# COACHING

## A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY

### PROMISES & PRACTICALITIES

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper
Education Matters, Inc.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

As the nation continues its unprecedented effort to improve teaching and learning, the stakes are getting higher. The idea that all children can reach challenging standards, once a fervent hope, is now national policy. Urban school districts, where low performance and inequitable opportunities to learn are prevalent, are embracing bold strategies to meet this goal.

District leaders understand that large-scale improvements in teaching and learning require them to support schools in new ways. In the past, district support often produced inequities: some schools, and some teachers, received the help they needed and, as a result, some students did well, while others languished. But now districts are recognizing that enabling *all* students to learn at high levels requires professional development on a large scale and a new way of delivering it.

The need for professional development is obvious: many teachers are not prepared for the challenge of educating *all* students to high levels. And district leaders know that the traditional workshops, conferences, and courses do not provide the ongoing, context-sensitive support that teachers and principals need to improve teaching and learning substantially.

One promising strategy districts are embracing is coaching. By employing part-time or full-time coaches in schools, districts can provide ongoing, sustained support to principals and teachers to improve school organization and classroom instruction. The coaches work side by side with principals and teachers, observe their work, and offer critiques and models of effective practice. They put them in touch with resources that can help them. And they stay with schools over time, helping principals and teachers meet new challenges as they arise.

To be sure, those implementing a strategy such as coaching will likely confront obstacles in education systems that are not designed to accommodate different roles for teachers based on expertise as practitioners rather than years of experience and education. And it represents a substantial investment in professional development. Boston, for example, devoted $5.8 million from general school funds to support seventy-five coaches in ninety-seven schools. But the district, like others employing the strategy, believes that the investment will pay off in improved teaching and, ultimately, in improved student achievement and greater equity.

The Urban Superintendents Network has a keen interest in coaching. The Network, established two years ago by the Aspen Institute's Program on Education in a Changing Society with support from several national foundations, is composed

of the leaders of a dozen of the nation's largest school districts. These superintendents, divided almost evenly between career educators and those whose prior professional experience had been in other sectors, all face the urgent challenge of large-scale, sustained instructional improvement.

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform has also been examining large-scale instructional improvement through its Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts. The task force, which includes educators, researchers, and policy-makers, is currently working with districts to develop the capacity of district central offices to support improved teaching and learning in schools.

To help the Aspen Urban Superintendents Network and other district leaders understand the promise and practicalities involved in coaching, the Aspen Institute's Program on Education in a Changing Society commissioned Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper to prepare a paper describing the approach and the challenges involved in implementing coaching strategies. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform agreed to copublish the paper and to distribute it broadly.

The authors, from the evaluation firm Education Matters, Inc., in Cambridge, Massachusetts, are deeply knowledgeable about coaching. As evaluators of school reform in Boston, which includes coaching in all of the district's schools, they have seen firsthand how the strategy works. They have also studied the implementation of coaching in other districts, including San Diego and Louisville, and have examined the literature thoroughly.

The result is a useful and timely guide for district and school leaders who are considering coaching as an arrow in their large-scale-improvement quiver. It offers details on what coaches do, what knowledge and skills they need to have, and what districts need to do to establish conditions to make coaching effective. The paper also helps districts navigate through some of the challenges they face in putting the strategy in place.

As Neufeld and Roper note, there is as yet no widespread evidence that coaching will improve student achievement. But there is good reason to believe coaching holds promise. That's why districts are looking eagerly at the strategy. This report is an excellent place for district leaders to start.

Robert Schwartz
Senior Advisor
Aspen Institute
Program on Education

Warren Simmons
Executive Director
Annenberg Institute
for School Reform

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# P R E F A C E

This paper takes as its orientation the knowledge and skill that district leaders must draw on if they are to develop successful, systemwide approaches to coaching. However, the paper is also written to be of value to coaches, teachers, principals, and policy-makers who can benefit from understanding what we call the promises and practicalities of coaching.

Our analysis is based primarily on what we have learned from Education Matters' longitudinal, qualitative studies of this professional development approach in Boston, Corpus Christi, Louisville, and San Diego.[1] Over the last six years, we conducted hundreds of in-depth interviews with coaches, teachers who work with coaches, principals, and central office administrators in an effort to learn about the design, implementation, and influence of coaching on whole-school, instructionally focused reform. In addition, we observed district-provided coach professional development as well as school-based professional development provided by coaches, and we reviewed pertinent documents related to coaches' work.

During this time, we produced many reports on the progress of whole-school improvement in these districts with special attention to coaching and other learning opportunities for principals and teachers. This report reflects a synthesis of what we have learned.

While this research forms the basis of our analysis and synthesis, the conclusions also draw on what we have read in the literature about other approaches to coaching (for example, in Hank Levin's Accelerated Schools Program and in America's Choice) and on other work with which we are familiar (for example, the middle school–focused work of the Center for Collaborative Education–Boston and the work of the Education Trust with respect to implementing its Standards-in-Practice approach to helping teachers develop assignments that are standards-based and academically rigorous).

We begin with a look at the promise of coaching: while not yet proven to increase student achievement, coaching does increase the instructional capacity of schools and teachers, a known prerequisite for increasing learning.

We then ask the question: What is coaching and what do coaches do? In this section, we provide some descriptions of coaches' work and how that work is likely to contribute to instructional improvement. Then we consider what kind of preparation

---

[1]  Partial support for the development of this paper was provided by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

is needed for this work. In this section, we describe some of coaches' learning needs and explore ways in which their professional development can be shaped to address those needs.

We then turn to the practicalities of implementation. We identify the conditions that should be in place at the start of implementation and we consider a range of challenges that are likely to accompany the start-up and continuation of coaching as a key component of a district's professional development program.

Finally, we suggest what significant improvements school districts might expect if they choose to implement coaching as part of their instructional-improvement efforts.

All across this country, there are coaches, teachers, principals, and others who have embraced the challenge of implementing coaching with the goal of providing students with high-quality teaching. Without these dedicated professionals, coaching would not be as fully developed as it is today. Therefore, we want to thank each of the many educators we have interviewed over the last six years – many of them six or seven times – for the knowledge they have shared with us and for their unflagging efforts to meet the learning needs of their students. More particularly, we want to thank Cathleen Kral, Instructional Leader for Literacy K–12 and Coaching, and Elliot Stern, Principal, Edison Middle School, both of the Boston Public Schools, for their thoughtful and encouraging comments on the initial draft of this paper.

Barbara Neufeld
Dana Roper

Education Matters, Inc.
50 Church Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
www.edmatters.org

# THE PROMISE OF COACHING

Seeking to improve instructional practice and, ultimately, student learning, districts across the country have embraced an old idea and given it a new application. Taking their cue from athletics, where coaches have enabled football and tennis players to succeed by helping them strengthen their skills before game time, districts have adopted coaching as a model for the professional development of teachers and principals. The goal is to engage educators in collaborative work designed to contribute to the development of intellectual capacity in schools.[2]

At its best, coaching helps educators make informed decisions about instruction and school organization that will lead teachers to teach in ways that help students gain a deep knowledge of subject matter so that they can bring that knowledge to bear on problems and questions that matter.

No one, as yet, has proven that coaching contributes significantly to increased

Improving teachers' learning – and, in turn, their own practice and their students' learning – requires professional development that is closely and explicitly tied to teachers' ongoing work. Coaching addresses that requirement.

student achievement. Indeed, there are scant studies of this form of professional development and how it influences teachers' practice and students' learning. However, in light of our current knowledge about what it takes to change a complex practice like teaching, there are reasons to think that coaching, in combination with other professional development strategies, is a plausible way to increase schools' instructional capacity. The results of instructional reform in Community School District 2 in New York City provide a compelling example of how coaching can support improved teaching and student achievement when it is embedded in a sustained, coherent, districtwide effort to improve instruction.[3]

What do we know, then, about the promise of coaching?

---

[2]  As a result of this orientation, we are not focused on coaching designed to help teachers implement scripted, highly prescribed instructional programs.

[3]  To date, New York City's Community School District 2 is the most famous and influential professional development experiment that included coaching; and it is likely that without the District 2 experience, coaching would be less of an option for districts than it is today. It is important to note, however, that coaching was only one part of District 2's approach to improving instruction. For a review of the work undertaken in District 2, see Elmore 1997.

## A Natural Outgrowth of Research on Student Learning

Coaching is a natural outgrowth of the lessons cognitive psychology has taught us about what it means to learn and to know something. Researchers have found that student learning includes much more than remembering and repeating what the teacher has said; it also includes the capacity to use what has been learned in traditional and novel ways, the capacity to make connections between new knowledge and old. To accomplish learning of this sort, schools must provide students with opportunities to solve problems and come to understand academic content in more complex ways.

This vision of student learning (see the discussion in Cohen et al. 1993) casts teachers as guides or coaches who facilitate learning by "posing questions, challenging students' thinking, and leading them in examining ideas and relationships." These activities are considered essential because, they write, "what students learn has to do fundamentally with how they learn it."

The implications of these ideas for schools and teachers are significant. Schools and classrooms need to become places in which children and teachers challenge each other about facts as well as opinions, places in which students approach academic content through assignments that involve problem solving, critical analysis, or higher-order thinking. Teaching that includes all of these components is known as teaching for understand-

ing. It is a fundamental part of standards-based reform and central to many of the latest approaches to teaching reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

## Professional Development that Supports Teaching for Understanding

To teach for understanding, teachers need new learning as well.[4] But traditional approaches to professional development are not designed in ways that are likely to help teachers learn what they now need to know. This is because, as Ann Lieberman observes, our understanding of how students learn applies to adults as well; yet, traditional forms of professional development do not take advantage of this knowledge. As she notes:

> It is still widely accepted that staff learning takes place primarily at a series of workshops, at a conference or with the help of a long-term consultant. What everyone appears to want for students – a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems using their own experiences and working with others – is for some reason denied to teachers when they are the learners. In the traditional view of staff development, workshops and conferences conducted outside the school count, but authentic opportunities to learn from and with colleagues inside the school do not. (Lieberman 1995, 591–596)

---

[4] See Windschitl 2002 for a detailed analysis of the demands of this kind of teaching.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

Almost everyone writing in the last fifteen years about how to improve teaching recommends changing the traditional organization and content of professional development so that it better addresses teachers' learning needs in light of the same findings from cognitive psychology that undergird new ideas about students' learning needs. Reformers argue that professional development of the sort needed to help teachers teach for understanding requires both new ideas about what counts as professional development and new policies that provide the framework within which professional development can occur.

The best information available about the essential features of teacher professional development[5] suggests:

- It must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant-driven.

- It must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.

- It must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.

- It must be connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students.

- It must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection that illuminate the processes of learning and development.

- It must be connected to other aspects of school change.

Reorganizing professional development along these lines has led to great interest in coaching as a critical component of teacher professional development. This is a logical outcome. After all, coaching, at its best, adheres to these principles: it is grounded in inquiry, collaborative, sustained, connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students, and tied explicitly to improving practice. And, given that the changes advocated for teacher professional development mirror those recommended for instructing students, it follows that professional developers, like teachers, must take on the characteristics of coaches and become collegial supports rather than direct instructors.

Implementing a coaching model does not mean giving up other approaches to teacher learning. There are good reasons for having large group instruction that introduces teachers and principals to a new concept or activity. There are great benefits to intensive summer institutes that focus on content as well as pedagogy. There are many good reasons for teachers to broaden the array of people with whom and from whom they learn. But improving teachers' learning – and, in turn, their practice and student learning – requires professional development that is closely and explicitly tied to teachers' ongoing work. Coaching addresses that requirement.

---

5   This list (with changes from the original order) is from Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995.

# WHAT IS COACHING AND WHAT DO COACHES DO?

The term *coaching* includes activities related to developing the organizational capacity of whole schools (such as increasing leadership for instructional reform). It includes helping principals and teachers reallocate their resources and improve their use of data in the service of improving instruction. And it includes activities directly related to improving instruction (such as one-on-one observation and feedback of teachers' instructional strategies and small-group learning of new content and pedagogy).

Coaching is school-based professional development designed in light of the district's reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools' specific instructional learning needs. Coaches can support instructional improvement in a number of different ways.

*Change coaches* address whole-school, organizational improvement.[6] They help schools examine their resources – time, money, and personnel – and allocate them more effectively. They develop the leadership skills of both teachers and principals.

*Content coaches* focus more exclusively on improving teachers' instructional strategies in specific content areas; for example, mathematics or literacy. Such coaches are likely to work most directly with teachers rather than with principals.

Whether a district decides to use coaches whose work is directly tied to instruction or coaches whose work directly supports the collaborative learning environment of the school more generally, or both, all coaches must deal with issues of instructional capacity. Instructional capacity, after all, is at the heart of all coaching work.

## Change Coaches: Focusing on Leadership for Whole-School Improvement

Change coaches help principals focus on instruction, make the best use of school-based resources, and nurture teacher leadership.[7] The coaches' influence cuts across

---

[6] In some districts, such as Boston, the name *change coach* has been dropped because the emphasis on change, alone, seemed insufficient. The individuals who engage in this work are now known as *capacity coaches* to emphasize their role in developing whole-school capacity to focus on instructional improvement.

[7] Some principals already have the skills needed to create a professional community of learners in their schools and shape their own work to focus on instruction. Such principal knowledge and skill is described in Supovitz and Poglinco 2001. However, in our experience most principals do not have such knowledge and skill. Coaches, as a result, enable such principals to learn what they need to know in order to support their teachers' learning.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

content areas and grade levels to bring a whole-school focus to the work of improving teaching and learning. Change coaches also assist with the examination of school-wide assessment data and help schools use the data to plan improvements in line with resources and the district's priorities.

The work of change coaches is especially important now that principals must take a greater leadership role in instruction than in the past. To meet these demands, principals need the classroom-based knowledge and skill with which to support and hold teachers accountable for implementing the instructional strategies they are being trained to use. At the same time, teachers, too, are taking leadership roles. Principals must collaborate with teachers so that, together, principals and teachers can address their schools' needs.

Many principals are challenged by the complex demands of increased collegial, instructional leadership. Change coaches can play a significant, multifaceted role in providing principals with the help they need to take on their newly defined roles. Specifically, change coaches can:

- *Help principals understand the importance of recruiting teachers to assume instructional leadership roles to drive whole-school change.* Sometimes this involves encouraging principals to listen to teachers more in order to identify their leadership potential. Sometimes it means helping principals inspire teachers to take on

instructional leadership roles, including decision-making and problem-solving tasks.

- *Act as strategists and assistants in building capacity for shared decision making.* Coaches engage principals in discussions before meetings and debrief them afterwards to help principals learn to reflect on their work. They help principals and teacher leaders develop focused agendas for meetings and professional development sessions. Change coaches may help principals understand and use the data available to them and even assume the role of "community organizer" by putting together the schools' various action groups, mobilizing and coordinating group activity, and developing strategies to win support for various proposals. These organizing tasks are all related to the larger goal of spreading instructionally focused responsibility throughout the school community.

- *Model leadership skills for principals as well as for teachers.* Change coaches can explicitly draw attention to the skills they use when they facilitate meetings, listen, offer suggestions, or forge compromises. For example, they help principals participate but take a less dominant role in instructional team meetings. They also support teachers who are learning to work with their principals in new, more open and collaborative ways.

## ENCOURAGING LEADERSHIP STYLES THAT MESH WELL WITH COLLABORATIVE WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Understanding their principals' styles of interaction enables coaches, when needed, to help principals learn to be one among many significant contributors to discussions about instructional reform. In taking on this role, the coach is helping the principal learn to interact with teachers in the same kinds of ways in which teachers are being asked to interact with students in order to foster their learning by actively engaging them in the work. Here, two coaches reflect on this kind of work with principals.[*]

#### COACH 1

The principal usually grasps things long before the group does, so sometimes he doesn't see the need for prolonged conversation around a topic. As a result, I have to come and say, "You're really talking too much in the group." To which he says, "Okay, all right, I can take that. Let me think. What should we do?" We talk about it, and at the next group he tries to stifle that natural urge that he has. He's willing to take suggestions, where I'm not sure everybody would be. He's not saying, "Go away, I'm going to do this the way I'm going to do it." He really wants to be successful.

#### COACH 2

I didn't want the principal to come to the meetings in the past because he tended to take over. And then people just felt like he's telling them what to do instead of them owning the problem. But I've said to him, "You know, there are times when you do need to come, but you need to come and listen to people as much as you need to come and give them a sense of what your parameters are." And I told him that we will get where we need to go a lot less painfully and a lot quicker if we trust teachers more and attend to this process stuff more. When he came to the meeting at the beginning of the year, he was very clear about what his expectations were, . . . but then he really did a good job of listening throughout the rest of the discussion.

---

[*] We have edited the quotes that appear in the paper's sidebars and appendices in order to make their points clear to the reader. As a result, they are not the exact words of any individual in our teacher or coach sample.

- *Assist in scheduling.* Coaches help principals set aside blocks of time in which teachers work in specific curriculum areas or share common planning periods.
- ***Help principals organize their time so that they are able to visit classrooms regularly to observe instruction and offer feedback to teachers.*** Good instructional leadership is more than having a presence in classrooms; it requires principal engagement with teachers about teaching and learning. Change coaches can encourage this engagement by giving principals concrete strategies for analyzing instruction, such as asking students what they are working on.

Change coaches understand that the focus of their work is on developing instructional leadership knowledge and skill in principals and in teachers. And these coaches understand that, even though their work takes place in a district with a specific approach to school reform, each school varies and coaches must "customize" their work to each school's particular needs. Some principals are knowledgeable about reform and eager to take it on; others are less knowledgeable and less willing to do so. Some schools face minimal disruptions to teaching and learning, and some face frequent disruptions. And schools are at various stages of implementing components of instructional reform.

Within such a range of settings, coaches must figure out when and how hard to push principals and teachers to

address the reform agenda. They also need to gauge how directive to be when they see little movement at the school level and how much collaboration and joint decision making they need to encourage in order to embed the reform agenda in the school. These issues require coaches to make decisions constantly about how best to proceed. There cannot be a "script" for change-coach work any more than there is script for teachers' work.

## Content Coaches: Focusing on Discipline-based Instructional Improvement

By and large, content coaches focus their attention on helping teachers improve instruction in a particular academic discipline, such as literacy and mathematics. But they do not ignore the larger issues of school organization and resource allocation. These issues affect their ability to do their work effectively. For example, many mathematics reform programs require hour-long class periods, but few schools devote this much time to mathematics. In order to begin to coach teachers to use the new mathematics curriculum and pedagogy, content coaches need to be assured that teachers have the requisite time available for their subject. Thus, the implementation of content-focused work involves dealing with the same kinds of issues addressed by change coaches – principal expertise as well as issues of scheduling and resource allocation.

## HELPING PRINCIPALS FOCUS ON INSTRUCTION

Some principals in reforming districts remain unsure about what to look for when they visit classrooms or how to provide useful feedback to teachers. This change coach suggests specific strategies for principals to use in classrooms.

> I ask the principal, "Are you going into rooms and really looking at what teachers are doing and what kids are doing?" I need to help administrators know that when they go into rooms, the first thing they do is talk to kids and ask kids what they're doing. You ask a kid, "What are you doing today?" If you do that with three or four kids, you'll get a quick idea of the level of instruction that's going on in the room. For example, if a kid says, "We're doing chapter three," that's very different than if a kid says, "We're working on our sentences to make them better." It tells you whether they're talking content or something else. So that's a concrete strategy for a principal: what to say to kids when you're in the room.

The next coach talks about nudging principals to assess what they are really learning when they are in classrooms.

> My question to him was, "You've got all this wonderful curriculum. Are teachers using it? How do you *know* they're using it?" He said, "Well, I go around to the classroom and I see that they're using it." I said, "Give me some evidence of that." And he couldn't do it. He could not give me evidence. "Okay," I said, "You've been around to the third grade. Have you hit a math one?" "Oh yeah, I've hit a math one." "Are they doing it? Tell me which ones you saw them doing." Couldn't do it. I said, "That's where your focus needs to be. Push this stuff. You need to be able to see that they're using it. And then you need to ask the question, Why aren't they using it?"

Change coaches might also ask principals to take risks in front of their teachers to demonstrate their understanding of the hard work teachers are attempting and their commitment to learning what the instructional strategies involve.

> It's not always easy to learn to do running records and observation surveys [assessment strategies associated with some literacy reforms]. Teachers can get a bit upset about them and find them hard to learn. So what I try – and it's the hardest part – is to get the principal to go in the classroom and let other teachers see her fumbling with this but keep going, keep going. I'm having a really hard time with that. The principal will say to me, "I can't do this, it's really hard." And I keep saying, "Neither can I, neither can your teachers. But we all have to get in there and sit down and try it." I said, "You know, the best model for them to see is you trying it. You know? Don't be afraid to go in and try it. Let them know that, gee, this is hard, but don't stop. Keep doing it."

## COACHING ONE-ON-ONE

A middle school literacy coach explains how she works with one English Language Arts teacher, illustrating the multiple strategies and the length of time it may take to help teachers improve their knowledge and skill.

> I've been working with Teacher A pretty consistently since about the third week of school. I'm usually in his classroom watching a lesson between three and four times a week.
>
> We've fallen into a pattern where I go in, I watch, and we meet up later in the day to debrief. In the debrief, I ask him how it went from his perspective, what he noticed about it, what he's working on. Then I give him some feedback about things I saw. And then, together, we work on setting some goals for the next time the principal and other administrators come in; what he'll be working on, and what I'll watch for him. One thing he's working on a lot is classroom management, how to manage his time and the children so there's as much work time as possible.
>
> One of the big issues that Teacher A and I are working on is that, often, by the time he's got his mini-lesson done and the kids are actually back on task, thirty-five minutes of the class period are gone and they only have twenty minutes to work. So, we've set a ten-minute mini-lesson goal, and yesterday it was twelve, which was "Phew!" And that feeds into a lot of our management problems, because the kids get antsy and start talking and being squirrelly.
>
> I worked with him last year and I did several demonstrations or model lessons. We kind of cotaught at times. I had concerns about doing that with him this year because I didn't want in any way to undermine his authority with the students, and he's struggling with that. I know that I can come in and teach a lesson and gather the kids in and have them behave, but I don't want the kids to make a comparison between me and him. I felt that wouldn't be beneficial for him, so this year I'm going to make more use of other teachers and take him to see them do lessons, so that within his own classroom he's just all teacher.
>
> We're scheduled to go see four other teachers teach during his prep period. One of the things that I asked him to do was to notice what's happening in their classrooms as far as how the children behave and how much time on task they have, and to build a vision in his mind of what he wants to create in his classroom. I did this because I see that his expectations for himself and the kids are lower than what they could be. I don't believe that he believes it's possible, and I want him to see that it is.

Like their change coach counterparts, content coaches do not have a scripted role. They must understand the instructional reform they are helping teachers to implement, they must be skillful in working with adult learners who may be skeptical about – or threatened by – the reforms, and they must know how to adapt their coaching methods to the knowledge and skill of the teachers with whom they are working.

In their work with individual teachers and with small groups of teachers, content coaches must first determine teachers' learning needs and then meet those needs by targeting conversations around instruction, raising questions, organizing professional development opportunities, bringing in research and articles, and guiding teachers in developing new practices.

Content coaches work at both the classroom level and the school level. At the classroom level, content coaches:

- *Help teachers transfer what they learn about new practices to their classrooms.* In the presence of a coach, and with the coach's support, teachers are encouraged to try the strategies they are learning in district-provided professional development. If they encounter difficulties, the coach is available to provide suggestions that will improve implementation of the new approaches.

- *Help establish a safe environment in which teachers can strive to improve their practice without fear of negative criticism or evaluation.* Coaches do this by approaching their own work as continuous learners, admitting that they are not expert in all areas. This stance models the value of learning together for new, experienced, and even veteran teachers. It is just such an environment that teachers are being asked to create for students, and, like their students, teachers have to experience this kind of instruction in order to understand it.

  More specifically, in the classroom content coaches:

- work with teachers to plan and implement lessons;
- work with some content-area teachers to hone specific strategies;
- develop/find materials and other curriculum resources;
- work with new teachers on new-teacher issues as well as on instructional strategies;
- encourage teachers to talk about their practice with them and with one another;
- observe classes and provide written and oral feedback after observations; and
- provide demonstration lessons.

  At the school level, content coaches:

- *Help teachers develop leadership skills with which they can support the work of their colleagues.* In a number of districts, both math and literacy teachers are being pre-

## COACHING SMALL GROUPS

Many coaches work with small groups of teachers in addition to one-on-one coaching. Such small-group settings allow teachers to learn in collaboration with one another and with the coach. Coaches in Boston use the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model to encourage teachers to engage – actively and collaboratively – in instructionally focused work.

The CCL model consists of a preconference, a lab-site demonstration, and a debriefing. The preconference sets the stage for the observations to follow. The coach facilitates both the preconference and the debriefing discussions; as facilitator, her role is to highlight best practices that she observed during the lab-site demonstration and to offer suggestions for improvement and next steps. The coach also plays an important role in ensuring that the classroom demonstrations and observations go smoothly, guiding the teachers through each aspect of the lesson and gently redirecting them when necessary.

A detailed example of the CCL process as used in one Boston elementary school appears in Appendix A beginning on page 29.

pared as "lab-site" leaders. In this role, teachers open their classrooms for observation by others. Such observations may help a new teacher, for example, observe someone with more expertise in a given strategy. And it may help the lab-site teacher get feedback on practices she is trying to implement. Through the establishment of lab-sites, content coaches help develop both the instructional culture and capacity of the schools.

- *Provide small-group professional development sessions for teachers.* Coaches may lead inquiry/study groups, demonstrate pertinent teaching strategies, and conduct directed small-group sessions that focus on the content teachers need to learn.

At the school level, content coaches may also:

- plan and implement professional development sessions, often in collaboration with principals and/or lead teachers;

- conduct book purchases and inventories;

- help teachers develop classroom-based strategies for assessing student learning and learn to use formative assessments to inform instruction;

- keep logs of their work with students and teachers; and

- meet with principals to review progress and plan future work.

Over time, like their change-coach counterparts, content coaches adjust what they do. In light of progress at their schools or changes in the districts' priorities, coaches may revise how they allocate their time, focus on planning and making links between standards and literacy or math strategies, and coach small groups of teachers for a concentrated period of time.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# HOW ARE COACHES PREPARED?

Coaching, like teaching, is not a routine activity. It must be focused on instructional goals and planned, but it must also be responsive to the needs of the learners and the exigencies of specific classroom situations. Coaches not only develop principals' and teachers' knowledge and skill; if they are successful, they also help develop schools' professional cultures as learning organizations.

To accomplish such work, coaches require professional development of their own so that they can improve their knowledge and skill to tailor their coaching to the needs of the teachers and schools with which they work. They need to understand organizational development and instruction, and they need considerable facility in working with adult learners in a coaching relationship.

Although some educators are sufficiently skillful in these areas and available to take on coaching roles, most districts have found that they need to "grow their own" coaches and sustain them with relevant, ongoing professional development. Districts, as a result, need to formulate professional development programs for their coaches. And these programs, like learning opportunities for students and teachers,

Districts must commit themselves to providing coaches with the kind of responsive, participatory professional development that coaching affords to teachers and principals, and they must constantly re-evaluate that professional development to ensure that it continues to provide the depth and breadth of knowledge coaches need for this work. Creating and staffing such programs can present considerable challenges to a district.

need to follow the guidelines for professional development delineated on page 3.

## Elements of Professional Development for Coaches

District-developed programs that that are currently under way[8] suggest that professional development for coaches should:

- *Ensure that principals and coaches understand the "big picture" of the reform in which they are engaged and the reasons that undergird the changes.* Such understanding is not always easy because, at the outset, district administrators themselves

---

[8] The districts that we have studied, for the most part, devote one day each week to professional development for coaches. This leaves coaches with four full days to be in schools.

## EXPLAINING THE "BIG PICTURE"

Too often, when a district is implementing a new curriculum strategy (such as Readers' and Writers' Workshop), administrators may initially focus only on the components of the new approach (in this case, guided reading, independent reading, conferencing, and read-alouds), without explaining to principals or coaches the "big picture." They neglect to address the fundamental questions about why this overall approach to literacy instruction was chosen, how the components fit together, and what its implementation is intended to accomplish. As a result, neither coaches nor principals know why they are being asked to implement what seems like yet another, arbitrarily chosen approach to instruction.

When the new teaching practices are quite different from those traditionally in use, and the form and content of professional development is, likewise, quite novel, coaches and principals need to understand the scope and rationale for what they are being asked to implement if they are going to successfully engage teachers in the work. Further, this knowledge is essential to ensure that principals and coaches are able to make knowledgeable adaptations to the instructional approach in light of school-based contexts.

## COACHING FOR COACHES

Just as teachers who are learning to improve their practice benefit from opportunities to observe and to be observed by their peers, coaches who are learning to improve their coaching will benefit from similar opportunities to observe other coaches' practice and receive feedback about their own coaching work. Such a professional development strategy allows coaches to observe one another's practice through coaching demonstrations and provides opportunities for coaches to reflect on their own and others' best coaching practices. Districts have been struggling to arrange these kinds of learning opportunities for coaches, but we have come across examples of this kind of coach professional development happening in a few places. Two detailed examples are presented in Appendix B on page 34, one led by a principal and one focusing on coaching to higher levels of teaching expertise.

may not be sure of the "big picture." They may be aware only that they want teachers to implement a set of new instructional activities. They may not have articulated for themselves how these instructional activities are related to each other nor the accumulated demands they make on teachers. They may not be aware of the implications of these demands on schools as organizations. Districts may fail to help principals and coaches understand as well as implement the organizational changes that must accompany implementation of such an approach to instruction or even acknowledge the challenges that they will face.

- *Develop a strong, focused, coherent orientation program for new content and change coaches.* This program should begin several weeks before the start of the school year so that coaches can start their work with a clear understanding of the district's reform agenda (the big picture), the schools in which they will work, their roles, and the specific knowledge and skills they will need to bring to those settings. In addition, coaches must be aware of how to get help if they are struggling with implementing their work. In subsequent years, when new coaches begin their work, the district might consider repeating such a program as well as providing new coaches with experienced "coach mentors" to speed their transition into the district's work. A district should also make some provision for orienting

new coaches who begin their work after the start of the school year.[9]

- *Develop differentiated professional development for experienced coaches.* It is difficult to implement effective coach professional development that mixes coaches across levels all of the time; therefore, their professional development should focus on the particular school level – elementary, middle, or high school – with which coaches will work. In addition, coaches need professional development that responds to their extant knowledge and skill and to the demands of their schools.

  For example, coaches often request professional development that addresses their expertise with coaching as well as with content. They may want to learn how to work more effectively with resistant teachers and/or with teachers whose content knowledge or facility with classroom management is weak. Knowing that their role is not to tell teachers how to teach but to guide them in improving their practice, coaches often want professional development to help them improve their skill as guides of teachers' learning, and both change and content coaches often want professional development to help them help principals take on the instructional component of their leadership role.

Some of this coach knowledge can be provided during formal, whole-group professional development sessions; but, ideally, coaches should themselves be coached as they work with teachers and principals. The human and financial demands of providing such opportunities can be daunting, but they are essential both to ensure that coaches learn what they need to learn and to model effective coaching techniques.

- *Ensure that coaches are knowledgeable about the learning needs of special populations of students.* Without direct attention to the learning needs of special student populations, it is likely that many coaches will not be able to provide skillful coaching to those who teach special populations in either separate or mainstream settings. Districts must ensure that coaches have the knowledge and skill needed to work with, for example, English-language learners and students with special education plans. Districts can provide such coaching by actively recruiting individuals with appropriate backgrounds and by ensuring that coach professional development includes attention to what coaches need to know about these issues.

- *Ensure that the coaches hear the same messages teachers do.* Outside experts who provide professional development often

---

[9] For a number of reasons, there is considerable coach turnover from year to year. As a result, districts need to have a strategy on hand for orienting coaches who are new to the work.

hold conflicting views on instructional reforms. To be sure, reforms are usually open to some interpretation and can be modified in light of local needs. However, in the early phases of changing instructional practices, teachers, coaches, and principals may be so concerned with implementing practices "perfectly" that they become confused and frustrated by variations in what they are learning and being asked to implement. Districts can alleviate this problem by sending a common message to coaches and teachers or else by acknowledging explicitly that there are some valid differences of opinion.[10]

• *Enable some coaches to become "coach leaders."* Creating a community of learners is one way in which districts can address the evolving learning needs of their coaches while utilizing their experience and expertise to build on the district's coaching capacity. Some districts have, in fact, created "lead coach" positions to enhance their capacity to support both content and change coaches.

## Challenges in Creating Effective Coach Professional Development

It is not easy for districts to develop high-quality professional development programs for their coaches. One primary difficulty is that, due to the novelty of the enterprise, there are few people with the extant knowledge and skill necessary to lead these programs. As a result, districts face considerable challenges in creating and staffing coach professional development programs that provide their coaches with the depth and breadth of knowledge they need.

In addition, the task of providing coach professional development can become more difficult over time as teachers and principals increase their knowledge and skill. Put simply, as coaches succeed in increasing teachers' and principals' instructional capacity, they must increase their own instructional capacity as well. Coaches need to be more than just "one step ahead" of the people they are coaching.

---

[10] In one district, for example, coaches were told by one literacy expert never to have teachers do a whole-class read in which all students are reading the same piece of literature. Several weeks later, another outside expert told coaches that there could be legitimate reasons for using a whole-class read. In circumstances where coaches feel accountable for faithful implementation, these kinds of mixed messages lead to confusion and frustration.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# WHAT CONDITIONS SUPPORT COACHING?

oaching does not occur in a vacuum; it is part of a district's reform strategy for increasing the quality of teaching so that students achieve at higher levels. As such, coaching needs to be embedded in the district's overall reform strategy and professional development plan; it is not a stand-alone or complete approach to professional development.

Therefore, prior to determining that it wants to initiate a coaching model, a district would do well to ask itself the following questions:

- What are our professional development goals and what do we want to accomplish with our overall professional development program?

- What would we gain from having coaching as part of our repertoire of teacher/principal learning opportunities?

- What would coaches do to help us achieve our instructional goals?

- Are there other approaches to achieving our goal, and might they be more appropriate for us?

- What else, in addition to coaching, would we have to support to help us reach our instructional goals?

If the answers to these questions suggest including coaching in the district's professional development repertoire, then

Successful coaching depends not only on the knowledge and skill of individual coaches, but also on a number of district- and school-level factors that can enhance or thwart the coaches' efforts. The work of coaching is highly localized and the principal plays a key role in the program, but its ultimate success at the school level depends on the district. Therefore, it is the district that needs to shape the coaches' role, focus the coaches' work around the district's instructional goals, and articulate the connection between that work and schools' overall reform strategy.

the district will need to do some preliminary planning.

### Before Starting a Coaching Program

Although coaching is a highly localized form of professional development, its success at the school level depends on the district. Only if the district shapes the coaches' role, focuses the coaches' work around the district's instructional goals, and articulates the connection between that work and schools' overall reform strategy can coaching be effective. Before

embarking on a coaching program, the district needs to ask itself some very practical questions:

- How many coaches would we need?

- What do we want them to do?

- What are the human resources we can bring to establishing coaching in the district? Do we have in-house people who can take on this work? Do we have people doing professional development now who are ineffective and, if so, can we replace them with others who can do coaching?

- What financial resources can we bring to bear on this approach to professional development?

- What will we stop doing by way of professional development if we opt for coaching?

- Whose "ox will be gored" by these decisions and how will we deal with them?

- And, finally, how should we organize coaching? Do we want to begin with a pilot program and scale up? Do we want to begin with a districtwide coaching program?

Once a district is satisfied with the answers to these questions, it then needs to move forward to put in place a number of conditions that will ensure that coaching has the opportunity to succeed.

## Conditions Essential for Successful Coaching

Successful coaching depends on a number of district- and school-level factors that can enhance or thwart the coaches' efforts.[11] Districts need to be aware of these factors and take them into account when developing and implementing coaching. Most of them are within the districts' and schools' control.

We recognize that not all of these conditions will be present when coaching begins. Indeed, some of them will develop, over time, as a result of coaching. However, we stress that districts must be aware of their importance, make sure they are addressed, and keep track of their progress throughout the duration of the coaching program.

For coaching to be effective, district leaders need to:

- *Provide clear, explicit, and continuing support for the coaching program.* Without question, the most important condition for successful coaching is district support for coaches' work. The support of district administrators who supervise and evaluate principals, as well as those in the district central office who develop curriculum guides and local assessments, is particularly critical.

---

[11] This finding is not unique to the implementation of coaching. District- and school-level factors are known to thwart or support any number and kind of school reform efforts. It is also well known that principals are key to successful implementation of school-level reform. In the case of coaching, district commitment to the work, which includes the provision of high-quality coach professional development and insistence on principals' support of and accountability for implementation, can make or break a district's coaching efforts.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

- *Understand the reforms in which schools are engaged and possess the knowledge and skill with which to support schools in implementing them.* We have seen many high-level administrators who observe instruction in schools and provide teachers or coaches with feedback that contradicts the district's reform agenda. This undermines the coaches' role and negates the learning they might provide.

- *Ensure that the coaches have well-specified roles and make coaches' roles and responsibilities clear to all of the district's educators.* Without question, coaches' roles evolve. But clarity from the outset, wherever possible, can help ensure that teachers accept coaching. In particular, districts must address the limits and possibilities of coaching given teachers' negotiated agreements concerning use of time and the possibility that coaching will be perceived as evaluation.

- *Provide principals with professional development that enables them to create a school culture in which coaching is both routine and safe.* Implementing coaching well depends on the presence of a school culture in which it is safe for teachers to participate and to have their work observed and critiqued. Principals have

a great influence on that culture and, as a result, need to learn how best to create a climate appropriate for coaching.

- *Ensure that the process of selecting coaches at the district and school levels is rigorous and fair and results in the hiring of coaches who will be credible to the teachers and principals with whom they work.*[12] Coach credibility, by and large, rests on a foundation of personal and professional qualities. Coaches need the personal qualities that establish trust. They need professional expertise – which in urban areas includes skill teaching low-achieving and diverse students – in order to demonstrate their value to teachers and principals.

Principals cannot usually create the school cultures suitable for coaching without strong direction, support, and accountability from the district. However, there are several conditions within the power of the principal that are essential for effective coaching. To support the coaching program in their schools, principals must:

- *Honor coaches' roles and not divert their time to other school needs.* Because schools are often short-staffed and have myriad tasks that are not clearly in either the principal's or teachers' domain, coaches often find themselves asked to "pitch in" in inappropriate ways that interfere with

---

[12] Union contracts can pose a challenge in creating coach positions. In some cases, new positions must be negotiated with the local teacher union or association. In others, teacher seniority dominates as the method for filling teacher leadership positions. The leadership positions may also be construed as evaluative, which is inappropriate or forbidden under some agreements.

their ability to coach. They may be asked to do substitute work, proctor exams, or organize book rooms. It is up to the district to make clear to principals what is and is not acceptable for them to assign as coach work, and the district must hold principals accountable for maintaining those guidelines.

- *Acknowledge that conversations between coaches and principals about teachers' work might cause tension.* While coaches are not supposed to evaluate teachers, coaches must be able to discuss their work and their progress candidly with principals. But teachers may regard these conversations with suspicion and can view coaches as "snitches." Coaches and principals must work out the delicate balance between confidentiality and reasonable feedback so that the coach can be a productive informant for the principal and the principal can use the coach's feedback in professional ways. In addition, when done with sensitivity, principals can help the coach resolve difficult situations.[13] The issue of coaches and teacher evaluation needs to be addressed directly at the outset; only through experience, however, will teachers develop the trust necessary to expose their learning needs to the coaches.

- *Have substantial knowledge about the content reforms their teachers are trying to implement.* When principals are far less knowledgeable than their coaches,

coaches may find themselves in the awkward position of disagreeing with their principals about the ways in which teachers are implementing new teaching strategies. This makes it difficult for the principal and coach to assess progress as well as set priorities for the work.

## Some Practical Conditions to Consider

Coaches must work with those who present themselves as learners. Like teachers, coaches can have a powerful impact on learners, but they cannot "make" the learners learn. They can diagnose their learners' needs and employ multiple coaching approaches; but, in the end, if the learner – either teacher or principal – does not or is not willing to learn, coaches cannot be successful.

And, what is more, coaches have no formal authority; they cannot insist that those they coach change their practice, nor can they threaten them with poor performance reviews. As a result, their credibility depends on the knowledge and skill they bring to the job and the trust they establish with principals and teachers. However, even with high credibility and trust, coaches cannot do their work if the teachers and principals with whom they work do not or do not know how to support them.

---

[13] Principals often play some role in determining which teachers the coach will work with and on which instructional strategies they will focus. Principals have also, on occasion, removed particularly resistant teachers from coaching activities and/or targeted additional coaching hours for certain teachers.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# WHAT CHALLENGES DOES COACHING PRESENT?

**E**ven when districts and schools establish the conditions that can make coaching work well, districts, schools, and coaches still face challenges in designing and implementing this approach to professional development. In our experience, the most significant challenges are these: allocating coaches to schools, finding time for doing the work, changing teaching practices, and assessing the impact of the coaching work.

In presenting this set of challenges, we do not intend to dissuade districts from adding coaching to their professional development programs. Nor do we mean to suggest that there is no way to implement a model well given all of the conditions and challenges that arise. Rather, we want to stress that this approach to professional development is complex and requires considerable thought as well as ingenuity in order to take the core idea and create an effective coaching model. The experiences of the districts in which we have worked suggest that it can be done well.

## Allocating Coaches

With limited resources, districts must decide how many coaches they can afford and how to deploy those coaches for the maximum impact on instruction. Because

Creating and supporting effective professional development through coaching is a complex undertaking; it requires considerable thought as well as ingenuity to turn the core idea into an effective coaching program. The challenges, however, are not insurmountable, and the experiences of districts in four often-repeated areas of concern can help districts just starting out to address them before they undermine the program.

the systematic use of coaches is new, there are no tried-and-true formulas. Nonetheless, the experience of a number of districts suggests that some allocation designs are likely to work better than others.

### How many days should a coach be in a school?

Given the urgency of helping all teachers and students, districts tend to provide all schools with at least some coaching time. Generally speaking, this is not a good idea. When coaches are spread thinly across a district's schools, teachers have insufficient opportunities to learn from them and coaches find themselves frustrated by their

inability to make a significant difference.

For example, some districts began their coaching program by assigning coaches to work with individual teachers in two or more schools for one or two days per week each. This approach has not worked. Coaching in this arrangement is fragmentary and lacks continuity, and coaches and teachers find it difficult to build trust. In addition, the preparation required for such an arrangement has proven overwhelming for coaches. As a result, some districts now prefer to have coaches in one school for four days each week, with the fifth day reserved for coach professional development.

Other districts, such as Boston, are turning to cycles of coaching to maximize the coherence of the coaching work and to minimize fragmentation for the coaches and teachers.[14] For example, a coach might work with one or more teachers, one at a time, for several weeks and then move on to others, either in the same school or perhaps at a different school. Or, a coach might work intensively with a small group of teachers and then move on to another group.

### With whom should the coaches work?

Some districts assign coaches to work with one teacher at a time; others assign coaches to work with small groups of teachers. Still others assign coaches to focus on particular grade levels or to work only with teachers who choose to work with the coach. Which is the best approach?

In our view, questions such as these need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the district's coaching resources and the schools' most pressing professional development needs. Nonetheless, we have observed that coaching models that rely solely on one-on-one interactions between the coach and the teacher do not show as much promise as those that incorporate small-group learning. In addition to the increased efficiency afforded by small groups, such interactions between teachers and coaches lead more quickly to the development of instructionally focused school cultures.[15] Similarly, models that rely solely on teachers' volunteerism do not appear to take hold as well as those that actively expect and encourage teachers to participate in coaching activities.[16]

### Should coaches be assigned to schools in which they recently taught?

Since, by and large, content coaches come out of the ranks of teachers, some schools tend to select coaches they know well

---

[14] Information on this model of coaching is available on the Boston Plan for Excellence's Web site at www.bpe.org. Also, see Appendix A.

[15] See Neufeld and Roper, July 2002.

[16] Some districts face barriers to requiring teachers to participate in small-group coaching as a result of the professional development parameters defined in their negotiated teacher agreements. As a result, most coaching models depend, to some extent, on teachers' willingness to volunteer and then on the power of peer pressure when participating teachers find coaching a positive experience.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

because they formerly taught in the school. As with everything else, there are advantages and disadvantages to having a coach who is well known to teachers and principals. One powerful advantage is that the coach will likely begin the work in a context of trust and credibility. This may help the coach gain access to teachers.

But there are disadvantages, as well. Coaching changes the relationship between a teacher and her colleagues and the principal. It may be difficult for teachers to have "one of their own" observing their teaching and providing feedback. Likewise, it may be awkward for a former teacher to establish a more peerlike relationship with the principal. We suggest that districts, principals, and coaches weigh these pluses and minuses as they assign coaches to schools.

### Should some coaches retain part-time teaching assignments?

Coaching appeals to some teachers because they want to work with adults. But others are reluctant to take on the job because it means that they must give up working with students. In addition, some coaches want to continue teaching in order to retain their professional credibility and become better teachers and, hence, more knowledgeable coaches. As a result, some schools (rather than districts) have made alterations in the organization and allocation of coaches in order to enable them to work with students

as well as teachers. On the whole, although many coaches in this position see the value in teaching while coaching, the demands on them are considerable and they can be torn between spending time preparing for their students and spending time on their coaching work.

### Finding Time to Do the Work

Even with a commitment to the concept, districts have learned that it is difficult to provide coaches with enough time to implement their roles to the fullest. School schedules and professional development calendars limit the time coaches can devote to the task, even while growing demands for coaches' help place a greater premium on their time.

### How can scheduling interfere with implementation of coaching?

Coaches frequently report that it is difficult to find time to conference with teachers immediately after an observation or demonstration lesson. Time for conferencing may not be available because the teachers' preparation periods were prior to the observation, for example. Yet, from the coaches' perspective, such immediate conferencing is essential to the coaching process. Time delays, they believe, reduce the effectiveness of their feedback.

A uniform instructional schedule – for example, mandating literacy instruction at the same time throughout a building – makes it difficult for coaches to schedule

A coach has arranged to accompany a teacher on observations and to facilitate the debriefing conversation that follows. By including herself in the observations, the coach feels that she increases the number of observations she can do in the time available.

> When I come in with Teacher A to watch, that's going to kill two birds with one stone, because then I can give the observed teachers feedback on what I'm seeing, and what they're working on, as well. I'm really liking that, because one of the problems I've run into is that Teacher B's got a prep period when I'm watching Teacher A teach; so a lot of times, I don't get a chance to debrief. It's harder for me to see them or debrief with them afterwards, and because Teacher A is more needy than Teacher B and some others, he's gotten the bulk of my attention so far. But I'm starting to back off on that and think that I've got to do more with the others because they're really ready to move ahead and be pushed and grow. And I learn a lot from them, so it's good for me, too.

time with teachers. Such schedules also make it difficult for teachers to observe one another, since all of them are teaching at the same time. While there may be valid instructional reasons for uniform schedules, schools need to consider the impact they have on coaching.

### How can coaching be organized as the demand for it outstrips the time available?

The success of coaching encourages teachers to want to spend more time with coaches, and more teachers to seek out their help. But coaches usually do not have time to help all of the teachers who want their help, even if they spend four full days in a school. Coaches need guidance from their principals and from the district about how to set coaching priorities so that there is a rational approach to the allocation of the coaches' resources.

### How do schools find time for small-group, coach-provided professional development?

While coaches' work with individuals or small groups of teachers in classrooms is built into the school day, the small-group professional development they provide to teachers around specific teaching strategies is not. For example, coaches may lead regularly scheduled teacher study groups or present new content knowledge to teachers before or after school or, occasionally, on Saturdays. These sessions can stretch a district's coaching resources very thin, particularly if coaches are spread out across several schools. Districts and principals need to monitor coaches' workload to make sure that they do not become overwhelmed by the professional development responsibilities associated with their role.

## Changing Teachers' Practices

Despite the urgency of improving teaching and learning, the truth is that it will take several years for teachers to master what are fundamentally new and different instructional strategies even when teachers are eager to implement what they are

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

learning. Needless to say, the process will take more time with teachers who are not willing to change their practice or with teachers who need help with other aspects of their work, such as classroom management. It is important for district leaders to keep in mind the challenge of changing instructional practices so as not to become convinced that the reforms are not working or put impossible expectations and demands on teachers and principals. Both of these possibilities can thwart the real progress that may be under way, leading to coach, principal, and teacher frustration and exhaustion.

District administrators can help manage expectations for coaching by acknowledging that deep changes in instruction take a long time. At the end of a school year, coaches can be dismayed by how little change in instruction they have seen. They can feel ineffective when they observe teachers who say they are implementing what the coach has taught, but whose practice does not seem significantly different. Setting goals at the school and district level, with benchmarks throughout the year, can help the coach and teachers to keep their instructional progress in perspective. In addition, these sorts of goal-setting activities can foster rich collegial

conversations around instruction, deep analysis of student- and school-level data, and, eventually, a renewed sense of commitment to the work and/or a clear sense of direction regarding next steps.

## What should coaches do about teachers who say "This, too, will pass" or who seem uninterested or unmotivated to learn new knowledge and skills?

Some teachers do not fully understand the instructional reform and its links to standards, and they appear to be comfortable using the practices they have always used. Some teachers are considered "expert" by their colleagues, and their students' achievement scores, on average, may be good; but they do not use the new strategies to guide their instruction. Encouraging these two groups of teachers to use new approaches can pose a challenge for coaches.[17] Districts must play an important role in supporting coaches by making clear that the new instructional strategies are a priority for all teachers.

## What should coaches do about teachers who overtly resist working with them?

Some teachers are not only uninterested in coaching, they are actively hostile to the practice. They might, for example, leave the room while a coach is modeling a lesson. More commonly, teachers simply ignore coaches' suggestions. District admin-

---

[17] Coaches also wonder what to say to teachers whose students, on average, seem to be doing well on accountability assessments but who may have a number of underperforming students. One of the important roles a district can play is to make sure that schools and teachers look at all of their achievement data. Teachers and principals should be accountable for all students' achievement, not achievement on average. Making sure that data are disaggregated by relevant categories before they are analyzed can alleviate this problem.

istrators must make clear to resistant teachers that new instructional strategies and the coaching associated with them are for all teachers. They can reinforce this message by holding principals accountable for implementing the district's plans.

## What can coaches do when they work in schools where principal leadership is weak?

In schools with weak principals, coaches find themselves unable to implement their work even if teachers want their support. Weak principals cannot organize the schools' schedules to accommodate coaching and other professional development activities. They ineffectively or incorrectly convey district priorities to their schools. Coaches who work in such school contexts describe their role as "frustrating and disempowering." They perceive the central office as ineffective and incapable of making clear to principals that they must assert leadership for reform at the schools. Coaches are stymied when districts do not provide principals with the professional development they need to improve their work as instructional leaders.

Providing high-quality professional development to principals and holding them accountable as collegial, instructional leaders are important responsibilities for any district, regardless of whether it implements coaching. But districts that employ the practice have a particular responsibility to develop principals' skills, because weak leadership impedes effective coaching.

Coaches must employ strategies for aiding weak principals when possible and circumventing them when necessary. Without district support, change coaches will be unable to work with principals, content coaches will be unable to work with teachers, and schools will not be able to build their instructional capacity.

## Measuring the Quality and Impact of Coaches' Work

It is extremely difficult to measure the quality and impact of coaches' work; yet, it is essential that districts attempt to assess coaches' value.[18] Without a sense of what distinguishes different levels of coach quality, it is difficult to provide coaches with appropriate professional development or consider what impact their work should have on teacher or principal practice.

In addition, without some links between coaching, teacher learning, and student achievement, it is difficult to justify the expense of coaching, especially in times of tight budgets when districts may be tempted to return to older, large-group forms of professional development. And by taking a close look at the quality and impact of coaching, districts may be able to develop something like a "coaching best practices" resource book that would be available to all of the district's coaches and which would enable the district to allocate coaches according to their coaching expertise and schools' specific needs.

---

[18] None of the districts with which we are familiar have developed refined coach evaluation strategies or assessment tools.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

In developing assessments of coach quality and impact, districts should:

• *Make clear the criteria used to evaluate coaches' work.* In a number of districts, principals evaluate coaches with only vague guidance from central office. It is not uncommon for coaches to report that no one has officially evaluated their work. But just as students cannot improve their performance without clear standards for excellent work, coaches are unlikely to perform better unless they know the criteria on which they will be evaluated.

• *Develop an evaluation instrument that is formative as well as summative in purpose.* Such an instrument should provide feedback that would highlight coaches' strengths and areas in need of further professional development. It should also provide sufficient documentation to allow terminating a coach's contract if this becomes necessary.

It is important to keep in mind that coaching, like teaching, is not a rote activity. Therefore, any evaluation of its quality and impact must allow for variation in how coaches do their work. Nonetheless, given a district's approach to instruction, some coaching strategies will be more appropriate and, likely, more effective than others. At a minimum, the coaching behaviors the district stresses in its coach professional development programs should be evaluated.

# THE IMPACT OF COACHING: OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

When coaching is integral to a larger instructional improvement plan that targets and aligns professional development resources toward the district's goals, it has the potential to become a powerful vehicle for improving instruction and, thereby, student achievement.

Coaching, the school-based component of a district's professional development plan, has the potential to contribute to teacher learning, to enhance the extent to which teachers use what they learn in their professional development, to increase teachers' and principals' collegial interactions around instruction and overall school improvement, and, thereby, to foster the development of a strong learning community. Coaching, in other words, has the potential to build instructional capacity in teachers, principals, schools, and districts. As a result, money invested in coaching can be money well spent.

In order to undertake effectively the considerable effort required to implement a coaching program, a district must commit itself to the theory that improved teaching will lead to improved student learning. But having made that commitment, a district must remember that coaching is not a gimmick; it is not something to be added onto a district's repertoire of professional development offerings. It must be integral to a larger instructional improvement plan that targets and aligns professional development resources toward the district's goals. Under those circumstances, coaching can become a powerful vehicle for improving instruction and, thereby, student achievement.

## What Outcomes Can Be Expected?

Coaching, as we have described it, is not yet broadly implemented; as a result, there are no hard data linking it to student achievement. However, there is reason to think that coaching, thoughtfully developed and implemented within a district's coherent professional development plan, will provide teachers with real opportunities to improve their instruction, principals with real opportunities to improve their leadership, and districts with real opportunities to improve their schools.

While we would argue that coaching alone does not have the capacity to lead to this result, there is evidence that coaching

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

can produce the following outcomes, which are likely to improve instruction:

- better targeted school-based professional development that addresses teachers' and principals' learning needs in light of students' needs;

- teacher learning that carries over into classroom practice because the coach helps teachers implement what they have learned;

- a willingness among teachers to share their practice with one another and seek learning opportunities from their peers and their coaches, and a willingness to assume collective responsibility for all of their students' learning;

- high-quality principal leadership of instructional improvement;

- school cultures in which instruction is the focus of much teacher and principal discussion, and in which teachers and principals reflect on their practice and its impact on students and use achievement data to drive instructional improvement.

### Is It Worth the Effort?

Our detailed discussion of the practical issues of designing and implementing coaching may lead some to throw up their hands and declare that coaching cannot be worth this level of effort. But with so much promise, we believe coaching to be a commitment worth making.

First, most of the implementation issues and challenges we have raised accompany any district professional devel-

## DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINING REFORM

Knowing that they will not be available to schools indefinitely, coaches help teachers and principals develop capacity to pursue school improvement themselves. This coach is working to create a demand for data that will continue when the coach is not there.

> I'm trying to walk a tightrope between doing stuff and building capacity to do it. With respect to using data to make instructional decisions, I think the important thing is to make the data useful to people. That might mean doing more of the front-end work myself, creating a demand for it and figuring out how to present the data in clear, meaningful ways that encourage rich discussions that will actually lead to change in practice or change in professional development or whatever. And that's what I see as my role here. On the other hand, I don't want to just produce things and papers that are just going to clutter people's desks and then when I'm not there, they will no longer do anything. So the capacity piece is important. But I think, before that happens, there needs to be a demand, which there is. So that's the biggest piece, I think, creating demand.

Another coach is helping schools develop in-house capacity to lead looking-at-student-work groups that focus on the impact of teachers' assignments and instruction on the quality of work students produce in light of standards. This coach talks about such professional development which coaches provided for teachers from a number of schools.

> The focus of those sessions was to build the capacity for individual facilitation by teachers. It addressed questions such as: What kinds of things do you have to do to facilitate the looking-at-student-work program? What do you have to do to understand this looking-at-student-work protocol very well? During the sessions, teachers actually looked at work and went through the protocol with an experienced coach. They did a real looking-at-student-work session, but the coach stopped to point out facilitation points along the way, and there was some interaction among each of the tables. After the first session, the coaches got together to debrief what had happened with the teachers and what other kinds of things they needed to know. It came out that they did, in fact, need to know more about facilitation and developing and strengthening the culture in schools to look at work to begin with, so we built that into our next session with them.

opment strategy. If district administrators are not knowledgeable about what they ask schools to do, they cannot support implementation. If the district neither supports nor holds principals and others accountable, no program will be effectively implemented. And, although some of the challenges associated with coaching may be different from those associated with the implementation of other instructional reforms, there is no school reform program that is challenge-free.

Second, coaching shows great promise for changing professional practice and the professional culture in which teachers work. Teaching has been described as an isolated profession in which individuals work in private; and school cultures discourage teachers from observing one another or inviting others into their rooms to observe and provide feedback. Coaching aims explicitly at changing that culture of isolation in which teachers have worked for decades. There is reason to think that teachers and principals working collaboratively to improve their practice can, over time and with the support of a knowledgeable coach, accomplish much more than has been accomplished to date. Furthermore, our data strongly suggest that teachers, after some initial nervousness, come to value their work with coaches and colleagues. Many principals, as well, appreciate what they have learned from working with the change coaches.

In sum, coaching holds a great deal of promise for districts willing to meet the practical challenges of this difficult work.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# COACHING SMALL GROUPS

**B**oston's Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model provides one example of how coaches work with small groups of teachers and demonstrates how a coach can encourage teachers to engage – actively and collaboratively – in instructionally focused work. The model enables teachers to learn in collaboration with one another and with the coach. (More information is available at www.bpe.org.)

The CCL model that we present here consists of a preconference, a classroom component (demonstration and observation), and a debriefing. The coach facilitates both the preconference and debriefing discussions in order to highlight best practices she observed during the demonstration, as well as to offer suggestions for improvement and next steps. The coach plays an important role in ensuring that the classroom demonstrations and observations go smoothly, guiding the teachers through each aspect of the lesson and gently redirecting them when necessary.

This example involves a fourth-grade lab-site with a heterogeneous configuration that included eight teachers from three grade levels and from bilingual and monolingual classrooms. Teachers had a range of teaching experience and varied knowledge of Readers' and Writers' Workshop. The principal had urged a few of these teachers to participate; others were participating by choice. Some teachers, including the one hosting the lab-site in her classroom, had participated in a lab-site earlier in the year; for others, this was their first experience. The classroom component of this lab-site included a mini-lesson, two conferences, a small guided reading session, and a "share" time. Three of the participating teachers demonstrated these workshop components.

## The Preconference

The purpose of the preconference is to set the stage for the observations to follow. Teachers gather together to hear the host teacher review what is happening in her classroom.

At this preconference, the host teacher reported that her students had been "buzzing" successfully with their partners – talking about their books. She noted that while many of her students could read, she was not sure that they comprehended well. In light of this concern, the focus for the lab-site would be comprehension. The teaching strategies would be linked to a chapter in *Guided Reading* by Fountas and Pinnell (2001) called "What Do We Do When Reading Doesn't Make Sense?"

A nonhost teacher would begin the lab-site by doing a mini-lesson to review comprehension strategies. The coach asked this teacher how she was feeling about doing the mini-lesson. The teacher told the group she was a little bit nervous: her lesson

would require students to articulate the strategies they use when they get stuck with understanding a given text, and she wasn't sure the students would be able to do this. The coach said that she would step in, if needed.

Another nonhost teacher would be leading the guided reading group. The coach asked this teacher how she felt about leading this activity. She reported having had difficulty deciding on a focus. She had chosen vocabulary, and her purpose would be to see if students skipped over words they did not know or if they tried different comprehension strategies. (This guided reading lesson was intended to link with the comprehension focus of the mini-lesson.) At this teacher's request, the group had a brief discussion about whether the teacher should identify the vocabulary words ahead of time or let students identify them from the text. The teacher decided that she would give students the words in advance.

The teachers then moved on to the host classroom, where some would demonstrate while others observed. The teaching and observing would form the basis for further discussions about improving/refining the workshop strategies.

## The Classroom Component

### Mini-lesson

The mini-lesson lasted just under five minutes and focused on "things that readers do when they get stuck/confused." Children gathered on the corner rug and paid very close attention to the teacher's instructions. When she asked them to talk about the strategies they use when encountering a difficult text, several volunteered. Another teacher made a list of the suggestions on chart paper so that they would be available to the students. The teacher leading the mini-lesson reminded them to use the strategies during independent reading. She also asked them to be on the lookout for new strategies.

The children dispersed, and a number of the teachers chatted briefly about the children's responses. The teacher leading the mini-lesson thought that the students had all given the same answer. The teacher who made the list told her not to worry, that there was some variation, although both agreed that rereading the text seemed to be the most popular strategy.

The coach came over and suggested they continue the conversation in the debrief and move now to the conferencing.

### Conference

At the suggestion of the coach, the host teacher selected the students for the conferences. A teacher volunteered to do the first conference with a boy who was reading a nonfiction book about World War II.

The original purpose of the conference was to check in and see how he liked the book, but the student reported that it was "kind of a hard book," with parts that he did not understand. The teacher asked the student to show her a part of the book that was confusing. After she scanned the page that he selected, the teacher asked him to

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

tell her what was "hard" about the excerpt. He could not tell her. The teacher then asked if he was having trouble with the names. The student sat up alertly and said that there were too many people to remember. The teacher asked if he had been using his Post-Its to keep track of them. He said no. She recommended making a Post-It for each character so that he could refer back to them whenever he got confused. She also suggested that he try 'buzzing' about it with a partner. (There were several other boys in the class who were reading the same book.) The student seemed pleased and surprised that he would be allowed to "buzz" about his confusion. The conference ended. The coach suggested moving on to the guided reading lesson.

## Guided Reading

One of the demonstrating teachers gathered a small group of students together, passed out the books, and told the students which pages to read. She asked them to focus on a list of vocabulary words she had selected. While the students were reading, the teacher went around to the students in turn and asked them to read aloud a paragraph or page so that she could check their comprehension.

Going from student to student was taking a long time, and the coach asked the teacher to turn back to the whole guided reading group prior to finishing. The coach also asked the teacher to share briefly with her colleagues some of the conversations she had with the individual students, because it had been difficult to hear

them. The teacher reported that some students were having trouble with the words and were going back to reread and look for context clues. Some were using that strategy on their own, others had to be reminded.

The teacher then addressed the guided reading group and asked for definitions of the words *syrupy, neon*, and *turnipy*. One of the girls knew the word *neon* from her highlighter markers. But everyone was confused by the word *turnipy*. No one had ever eaten, seen, or heard of a turnip. And referring back to the sentence – "The woman's face was turnipy and bulging at the cheeks" – did not appear to help. The teacher kept returning to the sentence, however, and eventually determined that students did not know what *bulging* meant either. She told them that they should have marked that word.

The students were becoming more and more hesitant in responding. Finally, the teacher defined *turnipy* while another teacher did a quick sketch to show the students that turnips are heart-shaped and that the sentence was referring to the woman's heart-shaped face. This visual demonstration seemed to help.

To wrap up her guided reading lesson, the teacher asked the students to talk about the story, but the students did not respond to this general instruction. The teacher asked more focused questions: "Is the main character in school or on vacation?" "How do you know this?" But still the students struggled. The coach then stepped in to

ask them if they were making a clear movie in their minds. "Or," she asked, "is the movie still fuzzy?" "Fuzzy!" they said. This was the first answer on which all the students agreed. The coach told them that it was okay, that they had only read a few pages. The teacher then suggested that the students go on and read the next chapter. But the coach stepped in again and suggested that the students reread chapter one before moving on. "That way," she told them, "the meaning won't be so fuzzy."

### The Debrief

The debrief began with the coach asking for someone to talk about the mini-lesson and the conference. The teacher who taught the mini-lesson said she thought it went well, but that it was clear from the students' responses that they did not have a repertoire of "sense-making" reading strategies. She heard five different ways of saying "reread" but not much else. She had not known whether to introduce a different strategy to the students during the mini-lesson. Another teacher said she had heard some variation in the students' responses: some students talked about rereading the words but others talked about moving on and trying to get a broader understanding of the passage.

The coach asked the host teacher to comment on how the lesson went in light of her knowledge of the students. She replied that her students used a range of reading strategies but could not articulate them clearly. Another teacher said that she

has found that younger students have a hard time talking about the strategies they use, even if they use those strategies very well. As a next step, she said, she would show a reading passage on an overhead and walk the students through the strategies. The host teacher liked the idea and said she would try it before the next lab-site.

The coach said that she thought the teacher did a good job with the mini-lesson even though it lasted only three minutes. There was no point, she said, to continue it longer since the students could not articulate more strategies. And, said the coach, if the teacher had introduced another strategy, she would have been doing a whole other mini-lesson. Finally, the coach noted that the students in the host teacher's class were able to carry over the main teaching point of the mini-lesson into their independent work.

The coach then turned to the conference with the boy reading the nonfiction book, noting that the boy had done a great job of expressing the problem he was having and that the teacher had included all of the important components of the conference: research (find out the student's problem), decide, teach. The teacher who led the conference said that, at first, she was worried because she wasn't able to tie the conference directly back to the mini-lesson. The host teacher interrupted saying, "You figured out what he needed." A third teacher went on to say that her first instinct might have been to say that the book was too hard for him, but then she

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

remembered that it is important for kids to be able to read passages and to understand that they don't have to catch every single name, every single detail. She remarked that adult readers don't catch every word. She suggested that this topic might be a good thing to visit in a mini-lesson around nonfiction texts. The host teacher had a lot of boys reading the same nonfiction books and said that she would try it.

The coach now asked the teacher who led the guided reading lesson to talk about how it went. In addition to noting that there was not enough time, the teacher reflected that, in hindsight, she should have let students find vocabulary words on their own, since she had failed to identify all of the words that stumped them. She also commented that they were not comprehending the story. No one else commented at this point. The coach told the teacher to remember that she was not teaching to that particular book, but to all books. For that reason, the strategy was more important than the individual vocabulary words. The host teacher said that she actually liked the fact that the students had the words ahead of time, but they would definitely need to read through the chapter again. The coach agreed. The host teacher said that perhaps they did not understand the text because they did not have time to finish reading.

With about five minutes left in the debrief discussion tine, the coach asked teachers what they wanted to do for their next, and last, lab-site. She asked them if they had any big questions outstanding

and wondered whether they were ready to look at literacy circles or book clubs. One teacher responded that it was too soon and cited research literature that said these strategies should be introduced after the Readers' and Writers' Workshop was well established. This teacher wanted to know how one would tackle a more general genre study. The coach said they could talk about that in the next debrief, but that it would be too much to handle in a single lab-site.

The coach continued, asking: "What is still missing? What pieces do you need so that you can put this in place next year?" One teacher asked about the reading response journal and how to tie it in. There was further discussion and final agreement that the teachers would like to see a mini-lesson demonstrating some of the comprehension strategies the students talked about in today's lesson. They also agreed that they might like to have some focus on reading nonfiction. The coach said she would check in with the host teacher during the week to determine what they could work on for next week.

Though the demonstrating teachers reported being nervous about making their teaching public, in the end they were glad to have had an opportunity to share their teaching with colleagues and receive feedback. The coach noted the "thin line" she walks between trying to give constructive feedback and not sounding negative or too critical. She finds this to be one of the most challenging aspects of her coaching work.

# COACHING THE COACHES

Just as teachers who are learning to improve their practice benefit from opportunities to observe and to be observed by their peers, coaches who are learning to improve their coaching will benefit from similar opportunities to observe other coaches' practice and receive feedback about their own coaching work. To date, districts have struggled to arrange these kinds of learning opportunities for coaches, but we have come across examples of this kind of coach professional development happening in some places.

The professional development strategies described below allow coaches to observe one another's practice through coaching demonstrations and provide opportunities for coaches to reflect on their own and others' best coaching practices.

### A Principal-Led Coaching Demonstration

In one of a series of school-based professional development activities for coaches led by the principal,[19] one coach volunteered to work with a teacher in front of her coach colleagues. The group watched the teacher's lesson (videotaped earlier) and then observed as the coach discussed the lesson with the teacher. Afterwards, the group gave the coach feedback about what she did well and what she might have done differently. Later, the coach reflected on the session.

We actually watched a video of a teacher doing a lesson with her students. As we watched her video, we scripted her lesson. When it was over, I volunteered to be the coach. I had to go up there, just like I would with the teachers I'm coaching right now and debrief about the lesson I observed. And that's, like, you think it's easy, but you don't want to give things away, you want to make the teacher do the thinking. I was really careful. I tried to really write my questions down to provoke her thinking.

I asked her what she thought of the participation, because there wasn't enough. There were about three kids participating. I asked her what she thought about the amount of wait time. Then, because it was unclear to me why, I asked her, "What was your purpose in doing some charting? What were you trying to get across? Did you

---

[19] These coaches work together at the same school and, in addition to their coaching responsibilities, retain full-time teaching positions at their site. For more information regarding the development of in-house coaching models such as this one, in which teacher leaders take on coaching responsibilities in order to build instructional capacity, see Neufeld and Roper, December 2002.

feel the students had a good grasp on this lesson after you did it?" It was hard. We were looking at questioning skills, and I thought she gave too much away, and I know I've done that in my own classroom.

When asked about the debriefing that followed the coaching demonstration, this coach said that she received a lot of helpful feedback from the other coaches and from the principal. One coach colleague was able to point out a missed teaching opportunity in the lesson – a missed teaching opportunity that became a missed coaching opportunity.

One of the coaches told me that she would have jumped on a certain student's comment and asked the student about her thinking. And I kind of skipped over that because I didn't see that. So it was an eye-opener for me, just to get another perspective. Her comment really stuck out in my mind because after I looked at that section of the lesson again I thought maybe I should have coached the teacher on that point.

The coach also received feedback from the principal about the need to better focus her debrief. The principal pointed out that just as teachers cannot expect students to learn many different things during a single lesson, coaches cannot expect teachers to absorb multiple coaching points during a single debriefing.

Eventually everyone in the group will participate in this kind of coaching demonstration and debrief, including the principal, who is herself a former coach.

## Demonstrating How to Coach Expert Teachers

Coaches sometimes report that they are unsure how to coach more expert teachers to the next level of practice. Indeed, they may not know what constitutes the next level of practice if they themselves have not learned to teach the instructional reform at the high level of expertise of the teachers they are coaching. As a result, they may feel they have little or no firsthand knowledge of practice that can inform their coaching of highly skilled teachers.

This professional development activity was designed to help coaches coach to higher levels of teacher expertise. In it, a coach professional developer (someone who "coaches the coaches") and an English Language Arts teacher whose practice in Readers' and Writers' Workshop is already quite advanced are observed by a group of coaches. One of the coaches gave the following account of this learning opportunity.

We had seen our coach professional developer coach teachers at a variety of levels, but we thought it would be good to have her coach someone who knew a lot about Workshop. So we observed such a teacher and then the coach professional developer coached this teacher, not about

what actually happened in the class-room, but about her role as a teacher. The coach professional developer took this focus because, as she put it, the teaching was clear and nothing had to be fixed. Instead, she stressed the teacher's role as a teacher, and how she could put more responsibility on the students, how she could facili-tate their becoming more independ-ent. The coach professional developer suggested that the teaching might encourage students' independence if the teaching were a little "messier," if it enabled the students to work on things that they couldn't do perfectly, if they figured out some things

together – students and teacher – instead of the teacher having every-thing all figured out ahead and saying to the students, "Here are your tools – go, go, go."

It was challenging and it was a different kind of coaching. We could see that it was tough for the profes-sional developer. You could see her thinking: How far do I push her here? The good thing about it was that it gave us some idea of how you coach someone who is doing some very good work in the classroom. How do you push them to the next level? It was a really interesting con-versation and helpful.

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

# REFERENCES

Boston Plan for Excellence's Web site at www.bpe.org.

Cohen, D. K., McLaughlin, M. W., and Talbert, J. E. (Eds.) 1993. *Teaching for Understanding: Challenges for Policy and Practice.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L., and McLaughlin, M. W. 1995. "Policies that Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(8): 597–604.

Elmore, R. F. 1997. "Investing in Teacher Learning: Staff Development and Instructional Improvement in Community School District 2, New York City." Paper prepared for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Fountas, I. C., and Pinnell, G. S. 2001. *Guided Reading: Essential Elements – The Skillful Teacher.* A two-tape video set. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lieberman, A. 1995. "Practices that Support Teacher Development: Transforming Conceptions of Professional Learning," *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(8):591–596.

Neufeld, B., and Roper, D. July 2002. *Off to a Good Start: Year I of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools.* Cambridge, MA: Education Matters.

Neufeld, B., and Roper, D. December 2002. *Growing Instructional Capacity in Two San Diego Middle Schools: An Interim Report.* Cambridge, MA: Education Matters.

Supovitz, J. A., and Poglinco, S. M. 2001. *Instructional Leadership in a Standards-Based Reform.* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Windschitl, M. 2002. "Framing Constructivism in Practice as the Negotiation of Dilemmas: An Analysis of the Conceptual, Pedagogical, Cultural, and Political Challenges Facing Teachers," *Review of Educational Research* 72(2):131–175.