

Cognitive Coaching

What is Cognitive Coaching?

Cognitive coaching is a coaching model that requires the coach to be non-judgmental, to encourage reflective practice, and to guide another person to self-directed learning. To encourage reflection, cognitive coaching focuses on a teacher's thinking, perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions and how these affect one's practices. A cognitive coach collects data and learns to pose questions to engage the teacher in reflective thinking. According to Costa and Garmston, a cognitive coach "...uses tools of reflective questioning, pausing, paraphrasing, and probing for specificity." A cognitive coach helps another person "to develop expertise in planning, reflecting, problem-solving, and decision-making. These are the invisible tools of being a professional, and they are the source of all teachers' choices and behaviors." (13) It is a reciprocal learning process between both individuals. A good cognitive coach must be able to work effectively with different personality types, different learning styles, different philosophies, and different stages of a teacher's development. (14)

The following charts are taken from *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools*, by Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston.

The left-handed column in each chart contains desired cognitive thoughts and processes. The right-handed column contains sample questions. Specific syntax cues in the questions are in boldface type.

Planning Conversation

If the desired cognitive thought or process is to:	Then the coach might ask:
Describe (State the purpose of the lesson.)	What outcomes do you have in mind for your lesson today?
Envision (Translate the lesson purposes into descriptions of desirable, observable student behaviors.)	As you see this lesson unfolding, what will students be doing?
Predict (Envision teaching strategies and behaviors to facilitate students' performance of desired behaviors.)	As you envision this lesson, what do you see yourself doing to produce those student outcomes?
Sequence (Describe the sequence in which the lesson will occur.)	What will you be doing first? Next? Last? How will you close the lesson?
Estimate (Anticipate the duration of activities.)	As you consider the opening of the lesson, how long do you anticipate that will take?
Define (Formulate procedures for assessing outcomes by envisioning, defining, and setting success indicators.)	What will you see students doing or hear them saying that will indicate to you that your lesson is successful?
Metacogitate (Monitor his or her own behavior during the lesson.)	What will you be aware of in students' reaction to know if your directions are understood?
Self-Assess (Identify a process for personal learning.)	As a professional, what are you hoping to learn about your own practices as a result of this lesson?
Describe (Depict the data-collecting role of the observer.)	What will you want me to look for and give you feedback about while I am in your classroom?

Reflecting Conversation

If the desired cognitive process is to:	Then the coach might ask:
Assess (Express feelings about the lesson.)	As you reflect on your lesson, how do you feel it went?
Recall and Relate (Recollect student behaviors observed during the lesson to support those feelings.)	What did you see students doing (or hear them saying) that made you feel that way?
Recall (Recollect their own behavior during the lesson.)	What do you recall about your own behavior during the lesson?
Compare (Draw a comparison between student behavior performed with student behavior desired.)	How did what you observe compare with what you planned?
Infer (Abstract meaning from data.)	Given this information, what do you make of it?
Draw Conclusions (Assess the achievement of the lesson purposes.)	As you reflect on the goals for this lesson, what can you say about your students' achievement of them?
Metacogitate (Become aware of and monitor their own thinking during the lesson.)	What were you thinking when you decided to change the design of the lesson? OR What were you aware of that students were doing that signaled you to change the format of the lesson?
Infer from Data (Draw hypotheses and explanations from the data provided.)	What inferences might you draw from these data?
Analyze (Examine why the student behaviors were or were not achieved.)	What hunches do you have to explain why some students performed as you had hoped while others did not?
Describe Cause and Effect (Draw casual relationships.)	What did you do (or not do) to produce the results you obtained?
Synthesize (Make meaning from analysis of the lesson.)	As you reflect on this discussion, what big ideas or insights are you discovering?
Self-Assess (Construct personal learnings.)	What personal learnings did you gain from this experience?
Apply (Prescribe alternative teaching strategies, behaviors, or conditions.)	As you plan future lessons, what insights have you developed that might be carried forth to the next lesson or other lessons?
Evaluate (Give feedback about the effects of this coaching session and the coach's conferencing skills.)	As you think back over our conversation, what has this coaching session done for you? What is it that I did (or didn't) do that was of benefit to you? What assisted you? What could I do different in future coaching sessions?

Charts are taken from:

Costa, Arthur L., and Robert J. Garmston. Cognitive Coaching: a Foundation for Renaissance Schools. Norwood, Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon, Inc., 2002. 398-399.

Additional Coaching Techniques

Below you will find some other ways of asking questions that allow the pre-service teacher to reflect on his/her lesson. These questions guide the teacher to consider and think about not only those things that were said or done by both teacher and students alike, but also what was not said or done. This exercise allows the teacher the opportunity to reflect on the elements that contributed to the success of the lesson or that could be improved to have a more successful lesson.

The following questions and statements were developed at the Summer Clinical Instructor Training, August 1994. Feel free to use them in your conference:

SUPPORTIVE FEEDBACK

Open-Ended Question:

What were some of the things that you felt went well?

What made you decide to use this topic for this lesson?

Your lesson provided a lot of information...."What did you do to ensure that the students were learning?

What do you think worked well today?

What do you think you did well in this lesson?

What did you feel went well with your lesson today?

Did you do some specific things to catch the interest of the students.

The lesson had many strong points. What did you do to help the kids learn?

What did you do to keep students involved in your lesson?

What did you do that caused your lesson to go well?

What do you think went well today and helped your students to learn?

SUPPORTIVE FEEDBACK

Narrowing Question:

What did you do to make the lesson meaningful to your students?

What did you do to reinforce students' knowledge?

What did you do to get your students interested in the?

What did you do to get the students to tell you what they had experienced?

What did you do to encourage active participation?

How did you respond to the children during class to encourage them to participate?

How did you organize your material to teach the students?

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Open-Ended Question:

What part of your lesson do you feel did not go very well today?

Why?

What was least effective in your lesson today?

What would you have changed? If you could change something in your lesson, what would you change?

What did you find most difficult about teaching this lesson?

If you were to teach this lesson again, what would you do differently?

What could you have done to enhance the lesson?

Is there anything you think didn't go well?

What do you think didn't go as well as you expected?

Is there anything that didn't go as well as you had planned?

Narrowing Questions:

What did you do to ensure that all students could see your materials?

How were you able to reinforce student learning in today's lesson?

What did you do to encourage student participation?

What did you do to see if the students were grasping the content of your lesson?

How did you involve your students in your lesson? Focus on what they did.

What did you do to encourage your students to formulate answers?

What did you do to ensure that your students have enough time to formulate answers?

Do you think if you increased your wait time it would have given more students time to respond to the question?

Another approach to providing feedback and encourage reflective thinking is to use statements that begin with "*I noticed ...*" and "*I wonder...*"

Examples:

I noticed that you monitored off-task behavior by going over to J and B and quietly speaking with them to refocus their behavior.

I noticed that a number of students didn't understand the directions to the assignment. How could this have been prevented?

I noticed how you differentiated the assignment for _____. Why did you choose this approach?

I wonder how you could have better focused the discussion. What kinds of follow-up questions could you have used?

I wonder if you set up a routine for passing out and collecting papers there would be less loss of instructional time.

I wonder how the discussion might have been different if you had first allowed the students to ask the questions that they prepared, instead of beginning with your questions.