

Paso 4: La reunión de reflexión

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Linda Warren: Welcome back. Now we'll look closely at the reflective conference. In Unit 1, we learned about the importance of building a relationship between the mentor-coach and the protégé. That relationship is the foundation for reflection. A positive trusting relationship is the key to effective reflective conferences. It is helpful to think of the reflective conference as a quality conversation between a mentor-coach and a protégé. To begin the reflective conference, protégés and mentor-coaches work together to analyze the events that were observed.

Remember, both the protégé and the mentor-coach did some analyzing alone, now they are coming together to share their ideas and further analyze the events that happened during the observation. Next they explore the challenges and strategize. They begin by reviewing the goals they set in their pre-observation conference. The mentor-coach guides the protégé to reflect on the events in the observation. To do this, the mentor-coach uses thought-provoking questions and comments to draw out the protégé's reactions.

The mentor-coach asks questions that relate to the protégé's goals and the strategies the protégé used to achieve the goals. The mentor-coach also encourages the protégé to reflect on and assess the effectiveness of these strategies. Throughout the conversation, the mentor-coach is guiding the protégé to make connections between her practice and children's learning. Tammy, can you provide some insight into how to support protégés in being more reflective in their practice?

Tammy Mann: Well, Linda, I think in addition to everything else you just described about the process, one of the important things to remember is that protégés, you need to understand what their comfort level is with this process. So much of this is rooted in being able to step back, being comfortable stepping back, communication skills, basic communication skills – we can't assume that active listening is something that every protégé brings to the table.

So we really, as as mentor-coaches, have to do some initial work to understand what protégés are bringing to the mentor-coach relationship if we are, in fact, going to be able to gauge our input and support at the right level. I also think it's important to make certain that there's time and space created in the program to provide this kind of experience.

If we're really wanting protégés to be reflective in their practice, we have to make certain that there are opportunities within the program that would support that through journaling and all of those other kinds of strategies that really makes a statement about, "This is something we see as an integral part of what should be happening in the program."

Helen Visarraga: Another crucial aspect is the planning piece. Planning helps to organize the mentor-coach process along the continuum of language development with children. It helps the mentor and the protégé learn how to make decisions and plan ahead based on data. It helps them to translate knowledge learned in the protégé/mentor-coach relationship into actual relationship processes with children and families.

Linda: Theses are very good points, so we're saying that we need to look at the comfort level and provide time and space and plan. Helen: Yes. Tammy: Absolutely.

Linda: In addition to talking with protégés about what happened during the observation, mentor-coaches can also encourage the protégé to analyze missed opportunities. It also is helpful for mentor-coaches to address challenges protégés face when they are teaching. Often protégés will bring up teaching challenges on their own. If the challenge is less obvious to the protégé, the mentor-coach will need to raise the issue.

You can effectively bring up those challenges by focusing on the protégé's goals. The protégé can examine the response of a child or a group of children. You could also point out a difference in perspective between yourself and

the protégé. The goal at this stage is to open the protégés' thinking and help the protégé to see a situation from a new perspective. We are now going to go back to Ronna and her protégé to see their reflective conference. Remember that earlier we saw Ronna's post-observation analysis.

[Video begins] Ronna Schaffer: I had such a good time in that classroom, thank you so much for inviting me to come in, giving me a good excuse. Barbara Fearing: Good, good. Ronna: That was great. How did you feel it went? Barbara: It was, it was very busy in there. We had a lot of attendance on that particular day.

Ronna: Which was great. Barbara: And it did, it kind of distracted me a little from the fact that you were in there watching... Ronna: Right.

Barbara:... to observe me. But I think that the kids accepted it quite well and and the parents were were okay with it. So and having watched the tape myself, it's always nice to take a step back and and having the opportunity just to to see cause there's a lot of things that, you know, in the classroom when you're working, you miss out on. Ronna: Absolutely.

Barbara: Seeing what some of the other kids are doing when you are busy with one particular family or child... Ronna: Definitely. So the the whole goal of my coming in to do the observation was, as you remember, to support you in some new ways or some additional ways that you could help Scott to enhance Jacob's language development in the classroom. And what was the specific activity that you and Dad had planned?

Barbara: Well, as I had told you earlier, one of the the hard times I'm having is is trying to plan an expressive language goal in accordance with his IFSP. And you know Dad wants him to learn more words so trying to balance that with Dad's interest in having him do the, you know, the get up and go type activities. Dad had, you know, liked the idea that the slide was in the classroom because he had been having a hard time with the slide. So we wanted him to play with that a little bit more.

So the two of us kind of put our heads together to think, okay well if he wanted to do the slide, what is going to help him with his expressive language goal and using the slide? So we came up, at the home visit, we decided we would have a slide available. And Dad and I talked about some of the words that he wanted Jacob to learn and where he is just starting to do a lot of imitation, we decided that we'd work on prepositions and placement-type words.

Ronna: When you went over to the slide activity it was nice to see that Dad helped you set it up. Let's view that a little bit to see where that activity went. Before we look at that activity, tell me what you envision your goal to be during that activity. What do you think your role would be with Dad? What were you hoping for in that activity? And then we'll take a look at it and see how it went.

Barbara: Okay, well again, Dad pretty much had it set in his mind at the home visit that he wanted to use the slide. Ronna: Right.

Barbara: And I did have the chance to brainstorm with him because, you know, that is it obviously you use language when you're playing on the slide and things like that. But I wanted to pick Dad's brain about, "How much do you language do you think he'll use on a slide," because his goal is expressive language.

I had prepared him at the home visit, you know, strategized with him about what words might be used, you know, like down the slide, you know, up the slide. So I think that I was hoping that my role in that would be, again, to to help be there to guide him and to help to prompt him when to use those those type of words with him.

Ronna: Okay, okay, let's take a look at it, okay? Barbara: Looking at this too you don't realize actually how busy that area was, when you're in the thick of it you you don't really you know see the big picture... Ronna: ...slow that you're just trying to... Ronna:...yes that was when he was going slow.

Ronna: Take a really good look at what you're doing, what Dad's doing, what Jacob's doing. Tell me a little bit about that. Tell me what you see your role as in actuality here.

Barbara: As I was watching this, I was looking at the fact that Dad isn't really as actively involved as I was. I seem to be kind of taking the lead and you know, and in hindsight, you know, I don't know if I was doing that because there were other children involved and I didn't want him to feel that like he had to take the commitment on of doing that activity with all the kids or if it was just my nature as the teacher in me.

Ronna: Right, which we've talked about a lot. Barbara: Exactly to to jump in and play with the kids because it is a lot of fun to play with the kids, you know, but and looking at Dad's face.. Ronna: Yeah, look at what Dad is doing, look at what you're doing here.

Barbara: Yeah, yeah, he's he's very, you know, somber looking and although he's having fun he he doesn't seem as engaged as I did, which, maybe if, if I had you know, just pulled back a little bit.. Ronna: Think again about Dad standing there and you not being there, envision how that, what, whether it would have worked if you just weren't there or if there was something more direct you might have been able to do.

Barbara: Maybe if I had directed him and said I'm going to set up the slide now for you and Jacob to to have your activity. I noticed that some other kids want to play there as well. How about if I help you get it set up and I'll take a step back and, you now, let you and Jacob explore the activity like we had talked about? And just gave it back to him instead of facilitating. I felt like, looking at this, like I'm facilitating instead of letting Dad facilitate, which I was hoping to have him do. And you know how I love to play with the kids so it's hard to take a step back sometimes.

Ronna: I I share that with you Barbara so I certainly understand that. Barbara: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ronna: Definitely, definitely. [Video ends]

Linda: We saw clearly that the mentor-coach and protégé are both active participants in the reflective conference. We also saw that the protégé, Barbara, is very skilled at reflection. When the protégé is skilled, the role of the mentor-coach in guiding the conference can seem subtle. Helen, what did you observe that can help other mentor-coaches?

Helen: Well, I think that we saw Ronna be very well prepared for this conference, and if we remember earlier on, she was kind of struggling and reflecting, "What am I going to do to bring up this area where I feel needs to be somewhat strengthened in a way that, that a very skilled teacher, a skilled protégé would be open to?" And if you notice, first of all she demonstrated an emotional empathy.

She asked her how she was feeling, she used a lot of active listening skills and actually allowed the, the protégé to explore, to look at the video, to assess, to kind of reflect on what was what what she was experiencing when it was all happening and she herself was able to reassess the situation. It wasn't Ronna telling her, "This is what you needed to do differently." So that was a really good example of a lot of planning and preparation that went into that, that whole discussion.

Linda: Thank you. What are some of your your experiences Tammy, with successful ways to conduct a reflective conference?

Tammy: Well, just piggybacking on some of Helen's comments, I, as I just, you know, thinking about the video, I was completely impressed with the thought that went into planning the questions, because, as Helen pointed out, we saw earlier that she was certainly concerned about the question piece and wanting to make sure she had the right questions that would almost lead the protégé to the place of being able to speak with her own voice about what didn't happen that perhaps she wanted to happen.

I thought her question about, "What do you envision your role, what did you hope for?" When she posed that question, it just very nicely set up an opportunity for the protégé to really put out there, "This is what I wanted to see happen." So that when they got to the viewing piece, she was able to see for herself, "I wanted that to happen, I can see as I am looking at this piece, it really didn't happen."

And I, I thought that was just an example of excellent planning; I also thought it was important to point out that even

in good relationships where there is a, is a connection, and we felt that, I certainly felt that in what we saw, anxiety is still present. The protégé mentioned that at the very beginning, you know, the fact that there were so many kids in the class that helped her be distracted from the fact that she was being observed.

And I think as mentor-coaches, we have to always keep in mind that component and do what we can, speak to what went well, build on those strengths, so that we really make it comfortable for protégés to venture into those areas where perhaps they do need some work to develop their, their skills in those areas. I just, I think that's very important.

Linda: So being thoughtful and intentional leads to asking some of the right questions, but also it's important to make the protégé feel comfortable. Tammy: Yes.

Linda: Okay, now that we have seen Ronna and Barbara's reflective conference, we want you to take some time with your facilitator to discuss how to address a challenge during a reflective conference. Stop the tape now and resume playing at the end of your conversations.

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