

# Coaching Conversation Guide for School Leaders

## Supporting Real-Time Feedback and Celebrating Early Instructional Wins

This guide is designed to help principals and instructional leaders structure short, supportive, and focused coaching conversations that build trust, improve practice, and cultivate momentum in turnaround schools.

### **BEFORE THE CONVERSATION: PREPARE WITH INTENTION**

- Have I observed a specific instructional moment or practice worth affirming or improving?
- Is my feedback rooted in a shared instructional goal, standard, or practice?
- Am I prepared to name one clear next step and one instructional win?

### **COACHING CONVERSATION STRUCTURE (10–15 MINUTES)**

Use this simple 4-part structure to guide a focused conversation:

#### **Affirm a Strength (Start With a Win)**

*“I noticed that students were engaged during your turn-and-talk. That showed me you’re working hard to build academic talk routines—great job.”*

- Be specific about what worked and why it matters.
- Link the success to student impact or a broader school priority.

## Ask a Reflective Question

*“How did that feel to you? What do you think helped that moment go well?”*

- Invite the teacher to reflect before offering suggestions for improvement.
- Use inquiry to surface their thinking and strengthen ownership.

## Offer One Actionable Next Step

*“One instructional move you might try next is asking a follow-up question that pushes student thinking a bit deeper—maybe something like, ‘Why do you think that?’ or ‘Can you explain that in a different way?’”*

- Focus on *one* small, high-leverage action.
- Connect it to student learning or lesson objectives.
- Avoid providing a lengthy list of things to change—keep it concise and bite-sized.

## Reaffirm and Encourage

*“You’re making strong instructional moves. Keep leaning into that intentional student talk—your efforts are moving us closer to our schoolwide goal of deeper learning.”*

- Reinforce the teacher’s progress and potential.
- Express belief in their ability to grow and lead change.

## Optional Follow-Up Prompts

- “Would you like me to pop in later this week to see how that adjustment plays out?”
- “Is there anything you need from me or our coach to support that next step?”
- “Want to share that strategy in next week’s PLC? Others could really benefit.”

## Quick Win Phrases for Celebrating Progress

- “That was a strong move—students were engaged and clear on the task.”

- “I saw evidence of our PLC focus in that mini-lesson—great job aligning your instruction.”
- “You tried something new, and it worked—let’s build on that.”
- “That’s exactly the kind of shift that makes a difference. Let’s name that in our next team meeting.”

### **TIPS FOR LEADERS**

- Maintain a tone that is warm, clear, and focused on growth.
- Create a norm where feedback is frequent, nonevaluative, and expected.
- Make praise public when appropriate, but keep feedback personal and supportive.
- Use a notebook or digital tool to track coaching notes for follow-up and patterns.