Steps to Success: Professional Conferencing Process - Step 4-5

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Linda: Welcome back. Joining us for this portion of our TVI is Helen Visarraga. Helen is a technical assistant specialist for Migrant Seasonal Head Start programs in Oregon, Washington and northern California. As a Head Start director, Helen promoted the development of mentoring programs and reflective practice workshops for both classroom and family service staff. Her interest in reflective practice stems from her twenty years of experience with Head Start children, families and staff. Welcome Helen, it's great to have you with us today.

Helen Visarraga: Thank you Linda, it's a pleasure being here.

Linda Warren: In Unit 2 we looked at the pre-observation conference and observation. You learned about the post-observation analysis in Module 3. In this TVI, we are going to look at the last two steps of the process, reflective conferencing and post-conference analysis. Reflection is a process used to refine teaching practice. We know the word reflection can mean different things to different people, so let's take a look at what we mean by the word reflection.

[Music] Slide reads: Reflection: a process of using thought-provoking questions to stimulate a protégé's thinking and problem solving.

The reflective conference has three parts. First, protégés and mentor-coaches work together to analyze the events that were observed. During this time, mentor-coaches guide their protégés to make important connections between their practice and children's learning. In the second part, mentor-coaches and protégés explore challenges seen in the observation.

In the third part of the reflective conferencing, protégés and mentor-coaches review the discussion, set goals and plan their next steps. Effective reflective conferences are regular and on-going and are conducted in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways. Mentor-coaches and protégés are equal partners in the process. Step five of the professional conferencing process is the post-conference analysis. In this step, mentor-coaches think about whether their own goals for the conference were successfully addressed and they analyze their own effectiveness in guiding protégés' reflection.

Then mentor-coaches decide what they might want to do differently next time. They also encourage their protégés to use the same process. Let's go back now and look at the reflective conference. First, we will see a mentor-coach and a protégé in a Migrant Head Start program in Utah. Then we'll see a mentor-coach and a protégé from a Head Start program in Alabama.

[Video begins] Narrator: In a Migrant Head Start program in Utah, ELMC Lisa Bedard observes one of her protégés, Monsi Brown. Monsi wants to engage children in more extended conversations and she looks to Lisa for support in reaching this goal.

Lisa Bedard: One of the things that I noticed while I was in your class observing today was that José, he brought up the word vaccines. How could you extend the conversation with him and go into more depth with him about a conversation about that word "vaccines"?

Monsi Brown: (Spanish) I believe I could have extended this theme a little more. I could ask, "what happens when they get pricked," or, "why they get pricked?" They put a band-aid on them. What are vaccinations for? I could have done more of an extension, because it's important to know that when they get pricked they won't get sick. I could have put this into the conversation with the children.

Narrator: Protégé Kendra Jennings is working on similar language development goals in her Head Start classroom in

Alabama. She frequently asks her ELMC Dee Ard to observe her classroom and they meet on a regular basis to discuss her progress.

Dee Ard: Now we had talked about when you made your lesson plan out about working on some language development goals. Can you tell me how those goals went? We had talked about extending conversations. We had talked about vocabulary and some REACH vocabulary words. We had talked about using those vocabularies with the correct grammar and I heard you restating some of that grammar, it was really great. And we had talked about Spanish words, including those. Do you feel you reached those goals?

Kendra Jennings: I think I do, I try to anyway. I believe I did cause we, a lot of kids picked up on new Spanish words for insects like spider and the butterfly and things like that, and they walk around saying them all day long trying to talk Spanish and then, with the extending the vocabulary we extend to as much as possible everything. [Music - video ends]

Linda: These examples were just brief segments of a reflective conference. We will see a conference from beginning to end later in the TVI. We saw that each mentor-coach/protégé pair in the video was experienced with the professional conferencing process. Helen, talk about what strategies you saw the mentor-coach using.

Helen: I think that in in both of the clips, the mentor-coach was providing a space for the protégé to give feedback and to do some quality reflecting. One of the areas of interest in the Migrant Head Start classroom was the profound use of language sensitivity, linguistic sensitivity. The, the mentor-coach and the protégé are both at different developmental levels in learning the second language and through their relationship they have agreed that in their conversation they can choose to use the language that's comfortable for them.

But of primary importance, what what this signifies is that Monsi, the protégé, was being encouraged to use expanded conversation and she, of course, would do it in the language of the home, which is the language that the children bring, which is a very, very critical issue in terms of literacy -- literacy skill development as they learn English. So that was an example of really good work along those lines of language development, taking both languages into consideration, both by the adults and, and what will eventually transpire to the children.

Linda: Thanks for providing that perspective for us.

Tammy Mann: Yes, one of the things that struck me in both of those examples had to do with the fact that they, the protégés, started with the goals that – or the the mentors – I'm sorry, the mentor-coaches started with the goals that the protégés had for those observation experiences so that they were able to be clear about what they were going to talk about at the very outset of of that conference experience.

It was also helpful that they both used open-ended questions to invite the protégés to, to think or provide examples about how they accomplished or made progress on some of the goals that they established for the observation experience. So I, I think that that always helps to ease the anxiety that can sometimes come with these kinds of experiences, when there is not a sense of, "What are we going to talk about?" And and as a protégé I, I, I'm anxious because I'm not certain about what's going to be focused on. It was really clear and I think that's important.

Linda: So revisiting the goals is really an important feature of this process. What are some of your own experiences? Do you have any others that you'd like to share?

Helen: I think some of the experiences that I've had in terms of watching and observing mentor-coaches and protégés is that trust needs to develop along a continuum. Very early on, that trust is not going to be there and it has to be provisional and it has to be developed based on open communication and tolerance of different perspectives.

Tammy: And I think it's it's related to what Helen was saying, getting to that trust place requires that certainly the mentor-coach must know what they bring to that relationship: experience. If you're, if you're going into this with an understanding that I bring something and the protégé brings something to the relationship and together we embark upon a shared learning experience that's designed to improve practice, that really does help set the stage for

establishing a solid foundation in trust.

So that as you look at what you're doing, that that comfort place is in place. And I think mentor-coaches need support to be able to do that effectively, and no, we're not talking about that today, but the, but the idea of being able to provide this kinds of support to protégés, mentor-coaches themselves need to be supported in the process.

Linda: We think that's an excellent point to, to end this part of our our conversation with. Let's now go to and take some time to think with your facilitator about reflective conferencing. Stop the tape now and resume playing when you have completed your conversations.
-- End of Video --

-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000372-Steps+to+Success+Unit+3+Clip+2-Steps+to+Success+Professional+Conferencing+Process+Steps+4-5-2007-SD360p/3cb18f1eh13a1e47ce08c8bt13af8d82620b