Coaching:
Where Learning Happens
A Special Monograph Edition

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ON THE COVER:
Wayne School District Special Education Director Cheryl Hunt coaches Nellie Wilkins in the use of her communication device.

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The Utah Special Educator accepts manuscripts, artwork and photographs on topics related to improving educational outcomes for school-age individuals with disabilities and learning challenges.

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Utah Professional Development
2009-2010 Calendar

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Coaching: *What’s in YOUR teacher’s playbook?*

Despite recent events in his personal life, few would disagree that Tiger is not one of the most talented and successful golfers in history. When he was young and just learning golf, his father was his “coach,” who taught him all that he could and encouraged him to be better. As Tiger improved and entered competitive sports, he needed a professional coach to move to the next level and maximize his game. He still employs a full-time golf coach. Now, if he just could find a personal life coach…

Teaching: *Caught or Taught?*

I’m not a sports fan, but on occasion have found sports analogies applicable to teaching. According to WIKIPEDIA, “A Hail Mary pass or Hail Mary play in American football refers to any very long forward pass, or long bomb, made in desperation with only a small chance of success, especially one thrown at or near the end of a half. The expression was made famous when it was used to describe the game-winning touchdown pass by Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach to Drew Pearson in a NFL 1975-76 divisional playoff game. Afterwards, it was reported that Staubach said, “I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary.”

Teaching, like sports, is hard work requiring much preparation, talent and a “playbook” on what to teach, how to teach, what to do if students are not learning, and how to maximize the academic and social competencies of all students in their care. Teacher skill is the single most powerful variable in student achievement, and the one most in our control. While some teachers are naturals, all teachers benefit from an effective playbook and coaching. The “Hail Mary” play has no place in teaching, as its chance of success is outweighed by its chance of failure. If the student did not learn, the teacher did not teach (Englemann).

Several years ago I was teaching sheltered instruction strategies to a school faculty and was touting the advantages of peer coaching. I had carefully planned, had practiced my delivery, included copious opportunities for teacher interaction and activities, provided graphic organizers and visual aids, and used cooperative learning techniques with participants. I knew that with the limited time I was given, my highest expectation for real change and for teachers to implement these strategies was at best 40% (see the Implementation Triangle on the back cover of this issue). This meant that if the research were accurate, only twelve of the thirty teachers in attendance would attempt the strategies I was teaching. Although this was better than nothing, this low return on time investment was not going to be powerful enough to close the achievement gap at this school, the reason I was invited to teach. I felt strongly that I had something worth teaching, and therefore something worth learning for teachers. In addition, my philosophy is that if my students are not learning, then there is something wrong in my teaching, as learning is not just listening. My discussions of the research and advantages to teachers and students were met with subtle eye rolling and resistance to the idea that these experienced teachers could benefit from coaching. Luckily for me, a veteran teacher stood up and offered her perspective. She explained that she was a competitive downhill skier, and that the difference between winning or not placing was measured in one thousandth of a second. She stated that winning then could not be attributed to luck or talent, but to meticulous preparation and execution, and a deliberate cycle of feedback and improvement. She attributed the difference between success and failure to professional coaching, and how essential this was in helping her to
achieving her goals. Coaching, she explained, should be embraced as a powerful tool to help all teachers, and not as evaluation or remediation.

**Who needs coaching?**

Much of the research and emphasis is on coaching of teachers in their first three years of service. This makes perfect sense as the number of teachers who leave this profession, particularly special education teachers, during their first five years of service is unacceptable and perpetuates an expense that we cannot afford. But, what are the costs and advantages to veteran teachers through coaching? I would suggest that the biggest improvement in student outcomes could be attributed to the improvement of teaching with experienced teachers. The majority of student time is spent with experienced tenured teachers, not rookies. As we are all aware, tenure does not always equate with quality. We all have worked with teachers who have “retired,” but have not yet physically left the building. These are often teachers who sit politely through professional development trainings, but take nothing back for their seat time and implement or change nothing in their practice. Coaching will not make poor teachers into average teachers. Coaching will, however, make an average teacher into a great teacher.

**“Coaching, because teachers matter most” (Anita Archer)**

No matter how rigorous and effective pre-service teaching programs are, they are no substitute for intensive, on-the-job, ongoing training to help teachers perfect their craft and respond to the changes in curriculum and students. Physicians in training receive rigorous theory in medical school, but then really start their education when they intern and specialize with observation and yes, coaching. Why is it that we expect teachers to stop studying teaching the very moment they begin to teach? Perhaps the fault lies in the culture of schools, where teachers are the captain of their own ships, quietly closing their doors and teaching. There is a better way, and this way is collaborative where teachers participate in a constant cycle of dialogue and professional development about teaching. Coaching and professional learning communities are not new, but the time has come to get serious and walk the walk of more students doing better work. If students are to learn better, then teachers have to teach better; there is no shortcut or more effective strategy within our control to help make this happen.

This special monograph issue is dedicated to the most universal, cost-effective, and most powerful strategy to effect better outcomes for all students. Some highlights of this issue include:

- Utah Coaching Network (UCN), Utah’s response to coaching and professional development, p. 13-17
- History, research and overview of coaching, p. 18-36
- Coaching for teachers of students with significant disabilities, p. 38-43
- Successful district responses to coaching, p. 44-47
- The important role of the building principal in coaching, p. 50-55
- “Systems” coaches for Positive Behavior Supports, p. 56-57
- Related service providers as coaches, p. 58, 60 & 62
- Coaching for teachers of early childhood, p. 64
- Fidelity of Implementation, p. 74
Effective Teaching

In the September 2009 issue of the *Utah Special Educator*, I discussed the “how” and “what” of professional development and concluded:

The research consistently agrees on the importance of teachers as the most potent factor in education. The research also reports that the more the student is at risk of failure, the more the competent teacher generates a positive life-long impact. Given the causal relationship between teacher competency and professional development, investments in effective professional development must be a high priority. Nowhere in the research was there evidence of a lack of teacher interest in increased competency. There certainly was evidence of teacher frustration with ineffective, ritualistic professional development practices.

In February 2009, in the foreword to the national report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession*, former Governor Hunt of North Carolina stated:

Other fields, from medicine and management to the military, do a far better job of providing ongoing learning opportunities and support for their professionals. But as this report shows, in education, professional learning in its current state is poorly conceived and deeply flawed. Teachers lack time and opportunities to view each other’s classrooms, learn from mentors, and work collaboratively. The support and training they receive is episodic, myopic, and often meaningless. Meanwhile, states and districts are spending millions of dollars on academic courses disconnected from the realities of classrooms, but little on helping educators find solutions to the day-to-day challenges they face. It is time for our education workforce to engage in learning the way other professionals do—continually, collaboratively, and on the job—to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work.

Clearly, there is deep national concern with the state of professional development. Most informed observers question the traditional assumption in which a teachers’ college provides an education degree, a state provides a teaching certificate, and a teacher enters a classroom as a competent professional who can effectively teach with the very modest in-classroom professional development available to most beginning teachers. The research concludes that the on-
is an Achievable Skill

Al Hofmeister

the-job experiences of the first year of teaching can support or negate the four years of preservice teacher education. Regardless of how the teacher arrives in the classroom, from traditional or nontraditional teacher preparation programs, the on-the-job professional development of the first three years determines success or failure for many teachers and their students.

As Governor Hunt and others note, typical professional development that is “episodic, myopic, and often meaningless” provides few practical or valid options for the teacher, their students and America, which is losing its industrial competitiveness to other nations with more effective professional development programs for teachers.

The special education implications of the present state of professional development for teachers are massive for both prevention and treatment. On a positive note, the above-listed report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession* includes this summary:

Rigorous research suggests that sustained and intensive professional learning for teachers is related to student-achievement gains. An analysis of well designed experimental studies found that a set of programs which offered substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total) spread over six to 12 months showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains. According to the research, these intensive professional development efforts that offered an average of 49 hours in a year boosted student achievement by approximately 21 percentile points. Other efforts that involved a limited amount of professional development (ranging from 5 to 14 hours in total) showed no statistically significant effect on student learning.

A gain of 21 percentile points directly linked to the quality and quantity of professional development has massive implications for: (a) student access to college, (b) dropout prevention, (c) reductions in referrals for special education services, (d) increases in the effectiveness of special education services, and (e) teacher attrition.

For special education, substantive improvements in prevention and treatment will be an obvious and major outcome. In June 2002, as a part of the congressional reauthorization of special education IDEA legislation, Reid Lyon presented to Congress the results of an extensive, three year, on-the-job staff development project. In a poverty impacted school district, reading failure at the end of first grade was reduced from 31.8% to 20.4%, then to 10.9%, and then to 3.7% with each year of intensive, in-class, professional development in k-1 classrooms.

For teachers, there was good and bad news. Clearly the sustained, intensive, on-the-job, professional development gave new teachers and experienced teachers pride in their competence as concerned, effective professionals who were having a positive life-long impact on their clients—the students. The bad news: Why did those experienced teachers who were far less effective than they could have been, have to wait so long to achieve the competence they clearly wanted?

In the past few years, researchers, educators, state and federal politicians, teacher unions, and school boards are recognizing the importance of an effective teacher and the need for in-service professional development that is systematic, long-term and evidence-based. One of the most recent shifts in national thinking moves the emphasis on school accountability, as legislated under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The increased emphasis is moving to individual teacher accountability. The research documenting extensive variability in effectiveness among individual teachers in the same school has generated the call for in-class coaching of teachers in research-based instructional practices. Researchers question investments in short-term workshops and related practices that never provide practical support to teachers or impact student outcomes. These staff development practices offended teachers, wasted massive amounts of money, and worst of all, replaced efforts to search for effective professional development practices that increase teacher competency as assessed by improved student outcomes.

*Continued on page 8*
Along with the increased focus on substantive professional development practices, such as coaching, is the recognition that effective teaching is an achievable skill. In the January/February 2010, issue of news magazine, The Atlantic, Amanda Ripley noted:

Parents have always worried about where to send their children to school; but school, statistically speaking, does not matter as much as which adult stands in front of their children. Teacher quality tends to vary more within schools—even supposedly good schools—than among schools.

But we have never identified excellent teachers in any reliable, objective way. Instead, we tend to ascribe their gifts to some mystical quality that we can recognize and revere—but not replicate. The great teacher serves as a hero but never, ironically as a lesson.

Ripley then referred to the ten years of research recently completed by Teach for America and published in a book by Steven Farr. This book, Ripley suggests, translates the mystical qualities of excellent teachers into a set of specific skills that can be taught to all teachers through the intensive, long-term, professional development practices such as coaching. These professional development practices directly and consistently improve student achievement scores and other important student outcomes. Steven Farr’s book, *The Highly Effective Teacher’s Guide to Closing the Gap*, was released February 2010. Ripley further notes that Teach for America, a nonprofit that recruits college graduates to spend two years teaching in low-income schools, began outside the educational establishment and has largely remained there.

As an establishment researcher focused on identifying the skills of effective teachers, Ripley’s observation that we have never identified excellent teachers in any reliable, objective way, certainly caught my attention. I have accepted millions of taxpayer dollars in research grants to identify and validate the skills of effective teachers. When the prepublication version of Steven Farr’s book arrived, my concerns were reduced. I found his list of effective teaching skills similar to establishment findings. Indeed, the more I read, the better I felt about the establishment listing of the skills of effective teachers. In many ways the news was good. The Teach for America researchers used a totally different database. They used ten years of observations of effective and ineffective teachers in some of the most challenging poverty-impacted school districts. From a research perspective, agreement among different credible data sources strengthens the validity of the conclusions.

It took time to confirm the considerable alignment between the Teach for America conclusions on the skills of effective teachers and the establishment observations on such skills. One reason for the increased time was that Teach for America did not use the establishment jargon. Here are some examples:

(a) **Time Management.** Teach for America states: “Implement time-saving procedures.” The establishment research states: “Increase Academic Learning Time (ALT).” Both groups
stress the importance of quick transitions between instructional activities to increase the time spent on successful instruction and reduce opportunities for behavior management problems. The establishment researchers stress the need to increase Academic Learning Time, because a gap of several grade levels will not close with effective teaching alone without a major increase in the amount of time in high-success instruction. Teach for America makes the point with the request to “Expand time and resources.” Expanding the amount of time at-risk students spend successfully engaged in reading instruction to 90 minutes a day often triples the amount of effective daily reading instruction and provides a very believable contribution to “closing the gap.”

(b) Microteaching and Dress Rehearsals. Teach for America states: “Execute Effectively.” One of the suggestions to improve instructional effectiveness is the use of “dry runs” and “dress rehearsals” by teachers using friends, pretending to be students, so the teacher could practice effective responses to student behaviors. The establishment jargon for this teacher training activity is “microteaching,” a practice initially researched and validated by Dwight Allen and colleagues at Stanford University. Teachers systematically refine instruction by practicing with peers or a coach as observers, receive feedback, refine instruction, and repeat this sequence until competence is achieved. Then, the teacher competently and confidently instructs students when the probability of success for teacher and student is high. Instructional refinement should never come at the expense of students. The use of the term, “dress rehearsal,” by Teach for America certainly carries more meaning than the term, “microteaching,” for those not tutored in the instructional science research jargon.

(c) Goals, Prerequisites and Task Analysis. Teach for America states: “Create long-term and unit plans (backwards design).” Teach for America emphasizes the design and the monitoring of the small steps that work backwards from “Big Goals” to the present skills of each student. One of the examples in Steven Farr’s book documents a junior high teacher of students with learning disabilities who set grade-level reading skills as the measurable “Big Goal.” Working backwards from this goal to the diagnosed present skill level of students, the teacher found many students lacked kindergarten phonemic awareness skills. The teacher then set up a detailed step-by-step instructional sequence to link present individual student skills to the goal skill. Establishment researchers name this process “task analysis,” and consider such analysis and the associated instructional sequencing a central competency for effectively teaching the diversity of student skills found in special education.

(d) Small Group Differentiated Instruction. Teaching for America repeatedly stresses the need to differentiate instruction. Differentiated instruction is required under federal (NCLB) legislation and related federal and state laws. The Utah State Office of Education 3-tier Model of Reading Instruction stresses differentiated instruction to align instruction with the specific needs of individual learners. This 3-tier policy document emphasizes dynamic, homogenous, small-group instruction. Steven Farr provides several examples of this small group instruction in his descriptions of effective teacher classrooms. The April 2007 issue of the Utah Special Educator contained a DVD exemplifying a master teacher demonstrating specific teaching skills for effective differentiated instruction in small groups. Requests for copies of this DVD can be made through the UPDC web site at http://www.updc.org/contact-us/.

Conclusion: The above examples stressing the importance of time management, microteaching, task analysis, and differentiated instruction provide evidence that excellent teaching is no mystery, but an achievable skill. For teachers investing time and effort in coaching to implement evidence-based practices provides a long-term positive return for these teachers and their students. The present national concern rests with the limited quality and quantity of professional development provided to teachers on-the-job. Again, special educators are in the front-line trenches in this battle that must be won for the dignity of teachers and the quality of life of students.
Todd Allen, a young, enthusiastic special education teacher, was living his lifelong dream of working in an urban school. In his first three years, he was optimistic about his career. He felt he was making a difference in the lives of his students.

But after his fourth year of teaching, things changed. Allen became disillusioned by the ever-mounting federal and state administrative requirements for special education and the disappearance of aides. He left his hard-to-staff position and went into fifth grade general education.

Dustin Kramer faced similar frustration. He was a middle school social studies teacher in his rural home town, but after seven years grew frustrated with a disengaged principal who rarely visited his classroom and made little effort to enforce appropriate student behavior. He felt a similar lack of support from his superintendent. He often worked late hours and questioned whether it was all worth only $37,000 per year. Kramer ended up leaving teaching to try his hand as a financial adviser.
While frustrated employees often look for new jobs, teachers are of particular concern because new and veteran teachers are leaving in large numbers, and many older teachers will soon be retiring.

“Teacher turnover is not cost free. We have long recognized this in the private sector, and now we need to recognize this in the public education sector as well,” says Richard Ingersoll, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. “There are significant costs associated with recruiting, inducting, mentoring and training new hires.”

Researchers have long conducted national studies to understand why teachers leave the profession. A new effort, however, is focusing on studies at the state and district level that lawmakers say is giving them new insights into why teachers quit.

At least 10 states have made these efforts in the last two years and have found some surprises, including that low salaries are not the top reason teachers leave.

**A Different Approach**

Ingersoll has reported that about one-third of new teachers leave the classroom within the first three years, and as many as half leave after just five years. And a new report from the National Commission on Teacher and America’s Future predicts that as many as 50 percent will retire over the upcoming decade. School districts all over the country struggle, in particular, to get and keep math, science and special education teachers.

Using a national survey of school personnel conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 2000-2001, Ingersoll found several factors for dissatisfied teachers: too little preparation time, heavy teaching load, poor salary and benefits, and a lack of say in factors that affect teaching and student achievement. Other researchers found similar results.

“Most of these results are pretty common sense,” says Ingersoll. “Nothing is really too surprising. This confirms what we all might guess.”

State lawmakers, however, wanted more specific information about why teachers were leaving jobs in their states.

In 2002, North Carolina policymakers became the first to design a survey to ask educators about their working conditions, under the direction of Governor Mike Easley and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission. The survey was sent out to every licensed public school educator in the state. In spring 2008, North Carolina repeated the survey for the fourth time, with 87 percent of the state’s educators completing it and making school-specific data available for every one of the state’s traditional public schools.

“We knew we had a teacher shortage and didn’t fully understand why we couldn’t get enough teachers or keep the ones we had,” says Representative Maggie Jeffus, a retired educator and strong supporter of the survey. Jeffus thinks the survey gave lawmakers a better handle on how to hold onto teachers.

North Carolina Representative Rick Glazier admits he was skeptical. He had concerns about the integrity of the data and thought the survey might be more about PR than substance. But now he’s a believer. “Information is what legislators operate on, and this is great currency for us.”

**Other States Join In**

Other states have created their own studies as well. In partnership with the National Education Association and Eric Hirsch of the Teacher Center, six states and one district—Alabama, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, West Virginia and the Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia—developed and distributed their own surveys in 2008. They heard back from more than 350,000 educators at almost 10,000 schools. And Colorado, Maryland and Vermont surveyed educators this year.

The short online surveys are tailored to individual states and districts to ensure their relevance with current initiatives and priorities. Yet there are standard questions in all the surveys to allow for comparisons. The survey results are used to improve schools, never to punish them.

“Teachers now feel a part of the process,” says Glazier. “This survey allows them to be heard and provide input, but preserves their anonymity.”

Kansas Senator John Vratil agrees. “It’s always important for any employer to seek feedback from employees about what improvements need to be made and what improves morale.”

*Continued on page 12*
What Teachers Need

Educators are Teaching Lawmakers

Educators have consistently indicated that they need:

• Supportive school leadership
• Engaged community and parents
• A safe environment
• Sufficient facilities
• Enough time to plan and collaborate
• High-quality professional development
• An atmosphere of trust and respect
• Effective school improvement teams
• Appropriate assignments and workload.

When these needs are met, research shows teachers stay and students achieve at higher levels. And when these needs are not met, teachers leave more often and student scores are low. In Alabama, teachers also reported that these factors, more than high salaries, influenced their decision to work in a low-performing school.

These results indicate school success and educator satisfaction cannot always be measured by counting computers, class sizes, calendar days and salaries. It’s more about the quality of the work environment.

“With our results, we’ll be able to pick low-hanging fruit that we might not otherwise have known would make such a difference,” says Colorado Representative Michael Merrifield, an educator for 30 years. “We might even address these challenges with a minimal fiscal impact.”

In most states, the survey also has given state and local policymakers the opportunity to work together toward a common reform agenda. At the state level, legislators, teacher associations, agency leaders and the governor have used the results to support stronger, more effective education policy, improve current programs, and provide information to support future school initiatives. The survey data also have provided an important opportunity for local district and building leaders to identify strengths and areas for improvement and create plans to meet their special needs.

In North Carolina, the four surveys have led policymakers to support strong school leaders and better working conditions. They’ve identified teacher recruitment and retention as a key problem they need to solve. They also put more effort into principal and teacher preparation programs, and evaluations for principals that include working conditions. Jeffus also sponsored legislation to require schools to carve out more free time for teachers to plan and collaborate.

Glazier says the data gave legislators a new perspective. “This helps us to understand that teacher retention isn’t all about the money,” he says, and highlights noneconomic issues that we can address—issues that we intuitively may know, but teachers now confirm.”

Vratil is less optimistic, however, about the effect in Kansas. He believes the survey results were less surprising and have not led to much change in teacher policy.

Information a Priority

Despite budget restraints, many state legislators feel that getting this kind of information is too important not to fund the surveys. The Colorado General Assembly funded the surveys while repealing most other education reforms passed during the 2008 session.

“This survey will help policymakers without education experience to understand the challenges in the classroom—how difficult it really is and how unneeded and unnecessary mandates affect the teachers,” Merrifield says. “This is an opportunity to open some eyes.”

The North Carolina legislature is facing a similar debate over future studies of working conditions. With a severe budget shortfall, some argue that money for future surveys should be cut. Glazier has made strong arguments, however, for maintaining funding.

“For a relatively small investment of $215,000 every other year, this gives us school-level detail, and gives teachers the opportunity to be heard,” he says. “This is a great investment that just makes sense. There’s really no downside.”
Many Hats

The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins is a children’s book, written by Dr. Seuss. Set in feudal times, the story begins in the Kingdom of Didd. On one particular day the king decides to ride through a street past Bartholomew Cubbins, a poor boy in the market. Bartholomew removes his hat, according to the laws, but another hat mysteriously appears; when he attempts to remove this one too, another one appears again, and this continues, even as he removes more and more hats. Eventually, as Bartholomew is being threatened with death, the 500th hat comes off and Bartholomew’s head is bare again.

In your role as an administrator, a teacher, or related server, how many different hats do you wear? Does it sometimes seem that after taking one hat off, another one quickly takes its place? Unlike Bartholomew, however, the hats you wear may change, but are rarely removed.

Over eight years ago, as district administrators, we were doing our best to manage the many day-to-day challenges of making personnel, legal, and financial decisions; of helping teachers cope with paperwork and related compliance demands; and of juggling multiple other roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, our frustration got the best of us when we realized that our annual special education teacher turnover rate, at the end of the 2001-2002 school year, exceeded 20%. We recognized that our struggle to retain good teachers impacted all of the others areas we were working so hard to manage. More importantly, it negatively affected student learning and our district’s ability to deliver quality special education services.

Teacher exit-survey information helped us to identify some of the reasons for the exodus. A sense of isolation, perceived lack of administrative support, and an increasingly more challenging student population were among the main reasons. We reached the conclusion that we needed to look at ourselves, by examining our department’s organizational support structures, to see what we were doing or not doing to contribute to the problem.

Costs of Teacher Turnover

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) reported that teacher isolation “is a factor driving many of our best teachers out of the classroom and driving new teachers from schools that need them the most.” In addition, Luan Purcell, former assistant superintendent of the Houston County (Ga.) School District and now executive director of the Council of Administrators of Special Education, indicates that “no matter what teachers or speech pathologists have to do, if they perceive they are supported, genuinely supported, they stay!” She suggests that the number one reason special educators are not retained is not money, but rather the level of support they receive.

In evaluating the impact of teacher turnover, a recent NCTAF study (a full report is available at www.nctaf.org) found that “when a teacher leaves, the costs of recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement teacher are substantial. It is clear that thousands of dollars walk out the door each time a teacher leaves. The cost per teacher leaver ranged from $4,366 in rural Jemez Valley to $17,872 in Chicago. The total cost of turnover in the Chicago Public Schools is over $86 million per year.”

The NCTAF identifies another significant impact of teacher turnover—the effect it has on quality instruction and student learning:

Studies have shown that teacher effectiveness improves with experience during the early years of a teacher’s career. New teachers struggle, but as they gain more knowledge and experience they are able to raise student achievement.

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With the high rate of new teacher turnover, our education system is losing half of all teachers before they reach their peak effectiveness. Students, especially those in at-risk schools, are too often left with a passing parade of inexperienced teachers who leave before they become accomplished educators. Even without a price tag on lost teaching quality and student opportunities to learn, the message is clear: high teacher turnover is draining school districts of precious dollars that could be used to improve teaching quality and student learning.

The loss of an effective teacher has a ripple effect. Students, parents, principals, community members, district office personnel, and others feel the impact. The immediate monetary costs are great, but the long-term costs (e.g., the failure to teach a child how to read) are far greater.

**Working Smarter**

After carefully analyzing the problem and considering our options (including finding employment in a less stressful environment), we decided to make the “main thing the main thing.” That is, we placed greater emphasis on our roles as instructional leaders and identified as many ways as possible to remove some of our hats by delegating certain managerial responsibilities to other staff members.

We gradually began intensifying our efforts at providing teachers with ongoing, effective professional development combined with instructional coaching. We recognized that follow-up coaching support is positively correlated to lasting change (Bush, 1984; Showers, 1995).

Guskey (2002) also suggests that one of the best ways to learn is by observing others or by being observed and receiving specific feedback from the observation. Furthermore, teachers are likely to keep and use new strategies if they receive coaching (expert or peer) while they’re trying new ideas in their classrooms (Gschwend, 2000). When professional development moves away from isolation of teachers in the workplace and moves toward collaboration, there is an increased likelihood of implementation (Joyce & Showers, 1980; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Teachers’ classroom practices greatly influence student achievement (Darling Hammond, 1997) and student achievement increases when students have teachers skilled in “how to teach.”

Our district professional development activities included sustained and intensive professional learning opportunities with follow-up support from coaches (i.e., full-time induction specialists and master special education teachers who were given release time to make classroom visits). In addition to the instruction and practice received during training sessions, participants observed their colleagues deliver a lesson, observed the instructional coach teaching in the coach’s classroom, and were observed in their own classrooms by their coaches. Throughout this process specific data were gathered, feedback about performance provided, and goals were established that focused on potential areas of improvement.

Teachers gradually became more skilled at effective teaching practices. Teachers and coaches alike identified other benefits from their coaching experience (e.g., relationships among professional peers were established and their sense of isolation was reduced).

As relationships between participants and coaches developed, critical technical support could be provided throughout the school year. Besides receiving assistance related to effective instructional practices and the implementation of research-based curricula, participants also received support in utilizing student data to make instructional decisions.

Observation data showed that skills learned during professional development activities were demonstrated in participant classrooms. Increased student response opportunities and praise statements, and improvements in error correction were also documented (See The Utah Special Educator, March 2009, page 43). Participants reported experiencing greater self-confidence and increased instructional effectiveness. Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to give and receive feedback from peers and experienced an increased sense of collegiality.

As administrators in a large school district, we noticed yet another important outcome of the coaching experience, which had powerful
School reform is dependent on teacher leadership being developed, nurtured and reinforced both in schools and throughout the district.

implications for long-term sustainability of effective teaching practices. A cadre of strong instructional leaders emerged. These coaches could now wear one of our many hats—providing instructional leadership and ongoing support to teachers.


> We can no longer ignore the leadership capacity of teachers—the largest group of school employees and those closest to students. Empowered teachers bring an enormous resource for continually improving schools. School reform is dependent on teacher leadership being developed, nurtured and reinforced both in schools and throughout the district.

Over the years, teachers expressed appreciation for the quality professional development activities, curricular materials, and coaching support. The investment in our teachers paid off in other ways as well! Our department was successful at reducing the turnover rate by 10.5% (51 leavers in 2003-04 and only 23 leavers in 2007-08) over a five-year period (See Figure 1).

**The Utah Coaching Network**

Given the success we experienced with coaching, we were eager to support other districts across the state with growing their own coaching model. Consequently, the UPDC began the Utah Coaching Network (UCN). The vision of the UCN is to work with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in order to do the following:

- Help grow district capacity for sustaining effective practices through coaching
- Improve instructional coaches’ skills
- Increase coaching skills in specific content areas (e.g., curriculum-based measurement and direct instruction)
- Enhance skills in identifying and using evidence-based practices, and in using student data to make instructional decisions

We recognized that instructional coaching was occurring in many LEAs. Some coaching practices were highly developed while others were just emerging. Through the UCN, the UPDC could assist LEAs in moving forward regardless of where they were at in the process.

Each district has the capacity for effective coaching, but it requires thinking systemically and acting systematically. It may also require making a few changes to district support structures. This concept is reflected in the following quote:

> Organizations are living systems that grow, learn, change, and adapt to their environments. A change in one part of the system (no matter how small) automatically affects all other parts of the system. For example, the simple act of one teacher’s reaching out to a colleague to share ideas and information can have a ripple effect throughout a grade level, an entire school, and—most important—on the students in each of those teachers’ classrooms. Thinking systemically means analyzing whether all parts of the system are aligned to mutually support one another...Thinking systemically means that all members of the system are moving in the same direction, guided by a shared vision and a common operating language about what constitutes quality curriculum and instruction. (Brown & Moffet, 1999)

The “common language” of the UCN is reflected in the motto: “Where Learning Happens!” The essential elements of our work can be summarized in the acronym F.A.C.T.S.:

- **F** – Feedback – prompts & corrections
- **A** – Adjusted – differentiated based on need
- **C** – Context – on-site, in real time
- **T** – Time – repeated, ongoing practice
- **S** – Student-focused, data-driven decisions

The UCN is working to assist LEAs throughout the state with the important work of developing a district infrastructure designed to support effective coaching. Despite the inherent challenges of such an undertaking, our vision for supporting teachers and improving student outcomes has helped us maintain our focus on what matters most.

To date, the UPDC has sponsored three UCN sessions in Southern Utah (UCN South) with over 70 participants from six LEAs receiving training in Cedar City (see Peggy Childs’ article in this issue). UCN North, held in Provo, had their first two-day training session November 16-17. The second two-day session was held January 21-22 and the third session will be held March 25-26. There are over 200 participants from thirty-three LEAs participating in the UCN North. Participants for the UCN include special educators with coaching experience (recommended by their Special Education Directors), individuals considered to be the change agents in their organization (special and general education), and administrators.

These professional learning opportunities will allow instructional coaches to learn and practice a variety coaching skills (i.e., the coaching cycle, using instructional routines, increasing the effectiveness of praise statements, increasing students’ opportunities to respond, and effectively correcting behavior).

**Summary**

According to the *Annenberg Institute for School Reform,* “When employed and supported effectively, instructional coaching enhances district professional development systems by providing school and central office personnel with sustained, targeted supports to build knowledge, improve practice, and promote student achievement.” Killion and Harrison (2006) remind us that, “Coaching is not the panacea for all the ills of education and the challenges related to student learning...However, coaching contributes to change—in student learning, in teaching, in professionalism, and in school culture...Coaching reinforces the importance of precise instruction and high-quality professional learning.”

The UPDC is committed to providing services to LEAs through Universal, Targeted, and Intensive professional learning opportunities. Our services are designed to facilitate positive outcomes for students with disabilities and help build local capacity. An important focus of the UPDC is on assisting LEAs, through the Utah Coaching Network, with implementing a differentiated coaching model to help support school personnel in using evidence-based practices. We believe that coaching is all about working smarter, not harder.
Coaching provides assistance and encouragement to teachers as they strive to improve their instruction and improve student learning—a noble endeavor. So, when the district special education directors in Utah requested that we create more opportunities for teachers to learn coaching skills, the UPDC responded by organizing a series of professional learning opportunities—one for the south and the other for the north. The southern end of the state led out with the first coaching session in October, 2009. Registration opened and 70 people signed up! There were special educators, general educators, administrators, coordinators, and specialists from both elementary and secondary education. Participating districts were Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Millard and Washington. The large number of participants indicated an eagerness for strong professional development on the topic of coaching and many expressed their appreciation for bringing the professional learning opportunities close to their homes and schools.

One of the first items of business was inviting participants to draft a District Implementation Plan for each of their districts. Even though some districts weren’t coaching at the time, participants developed a document that could start the process when they returned to their schools. That process included naming a coaching coordinator, site-based coaches and the teachers involved. All were given an assignment to engage in a coaching interaction with another coach before the next training in February. Some had to become creative in searching for someone to have a coaching interaction with in their smaller schools. Blaine Wheeler, from Kane High School, decided to start the process with his para-professional. Cathy Reed, from Big Water School, noticed an impact on her own instruction and the learning environment of her school as she worked with another teacher in the coaching interaction. Mandy Luce, from Kane Middle School used the coaching process with a new teacher she was mentoring. She said, “Overall, I feel the process is working! We were very interactive with each other. I am able to meet some of her first year teacher needs by implementing coaching practices. I am excited to continue the training!” Drafting a District Implementation Plan helped participants reach out in unusual ways to initiate the coaching process.

Other districts were eager to put into practice the skills and strategies that would enhance their coaching efforts. One aspect of coaching is observing another teacher with the goal of watching for specific behaviors agreed upon before the observation. Bylynda Murray, from Iron County School District, said:

The observations made a magical thing happen. Teachers were coming to me with questions, and requests for coaching and modeling in their
classrooms like never before. I was able to visit multiple classrooms, by teacher request, to model and coach one on one with them before the observations took place. I loved the communication that took place both prior to the observation and during the observation time. During the observation time it was amazing to see all the teachers implementing what we had talked about in our last professional development session. Not only were they implementing all the components but, in most cases, they did it flawlessly. I could tell that teachers listened during our professional development activities and made a sincere attempt to implement what was learned. I am happy that everything went so smoothly. I had a wonderful experience and look forward to our future coaching/observation sessions.

The UCN South series also featured Anita Archer, a well known national presenter. She spent two days in St. George during November talking about academic interventions and coaching academic interventions. Garfield District took advantage of an already scheduled professional development day and sent 60 teachers and paraprofessionals to this exceptional training opportunity. Anita’s handouts and videos were posted on the UPDC website. February was the last in the UCN South series for this year. Participants had been studying the book, Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction, by Jim Knight. They met Jim during a live iChat and asked him questions from their reading of the book. The coaches were coached from the #1 instructional coach, Jim Knight. Not a bad way to finish up the year’s training!

The Utah Coaching Network is a statewide initiative. Through the professional learning opportunities, both north and south, participating coaches, special educators, general educators, and administrators will learn, practice and implement effective research-based coaching skills and strategies. Indeed, it’s creating a community of competence where teachers can refine their professional skills in the non-evaluative environment of coaching. Statewide, that’s a great goal. For the southwest corner of the state, it’s an idea whose time has come!
The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University works with urban school systems across the country that are engaged in comprehensive school reform, especially in communities serving disadvantaged children. In our work, we support and encourage the use of instructional coaching, a promising new professional development practice in which teacher leaders serve as coaches to facilitate and guide content-focused professional learning for a school’s teachers.

Coaching aligns with the Institute’s interrelated focal areas for systemwide school improvement: district redesign, leadership, opportunity and accountability, and community-centered education reform. Indeed, effective coaching incorporates an array of interrelated approaches we advocate that promote coherence, focus, and alignment at multiple levels of a school system:

- **Investment in human capital.** Effective coaches and coaching structures build instructional and leadership capacity by applying what is known about adult learning and change theory.
- **Sustainability.** Coaching supports the systemic improvement efforts of school communities that push beyond individual teacher behavior or even the work of an individual school.
- **Equity and internal accountability.** Coaching holds the potential to address inequities in opportunities for teacher and student learning by providing differentiated, targeted supports. The structures and culture that well-implemented coaching models promote can increase collective responsibility throughout a school system for students and their learning.
- **Connecting school and district.** In cases where coaches are effective liaisons between school practice and district initiatives, emerging evidence shows that they can facilitate professional learning that supports systemwide initiatives more powerfully.

The Institute believes that—when employed and supported effectively—instructional coaching enhances district professional development systems by providing school and central office personnel with sustained, targeted supports to build knowledge, improve practice, and promote student achievement.

**School-Based, Job-Embedded Professional Development**

Instructional coaching is grounded in current research and clinical knowledge on leadership and schools as “professional communities of practice.” Recent research on professional development suggests that it is most effective when it includes components that are based in the school and embedded in the job and when it increases teachers’ theoretical understandings of their work (Miller 1995). Supports for improved teaching and learning are also more effective when they are tailored to needs identified by teachers and when their approach to learning is collaborative and inquiry-based (Darling Hammond and McLaughlin 1995).

Coaching provides such supports through an array of activities designed to build collective leadership and continuously improve teacher instructional capacity and student learning. These activities, ideally, coalesce in ways that create internal accountability due to...
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the embedded nature of the work and people engaged in it (Barr, Simmons, and Zarrow 2003; WestEd 2000). A well-designed and-supported coaching program weds core elements of effective professional development with the essential goals of professional learning communities in ways that advance both school and systemic improvement.

Effective Coaching

Lessons from Research

The principles of instructional coaching are grounded in research on effective professional development and professional learning communities. Coaching appears to be a promising approach because it strives to blend what is known about effective professional development with school-based and school-specific needs regarding both content and school climate.

Evidence of increased student learning as a direct result of coaching is not yet well documented (Poglinco et al. 2003). But, as coaching is increasingly used and its impact measured, researchers expect more and more links to be established between coaching and student achievement. A growing body of research suggests that coaching is a promising element of effective professional development in some of the following ways.

• Effective coaching encourages collaborative, reflective practice.
  Coaching shifts professional learning from direct instruction outside the context of practice (such as workshops and conferences) to more varied opportunities to improve discipline-specific practice. Most studies show that coaching leads to improvements in instructional capacity. For instance, teachers apply their learning more deeply, frequently, and consistently than teachers working alone; teachers improve their capacity to reflect; and teachers apply their learning not only to their work with students, but also to their work with each other (Neufeld and Roper 2003; Poglinco et al. 2003).

• Effective embedded professional learning promotes positive cultural change.
  The impact of coaching often goes beyond improving content instruction. The conditions, behaviors, and practices required by an effective coaching program can affect the culture of a school or system, thus embedding instructional change within broader efforts to improve school-based culture and conditions (Neufeld and Roper 2003).

• A focus on content encourages the use of data analysis to inform practice.
  Effective coaching programs respond to particular needs suggested by data, allowing improvement efforts to target issues such as closing achievement gaps, supporting teachers across career stages, and advocating for equity (e.g., through differentiated instruction). A coaching program guided by data helps both to create coherence within a school and to bridge different levels of the system (Barr, Simmons, and Zarrow 2003) by focusing on strategic areas of need that are suggested by evidence, rather than by individual and sometimes conflicting opinions. Coaches can then be chosen who have the content expertise and organizational development capacity to lead their “cadres” toward more effective practice in these areas of need at various levels of the educational system.

• Coaching promotes the implementation of learning and reciprocal accountability.
  Coaching is an embedded, visible support—usually funded by the district—that attempts to respond to student and teacher needs in ongoing, consistent, dedicated ways. The likelihood of using new learning and sharing responsibility rises when colleagues, guided by a coach, work together and hold each other accountable for improved teaching and learning (Barr, Simmons, and Zarrow 2003; Coggins, Stoddard, and Cutler 2003; WestEd 2000). And because instructional coaching takes place in a natural setting—the classroom rather than a hotel ballroom—observation, learning, and experimentation can occur in real situations (Neufeld and Roper 2003). Continued on page 20
• Coaching supports collective, interconnected leadership across a school system.
An essential feature of coaching is that it uses the relationships between coaches, principals, and teachers to create the conversation that leads to behavioral, pedagogical, and content knowledge change. Effective coaching distributes leadership, supporting the goals of effective principals through the coaches by keeping the focus on teaching and learning. This focus promotes the development of leadership skills, professional learning, and support for teachers that target ways to improve student outcomes (Neufeld and Roper 2003).

Research findings indicate that effective coaching structures promote a collaborative culture where large numbers of school personnel feel ownership and responsibility for leading improvement efforts in teaching and learning. Coaching attends to the “social infrastructure” issues of schools and systems (Payne 1998) that often impede the deep and lasting change that school reform requires. These issues include school climate, teacher isolation, insufficient support, and limited instructional and leadership capacity. The attempt to address these critical elements of school quality by incorporating new understandings of effective professional development is a primary reason that coaching holds significant promise toward improving teaching and learning in urban schools (Neufeld and Roper 2003).

Lessons and Implications from the Institute’s Work

As coaching has emerged as an increasingly common component of systemic reform, the Annenberg Institute has had the opportunity to work with, learn from, and observe in districts that are considering or engaged in instructional coaching as part of their professional development systems. Over time and in varied settings, we have observed some noteworthy challenges to effective coaching.

• Too great a focus on the classroom isolates coaching from systemic goals.
One of the strengths of instructional coaching is that it is grounded at the school and classroom level, allowing coaches to work as responsive, constructivist models for professional learning. This same strength, however, can create an array of divergent approaches to teacher learning and to building content knowledge, particularly in large or decentralized systems.

We have found the greatest coherence where coaching is guided by districtwide goals and standards that are grounded in research and experience, thereby avoiding disparate approaches at the school level and ineffective, diluted supports from the central office. To position coaching as a districtwide effort, a school and district need to develop decision-making systems that show commitment to a coaching program as a part of a shared practice. They need to identify strategies for communicating the coaching approach to a wide audience, designate the personnel required to do so, jointly invest in and create professional development for coaches, and clearly define criteria for hiring, and evaluating coaches.

Clarity about the districtwide nature of a coaching program also takes the focus off individual classrooms and teachers. Clarifying that the coaches’ role is supportive rather than supervisory avoids potential problems with the teachers’ union and contract issues.

• Coaching is one element of a professional development system, not the only answer.
Coaching is no silver bullet. It can sustain professional learning and act as a bridge between school practice and broader district goals. However, for coaching to accomplish those ends, it must be explicitly linked to other professional development opportunities and broader components of systemic improvement such as small learning communities or districtwide frameworks. If coaching is the only form of professional learning, it runs the risk of creating isolated pockets of effective teaching and learning in individual schools, rather than supporting improvement both schoolwide and districtwide.

• Coaching models are often not adapted well.
Instructional coaching emerged in and is more commonly found in elementary schools. While certain elements of good practice hold true across the K-12 spectrum, trying to apply what worked in elementary schools will often undermine the work in secondary schools. Effective coaching recognizes and adapts to the structural, cultural, and instructional differences of different school levels. Key differences such as size, departmentalization, student load, and planning time affect the ways in which a coaching model can be implemented, supported, and assessed.

• Whether voluntary or mandated, coaching can fail to reach resistant teachers.
Instructional coaching goes beyond building awareness and knowledge to help sustain changes in practice. But in cases where participation in coached “cadres” is voluntary, resistant teachers are able to opt out of the process. And in cases where participation is mandated, resistant teachers often feel resentment and develop no real ownership of the work. In both examples, the real benefit resides only with those teachers who most likely would have engaged in reflective, ongoing improvement efforts regardless of the structure within which it takes place.

• School and central office supports are often underused or inaccessible.
Central office supports for instruction and school-level efforts to improve instruction are often not consistently aligned and coordinated. While coaches can serve as liaisons between school and administration, clear routes of access to supports and communication of needs between central offices and schools remain ongoing challenges, particularly in large or decentralized districts.

• Coaching programs often lack assessment indicators and systematic documentation of impact.
As coaching is a relatively new approach to instructional
capacity building, there is increasing demand for evidence that it improves teaching practice and increases student learning. Effective coaching structures use indicators to measure the changes in their practice and assess the effectiveness of their work. However, the time, knowledge, and investment required to systematically gather a range of evidence continue to be a challenge. The lack of documented examples of coaching allows districts to construct their own process and content, but these new models must then be tracked in order to share the lessons learned.

• **A focus on process limits the rigorous analysis of data and content.**
  Just as rigorous instruction and high expectations are the goals for student experiences, the same holds true for the professional learning of coaches and the teaching teams with whom they work. “Process” activities such as collegial exchange and developing group processes and facilitation skills are highly valued and essential in coaching. But to be effective, the processes need to be grounded in content- and instruction-focused learning geared toward individual and organizational improvement through the use of evidence, research, and keen observation of practice.

• **Coaching often focuses on broad strategies to the exclusion of differentiation and equity.**
  Coaching must move beyond a “universal best practices” approach to instruction in order to effectively deal with complex equity issues such as language diversity and special needs. For example, a literacy coach cannot simply help his or her teaching team learn a menu of “reading strategies,” but must also attend to the unique learning needs of English-language learners. These considerations hold true at the school, coaching, and district levels.

• **Teachers are typically the “learners,” but learning must occur at all levels.**
  Instructional coaching is often focused—understandably so—at the school level and considered an issue between school administrators and school staffs. However, insufficient support or commitment not only from the school-level leadership, but also from district leadership, can derail even the best-laid plans. It is important to engage not only the school-level personnel who do the work, but also central office personnel to support and align the work across the district as well as community-based or other organizations knowledgeable about particular content-based issues.

*Editors note: This article has been edited from the original document to fit this publication. The entire article, including references, can be accessed online at: www.updc.org/310-p21-annenberg*

For more information regarding the work of the Annenberg Institute, visit: [www.annenberginstitute.org](http://www.annenberginstitute.org)
Recently, interest in using coaches to facilitate professional learning has exploded as schools across the country have hired literally hundreds of literacy coaches, reading coaches, cognitive coaches, and inclusion coaches. The Reading Excellence Act of 1998 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 both allotted unprecedented federal dollars for professional development, and across the country many states are spending those funds to hire coaches. In the Boston Public Schools, for example, each of the 139 public schools has a literacy coach on site at least 50 percent of the time each week (Richardson, 2004).

This turn to coaching is encouraging because it suggests that there is a growing awareness that professional learning programs are more effective when they involve intensive forms of support. At this point, however, little research has been published identifying what works and what doesn’t work when it comes to coaching. This lack of research puts schools and districts at risk; because little is known about effective coaching practices, decision-makers risk spending valuable dollars on coaching programs that end up being unsuccessful. This article has been written to provide an overview of some recent research CRL has conducted on coaching so that decision makers will have a better understanding of the potential advantages and stumbling blocks that any coaching program might encounter.

CRL Coaching Studies

During the past nine years, CRL researchers have conducted several studies to answer some central questions about coaching. Three projects in particular have provided funding for our extended study of coaching: the Strategic Advantage Project (conducted in Lawrence, Kan., and funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, 1996-1999), Pathways to Success (conducted in Topeka, Kan., and funded by GEAR-UP, 1999-present), and Passport to Success (conducted in Anne Arundel County, Md., and funded by a Maryland Department of Education State Improvement Grant, 1997 present). Some of the results of those studies are reported in this article.

What is Instructional Coaching?

An instructional coach (IC) is an on-site professional developer who teaches educators how to use proven teaching methods. In CRL projects, instructional coaches have provided on-site professional development in CRL’s Content Enhancement Series, Learning Strategies Curriculum, Community Building Series, and Strategic Tutoring as well as, recently, materials from Randy Sprick’s Safe and Civil Schools program.

Instructional coaches employ a variety of professional development procedures to foster widespread, high-quality implementation of interventions. The procedures coaches employ include the following:

- conducting one-to-one or small-group meetings to identify how best to collaborate with a teacher or teachers to address their most pressing concerns
- guiding teachers through instructional manuals, checklists, and other materials
- collaboratively planning with teachers to identify when and how an intervention might be implemented
- preparing materials for teachers before instruction
- modeling instructional practices in teachers’ classrooms
- observing teachers using interventions
- providing feedback.

Instructional coaches provide what Wood and McQuarrie (1999) have described as “on-the-job learning.”

Instructional coaches, as we define them, also base their actions on the Partnership Principles of Partnership Learning (for more information, visit www.kucri.org/partnership). Thus, instructional coaches respect teachers’ professionalism and focus their efforts on two-way conversations that lead to creative, practical application of research-based practices. Instructional coaches see themselves as equal partners with teachers in the complex and richly rewarding work of teaching students. More than anything else, instructional coaches work in partnerships to accelerate teachers’ professional learning through mutually enriching, healthy relationships. Instructional coaches are colleagues, friends, and confidants who listen with care and share valuable information with teachers at the time when teachers most need it.

Safe and Civil Schools

Randy Sprick is the author of several behavior management programs that collectively are referred to as the Safe and Civil Schools Series. In the past year, Randy and members of CRL’s Institute for Effective Instruction have been exploring the relationship between effective instruction and behavior management. One component of Randy’s Safe and Civil Schools program, CHAMPS, also has been introduced into several schools in Topeka, Kan., that are partners in CRL’s Pathways to Success project. An interview with Randy appeared in the May 2004 issue of Stratenotes and is now available on CPL’s web site, www.kucri.org/archives. Other sources of information about the Safe and Civil Schools Series:

Three Questions

1. Does coaching lead to implementation?

We have conducted several studies to assess whether or not coaching leads to implementation in schools. What is emerging from our data is that coaching does indeed lead to implementation when the right conditions are in place. In the Pathways to Success project in Topeka, Kan., (which involves six middle schools and three high schools) and the Passport to Success project in Anne Arundel County in Maryland (which comprises five middle schools), well-constructed programs have consistently generated implementation rates of at least 85 percent, with schools frequently getting every teacher on board to teach several interventions. For example, the four original Pathways to Success schools have maintained implementation rates of better than 85 percent for the past three years.

Recently, Pathways to Success researchers followed up with teachers who attended Pathways Summer Workshops to see how many teachers are implementing aspects of what they learned during summer workshops. We found that within six weeks of the start of school, 85 percent of Pathways to Success teachers (70 of the 82 teachers we contacted) already were implementing at least one teaching practice they had learned in the summer (for example, a Content Enhancement Routine, a Learning Strategy, or Sprick’s CHAMPs classroom management program). Coaches from the Passport to Success project in Maryland also report that more than 90 percent of teachers who attended their summer institute returned to their schools to implement a teaching practice they learned at that institute. In contrast, as is illustrated in Figure I, research conducted by Showers, Murphy, and Joyce (1996) suggests that traditional inservice with no follow up is likely to get about a 10 percent implementation rate.

The high success rate currently experienced in Pathways and Passport to Success schools has not occurred in every situation, however. In those cases in which implementation rates have been low, we have found that at least one of two critical conditions—administrative support and highly qualified coaches—was not in place.

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Administrative support. Coaches struggle to be successful when they do not have the explicit formal and informal backing of administrators within their school and at the district level. Principals significantly increase coaches’ effectiveness when they collaborate with coaches to identify teachers who could benefit from a coach’s services, respectfully apply pressure to teachers who need improvement, lead school improvement teams to institutionalize the interventions provided by coaches, evaluate teachers’ use of the interventions they learn from coaches, and celebrate the success teachers experience using materials they learned from coaches. Additionally, principals are more effective at supporting coaches when they know that the coach’s efforts are important to district decision-makers. Without district support, many principals are hesitant to fully support a coach’s efforts.

Qualified coaches. Not everyone has what it takes to be an effective coach. Instructional coaches need a deep understanding of the interventions that they are sharing with teachers. For example, an instructional coach who provides professional development in SIM strategies or routines needs to have the same knowledge, or access to the same knowledge, as a certified SIM Learning Strategies or Content Enhancement Professional Developer. Additionally, we have identified personal qualities that are equally important to the success of instructional coaches. In fact, on the Pathways and Passport to Success projects, we have come to believe that how a coach works is just as important as what a coach knows.

Our Pathways and Passport to Success experience has shown that effective coaches have to be master teachers who are comfortable going into any classroom. Effective instructional coaches have to love students and love the chance to work with them in schools. Simply put, no matter how much coaches know, they won’t win over teachers unless they can be successful in the classroom. Additionally, in our experience, instructional coaches are more effective if they have what we have come to call an “infectious personality.” Instructional coaches need to have energy and a positive outlook, and they need to be the kind of person that others enjoy being around. Coaches need to be, as one coach has commented, “respectfully pushy.” Most importantly, at their core, coaches need to continually communicate their deep, honest belief in teachers, even when they also are communicating specific ways in which teachers might need to improve their teaching practices.

Coaching can quickly make a difference in a school when district leaders, principals, and highly qualified coaches all work together in partnership to improve the quality of instruction experienced by students. However, when administrative support is lacking or when instructional coaches lack knowledge or important communication skills, a coaching program may never get off the ground.

2. What about fidelity?

By collaboratively planning instruction, sharing information, modeling in the classroom, observing teachers give lessons, and providing constructive feedback, instructional coaches not only increase implementation, but they also can increase the likelihood that teachers will implement an instructional practice with fidelity.

But is fidelity important? Does it matter if teachers teach in a manner that is close to what is written in an instructor’s manual? We decided that this was an important question to answer if we were going to make fidelity a central goal of coaching. With this in mind, we set out to see how well students were achieving in what we refer to as “hi-fi” classrooms (those in which teachers used practices that were close to those outlined in instructional manuals) and “low-fi” classrooms (those in which teachers left out significant components of the teaching practices outlined in instructional manuals).

To conduct this study, we compared the difference on pre- and post test assessments in the number of complete sentences written by students learning
Teachers also were clear that they did not believe that coaches have the skills and knowledge necessary to teach content in the classroom. While the mean scores for teacher responses to questions about the benefits of watching instructional coaches teach were all in excess of 6 on a 7-point scale, the mean score for responses to questions about instructional coaches being able to teach all content received a mean score of 3.18. The results suggest that teachers believe it is very beneficial to watch a coach model instruction associated with a Learning Strategy, Content Enhancement Routine, or classroom management procedure, but teachers do not believe it would be beneficial to watch an instructional coach teach more specific content in a course.

3. What do teachers think about instructional coaching?

To better understand teacher perceptions of the value of instructional coaches modeling in their classrooms, we surveyed teachers who had observed an instructional coach within the past year. Of the 107 teachers surveyed, 93 taught in one of five middle schools, and the remaining 14 taught in one of two high schools. Teachers were asked to complete a short questionnaire consisting of 10 items. Teachers responded to each item by circling a number from “1” to “7,” with “1” representing strongly disagree and “7” representing strongly agree.

The questionnaire items were written to gather information about teachers’ perceptions concerning five broad questions:

- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson made it easier to implement an instructional practice?
- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson increased their fidelity to instructional practices?
- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson made them more confident about implementing an instructional practice?
- Do teachers think they learned other teaching strategies while watching a coach demonstrate a lesson?
- Do teachers think coaches have enough content knowledge to demonstrate a content lesson in the teachers’ classes?

Results from the survey may provide insight into when coaches should and should not be modeling in the classroom. As Table I illustrates, teachers reported that watching an instructional coach in the classroom was very helpful. Teachers strongly agreed that watching an instructional coach made it easier for them to implement an instructional practice, increased their fidelity to the instructional model, increased their confidence, and enabled them to learn other teaching techniques. From the teachers’ perspective, watching a coach in the classroom was an important part of professional learning.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center

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Introduction

This past fall, the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future published a report called: “What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future.” This report focused on teachers and the quality of teaching as the core of student performance. New curriculum, standards, resources/materials, assessments, methodologies, technology, and reforms will not and do not have much impact unless teachers have appropriate access, knowledge, skills and continuous learning opportunities. Teachers require time for reflection, mentoring relationships, collegial interaction, expert role models, and ongoing professional development for any of these changes to be effective.

Peer coaching has the potential to improve existing, as well as new, teaching practices.

The National Commission made five major recommendations for the future of education:

• Get serious about standards, for both students and teachers.
• Reinvent teacher preparation and professional development.
• Overhaul teacher recruitment and put qualified teachers in every classroom.
• Encourage and reward teaching knowledge and skill.
• Create schools that are organized for student and teacher success.

An element which can be a tool to influence each of these recommendations is peer coaching. Peer coaching is a model of professional development that can be used to improve student learning by improving teaching. Peer coaching has the potential to improve existing, as well as new, teaching practices.

Issues

The improvement of teaching practices has traditionally been left to individual teachers working in isolation. Whether learning a new practice or working to improve a current
practice, teachers are expected, without appropriate support, to “work it out” on their own. Currently one-shot inservices, extended classes or workshops are rarely followed up with feedback and support or continued training.

“According to Fullan, ‘The absence of follow-up after workshops is the greatest single problem in contemporary professional development.’

There are few vehicles and little incentives for teachers to reflect on practice, share successful practices or learn from and with colleagues. Beginning teachers, or teachers changing disciplines or grade levels rarely have a regular, reliable support system.

“After teaching for 15 years I was asked to teach Algebra for the first time. I was frustrated. I needed another set of eyes in my room to give suggestions and feedback.”

To improve professional practices, and consequently to improve student learning, teachers need accessible opportunities and models for collaboration, sharing of ideas, feedback and assistance with their practice so that students may have the most optimal situations for learning, achievement, and success in schools.

Components
What is peer coaching? Peer coaching is a process in which two or more professional colleagues work together for a specific, predetermined purpose in order that teaching performance can be improved as well as validated. The purpose may be to reflect on current practices or to expand, to refine, and build new skills. Peer coaching can be utilized to share new ideas; to teach one another; to conduct classroom observations; or to solve problems in the workplace. Peer coaching is non judgmental, and non evaluative. Peer coaching focuses on the collaborative development, refinement and sharing of professional knowledge and skills. “Both novice teachers and veterans...nearly universally reported that these interactions improved their teaching. All involved are enthusiastic, including principals...welcome the new strengths the program brings to their schools.”

There are a variety of peer coaching terms and models: technical coaching, collegial coaching, team coaching, cognitive coaching, and challenge coaching are a few of the more common types of coaching used by schools. Each model is slightly different but all have the same end goal—to improve teaching and learning—and all involve the use of peers/colleagues to achieve this goal. Choosing appropriately which model for a situation is key, as is having all models available for use.

Why Peer Coaching?
Statistical support for peer coaching comes from many sources. Perhaps the most easily understood data follows:

- 5% of learners will transfer a new skill into their practice as a result of theory
- 10% will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration
- 20% will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training
- 25% will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training, and feedback
- 90% will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training, feedback, and coaching

(Dr. Bruce Joyce, “Staff Development Awareness Conference,” Columbia, SC, January 1987.)

Purposes which have been indicated to reinforce use of peer coaching include:

- increase of student learning
- facilitate/increase discussion between/among colleagues of professional topics/research sharing of successful practices through collaboration
- encouragement of and provisions for reflective practice
- use as a problem-solving vehicle
- reduce isolation among teachers
- promote teacher as researcher
- create a forum for addressing instructional problems
- support and assist new and beginning teachers in their practice
- build collaborative norms to enable teachers to give and receive ideas and receive assistance

A participant in STAR (Staff Training Assistance and Review Program) in Seattle, Washington offered, “…It has been a great relief and a great help to me to have time...to discuss my problems and to have her observations, on my classes and my teaching...feel much stronger now that I did...and am looking forward to further improvements.” There are currently programs provided for in union contracts and state policies across the country. Some American Federation of Teachers affiliates who provide a variety of peer coaching programs for their members include Toledo, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Boston. The State Board of Education in Vermont provides standards for teachers that include peer coaching.

Benefits
“The level of trust we developed throughout the year made it possible for us to support and listen to one another and to adapt our instruction based on individual needs.” “Having other teachers observe my classes gives me feedback on my strengths and weaknesses without having to be evaluated by an administrator.”

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Peer Coaching

Support

Today there are many teams of teachers and many schools around the country using peer coaching. There have been numerous books and journal articles, as well as workshops and training devoted to peer coaching. Studies have been conducted to document the positive impact of peer coaching on student and teacher learning. Yet they are not catching on in wide scope.

Obviously, a program like this needs certain supports in place in order to be successful. Commonly mentioned criteria are:

• trusting relationships among all participants
• administrative support (emotional, organizational, financial)
• faculty/staff recognition of the need for improvement and formal ongoing learning
• clear expectations for engagement
• assessment methods for measuring the difference and outcomes for the experience
• release time for peer coaches
• funds to pay for training and personnel

Policy Recommendations

In order for peer coaching to meet the intended purposes and realize the many benefits, specific policy components need to be in place. Peer coaching must be recognized as a legitimate and useful form of ongoing professional development. Teachers need to receive release time, pay and credit to participate in a coaching program.

• Local schools and local and state districts must include peer coaching as a vital component of their professional development programs.
• Peer coaching must be included as a component as the state restructures its teacher certification programs, and the curriculum in teacher preparation programs is restructured.
• Provide opportunities for teachers to form inter and intra school teams according to individual needs.
• Local schools and local and state districts must provide funding for training, time and personnel to include peer coaching in professional development programs.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center

For additional information and resources, visit: www.teachersnetwork.org
Why Peer Coaching?

Over the last fifteen years, a growing number of educators have come to the conclusion that the workshop and conference format that make up most staff development is ineffective. Teachers say that traditional professional development doesn’t offer the sustained opportunities for collaboration, feedback, and reflection they need to change their classroom practice. At the same time, a different methodology for professional learning has emerged. Richard (2003) notes that more and more schools across the country are replacing traditional staff development with school-based staff developers. Boston and San Diego School Districts are pioneers of this method of preparing teachers, but they are just two examples of the dozens of school districts that have adopted peer coaching as a model for school-based staff development. The reasons for this shift are clear; research on effective staff development shows that a peer coaching methodology meets teachers’ needs and is effective at shaping classroom practice.

Researchers have noted that workshops that comprise most traditional staff development methodologies don’t provide sufficient time, activities, or content necessary to promote meaningful change (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Study results by Joyce and Showers (1996, 2002) show that fewer than 15% of teachers implement new ideas learned in traditional staff development settings such as workshops. The problem with these traditional approaches is that teachers often don’t have the skills or knowledge needed to apply what they learn in these workshops and have no way to receive support or feedback when they do attempt to apply what they have learned. Teachers need time to see new strategies modeled during the school day and opportunities to use new skills in developing and implementing learning activities (Garet, et al., 2001; Joyce and Showers 1996, 2002; Rodriguez and Knuth, 2000).
As they have studied the impact of traditional professional development, many researchers have identified the characteristics of effective staff development, and their findings are remarkably consistent. Alexander Russo (2004) summarized these research findings in a recent article. Effective staff development must be “ongoing, deeply embedded in teachers’ classroom work with children, specific to grade levels or academic content, and focused on research-based approaches. It also must help to open classroom doors and create more collaboration and sense of community among teachers in a school” (para. 8).

Russo noted that school-based coaching not only met these criteria “remarkably well,” it is consistent with the standards for effective staff development outlined by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). For more than a decade the National Staff Development Council has studied the research on professional development with the goal of improving the quality of teachers’ professional development. The NSDC has outlined standards for effective professional development based on its analysis of the research. In reviewing the NSDC’s standards, Russo noted coaching aligned with many of them. In particular, he noted coaching “…is focused on authentic student work, is closely tied to specific school or district’s curriculum and to teachers’ practice, takes place on a continuous basis, and relies heavily on research” (para. 9).

Does peer coaching affect academic achievement?

While peer coaching may be an effective model of staff development, many educators are asking hard questions about peer coaching and academic achievement. Does peer coaching actually affect student learning? Does it produce increases in academic achievement? There are increasing indications that coaching can affect academic achievement.

- Richard (2003) notes that coaching, which was part of a broader package of reforms, was producing test score improvements in the San Diego School District.
- Guiney (2001) looked at the impact of literacy coaching in Boston Public Schools and concluded that, “Several schools have had dramatic increases on parts of the state’s difficult test, the MCAS [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System]—increases that can be directly connected to teachers’ work that was undertaken with their coaches.”
- Branigan (2002) concluded that Missouri’s eMINTS program, which combines computer technology, an inquiry-based approach to teaching, and extensive professional development, including coaching, produced impressive results in students who took the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test. “Results show that a higher percentage of students in eMINTS classrooms scored in the ‘Proficient’ or ‘Advanced’ categories…when compared with other students who took the MAP tests…” (para. 18).
Despite these promising findings, a recent study of peer coaching by Neufeld and Roper (2003) found that there is no conclusive evidence that coaching alone produces increases in academic achievement. Despite the lack of clear proof that coaching leads to increased academic achievement, Neufeld and Roper were quick to point out that “…coaching does increase the instructional capacity of a school and teachers, a known prerequisite for increasing learning” (p. v). Their conclusion is shared by many leading researchers in the field.

Does peer coaching affect teacher practice?

Research findings indicate that school-based peer coaching plays an important role in improving teachers’ abilities to adopt and implement new teaching and learning practices. When comparing teachers who had worked with coaches with those who had not, Showers and Joyce (2002) found that teachers who worked with coaches:

- Practiced new strategies more often and with greater skill than teachers who were not coached.
- Retained and increased their new skills over time; teachers who were not coached did not.
- Demonstrated a clearer understanding of the purposes and uses of the new strategies than teachers who were not coached.

These same researchers also found that when teachers combined participation in traditional workshops with peer coaching or methodologies that promoted collaboration and reflection, more than 80% of teachers were using newly learned strategies in their classrooms (Joyce and Showers, 1996; Joyce, Murphy, & Showers, 1996; Richardson, 1999).

Over time, research had made it increasingly clear that one key to changing classroom practices is to provide teachers with opportunities for ongoing discussion and reflection. Methodologies that provide teachers with these chances for collaboration change teaching practice (Darling-Hammond, 1995, 1996; Garet et al., 2001; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Little, 1993; Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, & Hewson, 1996; Richardson, 1994; Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, 1989; Richard, 2003; Showers and Joyce, 2002; Veenman and Denessen, 2001). Coaching is one methodology that encourages this type of professional collaboration. Teachers value coaching because it promotes their learning by offering them opportunities to become involved in meaningful discussions and planning, observing others, being observed, and receiving feedback (Carey and Frechtling, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998). Garet and several co-authors (2001) found that teachers from the same school who work together with coaches have more opportunities to “discuss concepts, skills, and problems that arise during their professional development experiences” and are “likely to share common curricular materials, course offerings, and assessment requirements.”

Does peer coaching help teachers effectively integrate technology into classroom practice?

The peer coaching methodology has an impact on teaching practices in a variety of content areas, and also plays a powerful role in helping teachers integrate technology into their classroom learning activities. Teachers needed ongoing support as their proficiency in integrating technology into instruction grew. While teachers initially rely heavily on technical support, they need instructional support as they begin to use technology to support project based learning or interdisciplinary learning (White, Ringstaff, & Kelley, 2002). Peer coaching can provide the type of support teachers need as they begin to integrate technology with classroom activities that actively engage students in learning (Ike, 1997; Miller, 1998; Norton and Gonzales, 1998; Saye, 1998; Tenbusch, 1998; Yocam, 1996). One reason peer coaching is so useful for technology integration is that it provides both ongoing support and just-in-time support that teachers value (Brush et al., 2003).

Conclusion

While peer coaching is slowly finding its way into American schools, we have enough experience with this methodology to know that it is a proven technique which can change teacher practice. Experience with this form of professional development shows us the building blocks that need to be in place to make it successful. Like any other professional development methodology, coaching won’t be successful unless it is closely aligned with the school’s educational goals, budget, and other resources. If it is “integral to a larger instructional improvement plan that targets and aligns professional development resources toward the district’s goals,” Neufeld and Roper (2003) concluded that, “coaching can become a powerful vehicle for improving instruction, and, thereby, student achievement.” Peer coaching is a cost-effective way for schools and school districts to meet their needs.

References are available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center ■
Nothing is more important for student learning than the quality of the classroom teacher. A teacher induction program that focuses on new teacher support and classroom practice while sustaining the idealism and passion of beginning teachers offers hope for our students and our schools.

Beginning teachers enter our nation’s classrooms filled with passion, idealism, and the commitment to make a difference for their students. Too often, however, they find themselves embarking on a journey isolated from their colleagues and faced with difficult working conditions, a lack of materials and resources, and the most challenging classroom assignments. They are shocked by these harsh realities and by a passionless system that has forgotten its most valuable resource—its teachers.

The quality of the teacher is the single most important ingredient in improving student achievement. An investment in teacher quality needs to start at the earliest stages of a teacher’s career and continue throughout a professional lifetime. The work is not just about beginning teachers and induction programs. As our nation hires more than two million new teachers this next decade, we have the chance to transform the teaching profession by creating induction programs that nurture new teachers while promoting the highest standards of classroom teaching.

To do this we need to break loose of the traditions that have divided us and build comprehensive models of teacher development. Universities and schools, administrators, teachers, bargaining units, and teacher educators must come together to create systems grounded in principles of effective teacher education and professional development. It’s about establishing system-wide norms and practices of professionalism, career-long learning, and inquiry into practice. It’s about making a commitment to improving education for America’s culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students and the professional lives of the teachers who serve them.

The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project: An Integrated Model of Support and Assessment

For the past eleven years our Santa Cruz New Teacher Project [SCNTP] has, with remarkable success, supported over 1,400 K-12 teachers to make the difficult transition into the teaching profession. The SCNTP is led by the Teacher Education Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in collaboration with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and sixteen school districts in the greater Silicon Valley and Santa Cruz area. Together, across institutional boundaries, stakeholders in the consortium have built and sustained a program that nurtures both the heart and mind of every first- and second-year teacher—working to ensure a highly qualified, committed and inspired teacher for every student.
Currently serving over 320 beginning teachers, our SCNTP is part of California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program, a state-wide initiative jointly administered by the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Implementation is funded by state monies ($3,000 per beginning teacher) which are then augmented by our local school districts according to the number of beginning teachers participating in the program at a rate of $2,100 per teacher. This investment in teacher induction is seen by both the state and participating districts as a cost-effective way to promote teacher quality and increase teacher retention.

Our project’s philosophy is that teaching is complex and that the process of becoming a teacher involves career-long learning. We recognize that new teachers enter the profession at different developmental stages and with individual needs. We believe that support should be non-evaluative, embedded in classroom practice, and suffused with the language of hope, caring, and equity. Furthermore, we have learned that changes in instruction are most likely to occur when teachers are given the opportunity to assess their practice against recognized professional standards and to construct solutions to their own classroom-specific challenges.

**Partnerships Between New and Veteran Teachers**

At the center of our work are the partnerships that form between the beginning teacher and the new teacher advisor, an exemplary veteran teacher on loan full-time from our participating districts for a period of two to three years. Matched with beginning teachers according to grade-level and subject matter expertise, our advisors mentor fourteen first- and second-year teachers.

Building a strong, trusting relationship with each new teacher is the crucial first step for advisors and fundamental to the success of their work.

Our advisors meet weekly with each new teacher for approximately two hours before, during, or after school. While in the classroom, advisors teach demonstration lessons, observe, coach, co-teach, videotape lessons, respond to interactive journals, or assist with problems as they arise. This familiarity with the students in the class, the overall curriculum plan, and the organizational environment, helps an advisor provide mentees with context-specific support. Time outside the classroom is spent planning, gathering resources, providing emotional support and safe structures for feedback, and facilitating communication with principals.

In addition, new teachers receive release days for observation of other teachers, curriculum planning, reflection, and self-assessment. A monthly seminar series serves as a network for new teachers to share their accomplishments and challenges in a learning community of peers. Special attention is paid throughout to literacy, language development, strategies for working with diverse student populations, and the needs of English Language Learners.

Together with their advisors, beginning teachers develop a portfolio that maps out and documents the teacher’s professional growth while encouraging reflection, goal-setting, dialogue, and assessment. This collaborative portfolio process is a central feature of our model of support and assessment, and helps beginning teachers connect teaching, learning, and assessment. One second year teacher and UCSC Teacher Education Program graduate notes:

> The portfolio process has supported me in many ways. It gave me an understanding of where I was, a vision of where I was going and how to get there. Without some way of focusing during those overwhelming first years of teaching, you can feel as if you are not moving forward. The reflection and documentation helped me see the progress I had actually made.

Key to this portfolio process is the advisor’s guidance and assistance beginning with the collection of information about the new teacher’s classroom practice. This data is then used by the new teachers as they self-assess on the SCNTP’s Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities. The Continuum is aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (1997) which are organized around broad categories of knowledge, skills, and abilities that characterize effective teaching: organizing and managing the classroom, planning and delivering instruction, demonstrating subject matter knowledge, assessing student learning, and participating as members of a learning community.

> The Continuum serves, then, as a tool for formative assessment and a catalyst for reflection and professional dialogue. With the help of their advisors, new teachers develop an Individual Learning Plan based on information gathered during this assessment and focused on a particular standard area.

Over the course of the year, our portfolio process is carefully supported during the weekly new teacher-advisor interactions and during the monthly seminars where sanctioned time is available for portfolio development. Advisors help new teachers select representative items for their portfolios; these typically include journal entries, documented observations, student work, lesson plans, teacher-created materials and assessments, letters, pictures, video- and audiotapes. Each item is accompanied by a written explanation of how it demonstrates the teacher’s professional growth or the growth of his/her students in relation to professional goal(s). The portfolio process also helps advisors identify the most effective form of assistance for their mentees.

**Looking at Results: The Impact on Teachers and Schools**

New teachers and principals report that participation in our program has made a significant contribution to the quality of their teaching and to their success as a beginning teacher. A pilot research study in the area of literacy development has shown that student achievement in our new teachers’ classrooms matches that of students taught by veteran teachers. Evaluation studies over the years also show that our beginning teachers exhibit increased job satisfaction, are retained at higher rates, work more effectively with diverse students, and are better able to problem solve around issues of instruction and student achievement. Beginning teachers also report that they welcome the regular observations by their advisors and find them essential for their professional growth.

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School officials and administrators also note the positive impact of our program; in a recent principal survey 95% of respondents credited the SCNTP with significantly improving beginning teacher performance. Specific outcomes cited by principals include better new teacher morale, increased willingness to take risks, more effective problem-solving strategies, improved classroom management and organization, and more effective instructional strategies.

We are also finding that this teacher induction program is not just about supporting new teachers; it is about building teacher leaders and ultimately changing school cultures. Our alumni are impacting school cultures as they try to create collaborative opportunities and structures once they are no longer participating in the SCNTP. Principals note that our collaborative model of support is changing relationships among teachers and promoting the establishment of these professional norms for entire staffs.

Our SCNTP alumni have learned to welcome the opportunities to observe and be observed by their colleagues; their doors are always open. They are assuming leadership roles early in their careers as they make presentations to colleagues on site, attend literacy study groups, encourage by example and by advocacy veteran colleagues to try new strategies, engage in collaborative action research, and request sanctioned time to observe and coach one another. As a result, administrators are beginning to set aside time at staff meetings to allow for reflective conversations and problem-solving on a monthly basis; others are finding ways to support colleagues observing each other’s classroom practice.

In addition, our veteran advisors return to their school districts with renewed excitement and passion for teaching, a broader perspective on education, and the communication and leadership skills to make a difference. After working in numerous schools, visiting countless classrooms in the company of their mentees, and sitting at the work tables in those schools, our advisors develop a wonderfully rich picture of education across our region. After fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years and more of teaching, these veterans have stepped out of the unique circumstances of their own classroom practice into a more expansive professional landscape.

They also return to their classrooms with new ideas and fresh approaches. An advisor notes,

*In working with [my colleagues] in a reflective manner, I am becoming more reflective about my own practice and its effects on students. And through our work to implement various strategies, my own repertoire of teaching methods is ever-increasing. When I return to a classroom of students, I will bring with me an enriched and stronger practice.*

Returning advisors also note that they will never go back to “the way things were before.” They return to their schools and classrooms with a renewed commitment to and passion for teaching. They have learned to see themselves [and their new teachers] as change agents who have the skills and capacity to change schools by providing strong educational and instructional leadership. These former advisors serve as school-site and district-wide curriculum leaders, union representatives, professional development school coordinators, as well as, site administrators. One has successfully led the reform of her district’s teacher evaluation process, shifting it to a collaborative model of focused professional growth which uses the SCNTP Continuum of Teacher abilities.

**Lessons Learned: What Makes the Difference**

As beginning teachers are encouraged to reflect upon, analyze, and share their growth over time, we as a program continually seek to identify the lessons we are learning about new teacher support and assessment. We feel that our success rests in some very important fundamental features of our model and in our project’s commitment to nurture the heart as well as the mind of all of our participants—both the veteran and the new. Sharing these lessons here might serve to help others as they seek to create and maintain effective induction programs.

Some of the most significant insights include the importance of the veteran teacher in this full-time role of advisor, the crucial link to site administration, and the impact of standards when embedded within a compassionate, supportive environment.

**A New Role for Veteran Teachers**

After eleven years of using a full-time release model of mentoring, we are convinced that this design feature is key to the success of the SCNTP program. It is the quality of the relationship these talented veterans forge with each new teacher and their day-to-day guidance and support that ultimately impact the quality of a new teacher’s instruction.

We have found that supporting new teachers is complex and demanding work and it involves learning skills other than those most classroom teachers possess. It becomes even harder when mentors must simultaneously focus on the needs of students in their own classrooms. Supporting new teachers after school makes it hard to understand a new teacher’s classroom circumstances, their level of practice, and the students’ needs.

With a full-time release model, our advisors are able to observe beginning teachers weekly, sometimes collecting formal observation data, other times helping out or co-teaching a lesson. Advisor and advisee become a classroom “team” where the energy is fully focused on the beginning teacher’s needs. We are also able to ensure that our veteran teachers’ time is totally sanctioned for work of one-on-one mentoring. For three years, they are not available to pick up other “duties as assigned” or split their focus by supporting other initiatives or programs.

In addition, supporting fourteen beginning teachers day-in-and-day-out for an entire school year builds mentoring skills quickly; our advisors become skilled coaches, classroom observers, and group facilitators almost overnight. At the same time, there are important differences between our first- and third-year advisors. In many ways, the first-year advisor is like a beginning teacher, learning the procedures and processes that characterize their new role; they are learning to examine in depth and “deconstruct” their knowledge of teaching. Third-year advisors become important contributors to the further development and refinement of our program.

**Selecting and Supporting Advisors**

As we select advisors each year, we remember what we learned early on—that not every outstanding veteran teacher makes an effective mentor. Thus, we pay close attention to the following critical selection criteria: strong interpersonal skills, credibility with peers and administrators, a demonstrated curiosity and eagerness to learn, respect for multiple perspectives, as well as outstanding instructional practice. We know that observation and coaching skills, knowledge of California’s professional standards, familiarity with the portfolio process, support strategies for new teachers, group facilitation and presentation skills can be easily taught later on.

Regardless of how carefully we select our advisors, however, high quality support doesn’t “just happen.” Providing thoughtful assistance to beginning teachers requires training and support for the advisors. Our advisors first receive a half-day orientation to the program and two days of foundational training, followed by weekly staff development. Friday morning staff meetings have become a cherished ritual and an important component of our program’s success. Not only do they prepare advisors for their work but
break down the potential “isolation” many full-time advisors experience as they travel from school to school supporting their advisees.

We use this time to review project procedures and our assessment tools and their use. We practice observation skills, using videotaped lessons of beginning teachers. We review and develop our advisors’ greater familiarity with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession not just as a lens on good teaching, but to keep all eyes focused on improving classroom practice. Together we read articles, share issues and concerns, practice facilitation and presentation skills, and, most importantly, think about and talk about our work. The meetings also provide us critical feedback on our program’s implementation and effectiveness.

**Strong Links to Site Administrators**

Principals have always been an important part of the SCNTP’s stakeholder “loop,” but with each successive year, we become more convinced of the critical role administrators must play in the web of support we want to build. Their understanding of new teachers’ needs affects how they design classroom assignments, and the site culture significantly impacts our new teachers’ lives. Furthermore, their commitment to and support of our work is crucial to our advisors’ success.

As a result, we seek to make site administrators our partners in our work. Advisors are encouraged to “check-in” with administrators on a weekly basis to update them on what sort of work is being done with the new teachers on site while maintaining strict lines of confidentiality. They may point out that the new teachers are being video-taped or formally observed, or self-assessing using the SCNTP Continuum, or attending an after-school seminar on student assessment, or observing a veteran teacher’s class, or developing their professional growth goals for the year. The weekly updates do not include sharing information that could damage the carefully-nurtured trust relationship between the new teacher and the advisor or which could be used for evaluation purposes.

The administrator’s support of our program can also influence the beginning teacher’s own commitment to the process of professional reflection, assessment, ongoing learning, and collaboration. In addition, the SCNTP can become an important collaborative partner in principals’ efforts to develop their staff and meet site instructional goals. Sometimes the number of new teachers is so large that an advisor is stationed full-time at a given school site, thus having even greater influence on school-wide instructional improvement and cultural change.

**Addressing Standards with Heart**

High professional standards are essential for all of us in education, and the role of any induction program must be to help new teachers recognize those standards and put them into practice. But in these times of “standards-base” curricula and “standards-driven” reform agenda, we feel that standards alone do not ensure quality teaching. Embedded, however, in a compassionate and responsive system of support that can guide educational reform.

Instructional change is developmental, individual, and rests in the hands of each and every classroom teacher. We have noticed over the years that virtually every new teacher walks into the classroom seeing themselves as an agent for change, not as a defender of the status quo. We further believe that the highest standards of practice will be achieved when the passion and inspiration that accompany most new teachers into the profession are carefully celebrated and nurtured. In the SCNTP, we have found that in the company of veteran teachers who, themselves, embody the highest standards of practice and who still radiate a passion for teaching, new teachers not only thrive but they meet high standards and live out the promise of change that called them to become teachers in the first place.

As a program, we have learned to talk the language of the heart; to remind teachers of why they chose to enter the profession; to celebrate our own learning as well as that of our students; to remind ourselves that equity and excellence must go hand-in-hand; to articulate those connections between what we believe and how we act in the world; to practice our art and craft with congruence. This is perhaps the most important gift we can give our new teachers. No carefully designed system of support, no technology or structure, no assessment system or best-conceived standards can replace the heart-felt commitment to education and to students that drive the finest of our teachers.

So we have embedded the California Standards for the Teaching Profession into every aspect of our program, from our seminars, to our assessments, to our collaborative log forms, and most importantly our language. And at the same time, we seek to create compassionate environments for new teachers where they hear the language of inspiration and love, of passion for teaching and dedication to community, of commitment to excellence and a determination that every child be afforded the birthright of a quality education. Our children and our schools deserve no less.
One morning 25 years ago, Kyle (pseudonym), one of my first grade students, cried after his reading group. I tried consoling him to no avail. “I can’t read! I’m stupid!” Sobbing, he laid his head on the table. My heart dropped; tears filled my eyes. As a novice teacher, I was unprepared to teach children like Kyle for whom reading did not come easily. I needed a coach!

Joyce and Showers (1995; 2002) report that professional development without follow up results in few changes to instruction. Theory, demonstration, and practice are insufficient means of increasing knowledge and skills; however, in-class coaching supports teachers’ implementation of new learning. By providing day-to-day support for teachers, coaches provide an important link between a vision of school improvement and its enactment.

An exemplary Reading First coach stated that “reading coaches have many facets like diamonds.” This analogy provides a mental image used to examine aspects of the coach’s role. Five facets related to successful coaching include: (1) establishing trust, communication, and collaboration; (2) the knowledge and skills of the coach; (3) ongoing professional development; (4) administrative support; and (5) recognizing that school improvement, especially in high-poverty Title I schools, is both challenging and rewarding.

**Trust, Communication, and Collaboration**

One of the first challenges new coaches face is negotiating learning with adults. Coaches polish this facet as they build trust, facilitate support, differentiate professional development based on individual teacher needs, foster an environment conducive to trying new techniques, and provide opportunities for constructive feedback and collaboration with peers. Understanding others’ perspectives, remaining neutral when tensions arise, and keeping confidences are essential. Observing teachers and providing thoughtful feedback is important. Showing teachers that you listen to them, that their concerns are important, and providing feedback in a way that does not make teachers want to put a shield up to defend themselves goes a long way in developing a collaborative culture. Coaches walk a fine line in their schools. They must be vigilant to ensure their actions are never perceived as evaluative as this will limit teachers’ acceptance of them and their role.

**Knowledge, Experience, and Skills**

The coach as a knowledgeable instructional leader is another key facet. The International Reading Association (2004) identified five qualifications for reading coaches. These include: (1) successful experience teaching reading at the grade levels they are coaching; (2) in-depth knowledge of reading processes, development, instruction, and
The Many Facets of Exemplary Coaching

Rebecca Donaldson, Reading First Director/Title I School and District Improvement Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

assessment; (3) expertise in working with teachers to improve instructional practices; (4) excellent skills as a presenter and group leader; and (5) experience modeling, observing, and providing feedback.

Coaches must accomplish a wide range of tasks requiring skills as instructional planners, observers, staff developers, and leaders. The ability to work with children and teachers who are at a variety of levels with a wide-range of needs is an advantage. Organizational and record keeping skills are paramount to success. Spending time each day focused on supporting teacher practice and student achievement should be a high priority (Bean & DeFord, 2007).

Administrative Support

Instructional leadership and support from principals and district administrators is crucial. Bean and DeFord (2007) believe that “with administrative support and understanding, the coach is not isolated and will have opportunities to facilitate change in the school” (p. 3). Effective principals mutually support the coach and the teachers as they collaboratively work to improve instructional practices, develop professional learning communities, and take on the ownership of improved student achievement. A district’s commitment to ensure that coaches and administrators share common beliefs and expectations about instruction allows them to complement rather than conflict with one another’s roles and responsibilities as they establish a united front and unwavering focus on student and teacher success.

Ongoing Professional Development

When I was a coach, I realized the necessity of ongoing professional development to hone my skills and knowledge as a teacher of reading in addition to developing my coaching skills. Fisher (2007) states, “professional development ensures that coaches practice what they preach, experience information as learners, and are rejuvenated with new ideas on a regular basis” (p. 3). An added benefit of attendance at coaching meetings is the opportunity to network and problem solve with colleagues.

To improve instructional capacity coaches must be collaborative learners who do not “fall into the trap of acting like the expert” (Bean & DeFord, 2007). Working side by side with teachers who are willing to let a coach try new practices with their students is beneficial. Although it’s essential that a coach has a vast knowledge of reading; it is important for coaches to realize that they don’t have to know everything. Coaches must recognize when to say, “I’m sorry I don’t know the answer to that, but I will look into it and get back to you.” Being on the forefront of learning can be rewarding personally; however, a crucial facet to keep polished is the ability to put success back on the teachers. Successful coaches understand the value of helping teachers feel valued and empowered through their successes.

The Challenges and Rewards of School Improvement

School improvement is a complex process; nonetheless, Fisher (2007) reminds us that “change should be the outcome of coaching…defined in terms of teacher behaviors or student learning or both” (p. 4). Sometimes teachers are reluctant or resistant due to difficulty accepting change, philosophical dissonance, or concerns related to additional preparation the change entails.

In order to meet the increasing demand for instructional coaches, to attract and retain qualified individuals to fill these positions, and to help coaches serve successfully in their multi-faceted roles, ongoing professional development and networks of support must exist at all levels of the educational system. As Kamil (2006) stresses, “If coaching is done right, there’s every reason to believe that it should work…all the evidence would suggest it has to work” (p. 17). Children like Kyle and their teachers will be the beneficiaries of the efforts of exemplary coaches who make it work.
How to Play on a Winning Team

The Coaching Process for Staff Who Work with Students with Significant Disabilities

Cathy Longstroth, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)

Most of us had the experience at one time or another of loyally following a team that is having a losing season. Pundits will analyze the causes of the continued poor performance, but we usually assume that once the season is over, someone will be taking a hard look at the coaching process, perhaps even considering replacing the head coach.

Recently, I attended a conference where I chatted with a nationally recognized autism expert and consultant. She reminded me of one of those fans of the perpetually losing teams as she confided in me, “We have been trying to get effective practices in classrooms for thirty years and little has changed. We just keep going over the same territory. Nothing lasting is happening.”

We’re not seeing uniform excellence; we’re not seeing “touchdowns” for our students. It’s time to look at the coaching.
Coaching is not a new idea. The master-apprentice relationship is the oldest form of professional development we know of and it is not outdated. We would not accept anything less than coaching in other areas where skill development is critical. How many of us would go to a hair salon where the new hairdressers had not had real on-the-job coaching by an experienced hair stylist? How many of us would trust our cars to a mechanic whose only training had been on the theory of the internal combustion engine? How many of us would feel confident with a doctor who had class work and research experience but not the rigor of rotations and residencies under the scrutiny of master physicians? The difference in training for teachers was addressed recently by Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education. In an interview on National Public Radio Mr. Duncan stated current teacher education programs are “heavy on educational theory and too light on developing core area knowledge and clinical training under the supervision of master teachers.”

The National Academy of Science Report, Educating Children with Autism (2001), contains a statement on professional development that I believe applies as well to educating students with significant cognitive disabilities as it does students with autism:

*Teachers learn according to the same principles as their students. Multiple exposures, opportunities to practice, and active involvement in learning are all important aspects of learning in teachers, as well as in children. Many states and community organizations have invested substantial funds in teacher preparation, predominantly through workshops and large-audience lectures by well-known speakers. While such presentations can be inspiring, they do not substitute for training and ongoing supervision and consultation. (p.189)*

Also the 2009 Evidence Based Practice and Autism in the Schools published by the National Autism Center states:

*If only we could develop capacity to accurately implement effective interventions after attending a one- or two-day workshop! Unfortunately, the adult learner literature suggests this is unlikely. Didactic training alone is insufficient if the goal is to develop a high degree of mastery in educational settings (Fixsen et al., 2005). More experiential learning with ongoing feedback is necessary. Coaching refers to the availability of an expert to provide on-site feedback based on real-world application of a new treatment. The coach assesses the front-line interventionist’s use of the treatment in practice, then provides feedback and support. (p.182)*

We know coaching works for training teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities. We saw coaching principles at work more than 20 years ago in the Teaching Research Model supported by the Utah Learning Resource Center, the predecessor to today’s UPDC. Teachers attended a model classroom for one week where they first observed, then gradually took over the teaching role in working with real students and being supervised by real teachers. The master teachers modeled the desired behaviors while the apprentice teachers took data. Then the roles were gradually switched as the master teacher took data on the proficiency of the visiting teachers. By the end of the week, the attending teachers had skills that were honed to mastery and that would provide a basis for effective instruction throughout their careers. Coaching produces real and lasting results.

**Coaching is Coaching**

Whether we’re talking about training literacy coaches, mild-moderate coaches, or significant disabilities coaches, there are common elements to the coaching process. Some basic skills include:

1) **Clearly Defined Standards**
2) **Pre-Assessment or Self-Evaluation**
3) **Pre-Conference**
4) **Observation with Data Collection**
5) **Post-Conference and Follow Up**

Additionally, the coaches need to have mastery level skills in the specific content related to their area of specialization. For coaches of significant disability teachers and paraprofessionals we have identified seven broad areas of expertise—The Significant Seven. They include the following:

1) **The IEP Package: Assessment, Alignment, and Implementation**
2) **Discrete Trial / Naturalistic Learning**
3) **Small Group Direct Instruction**
4) **Sequential Task Instruction**
5) **Classroom Management and Organization**
6) **Data Driven Decision Making and Problem Solving**
7) **Positive Behavior Support**

At this time, there are cooperative efforts between the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC), the school districts and the State Office of Education to help create materials that will streamline the coaching process in Utah districts and charter schools. We are developing self-assessments, quick and easy teacher data collection tools, and training modules for each of the seven areas listed above. The sequential task instruction module and DVD are complete and available through the UPDC.

We don’t have to feel like fans of a losing team as we cheer on the efforts of our colleagues who are trying to improve outcomes for students with significant disabilities. We have the winning combination.

**So let’s hear it!**
**Give me a U!**
**Give me a C!**
**Give me an N!**
*What have you got? UCN! □*
We often have students who offer a real challenge to our teaching abilities. When teaching students with significant cognitive disabilities it becomes even more of a question as to the best practice, methodology, or program to teach individual students; especially if they have multiple disabilities. How does a teacher find the answer to this challenge? Where is the information that will help solve the puzzle of communicating with the student and finding out what the student knows? What do we do when we don’t know what to do? It seems a dilemma that will be ever constant, as teachers look for the magic key to open the door of understanding for these students.

Often, teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities are isolated or separated from other teachers because they teach in pull-out, self-contained and special school situations. While it is true that many students with significant cognitive disabilities are also taught in inclusive settings with adaptations to their curriculum, it is time to “bridge the gap” between teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities with other special education teachers and general classroom teachers. The opportunities for coaching that are available to special and general educators should be taken advantage of by teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Good teaching is good teaching. We can learn from coaches who will also customize the coaching they do to the needs of the teacher they are coaching. We can also consider being a coach to others who teach in similar situations. We know that we learn more when we teach others and our skills improve as well.

With the support of administration, general education, and special education peers we can begin to look toward being involved in the coaching cycle. This coaching cycle starts with self-reflection. What kinds of strategies do I use that produce the student outcomes desired? What are the areas in which I need improvement? What kinds of strategies do I use effectively? Do I have the basic skills in teaching students with significant disabilities? Do I know how to differentiate my instruction for each individual student?

The next step is the Pre-Conference conducted by the coach to discover what was discussed in the Self Reflection. Then the coach will observe and take data to keep track of areas that worked or did not work for the student(s). This is followed by the Post Conference and the cycle begins again. The important thing to remember is during this cycle the teacher and the coach develop a collegial, teacher-teacher relationship with each other. Skills are taught and reviewed and both the teacher and the coach learn from the experience.

With the current emphasis on aligning the skills of each student with significant cognitive disabilities to the Extended Core Standards (ECS) at the student’s grade level, having a coach that understands this process is important. It takes time to develop the skill of aligning the ECS to the academic skills of the student. Finding where the access skills may lead to and fulfilling this requirement is also a concept that teachers need to learn.

Christine Timothy, Program Specialist, Utah State Office of Education (USOEO)
in order to complete this process. It has been found that as teachers write their goals and objectives and earnestly look at how this can affect the outcomes of the student, it becomes easier to complete this process. For those who still struggle with this a coach would be an appropriate resource for the teacher of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Because it takes longer for students with significant disabilities to learn, we do not have any time to waste. We need to move on whatever application of skills will help teachers become better and more highly adept at teaching students with significant cognitive disabilities.

So, what do we do when we don’t know what to do? We seek the knowledge of those who do:

- We keep up with the basic skills necessary to teach students with significant cognitive disabilities and we use them as our bottom line to success.
- We look for the new information from credible research in meeting the needs of the students with significant cognitive disabilities being produced at the UPDC.
- We look for the new information and curriculum being produced by publishers especially designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- We look to find a coach who will design a program to build our skills as a teacher of students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- We keep foremost in our minds that we must find the right thing to do when we don’t know what to do for the students who are depending on us.

Teachers, you are in the best place in education. We need you. Your students need you. Use the current trends and coaches to help you become an even better teacher. We can all be better!
Think of the sports team coaches you’ve heard about. It may be Tony Dungy, Coach of the Indianapolis Colts, John Wooden—UCLA, Rick Majerus—Saint Louis University, Coach “K”—Duke University, Phil Jackson—LA Lakers, Urban Meyers—Florida Gators, LaVell Edwards—BYU, Paul “Bear” Bryant—University of Alabama, Pat Summitt—University of Tennessee or Larry Gelwix—Highland High School Rugby Team. You may also be thinking about a favorite high school or college coach that has worked with you personally.

Coaches influence our lives in many different ways. A coach can also be:
• A parent or close family member or relative
• A teacher
• A religious leader
• A personal fitness coach
• A close friend
• A co-worker
• A favorite self-help book author
• A talk-show host like Oprah

I have personally been trained, observed, instructed, guided, advised, supported and/or influenced by the above types of coaches. What does a coach do? They help increase or decrease certain behaviors through observing, instructing, guiding, advising, and supporting others.

When I began in the Davis School District 23 years ago, teaching a classroom of students with significant disabilities, I was fortunate to be trained in the Teaching Research (T.R.) model of instruction. I spent a full week at the beginning of the school year in a model teaching-research site. It was an “I do it.” We do it. You do it” approach to professional learning. The model involved sequential teaching using the following effective, research-based instructional strategies:
• Task Analysis
• Discrete Trial Training
• Forward and Backward Chaining
• Reinforcement
• Error Correction
• Prompt Hierarchy
• Data Collection for Decision Making
We were observed, instructed, guided, advised, and supported during the entire learning process. After returning to my classroom, I continued to receive ongoing support on a weekly basis from an instructional coach proficient in the T.R. model. How fortunate I was to be able to implement a sound, researched-based program for my students with support and feedback from a coach.

Unfortunately, the grant funding for the T.R. training eventually ended. The ongoing, intensive classroom support became difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, sufficient numbers of teachers were trained in the model, and did their best to support one another during the years that followed, which enabled them to use effective teaching strategies in their classrooms and to improve student outcomes.

Now, fifteen years later, the research continues to support the use of these instructional strategies for students with autism and other significant disabilities. However, for new teachers entering the profession who did not have the opportunity to be taught these strategies in the context of a classroom, we recognize that coaching support is critical! We know that the only way for them to implement and sustain the use of effective instructional practices is through instructional coaching.

For the past several years, the Davis School District has implemented an instructional coaching model designed to actively support new and experienced teachers. We understand that professional development activities, without coaching follow-up support, have little or no impact on teacher instructional effectiveness.

Improved instruction requires the mediation of in-classroom technical assistance via research-based instructional strategies and materials that address the increased range and diversity of student needs. In their book, The Hero’s Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning, Brown and Moffett (1999) make the following insightful statement:

We can no longer ignore the leadership capacity of teachers—the largest group of school employees and those closest to students. Empowered teachers bring an enormous resource for continually improving schools. School reform is dependent on teacher leadership being developed, nurtured and reinforced both in schools and throughout the district.

To develop and nurture teacher leadership, and subsequently improve student outcomes, district support for instructional coaching is essential. Teachers must have the support of district administrators, teacher leaders, and other support teams. District office personnel must have a common vision for how to effectively empower teachers. When we set high expectations for teachers, we need to be willing to deliver ongoing district support. Instructional coaching, and time for doing it, is how we deliver such support.

In selecting the right people to coach, consider the following seven “B’s” of effective coaches:
• Be familiar with and have access to research-based curriculum and instructional strategies.
• Be deeply committed to professional learning.
• Be passionate about the profession and helping students succeed.
• Be good listeners.
• Be respectful of and sensitive to teacher challenges.
• Be able to communicate effectively.
• Be flexible.

In the Davis School District, we have an outstanding induction specialist who works with all of our new teachers. She is assisted by a cadre of coaches. She addresses many areas that our coaches are not responsible for (i.e., classroom staffing issues, severe behavior problems, IEP’s, UAA administration, district policy questions, and so on). She is also very knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction and assists in these areas as well.

What then are the roles and responsibilities of our instructional coaches? Their roles include:
• Provide coaching support throughout the school year.
• Present and practice the use of effective instructional strategies through monthly district professional development sessions.
• Assist teachers with using the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) and district websites to access instructional programs.
• Demonstrate the use of evidenced-based classroom curriculum.

Their responsibilities include:
• Improve coaching and content skills by completing assigned readings, and attending monthly, three-hour coaching sessions.
• Set aside one-half day per week for coaching of assigned teachers (i.e., site visits, emails, and phone calls).
• Provide onsite technical assistance to assigned teachers. This includes, but is not limited to lesson planning preparation and delivery, modeling and delivery of curriculum content and instructional strategies, data-based decision making, and participating in district professional development activities.

Our coaches understand they need to let go of perfection! They are taught to start slow with teachers and reinforce them one step at a time, maintaining a trusting, respectful relationship. Are we where we want to be? No, but we are now in our fourth year and feel like we’re moving in the right direction.

With the help of so many dedicated professionals, including the state SMART (Significant Mentoring and Access to Resources Task force) group, we have identified sound curriculum that incorporates all of the components of effective instructional strategies. Over the years, we have benefited from the experience and expertise of Dr. Alan Hofmeister to help keep us informed concerning the research on effective practices. Cathy Longstroth, Program Specialist for the UPDC, has also been very supportive of our district instructional coaching activities.

Our vision for supporting teachers is clear! We continue to learn from our mistakes and successes. Our coaches are mastering their skills and their classrooms are becoming model sites for other teachers to visit. More importantly, we recognize that improving teachers’ skills will improve student outcomes. In the end, that is what matters most!

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center

Patti Haning, Special Education Coordinator, Davis School District
One of the most challenging problems Utah schools face today is how to provide quality professional development in the face of ever increasing budget cuts. How do schools and districts provide new information or shift attitudes for educators in a way that has direct impact on what happens in the classroom? Park City School District has been working on a construct of professional learning that has the promise of doing just that through the use of school-based instructional coaches.

Park City educators have been the beneficiaries of high quality professional learning for years. With a district focus on differentiation and quality assessment, teachers were given yearly opportunities to work with top notch facilitators from ASCD and Lifelong Learning. Experts were brought into the district for four to five days throughout the year to provide new information and support teachers in developing their understanding. Some teachers were given opportunities for even further extensive training during the summer. Overall, approximately 38% of all teachers participated in this model of professional learning.

Schools also provided teachers with professional learning based upon the schools’ goals during professional development days set aside in the yearly calendar. Some schools focused on SIOP® (Sheltered Instruction), some on literacy; every school had the option of developing their own plan without much oversight from the district.

But did the learning stick? Did all of the time and money spent on professional development make a difference? Park City learned through two outside evaluations of programs, that indeed there had been minimal transference to teaching and learning. Given that the district had considerable gains to make to close the achievement gap, administrators knew that changes needed to be made to assist teachers in being more effective with all students.

In 2007, Park City School District began the process of developing instructional coaches. Principals were asked to solicit at least one person from each building to begin training as instructional coaches. Principals were to select master teachers who had the respect of their colleagues and demonstrated leadership skills. That first year, the selected teachers participated in monthly professional learning under the direction of Lori Gardner, the district’s Director of Curriculum, and Annette Brinkman, Associate Director of Teaching and Learning for Granite School District and a nationally recognized consultant for instructional coaching.

Participants developed an understanding of the multiple roles of coaches;
how to engage adult learners in reflective thinking and practice; how to use data to inform change; and how to provide effective job-embedded professional learning. In the spring of 2008, the Park City School Board approved the allocation of .5 FTE for each elementary and 1.0 FTE for each secondary school to provide site-based coaching.

Two years later, instructional coaches are providing services to teachers in a variety of ways. They serve as mentors to all teachers in their first three years of employment with the district, meeting with them monthly, engaging them in coaching conversations and observations, and facilitating master teacher observations. Coaches assist teachers in refining programs and practices through model teaching, providing data from observations, and providing resources on curriculum and instruction.

The most significant work of the coaches has been with the district’s initiative to promote the academic success for all students and close the achievement gap through the study and implementation of the SIOP® model in every classroom.

In the spring of 2009, administrators met to plan for a first of its kind effort in the district to coalesce all resources for professional learning to focus on a primary objective. Recognizing the impact effective implementation of SIOP® components and strategies could have for all students, especially English language learners, administrators selected the model as the professional learning content. The goal is to provide all educators with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the eight components of SIOP®, create the structure for professional learning communities, and support the implementation of knowledge and skills into the repertoire of each teacher.

Working with Utah Personnel Development Center’s Michael Herbert and Kristen Lindahl, a Ph.D. student from the University of Utah, administrators and coaches are engaging in collaborative learning once a month on SIOP® components. Coaches are then responsible for helping to plan and facilitate training with teachers. They are also developing tools to help teachers collect data on the effect of implementation of the components. Several of the coaches have developed strategies and tools to assist teachers in the integration of SIOP® into daily practice. Coaches are responsible for working with every teacher monthly, according to their needs, to assist them in effectively adapting the model into their instruction. The coaches are providing the expertise that has allowed the professional learning to move from “sit and get,” to a model of collaborative problem solving and sharing among grade-level teams. The model has allowed the district to provide professional learning within the course of the contract day without the expenditure for experts or substitutes. It also provides the means by which teachers can experiment and receive feedback, ask questions, and share their challenges and celebrations with a trusted colleague, continuing to build upon their knowledge and expertise.

Administrators are also deepening their understanding of effective teaching and developing skills in classroom observations and evaluation. Using the SIOP® protocol, administrators are engaging in walk-throughs with Annette Brinkman, to calibrate what they know about effective instruction and how to identify its components. The four district administrators and the superintendent, as a team, are in the schools weekly, and conduct classroom observations to assess levels of implementation of SIOP®. Administrators and coaches meet together to plan how the work will proceed month to month.

Once considered expendable positions in the face of budget cuts, more and more teachers consider the coaches to be of great support. Teachers appreciate their ability to provide resources, collect data important for the teacher and offer feedback when asked. Teachers have commented that “The coach has been a wonderful support to me as I have tried new strategies,” “I appreciate that the coach is here on site,” or “The coach helped me see that there is a lot I can do differently to manage student behavior.” Principals value the coaches’ role in providing support in a non-threatening, non-evaluative manner. The instructional coaches are validating what research has discovered, that adults need on-site support to integrate new learning into daily practice (Joyce and Showers, 2002).

Through the development of the professional development model for the year, Park City School district has provided educators with eighteen hours of focused professional development. More importantly, teachers have had the time and opportunity to transfer their learning to the classroom and the initial results indicate it is making a difference for their students.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center
Julie Christensen, Coach Facilitator, Weber School District

As I have been thinking about writing this article, I kept thinking of the word partnership. I have had the opportunity to be inspired by and learn from Jim Knight. He is one of the gurus of instructional coaching out of Lawrence, Kansas. As he talks about coaching and forming relationships with new teachers, he talks in great length about Seven Partnership Principles: Equality, Choice, Voice, Dialogue, Reflection, Praxis, and Reciprocity. Since 2003, special education and general education have partnered to form our district coaching program for new teachers.

**Equality—A belief that everyone counts.** Over the past seven years our partnership has had a feeling of equality. Everyone’s opinion counted. We approached this partnership with a vision of one cohesive coaching program that benefited all new teachers in our district. This partnership started with a combined new teacher training where all new teachers came together to learn the ins and outs of teaching and district policies. Next, classroom visits were added where new teachers have the opportunity to visit classrooms set up in the district. This happens each August where teachers can see a master teacher’s classroom and how it is set up. They also visit with that master teacher about classroom management, the first days of school, room organization and so on.

**Choice—Fosters internal commitment.** As we have worked closely together, we ensured that we had choices. Running Start for new teachers was established several years ago. As opportunities for professional development arose, general education teachers were invited. As a team, we have attended the New Teacher Symposium in San Jose, California, a coaching conference in Lawrence, Kansas, and the yearly state Early Years Enhancement (EYE) conference.

**Voice—Builds trust.** It is critical when forming a partnership that each side feels comfortable voicing their concerns, ideas, and feelings. Both groups meet together frequently to discuss what is going well and what needs to be adjusted. Yearly, our coaching program offers a one to two day training session in August. This training has been a collaboration between our two groups.
Most years both general and special education coaches were part of the development and presentation of these trainings. We also formed two different collaborative committees to align and create mentor logs and a portfolio rubric. General and special education teachers, principals, and stakeholders were part of both committees to give voice to the creation and adjustments of these tools.

**Dialogue—Thinking and talking together.**
Starting last year, we created an opportunity to dialogue and continue to increase our skills as coaches. We established meetings for coaches throughout the year. Four times a year, coaches come together to discuss successes, what is working, concerns they have, problem solving, and additional professional development. This year we have focused on the book, *Crucial Conversations*, by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler (2002). We read and discuss a couple of chapters each time we meet. We talk about what skills we have implemented and how it is working. Meeting often has been an added benefit to dialogue and support each other in our journey.

**Reflection—Thinking back on what has been done, reshaping what is being done now, an idea to use for the future.** Reflection is an important part of any successful venture and has become a natural part of everything we do. On a yearly basis, we have our new teachers and coaches fill out a reflection survey. These surveys typically have multiple choice, short answer and comment sections. The surveys then drive our focus for professional development for both our new teachers and coaches. Classroom management is frequently listed as an area of difficulty for new teachers. Because of this information, Weber School District collaborated with neighboring districts to have Rick Smith come in November 2008. Rick is a national presenter on classroom management skills and this half-day inservice provided nearly 500 new teachers and mentors with critical skills and information to improve their classroom management procedures.

**Praxis—Applying new ideas to our own practice.** The ability to apply our learning to our practices is critical. Having opportunities to reflect, dialogue, voice, and have choices increases the likelihood of implementation. As part of the requirements for attending the Rick Smith training, teachers were given a reflection paper, which they filled out and turned in as they left. These reflections were then given to their coaches. The coaches followed up with the teachers on their reflection and implementation of strategies learned.

General education coaches have created teacher development sessions every other month for their new teachers. They have a focus topic each time and they also differentiate their sessions between elementary and secondary. As part of our partnership, new special education teachers are included in these sessions.

**Reciprocity—Everyone benefits when we share our learning.** Last, but certainly not least, our partnership shares with each other. Attending trainings and conferences, developing professional development, reflecting, dialoguing and working together has created something very effective, supportive and special in the Weber School District. This benefits new teachers and students in numerous and long-lasting ways.

This wonderful partnership would not have happened without the vision, hard-work, passion and support of Ann Miller, Marilyn Runolfson, Noel Zabriskie, Roger Bailey, and Mike Jacobsen.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center.
Nearly half of new special education teachers hired in the state of Utah are hired under a Letter of Authorization (LOA). Working on an LOA means that the individual does not hold a current Utah Teaching License in Special Education but is enrolled in an accredited teacher education program. While there has been some improvement, retention rates of special education teachers remain low with many leaving the teaching profession within three years. To address this concern, seven school districts along the Wasatch Front, with support from the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), have collaboratively built a comprehensive program, Running Start, to provide ongoing support, facilitate skill acquisition and enhance new teacher retention.

Shelly Reier & Marilyn Likins (USU)

New teachers include those hired to teach students with both mild/moderate and significant disabilities. To meet participants’ needs, instruction and practice activities are differentiated for the new teachers and their coaches based upon the teacher’s teaching assignment (e.g., elementary versus secondary and mild/moderate versus significant disabilities). Much of the instructional time is dedicated to differentiated practice. Practice opportunities are hands-on activities through small group micro-teaching sessions.

Running Start–Ready to Teach on Day One!

Running Start

Running Start is a five-day new teacher induction program for unlicensed special education teachers and their instructional coaches. It is held the last week in July. The goal of Running Start is to provide new, unlicensed special education teachers with the opportunity to learn and practice teaching skills that are critical to the first four weeks of teaching. The week-long training is based on a set of vital teacher behaviors. These behaviors were identified by the Running Start planning group comprised of representatives from the seven participating districts. The planning group also generated a set of vital coaching behaviors. Those lists continue to be refined based upon feedback and data from Running Start participants.

One critical component of Running Start is instructional coaching. Teachers and instructional coaches attend Running Start together. Rather than attend a separate training session, Running Start coaches sit side by side with their new teacher(s), learn and practice the same instructional content and begin to build a relationship with their new teacher(s). Throughout the week coaches facilitate practice and provide instructional feedback for the new teachers. Teachers are provided theory, practice, and feedback for the following:

• Setting up classroom expectations
• Effective behavior management
• Effective instruction (students response opportunities, effective teaching cycle, discrete trial teaching, academic praise and feedback)
• Error correction procedures
• Lesson planning
• Classroom setup

Running Start – Ready to Teach on Day One!

Shelly Reier & Marilyn Likins (USU)
The Running Start Instructional Coach

Prior to Running Start, participating districts identify and select the instructional coaches who will be working with new, unlicensed special education teachers. Every teacher who attends Running Start is assigned an instructional coach who is expected to attend and participate in Running Start alongside the new teacher(s).

During Running Start week, training for instructional coaches targets the following areas:
• Classroom setup
• Providing verbal and written feedback
• Conducting classroom teaching observations
• Data collection
• Collaborative conversations
• Analysis of teacher/student data
• Modeling instructional/management procedures

An Unexpected Outcome—Relationship Building

As the new special education teacher and their instructional coach work together during the week, they begin to build a congenial working relationship. The new teacher and the instructional coach plan and problem solve together. Dates are set for the new teacher’s classroom set up prior to school starting. During practice activities, the new teacher applies skills and the instructional coach provides feedback. This opportunity is unique and highly beneficial in that the teacher-coach relationship is established prior to school starting. Both instructional coaches and new teachers have reported that when the coach enters the classroom to observe and provide feedback, anxiety levels are minimized.

Practice Opportunities for Coaches and New Teachers

As an addition to small group microteaching opportunities, a virtual classroom, TeachMe™, was incorporated during Running Start 2009. TeachMe™ was developed at the University of Central Florida. This virtual classroom allows teachers to teach mini-lessons to students while practicing skills learned each day. When teachers are teaching in the TeachMe™ lab, the instructional coach is able to practice instructional coaching skills (i.e., observation, data collection, feedback, and so on). Instructional coaches are also provided with feedback from the Running Start coach trainers regarding the application of coaching skills.

Impact of Coaching on Teacher Behavior

Running Start project personnel measured the implementation of vital teacher behaviors during the first 12 weeks of the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. Based upon the data collected in the fall of 2008, coach training during July 2009 Running Start targeted coaching of vital teacher behaviors. Figure 1 shows the marked improvement in implementation for vital teacher behaviors between the first 12 weeks of school in 2008 and 2009.

Impact of Training on Coaching Behavior

In addition to data for vital teacher behaviors, Running Start personnel have collected and continue to collect data on vital coaching behaviors. Figure 2 depicts the areas targeted for training of Running Start coaches. Follow-up Running Start coach trainings in November 2009 and February 2010 have focused on skill areas which, via observation and reporting from coaches, show up as needing further support and training.

What Comes Next?

The goal of Running Start is to provide new special education teachers and their instructional coaches with an ongoing support system as well as critical foundational skills. Running Start seeks to provide requisite skills for both new teachers and instructional coaches that enable the teacher to have a successful start to the school year.

Based on participant feedback and ongoing data collection, we continue to learn what it is that new teachers and their coaches require. As we do so, it is clear that the state and districts must not only consider retention rates of special education teachers, but consistently emphasize and assess improvement in teaching and coaching skills. Such a focus will ultimately impact our bottom line—student outcomes.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center

Figure 1: Percentage of implementation of vital teaching behaviors targeted by coaches during first 12 weeks of school during fall 2009

Figure 2: Implementation of vital coaching behaviors during fall of 2009-10 school year
Yes, Principals & Coaches
Do Play A Role In Education Reform!

As we work with school districts across the country, we keep a guiding idea foremost in our minds:

Real growth will happen only by developing teachers’ skills and by empowering the efforts of principals.

In the broadest sense, this idea is the underpinning of the tools and facilitations we have crafted for administrators, coaches and teachers. It even crawls across the masthead of our website, www.student-engagement.net, lest we lose sight of what we and all our colleagues desire most: to grow, to excel, to activate and to actuate real learning day by day, at the classroom level for all children.

Sounds like a noble goal, doesn’t it? Who could argue that developing teachers’ skills and empowering the efforts of principals is not a good idea? But no goal, however noble, comes without its challenges.

So What Exactly Are The Problems?

Let’s start with the dollar issues. Teacher turnover costs money, and unnecessary teacher turnover is simply a waste of resources in fiscal as well as human terms. A study of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003 by Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer) found that every teacher job turnover costs a district $1,500 or more per teacher for the training, rehiring, and record keeping that had been involved. Those dollar amounts keep rising.

Then there are the human-resource issues. Principal Jones fields phone calls and letters from parents who complain about Teacher Smith, especially after they see their children’s grades and test scores. Teacher Smith thinks he is doing a very good job, and his file contains positive evaluations. How can this be?

One reason is all too common: Some principals give overly generous evaluation ratings. Why? Well, maybe it’s easier to ignore a problem than embark on a process of remediation. And high ratings don’t rock the boat. Besides, an ineffective teacher with high ratings might be hired away by some other district (a strategy called “Phew! I dodged a bullet.”) Or maybe, just maybe, a principal doesn’t know how to lend assistance to a teacher. A principal might not have clear and concrete performance standards that can form a basis for working with a teacher —behaviors, skills, strategies that are measurable! Or a principal might not have tools available for working directly with a teacher in need—or tools to facilitate a coaching process that could rescue a teacher. Or, there may be so many problems that the principal doesn’t know where to begin. Most principals were themselves intrinsically good teachers so they may not be able to recognize easily where to begin working with a teacher who is struggling. And that is where our work comes in at Brinkman—Forlini—Williams.

Where To Start? Clarify Roles.

Surely, every teacher wants to do a good job. Every administrator wants teachers to grow and wishes to lend assistance where needed—to new teachers, to struggling teachers, and to teachers who want to hone their craft.

We all recognize and acknowledge these good intentions. However, when we recognize a need (an inductee, a struggling teacher, a veteran who wishes to grow professionally), we also know that the coaching process will be a critical ingredient for growth.

Much of our work with administrators and coaches focuses on the need to facilitate growth among teachers, and we begin by clarifying the respective roles of those involved. Who is the evaluator? Who will be the mentor? Who will be the coach? And very important: Whom will the teacher trust? Keep in mind that a struggling teacher may have a hard time trusting a coach or mentor who also acts as the evaluator, especially if that person is wearing the hat of a coach or mentor while also acting as evaluator.

This doesn’t mean that a principal cannot adopt more than one stance (evaluator plus coach, for instance). Indeed, an administrator can serve in both roles—coach/mentor as well as evaluator—but only if the teacher fully understands which hat the administrator is wearing during any given phase of the work. That requires communication, which is why we often recommend holding evaluative conversations in the administrator’s office while holding coaching or mentoring conversations in the teacher’s room or in a conference room.

We caution coaches, including principals acting as coaches, to chart a clear path from the outset—a path that starts with good intentions and instills trust, but a path in which the coach’s functions are clearly delineated and discussed.

What Next? Know The Big Eight.

The real work that follows involves very specific focal points. In our facilitations, which we generally perform on-site, we call these focal points The Big Eight, and we endeavor to describe and model these skills. Think of these as eight specific, describable, and transferable practices that every teacher must perform well in order to engage students actively in real learning. Each of The Big Eight is a classroom management skill that has concrete, measurable tactics and strategies that (1) a teacher can recognize and practice, (2) an evaluator can observe, record, and chart, and (3) a coach or mentor can guide, monitor, re-direct, and assist as necessary.

We define The Big Eight as Expectations, Attention Prompts, Proximity, Signals, Cueing, Time Limits, Tasking, and Voice. We offer a book for teachers (Class Acts: Every Teacher’s Guide To Activate Learning) and one for those who observe, evaluate, consult, and coach (Help Teachers Engage Students: Action Tools for Administrators).

Every key player must be on the same page for progress to happen. Most teachers already perform many of The Big Eight but with varying degrees of effectiveness. For instance, a teacher might be quite competent at communicating his Expectations to students, but many of his students wander off task. This teacher may need practice using Proximity so that his movements and nonverbal language increase student focus. Perhaps he needs practice with Tasking so that he re-structures certain activities and re-calibrates his questioning to maximize student engagement.
While it is important for teachers to recognize and practice classroom management skills like The Big Eight, it is equally critical for administrators including coaches to become adept at recognizing and charting these skills. Then, so that they become effective in working directly with a teacher, many administrators and coaches require—and ask for—practice. Practice in recognizing skills. Practice recording data about each skill. Practice converting that data into action steps. Practice consulting and coaching teachers directly.

Many of our on-site facilitations with administrators involve just that—situated learning, which involves (1) modeling in the context of practice and (2) participating in “drop-ins” and “time-on-task” observations. We find that debriefing after these visits goes a long way in building the nuts and bolts of a teacher’s classroom management while focusing the action steps to follow.

Where Does This Lead? A Process for Focused Coaching.

With an observer focused on a set of specific skills (The Big Eight) that a teacher recognizes (and has discussed), and with a coach or mentor lending assistance directly related to these skills, the stage is set for working toward a common goal: A Teacher’s Growth. A critical element, here, is a series of specific, mutually recognized and acknowledged steps leading to a common goal. Which is the very backbone of teamwork!

The work along the way may include multiple observations, each focusing on one, maybe two of the specific skills in order to collect data to share with a teacher. Once a coach or administrator acting as coach has made an initial diagnosis, we recommend limiting focus of an observation to one skill at a time to intensify the effort by maximizing the teacher’s attention. We advise administrators to talk to a teacher before observing a lesson. If necessary, an administrator can involve a school coach in assisting with this time-intensive task. For instance, a coach can conduct a planning conversation with a teacher before a principal’s observation to assist the teacher in a mental rehearsal before the event. A coach can also work with the teacher in a consulting role by showing and telling about a specific skill identified by the administrator. Yes, it takes a village.

We advise coaches and administrators to debrief after an observation, keeping focus on the one Big Eight skill targeted for that lesson and, if possible, to use a skill-specific data collection tool. Using such a tool allows a coach or administrator to review all points of data collected, to discuss the positives (behaviors to keep) and to suggest behaviors that need polishing. We recommend that every administrator elicit one short-term goal from a teacher—one that he or she will attempt to reach (possibly with assistance of a coach) before observing once more.

Often a teacher will benefit from observing a model teacher with a target skill or two in mind. If Mrs. Arm the science teacher is a master practitioner of positive reinforcement (Cueing), a coach or administrator might schedule a visit to her class and should accompany the teacher to observe Mrs. Arm. Both the coach and the teacher-observer might use a data collection device like a Cueing Depth Observation Tool and later can share specifics about Mrs. Arm’s cues to her students as well as the specific effects (observable behaviors) these cues had on her students. We can’t underestimate the importance of a coach’s participation in observing a demonstration teacher. Why is it so important? An untrained observer (e.g., a new teacher) probably will notice and remember only minor student infractions, or else the management in that classroom will be so well in place that it will be invisible. A coach’s job is to help unlock the secrets of success in that room.

If you decide that demonstration teaching in your teacher’s classroom will be helpful, you will follow the same steps. You will help schedule a member of your team, or some other colleague, to conduct a lesson with your teacher’s students, and again it will be critical for you to observe along with your teacher and to debrief afterwards. As always, end your debriefing with one short-term goal for moving forward—some technique or other skill behavior that your teacher will demonstrate in a subsequent lesson.

Sometimes, a coach or mentor will choose to shadow teach. If you do this, plan your movements beforehand with your teacher. Using this technique, you will follow your teacher so that you can point and whisper information that will help build whatever skill(s) you are focusing on at that time. For instance, if you are shadow teaching for Proximity, you might point out off-task students and whisper to your teacher to pause and make eye contact or to change position by moving closer to certain students. Some say that shadow teaching is one of the surest ways to enable skill growth; it is on-the-spot guided practice for the teacher. We don’t argue with that, and we point out that shadow teaching is inherently uncomfortable for your teacher, so we suggest shadow teaching for no longer than twenty or thirty minutes at a time.

If you think it will make a positive difference, consider videoing your teacher. Do this with your teacher’s full cooperation and planning. Ideally, video your teacher early in the process to establish a kind of informal baseline for plotting growth in certain target skill areas. Your role will be to stop the video at critical points and coach the teacher in areas he/she wants to replicate and areas he/she wants to refine. Remember that the teacher is the owner of the video.

Teacher growth and excellence is in everyone’s interest—and not only because of the dollars involved. Teacher excellence fosters student success and strengthens our communities and our nation. Making that happen is the interest of Brinkman—Forlini—Williams, through our on-site work, our tools for administrators, coaches and teachers, and in our publications.

Annette Brinkman, Gary Forlini, and Ellen Williams began their careers as classroom teachers and moved through education-related administrative and business positions. The three consult nationally. Annette currently serves as Associate Director in the Teaching and Learning Department of Utah’s Granite School District, working with more than 100 administrators (along with Tim Frost) on a daily basis doing this work of assisting struggling teachers to become good teachers whose students learn in a positive and productive environment. Dr. Ellen Williams also teaches this work to her principal candidates at BYU.
In today’s educational systems, educators must identify more specifically the factors that contribute to higher levels of student achievement. This is becoming less and less difficult due to the amount of research-based practices being brought to center stage. The challenge lies in implementing these factors into daily practices using strategies to increase learning for all students. One of the principal’s biggest challenges is to handle the day-to-day management of the building and still free up the needed time to visit classrooms and properly monitor teacher instruction and student learning. Simply finding the time to visit classrooms is a significant issue for principals, but even more difficult is the task of objectively providing instructionally based feedback in a reflective and mentoring environment to improve classroom instruction.

In Washington County School District a strong effort is being made to assist principals and teachers in becoming much more accountable, efficient, and effective at evaluating this process. We designed a new evaluating system based on Charlotte Danielson’s framework for teaching. It has been developed for manual and electronic use. Both teachers and administrators have had, and continue to receive training with respect to content and effective use of this new evaluation tool. This training has included a focus on academic conferencing and clinical supervision. Requirements include four classroom walk-through visits for each teacher throughout the year, and one or two Professional Evaluation Conferences as well. With specific performance related rubrics being used, evaluation becomes more of a process or continuum, than a one-time checklist. Focus and collaborative feedback are both key components.
A major element of our Professional Learning Community efforts has been the introduction and implementation of Learning Walks in our district. A Learning Walk is a very specific and focused look at student learning in an individual school building. This focus is based on nine principles of learning in areas such as Clear Expectations, Academic Rigor, and Accountable Talk. All are researched based and directly linked to improve student achievement. At the discretion of the principal, one of the nine principles of learning is selected as the area of focus for the Learning Walk. Usually the selected principle is related directly to recent staff development in the school or area of focus for the year. Specific questions are developed by the school team, along with identified items to look for, and then the walk is held.

If the Learning Walk is led by district personnel, the team includes the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendents, Special Education Director, Technology Coordinators, Reading specialists, and others. A principal from another school is invited along with the school’s own principal(s) and two to four teachers. If the individual school is sponsoring the walk, the principal, staff developer, and several teachers comprise the teams. Teams may also include school board members, community council members and so forth. This entire process is an effort to make more public the art of teaching and learning, which has traditionally been a private practice.

Another strategy that has been implemented by several secondary schools to address the needs of students who fail to meet proficiency standards is to modify the block or extend learning opportunities. Instead of time being the constant and learning the variable, we are attempting to make learning the constant and time the variable. Students are scheduled into extended classes at the expense of losing an elective course. These extended blocks are generally team taught by a regular and special educator. Student work is tightly monitored and paired with appropriate and needed modifications to ensure student success.

Throughout this process both administrators and teachers are participating in ongoing and job embedded professional development and training. All principals and staff developers have attended the Richard Dufour Professional Learning Community Conferences. Weekly staff development sessions are held in each school for teachers. Principals participate in monthly trainings focused on the above mentioned target areas. There are always growing pains and adjustments that need to be made as change is implemented, but we are committed to doing whatever it takes to improve student achievement for all students in Washington County.
Bob Edmiston, Principal, McPolin Elementary School, Park City School District

At the risk of losing most of my educational friends and colleagues, I am one of the few willing to openly support the NCLB legislation. Beyond all of the issues of organizing a fair and valid process of accountability for all students from Anchorage, Alaska, to the Hawaiian Islands, White Plains, New York, to Salt Lake City, Utah, and all destinations in between, there is success. If nothing else we have started the process of creating an accountability system that will assist education to help all students. Who would not support this idea? I know there is much work to be done. If we do not start now, then when?

If You Expect It, Inspect It!
Observations From Principal Walk-Throughs

I am the instructional leader, the principal of a small elementary school. We do have challenges. We are a K-5 school of roughly 380 students. Of those students, 49% are Caucasian, and 47% are Hispanic. Of the Hispanics students, 38% are identified as English Language Learners (ELL). Fifty percent of our students are economically disadvantaged based on the free and reduced lunch information. We also enjoy a fairly large population of middle class students. And YES, we are a Title I school, and our strength is in our diversity. Many Utah schools have similar characteristics. The question is where you might think my school is located? I am the principal of McPolin Elementary School that is located in the middle of Park City, Utah. And yes, I still support NCLB and the idea of using a consistent assessment system to measure student academic growth.
The staff and community are committed to ensuring that all students can and will learn at high levels. And as important as the commitment is, planning, developing, and supporting a clearly defined process that will enable teachers to learn how to improve and refine instructional practices is another matter.

Change is ever present. Change happens to us all. Change in population and instructional needs have impacted our school just as much as every other school. In my opinion, these challenges are the seed of powerful and purposeful learning. Like so many before us, even though our school has changed, our expectations have not. The staff and community are committed to ensuring that all students can and will learn at high levels. And as important as the commitment is, planning, developing, and supporting a clearly defined process that will enable teachers to learn how to improve and refine instructional practices is another matter.

This is exceptionally hard work. At the same time this work is non-negotiable. Even with the strong will to do it, finding the way can be extremely challenging.

An effort to integrate Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies, with a building level RtI process has recently been initiated. Added to these district structures, the school has created a schedule that allows the teachers to have a 45 minute staff development meeting, on a weekly basis, with highly talented instructional coaches. These meetings are being adapted to teacher and grade level needs to support the district work and to define not only what the SIOP work looks like in the classroom for the teacher, but what it looks like for the student. More specifically, we are focusing on what it sounds like when a student is engaged in learning.

What do I mean by sounds like? In the past, I did my best to use classroom observations and debriefing meetings with teachers to judge the effectiveness of student learning. However, we were encountering mixed messages with the data they had collected.

I would observe what I believed to be very strong instruction, and more often than not, teacher directed. In other words, the teacher was doing the majority of the talking. I would take notes, then meet with the teacher. The teacher would share plans, offer detailed efforts to differentiate, and clarify any questions I might have. We would both leave the meetings feeling validated. Unfortunately, the data were not showing the growth indicators we expected.

In addition to the teacher observation process, I started asking students, “What are you working on right now?” The answers would range from: “This worksheet,” or “some work,” to my absolute favorite, “I don’t know,” or “what the teacher said.” And the most disheartening response—silence. The same silence that might occur nearly every time the student is asked to engage or interact. I realize that based on a student’s language level there may be a silent phase. However, this is not appropriate for a fourth grade ELL student that has attended the school for three years or more. Apparently limiting my conversations to teachers had left out the most important part—the student.

Inviting students to express their thinking is not new. What is new, is having the McPolin staff deliberately, purposefully, and consistently making plans for students to express their thinking, every day in every class period. Now when I enter a kindergarten classroom and a teacher is having students break words into phonemic segments I will hear:

TEACHER: “What are we doing when we chop words?”
(STUDENT: “We are practicing phoneme segmentation.”)
TEACHER: “Why do we practice phonemic segmentation?”
(academic vocabulary)
STUDENT: “So we can learn to read words better.”
TEACHER: “Why do we practice learning how to read and say words?”
STUDENT: “So we can be good readers.”

We have just started this journey. We have already learned that on-going vocabulary instruction in all content areas for all students is beneficial and necessary. If students are expected to be able to share their thinking, they need the building blocks of vocabulary to express their thoughts. All students benefit from such instruction. We are now becoming more explicit and systematic with our vocabulary instruction in all content areas. The SIOP work is helping us to better define academic language (CALP) versus basic or “playground” language (BICS), and purposefully embedding vocabulary work in all content areas, emphasizing and building background for not just ELL learners, but all students.

All faculty members at McPolin Elementary School are committed to helping all students learn. Our work continues. Through this journey I have discovered two important learning principles that are shared repeatedly with staff and parents:

1) The person doing the most work is doing the most learning.
2) Teachers need to learn to stop talking and to become more of a facilitator and let the students talk.

Principal walk-throughs are a powerful tool for instructional leaders and contribute to more students doing better work.
Systems Coaching: Big Picture Coaching
Coaching is coaching, right? Wrong! Before we talk about the differences in coaching, let’s first talk about the foundational principles of coaching. Dr. Rob Horner from the University of Oregon defines coaching as the active and interactive delivery of (a) prompts that increase successful behavior and (b) corrections that decrease unsuccessful behavior. Horner says that coaching is done by someone with credibility and experience with the target skills; coaching is done on-site, in real time; coaching is done after initial training; coaching is done repeatedly; and coaching intensity is adjusted to need.

Research tells us that the best way to convert educational training into classroom application is through coaching (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Therefore, coaching is a critical component to training in schools and districts. So, what is the difference in the type of coaching we do? In the past few months, Mishele Carol and Andrea Miller of Granite School District have been working with their systems coaches and share their experience:

The coaches were hired as Integrated Support Coaches as a two-year position. The district intention was for these coaches to act as big picture or systems coaches. However, the coaches background was instructional coaching and the schools were expecting an expert to come in and give specific intervention ideas. It took the district personnel a few months of their own problem solving to figure out the disconnect. Mishele Carol says that the goal of the Integrated Support Coach is to teach the school how to use the problem-solving model, so the school will adopt the model, bring data and make their own decisions based on the data. These systems coaches are helping to build infrastructure, get commitment from faculty and staff and build awareness in the building. If a school goes too quickly to the implementation phase they will end in systems failure every time. The schools need to focus on systems change and the capacity of the system to support the needs of their students.

The “Ah-Ha” moment for these Granite educators happened when they were able to distinguish between an instructional coach and a systems coach. They were expecting systems coaches, when the newly hired coaches expected to be instructional coaches. While the foundational principles are the same, the day to day coaching activities are different. In this setting a system coach works with a school-based team to build local capacity for problem solving. A systems coach is fluent in the four-step problem-solving process: 1) What is the problem? (Problem Identification) 2) Why is it happening? (Problem Analysis) 3) What should be done? (Plan Development & Implementation) 4) Did it work? (Plan Evaluation). See Figure 1.

Systems coaches can benefit from understanding the components of Figure 2. This graphic from the National Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, visually shows us the relationship between Outcomes, Data, Practices and Systems. Teams need to know their desired Outcomes! What is the goal? Teams should reach those goals by using Data. The team should always make data-based decisions. Dr. Horner states that we should always expect three types of data: Demographic Data, Outcome Data and Fidelity Data. The team should be ready to develop evidence-based Practices to support student behavior. And the team needs to make sure there is a System in place to support staff behavior.

One initiative in Utah that uses systems coaches is the ABC-UBI project. There are 25 ABC-UBI coaches across the participating districts and charters. The major responsibilities of an ABC-UBI coach include: coordination of the district team, coaching the school-based teams and the collaboration and coordination with ABC-UBI state support. The ABC-UBI coaches are selected by the district or charter as part of the application process for ABC-UBI. They are someone within the district designated to become the systems coach. The district/charter agrees to free up .25 FTE for every four school teams the coach is supporting. The current ABC-UBI coaches come from a variety of disciplines such as: special education, school counseling, and school psychology. The systems coaches come together once a month as a group with the state team to discuss trainings, manage logistics, problem solve, review district data and increase professional development. The systems coaches then regularly visit their participating school sites to discuss trainings, help manage logistics, problem solve, review school data and increase professional development. The ABC-UBI coach is helping the school build local capacity for problem solving, maximizing current competencies, focusing on outcomes, and emphasizing accountability through data. The participating ABC-UBI sites can be found at www.updc.org/abc.

The ABC-UBI initiative started using district based system coaches in 2005 and Figure 3 shows the increase in implementation of positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) with the coaching implementation. The percentage of implementation is based on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), a research instrument used to assess and evaluate the critical features of effective school-wide behavior support across each academic year.

It is essential that coaching plays an important role in our educational practices today, but schools and districts need to understand the difference between systems coaching and instructional coaching in order to see improved social and academic outcomes for Utah’s schools.
School Psychologists as Instructional and Behavioral Coaches: A Natural Fit

Greg S. Ern, Kathryn Head, & Sims Anderson

Over the years, the roles and functions of school psychologists have expanded, especially with the advent of response to intervention (RtI). Increased emphasis has been placed on consultation, collaboration with other professionals, intervention assistance, and coaching. The types of assessment methods that school psychologists utilize on a routine basis have broadened to include universal screening measures and other sensitive measures for monitoring student progress and assisting in the design of classroom instruction, such as DIBELS and other curriculum-based measures (Canter, 2006). These changes are reflected in the course curricula and evaluation methods utilized by school psychology training programs in recent times.

Response to intervention emphasizes the selection and implementation of evidence-based interventions (EBIs) rather than the more traditional model that may have involved brainstorming with other professionals and developing non research-based or less formal interventions for individual students. Evidence-based interventions are practices that are supported by empirical data showing their effectiveness with a specific population (Batsche et al., 2005). The use of EBIs requires that interventions be implemented in their entirety in order to determine their effectiveness and that the student is showing positive changes (Batsche et al.). Treatment integrity, the degree to which an intervention is implemented as it was designed (Lane, Mahdavi, & Borthwick-Duffy, 2003), is essential to the RtI model. RtI stresses the importance of teachers’ understanding and implementing instructional interventions in their entirety, something previous literature suggests had not been happening in many cases (Lane et al.).

A recent survey of teachers, conducted by the authors of this paper, demonstrates the potential need for improvement in the level of coaching support that is provided following the initial stages of problem solving and intervention development by the student support team (SST). The survey showed that when asked to rate from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), 223 teachers responded with an average score of 3.73 to the question: “After the Student Support Team meeting, I receive adequate support and follow-up help (i.e., coaching) to set up, implement, and monitor the intervention.” Teachers also reported a need for more coaching support with comments such as, “I think more of the coaching would be beneficial. Sometimes the documentation of interventions is not clear” and “I would like more support from others to help carry out the intervention in my classroom.” When 33 members of SSTs from the same schools were asked to rate from 1 (Objective Never Met) to 5 (Objective Always Met) whether “There is sufficient support provided to implement intervention plans (e.g., coaching support),” the average response was 4.47, indicating some degree of incongruence between what teachers believe they are receiving and what SST members report. Thus, though SST members may believe that teachers are receiving adequate support, the teachers themselves may not. Coaches may be in a good position to improve the degree to which teachers view the support they receive as adequate to enable them to carry out SST recommendations.

Interventional coaching (e.g., instructional and/or behavioral) involves an expert in a specific behavioral or academic area collaborating with the classroom teacher around the proper design, implementation, and evaluation of the interventions (Knight, 2007). Duties of an instructional coach may include providing classroom demonstrations, constructive verbal feedback, modeling opportunities, follow up support, direct assistance to the teacher, and classroom observations (Knight, 2007). A key component of effective instructional coaching is the collaboration of the teacher, coach, and administrator or principal (Knight, 2005). Instructional coaches may be evaluative (those who directly evaluate teachers such as administrators) or nonevaluative (those who do not evaluate teachers, such as school psychologists; Sprick, Knight, Reinke, & McKale, 2006).

Evaluative coaches must clearly distinguish between their role as evaluator and their role as coach, and make it clear that they are not evaluating the teacher during the coaching process. Teachers must feel comfortable when being observed so that the observation is a valid representation of the teacher’s style, allowing for a constructive coaching partnership (Sprick et al.). School psychologists are in a unique position to serve as nonevaluative coaches because of their expertise in both academic and behavioral areas, and because teachers may be more comfortable being coached by someone who is not also evaluating them.

An effective coach is one who has expertise in academic and/or behavioral areas as well as strong communication skills. An effective coach is a strong mentor and is respectful, compassionate, and honest. An effective coach must be able to provide constructive and honest feedback to the teacher while also understanding the many sources of stress that the classroom teacher may experience, such as a high student/teacher ratio, multiple demands on their time, increased accountability, and having a class with students of multiple ability and achievement levels (Knight, 2007). A supportive and open relationship between the coach and the classroom teacher is arguably the most important element to a successful coaching experience. Administrative support is a necessity for successful coaching so that when time is needed for teacher/coach consultation, the administrator can make it happen (Knight, 2007; Sprick et al., 2006). For school psychologists, having one’s administrator understand, value, and encourage involvement in activities related to relationship building, intervention coaching, and other prevention activities is very important.

Instructional coaching provides numerous benefits: an opportunity for one-to-one listening (highly valued and sought by many teachers); the opportunity to engage in dialogue and to work with someone who can empathize with the struggles the teacher may be facing (Knight, 2007); and increased treatment fidelity (Lane, Pierson, Robertson, & Little, 2004), something that is essential in response to intervention. A major concern that teachers, especially new ones, express about response to intervention is that they have limited understanding of and training in the interventions they are being asked to implement in their classrooms (Lane et al.). Coaching provides the opportunity to work with the
teacher in a one-on-one setting to develop the intervention, maintain it over several weeks, collect data to monitor the student’s progress, and determine the success of the intervention.

Current roles and functions of school psychologists align well with those of effective coaches, making school psychologists a natural fit for the position. According to the Petition for Reaffirmation of the Specialty of School Psychology (American Psychological Association, 2005), school psychologists are “prepared to intervene at the individual and system levels…to develop, implement, and evaluate preventative programs” (p.1) that promote positive learning environments. School psychologists’ training and coursework are strong indicators of their appropriate fit as coaches. Training programs at the master’s, specialist, and doctoral levels emphasize the areas of intervention and collaboration, both of which are essential tools for the effective instructional coach. A training program will impart to its students the primary domains of competence for the training and practice of school psychology. As reviewed in School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice (National Association of School Psychologists, 2006), competencies include interpersonal and collaborative skills, diversity awareness and sensitive service delivery, databased decision making and accountability, systems-based service delivery, and the development of cognitive and academic skills. These areas of competency emphasize school psychology’s important themes of intervention and collaboration, as well as being excellent practice guides for intervention coaches. Being trained and proficient in the skilled execution of these domains is of great value for the role of the school psychologist as an intervention coach.

Accompanying their professional roles, the personal characteristics of effective school psychologists contribute to their suitability as intervention coaches. Bardon and Bennett (1974) assert that a good school psychologist “must be capable of genuine identification with different kinds of people and their modes of behavior...[and possess] a sincere and positive attitude toward humanity that will enable him to try new approaches and to persist even in the face of discouragement, lack of results, and frustration” (p. 176). Intervention coaches must also be able to identify with the teachers they work with and try different intervention techniques. They must be persistent in difficult situations, as implementing interventions can be very frustrating. Other personal characteristics that are important for coaching are being well organized, prompt, adaptable, able to profit from supervision, and able to work well with educators individually, in groups, or in systems (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

Practical Applications

According to Knight (2007), the goal of coaching is to allow for “Hi-Fi” (e.g., high fidelity) teaching or “teaching that demonstrates fidelity to the scientifically proven critical teaching behaviors of the various interventions being implemented” (p. 13). The following is a list of specific ideas that school psychologists may use to promote their role as intervention coaches.

- At the beginning of the school year, ask for a few minutes to speak at a faculty meeting to define your role as “intervention coach.” Although people may be familiar with you as the school psychologist, their perceptions of your role are informed only by previous experiences. This process of “formal entry” applies to both school-based and external coaches and consultants (Brown, Pryzwansky, & Schulte, 2006). At this meeting, leave business cards and/or pamphlets so teachers can contact you.

- During SST meetings, volunteer to serve as the intervention coach when there is a request for assistance from a classroom teacher. You should try to meet with the teacher within one week following the SST to clarify the specific implementation and data collection aspects of the intervention. Arrange to meet periodically with the teacher or other intervention agent to assist in the regular recording of data.

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The School

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Adding the title of coach to a school psychologist’s duties should not summon dread in time-constrained service providers. On the contrary, instructional coaching does not add anything new but rather gives a natural structure to tasks that most school psychologists already perform.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), job duties of a school psychologist fall into the five categories of consultation, evaluation, prevention, intervention and research and planning. The following is a short description of how school psychologists can assume the role of coach while carrying out these responsibilities.

Consultation:
Whether it is as a part of a problem-solving team or in one-on-one consultation, the school psychologist as coach works with a teacher to target areas for intervention across any and all tiers of instruction. Consultation in a coaching model should connote a dialog where psychologists will listen as much as or more than they contribute to problem-solving conversations. Consultative discussions will occur before and throughout any designed intervention with effective collaboration resulting in understanding a teacher’s starting point and goals.

Evaluation:
As a coach, a school psychologist’s evaluative duties depart from the stereotypical special services eligibility testing to the less standardized assessment of learning environments. Evaluation is accomplished as a partner with the teacher and not in a hierarchal fashion. During feedback discussions, a school psychologist will provide observational information with the intent of facilitating a teacher’s reflection about his or her own classroom practices.

Prevention:
A school psychologist coach can share research-proven methods and classroom ideas with an entire school staff as a presentation in faculty meeting or as a weekly handout or email. Some teachers will feel motivated and confident enough to implement these suggestions without a great deal of support or follow up. Others may have more specific needs that require individualized attention, planning and assistance.

Intervention:
After teacher goals have been determined for improving the learning environment, a school psychologist coach can design and help to employ a plan for intervention. For best effectiveness, the school psychologist needs to be an integral part of this implementation. A school psychologist can model an instructional or behavioral practice, observe the teacher applying the intervention to check for execution fidelity and offer to take baseline and progress data.

Assist teachers and the SST in translating research into practice. To do this, Knight (2007) recommends the following steps:

- Clarify: Develop a clear understanding of the intervention before sharing it with others.
- Synthesize: Write one- to two-sentence statements that capture the essence of the intervention.
- Break it down: Break down the intervention into manageable components for the teacher.
- See it through a teacher’s eyes: Address the practical concerns that the teacher might have and consider how the intervention might look in the teacher’s classroom.
- Simplify: Look for analogies, anecdotes, simple explanations, and stories to help explain and clarify complex interventions.

Provide your SSTs with a list of websites where evidenced-based interventions can be found, some of which are the following:

- Teacher Tube
- Florida Center for Reading Research (www.fcrr.org)
- Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (http://idea.uoregon.edu)
- Oregon Reading First Initiative (http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu)
- Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (www.texasreading.org)
- Consortium on Reading Excellence (www.corelearn.com)
- Center on Instruction (www.centeroninstruction.org)
- Intervention Central (http://www.interventioncentral.org)
- What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc)

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center
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Psychologist as Coach

Research and Planning:
A school psychologist should be familiar with a large number of research-based classroom interventions and instructional practices. Suggesting and helping to put into action scientifically proven procedures will give a teacher the best chance for success in reaching the goal of intervention. The school psychologist and teacher participate together in their own research and planning when they review data and make decisions to alter intervention strategies when needed.

Relationship Building:
Not included in NASP’s job duties list but vital to a school psychologist’s role as coach is the responsibility to develop a partnering relationship with teachers. Communication skills that show empathy and respect help to engender a feeling of professional equality crucial to the effectiveness and goal of instructional coaching. A competent but accessible and approachable school psychologist will encourage teachers to engage in assisted improvement whether self-referred or required to make classroom or instructional changes.

Instructional Coaching for Success:
A Case Study for Tier I Intervention

As the school psychologist, I was assigned through our problem-solving team to coach Ms. K., a 1st grade teacher struggling with classroom management. I met with Ms. K. one afternoon and listened as she described the struggles with her classroom—children out of their seats, talking during instruction and general disorganization. To get a better understanding of the classroom workings, I scheduled a few times to observe her class. During my observations I noted many of Ms. K’s teaching strengths and also saw a few minor things that could help with her classroom management. After my observations Ms. K. and I met and discussed the many things she was doing right as well as the areas where she could improve. We then set out to determine a starting point for change. We chose to focus on talk-outs during math instruction. Ms. K.’s first step was to collect baseline data. I modeled a few different ways that she could collect data, provided samples of data collection sheets, and even offered to collect data while observing. After a few days of data collection, we determined that Ms. K’s students averaged 46 talk-outs during her 10-minute math instruction time.

Ms. K. and I then discussed possible interventions. We wanted to choose research-based, yet practical and easy ideas to implement. We chose to use the Public Posting strategy—where progress towards a behavioral goal is posted in a visual feedback system (Tough Kid Book, Rhode, Jensen, & Reavis, p.99). Ms. K. made a large chart where she tallied each student talk-out during math instruction. She showed the children how many talk-outs occurred and discussed the class goal of decreasing the behavior each day. She modeled what behavior she wanted to see rather than talking out, worked on providing positive reinforcement to students who raised their hand to speak rather than blurt out answers. Each day she used the same chart to mark the talk-outs and made sure to frequently direct the children to the chart to see their progress. Additionally, she implemented an “Advanced Strategy for Public Posting” (p. 101) and offered a tangible reward—extra recess time—for meeting the goal. Within a few weeks, the students had cut their talk-outs down to an average of seven per math instruction period.

As the instructional coach, I met with Ms. K. throughout the intervention process to provide feedback, ideas, and support. After Ms. K. felt successful in this particular area, she felt confident in her ability to address other areas of classroom management that needed improvement.
Jocelyn Taylor, Program Specialist, Utah State Office of Education (USOE)

The Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) has a positive influence in a student’s learning trajectory. Using the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, the SLP can provide supports for prevention and remediation before the student may be referred for special education. Multi-tiered preventive programs, problem solving, and early intervention in the areas of language and communication, “can serve as the glue that unites the student with his or her environment” (Montgomery, 2005). Working both inside and outside of special education, opportunities for collaborating and consulting can be created.

Response to Intervention is the practice of focusing on effective instruction to help students meet proficiency standards without special education. RtI helps prevent the negative consequences of school failure. Skill sets of the SLP that can be utilized in a RtI model include assessment and intervention for:

- Language development. The SLP is trained to identify the language periods including pre-linguistic, emerging, developing, language for learning, and advanced language (Paul, 2007). The SLP understands how to peel back complex layers of language at each of these language periods to identify which areas should be targeted for the purpose of bolstering weak spots.
- Components of language. The SLP is trained to screen form (i.e., syntax, morphology, phonology), content (i.e., semantic components, vocabulary), and use (i.e., pragmatics, cooperative conversations) of language.

**TIER 1 Core Instructional Interventions and Activities**

The goal of Tier 1 is to provide preventative and proactive supports for all students. SLPs work on behalf of students and with students during Tier 1 activities, which may include collaboration, professional development, coaching, problem solving, screening, and group instruction.

**Coaching**

- Participate in a coaching partnership. This will encourage collaboration, support reflective practice, and promote positive cultural change.
- Collaborate to identify screening tools for qualifying and quantifying the classroom language learning environment.
- Identify typical trajectories of communication and language development and conduct systematic audits of the general education environment to study language and literacy instruction.
- Collaborate to audit the Tier I language environment. Design interventions to improve Tier 1 language instruction to improve the quality of the environment in which students are learning to read. Provide consultation on improving instructional quality.
- Collaborate to adapt academic language by reducing linguistic complexity, marking important information, providing concrete examples for abstract concepts, giving and requesting elaborations, adjusting the discourse demands to meet the needs of struggling students.
- Explain the role of language in curriculum, assessment, and instruction, as a basis for appropriate program design. Explain the interconnection between spoken and written language.
- Plan for and conduct professional development on the language basis of literacy and learning.
- Share information regarding communication development, scientifically based literature, and pedagogical sequences. The teacher can then embed the knowledge into classroom routines.
- Change how students are brought into speech-language caseloads.

**On Behalf of Students**

- Use data analysis to inform practice and enhance content, creating coherence within a school.
- Assist in the selection of screening measures.
- Serve as a consultant for teams delivering targeted instruction and interventions and administer progress monitoring assessments related to speech and language.
- Consult about more intensive systematic general education interventions.
- Collaborate to understand the implication of benchmark measures to help identify students not responding adequately to first-tier instruction.
Providing Services within a Response to Intervention Model

With Students
- Participate with general education during protected time for literacy instruction.
- Review student work samples, discourse analysis, communication sampling, and language samples.
- Help to identify children who are not succeeding in the language component of Tier 1 school-wide interventions.
- Help to differentiate students who are not doing well due to poor response to instruction or intervention and students not doing well due to a disability.
- Identify students with the lowest phonemic awareness and sight-word scores. One challenge to dynamic assessment for large numbers of low-achieving students is the need for a simple, quick, standardized measure of language that can be administered repeatedly; similar to “dibbling.”
- Help identify systemic patterns of student need with respect to language skills.
- Be more responsive to individual student’s need, by assisting in providing high-quality feedback, and helping to design a variety of learning formats.
- Provide service within a curriculum framework.

TIER 2 Targeted Group Interventions
The goal of Tier 2 is to provide a rapid response to some students who may be at risk for failing. The advantage to Tier 2 targeted interventions is that children with mild to moderate language deficits, arising from an experiential base, may be remediated. The SLP can:

- Assist in providing direct instruction to address high-priority targets in emergent and early literacy development. An extra dose of language instruction to struggling learners may accelerate the development of reading. Special resources or strategies are not required. The learning goals could be replicated using the same materials as the first-tier environment. This could occur in a small group weekly session for more targeted instruction.
- Help with decision-making about which skills to target. Beginning sound awareness has predictive validity for later reading success and may be an important skill to target. Phonological segmentation skills also have promising results using small-group instruction.
- Deliver targeted group intervention before formal referral for speech-language services. Focus on word study (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, interactive reading with comprehension instruction, journal writing and dictated writing) has promising results.
- Conduct additional activities, depending on the grade level of the student including: 1) shared storybook reading with discussion of target words, 2) phonological awareness, 3) journal writing, 4) letter-sound mapping activity, 5) articulation elicitation and practice, 6) language and vocabulary comprehension 7) word study, and 8) explicit vocabulary instruction and elaboration.

TIER 3 Intensive, Individualized Interventions
Students not responding in Tiers 1 and 2 receive intensive and specialized treatment in Tier 3 interventions. Tier 3 supports are individualized, assessment-based, of high intensity, and of longer duration. Tier 3 can include specialized treatment for poor readers with language deficits who have not responded to universal instruction and targeted interventions. A Tier 3 activity may include collection of data to be used for consideration of eligibility for special education services. Other important activities include consultation with special educators to support the student’s special education goals.

Planning for the SLP to Participate
Involving the SLP in the RtI process may involve special considerations to avoid adding on to existing caseloads. Consider the following:

- Structural conditions that support the involvement of the SLP should be identified. Dedicated time for teacher groups to meet will be more likely to facilitate success. District initiatives and goals should link to expected outcomes.
- A cyclical scheduling approach to increase availability to students may be considered. Two models include 3:1 direct/indirect, or 3X60 minutes for a grading period. Another approach is to create a flexible schedule, changing every nine weeks to be available for classrooms on a rotating basis. A four-day schedule with one day set aside for evaluations, make-up sessions, and 1:1 work could be considered.
- A “workload” approach rather than a “caseload” approach may also be considered. Create a new workload schedule to account for all the tasks such as collaboration, consultation, and support activities that are involved in the RTI role. Key workload features include:
  - Activities with students that may include screenings, observation, evaluations, direct services with students (with or without an IEP), and small or whole group instruction as sole instructor or as a co-teacher.
  - Activities on behalf of students, which may include indirect services, child study teams, eligibility and IEP meetings, referral discussions, IEPs, consultation, and generating lesson plans.
  - Other activities, which may include compliance with federal and local mandates, school meetings, (PTA, faculty, committee) clerical, leading staff professional development, lunch.

Utah educators are encouraged to build a sustainable RtI program from local competence. In other words, start where you are and look for opportunities. Attend team training, meet with teams, and build local capacity. Leverage what is already working. Build relationships and become better at what you do. Be willing to learn. Professionals add value to students’ lives by understanding the principles of RtI and coaching, and working for successful application to education.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center.
Instructional Coaching in Early Childhood Programs—What’s It All About?
Instructional coaching is embedded in a systematic, multi-level, intensive, and recursive model of professional development. Without the large and small group settings for professional development, coaching lacks both credibility and effectiveness.

Other prerequisites for effective professional development models apply no less to coaching. An agency or program must have (1) standards of performance for children in appropriate domains of learning, (2) detailed expectations and role descriptions for instructional staff performance, (3) ways to measure child and staff performance, and (4) a method to tailor professional development to meet needs identified from performance data of both children and staff. These prerequisites to coaching that improve staff and student performance are grounded in administrative decisions about how to deploy resources, including time, personnel, and materials.

In the Granite School District Preschool Program, coaching was a key feature of the professional development during the 3-1/2 years of implementation of the Early Reading First Project. The success of the project in improving teacher and student performance has been documented. Several of the project elements that have been deemed the highly effective practices are being replicated across the entire GSD Preschool Program this year. All aspects of the professional development model are among those elements, including instructional coaching. Two levels of coaching are currently implemented: supportive coaching and intensive coaching. Supportive coaching is provided by coordinators at a lower level of intensity than intensive coaching, which is provided by full time instructional coaches.

The coaching research in early childhood is not robust. However, borrowing from the studies done in school age, many of the same points of coaching apply. Effective coaching is intensive, targeted, and context-embedded. Coaching is based on an understanding of communication, building and maintaining relationships, needs of adult learners, adapting to teachers’ individual differences, applying data analysis, and documenting the work. Knowledge of key coaching strategies, curriculum and instruction content, and specific activities increases the likelihood of desired improvements.

The GSD PD model begins with each instructional staff member, both general education and special education, completing a Performance Improvement Measure (PIM) assessment based on the detailed expectations and role descriptions. A PIM is also completed by another person in the program who knows the individual’s work, typically an administrator, coordinator, or coach. The teacher and coordinator meet together to review the results of the assessment and to set two targeted goals based on the results, along with a description of evidence that will be used to evaluate progress on the goals. Teachers who are involved with supportive coaching have the coordinator working directly with them on their goals for 1-1/2 hours twice a month. When a teacher is involved in Intensive Coaching, at a rate of 3-1/2 hours per week, the coach and the teacher then plan, carry out, and evaluate extensive activities to assist the teacher toward these goals. The coaching activities may involve a bidirectional modeling-targeted observation, side-by-side teaching, assistance with the environment, the explicit teaching sequence, skills-based lesson planning, problem solving of instructional barriers, and data analysis to inform further instruction. After the coaching session, the coach documents both celebrations from the activity, and next steps for the coming week.

The PIM is completed in the areas of the teachers’ goals at mid-year, and then the entire assessment tool again at the end of the year. The progress of each member of the teaching staff on the PIM, along with the types, hours, and topics of training and children’s performance data are entered into a database that will allow tracking and correlation of training to outcomes.

The administrative organization required to make intensive coaching possible is based on commitment to improve results for children, acknowledgement that the existing funds are all the resources available, and careful rethinking of priorities, job assignments, and time loading for various roles. It is not easy—but through all the challenges, you can make it happen!!
If school leaders understand the nature of resistance, they can improve their relationships with teachers and increase teacher implementation of proven practices.

When efforts to improve student learning fail, teachers often end up being blamed. Teachers were resistant to new ideas, say the leaders who were working with them. Rather than blame teachers and ask, “Why do teachers resist?” perhaps those of us who lead change should ask, “What can we do to make it easier for teachers to implement new practices?”

Two pioneers in unpacking the meaning of resistance, Miller and Rollnick, have this to say about resistance in counseling and therapy relationships:

To use the term “resistance” as explanatory seems to suggest that things are not going smoothly because of something that one person (the client) is doing...In a way, it is oxymoronic to say that one person is not cooperating. It requires at least two people to not cooperate, to yield dissonance. (2002, p. 45)

We can learn a lot about professional learning if we apply the same kind of thinking to our understanding of “resistant teachers.” Consider six questions that can bring to the surface reasons for this dissonance between teachers and change agents.

QUESTION #1:
Are the Teaching Practices Powerful?

In The Evolving Self, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi describes what’s required for one idea to supersede another. “Ideas, values, technologies that do the job with the least demand on psychic energy will survive. An appliance that does more work with less effort will be preferred” (1993, p. 123, emphasis added).

Csikszentmihalyi’s suggestion that people adopt new ideas or tools that are easier or more powerful also applies to teachers leaving behind old ways of teaching for more effective approaches. Teachers aren’t likely to implement new practices unless they are powerful and easy to implement. Indeed, that seems like wise practice.

The issue of ease of use will be addressed in question two. Let’s begin by considering the need for powerful teaching tools. Of course, few teachers will be motivated to implement a teaching practice if it does not increase student achievement, make content more accessible, improve the quality of classroom conversation, make students happier, increase love of learning, or have some other significant positive impact. Nevertheless, teachers report that they’re frequently asked to change in ways that don’t make a difference.

This situation can arise for at least three reasons. First, not all teaching practices are created equally. Before recommending practices for their schools, consumers of educational interventions must consider the quality of research that supports those practices, the effect sizes or other measures of statistical significance from supportive research studies, and the experiences of other educators. Indeed, change leaders should propose new ways of teaching only if they’re confident they will have a positive impact on student achievement.

Second, educators should consider student achievement and behavior data from their schools before proposing new ways of teaching. Decision makers should strive to find teaching tools that are the best match for the needs of their students. A highly effective program in one school might be totally ineffective if adopted in a school facing different challenges. School improvement is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Third, even proven, effective programs that are a good match for a school’s needs still may not be powerful if teachers don’t get sufficient support for high-quality implementation. Our research at the Kansas Coaching Project (Knight and Cornett 2009) indicates that teachers are unlikely to implement a practice successfully, if they implement at all, if they have had only workshops without coaching or other forms of follow-up support. Many teaching practices are sophisticated, and teachers can’t be expected to learn them without an opportunity to watch model demonstration lessons, experience job-embedded support, and receive high-quality feedback. Without support, a powerful practice, poorly implemented, is no better than one that is ineffective.

QUESTION #2:
Are the Practices Easy to Implement?

Most teachers face what Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (1996) have referred to as a “press of immediacy.” In a typical day, teachers grade stacks of papers, create lesson plans, complete reports, attend meetings, contact parents, stay at school for sporting events, do bus duty, supervise the cafeteria, attend IEP meetings, and on and on. On top of that, they complete all of those tasks while doing work that requires a great deal of emotional fortitude. The result is that even when teachers want to implement a new program, they may not have the energy needed to put that program into practice.
What Can We Do About Teacher Resistance?

The importance of easy and powerful interventions has been nicely summarized by Patterson and his colleagues: “When it comes to altering behavior, you need to help others answer only two questions. First, is it worth it?...And second, can they do this thing?...Consequently, when trying to change behaviors, think of the only two questions that matter. Is it worth it?...Can I do it?” (2008, p. 50).

Even if a proposed program is “worth it” and easy to do, we still aren’t out of the woods. Teachers will adopt powerful and easy practices only if they believe that they are powerful and easy. Consequently, change leaders need to be able to convince teachers that they are so. Unfortunately, the most common forms of persuasion often fail.

**QUESTION #3: Are They Experienced?**

I have shown hundreds of change leaders a scene from the documentary The Waters of Ayole. The short film describes the efforts of United Nations aid workers to support villages as they take care of village water pumps, literally a matter of life or death for many villagers. In the scene, four village leaders are asked what they thought when they learned they were getting a pump for their village. “At first, we weren’t particularly pleased,” they say. “We thought it might be a trick.” “And people refused to come to meetings.” “When the machines arrived...we were afraid they might scare us away from our village.” “Without seeing the water, we weren’t convinced.” Even when the water gushed out, “without having drunk any of it, we still weren’t convinced.”

What finally convinced the villagers? “The day water came from the pump gushed out, ‘without having drunk any of it, we still weren’t convinced.’” Even when the water was offered, people may resist until they actually experience the phenomenon.

Patterson and his colleagues explain that when it comes to change, experience trumps talk every time. “The most common tool we use to change other’s expectations is the use of verbal persuasion...[however] When it comes to resistant problems, verbal persuasion rarely works. Verbal persuasion often comes across as an attack. It can feel like nagging or manipulation. If people routinely enact behaviors that are difficult to change, you can bet that they’ve heard more than one soliloquy on what’s wrong with them—and to no effect” (2008, p. 50).

If talk is cheap, or at least ineffective, then it’s experience that persuades. Tom Guskey has made exactly the same observation:

The crucial point is that it is not the professional development per se, but the experience of successful implementation that changes teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. They believe it works because they have seen it work, and that experience shapes their attitudes and beliefs...the key element in significant change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs is clear evidence of improvement in the learning outcomes of their students. (1999, p. 384)

When it comes to change, teachers have to drink the water, so to speak, before they will believe. This has real implications for change leaders. First, they should provide teachers with experiences that demonstrate the value of a program. For example, if a school employs coaches, the coaches can present model lessons in teachers’ classrooms. Other forms of professional learning, such as Japanese lesson study or peer observation with feedback, also enable teachers to see and experience new practices. Video recordings and experiential learning activities can also be used effectively during workshops, study groups, and other professional learning activities.

Perhaps most important, if we know that teachers usually need to experience success to believe in a teaching practice, that should change how we communicate with teachers. Trying to talk teachers into new ways of teaching without providing experiences can actually decrease implementation, creating what Miller and Rollnick refer to as an “ironic process,” an approach that “causes the very outcome that it was meant to avert” (2002, p. 37). A better tactic is to offer teachers opportunities to experiment with practices so that they can make up their own minds about their effectiveness.

If the practices are powerful and easy, most teachers will implement them. If the practices aren’t powerful or easy, there is very little anyone can say to persuade teachers to change. Indeed, the respectful way in which we talk to teachers can make a big difference in whether they implement a practice.

**QUESTION #4: Are Teachers Treated With Respect?**

Commenting on how another professional works is almost always difficult because so much of a person is woven into how she or he works. This challenge may be even more difficult for educators because few professions are more personal than teaching.

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Change agents need to be aware that they walk on sacred ground when they suggest new ways of teaching, especially when they criticize a teacher’s current teaching practices.

In more than 200 interviews that I’ve done with teachers about professional learning, teachers have been close to unanimous in criticizing professional developers who fail to recognize teacher expertise. The old model of an expert talking to a room full of strangers is, in fact, in some cases literally worse than nothing because teachers may leave traditional sessions feeling frustrated, disappointed, or patronized and worse off than they were before the session. One teacher’s comments summarize the views of many of these teachers: “It’s not like we are undergraduates. There are many people on our staff who are bright and who do read what’s going on in the field, who do take classes on their own time, not because they have to but because they love to teach. And I do think it’s kind of demeaning [when a presenter appears not to] know about that.”

Few change leaders actually intend to be demeaning, but intentions don’t matter. What matters is how teachers perceive change leaders. Perception is reality, and if teachers feel that their identity (their own sense of how good, competent, or talented they are) is under attack, their most frequent reaction is to resist (Stone, Patton, and Heen 2000).

Change agents, then, are likely to be more effective if they are masters of effective communication. They need to listen respectfully (Goldsmith and Reiter 2007) and communicate positive comments so frequently and so authentically that they foster what Kegan and Lahey refer to as “a language of ongoing regard” (2001, p. 101). Perhaps most important, they need to communicate recognition for the professionalism of teachers. For that reason, change leaders must understand the role of reflection and thought in professional practice.

**QUESTION #5: Are Teachers Doing the Thinking?**

Thomas Davenport has deepened our understanding of professional practice by describing the attributes of knowledge workers who, he says, “think for a living. [Knowledge workers] live by their wits. Any heavy lifting on the job is intellectual, not physical. They solve problems, they understand and meet the needs of customers, they make decisions, and they collaborate and communicate with other people in the course of doing their own work” (2005, p. 15). Few people do more thinking on the job than a teacher standing in front of 27 students, so it seems safe to say that teachers are knowledge workers.

Davenport extends his analysis by stating that defining characteristic of knowledge workers is this: “Knowledge workers like autonomy...Thinking for a living engenders thinking for oneself. Knowledge workers are paid for their education, experience, and expertise, so it is not surprising that they take offense when someone else rides roughshod over their intellectual territory” (2005, p. 15). This is precisely the case with teachers. Ignoring teacher autonomy often ensures that teachers don’t implement new practices.

On the surface, having a small group of educators and administrators do the thinking for teachers is understandable. Schools need programs implemented consistently across a district, and it’s not especially efficient for many teachers to be deeply involved in curriculum revision. However, if change leaders ignore teachers’ need for autonomy, they run the risk of alienating their audience.

Respecting teachers’ professional autonomy does not mean all teachers have complete freedom to teach in whatever way moves them. There have to be some non-negotiables in schools. Schools could expect all teachers to develop classroom management plans, use common assessments, or adopt particular textbooks or curricula, for example. However, handing a pacing guide to teachers and giving them no say in its development and no choice about implementing it is a recipe for disaster. When someone else does all the thinking for teachers, there’s little chance that teachers will implement the practice.

**QUESTION #6: What Has Happened in the Past?**

How teachers view professional learning in their schools on any given day will inevitably be shaped by how they have experienced professional learning in the past. If professional learning has been truly professional, respected teachers’ need for autonomy, offered powerful and easy practices, and been supported through coaching and other forms of job-embedded learning, then teachers will approach professional learning with positive, high expectations. When these elements are missing, however, history can become a major roadblock to implementation.

One particularly self-destructive pattern that prevents real change from taking hold in schools is what I call an “attempt, attack, abandon cycle.” During the attempt, attack, abandon cycle, change leaders introduce a new practice into a school. However, very little support is available to help teachers try the new practice, so many teachers never implement it and others attempt it but poorly. Before the program has been implemented effectively, and before it’s had sufficient time to be fully implemented, various individuals in the school or district begin to criticize or attack the program. As a result, many teachers implementing the program begin to lose their will to stick with it. Inevitably, even though the practice was never implemented well, district leaders label it unsuccessful and abandon it, only to propose another program that’s sure to be pulled into the same vicious cycle, to eventually be attacked and abandoned for another program, and on and on. Thus, schools stay on an unmerry-go-round of attempt, attack, abandon, without ever seeing any meaningful, sustained change in instruction taking place (Knight 2007).

Hargreaves and Fink (2005) have identified lack of continuity as another self-destructive pattern in schools. When districts swing from one instructional approach to another, when school leadership is constantly changing, the lack of consistency and focus can undermine a teacher’s enthusiasm for new ideas. Of course, if the history of professional learning is one that ignores all of the above questions, there is an even greater likelihood that teachers will adopt the age-old refrain, “This too shall pass.”

**Suggestions for Leading Change**

I hope the above questions show how the approach taken by change leaders can have a significant positive or negative impact on whether teachers adopt better ways of teaching. Indeed, if we carefully consider change issues, we might wonder why teachers don’t resist change more than they do. If we ask teachers to implement practices that may not have a powerful impact on students, if we don’t make it easier for teachers to adopt new ways of teaching, if we tell teachers why innovations are important without providing them opportunities to experience success, if we do the thinking for teachers, if we ignore the personal and professional aspects of change, and we do this year after year while continually changing the focus for professional learning, can we really expect teachers to be enthusiastic about changing their practices?

Fortunately, our six questions carry within them suggestions for how we can increase the likelihood that teachers will adopt and implement proven practices.
1. Seek high-leverage teaching practices that are proven and powerful. Those who propose new ways of teaching need to be certain that what they bring to teachers will have an unmistakable positive impact on students’ and teachers’ lives.

2. Use data to select and monitor the impact of practices. Data can be a valuable tool for the selection of effective teaching practices. Ignoring data can waste a great deal of effort on tools that don’t address students’, teachers’, and schools’ most pressing needs.

3. Provide quality coaching. The preliminary research on coaching (Knight and Cornett 2009) suggests that teachers rarely implement without sufficient support involving precise explanations, modeling, and encouraging feedback.

4. Balance precise explanations with provisional comments. Professional developers can make it easier for teachers to learn new practices if they precisely describe how teachers should use new practices in the classroom. However, they should also explain those practices provisionally to allow teachers the freedom to adopt practices to fit their unique pedagogical approach or the particular needs of their students.

5. Obtain commitment by offering teachers choices and valuing their voices. The more teachers can have a say in how and what new practices they implement, the more likely they will be to embrace new ways of teaching.

6. Focus professional learning on a few critical teaching practices. Professional learning that involves too many approaches can lack focus or overwhelm teachers (Davenport 2005). A better idea is to collaboratively identify a few critically important practices and then work together to ensure that they are implemented successfully.

7. Align all activities related to professional learning. Professional learning communities, coaching, teacher walkthroughs, program book studies, and all other forms of professional learning should focus on the same critically important practices that everyone agrees are important within the school.

8. Increase relational trust. Professional learning is most successful in settings that foster support and trust. As Michael Fullan has stated, “the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost” (2001, p. 5).

**Conclusion**

This article began with a simple question: “What can we do about teacher resistance?” One answer is that those of us who are change leaders should be careful about how we share practices with teachers. Professional developers who adopt the suggestions included here should see much less resistance and much more meaningful and valuable professional learning. More important, when teaching practices improve, there is every reason to believe student achievement will improve as well.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center

I was giving a workshop on hard conversations to a group of new teacher coaches last week and I overheard the comment, “I can’t believe she’s telling coaches to have these types of conversations.” Why would someone need to study this topic? Isn’t a hard conversation the superintendent’s job or the principal’s job? Yes, I believe it is their job to speak up when they see something they feel doesn’t align with the vision of their district or when they witness something they don’t feel is good for students, and I believe we all lead from whatever position we have in our organization. I feel it is everyone’s responsibility to learn how to have hard conversations and learn to do them with clarity and compassion.

“Getting into Necessary Trouble”

Collective Responsibility

This summer I watched a video of Congressman John Lewis being interviewed by students at Mount Madonna School. They asked Congressman Lewis about his values and how they informed his work as a legislator. At the end of the talk, he looked at the students and said, “Get into trouble, necessary trouble.” Given his history in the Civil Rights Movement, what was in the ‘white space’ around his comments spoke to me through that video just as loudly as what he said. It is our responsibility to speak out and have hard conversations when we feel the collective isn’t being served. There are times when we are the ones who witness something academically unsound, physically unsafe or emotionally damaging. It could be a comment that wasn’t supportive of a fellow colleague or an action that wasn’t helpful to a student. In those situations, it is our responsibility to speak out and create a safe and supportive climate for the growth of adults and children alike. We should all feel the responsibility to learn how to have hard conversations and increase our capacity to do so for the social good.

Creating Cultures of Excellence

Last year, Palo Alto USD had a statement at the top of their home page on their website that said, “Excellence by Design.” There is a certain sense of confidence in that statement. It said to those who were looking at it, “We are deliberate and self-assured.” Yet while design is necessary and critical, one can’t believe design is an end goal in itself. In education, we need to also be excellent in our communication, delivery and follow through. Do we truly provide the excellence we are aiming for? And if we don’t, do we have a hard conversation with ourselves and acknowledge it? I aspire to be excellent and I want to work in an organization that also aspires to do so. When we aren’t at our best, we need to recognize the gap between our existing state and our desired state. We need to skillfully articulate that difference and speak honestly to the potential we have to become our best selves.

Having Humane and Growth-Producing Conversations

One of the core beliefs foundational to my work on hard conversations is that we have them with one another so we can all become our best selves. We aren’t having hard conversations to be cruel or shaming. We aren’t having hard conversations to blame or gain power. We have them so we can begin a dialogue that centers around all of us learning and becoming more human human beings. We are all in a process of becoming—growing in our personal and professional identities. At times, we don’t see our impact and how it might not align with what we intended. If I am off the mark, I want someone to help me see how I could do an even better job as a teacher, trainer, facilitator and leader and tell me so in a humane and growth producing way.

We might have terrible memories of hard conversations that were hurtful. There is a better way to do them. No matter the roles we have, learning how to speak up in a way that is respectful of ourselves, respectful of others and holds a bigger vision of respect for our schools is at the core of what we need to be doing.
use a healthy balance of both support and challenge when working through difficult issues with our colleagues?

So whether you’re faced with a gossipy colleague or a belittling supervisor, there is a better way to have the hard conversation, whatever the conversation needs to be.

A good starting point is to understand clearly your feelings about the problem. Ask yourself:
• If I am hesitating, why?
• How can I get to a place where I feel ready and comfortable sharing what needs to be said? What information do I need? What emotions do I need to deal with?

Then think about what to communicate:
• What explicit professional teaching or work behaviors am I focusing on?
• Is there specific and reliable evidence that I can share?
• Once I share my thoughts, what are my suggestions for next steps in order to fix the problem?
• How will I continue to be of support as the problem is corrected?

And finally, think about how to communicate:
• How might I write up our first few talking points and/or sentences?
• What language will work for this conversation and what words might just trigger the individual and thus stop her/him from listening?
• Where should I have this conversation so it has the best chance of being effective?

These questions are just the beginning, but provide an initial framework for the internal discussion you need to be having before you speak up. Of course, each conversation should be handled on a case-by-case basis. It is important periodically to reflect upon our work. What did we really love about this year’s work? How might we want to do things differently next year? In terms of our teaching, working with our colleagues and our supervisees or coachees, how do we want to be? What changes might we want to make in order to have not only just more effective conversations, but also more honest and healthy ones? This newsletter will provide some ‘quick scripts’ for all of us interested in cleaner, more authentic communication. I call them scripts that help us be ‘two feet in the present.’

Quick Scripts That Help Us Be Two Feet In The Present

I don’t know about you, but I sometimes leave interactions I have with colleagues and think, “Ouch.” I was hurt by the tone, I was insulted by the comment, or I was not in agreement with the content or what I was expected to do next. And, sadly, I didn’t say a thing.

Unfortunately, the next time I interact with that person I bring that last ‘ouch’ into my present conversation. It sits in my head, and if something else is said that triggers me, I pounce; on a scale of ‘big deal or little deal’ I make the current comment a ‘10’ when it really is a ‘2.’ I brought the past into the present.

Now we all know that every little comment couldn’t realistically be discussed and worked through, nor should it be. We’d be processing for days. But, if something is still bothering you, you feel that you are still stinging from the last interaction, you are getting a sinking sensation that you are this close to being overwhelmed, and any or all of those feelings are getting in the way of you working well with a colleague, chances are you need some help so you can better say what you need to say in the moment.

Here are three very short quick scripts for those challenging moments:

1) “Ouch”
A training group I work with uses this word when we don’t know what to say right away but we know we have been stung by a comment and we have to say something. It immediately offers a signal that something was hurtful. Saying, “ouch” helps us all stop and think about what was just said and the impact it had. We restate our intentions, talk about the feelings it brought up and try then to move on without bringing the ‘slime’ of a past hurt with us.

2) “Here’s What I’m Thinking”
This ‘quick script’ is adapted from the “State My Path” piece in the book, Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson and his partners at Vital Smarts.

If you have just seen or heard something that you feel has been hurtful, or might come across in a way that could cause damage and you want to name what is going on from your perspective, try these three sentence stems:

“I noticed...”
“I am thinking/feeling...”
“Is that what you meant?” OR “Is this what’s going on?”

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Here’s a quick example:

Someone doesn’t respond to your emails in a timely fashion. You have set deadlines and they aren’t being met. You are beginning to steam a bit. You could say, “I put a Please get back to me by...deadline in both emails and I noticed that you didn’t respond. I am thinking that there is something wrong. Perhaps you aren’t interested in joining the group? Is this what’s going on?”

In this three part entry into a dialogue, most specifically with the “I Statements,” you have just put out what you think might be happening and how it looks from your perspective. Instead of playing the movie inside your head about what you think might be going on, this “Here’s What I’m Thinking” script, delivered in a sincere and open tone, gets the issue on the table so it can be discussed in real time.

3) “Are You Willing To Consider Other Options?”

Many of us have a difficult time disagreeing with our supervisor. What do you do when he or she has asked you to do something that, for whatever reason (time, resources, impact on others), doesn’t work for you? My colleague, executive coach and consultant Phil Berghausen, taught me this quick script to use when your supervisor has just suggested you do something that you feel might not be the next best step.

“I will do that if you want me to and are you willing to consider other options?” By saying, “I will do that if you want me to,” you send a clear message your supervisor is still in charge. By adding the words, “are you willing,” you are putting the next part of the discussion in the hands of the supervisor. You haven’t usurped any control. You have asked if he is willing to keep talking. And by finishing with the words, “consider other options” you have opened the door not only to the supervisor’s idea being a viable option, but the concept that there are also other options he might want to think about too. Then you can suggest your alternatives as well.

It takes some serious self-awareness and some strong confidence to speak up in the moment. Having some language in your toolbox for when awkward moments arise is essential. Addressing things when they occur, instead of sitting on them, keeps us ‘two feet in the present.’

“What about issues of language and culture and how do those play into a hard conversation?” “How many minutes should you schedule for each hard conversation?” “What do you say when the person you speak to responds with an aggressive tone and the comment, ‘You don’t know what you are talking about’?” “Do you have something in your book (Having Hard Conversations) for times like that?” And so it goes. And my guess, given everyone’s anxiety around giving anything close to a negative piece of feedback, the questions will be never ending. I continue to take notes and respond with, “Great idea for the 2nd edition.”
Being Transparent and Proactive

Knowing information is power. People want to know as much as they can about a situation. It helps them feel in the know and as in control as they can be. Hiding information or avoiding the giving of bad news can make matters worse. If people are hounding you for information, whispering to others in the lounge about what might be happening or skulking around the main office hoping you are going to say something, you aren’t giving out enough information. If you know something, be proactive and speak. If you know you don’t know anything and have a date in the future when you will, let them know that piece. Nothing is worse than an “Oh, thanks for calling. I’ve been meaning to talk to you.” When that happens we have the layer of avoidance added on to the layer of the bad news and muddying that water isn’t necessary and feels bad. Whatever is true and authentic and can be said without compromising confidentiality (see an HR professional on that front), find a way to say it professionally.

What to Expect in Response

We can categorize the types of responses we might get. People respond to bad news in many ways, but they most likely will respond with fear, anger, shame, or possibly relief. Those responses are in top four, and not necessarily in that order. If we can budget in for these types of responses we can possibly mitigate the situation by addressing them in the conversation itself. If you anticipate someone will feel shame, you could say, “Now you might be thinking this action is being taken because of something intrinsic in you and that isn’t true. Please know this isn’t a personal attack, it is an organizational action.” If you think a person will respond in fear, consider what the most immediate concern will be and, if you can, try to plan ahead to address it. If the employees might be worried about health insurance, attend to that concern. “Some of you might immediately be thinking about your children’s health needs. We have thought about this and have some ideas for you...” If you think the person will be angry, think about buffering yourself against some yelling or having the conversation with someone else present or whatever else might work for you in that situation. Anticipating specific reactions and proactively addressing them won’t stop someone from having those feelings, but it will give you some control (Yes, I knew that might be coming, I am prepared...) and shows you have been thinking about the individual’s needs.

Sitting with Others in Times of Uncertainty

Given that emotions don’t follow a linear trajectory, any initial comments take time to sink in. Then might come a reaction of anger or concern. So we need to expect to sit with others in this uncomfortable space. I was told of an assistant superintendent who had an open door policy and said, “Difficult information takes time to digest. I encourage you to come see me as different concerns arise and we expect you will and welcome you. We can offer you additional supports whenever you need them. If you need to come see me at any time, let me know.” His secretary was ready to greet teachers coming into the office. She was generous and immediate in her responses to them as they walked in and in her emails. The assistant superintendent and the secretary were being as empathic as they could given the complexity and pain of the situation—and their actions and kindness went a long way in keeping a respectful relationship with the employees.

These challenging times requires the ability to fasten one’s seat belt for the bumpy ride ahead and to be able to sit with others and ourselves in our anxiety. Being proactive in offering information and anticipating responses when you give the information will help all parties involved.

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Collecting Instructional Fidelity Data—Where Do We Begin and How?

David Forbush, John Hughes & Chris Milbank, Cache County School District

“Instructional fidelity is a measure of the degree to which a teacher’s instructional behaviors align with programmatic guidelines or principles of an instructional approach” (Forbush, Milbank & Hughes, 2009).

Introduction

I worked constructing log homes to get myself through college. The summer work was wonderful, taking me to Jackson Hole, Lake Tahoe, Park City, and other beautiful places. Before a construction project began, “where and how do we begin” questions were asked, and answered by architects, engineers and other designers. Collective answers to these questions were embodied in “elevation shots,” or colorful scaled drawings of the project’s final image. Additionally, detailed floor, truss, and electrical plans fleshed out detail needed for successful production of the structure. These elevation and detailed plans provide concrete evidence of Stephen Covey’s direction to “begin with the end in mind” when organizing an effort, or project.

With instructional fidelity, before beginning, ask yourself, “what is the end that I have in mind?” The title from our previous installment on instructional fidelity (Forbush, Milbank, Hughes, December 2009), “Maximizing Student Outcomes—What Does Instructional Fidelity Have to Do with It?” clarifies, “our end,” is developing in students nimble use of relevant concepts and core skills (e.g., reading, written communication, and mathematical computation) in authentic settings.
and under high demand conditions (e.g., reading and following assembly instructions; comparing and contrasting, and selecting from multiple home finance mortgage options).

With a proper “end in mind,” you are still left to determine the activities (i.e., vehicles) for achieving “the end.” We suggest that collection and use of instructional fidelity data is one of several activities forming a “composite vehicle” to aide instructional interventionists (i.e., teachers and paraeducators) in producing in students’ nimble use of valued concepts and skills.

Addressing this topic, we offer descriptions of six sequential activities, with the objective of providing initial direction toward preparing to assess instructional fidelity. With each step, we propose a primary focus for instructional teams and list several related tasks.

**Step 1: Developing the Need for Instructional Fidelity Data**

**Focus:** Collaboration toward deep and common acceptance of the importance of instructional fidelity and its measurement.

**Tasks:**
1. Identify, read, and discuss articles strengthening the need for instructional fidelity.
3. Develop an extended plan for assessing instructional fidelity.

In this preparatory stage, it strikes us as important that an instructional organization or team take time to become “steeped” in knowledge of the usefulness of instructional fidelity data for enhancing instruction and for properly fitting interventions to students’ needs. An instructional organization, or team, through a common diet of readings, and meaningful discussion should acquire a value for instructional fidelity data, and importantly, will develop a conceptual consensus and need for these data, and the capacity to begin laying out an extended plan. We recommend as an initial reading, our previous Utah Special Educator article “Maximizing Student Outcomes—What Does Instructional Fidelity Have to Do with It?” (Forbush, Milbank, Hughes, December 2009). Learnings to be derived from this read include:

- Developing a conceptual knowledge of instructional fidelity.
- Discovering the relationship between instructional fidelity and strengthening instruction.

- Discovering the relationship between instructional fidelity and properly qualifying students as having IDEA related disabilities.
- Discovering the need to increase the “degree of match” between local school-based instructional practices and practices described in peer reviewed research.
- Learning the value that instructional fidelity has for adding prescriptive instruction direction in responding to students’ learning difficulties.

**Step 2: Agreement on Salient Instructional Features**

**Focus:** Agreement on salient instructional delivery and management features.

**Tasks:**
1. Review evidence-base, attending closely to conditions upon which empirical bases were established.
2. Read and discuss curricula delivery and management guidelines of curricula you are most interested in collecting treatment fidelity.
3. Contextualize group discussions by reviewing curriculum lessons through lenses associated with curriculum guidelines and empirical bases.
4. Develop consensus on salient program delivery and management procedures

Steeped in knowledge about instructional fidelity and its values, an instructional team or organization is ready for rounds of thoughtful discussions to “tease out” the “salient” elements of instruction. The term salient brings to mind a recent cold medicine shopping experience related by one of the authors. Standing in front of an expansive shelving system organized with many brands and types of cold medicine, he decided to consult the pharmacist. Thankfully, the pharmacist stepped out of his glassed enclosure and offered training in cold medicine selection, which produced acquisition of two new important terms for the author (i.e., active and transportation ingredients). Transportation ingredients are substances which suspend, or aide in transportation of the “real medicine” or “active ingredient” to the targeted body location, and with as little discomfort as possible. From this experience, this author learned a single decision rule—buy medicines with as high a proportion of the salient or vital active ingredient as possible.

The concepts of “active” and “transportation” ingredients relate to curriculum and instruction. All curriculum and instruction consist of recommended procedures for teachers and for students. Some of these procedures serve to transport or support (e.g., roll calls, management of student behavior, review of expectations), and what remains is the active ingredient, or the salient element(s) relating directly to the acquisition of a targeted concept or skill (e.g., direct modeling of task, student responses…). The focus of a team’s efforts in this step is to engage in deep discussion in pursuit of discovery of the salient elements of instruction (i.e., vital to student learning), and to agree on these vital elements, with the express purpose of collecting instructional fidelity data on the degree of presence of these salient instructional elements in teachers’ instructional delivery.  

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To tease out salient from transport elements, first, all good researchers attend to treatment fidelity, or work to ensure that the treatment or intervention is implemented with integrity. Researchers prize claiming with as great of confidence as they can, that the observed effects of the intervention resulted from the intervention itself, versus a host of other unaccounted for, or uncontrolled variables, and including, simple failure to put the intervention in place, or implement the intervention as planned, or designed. If the curriculum or procedure has an evidence-base, and this evidence base was developed under specific conditions of quality, then knowing and implementing the intervention under the same or very similar conditions of quality should hypothetically produce similar results. So, recommendation number one is to read the research supporting your particular intervention to sift out the conditions under which evidences were achieved and then work to match the delivery conditions as best you can. Recommendation number two, read the delivery guidelines associated with the curriculum or intervention you use. These guidelines should also offer direction to salient features of the program and proper implementation procedures. Final recommendation—as you identify salient features of instruction, contextualize these identified features by reviewing lessons within your curriculum looking through the lens of salient features you identified. As a group, ask and answer questions like, “within this lesson, how would the salient features of instruction we have identified manifest themselves?” “At what junctures in the lesson, will we see each salient feature?” “Does the lesson prompt for our identified features of instruction, or, does the presenting teacher have to modify delivery of the curriculum to include salient features of instruction?”

Step 3: Instructional Fidelity Tool Development

Focus: Identify or develop a tool to measure salient delivery and management procedures.

Tasks:
1. For each procedure, ask “how can we efficiently capture this salient instructional feature (e.g., clear and sufficient teacher models) in a way that produces meaningful and actionable data?”
2. Ask “how can we sequence measures of salient elements within our tool so they flow with instruction, and aide in observers’ data collection?”
3. Ask “Does our planned measurement of this procedure reflect gradations of instructional fidelity” (i.e., percent of presence)?
With a clear sense of the salient instructional features you want to see in a lesson, an observational tool is needed to take snap shots of instruction, so that instruction can be teased apart into its component parts and analyzed for the degree of presence of salient instructional features. Important initial questions to pose include the three above. For examples, ask, as a group, “How can we efficiently capture this procedure or salient instructional feature in a way that produces meaningful and actionable data?” There are two key points here, for instructional fidelity data to be useful, it must attach to salient instructional elements, or elements divined to produce student learning, and the data must clearly specify the degree of presence or absence of the salient instructional feature to be actionable. Ask, “How can we sequence measures for salient elements within our tool so they flow with instruction, and aide observation?” Finally, ask, “Does our planned measurement of this salient instructional feature reflect gradations of instructional fidelity?” In other words, does the observation tool produce data offering information about the degree to which a salient instructional feature is present in instruction, or simply that it was or was not present? Tools that produce data snapshots with gradations of the presence of various instructional features provide for substantial discussion and action toward achieving higher levels of a salient feature (e.g., discrete verbal praise for correct student features of instruction) and a reliable measure (i.e., repetitively, in the hands of persons trained, the tool produces accurate representations of salient instructional features) and to refine the tool improving on its ability, in the hands of its users, to validly and reliably capture the salient instructional elements of interest.

To begin this authentication and refinement process, identify two to three persons who you desire to train as observers. Review the tool in its entirety and include the rationale for its production, design, and sequence of observation items. Next, show instructional video footage, and using an overhead projector, simultaneously model data collection (i.e., I do it) using the tool copied to acetate. Next, talk about what your trainees observed in your model and answer questions, and then model data collection again. Next, observe the video together (i.e., we do it), collecting data and finally, provide trainees with multiple opportunities to view the video and collect data independently (i.e., you do it). After each independent viewing, compare trainees collected data with verified data, and address questions that arise, and re-teach as necessary. Next, if possible, send each trainee home with a DVD recording of multiple instructional video segments that they can use to practice collecting instructional fidelity data.

With ample practice under your trainees’ belts, in the next training, collect interobserver agreement data. Interobserver agreement (IOA) data is a measure of the degree to which observers, independent from each other, produce similar observational outcomes. If IOA data is high >85% (i.e., 85% of the content observed is agreed upon by independent observers) then you have some assurance that the tool is sufficiently simple in its design, and the skills being targeted, are sufficiently clear, that with minimal training, multiple observers, looking through the lens of the tool collect similar data. If IOA data is lower than 85%, look to the simplicity of your tool, the clarity of descriptions of instructional behaviors to be observed, improve the quality of your training, or address all three potential problem areas, and go through this process again.

With a clear sense of the salient instructional features you want to see in a lesson, an observational tool is needed to take snap shots of instruction, so that instruction can be teased apart into its component parts and analyzed for the degree of presence of salient instructional features. Important initial questions to pose include the three above. For examples, ask, as a group, “How can we efficiently capture this procedure or salient instructional feature in a way that produces meaningful and actionable data?” There are two key points here, for instructional fidelity data to be useful, it must attach to salient instructional elements, or elements divined to produce student learning, and the data must clearly specify the degree of presence or absence of the salient instructional feature to be actionable. Ask, “How can we sequence measures for salient elements within our tool so they flow with instruction, and aide observation?” Finally, ask, “Does our planned measurement of this salient instructional feature reflect gradations of instructional fidelity?” In other words, does the observation tool produce data offering information about the degree to which a salient instructional feature is present in instruction, or simply that it was or was not present? Tools that produce data snapshots with gradations of the presence of various instructional features provide for substantial discussion and action toward achieving higher levels of a salient feature (e.g., discrete verbal praise for correct student features of instruction) and a reliable measure (i.e., repetitively, in the hands of persons trained, the tool produces accurate representations of salient instructional features) and to refine the tool improving on its ability, in the hands of its users, to validly and reliably capture the salient instructional elements of interest.

To begin this authentication and refinement process, identify two to three persons who you desire to train as observers. Review the tool in its entirety and include the rationale for its production, design, and sequence of observation items. Next, show instructional video footage, and using an overhead projector, simultaneously model data collection (i.e., I do it) using the tool copied to acetate. Next, talk about what your trainees observed in your model and answer questions, and then model data collection again. Next, observe the video together (i.e., we do it), collecting data and finally, provide trainees with multiple opportunities to view the video and collect data independently (i.e., you do it). After each independent viewing, compare trainees collected data with verified data, and address questions that arise, and re-teach as necessary. Next, if possible, send each trainee home with a DVD recording of multiple instructional video segments that they can use to practice collecting instructional fidelity data.

Step 4:
Instructional Fidelity Tool Refinement

Focus: Refine tool to better capture salient instructional behaviors.

Tasks:
1. Train observers and practice with video tape.
2. Compute interobserver agreement (IOA) percentages.
3. Where IOA percentages fall below 85% agreement either retrain, refine observation descriptions, or alter tool until IOA meets or exceeds 85%.

With your newly developed instructional fidelity tool in hand, the objective of this step is to test the tool to determine if it is a valid measure (i.e., measures what you desire it to measure—salient

The great challenge is getting started, and to ensure that once collected, instructional fidelity serves as a vehicle transporting you to the end you had in mind from the beginning (i.e., students’ nimble use of valued concepts and skills). Remember, “A pig doesn’t get fatter just because you weigh it!”

responses, percent of student response errors corrected…). The outcome objective of this step is the production of an observation tool for capturing the degree of presence or absence of salient instructional features.

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Where Do We Begin and How?

**Step 5:**
**Instructional Fidelity Data Interpretation**

**Focus:** Summarize instructional fidelity data, determine overall presence of fidelity, and consider what data may mean for student learning.

**Tasks:**
1. Review data and discuss how a low or high instructional fidelity score on a salient instructional element may impact a student’s learning (e.g., instructor identifies and addresses 37% reading errors).
2. Analyze data across instructional groups (responders and non-responders) looking in a broad way, for differential outcomes that may arise from presence/absence or varying gradations of instructional fidelity.
3. Non-experimentally determine if high instructional fidelity scores produce outcomes different from low instructional fidelity scores, and finally, begin constructing formats for actionable feedback to instructors.

With instructional fidelity data being collected, and summarized, it is important to keep the end in mind, or that the data are simply a vehicle to aide you to produce in the student nimble use of relevant concepts and core skills. Coupled with this reminder, one of the authors recently read on a principal’s wall, “a pig doesn’t get fatter just because you weigh it.” To that end, the objective of this step is to begin using collected data to enhance student learning. The tasks offered above are initial steps for beginning to use collected instructional fidelity data.

**Step 6:**
**Supportive Intervention**

**Focus:** Incrementally enhance instructional fidelity.

**Tasks:**
1. Agree on feedback formats and practice delivering feedback.
2. Establish interobserver feedback agreement (IFA).
3. Conduct instructional fidelity observation, provide feedback and schedule follow up observations to either sustain high levels of instructional fidelity, or to shape to higher levels of instructional fidelity.
4. Assess degree to which feedback and follow up alter instructional fidelity over time (i.e., presence and increasing gradations of instructional fidelity).

To ensure that collected data leverage actions affecting student outcomes, it is imperative to work as a team to develop supportive interventions to sustain or enhance instructional fidelity. Data can only be acted upon by instructional interventionists (i.e., teachers and paraeducators) if the data is shared, and preferably in a verbal format that invites discussion between the observer and the interventionist. It is important to note, that few educators possess training or extended experience offering observational feedback to other adults or professional colleagues. These limitations in training and experience may provoke in observers feelings of discomfort as they grasp for the skill set required. Some portion of the discomfort can be reduced when the data collected quantify actual instructional behaviors (e.g., rate of praise for correct responses, number of teacher modeled mathematical problems, and percentage of student response errors corrected).

Restricting conversation to directly observed instructional behaviors, and the degree of instructional fidelity present in these instructional behaviors as compared to a pre-determined standard, paves for a more comfortable experience than conversations about broad esoteric instructional labels which do not tie directly to observed instructional behaviors (e.g., organizing for effort, scaffolding, and instructional differentiation). Our recommendations are to design tools that quantify actual teaching behavior, and then restrict conversation to the absence or presence of salient teaching, management or assessment behaviors.

To begin developing a skill set for discussing observational data, consider the following activity sequence. First, show the video footage used previously, and have all trainees collect and summarize their data. Next, select one trainee to act as the person observed, and acting as the observer, model how to share observational data. Next, describe or unpack the format you worked through to share observational data. For example, your format may be:

1. Greet the person, and share pleasantries allowing time to transition from teaching and observing to discussing the presence or absence of instructional fidelity.
2. Share and discuss the instructional behaviors demonstrated at high levels of instructional fidelity.
3. Share and discuss instructional behaviors demonstrated at lower levels of instructional fidelity. (Model for your trainees two mental notes useful at this point in the conversation: a) “remember, objectively share the data and where the data sit in relationship to the standard!” b) “remember, share data in a positive unapologetic tone). Note that it is recommended that you prioritize the instructional behaviors to address. There are two approaches here. The first is to address instructional behaviors of greatest consequence to student learning. The second, is to select instructional behaviors which you believe are most easily altered, and thereby serve to build behavioral momentum toward improvement of more difficult to impact instructional behaviors.
4. Commend person for the specific areas of fidelity in their instruction, and mention that they shouldn’t hesitate to contact you, if you can offer to them, additional support in enhancing specific areas requiring greater instructional fidelity.

5. Let the person know that you will be back in touch to schedule another observational visit.

Next, place trainees in teams of two and allow them to practice with each other giving feedback, and encourage them to offer evaluative feedback to each other in terms of the feedback format you develop. Finally, share other pieces of video footage, with trainees collecting and summarizing data, and then without the trainees sharing the information with one another, have them write down the instructional behaviors they observed that met a high level of instructional fidelity, and those that were displayed at lower levels of instructional fidelity. Working together, determine the degree of interobserver feedback agreement (IFA) existing between trainees. Work this process until you have high levels of agreement of the information to be shared, and not shared with persons observed.

Conclusion

Collection and use of instructional fidelity data has direct bearing on interventionists’ skill in wringing from evidenced-based programs the student outcomes reported in peer-reviewed research. The great challenge is getting started, and to ensure that once collected, instructional fidelity serves as a vehicle transporting you to the end you had in mind from the beginning (i.e., students’ nimble use of valued concepts and skills). Remember, “A pig doesn’t get fatter just because you weigh it!”

This is the second installment of a two-part series on this subject by the authors. The first part can be found at: www.updc.org/assets/utah_special_educator/pdfs/dec2009-academics.pdf
Brian H. Pead, Assistant Principal, Northridge High School

To be a teacher is to have chosen the noblest profession, where one can do the most good. Teaching is the most fulfilling, rewarding and personally gratifying of professions. Not everyone can be a teacher—only those who look to the welfare of the rising generation as the first priority—who want to leave an indelible mark on the world through the lives of those whom they teach. Teaching is the profession that makes possible all professions. Teachers are the world’s most ardent learners and most unselfish sharers. To the dedicated teacher, every morning brings a noble chance for a noble professional to make a tangible difference in the world.

To help support teachers and effective teaching, the Northridge High School administration recognizes that instructional leadership is one of our most important responsibilities. During the 2009-2010 school year, we’ve made a concerted effort to ensure teachers receive the feedback necessary to increase their instructional effectiveness. To date, we’ve made over 600 class visits. Recently, teachers have been participating with us in our classroom observations. The Little Victories Observation Tool included below has helped guide our reflective and supportive practice.

The Classroom

Walls: (Walls that “Talk”)

• The Teaching Objective is observable (and the standard to which it applies).
• Exemplary work is on display that clearly demonstrates the standard or the objective.
• Student work posted, based on rubrics, as appropriate. (Posting student work may apply more to elementary than secondary classrooms).
• Student expectations for behavior and academic work (with rubrics) posted.
• Color, shape and engaging information are part of the classroom arrangement.

Physical arrangement of the room:
(Rooms that “Walk”)

• The room is orderly and safe from hazards.
• Physical movement is incorporated for students as a part of the learning process.
• Seating and desk arrangements lend themselves to a high level of learning.
• Books and other materials are relevant to the objective, easy for students to access and adequate for class teaming needs.

Emotional arrangement of the classroom:
(Anti-Shock)

• The room is “safe” for risking, participating, and sharing feelings.
• There may be music, plants and objects to gain and hold student interest and commitment.
• Students are recognized and appreciated.
• Effort is made to make the learning “fun” (funny, interesting, exciting).
• There is an abundance of water, light and air.
Student Engagement/Classroom Management: (Students Talk)
- Learner Engagement is high; students are challenged to achieve.
- Students are engaged in work directly related to the objective.
- Reflection-related activities are integrated into the learning.
- Activities are incorporated into learning: (i.e., teaming, contests, discussions, games, etc).
- There is a focus on student responsibility and accountability.
- Classroom procedures are explicit and support student teaming.
- Teacher “talk” supports the learning objective.

The Teaching: (Board and Chalk)
- All learning objectives are aligned to state and other standards.
- Learning activities are tied to the instructional objective and are at grade level.
- All objectives end with the word “independently.”
- New learning is tied to what students already know, to the “here and now” of students’ lives; students are both encouraged and required to bring their own knowledge and experience to each new learning task.
- Strategies being used in the classroom are research based.
- Questions asked are varied, challenging and high level.
- Participation by students is allowed and encouraged in various collaborative ways, such as discussions, debates, songs, chants, rituals, humor, games, and peer teaching.
- Specific feedback processes are incorporated into student work, and required revisions that focus on excellence are integral to the teaching.
- Students are learning the: (1) specific vocabulary and (2) the essential skills for each course or grade level.
- Students have opportunities to teach; the teacher takes the opportunity to learn.

Data: (Prove it! “Walk the Walk”)
- Continuous, varied, regularly reviewed, specific data on student performance is kept and incorporated into the teaching process.
- Data provides the basis for student interventions.
- The data the teacher collects is used to guide the teaching, including differentiation.
- There is evidence that data is shared with collaborative groups, such as data teams, as a means to enhance the learning of each individual student.

Editors Note: Dr. Brian Pead will be working with school administrators at the Utah Coaching Network Conference held on March 25th and 26th at the Provo Marriott Conference Center. The focus of his instruction will be on The Little Victories Observation Tool, four-minute classroom walk-throughs, and instructional leadership through reflective practice. For conference and registration information, please go to: http://www.updc.org/registration/
The Five Championship Coaching Strategies for Sustainable Success

“The Winningest Coach in America”
1. Go Horizontal

There are two leadership styles: vertical and horizontal. If we win, it’s great coaching. If we lose, it’s lazy, undedicated players. This is the attitude of a vertical leader who manages by ego, threats, and intimidation. Vertical management is the most common in business and society, but is ultimately destructive. One can achieve short-term behavior changes using threats, but that person will never invite you back and never develop any ownership for the change. Vertical management is controlling and fails to recognize the goodness and power in each individual.

Horizontal leadership multiplies talents and results. “I can’t win without you and you can’t win without me” is the attitude of a horizontal leader. Horizontal leaders understand that getting results is all about how one treats and engages others. Leaders don’t need titles. Horizontal leaders get results, extraordinary results, because they don’t let their egos get in the way of helping others experience success.

2. Don’t Play With Snakes

There are basic principles of right and wrong in life that help facilitate success. This does not suggest imposing one’s personal beliefs or values on others. Rather, it recognizes there are universal laws related to what is right and wrong (e.g., we don’t lie, we don’t cheat, we don’t steal, we don’t take unfair advantage of others, and so on). Sadly, we sometimes try to blur this line for our own advantage. Ultimately it never works. As someone once said, “winners never cheat!”

3. Hit the Field Running

Attitude and effort are everything! Attitude and effort are more important than innate intelligence, more important than natural ability. Attitude and effort are what separate consistent winners from occasional winners. It’s ridiculous to say to someone, “You need to change your attitude.” Why? Because our attitudes are developed and formed by a lifetime of experiences. Do you really want to change your attitude about something? There is only one way. You must first change your behavior. A change in attitude always follows a change in behavior, not the other way around.

4. Expect to W.I.N.

Winners expect to W.I.N. (What’s Important Now). Winners determine their long-term and short-term goals by continually asking, “What’s important now?” and “What’s Important Tomorrow?” Do our daily decisions and actions support or conflict with our goals?

5. Focus on the Final Score

Successful coaches focus on the final score, not just the first quarter or halftime score. “Begin with the end in mind” is another way to express this idea. Persistence, determination, and hard work enable us to reach our goals.

Editors Note: Coach Gelwix was the keynote speaker at the Utah Coaching Network-North Conference held on January 21-22, 2010. He is known as the most successful coach in the country and labeled by the national media as the winningest coach in America.
"If you had to explain America’s economic success with one word, that word would be ‘education.’"
— Paul Krugman

A Definition

Historically the United States of America led the world in universal basic education for all of the children of all of the people. We developed mandatory high school education and America has been seen as a world leader in higher education. In the past thirty years, however, our educational dominance has slowly shown signs of erosion. Our college graduation rate, presently, is below the average of all advanced economies. One major reason for this sad state is that we have made it so hard for the poor to stay in school. As Paul Krugman concluded, “We can ill afford to waste this basic asset that was the foundation of our past success.”

This slow, basic decline in the status of public education began with the report *The Nation at Risk*. This government document implied that public education was so flawed that it was as if we had been attacked by a foreign nation. Every argument in *The Nation at Risk* was thoroughly refuted by competent research. Yet, the public criticism of public education has continued unabated using much of the same kind of unsupported misinformation. The culmination of this slow, steady process is the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law.

The real perversion of the NCLB law is that the benchmark for reading and math test scores are increased every year. As more schools fail, anxiety increases. By the year 2014 the benchmarks will be at 100% and all public schools will be deemed failures. Politically, however, the focus has shifted to the differences between the test scores of white and black students—the racial achievement gap. “The Gap” has become one of the biggest civil rights issues of this generation.

As flawed as the NCLB law has proven to be, its intent is so well-established that it is politically very difficult to alter or eliminate.

Happy students work harder, happy teachers teach more effectively and that is what we need—effective teachers.

When I lived and worked in California I was aware that the highest public school test scores in Los Angeles were from an area where most of the families were African-American doctors, lawyers and executives. In San Francisco many very poor Asian students had very high test scores.

I was saddened by this story. It is about an English teacher at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, a Washington D.C. suburb. T.C. Williams is a state-of-the-art, $100 million high school where every student is given a laptop and there is open enrollment in advanced courses. The teacher asked his virtually all African-American 12th grade class, which had done poorly on a test, “Why don’t you study like the kids from Africa?” (T.C. Williams has children of a number of African diplomats.) A student responded, “It’s because they have fathers that kick their butts and make them study.” A second student challenged, “Ask the class how many of us have our father living with us?” When the teacher asked the class, not one hand went up.
This same teacher told of a student, Yasir Hussein, whose parents emigrated from Sudan. Yasir, who entered the engineering program at Virginia Tech this fall, said; “My parents were big on the American dream. One quarter I got a 3.5 grade point average. My friends congratulated me but my parents took my Playstation and TV out of my room and told me I could do better”.

‘The Gap’ is not primarily racial. Race is a concept with no warrant. Race was invented by English scholars when England was colonizing the known world for economic gain. Race should not have a serious place in any reasoned discourse.

‘The Gap’ is a function of our western culture of poverty, grounded in material wealth. This is a culture that creates a defensive survival mentality that will weaken and destroy relationships, families and a child’s achievement. There are, like most generalizations, exceptions and these exceptions often get a lot of press. It is very difficult, however, to escape the devastating effects of the culture of poverty.

In the past eight years we have narrowed the focus of public education to increasing reading and math test scores. This high investment in time, energy and dollars has had minimal success, and has created a great deal of collateral damage. The question of ‘the gap’ is clearer: What can we do to improve the achievement of our impoverished children?

The decline in public education has a parallel increase to the rate of poverty. With a shrinking middle class, a few people get much richer and a lot of people get much poorer. From the latest U.S. statistics, nearly 30% of our children now live in single-parent families (an increase from 12% in 1968). Poverty rates in single-parent households are roughly five times as high as in two-parent households. An added consequence of this slow, steady shift in wealth has been a crisis in urban high school dropout rates and crime rates among urban youths. Here are some vetted statistics that are shocking. In the fifty largest cities nearly 50% of the public high school students drop out. In some cities there is over a 70% dropout rate. Poverty is a devastating experience.

In Utah and in Vermont we are starting to feel the effects of increased poverty. We realize that there is very little we can do in our schools about political realities, but we can always do something about improving the effectiveness of our schools, especially for the students in poverty.

We must strive to re-establish as a priority what we know about real learning, which is much harder to measure but will last much longer. Real learning occurs through active engagement, rich sensory stimulation, exploration, intrinsic satisfaction, imagination, curiosity and play. Schools need to be supportive and joyful places.

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As an informational note, the first-world societies that have the least poverty provide full employment, universal health care and public education from childcare through college and post-graduate studies.

**Praxis**

Some progressive voices have floated some very encouraging ideas.

Michelle Obama wrote an article in *US News and World Report* which was titled, “Teachers are Key to a Successful Economy.” The Gates Foundation has changed their focus from small schools to teacher effectiveness. I will add that Gates has also joined forces and resources with Arne Duncan. I fear that this may mean that teacher effectiveness will be shorthand for raising test scores.

The teacher is the key. No matter what curriculum is required, the key is how the teacher feels about what they are teaching and how they treat their students. The teacher sets the tone; the teacher provides the activities; the teacher plans the day. Happy students work harder, happy teachers teach more effectively and that is what we need—effective teachers.

The previous two paragraphs are from a blog by a Palo Alto High School English and Journalism teacher in The Huffington Post, Esther Wojcicki. I think you teachers will enjoy her blogs.
Another English teacher, Nancy Schnog, from the McLean School in Potomac, Maryland, had the unusual opportunity to interview Bel Kaufman, author of *Up the Down Staircase* published in 1964. This is a story about a young English teacher striving to bring literary passion to the students in her New York City public school classroom. Bel was 98 and had taught English for thirty years in New York City schools. Bel spoke of a young man about to quit school, having failed all of his subjects but science, to whom she gave her own hardcover copy of Paul deKruif’s *Microbe Hunters*, hoping that this book might change his mind. In September, back in school, the young man told Bel: “No, I never read the book. But you gave me your own hardcover copy. That’s why I’m here.” Like an actress closing a soliloquy, Bel murmured: “That’s what reaches them. Caring enough. Caring. Never read the book, but came back.”

Here is a local voice, Christine Heywood, who is a fifth grade teacher at Draper Elementary School in Draper, Utah:

My energy will go towards those students who will try to hide. In various ways they will quietly resist doing their work. It will be hard to find them at first, because they seem to be invisible. Even after the first day of school, I will have put a face and a personality to most of the children on my list. The kids I have a hard time remembering will be my #3s (invisible). I will start the very next day to focus on two of them. I will learn who they are, what they are about, and using all the positive support ideas in my bag of teacher’s tricks I will help them find a place as a learner in our community. I will be careful to do this in ways that will be comforting to these individuals, trying hard not to embarrass them. I will jot daily goals to myself of ways I can be a support to the two children in my focus target.

I will have some help as I approach this huge task of developing a community of learners. My team will work together as we always do. We will discuss students and plans of action at lunch and every time we get together. We will help each other with difficult situations in our classrooms. We will compliment students who have done well from other classes. We always know which of the invisible students each teacher is helping and make it a point to add our compliments.

In the heart and mind of the teacher, the subjective functions of the process (relationships) must remain dominant over the object of instruction (curriculum). Create a community of learners where both teachers and students share and help each other then focus this mutual, subjective energy on the curricular objective.

**Conclusion**

Here is a story of research-based education that is taken from an editorial from our local paper by Steve Nelson who lives in Sharon, Vermont and New York City. Steve is the head of the Calhoun School in Manhattan.

Sixty-seven years ago, research sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation entitled *The Eight Year Study Project* was published. This work still stands as one of the most comprehensive comparisons of traditional and progressive educational practices ever made. Students from 30 experimental schools engaged in a variety of progressive practices were followed with phenomenal detail through high school and college.

The results were unambiguous. In college, graduates of the progressive schools performed as well or better on standardized tests, had higher grade point averages and consistently out-performed their traditionally educated peers. Progressively educated students were found more resourceful in new situations, having more intellectual curiosity and drive, and more precise in their thinking. They also demonstrated more concern for what was going on in the world and achieved more academic honors.

Three principles guide the education at the Calhoun School:

- Teaching and learning begin with the needs, interests, questions and diverse life experiences of the individual students.
- Students learn by doing, by collaborating in the real work of the school community and the world beyond the school, and by engaging as citizens to promote social justice and democracy.
- Teachers and students work together to create a dynamic learning community grounded in cycles of inquiry and action and focused on the products and the processes of learning and living.

The progressive concepts of education should not be limited to only the wealthy. In some form these principles should be available to all students. ‘The Gap’ is not just for children of poverty. We have created a gap between a narrow curriculum of test scores and the very important, immeasurable curriculum that every student deserves and needs.