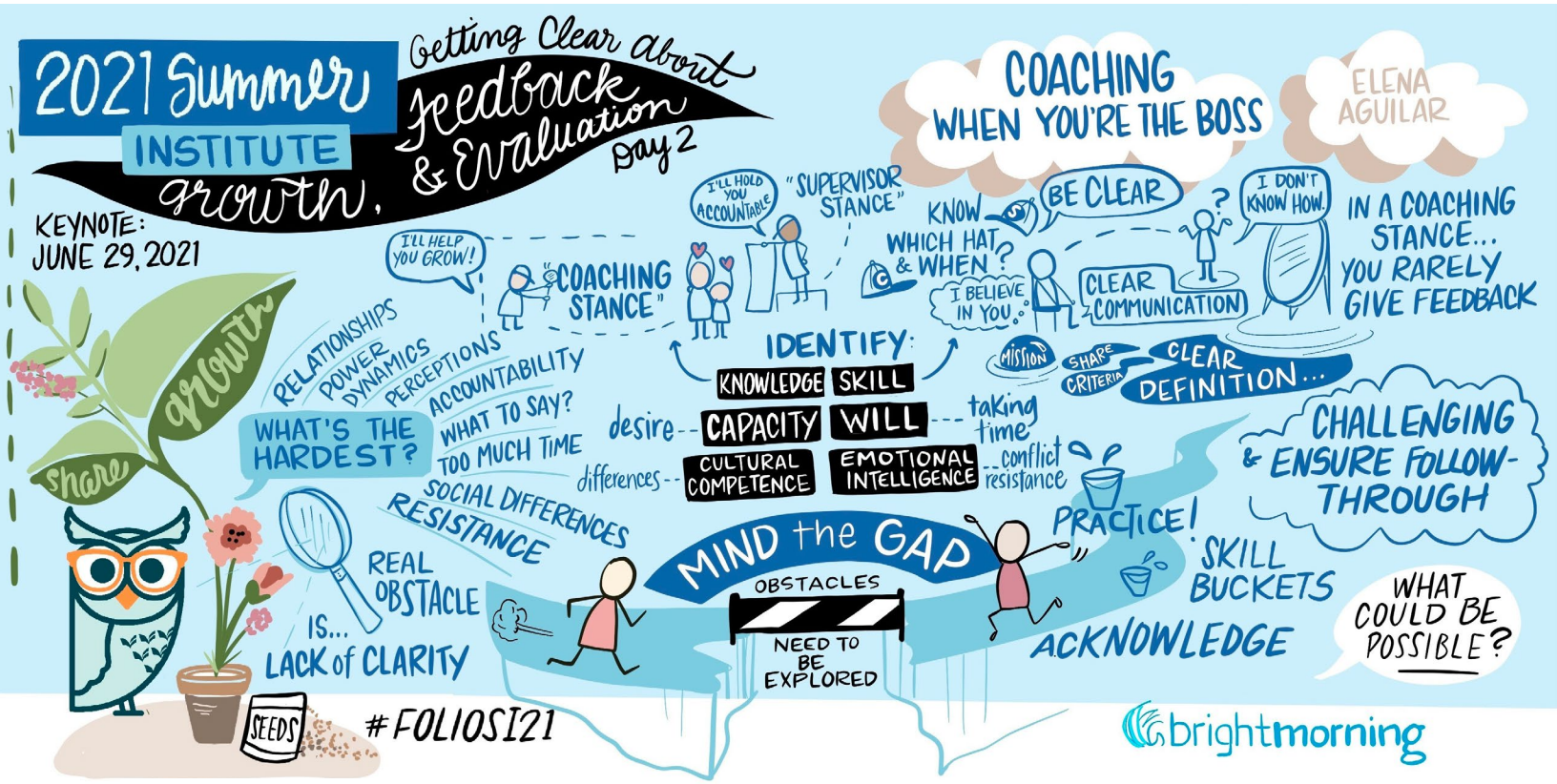


Folio
COLLABORATIVE

Mid-Year Coaching When You're The Boss

We've heard from many Folio leaders that 2021 was not what they hoped or planned for. They feel disconnected from their faculty and behind in having the types of conversations that validate, restore, support and inspire.

But it's a new year. So we put together this refresher about coaching from our Summer Institute opening keynote, Elena Aguilar's Bright Morning. In her speech , Elena created an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that come with coaching when you are the boss or supervisor.

We will deep dive into specific aspects of Elena's keynote in order to break down the obstacles, stances, and gaps, so we can all better understand the important work that can happen when we coach when we are the boss.

Take a look and let us know if we can be of support as you plan and hold transformational conversations with your direct reports:

Overview: Coaching When You're the Boss

Part I: The Ten Obstacles that Stand in our Way

Part II: Hats and Stances. Which do you wear, when?

Part III: Naming the Knowledge and Skill Gaps

Part IV: Naming the Four Other Gaps

Part V: Coaching as a Mirror

Overview: Coaching When You're the Boss

One of the most difficult tasks facing supervisors in our schools is the understanding that, in order to do their work well, it is essential to act as both a coach and a boss. There are many challenges and obstacles standing in the way of effectively filling both roles, so it is essential to name these challenges and explore how to surmount them in order to be transformational leaders.

The obstacles we face in effectively coaching while supervising actually come down to a series of gaps between our current abilities and our desired abilities.Like all gaps, these can be bridged by naming them and learning to close them. The gaps are not anyone's fault! In order to coach when we are also the boss, we need to closely observe our own gaps and take proactive steps toward addressing them.

The gaps we face and often consider to be obstacles can be summarized in six categories: gaps of knowledge, skill, capacity, will, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence. Each school leader struggles with different gaps—depending on their own institution and background—and the path forward to name and close gaps is unique and individualized. Yet, as school leaders consider what the skills they need to practice, the internal barriers they need to overcome, and how to focus their time, transformational coaching work can begin to take place in our communities.

In addition, in order to successfully coach as the boss, supervisors need to understand when to prioritize coaching work and when to prioritize supervision. In fact, there are different types of conversations and "stances" a school leader should take in order to run a division, department, or school. Leaders need to learn the vocabulary associated with these different "hats" (coaching and supervising) and know how to name the "hat" they are wearing in a particular conversation.

When school leaders examine the obstacles to coaching as the boss and can see these obstacles as "gaps" to be overcome, they can shift the paradigm of what school leadership can look like. Wearing both the supervisor and coach hat is not easy work, yet when we name the hat we are wearing in a given conversation and use the language appropriate for that role, we can begin to shift the perceptions of what is possible in our work.

At Folio Collaborative, we believe professional growth is a priority, and in order to prioritize it, we need to embrace the duality of our roles as supervisors and coaches. When we are able to do this, we place teachers and professional learning at the center and honor each individual's capacity to grow and change.

Part I: Ten Obstacles that Stand in our Way

It is hard to be both the boss and a coach! If we examine the obstacles effectively to wearing both our boss and our coach "hats," we can chart a path forward for our own learning.

We need to start by acknowledging that it is ok to struggle with these obstacles. In fact, defining and understanding the obstacles is an important step in our learning journeys. Every obstacle can be surmounted when we understand it a little bit better. Each individual struggles with obstacles from their own perspective and role, so it is important to begin to name and understand "What are the obstacles in MY path? What can be the course for my learning?"

We encourage school leaders to look over this list of obstacles and define their primary obstacles right now. A self-assessment will help supervisors recognize their gaps and allow them to take the proactive steps necessary to fill them in. Which is the hardest right now? Is there an obstacle that feels stuck or unsurmountable?

As in all situations, don't hesitate to reach out to us to problem solve a conversation, to think further about coaching, and to consider how to overcome the obstacles in front of you.



10 COMMON OBSTACLES

to effectively being both a boss and a coach

1. I am not clear, what is coaching?
2. It feels hard for me to both hold people accountable and be supportive of them.
3. I have a hard time finding the right words.
4. I have too much to do and too many roles to play, there is no time for coaching.
5. I don't know how to push or challenge someone.
6. I don't want to do this. Why can't people just do their jobs?
7. I have a hard time coaching people who do not share my social identities.
8. I struggle with resistance.
9. I have tried coaching in the past, but I didn't see any follow through. People don't change.
10. I am afraid. I have good relationships right now with everyone, but coaching might damage those relationships.



Part II: Hats and Stances

Once we come to recognize the obstacles in the way of coaching when we are the boss, we must next acknowledge when it is appropriate to have different conversations. At Folio Collaborative, we agree with Elena Aguilar's assessment that successful coaching when you are the boss includes understanding the two primary "stances" that come with the role: a supervising stance and a coaching stance. The conversations we have are different depending on the stance we take in a given conversation. While some conversations might switch mid-stream, we are at our most effective as school leaders when we identify the "HAT" we are wearing for a conversation (our "coach hat" or our "supervisor hat") and name that at the outset.

When we are in our "coaching stance" or wearing our "coach hat" we are committed to helping someone else grow. Our approach should be focused on reflection, grounded in kindness and support. Our coach hat is the one we wear to say to someone else: "I am here for you to help you to see your bright spots and your struggles." Coaching has the potential to move from being "transactional/advice-giving" into transformational coaching. One way to think about the move toward transformational coaching is to ask ourselves: "Who has the answer to this question I am asking?" A coach in a transformational frame recognizes that the "journey is the destination" of the work together. For further insight into this specific type of coaching as a move toward "making every conversation count," please check out Elena Aguilar's podcast linked above.

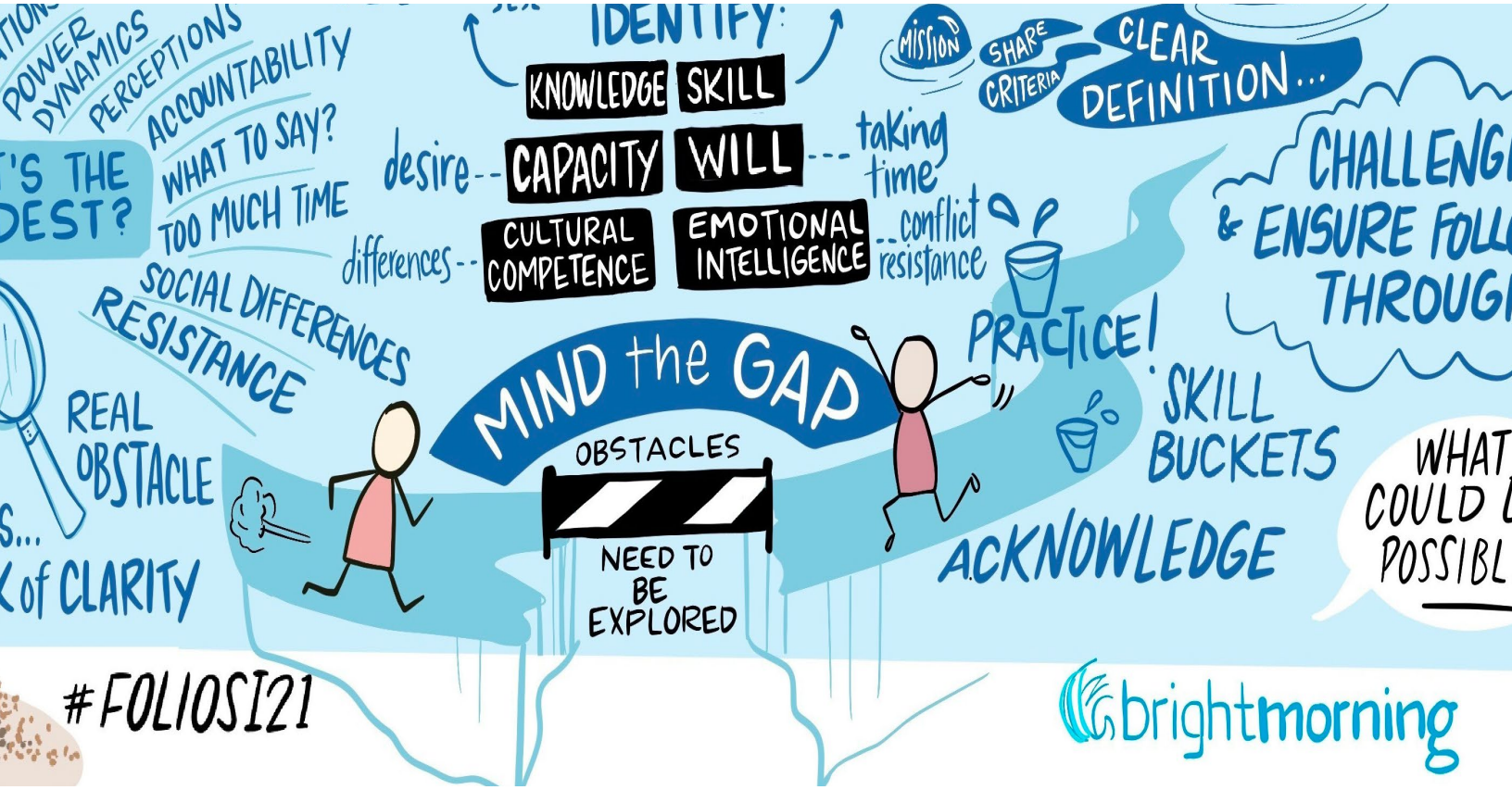
In contrast to our coaching stance, there are times as the boss or supervisor when we need to move out of that frame and into a place of holding someone accountable. In other words, we must "switch hats." When we are in our "supervising stance" or wearing our "supervisor hat" we are holding someone accountable for certain criteria and sharing a vision. Often, our supervisor hat is the one we wear to provide rewards for those who meet specific criteria and hold responsible those who do not.

When we are wearing our supervisor hat, we might say: "Grades are due on this date and if some people are late with their grades, everyone else is impacted in these specific ways." If we tackle the same situation while wearing our coach hat, we might say to one teacher: "Last quarter, I noticed your grades were late. I am assuming you want to turn them in on time. Would you like my help to make a plan to get them done on time? What comes up for you about grading? Let's unpack that together."

In our roles as school leaders, we must be able to wear both hats for different types of conversations. Clarity comes in our conversations when we name the hat we are wearing at the start of our discussions.

As you look ahead toward the new year, what are some upcoming conversations you need to have as the supervisor in your school?

- Are these conversations where you will wear your "coach hat" or your "supervisor hat?"
- How will you name the work that needs to be done?
- Are there any obstacles currently standing in your way from putting on the hat you need to wear?



Part III: The Knowledge and Skill Gaps

In this section, we preview a useful tool for self-assessing your readiness as a coach and/or using with your direct report in coaching conversations.

Earlier, we examined the ten primary obstacles standing in the way of coaching while supervising in our schools. What we experience as obstacles are actually indicators of "gaps"—a space between our desired ability and our current ability. A gap is an area for growth, not a deficit. We all have gaps, and the most important thing to keep in mind is that all gaps can be closed.

In order to be successful at any task or skill,we must examine and name our gaps and think about the explorations necessary to bridge them. As we look at any task, whether that is teaching, leading, or even cooking, we can see there are always gaps that reflect the abilities we hope to develop. If we examine our own gaps, and if we help others examine theirs, we can achieve something we want to be able to do.

While there are many different types of gaps that can keep us from achieving at the level we desire, the gaps of knowledge and skill connected to coaching work are worth addressing first. Closing the knowledge gap begins by developing our understanding of the practice of coaching. This means we need to understand what coaching is, what it means to be a coach, and when it might be essential for us to take on our "coaching stance."

Another aspect of the knowledge gap includes creating institutional alignment around definitions and roles. In order to close the knowledge gap, organizations need to consider alignment around some of the following questions:

- What does it mean to be an effective teacher in your school?
- Is there a rubric for effective instructional practice?
- What does it mean to be an effective department chair or division head in your school?
- How do we hold people accountable here?
- What do we expect feedback on?

Once we answer these questions, we must communicate them to create institutional alignment around each practice. As we consider the knowledge gap, we also need to name the power differentials that can manifest in developing these institutional frameworks, recognizing how they might impact the coaching work that needs to take place in our schools.

Sometimes, bridging our knowledge gaps uncovers some of the skill gaps we are missing. A skill gap is one that says "I don't know how to do this [specific task]." The wonderful thing about recognizing the things we don't know is the understanding that we can always learn a new skill. We can close skill gaps through reading, professional development, mentorship, coaching, and practice. Some of the potential skill gaps in learning to f coach when you are the boss would include:

- learning the words and phrases connected to effective communication,
- and giving effective feedback to help someone see themselves.

To close a skill gap, we need to name it, proactively seek information to bridge it, and then practice, practice, practice!

If we return to the illustration of learning to cook, we address the knowledge gap when we learn how to combine different flavors or ingredients to create a specific type of cuisine. We bridge the skill gap when we learn to chop those ingredients and consider the length of time each one needs to be in the pan. In coaching, the knowledge gap is understanding the two stances: a coaching stance and a supervisor stance. The skill gap is learning the communication patterns, words, and tools required to effectively communicate in each of those stances.

As you "mind your gaps" or help your direct report name theirs, consider the areas where you hope to grow in knowledge and skills:

- What comes to mind as the first gap to tackle?
- What will be your plan for bridging this gap?



Part IV: Gaps of Capacity, Will, Cultural Competence, and Emotional Intelligence

Earlier, we examined the ten primary obstacles to successful coaching while acting as a school supervisor. In our last section, we considered the gaps in knowledge and skill. While these are important gaps to bridge, we also need to consider the gaps of capacity, will, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence.

A capacity gap is a gap of time: When we feel stuck in the obstacle of having too much to do, too many roles to play, and too little time to complete them all successfully, we are experiencing a capacity gap. Sometimes the capacity gap is hard to overcome because it requires a rethinking and a reframing of tasks in order to carve out more time in our day. To address the capacity gap, we need to examine the types of tasks getting in the way of the work we desire to do, reframing our approach to these tasks. Sometimes, addressing the capacity gap means considering the ways our institution as a whole differentiates between "urgent" work and "important" work.

A will gap is a gap of interest:The will gap comes in the obstacle that says "I don't want to coach, why can't everyone just do their jobs." When we examine the will gap, we might consider the organizational culture and psychological safety each individual feels within the institution. Sometimes, confronting the will gap means examining the adult culture in our schools.

The cultural competence gap is a critical gap to bridge in order to be an effective school leader.. This gap names the obstacle of struggling to coach people who do not share our social identities. School leaders must seek professional training and development to support their growth in this critical area. Remember, cultural competence is a gap, which means it is possible to learn this valuable skill.

The emotional intelligence gaps are the obstacles of our own desire for a congenial culture, when the school leader feels that coaching may damage pre-existing "good relationships" with staff. In order to bridge the emotional intelligence gap, remember that coaching is essential for an adult culture of growth. While a supervisor might say: "I see this, I think this, this needs to happen;" the coach might instead say: "What do you see, what else is going on." The frame of coaching, removing the "I" of the supervisor, is one of respecting the adult learning and growth of educators. To bridge our emotional intelligence gaps isto build respectful relationships with colleagues in order to honor their professional learning.

As you consider the gaps of will, capacity, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence:

- Where do you see your biggest gaps?
- What steps might you take to bridge them?



Part V: Coaching as a Mirror

When we are in our coaching stance, our job is to help someone to see themselves. Using established criteria for performance (school-aligned definitions of what makes for an excellent teacher), the coach can help an individual see their gaps. The coach might ask:

- Here is the rubric, let's explore where you are.
- Where are your gaps?
- What are the impacts and the consequences of your gaps?
- How can I help you to close your gaps?

Using clear communication (practice in closing our skill gaps), the coach can hold up a mirror. When we hold up mirrors, we are not usually giving feedback.Instead, our role is to help someone see the dynamics of a particular situation for themselves.

Learning to have these types of transformational coaching conversations is a skill supervisors can practice in their schools. Holding up mirrors as effective coaches is one aspect of learning to, as Elena Aguilar notes, "make every conversation count." To learn more, consider listening to this podcast on transformational coaching and feel free to reach out to the Folio team for more information and resources.



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