

Coaching Moves Framework:

Building a Common Language for Facilitating Coaching Conversations

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INTRODUCTION

This framework was developed based on the Coaching Moves Framework introduced in the paper [Parsing Coaching Practice: A Systematic Framework for Describing Coaching Discourse](#). It is designed to provide instructional coaching leads with a practical guide for using the Coaching Moves Framework to support their coaches.

The Coaching Moves Framework synthesizes the existing coaching research into a taxonomy of coaching moves, highlighting the range of facilitation strategies coaches may employ. In doing so, the framework offers a common lens and language for reflecting on and improving coaching practice. In the same way that frameworks of teaching practice (e.g. Danielson's Framework for Teaching) can guide teacher reflection and feedback, the Coaching Moves Framework can guide coach reflection and feedback. In the same way that frameworks of teaching practice allow coaching programs to track trends across teachers and over time, the Coaching Moves Framework can help programs identify trends across coaches and over time.

However, there is one key difference between the Coaching Moves Framework and common frameworks of teaching practice. Whereas common frameworks of teaching practice highlight a vision of high-quality instruction, gaps in the coaching research and ongoing academic debates mean that we don't yet know enough about high-quality coaching to articulate this kind of vision. While the Coaching Moves Framework is grounded in the research on coaching, it is not a list of "effective" or "evidence-based" strategies. As such, unlike common frameworks of teaching practice, the Coaching Moves Framework cannot provide coaches or coaching leads with information about the quality of a coaching

conversation or the strengths and weaknesses of a coach or coaching program.

What then can the framework provide? Below, we describe four potential use cases, focusing on how coach leads can use the framework to support improvement, even while not serving as a description of effective coaching or a measure of coaching quality.

Supporting Reflection & Planning

Coaches and coaching leads can use the framework as a tool for analyzing and reflecting on previous coaching conversations. Rather than reflecting on the extent to which a conversation adheres to principles of effective coaching, the Coaching Moves Framework enables collaborative reflection on questions such as:

- Which moves do coaches tend to rely on most heavily? Why?
- Which moves do coaches tend to avoid? Why?
- What purposes have moves served for coaches in prior conversations and how have teachers responded to those moves?

Answering these questions can help coaches and coaching leads develop a deeper understanding of the link between coaches' facilitation moves and teacher development within their own context, identify the moves that may be particularly high leverage within that context, and identify new moves for coaches to experiment with to broaden their skills and/or make progress with teachers and situations where existing strategies have been less fruitful. These conversations, in turn, lay the groundwork for coaches and coaching leads to use the framework as a tool for planning future coaching conversations as well. Here, the framework provides a broad range of

ideas from which coaches may draw to accomplish specific goals or tailor their coaching to specific teachers and contexts.

For example, a coaching lead might introduce the framework (or parts of the framework) to coaches during a monthly meeting and facilitate a discussion about which moves coaches use most, why, and for what purposes. If the answers to these questions differ across coaches, the coaching lead might facilitate further discussion about the reasons for these differences and how coaches can learn from them to improve their own coaching. If the answers to these questions are largely similar across coaches, then the coaching lead might facilitate further discussion of moves that are rarely used, the reasons they are rarely used, and the ways incorporating those moves might offer avenues for improvement. The discussion might end with the selection of one or two moves for coaches to experiment with going forward and reflect on at the next meeting. In this case the framework provides a common language for collaborative reflection and planning across multiple coaches.

Once coaches are familiar with the framework, it can also be used as a tool for coaches' individual reflection and planning, either on their own or in collaboration with a coaching lead. A coach and coaching lead might discuss a coaching conversation that was particularly challenging or a teacher with whom the coach struggles through the lens of the framework, identifying the moves that the coach has previously used and how the teacher responded. The coach and coaching lead might then draw on the framework as a source of ideas for new moves or combinations of moves to try in a future coaching conversation. Though these interactions might be limited to individual coaches, using a common framework allows the coaching lead to more efficiently support their coaches, removing the need to translate their thinking and ideas into a different "language" for each coach.

Supporting Data Collection

Coaching programs can also use the framework as the basis for collecting data about coach activities.

For example, coaching leads and supervisors might draw on the framework to take notes about the strategies coaches use when observing coaching sessions. This provides a common lens and language through which programs can analyze patterns in how coaches use their time with teachers. To the extent that all of the coaches in a program become familiar with and bought into the framework, it could also serve as the basis for questions included in a coaching log to collect data on coaching activities. RPPL also currently has a project underway to create an automated tool for identifying coaching moves from audio or video recordings of coaching conversations.

Articulating a Coaching Model

For coaching programs that have or adhere to a particular model or vision of coaching, the framework can serve as a starting point for helping coaches draw connections between the broad vision and principles of the model and the specific moves and strategies they can use to enact that model in practice. As with using the framework to support coach reflection and planning, having a common language for discussing coaching practice enables collaboration amongst coaches and creates efficiencies for coaching leads.

In each of the use cases highlighted above, the Coaching Moves Framework serves as a common language across coaches and coaching leads working within a specific program or organization. We also see important benefits in having a common language across programs and organizations. As more programs make use of the framework for coach reflection and collecting data on coaching practice, we will be better able to study how different moves support teacher development and support coaches with incorporating new findings into their practice.

In the next section we introduce the Coaching Moves Framework itself.¹ In the final section, we highlight the connections between specific coaching moves and the coaching goals and challenges they may address.

¹ The version of the framework shown here includes several revisions from the original presented in the paper Parsing Coaching Practice: A Systematic Framework for Describing Coaching Discourse. We include an Appendix that explains the differences between the original framework and the updated version and our rationale for making those changes.

COACHING MOVES FRAMEWORK

In the Coaching Moves Framework, a coaching move is an individual statement made or question asked by a coach during a coaching conversation.

In the Coaching Moves Framework, specific moves are identified by the intersection of the following five dimensions:

1. **Stance** – is the coach sharing information by providing a statement or eliciting it from the teacher in the form of a question?
2. **Perspective** – is the coach's question or statement focused on discussing prior events or planning for the future?
3. **Object** – who or what is the focus of the question or statement?
4. **Function** – what kind of analysis does the question or statement involve?
5. **Tone** – what is the emotional tenor that accompanies the statement or question?

These dimensions attend to the language that coaches use and how different uses of language provide different supports for teachers and accomplish different purposes. In the same way that language use is an important part of teaching practice, research suggests that language use is an important part of coaching practice. However, it is also important to acknowledge that other aspects of coaching practice matter, including tone of voice, body language, and the other kinds of interactions that coaches have with teachers outside of planning and debrief conversations (e.g. modeling instruction, observing instruction, or having an informal chat in the hallway between periods).

Each move in the framework is based on examples or ideas found in existing coaching research, practical coaching guidebooks (e.g. Elena Aguilar's Art of Coaching), and transcriptions of actual coaching conversations. A more detailed description of how the

framework was created and a full list of sources can be found in the original paper.

Below we define each dimension in more detail and provide a brief discussion of the purposes they may serve. Then we provide several exemplar coach statements and questions accompanied by a description of how they would be categorized according to the five dimensions in the Coaching Moves Framework.

Stance: Is information being shared or elicited?

Move Types

This dimension distinguishes between **asking** moves that use questions to elicit information from teachers and **telling** moves that use statements to share information with teachers. Of course, there are many different kinds of questions and statements. Asking moves can vary in how open or close-ended they are and telling moves can vary in how directive they are. The key distinction is in whether the intention is to elicit or share information. Rhetorical questions, which are intended to make a point rather than elicit information, are therefore telling moves. Suggestions or feedback that are framed as questions through rising intonation are telling moves as well.

Purpose

Asking moves serve to prompt teacher reflection, analysis, and sense-making. Telling moves, on the other hand, provide teachers with information and more directive feedback.

Perspective: Is the focus of discussion on prior events or planning for future events?

Move Types

This dimension distinguishes between **backward-facing** moves, which focus on discussing prior events like a specific lesson or a previous professional learning experience, and **forward-facing moves**, which focus on future lessons and opportunities for professional development and learning.

Backward-facing moves can include:

- Discussing a lesson that you observed
- Discussing instruction modeled by you or another teacher
- Discussing ways a previous lesson could have been improved, such as “I think that student really would have benefited from additional scaffolding”
- General comments or questions about a teacher’s instructional strengths and weaknesses
- Discussing subject-matter content from a previous lesson, such as reviewing a specific mathematical problem
- Discussing content from a previous coaching session or other professional learning experience

Forward-facing moves can include:

- Planning instruction for a specific future lesson
- Discussing potential changes to a teacher’s instruction
- Discussing goals for future student learning or teacher development
- Discussing subject-matter content for a future lesson
- Discussing general pedagogical principles or ideas about how students learn

Purpose

Backward-facing moves support teachers in making sense of their professional strengths and weaknesses, their professional growth over time, and specific instructional and professional learning experiences. Forward-facing moves, on the other hand, support teachers with setting goals for their development and determining how to reach those goals.

Object: Who or what is the focus of discussion?

Move Types

This dimension distinguishes between several common objects of discussion during coaching conversations. **Student-focused** moves provide information or ask questions about student actions or characteristics of students. This can include both the individual students of the teacher participating in the conversation or other students. It may include references to specific students or general discussions about common characteristics or behaviors of students. Teacher-focused moves provide information or ask questions about the actions and characteristics of teachers.

Similar to student-focused moves, teacher-focused moves may focus on the specific teacher involved in the conversation, other individual teachers, or common characteristics or behaviors of teachers in general. Finally, content-focused moves provide information or ask questions about specific subject-matter content.

In any given move, coaches may address multiple objects, such as in the case where a coach discusses the link between a teacher’s actions and its effect on students.

Purpose

The object of a move highlights where the coach wishes to draw the teacher’s attention for the purposes of feedback and reflection. Student-focused moves draw the teacher’s attention to student behaviors and actions. Teacher-focused moves draw the teacher’s attention to teacher behaviors and actions. And content-focused moves draw the teacher’s attention to specific subject-matter content. Moves involving multiple objects serve to draw the teacher’s attention to the connections between those objects.

Function: What kind of information is being shared or elicited?

Move Types

This dimension distinguishes between several different kinds of feedback and prompts for reflection that coaches might draw on to support teacher learning and development. Each function uses a different lens for analyzing and making sense of teaching. **Noticing** moves involve the sharing or elicitation of key events and facts. **Interpretation** moves, on the other hand, move beyond events and facts to interpreting or evaluating those events in order to make judgments or draw conclusions. **Cause and Effect** moves explore the connections between causes and their effects, such as the impact specific instructional strategies have on student learning. **Goal Setting** moves involve exploring and establishing goals connected with instruction, including both goals for student learning and goals for teacher development. Action Planning moves focus on identifying specific strategies and action steps that can be taken to achieve goals connected with instruction. **Activity** moves involve the explanation and set-up of activities such as role-play, in-the-

moment modeling, and reviewing instructional artifacts like student work, student data reports, curricular documents, and rubrics of instructional quality.

Purpose

These functions allow coaches to scaffold teachers in generating new or revised insights about teaching and learning that can enable and facilitate changes in instructional practice.

Noticing, Interpretation, Cause and Effect, and Activity moves draw teachers' attention to specific information and/or the implications of that information. These moves allow coaches to introduce information the teacher may not be aware of, make particularly important information more salient for the teacher, support teachers with reflecting on differences between their interpretations and beliefs and the coaches, and support teachers in revising potentially incorrect or harmful ideas and beliefs. Goal Setting and Action Planning moves, on the other hand, draw teachers' attention to the goals that shape classroom interactions and the strategies and steps that help achieve those goals. Coaches may use these moves to support teachers in making sense of how previous classroom interactions contributed or didn't contribute to their goals and support teachers in

developing or revising their goals and plans for reaching them.

Tone: What is the emotional tenor of the information shared?

Definition

This dimension distinguishes between several relational stances coaches may take when facilitating coaching conversations. **Encouraging** moves communicate a coach's positive regard for and beliefs about the teacher, including their skills and characteristics. **Validating** moves communicate agreement, approval, and/or understanding of the teacher's perspective, emotions, and beliefs. **Supportive** moves communicate a coach's attentiveness and commitment to the teacher's well-being, including expressions of concern and offers of assistance. **Deferential** moves communicate a coach's respect for and deference to the teacher's perspective and wishes. Moves may also be **neutral** in tenor.

Purpose

The tone dimension serves a primarily relational purpose, building trust and attending to teachers' emotional needs.

The Coaching Moves Framework

Stance

Is the coach sharing information by providing a statement or eliciting it from the teacher in the form of a question?

Asking

Telling

Perspective

Is the coach's question or statement focused on discussing prior events or planning for the future?

Backward-facing

Forward-facing

Object

Who or what is the focus of the question or statement?

Student-focused

Teacher-focused

Content-focused

Function

What kind of analysis does the question or statement involve?

Noticing

Interpretation

Cause and Effect

Goal Setting

Action Planning

Activity

Tone

What is the emotional tenor that accompanies the statement or question?

Encouraging

Validating

Supportive

Deferential

Neutral

Analyzing Coaching Moves Using the Dimensions

The table below provides examples of coach dialogue and highlights how the five dimensions of the Coaching Moves Framework would apply to each.

Example Dialogue	Dimensions & Move Type				
	Stance	Perspective	Object	Function	Tone
There was an activity you did, the one with the irregular hexagon and you said "Is it a hexagon or not?" How did that help?	Asking	Backward-facing	Student-focused Teacher-focused	Cause and Effect	Neutral
I think it's also about telling them the benefit, like "Guys, I really want you to get this right because it helps me tailor what we do next."	Telling	Forward-facing	Teacher-focused	Action Planning	Neutral
Given the pacing needs, I'm wondering if it's possible to tweak your planning so the tasks prioritize the knowledge that is needed for the specific lesson.	Telling	Forward-facing	Teacher-focused	Action Planning	Deferential
Thank you for letting me come and see your lesson earlier. I really enjoyed it.	Telling	Backward-facing	Teacher-focused	N/A	Deferential
So, I want to help you think about how you can give more children the chance to be successful.	Telling	Forward-facing	Student-focused Teacher-focused	Goal Setting	Supportive

Connecting Moves to Coaching Goals

In this section, we explore in more detail the specific goals and challenges that individual coaching moves may address. In doing so, we draw on Kochmanski & Cobb's (2023) work highlighting six core goals of coaching conversations. For each goal, we provide a short description, describe common challenges coaches may face in reaching the goal, and highlight the kinds of coaching moves that may help address these challenges and goals. This tool represents one way of linking coaching moves to coaching goals and challenges, but it is by no means exhaustive or the only way. We hope that it provides a helpful starting point for coaches and coaching leads to think through how they might use the moves in this framework to support the development of their specific teachers in their specific context.

● Stance
 ● Perspective
 ● Object
 ● Function
 ● Tone

Coaching Goal	Supportive Coaching Activities	Common Challenges	Useful Coaching Moves
Identifying productive goal(s) for individual teachers' improvement of their instructional practices	Observation & Debrief	The coach needs more information than available from observation or prior conversation to determine a productive goal, particularly information about the teacher's thoughts and beliefs	Asking Backward-facing Noticing Cause and effect
		The teacher may not be receptive to a goal provided by the coach	Asking Forward-facing Goal Setting Deferential
Supporting teachers in seeing instructional improvement goals as worthwhile	Observation & Debrief	The teacher isn't aware of key moments in the lesson	Noticing
		The teacher has a different interpretation of classroom events than the coach does	Interpretation
		The teacher has a different understanding of the link between student and teacher actions than the coach does	Cause and Effect
		The teacher has a different learning goal for students than the coach does	Goal Setting
		The teacher doesn't know what steps to take to achieve a goal	Action Planning
	The teacher feels unequipped or not capable of achieving a specific improvement goal	Supportive Encouraging	
Co-planning	The teacher lacks fundamental content understanding	Content-focused	

Connecting Moves to Coaching Goals (continued)

● Stance
 ● Perspective
 ● Object
 ● Function
 ● Tone

Coaching Goal	Supportive Coaching Activities	Common Challenges	Useful Coaching Moves
Supporting teachers' development of productive views of their students' current capabilities	Modeling & Debrief	The teacher believes students are not ready or capable of meeting ambitious learning goals	Backward-facing Student-focused Noticing Interpretation Cause and Effect
Supporting teachers' development of functional visions of ambitious and equitable instruction	Modeling & Debrief	The teacher lacks a clear vision of ambitious and equitable instruction or has a different vision from the coach	Noticing Cause and Effect Action-planning
Supporting teachers in improving their enactment of specific instructional practices	Co-teaching Observation & Debrief	The teacher struggles to enact a specific instructional practice	Backward-facing Teacher-focused Noticing Interpretation Cause and Effect
		The teacher feels unequipped or not capable of enacting a specific instructional practice	Encouraging Supportive
Supporting teachers in learning to design rigorous lessons	Co-planning	The teacher struggles with designing a rigorous lesson that enables ambitious instruction	Content-focused Action Planning Goal Setting Noticing Cause and Effect

APPENDIX: REVISIONS TO THE COACHING MOVES FRAMEWORK

The original [Coaching Moves Framework](#) consisted of 45 moves organized into six groups. While it is relatively straightforward to understand the distinctions between the different groups, it is much more difficult to understand and remember the distinctions between the moves within each group, especially when using the framework as a practical rather than academic tool. The updated framework removes the need to remember individual moves, instead identifying moves as the intersection of several dimensions. Thus, users of the framework need only familiarize themselves with 5 dimensions rather than 45 moves. For example, the original framework required users to familiarize themselves with the specific definition of the individual coaching move called **Noticing** as part of the Asking and Backwards Facing Group, as shown below:

Original Definition	Example
Questioning that <u>only</u> asks the teacher to recall information about themselves, a lesson, or their students based on prior experiences or their general familiarity with themselves or their students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What did you notice about student x's behavior?</i>• <i>How did student x respond to the prompt?</i>• <i>What did you do when...?</i>

In the revised version of the framework, this move would not have its own individual definition, but rather would be defined as the intersection between the following dimensions:

- **Stance:** Asking
- **Perspective:** Backward Facing
- **Object:** this revision now allows differentiation between noticing student actions, teacher actions, or content, which wasn't possible in the original taxonomy
- **Function:** Noticing
- **Tone:** this revision now allows the layering of the emotional tenor of the coach's question, which wasn't possible in the original taxonomy. The examples in the table above have a neutral tone, but a coach could also display, for example, an encouraging tone by saying something like "I'm sure you noticed a ton of things in your lesson, can you tell me about what struck you the most?"

The last two groups in the original framework, Activities and Rapport, have also been revised to fit this new dimension structure. All of the moves within the Activities group are now included within the Activity function. Aspects of the Rapport group are now incorporated within the dimension of tone.

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