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SPED 854

Coaching Conversations

**Title of Scenario (1):** Elementary educator in need of feedback and/or professional development

**Setting of Conversation:** Empty kindergarten classroom, after school, just the two of us present

**Conversation:**

**Me** (*cheerfully*): Good afternoon, Ms. Allison, how are you today?

**Paraeducator** **Allison** (*happily*): I’m doing great, how are you?

**Me**: I’m well, thank you! Do you have a moment to chat? I wanted to talk to you about something.

**Allison** (*quizzically*): Sure, let me grab my things from the kindergarten class, and I’ll meet you in your room!

**Me**: Okay, sounds great.

…Moments later in my classroom, both of us sitting at a table…

**Me**: Allison, first I just want to say how much I appreciate your being here and assisting the class, especially with our kiddos who need that extra love and attention. You do such a wonderful job!

**Allison**: Of course! I enjoy being a part of the school and supporting the students however the teacher(s) needs me to. It’s great to be here for the kids.

**Me**: I’m glad! That’s actually part of the reason I wanted to chat with you this afternoon. Earlier today, when I passed the class during carpet time, I noticed something that slightly concerned me.

**Allison** (*nervously*): Oh? Is it something I did?

**Me** (*reassuringly)*: Don’t worry! I just want to make you aware so that you can be proactive and learn from this area of concern. Do you recall what you were doing during carpet time earlier today?

**Allison**: Yes, I was actively engaged with the students and holding Susie so that she would stay seated during that lesson. Was that wrong of me?

**Me**: Okay, yes. That is the observation I made when I passed the classroom; however, that was actually hindering Susie instead of supporting her. I know you are showing your love for the students, and that is an admirable and appreciated quality, but Susie’s right to privacy and inclusion were being violated.

**Allison**: Ah, I had not thought of it that way. I was only trying to help her. How were her rights being violated? I definitely want to learn from this so that I can support Susie in the best way possible. She’s such a sweet girl!

**Me**: All you need to do is put yourself in the shoes of her peers. Where you saw yourself helping Susie, her peers could have viewed her as different and being babied since she was not sitting with them and participating as they were. I understand that you were attempting to help her relax so as to not distract the other students, but in the bigger picture, it is situations like this that can set her apart from the rest of the class. It’s important for her to be included with her peers at all times.

**Allison**: Oh, I see that now. I vaguely recall inclusion being talked about during orientation, but we covered a lot that day. I had not realized how that was obstructing Susie’s learning experience!

**Me**: We all learn from each other. A part of the education we give our students is that we also learn from them and for them. I actually know of a professional development session coming up that revolves around inclusion for special education students that really helped me grasp the rights of students and how to enhance their learning. Would you like the information for it?

**Allison**: Yes, please. I know I am not trained in it and would like to become more aware so that I can better support the students I assist in my kindergarten class. I appreciate you pulling me aside. I don’t think I would have thought twice about today had you not. It definitely makes me think more about what else I could do better or differently!

**Me**: Absolutely! I filled out an observation sheet afterwards just to have on file, but do not fear. It is only a matter of record. I, as well as the kindergarten teacher you are a para for, are here to guide you so that we can work together efficiently!

**Allison** (*appreciatively)*: Thank you! Again, I appreciate it. I better get going! Can I come to you if I have any questions after that professional development meeting?

**Me**: Sure, and you’re welcome! It’s about time for me to leave, too. I have a few lessons to prepare this evening. See you tomorrow!

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**Title of Scenario (2):** Secondary Paraeducator in Need of Feedback and/or Professional Development

**Setting of Conversation:** Classroom before school sitting at table, just the two of us present

**Conversation:**

**Me** (cheerfully): Good morning, Miss Jane, how are you?

**Paraeducator Miss Jane**: I am doing great! I’m ready to jump into this week of fun and students! How about you?

**Me**: I am doing great as well. I’m ready to dive into this week, too! Actually, I have several ideas and what not I would love to talk to you about. Let’s start with how you think our math class is going?

**Miss Jane**: Everyone seems to be doing well. I am very proud of how hard they work and how they need little to no clarification.

**Me**: I agree! What about Jonathan? How is his progress??

**Miss Jane**: Oh, he is a wonderful student. I have seen, though, that he needs help taking notes and getting all his supplies ready. Jonathan is a very hard worker, as his peers, but I see his self-confidence falter when he works alone.

**Me**: I appreciate your observations. What have you seen him do that is evidence of his IEP goal of independence? Do you think we are successfully supporting him in reaching that goal?

**Miss Jane**: Actually, I think he does need further and additional support. It seems that he does not successfully work alone yet, and I am eager to see him achieve that IEP goal.

**Me**: I see! This brings me to some of the ideas I have for this week. Some address his needs you mention! But first, I would like to know how do you feel you address his needs already?

**Miss Jane**: One of the ways I support him is I turn to the pages he should be on in the book so that he is following along. I sometimes also take notes for him in his notebook, and I help him get all his supplies ready.

**Me**: Those are great ways to support him in class! I appreciate your assistance and care for our class so far this year. Do you ever meet with Jonathan’s parents to express his progress and needs?

**Miss Jane**: Yes, in fact I meet with his mom regularly at our local coffee shop! It’s where we discuss him, and she knows he’s doing well but still needs our help.

**Me**: I see. What about how we are currently helping Jonathan? Do you think you may be doing too much? Are we meeting Jonathan’s IEP goal of independence?

**Miss Jane (uncomfortable)**: I sometimes feel that I do too much for him, but I know he needs it.

**Me (respectively)**: I hear what you’re saying. Let’s look at his IEP. We set some awesome goals as a team; how do you think we are meeting his independence goals thus far in our classroom?

**Miss Jane** **(light bulb coming on):** Oh my, we aren’t really meeting those goals since I do so much for him!

**Me**: Your help is very much appreciated, Jane, but yes. You do a little too much for him and it is also affecting how his peers view him.

**Miss Jane**: Yes, I realize this now. I am so glad you brought this to my attention. I was only trying to help him how I thought best, but I have never considered this. I do not want him to not meet those goals! He’s so special to me!

**Me**: I know your relationship with Jonathan is very special, and I know you want him to be successful. However, he can still be special and successful without so much intervention on your part. How do you think we can grow and learn from this?

…Pausing to let Miss Jane think…

**Me**: I would also like to talk about how you discuss Jonathan with his mom at the coffee shop. This interferes with privacy and confidentiality. So how can we also change here?

**Miss Jane**: I actually have no idea. How do I stop talking as I have with a friend I’ve made?

**Me**: It’s okay! You can still be friends. There’s no harm in that as long as you be sure not to cross the line of what should and shouldn’t be discussed. It’s important we maintain a professional relationship with the family members of our students in regards to what takes place in the classroom.

**Miss Jane**: That makes sense when you say it like that. I will definitely work on that with Jonathan’s mom and keep that in mind for any future friendships! As for how I can grow and learn from helping Jonathan in class, I could start prompting him to turn to the correct page, to get his supplies out, and to take his own notes.

**Me**: I like this plan! I want to let you know that you can still step in to clear up confusion when that arises. Oh, before I forget! There is a staff meeting next week about proximal harm. Would you like to attend? I can get you the info for it; it will help you in areas like we have discussed today!

**Miss Jane**: Alright, thank you! I look forward to going. I think it will be very beneficial, and I can’t wait to change gears so that I better help Jonathan gain independence. Thank you for pulling me aside so that I can learn from my mistakes!

**Me**: Of course! It’s my job to help you as you help me. We are a team, and I am glad I can teach you to be a better support system for the students, especially Jonathan. I look forward to seeing how you help his growth in the upcoming months!



