

INSTRUCTIONAL MODELLING

A one-pager summarising five ways that coaches and teachers can model and rehearse teaching techniques together as part of an instructional coaching cycle.

REHEARSAL

CO-TEACHING

VIDEO

VERBALISATION

SCRIPTING

In The Definitive Guide To Instructional Coaching, Jim Knight says that *'it is helpful for teachers to see a strategy being used in the classroom before implementing it themselves.'* There are several different approaches to consider – in practice, a coach will likely need to offer a combination of ways for the teacher to see a model of the teaching technique that they are learning. Here are five approaches that our coaches and teachers have found to be helpful.

What matters is that the collaborating teacher feels confident about applying the new strategy.



JIM KNIGHT

1 REHEARSAL

Rehearsals ideally take place in the teacher's classroom, without their students present. Many teaching techniques, especially those that are linguistic or physical, lend themselves to role play, where the coach and the teacher collaboratively play out the technique as it might be used in the classroom. Each step of the technique can be rehearsed and critiqued, and adaptations can be made as needed. This approach enables the teacher to see the technique play out in their own teaching space, helping them to consider the aspects of the technique that might and might not work before they deploy it in real-life.



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2 CO-TEACHING

Co-teaching can provide an effective way to model a teaching strategy without compromising the delivery of specialist content. For example, a science teacher working with a coach to develop approaches to summarizing academic texts might want to steer the accurate delivery of the content by selecting the text and identifying the intended output, whilst allowing the coach to deliver the summary aspect of the task. Co-taught lessons need to be really carefully planned, not least to ensure that the collaboration is built on parity; the coach and the teacher must both welcome the arrangement and positively embrace their differing expertise.



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3 VIDEO

Watching a video of the teaching technique being deployed in an exemplary way can be a useful modelling tool for coaches to share with teachers. There are many sources from which these videos might arise, however at their most effective, videos that are recorded in-house to support the school's own teaching toolkit, featuring the school's own students and teachers, are likely to be best. Great video examples of teaching techniques, observed collaboratively by both the coach and the teacher, can provide a productive agenda for a coaching discussion and a useful aid for learning a new technique.



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4 VERBALISATION

Sometimes, the coach will elect to explain and describe the elements of a teaching technique to the teacher. This is particularly important when the teaching technique comprises non-physical or non-linguistic elements and is therefore difficult to role-play or act out. Talking through the technique, preferably in the teacher's classroom, enables the coach and the teacher to verbalise the necessary actions and point out physical aspects of the classroom environment that might come into play.

5 SCRIPTING

Scripting can be a powerful way to rehearse the role out of a particular action step or strategy. For example, a teacher working on developing their use of cold calling in the classroom might benefit from scripting question structures that encourage all students to participate in thinking rather than inviting individuals to volunteer answers. A teacher seeking to improve the effectiveness of their explanations might benefit from scripting an example explanation with the support of a coach.

REVIEWING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

A one-pager summarising what coaches might consider when reviewing student performance in order to gain a clear picture of the teacher's classroom reality.

OBSERVATION

VIDEO

TEACHER INPUT

STUDENT FEEDBACK






At the beginning of a coaching cycle, it is important that the teacher and the coach share a clear understanding of what is going on for students in the teacher's classroom. Many schools rely on lesson observation as the primary data source for determining the focus of a coaching cycle and, whilst this can be effective, it's important to recognise that this approach has limitations, too. In 2011, Strong et al published findings from research into how successfully we can judge the effectiveness of teachers through observation – their findings make clear the need for a broader range of evidence to be considered when planning teacher development. When reviewing student performance, coaches and teachers should consider evidence in light of both its reliability and objectivity, recognizing that in most cases, no single source of evidence will be enough to accurately identify elements of the learning and teaching process that need to be improved.



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COMMON PERCEPTUAL ERRORS

Whenever a coach enters another teacher's classroom, they should guard against perceptual errors. Here are five common examples:

-  **Confirmation Bias** | The tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs.
-  **Habituation** | The tendency to become desensitised to experiences that we frequently experience.
-  **Primacy Effect** | The tendency to be influenced by our first impression of someone or something.
-  **Recency Effect** | The tendency to be influenced by our last impression of someone or something.
-  **Stereotypes** | The tendency to be influenced by unfounded beliefs about certain groups of people.

1 OBSERVATION

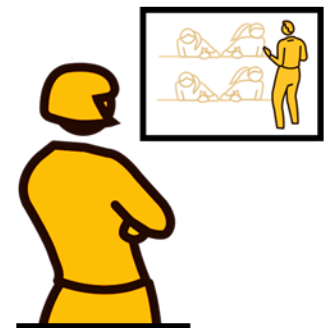
It can be tricky to overcome the transient nature of lesson observations; sometimes it is difficult for the coach and the teacher to perceive students' performance in the same way. This can compromise the productivity of the subsequent dialogue. In-person observations should be built on trust and transparency. There must be an explicit and shared understanding of the judgement-free, formative purpose of the activity.



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2 VIDEO

Video can be a powerful way to review student performance. Teachers might self-record an example of their practice to share with their coach, providing a slightly more reliable and objective reference point for the coaching dialogue that follows. This removes the transient element of observation, as the video can be paused, replayed and reviewed when further probing or clarification is needed.



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3 TEACHER INPUT

In a coaching partnership, the input of the teacher is crucial. Student performance should be reviewed through the lens of the teacher's intentions for learning, a context that cannot be assumed by the coach. This might involve a discussion around planning, curriculum design, knowledge of the class, etc. The teacher's own reflections and observations are as, if not more, valuable to the process than those of the coach.



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4 STUDENT FEEDBACK

Students can provide teachers and coaches with all manner of useful feedback. Asking students informally about their in-class experiences can be extremely productive, as can running student voice surveys or interviews. Collecting exit tickets or reviewing student work, particularly when combined with observation or video, allows teachers and coaches to triangulate the data in order to arrive at a more cohesive diagnosis.



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PERSISTENT LEARNING PROBLEMS

A one-pager summarising four persistent learning problems faced by all teachers all of the time, as proposed by Sarah Cottingham ( @overpractised).

FOCUSING
ATTENTION

FORMING
KNOWLEDGE

STORING
KNOWLEDGE

DEVELOPING
UNDERSTANDING

Persistent learning problems are problems all teachers are trying to work on all of the time (Mccrea, 2018; Kennedy, 2016). They are universal: an unavoidable feature of classroom practice. They are causal: if tackled effectively they will have a strong, positive impact on the outcomes of our roles. And they are controllable: once diagnosed, we can develop our practice to directly mitigate their effect (Barker & Rees, 2020). It can be useful for schools and teacher educators to frame professional development around persistent problems (Cottingham, 2022).

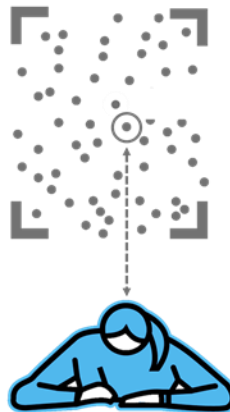
Just providing
'the answer'
is not the
answer.



SARAH COTTINGHAM

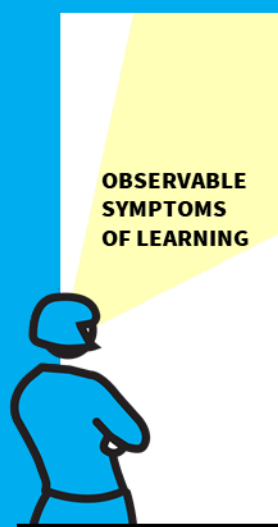
1 FOCUSING ATTENTION

Attention is the gateway to cognition (Hobbiss, 2017). We might observe symptoms which indicate that our students are not able to efficiently focus their attention onto the information to be learnt. We need to minimize distractions to enable them to focus on important knowledge. Potential solutions might be found by working on classroom and behaviour management, routines, expectations, explicit instruction or task design.



2 FORMING KNOWLEDGE

In order for learning activities to be generative, they must support students to manage their working memory while building on their prior knowledge. Forming useful knowledge requires students to **select, organise** and **integrate** new knowledge (Fiorella & Mayer). Solutions might be found in task design, the development of high quality instructional techniques (eg. modelling, scaffolding) and checking for understanding.



OBSERVABLE
SYMPTOMS
OF LEARNING

PROBLEM | How do we efficiently help all pupils to focus attention?

PROBLEM | How do we efficiently help all pupils to form useful knowledge?

PROBLEM | How do we efficiently help all pupils to store useful knowledge?

PROBLEM | How do we efficiently help all pupils to develop understanding?

Potential solution

Potential solution

Potential solution

BETTER
UNDERSTANDING OF
LEARNING

BETTER DIAGNOSIS
OF LEARNING
PROBLEM

BETTER SELECTION
OF SOLUTION

3 SECURING KNOWLEDGE

Though it seems counter-intuitive, forgetting is a critical part of how we learn - forgetting focuses remembering and fosters learning; remembering generates learning and causes forgetting (Bjork, 2011). If our classroom observations indicate that students' storage strength is low, we might consider revisiting approaches to retrieval practice, guided and independent application practice, assessment, testing and feedback.



4 DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING

The goal of classroom-based learning might often be mastery, fluency and automaticity. If we observe that our students are having difficulty in connecting new and existing knowledge, or applying knowledge fluently, we might need to reconsider how knowledge is sequenced, the effectiveness of practice and retrieval activities, or how we support students' metacognitive and self-regulatory thinking.

