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12

Repertoire of Support Functions

Whatever we can do to facilitate learning on the one hand and loving on the other is important, because those are the most healing forces available to us.

—Na'im Akbar[1]

No single form of support serves all purposes. The power of Cognitive Coaching has been applied in many different forms of support models. Some models are technical, some are humanistic, and some are developmental or reflective. Ed Pajak[2] has created a summary of current models that distinguishes the unique features of many programs, but all of these approaches have certain tenets in common. Among them is the belief that teaching is "untidy" and uncertain. Structured collegial conversations to help make meaning from complex instructional situations, and reflective conversations help to generate knowledge, expand teaching repertoire, and promote teacher development.

AN EXEMPLARY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Sometimes we are asked, "When coaching, is it all right to give a suggestion? What if you sense the teacher's plan will not work? Should you tell him?"

Coaching, collaborating, and consulting each serve a valued purpose to the teacher, the institution, or both. Ideally, each takes place in transactions devoted to only one of these functions at a time. There are situations, however, that call for an *occasional*, skillful transition to another function. There are no simple rules to guide the coach, but there are some prerequisite conditions.

Of paramount importance is interpersonal trust and trust in the process. Next is a collegial relationship between the coach and the person being coached. Finally, the coach needs exquisite coaching skills and a rich knowledge base of the topics being coached.

We've had the good fortune to visit an exemplary program for new teachers at the University of California, Santa Cruz.[5] There, teacher advisors demonstrate elegant, seamless, and effective situational flexibility across the functions of coaching, consulting, and collaboration. What makes this possible are a number of conditions.

The teacher advisors are maestro coaches. The associate director has 14 years' experience and is a graduate of both the cognitive coaching foundations and leadership programs. Other advisors have been coaching and teaching coaching skills to others for as many as eight years.

The teacher advisors' only responsibilities are to support beginning teachers. For years, these advisors have spent every single school calendar day in classrooms working with beginning teachers or conferencing with them about their work. The advisors have no responsibilities for teacher evaluation.

Teacher advisors practice continuous inquiry into their own practices. New and veteran advisors are paired in coaching relationships. Center staff members meet weekly to share experiences and seek ideas from each other. They continue to build a collective body of knowledge and skills about supporting beginning teachers.

Each teacher advisor receives intensive training in classroom observation on (1) how to recognize, along a developmental continuum, classroom manifestations of each of the California Teaching Standards, and (2) how to use a variety of data-gathering instruments.

The teacher advisors are clear that their mission is to develop independence, not dependence, in these relationships. They regard collaboration as a vehicle for developing the beginning teacher's professional independence, and they move to establish this early in their relationships.

For beginning teachers, these advisors are their lifelines to survival. Advisors communicate a reaffirming certainty that each beginning teacher is okay, has the capacity to survive and learn, and contributes value to students' education. Such consistently positive presuppositions are especially important during the early months, when beginning teachers encounter feelings of overwhelming self-doubt and inadequacy.

Part of the sense of a seamless fabric in the work of the New Teacher Center may be explained, we think, by noting that many coaching practices are applied in either consulting or collaborating. For example, trust and rapport are fundamental to any helping relationship. Paraphrasing, with its profound influences on the chemistry of resourcefulness, is prominent in both collaborative consulting and coaching. In consulting, as in coaching, there is a need for data. Good practices in either function require clarity about what data to gather, how to collect it, and how it will be useful. Data may sometimes be reported within the consulting role without interpretation from the consultant. During consulting, clarity is needed about the teacher's goals. A consultant, like a coach, will use open-ended questions and pause, paraphrase, and probe for specificity. Given these common features, the question "How do you know when to segue from coaching to consulting, and how do you do it?" is often met with puzzlement.

WHEN TO CONSULT

How does a support provider know when to switch from coaching to consulting? One teacher advisor described her thinking process as follows. First, she knows the teacher well enough to detect when the teacher is stuck. Second, based on her knowledge of what has worked for this teacher in the past (including the teacher's information processing style and the degree of risk to the teacher in acting on possibilities in this situation), she knows the teacher has the capacity to implement ideas the advisor might offer.

Wendy Barron, associate director of the New Teacher Center and senior teacher advisor, describes how coaching and consulting are woven together over a three-week period with a beginning teacher.

1. **Coach:** The teacher expresses interest in literacy circles. Wendy invites reflection about her intention, values, goals, and planning.
2. **Consult:** The teacher realizes there are gaps in her knowledge about how to conduct literacy circles. Wendy shares ideas, locates information, and gives the teacher an article about literacy circles.
3. **Collaborate:** Wendy discusses the article and engages the teacher in co-planning. She and the teacher share ideas about how to get started.
4. **Consult:** At the teacher's request, Wendy models a lesson teaching students to generate processing questions. When asked for strategies, she offers some for consideration.
5. **Coach:** The teacher asks Wendy to observe. Wendy gathers requested data and conducts a reflecting conversation after the lesson.
6. **Collaborate:** Wendy and the beginning teacher examine student papers together and determine an area for future instruction. Together they plan the next lesson.

Teacher advisors see their work as a dance in which they are constantly deciding when to turn, dip, or bop while maintaining a partnership with the teacher.

When coaching, support providers may be especially generous with silence. They also might ask teachers to elaborate on values and beliefs they hold about learning. Sometimes they allow teachers to "fail forward" in order to develop rich learning from lessons that did not go as the teacher wanted. They also ask "take-away" questions for the teacher to ponder after the coaching conversation. Take-away questions do not require an answer in the moment. Rather, they are inended for later reflection. Occasionally, coaches model their own reflective thought.

Practices unique to collaboration might include physically helping a new teacher to arrange a classroom or supplies, procuring materials, demonstrating, advising, suggesting, co-planning, or co-teaching.

Although support providers might do more consulting than coaching at the beginning of the year with new teachers and incrementally modify the ratio to a greater use of coaching, we do not regard these functions as points on a continuum. Rather, we see them being chosen in the moment, based on perceived appropriateness to meet various intentions and teacher permission.

In fact, support providers may want to start interactions with coaching and collaborating and move to consulting only when they see a need. Teachers report far more satisfaction with coaching than with consulting, and even young and inexperienced teachers bring the cognitive capacity for coaching.

ISN'T EVERYTHING EVALUATION?

We're often asked, "Isn't everything just evaluation?" This is a complex question to answer. First, it's useful to consider the various meanings of *evaluate*. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* provides this definition: to determine the worth of; to find the amount or value of; to appraise.

The word *evaluate*, used as a verb, is a nominalization. Nominalizations name ideas as events when they are actually processes. Nominalizations are abstractions, separate from the actual doing of the thing. Because abstractions trigger different representations

in people's minds, it is useful to ask, "What specifically does one do when one is evaluating?"

When we claim Cognitive Coaching should be separated from evaluation, two issues often arise in people's minds. First, to evaluate is to make a judgment, but aren't humans judgment machines? Our very survival depends on rapid assessment of situations and determining the relative safety of our environment. Don't all actions and questions arise from the foundation of judgments we have made, either consciously or unconsciously?

We agree that judgment and action are inextricably intertwined. Yet one can choose to act without communicating judgment about events, behaviors, or choices that another has made if one is free of judgment about the individual. To be nonjudgmental of others is both a perspective and a discipline, developed as one gains in personal maturity. Harvard Professor Robert Kegan[6] describes this stage of adult meaning-making as "post-institutional thought," when one's thinking is freed from the certainties of right and wrong, compassion is a state of being, and one can compare (judge) actions with standards without either blame or praise.

Of course judgment is associated with coaching (and consulting and collaborating). However, the judgment required in these settings is about comparing behaviors against standards, results against goals, not about the worth or motivation of the individual.

Webster's says that a judge is one who has skills or experience sufficient to decide on the merit, value, or quality of something. Judgments will always be a necessary part of our work. We can make judgments, however, without being judgmental. We can judge without criticizing, censuring, or praising.

CAN ONE PERSON EVALUATE AND SUPPORT?

Research by Carl Glickman at the University of Georgia sought an answer to the question "Is it possible for one person to serve as both a supporting supervisor (coach, consultant) and an evaluator of performance?"[7]

Glickman's findings were a cautious "yes," if three conditions are present:

1. Trust exists in the relationship and the process.
2. The teacher is clear about which role the principal is performing in the moment.
3. The principal's behaviors are pure. That is, when evaluating, only evaluating behaviors are used. When consulting, only consulting behaviors are used (providing data, making judgments, interpreting possible relationships, making suggestions, offering advice, advocating). When coaching, only coaching behaviors are used (giving data, asking questions, inviting self-assessment, eliciting analysis, inviting synthesis of learning, requesting commitment). Mingling these three classes of behavior sends a mixed message, and the learning potential of the brain shuts down, which is one more indicator of the power of emotions to disrupt thinking. Anxiety signals from the limbic brain can create neural static, sabotaging the ability of the prefrontal lobe to maintain working memory.[8]

Glickman's findings become especially important as many school districts encourage teachers to serve in support roles with their colleagues. Among the forms this support takes are beginning teacher induction programs, peer coaching, mentoring, peer assistance, and peer review. Being an outstanding teacher, however, does not automatically translate into being an effective mentor for other teachers. Just one or two teachers unskilled with the functions of mentoring, consulting, coaching, or peer-assisted review can disastrously affect morale and teachers' willingness to be open to collegial support.[9]

On the other hand, many programs have developed thoughtful curricula for preparing teachers to work in support relationships with their peers. Throughout California, for example, local Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment programs have developed training modules for supporting new teachers. Two reliable sources of curricula and seminars for supporting teachers are the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the Center for Cognitive Coaching in Highlands Ranch, Colorado.[12]

MAKING IN-THE-MOMENT DECISIONS

During our university days, we were jolted as we realized how valuable it could be to shift supervision styles. We were working with a graduate student administrative intern. Both of us, by nature, tend toward a mediative, inquiry-based style of supporting others. Examination of progress with "Paul," however, revealed little follow-though on his part and insufficient understanding of the administrative position in which he was interning. Recalling Glickman's description of levels of abstraction and levels of commitment, we decided that Paul was relatively low on both continuums and therefore might benefit from a more direct information approach. Paul's performance and understanding immediately improved as he was provided with descriptions of what he should do next. Even though we had switched to a more direct informational style with Paul, we had not lost sight of our mission: extending his capacity for self-directed learning.

Paul's story represents the coach's dilemma of not knowing what kind of support to offer. More often, the issue is not if to offer information or questions, but *when*. This is a delicate situation, and it is possible that only the most experienced coaches can make sound judgments most of the time. Many factors come into play. Is this a new teacher, a new assignment, or a new relationship? What is the person's general state of efficacy and craftsmanship? What is he asking for? How do you know if what she asks for is what she needs? What degree of stress is present?

Our colleagues Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman address similar issues related to mentoring. They believe that a mentor's major responsibility is to increase the novice teacher's capacity to generate knowledge. Lipton and Wellman envision three stances that a mentor might take along a learning-focused continuum of interactions:

> The mentor might consult; that is, inform a teacher regarding processes and protocols, advise based on the mentor's expertise, or advocate for particular choices and actions. Another stance is to collaborate; that is, to participate as equals in planning, reflecting, and problem solving. At other times, the mentor might decide that coaching, that is, the nonjudgmental mediation of thinking and decision making, is the most effective option.[10]

Whether to deviate from coaching is the most critical question for a support provider. Lipton and Wellman suggest that mentors give thought to three related questions: if, when, and how. If their answer to "if I should deviate" is yes, then consideration must be given to when and how.

Decisions about when and how to deviate from coaching are largely driven by the coach's attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues that signal what someone is thinking and feeling. The coach must read the colleague's communication: Is it confidence, confusion, or discomfort? This may move the coach to offer a summarizing paraphrase, leave an area of inquiry for another time, or ask a penetrating question. Inexperienced coaches sometimes move to consulting because of their own discomfort, not the teacher's.

Whether to move to another type of support behavior seems to be the most complex question. In general, one moves along a sliding scale of support behaviors as a teacher gains experiences and matures in reflection. For a beginning teacher, for example, it is most likely that one enters the relationship primarily as a consultant but exits it as a coach.

Several factors influence the choice of services to provide. As in the case of Paul, Glickman's concepts about the level of abstraction and commitment may apply. Abstraction refers to the teacher's ability to examine situations from a variety of perspectives, to generate and examine alternative solutions, to test and modify instructional practices, and generally to reflect about their work. In brief, the support provider determines how much initiative, thought, and action the teacher expends in his teaching. Glickman[11] regards these two factors as developmental. He would have support providers increase the ratio of collaborative, or nondirective, work (coaching) as teachers become more highly abstract or committed.

Another variable is culture. Glickman cautions that a support provider might incorrectly interpret limited language production

from a teacher as a lower level of abstraction when, in fact, it might stem from a cultural cause. The percentage of foreign-born persons in the United States is increasing. Coaches must be aware of how a foreign-born speaker's language might color a coaching interaction differently.

SIGNALING A CHANGE

When the teacher knows which function is driving an interaction, he can respond congruently. The greatest risk of confusion comes when a support provider decides to shift from one function to another. Laura Lipton does this elegantly. Here are some of her moves.

First, she seeks permission to change functions: "I've been coaching. I'd like to shift roles and offer some ideas to consider. Then you decide for yourself which might be useful. Okay?"

Then she physically moves, in essence creating a visual paragraph for a new beginning of the conversation.

She pauses and uses a frozen gesture, which initiates a neutral zone in which the teacher mentally separates from the coaching function.

When Laura sees that the teacher's breathing is regular and unlabored, she knows that she has permission to transition into consulting. [13]

MENTAL PREREQUISITES FOR FLEXIBILITY

Skillful coaches shuttle among a variety of perceptual orientations. Each provides unique information unavailable in the other two perceptions. These three orientations are as follows:

- Egocentric, the coach's point of view.
- Allocentric, the other person's perspective.
- Macrocentric, a wide-angle view of the interaction between the coach and other person.

The Coach's Perspective

This perceptual frame operates whenever we are intensely aware of our own thoughts, feelings, intentions, place on a coaching map, and physical sensations. To be aware of our own boundaries requires egocentricity. Being egocentrically conscious allows us to monitor of our own processes. With consciousness, we can recognize that we are doing autobiographical or solution listening and decide to set it aside to better understand the other person. Without consciousness of our own thinking and feeling processes, we have no other choice but to stay stuck in whatever internal reality is happening at the moment. Listening egocentrically may generate sympathy for the person we are coaching.

The Other Person's View

Shifting focus from myself to the other person characterizes this perspective. It is the mental resource for rapport. With this point of view, we become aware of how a situation looks, sounds, and feels from the other person's experience. To work within this point of view, the coach must be exactingly attentive to the other person. Listen with your eyes to the physicality of communication, with your ears to the delivery and tone of the words, and with your feelings to what you sense about the other person's state. Allocentricity is the catalyst for empathy.

Listening "From the Balcony"

Compassion, or observation without value judgment, is often a by-product of the macrocentric perspective. In the macrocentric mode, one listens from a view outside the perspective of either party—"listening from the balcony." To a degree, you are detached from the feelings of identification you might have been experienced with either the egocentric or the allocentric view.

Coaches gather the most information about an interaction from this position. The deeper that coaching maps, tools, and values are internalized, the greater the ease of going to the "balcony." Coaches have some understanding of their own feelings, some understanding of the other person's perspective, and an awareness of the systemic nature of the conversation. To be macrocentric is to observe the interaction from a distance without identifying with either person.

Knowing one's intentions and choosing behaviors from a range of possible options that are congruent with those intentions requires the ability to move in and out of these three positions. This may be the most essential requirement for exercising situational flexibility. It is also the most valuable resource in modifying coaching interactions to match the other person's ways of processing information and making meaning.

CONCLUSION

The mission of Cognitive Coaching is to develop the cognitive capacities for self-directed learning. Ultimately, the support person with the greatest flexibility in choices and repertoire has the greatest influence. It is for this reason that Cognitive Coaches, devoted to mediating thinking, will occasionally draw from the other support services of collaborating and consulting to achieve these ends.

The constructivist coach knows that through her services in collaboration and consulting she can provide data, ideas, and structured experiences which can be mediated to enhance the teacher's skills and dispositions of meaning making.

The coach also knows that through collaboration and/or consulting, opportunities will arise that can enhance the teachers development of resourcefulness related to the five states of mind: efficacy, flexibility, consciousness, craftsmanship, and interdependence.

Thus, even though a coach may enter other support functions, their "default position" is always from their stance that is grounded in the values, principles and purposes of Cognitive Coaching.

NOTES

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2. Pajak, E. (2000). *Approaches to clinical supervision: Alternatives to improving instruction* (2nd ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

3. Baker, B. (2001). Personal communication.

4. We are grateful to Michael Dolchemascolo, Jane Ellison, Judy Gottschalk, Lynn Sawyer, Sue Pressler, and Sharon Storrier, associates at the Center for Cognitive Coaching, for helping us to make these distinctions.

5. Moir, E., Barron, W., and Stobbe, C. (2001). Personal communication. Starting with a foundation of Cognitive Coaching principles, protocols, and skills, the Santa Cruz New Teacher Center has become a leader in training support providers in California and other states. Center advisors in Santa Cruz support beginning teachers using a blend of practices that we had earlier thought not to be possible. What has emerged from their work is a support system in which Cognitive Coaching, consulting, and collaboration work together almost seamlessly. The advisors blend Cognitive Coaching with what we will term *collaboration or consulting*. We do not necessarily recommend their practices in settings in which a number of factors we describe are not present.

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