



The Case of the Tender Loving, Tedious Teacher (INFP) Coach as Collegial Mentor (Intuition and Feeling)

Coaching Issue

Shoya, a second-year teacher, has asked you to visit her 5th grade classroom. “I know I bore the kids every time we study a novel. I don’t know if it’s the stories they dislike—they’re from the District’s reading list—or the fact that it takes weeks if not *months* to finish the unit because of the amount of class time needed to read it aloud.”

During the lesson you observe, Shoya begins with a quiz on the chapter from *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990) she read to them yesterday. As she goes over the ten short-answer questions, only a couple students raise their hands to contribute their thoughts. The questions are fact-based. She then begins reading the next chapter. The class follows instructions well and seems respectful of Shoya and each other.

Students have their own copies and nearly all of them seem to follow along. Three or four students appear to be reading ahead. Occasionally, Shoya stops and asks a question such as, “Why do you think Maniac did that?” or “Does this remind you of any other story you’ve read?” When she finishes the chapter, she hands out worksheets and asks students to work in pairs to answer the questions.

As they work, Shoya whispers to you, “Some of these students are so low that they need to review and review to get the events of the story straight. The worksheets and quizzes help, but I worry that all the drilling makes them lose interest and the high kids don’t need it at all. I have to use the higher-level questions, like compare/contrast or making connections, in discussion. That way everyone is hearing great answers which should help for state test preparation. Look—only a few pairs are actually working and most of those who are goofing off are the ones that need the review!” The worksheets are similar to the quiz; she found all of them online.

This is the only literacy instruction until they finish the novel, at which point they’ll return to the basal and leveled readers. Shoya outlines her plans for the next few days. One more chapter and then students will choose scenes, draw pictures with captions that describe the events, and post them as a timeline around the room. “That allows for some creativity,” she says. “Next Friday, they’ll have time to write a journal entry from a character’s viewpoint, but I’m worried about how the low kids will handle that—and the high ones simply refuse to do anything extra. There were ideas for debates and web research, too, but that’d extend the unit even longer and a lot of the kids already seem bored. I’d thought about bridging to discussions about racism, but I don’t think it’d work with these students...”

Key Element: Use a common framework for unbiased reflection on education

- Compare Shoya's teaching methods to your common framework.

Key Element: Understand the teacher's strengths and beliefs about teaching and learning

- What are Shoya's strengths?
- What does Shoya believe about her students? About literacy instruction? If you could meet with her, what questions might you ask?

Key Element: Provide information and evidence that can influence the teacher's beliefs

- What new information does Shoya need about reading instruction? What forms of information will she be most open to?

Key Element: Meet the needs of the teacher during change

Shoya prefers "Coach as Encouraging Sage."

- Compare your own coaching style to Shoya's style. What would be important for you to remember?
- What coaching techniques might work best in helping Shoya change her literacy instruction strategies?

Key Element: Relate or apply what is being learned to the problem the teacher wants to solve in his/her classroom

- Shoya has some dreams for using *Maniac Magee* with her students. How might you use these as a "hook" as you work to improve her instructional strategies?

Action Plan

Use the above information to suggest a plan for how Shoya can improve instruction for teaching novels.

Goal	Coaching strategy	Coach's role	Evidence of success
1.			
2.			
3.			

A Possible Approach for Coaching Shoya

Key Element: Use a common framework for unbiased reflection on education

- Compare Shoya’s teaching methods to your common framework.

Shoya isn’t very satisfied with how teaching this novel is working because, like many newer teachers, she’s using things that exist rather than differentiating to meet the needs of her students. She seems most concerned with her “lower students”—a common concern among Feeling teachers. Her desire to add creativity, through drawings and the character journaling, as well as wanting to bridge to the theme of racism, are more consistent with her Intuitive preference and might be “hooks” for helping her change.

Her Introversion preference may be influencing her reliance on all-class instruction. Introverted teachers sometimes see station work or literature circles as problematic because of the extra noise and movement they can entail. It also doesn’t seem as if the unit was planned systematically—she mentions the theme of racism in passing. Has she identified the “essential questions” and literacy skills she wants students to develop through this study or is she planning week by week with no overall structure, often a trap for Perceiving teachers.

Key Element: Understand the teacher’s strengths and beliefs about teaching and learning

- What are Shoya’s strengths?

She cares deeply about her students and seems to understand each child’s current literacy skills. She’s established a positive classroom atmosphere that should allow her to try new things with students. She also naturally tries to include creative elements in classroom instruction to motivate students.

- What does Shoya believe about her students? About literacy instruction? If you could meet with her, what questions might you ask?

Shoya believes that she needs to provide the same assignment to all students, that drilling on story facts is the best tool for comprehension, that there is a linear progression from facts to higher levels of questions so that one can’t move on until students demonstrate knowledge of the story line, and that students who struggle with comprehension will struggle with any activities that call for creativity.

She also seems to be teaching this unit without intentional instruction on literacy skills beyond comprehension and is relying on one method for the comprehension.

You might ask directly about her experiences with differentiating instruction, exposure to literature circles, and her experiences as a student with studying novels. Other key questions could be, “What would your classroom be like if students responded ideally to your instruction on Maniac Magee?” “When you finish this unit, what skills and knowledge do you hope students will have mastered?” If she has no answer to the latter, then backward planning (i.e. understanding by design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) would be an excellent coaching exercise.

Key Element: Provide information and evidence that can influence the teacher's beliefs

- What new information does Shoya need about reading instruction? What forms of information will she be most open to?

Shoya needs exposure to other ways to teach a novel. Literature circles or differentiated activities to meet different learning style needs throughout the unit are two possible avenues to explore.

Because she prefers Introversion and Intuition, she might prefer to read about these strategies first. To tap into her Feeling function, instead of research or straight how-to guides, look for resources that contain student or teacher success stories. She might also enjoy looking at a lesson plan that allows for creativity but would seem to meet the needs of students with differing skill sets.

Provide more than one option or resource and let her choose.

Key Element: Meet the needs of the teacher during change

Shoya prefers “Coach as Encouraging Sage.”

- Compare your own coaching style to Shoya's style. What would be important for you to remember?

Keep in mind that once given a basic framework or strategy, teachers like Shoya often prefer to brainstorm and plan on their own. She may be most open to coaching on backward design—adding structure and goals to the unit—since that is often difficult for NFPs who tend to be content to let things unfold.

Offer opportunities for reflection. She may prefer to bounce ideas back and forth in emails or to meet only after she's had time to develop several ideas or options.

- What coaching techniques might work best in helping Shoya change her literacy instruction strategies?

Operate as a consultant. Once she's chosen the basic literacy strategy she'll pursue and read a few resources, outline what needs to be done to improve instruction: identifying essential questions and enduring understandings; planning activities and assessments for each element; differentiating instruction, and so on. Ask about her ideas for each area and where she might appreciate some assistance.

Key Element: Relate or apply what is being learned to the problem the teacher wants to solve in his/her classroom

- Shoya has some dreams for using *The Giver* with her students. How might you use these as a “hook” as you work to improve her instructional strategies?

The theme of racism can be tied into essential questions for the unit. If she decides to use a series of differentiated activities, the theme can be tapped in many of them. If she moves toward literature circles, she could identify more than one book, at different reading levels, that tap into this theme.

She's also clearly concerned about helping every student, so showing how "high" and "low" students will benefit from the chosen strategies will be motivating for Shoya.

Action Plan

Use the above information to suggest a plan for how Shoya can improve instruction for teaching novels.

Goal	Coaching strategy	Coach's role	Evidence of success
1. Choose an instructional method that will allow for differentiated instruction	Provide information on different strategies: literature circles or differentiation for learning styles	Introduce the different methods but let Shoya study and choose	Shoya identifies a strategy and commits to using it
2. Plan for instruction based on standards, essential questions, and enduring understandings	As motivation, provide a unit plan that both allows for creativity and for teaching skills while developing a universal theme. Include samples of student work if possible. Provide a planning template	Let Shoya decide where she does/doesn't want help in structuring the unit. However, get her to commit to another meeting time to discuss her progress. She'll either have a plan ready for the two of you to review together <i>or</i> she'll have learned where she needs your help in finishing it!	A finished unit plan that Shoya believes she will enjoy teaching.
3. Use the unit with students.	Preconference and observation	Ask Shoya what she would like you to look for as you observe again. Be her troubleshooter but also her encourager.	Completed pre and post observation conferences that focus on Shoya's concerns.