

Discussion and Reflection Questions for *Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping Teachers Change.*

Jane A. G. Kise, Ed.D. (2006).
Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

These study questions are designed to help individuals or groups understand apply the concepts and strategies of differentiated coaching more deeply. The process of differentiated coaching has six key elements:

1. Using a common framework for unbiased reflection on education
2. Understanding the teachers' strengths and beliefs about teaching and learning
3. Providing information and evidence that can influence those beliefs
4. Meeting the needs of each teacher (differentiating professional development or coaching)
5. Relating or applying what is being learned to the problems teachers want to solve in their classrooms
6. Engaging teachers in deep, reflective collaboration.

The first four chapters of the book explain the importance of each key element, through research-based examples from real classrooms. These principles can be used in tandem with many different frameworks for understanding adult learning or student instruction.

The second half of the book details one common framework, that of personality type, that is an ideal tool for understanding how adults and students teach and learn, their strengths and beliefs, and how those affect educational experiences. It also allows for conversations around curriculum, teaching strategies, and assessment that change the focus from “right” and “wrong” to “Which students will this practice reach?” Few other frameworks meet the criteria for being strengths-based, neutral, cross-cultural and appropriate for both adults and students. While other frameworks can be used, the second half of the book provides concrete, ready-to-implement tools for immediately using the framework while also encouraging coaches to investigate in-depth study of the theory and the practical tools it can provide when it becomes an embedded common language.

Before You Begin Reading...

1. Think about teachers who seem resistant to being coached. Why do you think they are resistant?
2. What are your favorite teaching strategies?
3. Consider a curriculum, teaching strategy, or classroom management strategy you resisted? What were your reasons?

Chapter 1: What Do Teachers Believe?

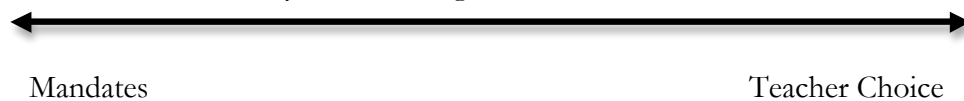
1. Consider your own strengths as an educator, a student, and a coach. Do any of these strengths tie to your own beliefs about education?
2. Consider the quotes on page from John Dewey. Does professional development in your school or district more closely resemble force or drill or an art which takes place when “a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties” (Dewey, 1934, p. 214).
3. Do you have a common framework for discussing teaching and learning? How well does it fit the criteria listed on page 16?
4. Coaching practices often rely heavily on evidence from data and modeling. Consider ways you might use student grades to influence teacher beliefs about current teaching practices, as on page 20.
5. Discuss a recent professional development event. Who liked/disliked it and why? Did it meet the criteria for experiences listed on pages 21-22?

Chapter 2: What Do Teachers Need During Change?

1. Page 23 quotes Michael Fullan comments on how restructuring is different from changing school culture, adding that changing teacher beliefs often involves changing the person the teacher is. How does this relate to your own experiences with school change?
2. Consider the informational needs listed on page 27 and explained on pages 27-29. Which are usually met in your organization? Which are seldom met?
3. Are “resisters” in your organization given labels similar to those on page 30? How does this affect the strategies used to counter resistance?
4. Read the four coaching styles described on pages 34-36. Which one fits most closely with how you like to coach? Which is least similar?
5. This chapter ends with the sentence, “If we want [teachers] to meet the needs of all students, we need to model with them how that is possible, by meeting the needs of all teachers.” Do you agree or disagree? Why? What does this mean for you as a coach?

Chapter 3: What Problems do Teachers Want to Solve?

1. Thinking about the current changes you are being asked to make, how might you place overall teacher autonomy in implementing initiatives? Mark your placing on the continuum below and list your reasoning.



2. A teacher complains that students lack reading comprehension skills. Think about the differences in the suggestions you would make given three different definitions of the root cause of their struggles: 1) Students lack basic comprehension skills 2) Students lack perseverance 3) Students see no reason to engage with the chosen text.

3. Brainstorm the forms of evidence you've used to motivate teachers or examine effective lessons.

Chapter 4: How Can Teachers Collaborate?

1. Use the information on pages 54-55 to consider whether which collaboration level fits the way the teams with which you work operate the majority of the time.
2. Page 56 provides some specific criteria for Level III collaboration. What gets in the way of this level of collaboration?
3. Pages 58-58 list several common barriers to Level III collaboration. Which are most prevalent in your building? If you've overcome some of these barriers, share what actions helped you do so.
4. Page 60 lists criteria for Level III collaboration. Which are present on the teams with which you work?
5. The rest of the chapter discusses coaching moves that can improve collaboration. What three actions might you take in the next weeks to improve collaboration?

Chapter 5: A Common Framework

1. Does your school use a common language/framework for teaching and learning? If so, how well does it fit the criteria listed on page 74?
2. Select your own personality preferences using the information on pages 77-98. If you're unsure, read the descriptions of the possible types found in Appendix A. Which sounds most like you? Compare your results with others on your team.

3. Consider the “Coaching Implications” information on pages 87, 91, 95, and 97. Which might be most important for you to keep in mind? Are there any actions/needs of your “opposites” that you may have interpreted as resistance?
4. Page 81 has a chart of correlations between personality type and other commonly used learning styles frameworks. If you use another one, what are its pro’s and con’s compared to using type?
5. Read your type description, found in Appendix A and then the one for your opposite. For example, ISTJ would also read ENFP. What surprises you about your opposite? How might their classroom look different from yours?

Chapter 6: Learning Styles and Coaching

1. Look back at the reflection questions you completed before reading Chapter 1. Are there any ties to your own strengths as listed in the type description in Appendix A?
2. Is the approach to reading instruction more Sensing or Intuitive, as discussed on pages 105-7, in your school or District?
3. Is the approach to mathematics instruction more Sensing or Intuitive, as discussed on pages 108-109? Might there be patterns to which types show more math anxiety?
4. Consider the quote from page 110 on discipline and Sensing/Perceiving students. How might you help teachers diffuse these conflicts?
5. In the chart on pages 116-117, circle the number for each item that you easily incorporate into your teaching. Place a check by the number for each item that is more difficult or that you seldom consider. What patterns do you see?

6. Pages 122-123 describe three phases for using type in coaching. They can actually be done in any order. Look at the “Why” column. Which might be the best starting place for the teachers you coach?

Chapter 7: Coaching Your Whole Staff for Change

1. On page 127 there are four prompts to complete about teaching and learning. Choose at least one to complete and compare your answers.
2. Consider at least one of the four common initiatives described in the chapter: curriculum mapping, collaboration, standardizing curriculum, and standards-based instruction. Which type preferences are being honored in the way your school or district implements this initiative?
3. Consider a recent change you were involved in. Given the information on pages 133-135, whose needs were met? How could the change have been handled to better meet the needs of others?

Chapter 8: Differentiated Coaching for Teachers

1. How does your job description and the expectations placed on you match with the definition of coaching given on the bottom of page 139?
2. Pages 144-145 lists tips for coaching teachers with each preference. Which preferences are hardest for you to coach? Discuss which tips you might work with to improve your coaching abilities.
3. Think of a teaching strategy or other initiative you've struggled with. How might someone have coached you in your own style to make the change easier? In your group, take turns sharing your struggles. Use the coaching styles information on pages 146-146 to make coaching suggestions. Help each other understand which moves would be most successful for teachers of your type.

Chapter 9: A Framework for Solving Problems

1. Look at the four steps in the problem-solving model (pages 156-157). Which steps are you naturally drawn to? Which do you tend to spend the least time on?
2. The text boxes on pages 158-164 describe different coaching roles for each step of the problem-solving mode: detective, catalyst, mediator, advisor. Which is most natural for you? How does this affect your coaching practice?
3. Try the model! Consider a current issue and follow the process given in Appendix b.

Chapter 10: Organizing Staff Development Efforts in the Same Backpack

1. What one step might the teachers you work with take to help students understand their own learning styles? You might check out the article “Are They Really Problem Students” at www.edcoaching.com for ideas.
2. Choose a culture and discuss what the archetype (page 84) might be. Remember, the final say always lies with those within the culture, but this analysis can often create bridges for understanding.
3. Consider the information on students of poverty. What coaching move might help teachers better meet the needs of these students? Are any changes needed to teaching strategies?
4. Share your reactions to the information on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Do you coach teachers who always start with the “knowledge” level? Teachers who jump in at “synthesis”? How might you coach them, using this information, to meet the need of Sensing and Intuitive students?
5. Think about a “problem student” with whom you’ve worked. What strategies, shared on pages 180-182, might have helped?