

Human Resources

A teacher with 15 years of experience has had successful performance appraisals in the past. This teacher's current practice is not reflective of "successful performance". Principals have not addressed the issue in the past and now based on the teacher's current practice, this teacher is facing termination. Some strategies, questions or conversation starters for the principal:

Gather strategies from the *Ideas [Into Action, Exploring the "Cognitive" Personal Leadership Resources \(PLRs\), Problem-Solving Expertise, Role-Specific Knowledge & Systems Thinking](#)*. While many sections of this resource are helpful, the section on "Make a coaching difference with the seven coaching questions that Michael Bungay Stanier (2016) sets out in *The Coaching Habit* are very helpful. There are also excellent sections on identifying the problem.

1. **"What's on your mind?"** is the "kickstart" question that gets to the heart of the matter quickly.
2. **"And what else?"** is the "AWE" question that Stanier believes is the "best coaching question in the world ... because someone's first answer is rarely the best answer."
3. **"What's the real challenge here for you?"** is the "focus" question.
4. **"What do you want?"** is the "foundation" question that is often the hardest to answer but has potential for building shared understandings and strengthening relationships.
5. **"How can I help?"** compels the person to make a clear request and prevents us from imposing what we think people want us to do.
6. **"If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?"** is a "strategic" question that forces us to focus and avoid taking on more than we can deliver.
7. **"What was most useful for you?"** is the "learning" question that helps finish the conversation strong and can provide useful feedback.

Suggested questions using a Cognitive Coaching approach (see above) for this scenario might be:

1. **How do you think your teaching/lessons are going?** This helps to determine where their thinking is.
2. **What observations make you think that?** Helps them to ground their feeling/opinion in fact.
3. **What would you like to do differently?** Starts the process of brainstorming ideas to move forward.
4. **What further questions do you have?** Are there resources or supports that both of you might access?
5. **What are you taking away from our conversation?** Consolidates learning and confirms an action plan

The Principal could ask the teacher:

- What else can you tell me about the situation?
- What is the real challenge here for you?
- What are possible solutions? The principal is asking for solutions but can also offer suggestions should this be required. Before this can be accomplished they have to be able to clearly identify the issue(s).
- What can the principal do to help? Follow the administrative guidelines for such matters, involve the superintendent and the HR Dept. Carefully monitor throughout the process and provide support along the way. This would need to be detailed further.