Using Video-Based Self-Assessment
to Develop Effective Conferencing Skills

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Abstract

Conferencing is the commonly used vehicle for improving instruction by providing feedback to teachers. However, it is the nature of the feedback given to the teacher and how it is delivered, using effective conferencing strategies and techniques, that will actually involve the teacher in understanding, accepting, agreeing and initiating changes, or make him angry and hostile. This article focuses on defining effective conferencing strategies, and the process that was used to help program participants preparing for leadership certification to practice these strategies in a clinical setting. The leadership program at Hunter College prepares educators for certification as school building and district leaders. Supervision of instruction for student achievement is considered the heart of the work of the school and district leader. Therefore a major focus for program participants seeking leadership certification is on content and practice for conferencing effectiveness. Participants learn and practice these skills in simulations, and then implement them by trying out their abilities in the field in real observation and conferencing experiences with a practicing classroom teacher. Participants video-tape themselves conducing conferences with their practicing classroom teacher clients following an observation. They then view the video of their conference performance and self-assess their conferencing skills by electronically recording the behaviors they observe using a set of criteria and design a growth plan for the further development of their conferencing skills.

Keywords

teacher supervision, conferencing, leadership, self-assessment, electronic, video

Introduction

There is almost universal agreement that the current system of teacher evaluation in the United States is ineffective. Three of four teachers report that their evaluation process has virtually no impact on their classroom practice (Duffett, Farkas, Rotherham, & Silva, 2008). The current national practice for improving teacher effectiveness and school performance relies on using more intensive

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supervision and evaluation of teachers. Popular models for data accumulation have been implemented across the United States and are used to measure and rate teacher quality. These models use behavioral and archival indices of teacher performance as well as student outcomes as indicators (e. g., Danielson, 2007, Marzano, 2011). Criteria established to evaluate the teacher's performance in preparation for and during instruction as well as in creating the environment in which instruction occurs are strategically important. However, even though these criteria are helpful in evaluating and grading the teacher, they do not influence the actions of the teacher or cause changes in instruction to be made by the teacher (Myung & Martinez, 2013).

Knowing what aspects of instruction need to be changed and improved is the first step. The next major step is to help teachers understand, accept, agree and initiate those changes. Supervisors need to skillfully attend to effective conferencing strategies in the conversations that take place after classroom observations to achieve the goal of meaningful improvement in instruction.

The conference should provide the opportunity for teacher growth by engaging teachers in reflection on their practice and self-assessment of the results of their instruction (Danielson, 2011). Ideally, the teacher and the supervisor have professional conversations, share ideas and come to agreement about future actions. However, the conference may not have this result. The reasons may relate to the conferencing behavior of the supervisor and how their conferencing skills contribute to effective dialogue that positively influences the teacher, or to ineffective dialogue that results in antagonizing the teacher.

Effective conferencing skills employ three aspects of active listening including nonverbal active listening, active listening and interactive listening, which are directed at making teachers feel comfortable, accepted, and understood. In this climate the teacher is validated and encouraged to think deeply about the teaching and learning process without fear of criticism and judgment. This sets the stage to foster teacher growth through reflection by asking questions that focus on instruction, probe for information and clarify intentions.

Active Listening

Active listening, researched by Costa and Garmston (2001), supports many of the elements of andragogy, the study of how adults learn, and can be an effective feedback tool when conferencing with teachers (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005).

Active listening places the focus of the conference on the teacher. The supervisor becomes an effective active listener through nonverbal, active and interactive listening behaviors.

The purpose of nonverbal active listening is the expression of caring and interest in the teacher. Nonverbal active listening behaviors send the message to the teacher that the supervisor believes him/her to be important, is interested in and cares about him/her. The actions of the supervisor include the following positive body language behaviors: maintaining eye contact, nodding the head, leaning in, smiling and silence; sitting next to or across from the teacher; relaxing the body and turning to face the teacher; leaning forward toward the teacher and moving slowly and infrequently; keeping arms relaxed and open resting on the table, the arm of the chair, or in your lap; keeping hands open with the palms facing up; using your hands to gesture or to lightly touch the teacher; showing expression on the face. These behaviors encourage the teacher to communicate his/her ideas.

Listening can become difficult at times and it is important for the supervisor to concentrate so that his mind does not wander. Thinking while planning what to say or ask next may distract the supervisor's attention from

clearly and completely hearing the teacher, and might cause miscommunication.

The purpose of active listening is understanding. Active listening behaviors send the message, "I am sensitive to your needs and I seek to understand what you are saying." The goal of the supervisor is to paraphrase, to restate, or to summarize the teacher's words, and/or make statements that recognize the teacher's feelings. Useful statements include, for example: "so you are saying that…," "Do you mean…," "I hear you saying…," "You are feeling…," "I can feel how hurt you were about…"

The purpose of interactive listening is teacher directed problem solving. Interactive listening behaviors send the message that the teacher has the power, the ability and the ideas to solve his/her own problems. The actions of the supervisor are expressions of support such as: That sounds interesting. You know how to… I have seen that work… You had success in a similar incident when…

Reflection

Active listening establishes a climate of trust and acceptance that sets the stage for change and growth. Reflection moves beyond building teachers' confidence and validating their efforts. It focuses on teacher directed problem solving and the design of solution activities. These are the actions of professionals who are continuing learners in the process of the art and science of teaching and about themselves as teachers (Coster & Garmston, 2001).

The supervisor's goal is to help teachers make reflection a habit of the mind in which they engage as a natural outcome of every teaching action. The vehicle for reaching this goal is communicating through asking questions.

Authentic and sustained growth involves commitment and responsibility, and is therefore in the hands and minds of the teachers. They must own it! However, the supervisor is the agent of the change process. By asking questions rather than being told what to do, the supervisor guides the teacher to examine instructional practices, reflect on his or her effectiveness, and seek ways to help every student to achieve. The total involvement of the teacher in thinking, creating, and designing instructional improvement is therefore critical. Ideas the supervisor presents, no matter how good, may be considered not valid or useful because they are not the ideas of the teacher and may get the response, "Oh I tried that and it did not work. " Ideas generated by the teacher have a better chance of success because adults do not want to fail.

Supervisors who use the techniques of active listening help teachers to feel comfortable, and this encourages them to speak openly and professionally about instructional practices. This sets the stage for reflection through questions that focus on particular aspects of instruction, probe for information and seek clarification.

Focus on Instruction

Questions that focus on instruction ask the teacher to analyze and reflect on specific aspects of instruction. Teachers are asked to discuss their impressions and assessments of the lesson. They are also asked to recall data that supports these impressions and assessments. Teachers are encouraged to infer relationships between student achievement and their actions. Maintaining a focus on instruction prevents the conversation with the teacher from moving to topics outside of the intent of the conference to improve instruction such as laying blame, making excuses and seeking sympathy.

Questions that maintain this focus on instruction include for example: "What went very well with the lesson?" "What did not meet your expectations?" "What surprised you?" "What student actions demonstrated their

understanding of the content?" "How did the strategy you selected produce the outcomes you wanted?"

Probe for Information

Questions that probe for information ask the teacher to fill in the gaps in statements that were made. Teachers are asked to extend what they have said or did to provide more information on the subject. Teachers are encouraged to explore the reasons for their decisions and actions and the resulting outcomes.

Supervisors should not accept the first response of the teacher to their question and move on. Instead, they may explore the response to seek a full and better-reflected response. Probe questions that elicit a fuller response include for example: "Can you explain what you mean?" "Have you considered other actions?" "What is the next step you could take?" "Are there other ways to accomplish that?" "Why do you prefer to. . ?"

Seek Clarification and Elaboration

Questions that seek clarification ask the teacher to explain statements or actions that are not clearly understood. Teachers may be asked to clarify generalization or vague statements by using more precise words and terms. Teachers are encouraged to think deeply beneath the surface statement that they have made to clarify their real meaning. Vague responses should not be ignored. Clarification and elaboration questions that elicit a deeper meaning include for example: "Why do you believe...?" "What might happen as a result of that action?" "Please explain how that might work?"

Active listening and reflection should be used interactively throughout the conference. Skillful conferencing uses nonverbal active listening to send the message that the teacher is important, cared about and the focus of attention. A supervisor with conferencing skills

knows when active listening is needed to help a teacher who is feeling defeated, confused, or hurt by conveying the message that "I seek to understand and I empathize with you." That supervisor with conferencing skills knows as well when interactive listening is needed to validate the teacher and build his or her confidence.

A supervisor with conferencing skills also knows that questions that stimulate reflection should be used in every meeting to help teachers focus on aspects of instruction, explain decisions and actions taken, clarify and articulate the problem and propose viable solutions. However, the supervisor should be aware of the level of experience and degree of knowledge of the teacher and use this information to select the conferencing language that will be effective when building the growth plan with the teacher.

Effective and Non Effective Questions

Questioning is a skill that requires awareness and practice to be used effectively. Teacher involvement in the conference and ownership of the ideas generated and plans created will more likely be achieved when judgmental questions or comments are avoided and questions encouraging reflection are used instead.

Conference feedback that gives an opinion or value or judgment either favorable or unfavorable destroys the collaborative nature of the conference because the supervisor is placed in an active role as judge and decision maker while the teacher is placed in a passive role. In a collaboration both parties have equal access to judgment and opinion upon which to reflect. Consider how judgment or opinion or "I liked" statements can stop communication while reflective questions, especially those that present data can open lines of communication because non-judgmental information is presented for discussion.

Other types of questions that may result in moving the conference in a negative direction include questions that elicit a yes or no response. They shut down the discussion and do not engage teachers in reflection and assessment of the areas being discussed. In addition, leading questions that contain the answer in the question or presuppose a conclusion should be avoided. They rob teachers of the opportunity to reflect and create their own solutions.

Sample Comments/Questions that:

Don't invite reflection		Invite Reflection	
Judgment / Value / Opinion Positive Comment	You selected good materials for the lesson.	Open Questions require a reflected response	How did the materials you selected to use help you achieve your objective for the lesson?
Judgment / Value / Opinion Negative Comment	You lost the attention of many of the students after the first 10 minutes.	Open Questions using data require a reflected response	Eight students had their heads down, were drawing figures, or doing homework for other subjects at some point during the lesson. Why do you think this happened?
Personal Comments "I"	I liked the way you moved around the room.	Open Questions using data require a reflected response	You changed your position in the classroom five times during the lesson. How do these actions contribute to the success of the students?
Yes / No questions	Have you tried that strategy before?	Open Questions require a reflected response	What experience have you had using that strategy?
Double questions	How did you feel about that? Was it a success?	Open Questions require a reflected response	How would you describe your feelings after that happened?
Leading Questions	How can posting students' work on bulletin boards help them to value their work?	Open Questions require a reflected response	What could you do to help students to feel proud of their work?

Description of Program, Tools and Data

With the support of the building or district supervisor, each program participant works with a practicing teacher who agrees to work with him or her at the beginning of the semester. Program participants have several opportunities to observe and conduct conferences with their teachers using various observation tools such as Environment Observation, Time on Task Assessment, Informal Visits and Lesson Observation. A description of each of these tools, the data collected and how that data may be used follows.

Observation Tools
Environment Observation

The structure, activity and organization of the classroom may contribute in many ways to the success of students. It may encourage students to take pride in the work they are doing. Students may also take pleasure in being in and working in pleasant and attractive surroundings. Pleasant environments lead students to believe that they are cared about and that their well-being and progress are important. Those feeling contribute to a positive attitude about school, which results in good behavior and high attendance.

Data about environments can be collected by looking at three critical aspects of the learning environment. Those are: the role of the teacher, the activities of the students, and the organization of the classroom that encourages active student involvement. Data is best collected using a tool customized to the environment being observed for example a mainstreamed grade 5 class or an early childhood class for autistic children. A data collection sample designed for an early childhood environment follows.

Early Childhood Classroom Environment Observation Form

Scale: 4=excellent, 3=good, 2=fair, 1=poor

Assessment:	Teacher Roles:
_____ Tests	_____ Observes students
_____ TC Reading assessment	_____ Groups students
_____ Reading conference notes	_____ Moves about
_____ Writing conference notes	_____ Instructs whole class
_____ Running Records	_____ Instructs groups
_____ Homework	_____ Instructs individuals
_____ Classwork	_____ Plans instruction
Notes:	_____ Controls Behavior
	_____ Keeps students on task
	_____ Keeps records

Organization of Materials:

_____ Clearly labeled

_____ Labeled with pictures

_____ Neatly arranged

_____ Easily available

_____ Organized into centers

_____ Leveled Library

_____ Homework collection and
 distribution

Notes:

Classroom Organization:

_____ Furniture arranged to suit

_____ Instructional areas

_____ Meeting area with easel

_____ Areas for group work

_____ Areas for individual work

Notes:

Classroom Appearance:

_____ Clean

_____ Attractive

_____ Schedule displayed

_____ Charts for students use

_____ Students work is displayed

_____ Teaching points are visible

_____ Rules clearly posted

_____ Word wall

_____ Job Chart

Notes:

Observations/Notes:

Scale: A=all, M=most, S=some, N=none

Student Activities:

_____ Individual assignments

_____ Group work

_____ On-task

_____ Engaged

_____ Varied modalities

_____Different Levels

_____ Give/get help

Notes:

Student Behavior:

_____ Follow classroom rules

_____ Move freely when told

_____ Can easily move around the
 classroom

_____ Move quietly

_____ Respect others

Notes:

Teacher _____

Class_____ Date_____

Teacher Signature_____

Supervisor Signature_____

The data gathered during the classroom environment observation is reviewed with the teacher. It is important for the teacher to think about and understand how the overall effectiveness of his or her environment contributes to or detracts from students' achievement. The discussion may first focus on areas that can easily be improved such as techniques for checking class work and homework as well as keeping student records. Items that require more extensive assistance and time for development such as the creation of learning centers may be incorporated into a growth plan.

Time on Task Assessment

There is a direct relationship between achievement and students' continuous focused attention to the tasks involved in learning. The time-on-task review provides an opportunity to focus on each student within a particular class, over a fifteen to thirty minute time frame to determine what each individual student is doing. The data collected provides information about factors that have an impact on learning and achievement. The engagement rate is the first factor and can be assessed by determining the number of students on task and the number of students off task, as well as the nature and frequency of off-task behaviors exhibited by the students and when they occur. Productive instruction is a second factor assessed by considering the quality of the tasks with which

the students are involved and their appropriateness for the learners. A third factor involves the teacher's ability to monitor student actions and make adjustments, if necessary to instruction, directions, explanations or materials. The time-on-task review is best recorded using a printed form. The form provides a space to note the type of activity in progress during each time frame. The form also contains a list of areas of student participation. These areas represent on-task and off-task student actions. The list of areas of participation may be modified to suit particular class situations.

Class   **Teacher**   **Date**
   Attendance_____

Time Began   **Teacher Activity Key: L (lecture), D (Discussion), C (Circulating) etc.**
Teacher Activity
Student Activity

Time Segment									**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**15**	**14**
*Teacher-directed														
*group assignment														
*individual assignment														
*recordkeeping														
**transition														
**discipline														
**unoccupied														
**out of room														
Total On Task*														
Total off Task**														
Total Attending														

Engagement Rate   Total On Task =   ____ = _____ **% On Task**
                           Total Attending

The space above each numbered time segment is used to enter the code that indicates the activity in progress at that time. These notes will be useful when analyzing the review to relate high and low numbers of on-task or off-task behavior to the activity being conducted. The on-task areas on the form are coded with a single asterisk, and include student actions that are involved in teacher-directed activities, group assignments, individual assignment or record keeping. The off-task areas on the form are coded with a double asterisk and include student actions identified as in transition, discipline, unoccupied or out of the room. Tally marks in each student category are used to record each student's actions. The tally marks can be counted and recorded as a numeral later. Every

student in attendance that day must be accounted for in a particular area of participation for each time segment. There are a total of fifteen time segments to complete during the time-on-task review. Each time segment should take between one and two minutes to complete depending upon the number of students in attendance as well as the amount of activity and action in the classroom.

There is a large amount of information to be gathered from the time-on-task review. This information contributes to a growing fund of knowledge that should be used to guide the development of a growth plan that will help each teacher improve the effectiveness of his or her instruction. Following the time-on-task review, the data is analyzed. The first area to consider is the engagement rate, that is, the percentage of students considered on task during the time the review was conducted. To find the percentage of students on task, divide the total number of students on task by the total number attending that day in each time segment. The time-on-task review should be discussed with the teacher. The information is important to the teacher as he or she seeks to become more effective. The conference also provides an excellent opportunity to involve the teacher in a professional activity by asking him or her to review the data and reflect on causes, interpretations and solutions.

Informal Visits

Informal visits are like snapshots of what is happening at a particular point in time in any area of the school. Since informal visits are unannounced, include all instructional areas and are frequent, they provide a means of checking the pulse of the school throughout the day. Valuable data can be gathered from all areas of the school when making informal visits to determine what actually happening at any is given time in the school day such as during the literacy block or how a school-wide incentive

such as active student engagement is being implemented. The tool is also a helpful way to check possible areas of concern, such as a new substitute teacher, or a student new to the school, monitor progress on teacher actions agreed to in a growth plan, identify trouble spots and maintain a visible presence in the building.

Areas to observe and collect data about include:

Where are the students and what are they doing?
Are they active or passive?
Are they working alone or with the teacher, a peer or a group?
Are they on or off task?

Where is the teacher and what is she/he doing?
Instructing the class, a group, individuals
Conducting a lecture, discussion, demonstration, observing, assisting, correcting
Seated or standing
With students or apart
At the teacher's desk, the front of the room, a student's desk

What is the teacher's body language?
Voice level, tone, expression, actions, gestures

How is the room managed and organized?
How do students use the room?
What is the noise level, behavior?
Is the room neat, organized?
What is the seating arrangement?
What is the light quality, temperature and general appearance?

What materials are in use?
What are the variety and type of

materials students are using?

The data are used as a part of an ongoing monitoring of climate and instruction in the building. Discussions with the teachers should be conducted following several informal visits and/or when there are items in need of improvement.

Lesson Observation

Observation provides the teacher with a view of the classroom seen through the eyes of the observer. Teachers can use these images to help them to understand what is happening in their classrooms and then use that information to improve their practice. Teachers are usually more open to changing their instructional behaviors after an observer objectively describes their classrooms. There are five phases in the clinical observation process. Each phase contributes to raising student achievement as teachers grow in their abilities to plan and deliver effective instruction.

The teacher completes a plan for instruction as the first phase of the observation process. This plan provides the observer with an overview of the lesson that will be observed. It also provides the information that will be discussed during the pre-conference. The plan should include a clear statement of the learning objective, the instructional strategies to be used, a strategy to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners, a plan to check for understanding and an effective closure to the lesson.

The pre-conference conducted during phase two serves three purposes based on the skills and needs of the individual teacher: communicating with the teacher, assessing the growth needs of the teacher and developing the teacher's skills. In addition, an opportunity to build rapport and trust with the teacher is provided.

During phase three, the observation, detailed objective information about the

teaching and learning process in the classroom is gathered. Taking objective notes, sometimes called a script, is the best way to record the data observed. All of the verbal and visual actions and interactions taking place in the classroom during the observation are factually recorded without interpretation, value or assumption. These objective notes should include a time line. These are notations of the time as the lesson proceeds, recorded usually in the left-hand margin. This information allows the observer and teacher to review how time was used during the lesson to accomplish the learning objective.

Phase four provides the opportunity for the observer to review and analyze the recorded notes. All aspects of the teaching and learning process including for example, how time was used, the level of inquiry demonstrated by the questions posed, and how the lesson was differentiated should be included. The observer forms initial impressions and assessments about the lesson observed and identifies data from the notes to support them.

During phase five, a conference with the teacher is held. Effective conference behaviors include involving the teacher in a dialogue that encourages him or her to speak openly and professionally about instruction and its improvement. The questions asked continuously seek to help the teacher to focus on instruction and reflect on how it can be improved. The responsibility for improvement belongs to the teacher and ideas for how to achieve improvement should, to the greatest possible extent, come from the teacher. The conference ends with the development of a collaboratively developed growth plan for the teacher's improvement.

Program participants conference with their participating teachers following the use of each tool to review and discuss the data collected and seek ways to improve student

achievement. Conducting these conferences provides program participants with the opportunity to further develop the conferencing skills and strategies studied and practiced in simulations during the semester.

Video Recorded Conferences

The leadership program at Hunter College prepares program participants for certification as school building and district leaders. Because a major focus of the development of the program participants for school and district leadership certification is on content and practice for supervision for the improvement of instruction there is an emphasis on developing their conferencing skills. This focus led to the development of a strategy to video the conferences conducted by program participants with their practicing teachers and use the videos for reflection, self-assessment and collaborative evaluation of the program participants' conferencing effectiveness.

Video recording of the post conference was selected because of video's well-documented use in facilitating critical reflection of teaching skills and abilities. The video recording of a feedback conference provides an opportunity to analyze conferencing abilities because it captures the body language as well as the oral exchange between the program participant and the teacher, offering detailed and rich data on the communication process,

which permits the viewer access to a personal and authentic learning experience (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008; Rich & Hannafin, 2009; Rosaen et al. 2008, Newhouse, Lane, & Brown, 2007). The video permits the program participant to view his/her performance and observe patterns of behavior, as well as language that should be modified or changed (van Es & Sherin, 2010, p. 172). Viewing the video provides the program participants with the opportunity for a collaborative assessment with the professor and self-assessment of effective conferencing behavior using specific criteria.

Even with repeated conferencing experiences there is a need for the viewing of the conference to be guided through the use of well-discussed and practiced criteria. Without this directed viewing of the conference, candidates may have trouble making sense or having meaningful insights into the conference dialogue and its effectiveness in facilitating teachers' understanding, acceptance and motivation to work on instructional needs. For these reasons, video was selected as a medium to support candidates' understanding and design decisions were made to heighten their interaction with the video and the criteria as a support to learning.

The criteria used for the self-assessment stated below include the aspects of effective conferencing behavior previously discussed.

Observable Conference Actions and Behaviors

Non-Verbal Actions	Active Listening	Questioning	Plan Development
Eye contact	Paraphrases	Presents data	Small talk
Expressive face	Positive feedback	Discusses data	Asks for teacher's solution
Leans in	Criticizes	Elicits thinking	Tells teacher what to do
Nods		Probes for more info	Builds the growth plan
		Focuses on instruction	Confirms the growth plan
		Focuses on students	
		Redirects to topic	
		Asks for teacher ideas	

The last observation of the practicing teacher is a full period lesson observation that requires all of the aspects of a clinical supervision cycle including lesson plan review, pre conference, observation with verbatim notes or a script, an analysis of the script, and the post conference resulting in the development of an appropriate growth plan constructed with the teacher. Program participants video themselves conducing post conferences with their practicing teachers following a lesson observation and submit the video to the professor for evaluation and feedback as documentation of conferencing skills and the ability to engage the teacher in the development of a growth plan for improvement. Program participants also view the video of the conference and self-assess their conferencing skills by electronically clicking on the behaviors they observe using the criteria presented above and discussed as effective conferencing behaviors earlier in the article. .

The marked behavior is then listed to the right as the time frame when it was viewed and heard during the conference. The number of times each conference behavior was clicked is tallied in the last column. In addition, candidates reflect on the experience and design a growth plan for the further development of their conferencing skills.

A screen shot of this electronic marking follows.

Hunter College School of Education
Video Analysis of Leadership: Teacher Conference Analysis

02:47 of 16:01

Hunter College School of Education © 2010

How to use

Play the video. As it plays, click the buttons to the right each time you see evidence of these supervisory behaviors.

Name: Ariana Butler

Video #: 15313

Description of Session

Non-verbal Actions	Tally	Total
Eye contact	00:22, 00:47, 01:51, 02:49, 06:15, 07:25, 12:08, 14:04, 15:19, 15:29,	10
Expressive face	01:53, 07:23, 12:09, 15:13,	4
Leans in	00:51, 13:57,	2
Nods	00:29, 00:43, 01:57, 03:07, 06:21, 07:20, 08:25, 12:07, 12:34, 13:09, 13:54,	12
Active Listening		
Paraphrases	02:07, 04:53, 08:35, 08:50, 09:31, 10:41,	6
Positive feedback	01:17, 03:12, 05:00, 10:44,	4
Criticizes		
Questioning		
Presents data	03:41,	2
Discusses data	07:02,	1
Elicits thinking	00:37, 02:10, 02:41, 04:11,	4
Probes for more info	01:37, 04:21, 05:06, 05:24, 05:49, 07:11,	7
Focuses on instuction	03:36, 04:18, 05:46,	3
Focuses on students	01:06, 06:41,	3
Redirects to topic		
Asks for teacher ideas	02:14,	1
Plan Development		
Small talk	00:11, 00:13, 15:56,	3
Asks for teacher's solution	09:10, 09:24, 10:17,	3
Tells teacher what to do		
Builds the growth plan	07:37, 08:21, 08:41,	3
Confirms the growth plan	14:47, 15:02,	2

Save this Analysis

In general, developing effective conferencing skills needs to be practiced and developed over time. The comments of a representative sample of program participants evidence several areas of conferencing that program participants paid attention to and commented on. The ability to ask reflective, non-judgmental and probing questions was stated by several of the participants. A number of the program participants talked about their ability to develop a collaborative growth plan with the teacher. Some participants talked about their visible confirmation of the use of active listening techniques. The comments made by some of the program participants as they watched the video of themselves engaged in a conference with the teacher selected for this work and reflected on their performance follow:

"The technique of asking questions that don't have an implied answer is not that easy, but something that is well worth the effort to master. My questioning left me a little unsettled when I reflected on the conference. "

"The area of growth for my personal, professional growth plan is directly related to the questioning skills necessary to be an effective supervisor. Until this course, I rarely stopped to reflect on how difficult yet important this is. "

"Watching myself with my teacher-client during the Growth Conference was definitely an experience. I learned a lot about my body language, posture, and tone of voice I use when conferencing with someone. I was happy with the comfortable tone I set from the beginning of the conference with my client. We were sitting in close enough proximity to each other to be able to work together to discuss the data I compiled and develop an appropriate growth plan. "

"I noticed myself using many effective active listening techniques including smiling a lot, nodding in agreement, and keeping good eye contact. I did lean in at one point. I was happy that I did not see myself cross my arms at all because that is something I have been working on. I found myself saying that's excellent after almost everything Liz was saying. I need to refrain from using grading words like excellent, good, or great in situations where I am not grading a person's performance."

"The questions I asked my teacher client were good and I felt I paced the timing of the conference well. I did some probing such as asking about games that she plays with her students and asking for her thoughts about using specific forms of praise. I can work more in this area and probe for even further understanding at times. I was happy to see myself asking rather than telling. This is another area I have been working on. "

"There were several things I wanted to point out in the data (positive and constructive) that I simply did not address. "

"I effectively used the script to present data from the lesson for discussion. I efficiently bridged into the conversation about the teacher's lack of engagement throughout the lesson. My tone was warm, open, and welcoming during this point of the discussion."

"I presented the idea of a growth plan and effectively built the plan with the teacher discussing each section specifically. I successfully confirmed each portion of the plan with the teacher including the time frame and evaluation criteria. "

"What I am most disappointed about is my lack of probing. I didn't do enough, "Say more about that…. " "Can you reiterate for me what this will look like? I want to make sure we're on same page. "

"The teacher and I, as observed in the video, developed a growth plan together. I repeated back a few main topics of discussion that we had gone over in our conference, and I asked my client to choose one that seemed like a priority. She chose to focus on clarity of instructions. Together, we developed a plan that she will begin to implement immediately. "

These efforts are only a few years in practice but seem promising as we continue to work on preparing supervisors who are able to involve teachers in directing the improvement of their instruction. Continued research needs to be conducted in several ways. First, to determine if and how well the Growth Plans created with those teachers contributed to a significant and lasting improvement in instruction. Next, to determine how these conferencing skills develop or change as the participants complete the program and obtain positions as supervisors in the schools.

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