

Linda Warren: Successful reflective conferences require careful preparation and planning. This occurs during the post-observation analysis stage of the Professional Conferencing Process. In this stage, the mentor-coach analyzes the observation and identifies topics to be addressed. The mentor-coach also needs to set realistic expectations that can be accomplished with the protégé during the reflective conference. Mentor-coaches can prepare for the reflective conference by developing a few questions designed to get the reflective process started.

Mentor-coaches also plan an approach to introduce a discussion of missed opportunities or a teaching challenge relevant to the observation. We visited a home-based Head Start program in Massachusetts to see how one mentor-coach prepares for a reflective conference through her post-observation analysis. Her observation focused on a home-based socialization experience where parents are present with their children.

[Video begins - music] Narrator: In Taunton, Massachusetts, Ronna Schaffer works with protégé Barbara Fearing on her practice as a home visitor. They are focused particularly on Barbara's interactions with one of the fathers, Scott, and his son Jacob.

Ronna Schaffer: When I did my observation in the classroom, I was really focusing on how to help Barbara step back a little bit to help the parents. And I really saw her do that a lot. Barbara is wonderful with the children, always wonderful with the children. And even with the challenge that she presented in trying to improve her skill in working with the parents, she did that in a lot of ways. She would go to the parents; she welcomed each parent into that classroom as they came. She moved around the room a lot so she did a lot of that really well.

I noticed that when Barbara was with Scott at the slide, Scott and Jacob was on the slide. Barbara really stepped in a lot to interact with Jacob rather than helping Scott to do that. So I'm going to focus on that when I talk to her and I'm going to ask her if she can see ways where that happened.

And I don't want to tell her that it happened but I'm really going to have to really give some thought to how I can ask her some really good questions in addition to just "where are you, where is he?" I have to really come up with some ideas and some thoughts that will help her see the opportunities that she missed in working with Scott to help him to interact with Jacob. So that's something I really have to think about before I meet with her. [Video ends]

Linda: Ronna uses videotaping frequently and finds it a useful tool. We saw her prepare for the reflective conference by reviewing the tape she made during the observation. Tammy, what else did you observe about Ronna's post-observation analysis that could help other mentor-coaches?

Tammy Mann: Well, I think it's no insignificant point that she, in fact, did prepare. I mean she really did take the time to look at what happened that, that went well so she could be able to speak to those strengths and hopefully in the process of conducting the actual conference. But she was also looking to, to understand what missed opportunities took place so that she could use that as a basis for thinking about how to approach the conference process. And I was very impressed with her reference to "I'm not going to provide the answers."

When she said that I thought that's exactly what we'd hope this kind of reflective process would entail. It really is trying to give thought to the kinds of questions -- open-ended questions -- that really help protégés come to those understandings as they're being reflective. It's, it's using a reflective process to help the protégé become reflective in practice, and I just thought that was absolutely outstanding.

Linda: Yeah, and I think because there are no right or wrong answers, it really encourages more reflection. Tammy: Absolutely.

Helen Visarraga: Ronna also modeled the concept of self-assessment which is very, very important for for mentor-coaching cause she was actually introspective, trying to say, "Okay this is what I need to do, this is where I need to go." And, and self-assessment probably is one of the most crucial elements because we should be always kind of

asking, "What am I feeling? What am I thinking? What is my space? Am I, am I providing a place of openness for the protégé?"

Am I stressed out; am I in a hurry?" I think that self-assessment is valuable because when you do present yourself to that protégé, you're clear and, and that energy is there and and that protégé can sense that you are sincere and available for her or for him.

Linda: So it's very crucial to be present in that experience. Helen: Absolutely. Linda: And make sure that you have the time to be present. Good. Why don't, we have a few minutes left so could you share some of your own experiences with post-observation analysis?

Tammy: Well I think for me, I've done best in in situations where I really find myself. If I'm using reflective supervision -- and that's how we typically tend to talk about it -- but, if I find that in the process of preparing to support staff, I'm more concerned about where I need to go versus trying to stay in the moment and, and think about that protégé and where that protégé is and what they need to, or have identified for themselves as being areas they want to focus on.

I know I'm on track when I am am thinking in that manner. It, it's easy to get caught up in wanting to see the right thing happen and really take over sometimes in that process. So I, I tend to do better or think I'm doing best when I'm spending much more time focusing on the kinds of questions that need to be asked as opposed to where I believe someone needs to go.

Linda: Thank you Tammy. Now we want you to take some time to think about the post-observation analysis and preparing for the reflective conference. Stop the TVI now and resume the tape when you are finished discussing this topic with your facilitator.

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