

Relationship Building

A trusting relationship lays the foundation for adult learning and long-term growth in a teacher's practice. Through ongoing interactions, you communicate to the teacher, "I notice you, I'm interested in you and your students, and I want to get to know you even better." When you share genuine, judgement-free curiosity about a teacher's practice and invite them to open up about their thinking and decision-making, a personal connection is forged.

For example, during a conversation following an observation you might say, "I noticed you talking to Jasmine and Leo about their blocks building this morning. I'm interested in hearing about your goals for supporting their cooperative interactions, and I want to learn more about what you are thinking and doing." Interactions like this position the teacher-coach relationship as a partnership based on a shared desire for professional learning.

Four principles strengthen the teacher-coach relationship and promote learning.

1. **Individualized coaching fosters the development of respectful relationships essential for learning.** Coaches adjust their approach based on each teacher's communication and learning style.
2. **A strengths-based approach highlights teacher success.** Coaches observe teachers with the goal of identifying moments of effective instruction.
3. **Powerful coaching conversations enable teachers to act based on their own thinking and ideas.** Coaches intentionally use communication skills like powerful questions to foster teacher reflection and goal-setting.
4. **A reciprocal learning partnership leads to shared goals and responsibilities.** Coaches and teachers co-develop a plan of action to grow classroom practices that is meaningful for both coach and teacher.

References

Material in the Coaching Best Practices section was adapted from the following sources:

Aguilar, E. (2020). *Coaching for equity: Conversations that change practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Jablon, J., Dombro, A. L., Johnsen, S. (2016). *Coaching with powerful interactions: A guide for partnering with early childhood teachers*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Kee, K. M. & Anderson, K. A. (2010). *Results coaching: The new essential for school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.