



Coaching with Video Vignettes: Four Guided Noticing Strategies

In the past, the cost of video equipment and production made it difficult to integrate video into teacher coaching and professional development. Now video is more accessible to schools across the country through low cost mobile phones and webcams. The increased presence of video in teachers' work-lives means that observers and teachers have an opportunity to leverage a shared record that can be used to tackle classroom challenges.

In our experience through the Best Foot Forward project, the qualities of video differ from other artifacts collected during observations, such as observers' notes, board snapshots, lesson plans and student work, because video is both an artifact and an investigative tool. When coaches use a video recording to help teachers investigate or explore practice, they can employ a particular set of strategies to help them notice, remember, and reflect in new ways. Below are four coaching strategies utilizing video clips (or vignettes) in the post-conference conversation.

STRATEGY 1: NARRATION

In traditional coaching conversations, teachers must recall lesson details by memory alone, which is a difficult feat, so they end up relying on the observer to retell the details of the lesson from his or her notes. Video, however, provides an opportunity for teachers to independently reconstruct the past in much more accurate detail. By having teachers retell what happened without judgment, both parties in the coaching relationship gain additional insights into the underlying rationale in a particular teaching moment. This can serve as the springboard for a detailed discussion.

TRY THIS:

Ask teachers to narrate a video clip. Watch the clip first, and then re-watch on mute with the teacher's voiceover. Another strategy is to watch and then simply elicit a detailed retelling. Start with concrete details. What did the teacher do and see? What was the plan?

STRATEGY 2: QUESTIONING

It is rarely effective to simply tell a teacher what went wrong or point out a missed opportunity. If given the chance, they are often able to figure it out for themselves with the help of an extra set of eyes. Virtually all great coaches use questioning to shift the cognitive lift from observer to teacher. Video questioning is particularly useful in helping to generate accounts of the characteristics of 'off-stage' phenomena, that is, aspects of the work that are "invisibly buried in the routines of day-to-day activities" (Schubert, 2006).

TRY THIS:

Some "go to" questioning prompts from video coaching projects at the Center for Education Policy Research include:

- What made you decide to...
- What were you thinking in that moment?
- How did that match up to what you expected?
- When you say X... what do you mean?
- How do you think that went?
- Tell me about your decision to...



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STRATEGY 3: CODING AND COUNTING

Education leaders rarely train teachers to “code” evidence, reserving such training for coaches and observers alone. In the [Exploring Methods for Improving Teachers’ Mathematical Quality of Instruction](#) projects at the Center for Education Policy Research, we train teachers, in addition to coaches, to for moments in a lesson video that correspond to a rubric. This allows teachers to internalize the dimensions of excellent instruction and share a common language with their coaches, thereby bringing more thoughtful reflection to the coaching conversation.

Another way to code a video is to use a counting methodology. Counting allows teachers to quantify behavior that will help them draw conclusions about areas of practice. Coaches can ask: what percentage of students in your classroom answer questions in class? A class may seem very dynamic, but if only a few students are driving the action, a teacher can figure this out through guided counting.

TRY THIS:

- Ask teachers to tag specific moments in a video clip to rubric indicators before a video observation or coaching conversation.
- During a coaching conversation ask teachers to count details aligned with areas of your local rubric. For example: number of high-leverage questions, wait time between questions and answers, or number of student responses to questions.

STRATEGY 4: PIVOTAL PAUSING

As a former teacher, I cannot count the number of times I wished to go back, freeze time, and do something differently in my classroom. Alas, this was not possible.

“Pivotal Pausing” is a strategy whereby teachers freeze a video at important moments in the lesson. This helps the teacher to prioritize important events in a lesson, rather than responding to every single moment that could have been done differently. Teachers are their own harshest critics, and coaches can play a critical role in helping teachers avoid nitpicky tendencies and focus on what matters most.

TRY THIS:

Play a pre-selected clip and ask teachers to press pause at a moment they consider pivotal. These moments might include missed opportunities for teaching and learning, or an event that triggered a series of distractions. Then, the coaching pair can discuss a future course of action when dealing with similar challenges.

Of course, these strategies are not exhaustive. Be sure to share your best coaching practices with your colleagues, online educator forums, and with [the Best Foot Forward team](#).