

STRENGTHENING GROWTH THROUGH COACHING CONVERSATIONS



Takuya Umeki

Canadian and International BTC Consultant

Richmond, BC

generating.solutions.contact@gmail.com

Jerrold Wiebe

Canadian BTC Consultant

jerrold@buildingthinkingclassrooms.com

FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY

This is a copyrighted presentation of Peter Liljedahl, LLC, 2023. If you have been given a link to these slides as part of participating in a presentation on Building Thinking Classrooms, you may use these slides for your own personal reference only. The link to the presentation is NOT to be in any way shared or distributed, and the presentation, in part or in its entirety, is not to be shared, replicated or otherwise used to deliver presentations to others.

If you are interested in booking an in-person or virtual Building Thinking Classrooms presentation, workshop, series or workshops, or co-teaching or other coaching services, either with Peter Liljedahl or one of his official Team Members please contact liljedahl@sfu.ca.

When “Coaching” Goes Wrong

We build autonomy for students, yet we strip autonomy from teachers through advice-giving.

The Real Problem

We say “coaching,” but we often mean:

- Advice
- Judgement
- Fixing
- Telling

A Story of Misalignment

- *Students*
 - noticing, thinking, autonomy
- *Colleagues / Student Teachers*
 - lots of advice with good intentions

What This Creates

- Teachers feel judged and inadequate
- Growth becomes compliance
- Reflection becomes performance

Axiom #1

- Just like there is a craft to teaching, there is a craft to teacher education.

From → To

- Advice → Thinking
- Fixing → Noticing
- Judgement → Identity
- Compliance → Self-directed learning

What is Cognitive Coaching?

Cognitive Coaching is a structured process that uses reflective dialogue and questioning to help people become more effective, independent thinkers and decision-makers.

My Journey: BTC With Students vs. Coaching Teachers

What I Loved About BTC With Students

My Journey With Students

- Energy
- Noticing
- Arguing
- Questioning
- Trusting their own thinking

I trusted them.

The Discomfort With Adults

Coaching Adults Felt Different

- I stepped in too quickly
- I finished their sentences
- I offered solutions too soon

It didn't feel right.

Axiom #2

- If we are willing to accept the fact that students don't learn best by being told how to do it, then we also have to accept the fact that teachers don't learn best how to teach by being told how to do it.

The Turning Point

“I trust students’ thinking...but not teachers’ thinking in the same way.”

That realization changed everything.

→ Led me to **Cognitive Coaching**

What Gets in the Way

Gets in the Way:

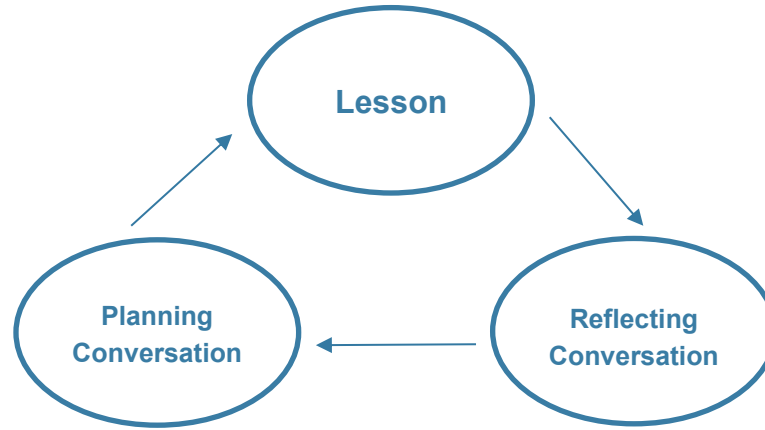
- Autobiographical responses
- Solution
- Curiosity

What Supports Thinking

Supports Thinking:

- Pausing
- Paraphrasing
- Mediative Questions
- Data-based reflection

Coaching Conversation



Three Strategies for Coaching That Grows Thinking



Axiom #3

- I cannot change a teacher. Only a teacher can change themselves.

Strategy 1: Surface Thinking, Not Solutions

Planning Conversation surfaces:

- Clarify goals
- Success indicators
- Approaches
- Personal learning focus (Data)

“I want students to enter group work smoothly and start thinking right away.”



Examples of Planning Conversation Templates

Purposes	Examples
Clarify Goals	What might be your goals for the coming lesson?
Specify Success Indicators	When you think about a successful lesson, what might be some of the indicators you are envisioning? If you were to create a rubric based on this goal, what would you write in the rubric?
Anticipate Approaches	What might be some of the strategies you have considered? What data would you like to collect to measure the effectiveness of the strategies?
Establish Personal Learning Focus	What is most important for you to pay attention to in yourself? What is your personal learning focus? VALUE
Reflect on Coaching	As you reflect on this conversation, how has it supported your learning?

Strategy 2: Anchor Reflection in Data

Use Reflecting Conversation prompts:

- Evidence
- Causation from students and as a teacher
- Meaning
- Next steps

Axiom #4

- A teacher in change is either moving towards something or away from something.
- *Corollary: A teacher who is not moving towards something or away from something is not going to change.*

“I almost wrote a question, but students weren’t ready.”

Examples of Reflecting Conversation Templates

Purposes	Examples
Summarize Impressions	How do you think it went?
Analyze Causal Factors	What did you do to contribute to the success of the lesson? What did you notice in students? How would you compare between the plan and the result?
Construct New Learning	What learnings do you want to take with you to future situations?
Commit to Application	How might you apply your new learning?
Going back to “Clarify Goals in Planning Conversation”	

Strategy 3: Coach the System, Not the Moment

How coaching becomes more nuanced over time

Early

- Moment-focused
- “What do I do when...?”

Developing

- Notices patterns
- Sees connections

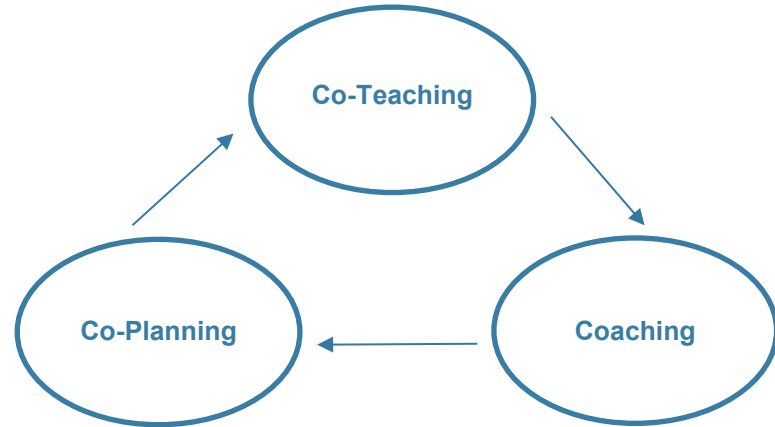
Mature

- Thinks in systems
- Designs for flow & autonomy

Shift: → isolated moves → interconnected systems

Coaching That Feels Like Thinking Classrooms

- Shared intentions
- Shared data
- Shared reflection
- Parallel growth



Axiom #5

- What they are moving towards or away from has to be noticed.

Examples...

Rather than:

"Did the groups work well?"

Try:

"What did you notice students doing when they encountered uncertainty?"

Examples...

Rather than:

"How did the task go?"

Try:

"At what moments did students seem to be doing the most thinking?"

Mediative Questions

- What surprised you about student thinking today?
- Was there a particular student who surprised you?
- When did students demonstrate agency?
- Where did you see students relying on one another rather than on you?
- What evidence suggests that students were making mathematical decisions?
- What structures seemed to support productive struggle?
- Which structures might you adjust next time?



Turn and Talk

“What would you do differently if you coached teachers the way you build thinking classrooms for students?”

The Mindset Shift

- Trading control for responsiveness
- Seeking to develop responsibility over accountability
- Balancing the effective and the efficient

What Teachers Say

“You didn’t give me answers — you gave me space. And in that space, I started trusting my own thinking.”

Thank you!



Takuya Umeki

Canadian and International BTC Consultant

Richmond, BC

generating.solutions.contact@gmail.com

Jerrold Wiebe

Canadian BTC Consultant

jerrold@buildingthinkingclassrooms.com