescribes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples:**
- Share a process for analyzing student work
- Model an instructional strategy
- Suggest an assessment strategy for evaluating plan implementation
- Offer a menu of ways to make suggestions to teachers
- Share thinking that leads to a solution
- Reference current research
- Provide information
- Point out ways to tweak continuous improvement plans and implementation

**Examples:**
- Co-develop a meeting agenda or action plan
- Problem-solve issues of practice
- Analyze data together
- Co-observe a teacher and debrief together

**Examples:**
- Pose questions that clarify and deepen the school leader’s thinking
- Facilitate a group or team meeting
- Observe a team meeting or faculty meeting and take notes for the school leaders facilitating
- Listen as the school leader analyzes data to provide feedback
Tool 3: Conferencing Protocol

Description:
The Conferencing Protocol Tool 3 Template provides a process for leadership coaches to create and guide conversations that help school leaders achieve clear and in-depth thinking that leads to useful information and/or meaningful improvement. The template can be used to help organize, sequence, and pace the coaching meeting.

Tips:
This protocol represents the different levels of conversation. Through questioning, it structures a conversation to start with easily accessible information and builds in complexity to help school leaders think more analytically and creatively about current challenges and possible solutions.

To plan for a coaching conversation using the protocol, coaches should review the tools listed in the “during the coaching conversation” section since it focuses on how to ensure that school leaders can reflect deeply on their practices and make changes that will have positive impacts on teachers and students.
### Leadership Coaching Tool 3: Conferencing Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Framing Level      | To establish a shared purpose and outcomes | In order to: Draw the school leader into the conversation  
Ask questions that: Promote collaboration, invite inquiry and professional growth, and seek consensus and agreement. |
| Objective Level    | To understand and examine the facts | In order to: Identify and clarify facts, evidence, or issues  
Ask questions that: Identify factual information, examine data, and draw information from the school leader  
Example: What do you see in the data? What factual statements can you make based on the evidence? |
| Reflective Level   | To explore context and assumptions | In order to: Understand the school leader’s feelings, impressions, and insights  
Ask questions that: Deal with emotions and feelings, solicit the school leader’s reactions, and make personal connections  
Example: What surprised you? What encouraged you? What discouraged you? How does that make you feel? |
| Interpretive Level | To make meaning | In order to: Engage the school leader in reflective practice, and determine the current impact and future implications  
Ask questions that: Identify patterns and determine their meaning or significance, identify effects, and encourage free flow of ideas and insights  
Example: What does the evidence tell us? What insights do you have? What good news is there for us to celebrate? What doesn’t the data tell us? What else might we need to know? |
| Decision Level     | To develop next steps | In order to: Make decisions and develop an action plan  
Ask questions that: Describe desired outcomes, prompt the school leader to make decisions, and build commitment to next steps  
Example: What are our proposed next steps? What decisions can we make? What is our action plan moving forward? |
Leadership Coaching Tool 3: Conferencing Protocol Template

Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing Level</td>
<td>To establish a shared purpose and outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Level</td>
<td>To understand and examine the facts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Level</td>
<td>To explore context and assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Level</td>
<td>To make meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Level</td>
<td>To develop next steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:
Tools to Be Used for Planning DURING the Coaching Meeting

From the beginning of a coaching relationship, leadership coaches will work to establish trust and rapport, the building blocks of a successful relationship. The strategies outlined in the following tools are concrete things that will help put a school leader at ease.

Tool 4: Relationship Building

Description:
The Relationship Building tool divides trust and rapport into their component parts to help better define the building blocks of a healthy relationship.

Tips:
Leadership coaches should approach trust as an ongoing goal. Trust takes time to build, but it can only be nurtured and developed if the four characteristics are displayed on a regular basis, in a variety of situations.
Leadership Coaching Tool 4: Relationship Building

**TRUST:** Trust is a building block of an effective coaching relationship. The following tips can help to earn someone’s trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>What does this mean?</th>
<th>What can you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity/Integrity</td>
<td>The coach is genuine, authentic, and honest.</td>
<td>- Do what you say. Make sure your behaviors match what you say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Be aware of what your body language communicates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell the truth and stand by your word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>The coach can be counted on for keeping promises.</td>
<td>- Follow through on commitments and promises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Schedule regular check-ins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Meet deadlines and appointments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Ability</td>
<td>The coach has knowledge and skills to coach.</td>
<td>- Clarify your role as coach and the coaching process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduce and discuss issues of trust and confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implement a range of coaching skills, strategies, and tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>The coach shows kindness, compassion, and empathy.</td>
<td>- Be familiar with the school leader’s culture/background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Connect as people (interests, families, values).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Address the school leader’s issues with empathy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RAPPORT:** Rapport leads to a state of harmony and shared understanding. The following tips can help establish rapport with school leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>What can you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be approachable, kind, communicative, and accepting.</td>
<td>Smile and make eye contact. Be approachable, positive and supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fully present and an active and thoughtful listener.</td>
<td>Give full attention and filter out all distractions. Ask questions to learn more about the school leader’s ideas, experiences, and perspectives and show genuine interest. Do more listening than speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make personal connections.</td>
<td>Use open-ended questions to discover and build on commonalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be aware of body language and environmental cues.</td>
<td>Be aware of what nonverbal messages are conveyed through physical actions. Consider the physical environment such as seating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use mirroring strategies.</td>
<td>Adjust actions and words to reflect the other person such as subtly echoing body language, language, and speech patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 5: Pushing for Depth and Reflection

**Description:**
Leadership coaches push coaches to think deeply about practice and reflect on how their actions and behaviors impact teacher performance and student success. Coaches accomplish this by listening, observing, questioning and giving feedback that encourages reflection and critical thinking and then using data that emerges in that process to set goals, plan, implement and assess progress. This tool provides some easy tips for implementing this collaborative communication strategy.

**Tips:**
This tool looks like a checklist and the graphic representation is a linear progression, however, pushing for depth and reflection is an ongoing, cyclical process. Reviewing these tips could be helpful to a coaching conversation in order to be reminded of effective strategies, or after a coaching conversation to reflect on the efficacy of the meeting.
Active Listening and Observing

- Filter out all distractions
- Maintain eye contact, show understanding through gestures/body language
- Avoid interrupting or redirecting until the speaker has finished talking
- Do more listening than talking
- Ask clarifying questions and paraphrase to ensure understanding
- Observe non-verbal communications

Questioning and Dialogue

- Ask questions that clarify, explore, summarize, and probe
- Ask questions that help ensure the understanding of the message
- Mirror the individual's language in your questioning
- Build questions upon information the school leader has shared
- Be careful to make sure questions don't communicate advice or judgment

Giving Feedback

- Describe exactly what was seen or heard
- Provide information about progress toward stated goals
- Be concrete and specific when sharing actionable information
- Focus on a few key areas: don't overwhelm with too much information
- Deliver feedback in a positive and personal way
- Share timely information that can be immediately applied to improve performance
Tool 6: Leadership Coaching Language

**Description:**
This tool defines four essential communication strategies to build the habits of mind that result in reflective practice.

**Tips:**
The communicative process is one in which information is shared by one person, received by another, and mutual understanding is confirmed through a back and forth dialogue. The four strategies defined in this tool help ensure the process will not only avoid misunderstanding, but will also build a shared understanding of current successes and challenges and support the clear vision of next steps to achieve goals. Clarifying and reflection questions should be asked to get more information, and paraphrasing should be used to ensure understanding.
### Paraphrasing
- Paraphrasing communicates that the listener
  - Heard what the speaker said
  - Understands what was said, and
  - Cares.
- Paraphrasing involves either
  - Restating in your own words or
  - Summarizing

Some possible paraphrasing stems include:
- In other words...
- What I am hearing then...
- What I hear you saying...
- From what I hear you say...
- I'm hearing many things...
- As I listen to you I'm hearing...

### Clarifying
- Clarifying communicates that the listener has
  - Heard what the speaker said
  - But does not understand fully what was said
- Clarifying involves asking a question to
  - Gather more information
  - Discover the meaning of the language used
  - Get clarity about the speaker’s reasoning
  - Seek connections between ideas
  - Develop or maintain a focus

Some possible clarifying stems include:
- Would you tell me a little more about...?
- Let me see if I understand...
- I’d be interested in hearing more about...
- It’s help me understand if you’d give an example
- So are you saying/suggesting...?
- Tell me what you mean when you...
- Tell me how that idea is like (different from)...

Note: “Why” tends to elicit a defensive response.

### Reflection Questions
- Reflection questions help the school leader
  - Hypothesize what might happen
  - Analyze possibilities
  - Imagine possibilities
  - Compare and contrast what was planned

Some possible reflection question stems include:
- What’s another way you might...?
- What would it look like if...?
- What do you think would happen if...?
- How did you decide...?
- What sort of impact do you think...?
- What criteria do you use to...?
- Have you done something like this before?

### Non-Judgmental Responses
- Non-judgmental responses help to
  - Build trust
  - Promote an internal locus of control
  - Encourage self-assessment
  - Develop autonomy and efficacy
  - Foster risk-taking

Possible strategies and examples include:
- Identify what worked and why
  I notice how when you___ then___.
- Encourage
  Sounds like you have a number of ideas to try out!
  It’ll be exciting to see what works best for you.
- Ask to self-assess
  What did you do to make the situation successful?
- Listen
  - Ask sincere questions
  - Show enthusiasm/interest in thinking
  I'm Interested in learning/hearing more about...
Tool 7: Responding for Equity

**Description:**
Leadership coaches are often in a position to push school leaders’ thinking and to help them identify and avoid biases they have and assumptions they make that may limit their effectiveness. This tool helps coaches respond in ways that ensure greater equity to instances when school leaders provide an entry point for raising these issues.

**Tips:**
This tool provides some tips for responding to equity issues when working with school leaders as they work with their teachers on equity issues. It highlights ten things coaches can do to alter current practices and perspectives to teach for social transformation and promote equitable learning outcomes for all students. Equity is the approach; Equality is the goal.
Leadership Coaching Tool 7: Responding for Equity

Examples that can provide an entry point into a conversation with school leaders and school leaders with teachers.

1. **Embrace the idiom:** Find a word or phrase that the individual uses, and paraphrase it.
   - Comment: I do want my students to be successful.
   - Response: You say you want your students to be successful.

2. **Extend the idiom:** Take a word or phrase beyond the original thinking to suggest new possibilities.
   - Comment: Yes, I want them to be successful, but I don’t think they even think about going to college.
   - Response: For years, people haven’t thought that Latino students have the ability to be successful. You say you want your students to be successful. Could they be more successful if they were prepared for and encouraged to plan for college?

3. **Build an assets inventory:** Help the individual think of skills and knowledge that students bring rather than deficits.
   - Comment: These students don’t even know how to write a three-paragraph essay or know what a thesis statement is.
   - Response: What do your students know about organizing? What can they write? What can they do outside of school that can be built upon to support learning the content? How can we find out?

4. **Find common ground:** Find something you both agree on.
   - Comment: I want them to do their homework.
   - Response: We both know it is important they do their homework. Let’s think of ways we can support them.

5. **Identify the inequity:** Describe the inequity explicitly.
   - Comment: Some students just won’t make it.
   - Response: If we look at history, we will see patterns of students who haven’t made it. These are usually students who aren’t part of the culture of power. What can we do to make sure that all students make it?
6. **Apply equity principles with examples of how to do whatever it takes to bring about equality.**
   - **Comment:** Those boys all want to sit in the back of the classroom. I know that I don’t always get back to see if they are doing their work, but at least they are not bothering the rest of the class.
   - **Response:** It is more important that we don’t ignore any students, especially African Americans, whose race has been traditionally ignored. In fact, let’s think of how we can help them see themselves in the curriculum and experience success.

7. **Put race on the table:** Name the race, culture or language.
   - **Comment:** Well, you know how those people are...
   - **Response:** Sometimes we make assumptions about Jamaicans. What are some ways we can find out more about their culture and values?

8. **Highlight the historical perspective:** Fill in the missing history or connect the teacher with resources to do this.
   - **Comment:** These people are happy if their kids just graduate for high school.
   - **Response:** Throughout history, people have thought this about Latinos. Let’s look for resources that can help us learn more about Latino history. Because our history curriculum has been incomplete, we have to consciously fill in the gaps. Do you know any resources about successful Latinos?

9. **Expand the vision of equality:** Help individuals envision true equality rather than the one that is generally held.
   - **Comment:** I have two Black students in my Advance Placement Class. So anyone can do it.
   - **Response:** When all cultures are equally represented in Advanced Placement, or at anywhere for that matter, then there will be true equality in education.

10. **Begin to write a new history:** Help the individual put plans into action that will change the existing inequities, and change the paradigm.
    - **Comment:** At our school, Filipino students have always had the highest dropout rate.
    - **Response:** That doesn’t mean that it has to continue. What if we explicitly focus on seeing that all of our students, including Filipinos, graduate?

    *Adapted from Enid Lee*
Tools to Be Used for Planning AFTER the Coaching Meeting

Following a coaching session, it is important to reflect on what has taken place and what is important to pursue in future sessions. The tools in this section will provide the leadership coach guidance with this process.

Tool 8: Coach’s Reflection Worksheet

**Description:**
The Coach’s Reflection Worksheet provides the opportunity to reflect on the coaching session, with a focus on what the next steps will be for the coach and coachee.

**Tips:**
Leadership coaches can complete the Coach’s Reflection immediately following the coaching meeting. It provides a process for recording the coaching techniques used, the degree of participation, and the balance of talking, as well as essential next steps for ensuring ongoing development.
### Leadership Coaching Tool 8: Leadership Coach’s Reflection Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Put a mark on the line to indicate who talked more in this session.</th>
<th>Put a mark on the line to indicate which coaching technique you predominately utilized in this session.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there anything you can do next time to enable the school leader to speak more?</th>
<th>Is there anything you can do next time to build the school leader’s capacity and autonomy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Put a mark on the line to indicate who spent more time providing answers, information, and solutions in this session.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there anything you can do next time to assist the school leader in reflecting more?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Use the boxes below to record next steps based on this session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leader Next Steps</th>
<th>My Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How will you follow up on the next steps? How are your next steps supporting growth?
Tool 9: Conversation Analysis

Description:
This tool looks at four key strategies – listening, questioning, giving feedback, and non-verbal communication – and offers ways in which they can be implemented in order to promote effective coaching.

Tips:
Leadership coaches can review this list after each coaching session to identify one or two things that can be improved for the next meeting.
### Leadership Coaching Tool 9: Conversation Analysis Tool

#### Examples of Coaching Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Paraphrases what was said to ensure clarity and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourages, accepts, explores, and reinforces feelings, perceptions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerns, and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrates and builds on ideas/suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allows the individual to vent or clear the situation without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judgment or attachment in order to move on to next steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allows for silence and short pauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Paraphrases and asks questions that reflect active listening and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding of the individual's perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks clarifying questions about information provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that evoke discovery, insight, commitment or an action,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or that challenge assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks open-ended questions that create greater clarity, possibility, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that move toward desired outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Invokes inquiry for greater understanding, awareness, and clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks clarifying questions in order to deepen the awareness or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Refocuses and redirects the conversation when necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Feedback:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that is clear and direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that is evidence-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses appropriate and respectful language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that allows the individual to make his or her own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Appropriately uses humor to lighten the tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When appropriate, provides feedback that challenges beliefs about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students, parents, and learning capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interrupts deficit language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal Communications:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintains eye contact the majority of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Keeps arms and body relaxed and open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nods head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses facial expressions that reflect empathy, concern, understanding,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Establishes an appropriate physical setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Non-Examples of Coaching Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Interrupts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Talks over the individual and doesn’t defer to him or her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Finishes the individual’s thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Appears distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Speaks more than listens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Doesn’t refocus or redirect when individual is rambling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seems to have an agenda or doesn’t push to understand the individual’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that do not demonstrate active listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks closed questions that have yes-or-no answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that have advice embedded within them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that justify or look backwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks a number of questions in a row without allowing a response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that are leading or have a right or wrong answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks questions that reflect the coach’s interpretation (not understanding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks rhetorical questions that may reflect judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks “why” questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Feedback:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that is based in opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that is framed by the coach’s prior experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides more than 2 pieces of critical feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides mostly instructive or directive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moves the individual to action quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Without substantive reflection and without ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides feedback that reflects the coach’s biases or reflects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disrespect for student groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allows deficit language to be used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal Communications:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Crosses arms or uses other body language that unintentionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicates disengagement or judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses facial expressions that could reflect judgment, frustration, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allows interruptions or distractions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 10: Self-Assessment for Coaches

**Description:**
A self-assessment for leadership coaches to use to identify their strengths and areas for growth with respect to dispositions that help develop successful coaching relationships.

**Tips:**
This self-assessment can be done on a regular basis so that leadership coaches can monitor their progress as they work to develop the dispositions that help ensure successful coaching.
Leadership Coaching Tool 10: Self-Assessment for Coaches

How are my skills and dispositions impacting the coaching process? Take the self-assessment by placing an “X” in the column that best describes you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition of Coach</th>
<th>I have this disposition</th>
<th>I need to develop this disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is skilled at conducting observations and providing feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is effective in different interpersonal contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is accepting of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates hope and optimism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is growth-minded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a model of a continuous learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists school leaders in identifying next small steps for improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens with curiosity and inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes positive intent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in the capacity of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is conscious of own biases and limitations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is empathetic and withholds judgments until evidence is examined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is focused on improving education practice and leader practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides specific rather than vague feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is culturally proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges biases and inequitable practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Section IV. Growth-Focused Conversations

In this section, conferencing protocols are introduced to assist leadership coaches when working with school leaders. This Conferencing Protocol should be used as a guide, not a script. Leadership coaches should be flexible and responsive, making sure to follow the natural flow of the conversation when possible. Remember, it is through conversation that leadership coaches build trust and rapport, gather data, and push for depth and reflection. The implementation of the Conferencing Protocol should keep the school leader’s needs at the forefront so that the coaching conversation helps them achieve clear and in-depth thinking.

Conferencing Protocol Planning Guide

Thoughtful and strategic planning for the coaching meeting is key to establishing the conditions necessary for growth-focused conversations that result in positive change. The Conferencing Protocol Template provides an effective structure for planning. The following tips were designed to help guide the process.

- **Frame the Conversation:** Pick a specific topic, issue, or experience as a starting place. Identify intended outcomes of the conversation.
- **Brainstorm Questions:** List questions that will reveal facts about the topic and those that dig deeper. Write all possible questions on the topic without concern for order or quality.
- **Select/Order Questions:** Record questions that best address the outcomes in the Conferencing Protocol. Be sure to have a few questions for each level.
- **Practice the Conversation:** Edit questions, order, and flow while thinking about the school leader’s perspective. Rehearse the conversation and prepare a timeline.
- **Plan Your Opening:** Provide an invitation for the school leader to own the process. Plan to introduce the focus topic, intended objectives, and shared expectations.

---

The following table (Figure 4.1) provides a more detailed explanation of each conversational level of the Conferencing Protocol Template (Tool 3) in Section III.

**Figure 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Ask questions that...</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing Level</td>
<td>Draw the school leader into the conversation&lt;br&gt;Establish a shared purpose and outcomes</td>
<td>Promote collaboration, invite inquiry and professional growth, and seek consensus</td>
<td>What topic, issue, problem, or experience is best to focus on?&lt;br&gt;What is the intended outcome of the conversation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Level</td>
<td>Identify and clarify facts, evidence, or issues</td>
<td>Identify factual information, examine data, and draw information from the school leader</td>
<td>What do you see in the data?&lt;br&gt;What factual statements can you make based on evidence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Level</td>
<td>Explore context and assumptions&lt;br&gt;Understand the school leader’s feelings, impressions, insights</td>
<td>Deal with emotions and feelings, solicit the school leader’s reactions, and make personal connections</td>
<td>What surprised you?&lt;br&gt;What encouraged you?&lt;br&gt;What discouraged you?&lt;br&gt;How does this make you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Level</td>
<td>Make meaning through reflective practice&lt;br&gt;Determine impact and future implications</td>
<td>Identify patterns and determine their meaning or significance, identify effects, and encourage free flow of ideas</td>
<td>What does the evidence tell us?&lt;br&gt;What good news can we celebrate?&lt;br&gt;What doesn’t the data show?&lt;br&gt;What else might we need to know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Level</td>
<td>Develop next steps&lt;br&gt;Make decisions and plan actions</td>
<td>Explore desired outcomes, and prompt the school leader to make decisions and commit to next steps</td>
<td>What are our proposed next steps?&lt;br&gt;What decisions can we make?&lt;br&gt;What is our action plan moving forward?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the Conferencing Protocol to Have a Growth-Focused Conversation

The leadership coach uses the Conferencing Protocol Template (Tool 3) as a guide to navigate the meeting, taking on the role of the facilitator. Just before the start of the meeting, the leadership coach should set up a conducive environment, minimizing distractions to support active listening. The coach shares an opening statement inviting the school leader to be a partner in this journey. The coach is encouraged to utilize questions beginning at the objective level, moving to the reflective level, and then to the interpretive.

The leadership coach sets the pace for the meeting moving the conversation respectfully to stay on topic. There should be enough time to formally conclude the meeting. As the conversation comes to a close, the coach should reflect on whether or not the modifications are necessary to the planned closing. The purpose of closure is to work together to summarize the learning, affirming the insights and progress of the school leader, and clarify agreed upon next steps. It should also identify what was not addressed, and create for revisiting those items later. At the end of all coaching meetings, the coach should thank the school leader for their dedication and work towards the outcomes.

Reflecting on the Protocol and Growth-Focused Conversations

After the coaching meeting, the leadership coach can use the same categories to reflect on the effectiveness of the coaching conversation (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing</th>
<th>What were you hoping would come from the conversation today? How did you choose this particular conversation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>What was the focus of the conversation? What were you hoping to achieve as the facilitator of the conversation? What is one thing that stood out to you as you reflect on the conversation? When did you see and hear the school leader particularly engage in the conversation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>At what point did you have a strong feeling about something that was said? When did you feel the most success? Where did you have the most difficulty? Were there any parts of the conversation where you wished you felt better prepared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>What worked effectively for you? How can you repeat this in the future? What objectives did you meet as a result of the conversation? Were the questions you asked helpful in understanding the data, facts, and evidence provided by the school leader? What insights have you gained about the school leader that will help you work more effectively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisional</td>
<td>What are the next steps? What are priorities for future conversations? Would focusing on specific techniques or dispositions help you work with school leader more effectively? What steps will you take for self-growth?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conferencing Protocols

The following pages contain model templates to help Leadership Coaches prepare for and facilitate coaching conversations. They are intended as guides, or outlines, to help coaches envision how the protocol can be used to provide a workable starting place so coaches don’t have to reinvent the wheel.

Sample templates include:

1. [Debriefing Classroom Visits or Walkthroughs](#)
2. [Debriefing a Meeting](#)
3. [Debriefing Working with and Supporting Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Teams](#)
4. [Making Mid-Course Corrections for an Action Plan](#)
5. [Examining Low-Performance of Student Groups in the School](#)
6. [Thinking through a Serious Personnel Issue](#)
Conferencing Protocol for Debriefing Classroom Visits or Walkthroughs

This conversation template is designed to facilitate a reflective dialogue around classroom observations that helps the school leader identify strengths and areas of growth among the teaching faculty, and use the data to inform supports and professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Framing**        | -The goal of today’s meeting is to debrief what we saw this morning when we conducted classroom walkthroughs so that we can reflect on strengths and challenges as they related to instruction and curriculum, and trends we see across the classrooms in your building.  
-Let’s review and talk about what we saw. |
| **Objective**      | -What grades and subjects were observed? What didn’t we see?  
-What stood out for you about the teaching? What activities do you remember?  
-What stood out for you about what students were doing?  
-What did you notice about the classroom environments? |
| **Reflective**     | -What surprised you about what we observed?  
-When or where did students seem to be disconnected or have difficulty?  
-Which activities fostered high student involvement or engagement?  
-During which classroom visit did you have a strong feeling that the instruction would lead to successful student learning? |
| **Interpretive**   | -When students were disengaged or had difficulty, what could have been done differently?  
-When students were involved or engaged, how might they describe what they learned today?  
-What understanding is emerging about where we most need to focus to improve student learning?  
-What best practices and/or positive trends in instruction can you identify?  
-What insights have you gained about teaching and learning in your school? |
| **Decisional**     | -Which teachers may need extra help? Which can serve as mentors/models for others?  
-What feedback will you give to teachers you observed?  
-In what ways can what you observed help you better address student needs?  
-Where might you target professional development in the coming weeks? |
| **Closing**        | -I really appreciate the thoughtfulness with which you reflected on your observations and used the observational data to inform your next steps. Let’s recap what your next steps are. Thank you so much for sharing this with me. |
Conferencing Protocol for Debriefing a Meeting

This template is designed to support the school leader in reflecting on the effectiveness of a faculty meeting to provide direction on how to improve the structure of future meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>-Let’s take time to reflect on what happened during the meeting so we can determine what worked well, and what you might want to change about the structure of staff meetings moving forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Objective         | -How was the meeting structured/organized? Is this similar to other meetings?  
-AWho took the lead?  
-AWhat ideas, topics, or concerns were raised in the meeting?  
-AWho was present? Who participated?  
-AHow long did it go? Was there enough time to complete everything on the agenda? |
| Reflective        | -What seemed to go well in the meeting?  
-AWhat frustrated you?  
-AWhat didn’t get accomplished? Why? |
| Interpretive      | -What was the impact of this meeting?  
-AWho helped accomplished the meeting goals? Who hindered progress?  
-AIn what ways was this meeting similar or different from other staff meetings?  
-AWhat needs have emerged? How can staff meetings be more effective?  
-AWhat trends are emerging in our discussion so far? |
| Decisional        | -What do you want to be sure continues to happen in meetings?  
-AWhat do you think needs to be stopped?  
-AWhat changes are needed? Who will take responsibility for implementing these changes?  
-AHow will you use this information to plan for the next staff meeting? |
| Closing           | -Let’s recap on the few things you said you would do to plan for the next meeting so that it will run more effectively, and what you will need to do to make that happen. At the end of the year we will do this again.  
-ALet’s agree to check in before the next meeting to make sure you are ready to implement these changes. |
Conferencing Protocol for Debriefing Working with the Supporting Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Leadership Teams

This conversation template is designed to support the school leader in reflecting on the effectiveness of professional learning communities (PLCs) and Instructional Leadership Teams. The common thread is for teachers to experience the strength of teamwork as they work together in common planning and collaborative learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>-Effective schools are based on the development of effective teams. In this conversation we are going to explore what makes an effective team, and we will consider how your PLCs or your Instructional Leadership Team are functioning as compared to the definition of an effective team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>-Where have you seen effective teams working in your school? Give examples? -What are other examples of effective teams? In society? History? Sports? Others? -How are your PLCs structured? How often do they meet? What accountability do they have? How do they communicate what is happening? -How is your leadership team structured? How often do they meet? What accountability do they have? How do they communicate what is happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>-What seems to be working well? -What has been frustrating for you? -What is staff communicating about the successes and challenges of their team? -When have you wished for more teamwork among staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>-What do you think the members of this team hope to get out of their participation? -What are the results or benefits of effective teamwork? -What could we do better here to make this a highly effective team? -How are / should roles and responsibilities be determined? -What impact might this team have on students? On the program? On teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisional</td>
<td>-What do you want to be sure continues to happen in these meetings? -What do you think needs to be stopped? -What changes are needed? Who will take responsibility for them? -How will you use this information to plan for the next staff meeting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>-Let’s recap the timeline and plan for improving upon team systems, structures, and processes. Thanks so much for thinking through this with me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conferencing Protocol for Making Mid-Course Corrections for an Action Plan

This template is designed to support the school leader in revisiting an action plan that was created earlier in the year in order to develop a realistic revised plan that deals with changing situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Framing            | -This conversation is an opportunity to check in on your action plan implementation and progress toward achieving the goals you set. The action plan is your opportunity to ensure that you are taking the steps necessary to achieve the goals you set for yourself. This is a key part of the principal evaluation process.  
-Action plans are living documents. Thus, they need to be revisited if you are having difficulty with any part of this process, or if the context or situation has changed in your school or district. It is important to address these changes on a regular basis, and make the necessary modifications, so you can keep on track to success. |
| Objective          | -Look at the original plan. What action steps have you successfully implemented? What resulted from these actions? What is the evidence?  
-What actions steps have you not yet implemented? Why?  
-What has happened since you started implementing this plan (events, actions, accomplishments, etc.)?  
-What new information do you have regarding the plan?  
-Does your goal still seem relevant? Achievable? |
| Reflective         | -What concerns do you have about the implementation of your plan?  
-What has been the high point of your action plan implementation? The low point?  
-What do you still is important? |
| Interpretive       | -What elements of this plan still need to be completed as you designed them? What is most critical to success?  
-What changes do you need to make? What elements of the plan should be reconsidered or let go? What should be added? Why?  
-When will you do them?  
-What impact does completing this plan have on your work? |
| Decisional         | -What do you need to include in your revised plan?  
-What steps can you take to ensure completion of your goal? Let's set up an outline of what to include.  
-When will we need another mid-course check? |
| Closing            | -Good work. I’ll check in with you next week to review your revised plan and provide feedback. I think the new time line is more realistic for implementation and goal attainment. |
This conversation template is designed to support the leadership coach in looking at achievement data, to investigate whether any student is experiencing noticeable barriers or challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Framing**        | -Today we’re going to look at your school’s achievement data disaggregated by student groups (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, English language learners, special education, etc.). I would like to review and analyze this data with you, so we can determine the extent to which equity challenges exist in your school.  
-Let’s begin by reviewing the data. Then we’ll work together to evaluate the current situation at your school. |
| **Objective**      | -According to the data, what student groups are experiencing low-performance?  
-Is this consistent with the school system’s data?  
-Is this consistent with the state’s data? |
| **Reflective**     | -What are your first reactions to the data?  
-Try to put yourself in the place of a student from one of the student groups, or the family of that student. How would you feel about these findings?  
-What similar things does this remind you of in our school system? |
| **Interpretive**   | -What are the long-term implications of under-achievement of the student group?  
-What lessons can we learn from this data analysis?  
-What are the critical issues in our situation that need to be addressed?  
-How has this situation been addressed successfully in other locations?  
-What might be some solutions to solve this problem? |
| **Decisional**     | -What do you think we can do to address this problem on an ongoing systemic basis?  
-Which one would make a difference for our minority students? For other student groups?  
-Which ones can we successfully implement?  
-Which of these suggestions should be given high priority?  
-What should be our next step? |
| **Closing**        | -Thank you. I hope this will move us a long way down the road to ensuring that all of our students achieve at the highest possible level. |
Conferencing Protocol for Thinking through a Serious Personnel Issue

This conversation template is designed to help leadership coaches facilitate a conversation that supports the school leader in clarifying how to deal with a difficult issue with a teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Level</th>
<th>Content and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Framing</strong></td>
<td>- I understand you have been having a tough time dealing with a particular teacher. Let’s work together to explore the situation and identify concrete next steps for generating solutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Objective**      | - What facts do you know about this situation?  
- What employment history is relevant here?  
- What behaviors have been observed or reported regarding this teacher?  
- What have you seen for yourself? |
| **Reflective**     | - What is your reaction or response to these reports?  
- What is your real concern about this? Why? |
| **Interpretive**   | - What are your legal obligations?  
- What are the possible traps or dangers in making a decision in this situation?  
- What are your options?  
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?  
- How do these options impact students? Parents? Other teachers? |
| **Decisional**     | - What do you need to verify with other teachers, parents, or students?  
- What’s your first step? |
| **Closing**        | - OK. Let’s make sure we are all on the same page. Let’s put this plan into motion. |
Conclusion

There is much more to say about coaching – about the roles it can play, how we can refine our strategies, and document its impact. What we do know is the path to equitable schools often feels like a never ending process, however, coaching can facilitate the process. Leadership coaching is a form of professional learning designed to enhance the professional practice of school leaders and improve school performance. This guide has been developed to assist Maryland State Department of Education Leadership Coaches in the journey of bringing out the best in Maryland school leaders and ultimately improving the educational outcomes for students.

*Often the question comes up about what makes a great coach. The answer is a coach engaged in ongoing work on him or herself. The answer is not someone who asks great questions...All our “doing” is affected profoundly by the way in which we “be.”*

*Frank Ball (2008)*