



## MAKING IT REAL

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If they are going to suggest to teachers that they use video to get a clear picture of reality, instructional coaches must use video to improve their own skills. Coaches can video record their coaching conversations to see how well they are implementing many of the strategies described throughout this book, such as the listening and questioning strategies described in Chapter 3. Additionally, coaches who give presentations can record their presentations, and coaches modeling teaching strategies can record their lessons. Something as simple as recording and reviewing a conversation with a spouse or child can be a powerful learning experience.

Coaches must also become highly skilled at gathering data reliably. A great way to do this is to watch videos of teachers with fellow coaches, gather data, and then compare what everyone records. Coaches should keep practicing and refining the way they gather data until everyone's scores are at least 95 percent the same. We've found it takes about two to three hours of practice to reliably gather such data as ratio of interaction, kinds and types of questions, and instructional vs. non-instructional time.

Using video is a great way to improve data-gathering skills since you can rewind the recording to discuss what was noted and why. However, some data, such as time on task, are difficult to see on video, so coaches will need to practice gathering that data with peers in cooperative teachers' classrooms.

## TO SUM UP

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- To get a clear picture of reality, teachers must appreciate (a) where there is room for improvement and (b) what is going well.
- Three strategies for getting a clear picture of reality are (a) video recording, (b) learning from students, and (c) gathering observation data.
- Video:
  - Video gives teachers and coaches a perspective on the class that cuts through perceptual errors.
  - Instructional coaches who plan to make video a part of their practice should take into consideration that a culture of trust must be in place for video to be embraced, that video should be a choice for teachers, and that teachers should own their recordings.

- Learning from Students:
  - Student voice is a powerful tool for professional growth that has been sorely underutilized.
  - All human beings want their voices to matter.
  - Teachers can learn from students in informal conversations, in interviews, and through writing prompts and exit tickets.
  - Review of student work is a powerful way to get a clear picture of reality.
- Observing a Lesson:
  - Though not the best way to get a clear picture of reality, observing can be helpful when teachers don't want to be video recorded and don't want students to be interviewed.
  - Gathering data is a necessary skill for coaches since data are often a big part of goal setting and measuring progress toward goals.
  - The pre-observation conversation needs to accomplish many things summarized in the Pre-Observation Planning Form.

## GOING DEEPER

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I learned about the importance of having a clear picture of reality and the creative tension that is at the heart of the Impact Cycle from Robert Fritz's book *The Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life*, first published in 1989.

Several books have deepened my understanding of the fallibility of our perceptions of reality. I like Heidi Grant Halvorson's *No One Understands You and What to Do About It* (2015), which offers a helpful summary of common perceptual errors and how they complicate effective communication. Michael Lewis's *The Undoing Project: A Friendship That Changed Our Minds* (2017) is, surprisingly, a page-turner about the theories of cognition developed through the friendship between Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. Kahneman's own book on his theories about decision making is *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2011).

If you want to learn more about using video in schools, as I write this book, the only book I know of on that topic is my book, *Focus on Teaching: Using Video for High-Impact Instruction* (2014). Here I describe how video can be used by teachers who coach themselves, instructional coaches, teams, as well as principals and teachers in the midst of the teacher evaluation.

Dianne Sweeney's books *Student-Centered Coaching: A Guide for K-8 Coaches and Principals* (2010) and *Student-Centered Coaching at the Secondary Level* (2013) contain many excellent suggestions on how to use student work as the point of departure for goal setting during coaching.

Alexandra Horowitz's *On Looking: Eleven Walks With Expert Eyes* (2013) is like a course on observing. I think it can enhance the way anyone looks at the world. Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen's *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* (2015) is a book about how to receive feedback, which is an important topic if you want to be a better learner. However, the book is also helpful for anyone who gives feedback, such as coaches.

