

Coaching Stances Reference Chart



Coaching Stances Reference Chart

(Based on Jim Knight & Elena Aguilar — *Facilitative vs. Directive*)

Facilitative Stances

*Used more frequently.

Stance	Purpose	When to Use	Sample Questions
Supportive	Build trust, affirm strengths, create psychological safety.	Early in the relationship, when teachers need encouragement, at the beginning/end of sessions.	• “What felt successful in your lesson?” • “How are you feeling about your approach so far?” • “What do you want to try next week?”
Cathartic	Provide space for emotional release to enable forward movement.	When the teacher is frustrated, overwhelmed, or emotionally charged.	• “It sounds like this is really on you. What’s been going on?” • “I can hear the frustration. Do you want me just to listen or help you work through?” • Reflective paraphrase: “You’re feeling... because...”
Catalytic	Surface new insights through reflection and questioning.	When teachers are ready to analyze their practice or explore root causes, during debriefs or goal-setting sessions.	• “What patterns are you noticing?” • “What might be a different issue?” • “If you tried that in a different way, might you adjust?”

Directive Stances

*To be used strategically.

Stance	Purpose	When to Use	Sample Questions
Informative	Share expertise, research, or strategies.	When teachers need new information, strategies, or clarity.	• “Would it be helpful to share that strategy other teachers are using?” • “Here’s what research says about this time...”



			• “Let me show you how I support this goal.”
Prescriptive	Recommend specific next steps for growth.	With novice teachers, when clarity is needed, or when time-bound outcomes are required.	• “A next step that could be helpful.” • “I’d recommend trying this. How does that feel?” • “Let’s plan to implement this and gather evidence.”
Confrontational	Address inconsistencies or resistance with respect and honesty.	When avoidance or incongruence blocks growth, after trust is built.	• “I hear you say engagement is a priority, yet students aren’t participating. Tell me what was the case.” • “We agreed to try this strategy today. What got in the way of that in this lesson?” • “I want to share some feedback that might be hard to hear. Is there anything you’d like to hear?”

Coaching Conversation Flow

Build Trust → Reflect → Plan & Learn → Implement → Accountability & Growth

Phase	Typical Stances Used
Build Trust	Supportive, Cathartic
Reflect	Catalytic, Supportive
Plan & Learn	Catalytic, Informative, Prescriptive
Implement	Informative, Prescriptive
Accountability & Growth	Confrontational (when needed), Catalytic

Key Insight:



Teaching Learning Succeeding

- Great coaches move fluidly between facilitative and directive stances, always grounded in partnership, respect, and the teacher's context.

Coaching Stances Expanded Format



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

1. Supportive (Facilitative)

Purpose: Build trust, affirm strengths, create psychological safety.

When to use:

- Early in the relationship to establish rapport and partnership.
- When teachers are feeling vulnerable, uncertain, or need emotional acknowledgment.
- At the beginning or end of sessions, to celebrate progress and anchor growth.
- During moments of low confidence or high stress.

Examples in practice:

- A teacher is trying a new strategy and feels unsure about the outcome.
- You want to highlight what's working before moving into areas for growth.

Sample Questions / Moves:

- "What felt successful for you in that lesson?"
- "I noticed students were really engaged during your partner activity. What do you think contributed to that?"
- "How are you feeling about this new approach so far?"
- "What do you want to celebrate from this week?"

2. Cathartic (Facilitative)

Purpose: Provide space for emotional release so the teacher can move forward cognitively.

When to use:

- When a teacher is emotionally charged (frustrated, discouraged, overwhelmed).



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

- Early in a session before shifting to problem-solving.
- When resistance is emotional, not technical.

Examples in practice:

- A teacher is venting about student behavior or feeling unsupported by the administration.
- A coaching conversation stalls because the teacher needs to process feelings first.

Sample Questions / Moves:

- “It sounds like this has been weighing on you. Do you want to talk through what’s been most challenging?”
- “What was the hardest part of that experience for you?”
- “I can hear the frustration in your voice. What would feel most helpful for me to do right now: just listen, or help think it through?”
- Reflective paraphrasing: “You’re feeling... because...”

3. Catalytic (Facilitative)

Purpose: Surface new insights through questioning and reflection.

When to use:

- When the teacher is ready to analyze practice and think critically.
- During goal-setting or problem-solving stages.
- To prompt reflection and ownership rather than giving answers.
- Ideal for coaching experienced teachers or those with strong reflective capacity.

Examples in practice:

- Debriefing after a classroom observation.
- Exploring root causes of persistent challenges.



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

Sample Questions / Moves:

- “What patterns are you noticing in students’ responses?”
- “What might be some reasons students reacted that way?”
- “If you were to try that lesson again, what might you adjust?”
- “What do you think is at the heart of this issue?” or “What options do you see for moving forward?”

4. Informative (Directive)

Purpose: Share information, resources, or expertise in service of teacher growth.

When to use:

- When the teacher lacks specific knowledge or strategies.
- When introducing research-based practices or explaining why something matters.
- During goal setting, if the teacher asks for guidance or information.

Examples in practice:

- A new teacher unfamiliar with instructional routines.
- Sharing student engagement strategies after a walkthrough.

Sample Questions / Moves:

- “Would it be helpful if I shared a strategy other teachers have found effective?”
- “Here’s what research says about wait time and student thinking...”
- “Let me show you a quick structure that can support this goal.”
- “Based on what I’ve seen, one approach that aligns with your goal is...”



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

5. Prescriptive (Directive)

Purpose: Recommend or suggest specific next steps for improvement.

When to use:

- When clarity and direction are needed for growth.
- With novice teachers who need concrete guidance.
- When timelines or outcomes are non-negotiable (e.g., safety, mandated curriculum).
- After collaborative reflection leads to a clear next step, the teacher wants input.

Examples in practice:

- Helping a teacher structure a lesson more clearly.
- Suggesting how to reframe questioning techniques for rigor.

Sample Questions / Moves:

- “A next step that could help address this is...”
- “I’d recommend trying ____ next week; how does that feel to you?”
- “One way to strengthen this part of your lesson is to ____.”
- “Let’s plan to implement this strategy and gather student evidence.”

6. Confrontational (Directive)

Purpose: Surface and address inconsistencies, resistance, or blind spots with care and respect.

Stance: Directive (but rooted in partnership)

When to use:



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

- When avoidance or incongruence is blocking growth.
- To hold teachers accountable to agreed goals.
- When beliefs, statements, or actions are misaligned with outcomes.
- After trust has been built, this stance requires a strong relationship.

Examples in practice:

- A teacher says they value student engagement but continues to lecture without checks for understanding.
- Goals are repeatedly set but not acted upon.

Sample Questions / Moves:

- “I hear you saying that student engagement is a priority, and yet I observed most students were passive during the lesson. How do you reconcile those two?”
- “We agreed last week to try ____, and I didn’t see evidence of that today. What got in the way?”
- “I want to share something that might be hard to hear, but it’s important for your growth. Is now a good time?”
- “Can we pause and look honestly at what’s happening here?”

Putting It All Together in a Coaching Conversation Flow

Coaching Phase	Likely Stances	Purpose
Relationship Building / Check-in	Supportive, Cathartic	Build trust, acknowledge



Coaching Stances Expanded Form Chart

Observation Debrief / Reflection	Catalytic, Supportive	Surface insights, o
Goal Setting / Planning	Catalytic, Informative, Prescriptive	Reflect, provide optio ste
Implementation Support	Informative, Prescriptive	Provide resourc
Accountability / Growth Over Time	Confrontational (when needed), Catalytic	Address gaps hones