

Steps to Success: Step 5: Post-Conference Analysis

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Linda Warren: In the third part of the reflective conference, protégés and mentor-coaches review their discussion, set goals and plan their next steps. The mentor-coach ends the reflective conference by ensuring agreement with the protégé. Together they review highlights of the discussion and the challenges discussed and then summarize the goals the protégé wants to address.

In planning next steps, the mentor-coach and the protégé choose activities that will help the protégé reach his or her goals. They make a plan for where and when the activities will occur. Let's go back to Ronna and Barbara to see how they conclude their reflective conference.

[Video begins] Ronna Schaffer: It sounds like the things that you planned when pretty well with with all of that. Barbara Fearing: Yes, yes, yeah. Ronna: Do you feel that you met the goals that you wanted to meet, do you feel more comfortable, more confident about planning some expressive language activities for Jacob and Scott?

Barbara: I do, I think the expressive language piece of it went quite well, not just in these two activities, but during other times... Ronna: Right, umhumm. Barbara: Dad just has a natural way about him, and he, he likes to participate in things with his child and so the language is just coming on its own. And again, I think that taking things back to the home visit that happened during play group...

Ronna: Umhmmm, yes. Barbara: and again, getting more feedback from him about how we might try that activity again and and share with him maybe next time we do it, I'll help you to get it set up and I'll step back and watch how you do this activity with him. Ronna: Great. Barbara: And, and let him know ahead of time.

Ronna: So in what ways or are there any ways that I can continue to support you in meeting this goal? Barbara: Maybe in four weeks, if you'd like to come back, and you know over the next few weeks I'll really, you know, work hard at, you know, kind of pulling back a little bit. Not necessarily just with this particular family, but with the other families as well. And then just seeing how it goes. We can meet again in a month and and see.

Ronna: And shall I video then as well? Barbara: Yeah, I'd like to to see that, it it helps me to to form a better reflection on myself, sounds like a plan. Ronna: Okay, so we'll meet we'll meet again between that time but certainly I'll come back and I'll plan it on my calendar for about a month from now.

Barbara: Okay, great. Ronna: Great, thank you Barbara, have a good rest of the day, I know you have a home visit to get to. Barbara: Yes I do. Ronna: Okay. Barbara: Okay. [Video ends]

Linda: Helen and Tammy, we saw Ronna and Barbara plan their next steps. Tammy, what did you observe?

Tammy Mann: Well, I was so impressed by the question, "How can I support you?" I mean, she started with, I'll go back to where she started. She started with summarizing what she saw in the experience. But as she answered or asked more questions of the protégé about, "What did you learn that could gain or help you in being able to address that goal in future experiences with the dad and son?" I thought that was very targeted support around trying to understand what insights came to her as a part of this process.

But the question about "how can I support you?" When she asked that question I just thought, "That's what we want to see." She may have, as the mentor-coach, had her own ideas about what she could do to support her protégé. But she was in touch with the fact that it's about what is going to work best for you, so, "Tell me how I can be helpful to you in the process of accomplishing that goal." And that was just that was beautiful, that's what we want to see happen in these relationships.

Linda: That's so true. Planning the next steps at the end of the conference helps to further the protégé's professional development. Helen, what else does planning do?

Helen Visarraga: Well, in addition to giving continuity to the process so that there is a tracking piece in place which we all need to always have documentation in Head Start, planning also helps to measure the degree of professional development being accomplished within the protégé and the mentor as well.

Some of the follow-up processes that can be included in the next steps or planning can be things like journal-writing, teleconferencing, peer/peer processes and also a way to keep in touch through email with, with little tips on mentor-coaching, maybe a newsletter. And, and get program support to do all of these processes. If the planning is done and it's done well, the program is more apt to support it completely.

Linda: Okay, good point. Arranging for the protégé to observe another protégé may be another next step as well as even conducting a formal observation. Helen: Yes.

Linda: We have now reached the final stage of the professional conferencing process, the post-conference analysis. During this step, mentor-coaches take time to reflect on their own practice by answering a few questions. The mentor-coach can ask, "Did I successfully address the goals for the conference? Did I set realistic expectations for what could be accomplished in the conference?"

Mentor-coaches can also ask themselves, "How did I help my protégé reflect on his or her teaching practices and how effective was I in encouraging my protégé to take initiative during the conferences? What were my challenges or missed opportunities and how effective was I in addressing these? What will I do differently next time?" To inform their own practice, mentor-coaches may also find it helpful to talk through their self-analysis with their supervisor or another mentor-coach.

Mentor-coaches should also encourage protégés to self-reflect, asking themselves, "Was I adequately prepared for the conference and did I express my thoughts and ideas fully?" They can also ask, "Did I leave any questions unanswered and what will I do differently next time?" Now we are going back to Ronna and see her post-conference analysis.

[Video begins] Ronna: Well, when I conference with Barbara, I feel like it's fairly easy because she is so skilled in it. It's not like I have to find a way to say something that's really hard to say to her. But it's also a little bit challenging for me – I have to prepare in a very different way with a skilled professional like Barbara than I do with somebody who is more of a novice.

And that's more of a challenge for me to really sit back and think about okay, how am I going to ask these questions of Barbara to help her improve what's already really good? [Video ends]

Linda: This type of self-reflection can build mentor-coaches' skills and help them individualize their approach with different protégés. Helen, Ronna talked about approaching things differently with a protégé who may not be as skilled in reflection. Talk more about that.

Helen: Well, you know I, I come from a social work background and there's a saying in social work, "Start where the client is" or "Start where the family is." Well, this applies also to, "Start where the protégé is." Use what the protégé brings and build on that. There is a lot of emerging knowledge in every one of the protégés because they have had many different levels of experience that the mentor may only not be aware of and that is one of the crucial aspects of building that relationship from a strength-based perspective.

Linda: So important, thank you for sharing that. Tammy, would you like to add to that?

Tammy: Well yes, I I was thinking that here is where patience is such an important part of the process because, clearly, when you're working with someone who is a novice, I think the tendency to get drawn into wanting to speed up the process because you can see where you want the person to go. And so the idea of needing to be patient and

using your relationship with other mentor-coaches or supervisors so that you can really gauge, are you allowing adequate time?

It really, it takes time for individuals who are not comfortable or having experience really being open to looking at themselves, looking at their practice. It really takes time getting comfortable doing that and I think as a mentor-coach, you have to really be in touch with how much you are allowing time for that process to happen versus pushing it or speeding it along because, you know, you really want to see things go forward fast.

Linda: So starting where the client is, being patient, and also you know we've talked today about using videotaping, that videotaping can be a good tool for later analysis as well. We have now learned about all five steps of the professional conferencing process. Goal-setting plays an important role in this process. At the heart of the professional conferencing process is reflection. Reflection is a powerful strategy that can build strong connections between teaching and learning.

It is important to remember that professional conferencing is most effective when the mentor-coach and the protégé maintain a culturally and linguistically sensitive relationship. We have accomplished a lot in this TVI, so let's look back and review our objectives. First, we discussed the importance of language development. Next, we learned about language development in infants, toddlers and preschoolers. We discussed the fourth step of professional conferencing, the reflective conference. We described the three parts of the reflective conference and learned how to be successful in each part.

And finally, we discussed the post-conference analysis. We have now come to the end of the video portion of this TVI. I want to thank Helen Visarraga and Tammy Mann for being with us and for sharing their knowledge about the professional conferencing process and supporting children's language development. Thank you Helen.

Helen: Well, you're so welcome, it's been such a pleasure being here and involved in this process and I just want to invite all of our Head Start family out there to embrace this, institutionalize it, and help children develop language through play, and help mentor-coaches develop relationships so that we can be at one with our mission to serve families and children and have them be self-sufficient and enjoy the educational access that they all deserve. Thank you.

Linda: Thank you, and Tammy it's so special to have you here, thank you.

Tammy: Well, I am very glad to have had an opportunity to be here. I, of course, think that the work that you all are doing is so very important. This topic is one that's so close to my heart; we've done so much work talking about this in the Early Head Start context and to see reflective practice be embraced in a much broader context I think will mean great things for children and families that are being served in our programs so, hats off to you all for pulling this together.

Linda: I also want to thank the facilitators for their role in the process. Now it's time for you to stop the tape one last time so that you can finish this session with your facilitator. For Helen, Tammy and myself, goodbye.

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