

Chapter and Case Study Discussion Activities

Chapter 8: Connected Coaching

In this chapter, we focused on the components of the “Connected Coaching” model. We read about three design principles that guide connected coaching, and we also reviewed how to foster and leverage an educator-coach relationship. Use the following case study from Chapter 8, along with the questions below, to reflect on how concepts and key takeaways from the chapter apply to your professional work and settings.

Jada glances around her Pre-K room at the Explorations Early Learning Center with a freshly critical eye. Ever since Melinda, the center’s director, brought Karen, the new coach, on to the center’s staff, Jada has become a little more aware of her classroom organization—and her teaching, for that matter. Jada wonders what today’s meeting will be like; they are scheduled to debrief a lesson Jada taught a few days ago. Jada isn’t sure what she thinks of all this. But she smiles, remembering her pleasant surprise when Karen stayed around after the lesson, helping to wipe down tables and get the children ready for lunch. It was like she understood.

As Karen enters the room, ready for the meeting with her notebook, and two cold waters from the break room, she says: “Alright, we have work to do together. I’m looking forward to this!” Karen smiles. She looks Jada in the eye. “Does it work for you to start now? Let’s sit down and get started — I want to talk about some great things I noticed at circle time yesterday morning and I’d love to hear more about what you thought.” Jada smiles tentatively and they walk to the table and sit down. Karen hands Jada a bottle of water and gets out the protocol they will work from. Jada takes a sip and thinks, “Maybe this won’t be so bad.”

Questions for Leaders to Consider

In the case example, we see Jada isn’t sure what she thinks of coaching; she is deciding whether she can trust the process, the coach, and a space to share challenges. What needs to go well for her to trust and believe in coaching?

What role does a leader play in supporting an effective coaching process? What resources are involved in developing a coaching system? What changes could you make in your system to either improve the quality of coaching or to create coaching opportunities?

Resources for Implementation

The Early Education Leader's Guide

Case Questions for Leaders to Use in Professional Learning Discussions

- How did Karen, the coach in this case example, help Jada feel comfortable? What did she do or say to communicate expectations and to begin building trust? How could you incorporate some of these approaches into your work with adults or children?
- In this chapter, we learned about three design strategies that guide connected coaching: ongoing, frequent classroom visits, reflective conversations, and using a discussion protocol to guide the coaching conversation. Why are each of these pieces important? When did you see these strategies in the case example?
- As described in the previous question, three strategies are essential for coaching to help educators improve their practices. Each of these strategies requires committing time and energy. How can unexpected demands in early education settings impact coaching? How have you ensured protected time for coaching?
- We read in the chapter that, “reflection is at the heart of individualized coaching conversations.” How is reflection a part of developing the educator competencies described earlier in this book? When do you reflect on your practices? How often? What role does professional development, like coaching or professional learning communities, play in encouraging and supporting reflection?
- One of the recommended strategies is using a discussion protocol. Why is this important? Have you ever used a discussion protocol before? Have you found it helpful? Why or why not?
- As part of the discussion protocol, coaches start by talking about what went well. Why is this so essential in coaching conversations? How did Karen, the coach in the case study, use this approach in the reflective conversation? How could you use this approach in your work?

Self-Study Activity

This discussion highlighted approaches that Karen uses to build a trusting coaching relationship. One of the ways she builds this partnership is through active listening. This chapter suggests three ways to actively listen:

- Seek clarification (Questions like: Can you tell me more about what you mean?)
- Communicate understanding (Paraphrasing what someone else shares)
- Add to what someone else highlights (Phrases like: I also noticed _____, What do you think?)

How can you better use active listening to build connections and partnerships with colleagues? Think of a particularly challenging relationship and write down how you plan to use active listening with that person in an upcoming professional interaction.