

Assessing and Reporting with Powerful Interactions

The Powerful Interactions Approach to assessing and reporting encourages the assessor to search for and highlight the teacher's strengths. These strengths, that we call *moments of effectiveness*, allow teachers to see and appreciate their skills and build upon them.

The assessor records observations and creates reports, describing the teachers' words and actions. Moreover, the assessor articulates the specific impact these actions have on children's learning. This Powerful Interactions change strategy of strengths-based articulation is so much more than being positive. It provides teachers with inspiration, motivation and the information they need to improve their practice in areas that need work so that together with coaches and directors they can create ripples of positive change in quality and outcomes for children. Regardless of the assessment you are using, this is the ultimate goal: to engage teachers (coaches and directors) in continuous quality improvement and children's success as learners.



As an assessor, you bring knowledge, skills and tools to your work. When assessing with

As you reflect upon your practice as an assessor, consider:

- Do you walk into a room and home into the negative or are you able to resist that inclination and notice strengths?
- Do you think of yourself as the “expert” scoring and judging a teacher’s work or as a curious colleague engaged in observing so that you can both learn more about her practice?
- How do you feel when someone is observing you?
How do you think the teacher feels as you observe?

Powerful Interactions, there is another key ingredient, one often overlooked in the urgency to improve programming and support children's success: you. How you are and what you decide to say and do determines the effectiveness of assessment. The more intentional your decisions as you go about assessing and reporting, the more effective you will be.

Throughout the entire process of assessing and reporting, every interaction that you have with a teacher can support or undermine that teacher's sense of self,

what she will learn and if and how new insights and strategies get translated into improved practices with children.

Even when you think you are being a fly on the wall, your presence, the expression on your face, the few words you might decide to say can all significantly impact the outcome of the

assessment process. The same holds true when reviewing the results of an assessment report with a teacher or director.

How you view your role also impacts your effectiveness. When you engage with a teacher as a learning partner, curious and in touch with how it feels to question, experiment, stretch and grow, your interactions as you assess and convey report findings are more likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

When you assume a Powerful Interactions stance, you search for and highlight moments of effectiveness, articulate observations and their impact on children's learning. You interact in ways that convey respect and engage with the teacher as a curious learner about her effectiveness, looking for opportunities to build upon what works to enrich her practice. In this way you model attitudes and behaviors that support relationships and learning, setting the stage for ongoing quality improvement and children's success.

Assessing with Powerful Interactions

Using the three steps of a Powerful Interaction can help you be more effective as you assess in a classroom and convey report findings.

Step One, Be Present means having an "inner quiet," allowing you to be in the moment, self-aware and able to make decisions about what to say and do with maximum clarity and effectiveness. This is the core of intentionality. You can slow down for a few moments and quiet your static, that mental noise we all experience when too many people and tasks demand our attention when you:

- turn off your cell phone;
- pause before entering a classroom or delivering a report to take a breath and calm yourself after a busy morning, whether at home or work;
- take a few minutes to review items on the assessment tool so that you can focus more clearly on observing.

Step Two, Connect means attending to relationships by showing sensitivity to the person you are assessing. You connect when you:

- address a teacher by her name;
- meet a teacher's eye, smile and wait for her to welcome or signal you to enter her room;
- ask where you should sit to gain an overview of the room and to give her a few moments to get used to you being there before you begin to move around the room to observe.

Step Three, Extend Learning means highlighting the teacher's strengths to promote her learning and create positive change in practice. You can most effectively promote positive change in a teacher's practice with report findings when you:

- begin by addressing her strengths, then move to areas of growth;
- intentionally connect her words and actions to outcomes for children (e.g., "When you read aloud with expression, children can better understand the story. This is important because it allows children to feel competent and serves as a model of reading with fluency.");
- discuss that there is always something to do that will extend, enrich and strengthen the teacher's work and quality of children's experience and think with the teacher about a step she might take on her path of continuous quality improvement.

Why it matters

Assessing with Powerful Interactions promotes positive change for children, their families and programs by creating an environment of respect and optimism for teachers and those who support them. When the assessor provides concrete, clearly stated, outcome-related information, teachers are able to recognize their existing strengths and areas in need of improvement so that steps can be implemented for continuous quality improvement.

No matter the assessment tool or the setting, by using Powerful Interactions assessors are more effective as they:

- Illuminate a path of change, step by step, towards quality so that teachers, coaches, directors can see progress already made and plan for and implement next steps;
- Invest teachers with a sense of ownership, power and competence as change-makers in their practice by highlighting that they are already making a difference in outcomes for children through the decisions they make about how to be and what to say and do;
- Recognize and appreciate that who and how they are matters and begin to use themselves as their own best resource to create positive change.
- Support a culture/climate of optimism, possibilities, growth and change by highlighting what works and by providing information needed for teachers to enrich and extend their practice.

Guidelines for using Powerful Interactions to create reports

Teachers are more likely to be able to hear, learn from and use report findings when reports go beyond conveying scores to become a conversational, respectful, living document tool that teachers can refer to as they create and track their continuous quality improvement plans. Reports based on Powerful Interactions principles:

- Begin with a letter of welcome and an invitation for teachers to use assessment findings to create a roadmap on their continuous quality improvement plans;
- Identify areas of strengths and provide examples of how teachers' practice is currently making a difference in children's lives;
- Convey the message: "You are seen," whether through a specific example from a classroom visit or by including a photo;
- Introduce opportunities for growth as ways to enhance quality by linking indicators to child outcomes (e.g., To enhance the quality of your classroom, most furniture must be child-sized. This is important because it allows children to be relaxed and comfortable and better able to concentrate on their work and play.);
- Provide space for teachers to jot down ideas of one action they might take to enhance children's learning for each area for growth.

Using the Powerful Interactions Approach to assessing and reporting turns a process that could be stressful and energy-depleting into a conversation that opens the door to extending learning and enhancing quality on behalf of children and families. We invite you — states, agencies, and programs to customize your approach to assessing and reporting with Powerful Interactions in ways that best suit your needs.

