



## 5. Making a difference: how do we know when mentoring and coaching are working?

This section highlights the aspects of mentoring and coaching that will make a direct contribution to evaluating the impact of CPD and offers ideas on how to make this manageable.

Evaluating the impact of CPD is a challenging business and a central part of school development, improvement and performance management. It's neither sensible nor possible to build elaborate arrangements for evaluating the impact of mentoring and coaching separate from wider evaluation arrangements. That said, mentoring and coaching are, in themselves evidence-rich formative evaluation processes. Done well, as is shown briefly below, they can make a rigorous contribution to whole school evaluation processes.

Mentoring and coaching are not ends in themselves, as we have shown in this Guide. They only matter if they are helping colleagues enhance their pupils' learning. Given the number of factors that affect pupils' learning, how do you, as a CPD leader, satisfy yourself, your colleagues and your managers that CPD focused on mentoring and coaching is really making a cost effective contribution? This section offers three principles and a few practical suggestions for doing just that.

### The three principles:

- focus colleagues' attention on identifying linked learning goals for themselves and for their pupils - from the start. The deeper or more challenging the learning goal, the more important it is to be specific about the target group of pupils and what success will look like;
- secure manageable and practical approaches to evidence by making sure any evidence you collect makes a useful contribution to the learning process at the same time as helping you evaluate impact. Think of this as facilitating



reflection, a sort of AfL for adult learners; and

- model the approach to formative assessment you want your colleagues to use in evaluating the impact of CPD on their own learning as you evaluate the effectiveness of your CPD strategy.

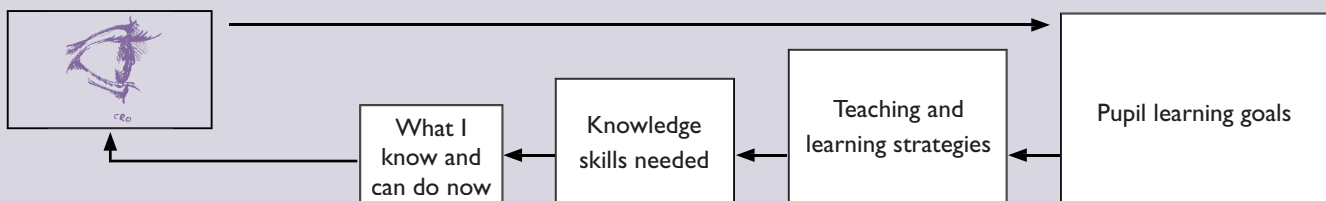
### Linking professional and student learning goals

The **Joining Up** pack includes a video reconstruction of a CPD leader reflecting on performance management. In particular she is noticing how a colleague responded effectively to a discussion about targets when she used her coaching skills to take as a starting point the learning needs of an identifiable group of students. This was much more effective than focusing first on what the teacher did or didn't do and what s/he wanted to change. It enabled colleagues to work backwards from pupil progress objectives to:

- the teaching and learning activities likely to contribute to such goals; and
- the new knowledge and skills the teacher would need to support such activities.

In mentoring partnerships, given the early stage of development in the role, there may be wide ranging gaps in knowledge and skills near or at the surface - rather as sheet ice floats on the surface of the Antarctic Ocean. So you can focus on surface features when you look at the impact because these will be evidence of early learning.

In coaching relationships, the skills and knowledge being targeted will involve drilling down deeper into established skills, patterns of behaviour and beliefs. This is more challenging - like the ice of an iceberg, the surface features are visible and important but what lies beneath is even more significant. What seems to work particularly well in coaching contexts is encouraging professional learners to focus on specific subsets of pupils, such as a small group of 'Rhino' students, a trio of gifted and talented students or struggling learners. This enables





coaching partners to explore learning in depth and to keep the evidence to be collected meaningful and manageable.

### Some common mistakes

An easy trap to fall into when designing a system for collecting evidence about CPD is just to gather evidence that is easy to collect or evidence that is too broad brush to be meaningful. Evidence that's easy to collect includes satisfaction sheets at the end of CPD sessions or statistics to monitor the number of hours of participation in CPD events. These things might be helpful indicators of engagement in the CPD programme and help make changes to CPD events or increase investment in CPD. But although they are often collected they say little about the relationship between the CPD and its impact on teaching and learning.

Over generalised evidence might include requests to colleagues to trace connections between a particular CPD process and the attainment of a whole class or year group. This is a laudable but unachievable aim and one that will have colleagues drowning in data. It is always worth monitoring trajectories to ensure that broad trends are moving in the right direction. But beyond that, CPD is inevitably one thread in a complicated chain of connections. You need something rather more specific and detailed.

Mentoring and coaching enable you to target more specific and fine grained evidence because the principles encourage participating colleagues to:

- set challenging and specific goals for clearly identified groups of their pupils; and
- use learning conversations within coaching or mentoring partnerships to explore evidence about their own and their pupils' experiences of new approaches.

In other words, collecting and interpreting evidence about identifiable learning goals for pupils is built into the coaching and mentoring process. Because the evidence is designed as a core part of the learning experience, participants will be motivated to collect it and use it well in evaluating the impact of the CPD at the individual level.

### Dos and don'ts

**X** Don't panic! The old saw about it being better not to be coached at all than to be badly coached just isn't true! If it were, how would anyone ever learn to be a coach? In any case, every effective coach starts by recognising that they are always developing their skills. So every glitch represents an opportunity to model professional learning.

✓ Do remember that developing mentoring and coaching and professional learning skills takes place over time and through a sustained rhythm of development experiences. Make elapsed time work for you by tackling the activities and trying out the strategies in bite sized pieces and incrementally.

✓ Do read the facilitators notes for each individual activity. They offer very practical hints and tips to help you see how to make an activity a positive experience and manage the practicalities. They also point you towards model answers so that you can have starter questions up your sleeve if, for example, group discussions are slow to get going.

✓ Do try out each activity as a learner before using it with your colleagues. You could ask someone to explore this with you as a co-coach remembering you will both benefit in both roles. Alternatively you could participate in the introductory CPD events (<http://www.curee-paccts.com/dynamic/curee70.jsp>).

✓ Do try recruiting your colleagues as co-developers or as co-enquirers. By explaining what you are and aren't sure of you will be modelling confident and open professional learning and helping colleagues see this as an active development experience. Remember that learning how to teach something is one of the fastest ways of developing skills and understanding - and giving colleagues chance to contribute avoids setting up dependencies.

✓ Do ensure you have access to the right equipment - a PC with a projector and screen, and sound capability (including speakers). Please see the technical specification for further details in Chapter 6.

