

## Mentor Skill Builder: Practicing Coaching Conversations

*This resource provides two different activities that can be used for practicing coaching conversations. These activities use the power of a PLC in order to develop this critical mentoring skill.*



### Choose Your Own Coaching Conversation

*Work together to shape a coaching conversation through role-play, observation, and reflection.*

#### Prepare

1. Develop a coaching scenario and select one participant to serve as the mentee. The facilitator will serve as the mentor.
2. Make sure the mentor and mentee understand the scenario, but do not rehearse the conversation.
3. Bring any training resources or tools that may support the coaching conversation.

#### Role-Play

1. The mentor and mentee begin the conversation based on the scenario. The rest of the PLC observes.
2. At a key moment, pause the role-play. The mentee leaves the room.
3. The facilitator asks the PLC:
  - What are you noticing?
  - What should the mentor do next?
  - What coaching strategies might be helpful?
4. The PLC agrees on how the mentor should continue the conversation.
5. The mentee returns, and the role-play continues based on the PLC's suggestions.
6. Repeat the pause-and-plan process several times, as appropriate.
7. When the conversation reaches a natural stopping point, the PLC identifies how the mentor should bring the conversation to closure.

#### Debrief

- How did the mentor use coaching strategies to support the mentee's reflection?
- What feedback would help the mentor strengthen their coaching skills?
- Which mentor strategies seemed most effective in encouraging reflection?
- As the mentor, what would you do next to support this mentee?

## Reflective Coaching Fishbowl

*Practice coaching skills through role-play, observation, and feedback.*

### Prepare

1. Ask each mentor to create a fictional **mentee challenge scenario** that includes:
  - Brief background on the mentor/mentee relationship
  - A summary of a recent fictional classroom visit or meeting
  - The coaching challenge the mentor wants to address
2. Provide copies of your system's coaching guidelines for reference.
3. Create a **Fishbowl Observation Capture Sheet** with key coaching skills as look-fors.

### Fishbowl Role-Play

1. The facilitator selects one mentor to present a **mentee challenge scenario** and another PLC member to role-play the mentee.
2. The mentor and mentee role-play the reflective conversation at the front of the room.
3. The remaining PLC members observe from outside the "fishbowl," using the **Fishbowl Observation Capture Sheet** to record evidence of effective coaching practices.

### Possible Coaching Look-Fors

- Establishing a trusting, collaborative tone
- Communicating without judgment
- Validating the mentee's experiences, efforts, and feelings
- Using active listening
- Asking probing questions that deepen reflection and analysis
- Using relevant data to support reflection
- Guiding the mentee toward goals, next steps, and follow-up

### Follow-Up Discussion

1. After the role-play, the facilitator guides the PLC discussion:
  - What did the mentor do to create a positive, trusting, and collaborative environment?
  - Which coaching skills were most effective? What specific evidence did you observe?
  - What feedback or suggestions would strengthen the mentor's coaching practice? Why?
2. After receiving feedback, give the mentor a few minutes to reflect and identify **one or two next steps** for applying the feedback.

### Debrief

- How can you apply something you observed or learned to your own coaching practice?
- Which coaching skill is a strength for you? Why?
- Which coaching skill is most challenging for you? Why?
- How did participating as the **mentor, mentee, or observer** contribute to your learning?