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Professional Development Guide:

Module 1, Session 2

Communication

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Bridge to Practice Module Projects for Coaches

A Bridge to Practice project after each module will provide evidence that coaches are able to apply the knowledge and skills they developed in this course in their schools. Coaches will:

- **Module 1:** develop a principal-coach partnership agreement;
- **Module 2:** develop a needs assessment for professional development on evidence-based instructional practices and complete an **ADDIE model** for planning this professional development;
- **Module 3:** develop and describe planned implementation of a professional learning action plan;
- **Module 4:** create a video that reflects coaching to help teachers plan, implement, and analyze standards-based literacy instruction;
- **Module 5:** complete a reflection on the course including plans for continued professional growt;
- **Module 6:** choose one teacher with whom you have seen significant growth as a result of coaching support and complete a reflection on what worked, why it worked, and which areas of growth were most evident.

A rubric is provided at the end of each module for the corresponding Bridge to Practice project.

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Fundamentals of Literacy Coaching

Professional Development Modules

Module 1, Session 2

Communication

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Module	Topic	Session	Minutes	Session Date
1	Applying Principles and Practices that Foster a Positive Culture	Intro	60	
		1	120	
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		3	150	
2	Applying Effective Pedagogy and Andragogy	4	120	
		5	120	
		6	165	
3	Collecting Data to Inform Professional Learning	7	150	
		8	140	
		9	170	
4	Planning, Implementing, and Analyzing Literacy Instruction	10	175	
		11	135	
		12	165	
		13	130	
5	Growing Professionally	14	120	
		15	120	
6	Planning and Implementing Coaching	16	120	

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Bridge to Practice Projects for Coaches

- An activity designed to serve as a Bridge to Practice after each Module will provide evidence that coaches are able to apply the knowledge and skills they developed in this course in their schools. Coaches will complete the following activities:

Module 1	Develop a principal-coach partnership agreement.
Module 2	Develop a needs assessment for professional development on evidence-based instructional practices and complete an ADDIE model for planning this professional development.
Module 3	Develop and describe planned implementation of a professional learning action plan.
Module 4	Create a video that reflects coaching to help teachers plan, implement, and analyze standards-based literacy instruction.
Module 5	Complete a reflection on the course, including plans for continued professional growth.
Module 6	Choose one teacher with whom you have seen significant growth as a result of coaching support and complete a reflection on what worked, why it worked and which areas of growth were most evident.

- A rubric is provided at the end of each Module for the corresponding Bridge to Practice project.

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Norms for Our Course

Cell phones on silent

Pay attention to self and others

Presume positive intentions

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Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content

Goals for Today

- Review Session 1 and debrief the self-study activities completed after the session.
- Learn about the importance of communication in the coaching process and how to ensure that communication is positive, clear, and productive.
- Examine communication in one-on-one and group settings.
- Preview the self-study activities to be completed before Session 3.

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Debrief

Review of Module 1, Session 1

Self-Study 1: Steps to Building a Teacher-Coach Relationship

- What are important aspects of relationship building as a coach and ways to develop positive relationships with administrators, teachers, and other staff?
- Any comments or questions about Session 1?

Self-Study 2: Video Viewing Guide for Reflective Coaching Conversation

- Share responses to questions.

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Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content

Literacy Coach Domain and Standards: Session 2

A. Knowledge of and ability to apply principles and practices that foster an inclusive and collaborative culture. Coaches will be able to:

Standard 4: Identify and apply appropriate practices to communicate across lines of difference.

Standard 5: Determine and use appropriate strategies for facilitating dialogue that ensures equitable participation in small and large group settings.

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Learn and Confirm

Communicating with Teachers

Some factors that may influence discourse:

- Purpose
- Preconceptions
- Perspective
- Positioning

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Communicating with Teachers

Purpose of the Conversation:

- Establishing or maintaining a relationship
- Knowledge-building
- Planning
- Reflecting and providing feedback

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Communicating with Teachers

"Personal interactions with teachers are at the heart of the coaching initiative. Hargreaves wrote about the possibility of transforming people through 'the meanings and language of human interaction' (1995, p. 11). The relationships that coaches build allow them to interact with teachers about the very important work of school improvement. In the case of these three coaches, these interactions were in fact fundamental to their everyday practice."

Hargreaves, 1995, p. 11; Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2013, p. 749 10

Communicating with Teachers

"*If there's no goal, it's just a nice conversation.* I heard this saying from coaching expert John Campbell (who attributes it to coaching researcher Tony Grant). Effective instructional coaching is a goal-directed action. Goals give direction to coaching; they provide a finish line, and when they matter to teachers, goals propel the entire coaching process. If teachers don't have a goal, or if they are pursuing a goal they don't care about, the entire coaching process can be a waste of time. But when teachers pursue a powerful, student-focused goal that truly matters to them, unmistakable improvements happen in students' lives and learning."

Knight, 2021 11

Communicating with Teachers

"Use of relevant, reliable, and valid data to analyze, evaluate, and inform next steps and action planning (including goal setting, identifying progress monitoring or outcome data needed, and development of an action plan). Decision making is an iterative process with on-going data feeding into subsequent actions."

Cusmano & Preston, 2018, p. 6 12

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Communicating with Teachers

Possible Preconceptions:

- The coach is evaluating my performance.
- The coach is working with me because I am not a good teacher.
- The coach will report my deficiencies to administration.

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Communicating with Teachers

"And when coaches focus their discussions on how to address the needs of students—rather than on the strengths or weaknesses of a teacher's instruction (McCombs & Marsh, 2009)—they clearly communicate their intention to be a collaborator with the teacher, not an evaluator "
(Casey, 2006; Toll, 2005).

L'Allier, Elish-Piper, Bean, 2010, p. 547

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Communicating with Teachers

"As coaches engage in activities such as making classroom observations and conferencing with teachers about those observations, they must maintain confidentiality by not discussing those activities with other teachers or the principal" (Rainville & Jones, 2008).

L'Allier, Elish-Piper, Bean, 2010, p. 547

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Communicating with Teachers

Perspective:

- I am a good teacher, so I don't need a coach.
- I know more than my coach does.
- I do not need to change my practice.
- My philosophy for teaching reading is not the same as the coach.

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Communicating with Teachers

- "The experience of teacher wariness to allow coaches and other professionals into the classroom is a common experience cited in the literature (e.g., Ancess, Barnett, & Allen, 2007; Sarason, 1996) and can be seen as a normal reaction that people have toward attempts at behavior change" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

- "Continuous dialogue and responsiveness among the partners, working alongside practitioners to seek and craft solutions, and expressing sensitivity to teacher needs help to build trust between the coach and teachers " (Ancess et al., 2007).

Hershfeldt, Pell, Sechrest, Pas & Bradshaw, 2012, p 9

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Communicating with Teachers

"Prior research has highlighted some implementation challenges of coaching initiatives. Most notably, evidence suggested that instructional coaches often face resistance from the teachers with whom they work, a manifestation of what has been described as a loosely coupled and isolated culture of teaching (Bredeson 2003, Weick 1976). Some teachers also report feeling professionally threatened by their instructional coach peers, a topic discussed in recent literature with respect to notions of authority and power" (Camburn et al. 2008, Lynch and Ferguson 2010, Coburn and Woulfin 2012).

Lowenhaupt, McKeinney, & Reeves, 2013, p. 740

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Communicating with Teachers

Possible Positioning:

- The coach is the expert.
- The coach has power over the teacher.
- The teacher has less expertise and commands less respect.

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Communicating with Teachers

"Finding ways to value the knowledge and expertise that all participants bring to professional learning interactions is an important step in developing a culture of shared inquiry. As members of a community recognize, and are recognized for, the strengths they bring to the community, relationships will grow, creating solid ground for deeper inquiry into literacy practices and discourses."

MacPhee & Hunt, 2018, p. 14

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Communicating with Teachers

"Through a collaborative approach, teachers are likely to feel their ideas are valued, and in turn, communication will be more effective."

Walkowiak, 2016, p. 16

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Communicating with Teachers

Read Handout 1: How Varying Perspectives Influence Discourse: A Scenario

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Handout 1 on next page

Handout 1: How Varying Perspectives Influence Discourse: A Scenario

Ms. Jensen recently read a professional text about dialogic reading and decided to incorporate more open-ended questions into read-alouds with her first grade students. The first day, she integrated more questions into her read-aloud. The conversation went longer than planned, but Ms. Jensen was excited about the richness of the read-aloud and discussion. Meanwhile, Ms. Thomas, the literacy coach was scheduled to observe the teacher conduct a vocabulary lesson in a small group during the reading block, but when she entered the classroom, she found that Ms. Jensen was not conducting small group instruction, so she left.

Later, when Ms. Jensen and Ms. Thomas met, Ms. Jensen was excited to share how students demonstrated their understanding of the read-aloud text through the extended conversation that was sparked by the inclusion of more open-ended questions. Ms. Thomas, who was expecting to see the vocabulary lesson which exhibited strategies presented during a recent professional development session, only wanted to discuss the fact that she was disappointed that she was unable to observe the lesson, and how the vocabulary strategies would enhance student learning. The conversation between Ms. Jensen and Ms. Thomas was cordial; however, both of them left frustrated, without discussing what was learned about using open-ended questions to guide conversations or how questions could enhance vocabulary instruction during small groups. While Ms. Jensen and Ms. Thomas may have shared the goal of supporting readers in developing their comprehension skills, the perspectives and expectations of each of them may have inhibited meaningful dialogue about that shared goal.

End of Handout 1

Communicating with Teachers

Discuss Handout 1 with a partner or in small groups:

- Do you think that Ms. Jensen and Ms. Thomas knew that the other was frustrated? What makes you think that?
- Why were they both frustrated?
- What could have been done to ensure that the conversation was productive?
- What do you think happens if the discourse continues as it is between the coach and the teacher?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that conversations are productive?

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Enhancing Communication Between Coaches and Teachers

- The topic of coaching is focused on literacy instruction/practice.
- The coaching goal is teacher learning.
- Teachers should talk more than coaches during coaching conversations.

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Communicating with Teachers

Engage teachers using verbal moves to extend the conversation and encourage more teacher talk, which leads to collaborative learning.

- Request information.
- Ask for the teacher's opinion.
- Request clarification.

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Communicating with Teachers

Practices to avoid when having a coaching conversation:

- Talking too much.
- Interrupting the teacher.
- Simply acknowledging, agreeing, or showing acceptance (this tends to shut down the exchange).

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Communicating with Teachers

- Read Handout 2: A Coaching Conversation Vignette regarding the experience between literacy coach, Ms. Porter, and teacher, Ms. Walters.
- Answer the questions about the vignette.
- Discuss the questions and your answers with a partner or with a small group.

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Handout 2 on next page

Handout 2: A Coaching Conversation Vignette

Ms. Walters is a fifth grade teacher with 12 years of experience, and Ms. Porter has been a literacy coach for seven years, and was a fourth grade teacher for eight years before that. They are both committed to continually improving their practice, and they highly value collaboration and inquiry within professional learning. They are close colleagues, and friends, and they often took time to chat during lunch and before or after school. Ms. Porter considered these impromptu interactions as opportunities for coaching conversations as Ms. Walters often sought Ms. Porter's advice regarding teaching her students reading and writing strategies. During one such informal conversation, Ms. Walters voiced her frustration regarding how she could make sure that students who were reading independently while she was conducting small group reading instruction were actually reading, and comprehending what they read. She also didn't know if students were using comprehension strategies that they had been learning.

In response to Ms. Walter's comments, Ms. Porter asked if she ever conferred with her students regarding what they were reading. Ms. Walters said that she did, but that she did not always confer with every student. Ms. Walters explained:

> *I love what I'm doing with small group instruction. I know that it's worthwhile and beneficial, so I get anxious about ensuring I have enough time for the next group. I need to get better at scheduling time strictly for conferring with individual students regarding what they are reading.*

Later in the conversation, she said:

> *I find myself going to the same students. I tend to focus on the struggling readers or the ones who don't seem to be on task and sometimes neglect my higher readers. I need to be more purposeful as I confer with students to make sure I am talking with everyone.*

Ms. Porter responded to Ms. Walters' comments with examples of how she could document conferences. For example, she reflected that some teachers established a system to be purposeful and intentional about holding conferences with their students. She shared,

> *I think it is important to think about how many conferences you can complete during the day in addition to conducting your small groups. You may want to do a few conferences every day, or you may want to forego small group instruction one day of the week and devote one whole reading block to conferring with students. Another idea would be to bring small groups of students together so that they share what they are reading with one another. You can then confer with several students at the same time.*

Ms. Porter then asked Ms. Walters if she had a class grid or tracking sheet that she used to document her conferences. Ms. Walters responded in a timid and apologetic tone, "I do, but I don't use it consistently. I just forget, or it's not where I can find it easily."

Ms. Porter and Mrs. Walters ended their conversation by making plans to follow up on their discussion. Ms. Porter committed to come into Ms. Walters classroom several times over the next few weeks to help her confer with students and to observe how she conducted conferences. Ms. Walters committed to documenting her conferences more consistently and meeting with Ms. Porter to talk about her documented conferences as well as her notes regarding how students were using comprehension strategies they had been learning. Several months later, they had not implemented these plans or returned to the conversation about documenting conferences and improving their focus.

Reflection Sheet for a Coaching Conversation Vignette

Directions: Read **Handout 2: A Coaching Conversation Vignette** and answer the questions below. Be ready to discuss in small groups and debrief in whole group.

Question	Answer
1. What other comments might have been appropriate for the coach to make after the teacher initially voiced her concern?	
2. What verbal moves could the coach have made to gather more information about what was really happening in the teacher's classroom?	
3. Should the coach have made other suggestions – why or why not?	
4. The coach and the teacher both left the conversation with next steps – yet there was no follow-through. What factors (purpose, preconceptions, perspective, or positioning) might have contributed to that?	
5. What could have been done to be sure that follow-up did occur, and whose responsibility was it to make sure it happened?	

End of Handout 2

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Communicating with Teachers

Handout 3: Video Viewing Guide for Video 1: Watch the video, complete the viewing guide, and discuss with a partner or in your small group.

- Video 1: Coaching Conversation-Reflecting on a Lesson (Grade 2)

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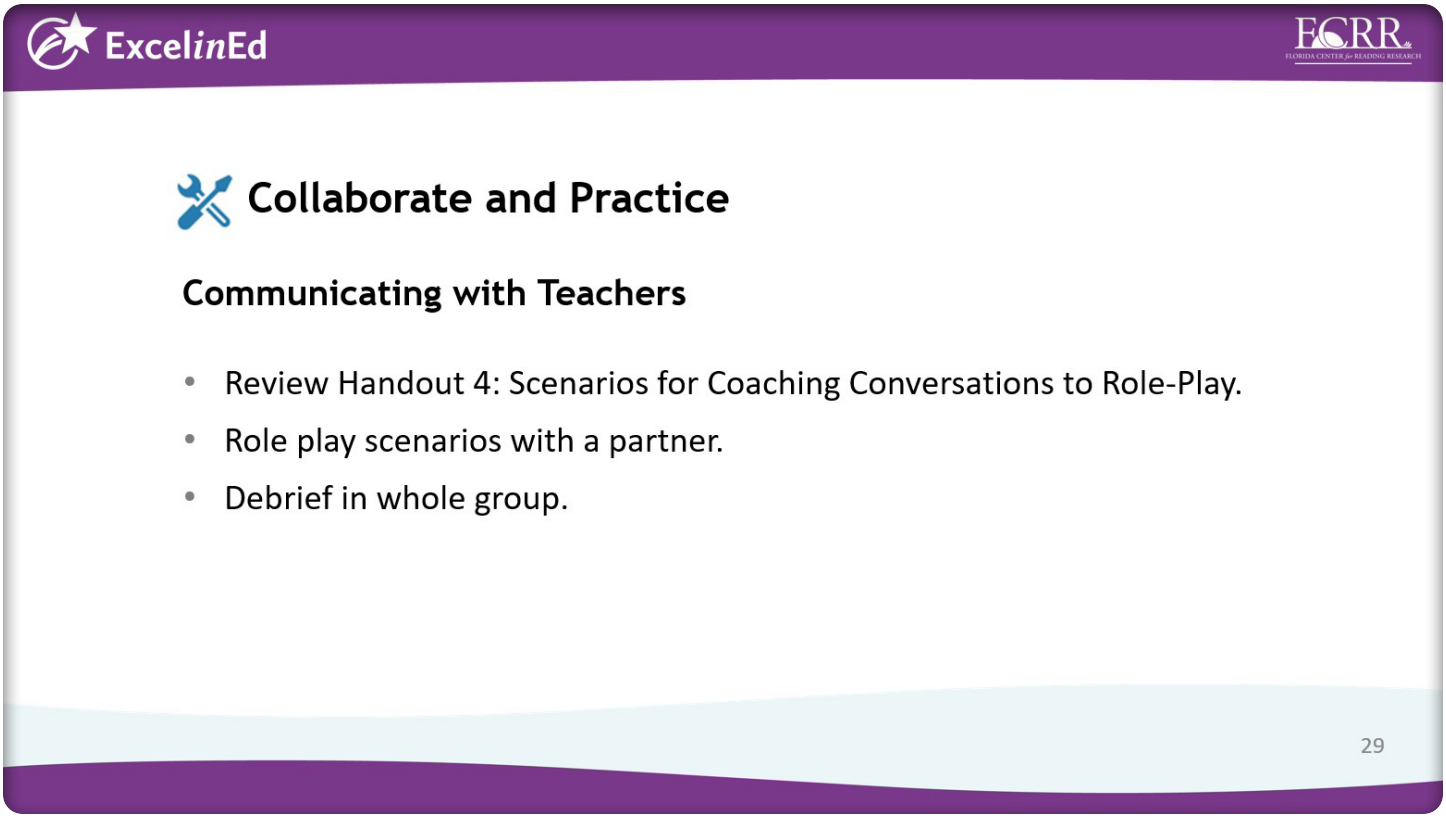
Handout 3 on next page

Handout 3: Video Viewing Guide for Coaching Conversation (Grade 2)

Directions: Watch Video 1: Coaching Conversation-Reflecting on a Lesson (Grade 2) and answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
1. What was the topic of this coaching conversation?	
2. What was the goal of this coaching conversation?	
3. Approximately how much time did the teacher talk versus the coach?	
4. What factors (purpose, preconceptions, perspective, or positioning) might have influenced this conversation and how?	
5. What are some of the strengths of this conversation?	
6. What would make sense for the coach and teacher to discuss next in this conversation?	

End of Handout 3



Handout 4 on next page

Handout 4: Scenarios for Coaching Conversations to Role-Play

Role-Playing Scenario #1

Teacher: You have been a seventh grade English teacher at the school for five years and have been a teacher in the district for eleven years. The literacy coach has been conducting professional development sessions on implementing extended text discussion to enhance comprehension of text. Admittedly, you haven't been fully engaged with the sessions because you haven't seen the value in spending the amount of time this will take to engage in these types of discussions. You use short question and answer sessions and graphic organizers for students to demonstrate their understanding of the text.

The coach is meeting with you to get an idea of how things are going in regard to implementing extended text discussion, but you haven't changed your practice because you feel what you are doing is effective. You want to be nice, but at the same time let her know that you don't feel like this will be valuable in your classroom.

Coach: You have been a literacy coach at the school for three years after serving as an English teacher for seven years at the same school. You feel like you have good relationships with most teachers, including this one. You have been delivering a grade-level training on using extended text discussion to help increase students' comprehension of text. You have been meeting with teachers individually to see how implementation is going and to set up a time to come to their classrooms and observe this new practice. You have an idea that this teacher is not enthusiastic about implementing extended text discussion. She has seemed distracted in the professional development, and you have noted that she at times is grading papers. You are a little anxious about the conversation and hope that she has at least begun to integrate some discussion time into lessons, but you are not sure this has happened.

Role-Playing Scenario #2

Teacher: You are a kindergarten teacher and this is your first year of teaching. You come to teaching after years as an education reporter for the local television station. It is the beginning of the school year, you are excited about this career change, and you are eager to serve your students well.

You know that students benefit from read-alouds, but you are not sure if you are doing them "right." You became acquainted with the literacy coach at the school when you were a reporter, so while you don't know her well, you still think she might be able to help you. You have asked to meet with her to get some ideas regarding how to conduct effective read-alouds with your class.

Coach: You are just beginning your fifth year as a literacy coach at this elementary school. You were a third grade teacher at the same school for three years before that. A new kindergarten teacher has asked to meet with you to discuss how best to conduct read-alouds with her students. You are acquainted because as an educational reporter she came to the school several times and covered events that were happening at the school, but you don't know her well. She seems eager to learn, but you are wondering if she has romanticized teaching a bit and may have some unrealistic expectations of herself and her students. Since she comes from another profession, and has not completed a traditional teacher preparation program, you are not sure of the strength of her pedagogy or the science of reading. You are glad to meet with her and develop a plan to incorporate read-alouds in a way that benefit students most.

End of Handout 4

Learn and Confirm

Facilitating Professional Learning in Groups

- Professional development should address needs of the school based on data.
- Professional development should be ongoing, and coaches should support implementation in the classroom.

Facilitating Professional Learning in Groups

- Research (e.g., case studies, interviews, observations) and scholarship on professional development practices suggest that in some cases, PLCs can foster teacher learning and improve the professional culture of a school.
- PLC materials have been developed to promote teacher learning on a variety of topics.

Borko, 2004; Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003; Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Little, 2002; Wilson & Berne,1999; Vescio et al., 2008

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Facilitating Professional Learning in Groups

- Establish norms.
- Build trust within the group.
- Value everyone's contributions.
- Develop shared goals.
- Allow teachers to discuss in small groups before calling on them to share in a large group.
- Use a graphic organizer to track teacher/discourse/participation.

Rasberry & Mahajan, 2008

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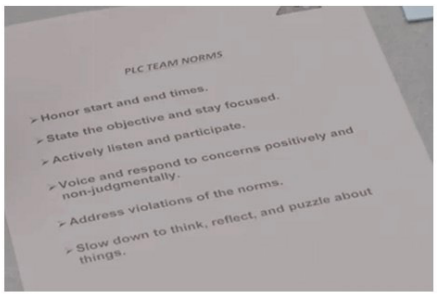
Collaborate and Practice

Facilitating Professional Learning in Groups

Sneak Peek: Establishing Expectations and Norms



- Watch the **Video 2: Small Group Data Discussion and Planning**
- Debrief in whole group.

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Facilitating Professional Learning in Groups

With a partner or in your small groups, use chart paper and markers to create an infographic that reflects how to conduct a small or large group professional development where everyone participates and shares ideas.

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Reflect, Plan, and Implement

Think-Pair-Share

- What did you learn during this session that confirmed what you already knew about having coaching conversations and facilitating dialogue in small and large professional learning sessions?
- What did you learn that you need to focus on implementing as a coach?

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Reflect, Plan, and Implement

Post-Session Reflection, Planning, and Implementation

READ **Handout 5: Coaching in Context-The Role of Relationships in the Work of Three Literacy Coaches**

DO

- Complete **Self-Study 1: Reflections on Session 2 and Communication**.
- Reflect on your participation in Session 2 by noting any questions about the content or format in Self-Study 1. Bring this self-study assignment to Session 3.

WATCH **Video 3: Coaching Conversations with Diana Beabout**
Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/JNHKZH5ropA?si=ExUfcInYPN0_pdPu&t=23 on 1/4/2024

and **Video 4: Observations and Feedback**
Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/bBeNs1Q2kXk?si=K3W5VBFCAyyV64T on 1/4/2024

and complete **Self-Study 2:Video Viewing Guide for Video 3 and Video 4 Coaching Conversations**.
Be prepared to debrief at our next session.

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Handout 5 after final slide

Questions?

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We have completed Session 2

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Handout 5: Coaching in Context-The Role of Relationships in the Work of Three Literacy Coaches

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In the United States and internationally, instructional coaching has been implemented as a mechanism to increase professional capacity, and in so doing improve student achievement. However, instructional coaches often face resistance from the teachers with whom they work; a manifestation of the egalitarian, isolated culture of teaching in many schools. In this paper, we analyze the daily roles of literacy coaches in three schools in one urban US school district. We explore how coaches' responsibilities are shaped by the everyday realities of their school contexts. Further, we discuss how coaches manage those realities through the relationships that they build. We found that building relationships and establishing rapport are the foremost concerns for literacy coaches in their first months on the job and continue to be central throughout their time as coaches. Implications for the design, implementation and evaluation of district literacy coaching initiatives are discussed.

Keywords: instructional coaching; teacher leadership; school reform

Introduction

In the United States and internationally, instructional coaching has been implemented as a mechanism to increase professional capacity, and in so doing improve student achievement (Coburn and Woulfin 2012). A form of school-based, embedded professional development coaching, has been embraced by many US districts in response to a wave of education reforms marked by accountability pressures and scrutiny of instructional practice (Spillane et al. 2011, Mehta 2013). While literature exists that defines the ideal coaching model and sets standards for the position (International Reading Association 2004b), along with a growing research base about the effectiveness of the reform (Elish-Piper and L'Allier 2011, Coburn and Woulfin 2012), we still know little about the coaching model in practice and how coaches manage their everyday work in the context of complicated and often isolating school cultures (Neumerski 2012, Vanderburg and Stephens 2010).

Prior research has highlighted some implementation challenges of coaching initiatives. Most notably, evidence suggested that instructional coaches often face resistance from the teachers with whom they work, a manifestation of what has been described as a loosely coupled and isolated culture of teaching (Bredeson 2003, Weick 1976).

Some teachers also report feeling professionally threatened by their instructional coach peers, a topic discussed in recent literature with respect to notions of authority and power (Camburn et al. 2008, Lynch and Ferguson 2010, Coburn and Woulfin 2012). As such, it is not surprising that scholars point to relationship- building as a critical feature of coaching, both as a facilitator of and a potential hindrance to the coaching role (Walpole and Blamey 2008, Atteberry and Bryk 2011, Smith and Bothell 2012). While these accounts indicate the importance of school context and culture in the implementation of coaching, some have noted a need for more research on coach–teacher relationships and the daily realities of coaching in context (Scott et al. 2012).

In this paper, we present the case studies of three literacy coaches in different schools within one large urban US school district. We explore how coaches' responsibilities are shaped by the realities of their school culture. Further, we discuss how coaches manage those realities through the relationships that they build. We conclude by discussing the possibility that it is in fact the relationships they build through the symbolic duties they serve, the way they situate their interactions, and the content of those interactions that enable them to perform their coaching responsibilities in the first place. Specifically, we seek to answer the following questions:

- What does the daily life of a literacy coach look like?
- What interactions do coaches have with teachers?
- What role do relationships play in allowing coaches to fulfill their responsibilities and impact instruction?

Below, we situate our work within the growing body of literature about instructional coaching and explain the theoretical perspective that guides the study. After describing our methodology, we describe the district context and three cases of coaches within their school contexts. We then present findings illustrating the critical role relationship-building plays in the coaching process, before concluding with a discussion of the implications of this study.

Instructional coaching as professional development

Instructional coaching models have emerged in multiple contexts and school subject areas as a way to leverage teacher leadership in the service of developing teacher capacity (Camburn et al. 2008, Coburn and Woulfin 2012, Hopkins et al. 2013). Increasingly, scholars of professional development have emphasized the promise of instructional coaching, noting the importance of ongoing, consistent instructional support for teachers (Guskey 2000, Russo 2004, Snow et al.2006). Research suggests that, 'local, site-specific, instructionally focused, ongoing professional development [such as instructional coaching] generally works better than the traditional pull- out models focused on schoolwide or districtwide issues' (Snow et al. 2006, p. 36).

Social (Bandura and McClelland 1977) and situated (Anderson et al. 1996) learning perspectives, which posit that learning occurs in and through a social context, offer theoretical grounding for instructional coaching (Camburn et al. 2008).

Although an emergent form of professional development, instructional coaching has become more and more common, particularly within the context of policy reform efforts (Hall 2004, Coburn and Woulfin 2012, Hopkins et al. 2013). In Professional Development in Education 741 2005, UK scholar Aileen Kennedy identified instructional coaching (or mentoring) as one of nine common models of professional development. Despite the widespread use of this form of professional development, there remains a need for further studies to generate empirical evidence on the impact of coaching (Neufeld 2002, Hall 2004, Snow et al. 2006).

There is a growing body of quantitative research (Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Biancarosa et al. 2010, Elish-Piper and L'Allier, 2010, 2011) and qualitative research (Vanderburg and Stephens 2010, Stephens et al. 2011, Coburn and Woulfin 2012) that suggests effects of instructional coaching on teacher beliefs, practices and student achievement. For instance, coaching has been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement in a large-scale evaluation of early literacy learning through the Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning program (Swartz 2003).

Taken together, this body of research emphasizes the importance of the form and implementation these coaching models take. Showers and Joyce (1996) pointed out that the efficacy of coaching models may rest in details of how, or how faithfully, they are implemented, noting 'there is no evidence that simply organizing peer coaching … will affect students' learning environments' (1996, p. 1). Our review of the research on coaching reveals that while there are some commonly accepted elements of the role, such as modeling and observing lessons, as well as similar definitions endorsed by

professional organizations (International Reading Association 2004a, 2004b), the implementation of such initiatives varies widely (Camburn et al. 2008). There are significant structural differences by site, leading to distinct ways in which the implementation of the coaching model interacts with existing infrastructures at the school level (Hopkins et al. 2013). Some schools create and pay for positions on their own without district involvement (Richard 2003). Some districts hire a limited number of coaches who travel from school to school. Others only make use of the coaches provided by the various comprehensive school reforms they have brought into the district (Camburn et al. 2003). Finally, there are districts that provide coaches with only partial release from classroom duties of their own (Camburn et al. 2008). These differences arguably might yield different results.

Authors have cautioned that coaching can be difficult to implement (Neufeld 2002, Snow et al. 2006). Without strong leaders, clear expectations and sufficient time, coaches may exert little influence (for example, International Reading Association 2004a, 2004b).

Due to the rapid scaling up of coaching models and a dearth of training strategies, a lack of qualified coaches can also lead to problems (Snow et al. 2006). Implementation also varies significantly based on the local demands and culture that the coaches encounter, as well as the individual qualifications (or lack thereof) that they bring to the position. Given the heterogeneity among US school districts and schools, scholars have highlighted the importance of considering such contexts in the professional development of teachers (Showers et al. 1987, Guskey 1995, Mangin 2009).

Importantly, research has indicated that instructional coaches often face resistance from the teachers with whom they work; a manifestation of the egalitarian, autonomous culture of teaching (Firestone 1985). Teachers have also reported feeling threatened by their instructional coach peers, a topic discussed in the literature with respect to notions of authority and power (Rainville and Jones 2008). The literature has underscored the importance of relationships between instructional coaches and the teachers with whom they work (Camburn et al. 2008, Lynch and 742 R. Lowenhaupt et al. Ferguson 2010, Coburn and Woulfin 2012). Indeed, a recently proposed theoretical model for the impact of instructional coaching posited that as a first step in instructional coaching initiatives, coaches 'must establish relationships with her [or his] school-based colleagues …' (Atteberry and Bryk 2011, p. 358). While relationships emerge as a theme in instructional coaching scholarship, at the same time the research has suggested that in practice instructional coaches may struggle most with this aspect of their practice (Walpole and Blamey 2008, Smith and Bothell 2012). Our study confirms the critical importance of relationships in the coach position and provides insight into how coaches shape interactions to develop relationships, as we describe in the findings below. First, we describe the theoretical perspective we draw on to frame our study.

Symbolic interactionism

We ground our analysis in symbolic interactionism, as described by Andy Hargreaves (1995), a perspective that encourages us to consider, 'practical realities rather than holding people to prescriptive ideals or moral exhortations' (1995, p. 10). As Rueda and Moll (1994, p. 121) explained, symbolic interactionism takes the view that people are, 'symbolic beings who interpret and define their world, and their behavior must be understood with reference to this defining process'. By adopting symbolic interactionism, we are better positioned to describe the realistic dynamics of coaching without an evaluative lens. While it is important for us to understand the function of coaches in comparison with their official job description, we seek to describe how coaches interpret and define their work based on the realities they encounter. We examine how the culture of schools acts on coaches, the actual work they are asked to do and how they adapt their understanding of their job in response to their lived experiences and interactions.

Our goal is not to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching, but rather to understand better the ways in which coaches negotiate the everyday roles and responsibilities of their positions. This perspective allows us to, 'see how lessthan-perfect … actions are, in fact, rational, strategic responses to everyday, yet often overwhelming, constraints in [the] teachers' workplace' (Hargreaves 1995, p. 10). Some research has suggested that coaches rarely engage in coaching, instead spending time on other tasks such as providing administrative or discipline-related support (Camburn et al. 2008, Elish-Piper and L'Allier 2010). Our approach allows us to explore what might account for this through a detailed analysis of coaching practices and the everyday life of schools and districts.

Crucially, we view school culture and context as critical features of coaching practice. Following in the footsteps of others who seek to understand the implementation of education reform in situ, we consider coaching within the context of interactions, relationships and the everyday realities of schooling (Spillane et al. 2001, Oborn et al. 2013). This approach considers the work of coaches, like other school leadership roles, as enacted through relationships, tools and institutional and historical structures (Oborn et al. 2013). Taking this approach, we aim to depict literacy coaching in situ, as shaped by school cultures and context through an analysis of how coaches navigate the complex realities of their roles.

Methods

District context: coaching in Greenfield

Greenfield Public Schools (GPS)1 began developing the literacy coaching initiative in 2001. At the time, the district was struggling with low student achievement, particularly in the area of literacy, and inconsistency in teaching practice districtwide. GPS, the local university and the teachers' association embraced the idea of coaching as a strategy for school improvement.

The GPS literacy coach program was initiated in 2002. In the first year of implementation, coaching positions were fully funded with district Title I funds – US federal funding intended to support the education of students from underprivileged backgrounds. In 2005/06, the district offered participating elementary schools 75% support for the coach position, requiring individual schools to provide the remaining 25%. The district funded 50% of the position at middle and high schools. Approximately 75% of the schools in the Greenfield district participated in the literacy coach initiative in the 2005/06 academic year.

The job description on the district's website outlined the following responsibilities for literacy coaches:

- assist in identifying successful intervention strategies with struggling students;
- demonstrate and model intervention strategies with struggling students for classroom teachers;
- model the components of the Balanced Literacy framework in classrooms for classroom teachers;
- provide technical support for professional learning communities in schools;
- collect and analyze information on research-proven practices in Literacy;
- submit weekly log to Literacy Specialist;
- deliver school-based professional development as requested;
- reinforce strategies that support Family Literacy; and
- provide direct and ongoing support to teachers.

The district attempted to delineate specific duties of a literacy coach, focusing on the primary responsibilities to observe, provide feedback and model lessons to teachers, as well as providing additional school-based professional development opportunities. In another document, also accessible on the website, the district specified that 'Literacy Coaches may not

perform administrative duties' and that 'Literacy Coaches should not be assigned to substitute teaching duties'.
While the literacy coach position was on the same pay scale as that of a classroom teacher, the position required additional qualifications and skills, which included five years of teaching experience in the district and a valid teaching license. The district also required literacy coach applicants to demonstrate expertise in literacy, experience providing professional development and in a leadership role, and experience in collaborative teaching environments.

Data sources

Our study was part of the larger evaluation of the GPS school district's literacy coach initiative. The larger evaluation study included both survey data and 744 R. Lowenhaupt et al. qualitative data. Qualitative case study data were collected in 14 schools, which were purposefully sampled for a mix of schools across levels (i.e. elementary, middle and high schools). This paper utilizes the qualitative data from three of these schools, collected in winter 2005 and spring 2006, to present the cases of three literacy coaches. The larger project had already been underway for several months when qualitative questions about the daily work of literacy coaches began to arise. It was at this point that we began working with the research team to extend the project to look more specifically at the daily work of literacy coaches through more intensive participant observation and shadowing.

It is worth noting that although data for the study come from several years ago, we argue that the experiences of the coaches in this study remain relevant today. Although school reform efforts have continued in the intervening years, our findings hold true within the current educational context. Instructional coaches continue to negotiate entrenched social dynamics and school cultures, at the same time that coaching has become an increasingly popular feature of various policy initiatives (Coburn and Woulfin 2012).

There remains much to be learned about the everyday practice of coaching, particularly as it relates to the implementation of recent reform initiatives that seek to influence classroom practice through the use of instructional coaches.

Data collection and analysis

The data for this study included interviews with three literacy coaches and their school principals. We also triangulated data from interviews to develop the descriptive nature of these case studies with first-hand, on-site observations of the three literacy coaches. The observations began at the beginning of the school day, around 8:00 a.m., and continued through lunchtime. During observations, we employed a combination of participant and removed observation (Emerson et al. 1995). After each day of observation, each researcher wrote up field notes that evening, including jottings of time, activities of the coaches and those with whom they interacted, our impressions, descriptions of the space and people, and significant quotes and comments. The final format of our field notes included notation of the time, in fiveminute to 15-minute increments and, in acknowledgement of our personal bias and identity, judgments and impressions noted in italics (Emerson et al. 1995).

The larger research team developed protocols for the semi-structured interviews, which were recorded on a digital recorder. Immediately after interviews, the primary interviewer jotted notes into a common matrix of the interview questions (Miles and Huberman 1994). For each of the three schools in our sample, we completed full transcriptions of the coach interview and wrote selected transcriptions of principal and teacher interviews in those schools. In addition to interview transcripts and field notes, we accessed an array of data gathered through the larger project. In conducting our analysis of the data, we also incorporated analysis of archival data sources, such as the district's official job description for literacy coaching and student achievement data on state and district assessments.

We analyzed notes from teacher and principal interviews, transcripts of coach interviews and field notes using Nvivo. We first created substantive categories through thematic analysis (Maxwell 1998), developing codes based on emergent themes in relation to our understanding of the literature. Codes were organized into the broad nodes of coach characteristics, expectations, interactions and actual Professional Development in Education 745 responsibilities. For the purposes of this paper, we primarily focus on the results from our analysis of the 'interactions' node, which includes the following subnodes: with whom, where and how frequently the interactions took place, as well as how those interactions were scheduled. Throughout our coding, we engaged in an iterative, collaborative, arbitrated coding process.

Three cases of coaching in context

In the following sections, we provide a brief introduction to each of our cases. These cases are followed by a discussion of key findings and concluding thoughts on the implications of this study for the implementation of coaching and future research.

Lydia at Lancaster School

An urban, neighborhood school, the Lancaster School served approximately 450 students, the majority of whom were low-income students of color, primarily African-American (80%), in kindergarten through eighth grade. The primary focus of reform during the time of study was the implementation of an adopted curricular program, Direct Instruction (DI) – a highly structured curriculum that uses a 'systematic, explicit, and aural' approach to teaching through 'teacher modeling and leading, unison reading, and systematic review and practice' and leveled student grouping (Ashworth 1999). DI was first implemented as the reading curriculum used in the primary grades and was then expanded to all grades as the school's primary curriculum in the areas of reading, reasoning, writing and mathematics. Although considered a low-performing school in the district, scores showed gradual although uneven growth in both reading and mathematics in the years preceding the study, growth attributed by study participants to the implementation of DI. The information cited in this section, unless otherwise noted, was taken from the district's website, the state's online assessment database or the school's website.

A former teacher at Lancaster, Lydia took the coaching position after her principal asked her to apply. Because of her strong working knowledge of DI, the curriculum the school was in the process of implementing, the principal believed she would be a good choice. He also explained that she had demonstrated her abilities as a teacher leader by volunteering to help write grants. In general, he felt that she was a well-liked member of the faculty, an obvious choice (Lancaster, principal, interview). Lydia's five years as a third-grade teacher provided classroom experiences on which she drew in coaching. She lacked specific training or certification in reading or literacy (Lydia, interview), but had significant training in the teaching and administration of the DI program and coaching.

During her four years as a literacy coach, Lydia focused on establishing herself as a knowledgeable resource for teachers. One teacher explained that while others in the school may have had more expertise, she was more personable and knew how to deal with traditional teachers set in their ways or opposed to DI (Lancaster, Teacher 2, interview). Lydia originally took the job because she viewed it as an opportunity to take a step toward school leadership. She explained:

> I am one of those people that likes new challenges … I don't like the same thing year in year out. I thought I got quite accomplished at being a third grade teacher, and I thought, 'I've always been kind of a leader anyway.' (Lydia, interview)

After a few years in the coach role, Lydia began working toward her master's in school administration, graduated with her principal licensure and had begun actively seeking a principalship.

Lydia's primary frustration as a coach was the line she walked between administration and teachers. Despite her authority in the school, she voiced an interest in moving into a more formal leadership position. In her interview, she explained that she feels she has reached the limit of her effectiveness. She expressed frustration with her status as a teacher, rather than an administrator. Without official authority, she felt she could not have the impact she would like.

Tricia at Thatcher Elementary School

Thatcher Elementary School was located in the heart of a working-class neighborhood, enrolling students in kindergarten through grade five. Similar to Lancaster, Thatcher's approximately 450 students were primarily African-American (81%) and of low income (88%). The teaching staff at Thatcher was predominately white and female, and the school had experienced a considerable amount of staff turnover. The teachers at Thatcher appeared to work in relative isolation from each other as 'individual practitioners' (Thatcher, field notes) and much of the school's improvement efforts was structured around developing professional relationships across grade levels and benchmarking expectations for student achievement, rather than focusing on a particular curriculum. Although the school was not as low-performing as Lancaster, Thatcher's student achievement data showed a decline in recent years in both reading and mathematics. In the year prior to data collection, the school administration identified improving achievement in writing as the school's main goal.

The hiring process for the current literacy coach at Thatcher Elementary was complicated. Originally the school planned to hire from within, but none of the faculty who applied had the necessary qualifications. Accepting applications from a larger pool, the principal offered the position to Tricia, a veteran teacher in the district, as his second choice (Thatcher, principal, interview). With little formal training in literacy coaching, she was hired because of her expertise in writing, with the explicit responsibility of helping the school raise its scores on the writing test. Tricia's induction was impacted by this experience. Her first year of coaching differed significantly from Lydia's experience, a teacher promoted from within. Tricia felt the residual tension from the hiring process, and constantly reminded teachers that she was a teacher too (Thatcher, field notes). Although she struggled to gain acceptance, she identified her mother's death as a turning point, when teachers rallied around her in support.

Tricia chose to become a coach because she was interested in working with more students and felt limited by her work as a classroom teacher. Similar to Lydia, she also acted as a teacher leader in her previous position, offering help to teachers who were struggling.

Despite similar tendencies toward leadership, she did not share the administrative aspirations expressed by Lydia. Instead, she hoped her work as a coach would ultimately make her a better teacher. She explained: 'I basically taking the position as a learning position. To make me a better educator, to be more innovative in teaching, because otherwise, [coaching] is really just a thankless role' (Tricia, interview).

Tricia's primary frustration was the unrealistic time demands of the position. She described the length of her day as overly long considering that there was no pay increase associated with the job. She mentioned her family, saying that 'it would be different if I could say this would give me an opportunity to give my family more, but really it's just taking away from them' (Tricia, interview). Without higher pay and with longer hours, she was not yet sure the position was worth the sacrifices she made for it.

Sally at Stafford Middle School

Serving approximately 850 students in grades six through eight, Stafford enrolled students from all areas of the city. Although serving a similar percentage of low-income students (83%) to Lancaster and Thatcher, Stafford was more racially diverse, with just over one-half of the students African-American (52.7%), and sizeable minorities of Hispanic students (29.6%) and white students (9.5%). Stafford also had a relatively significant population of students with limited English-language proficiency (20%). Similar to Thatcher, the professional culture in Stafford was in a time of transition, following a series of administrator turnovers. Recent reforms in literacy centered on the implementation of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program. AR is a computer-based reading fluency program through which students earn points by taking comprehension assessments after completing self-selected, AR-approved books, and then redeem their points for rewards (Scott 1999). The teachers we spoke with, as well as the school's literacy coach, attributed the school's steady gains in reading assessments to the AR program. Despite fairly high proficiency levels in reading, mathematics scores remained extremely low as compared with other schools in the district.

Sally, like Lydia, was asked to take the coaching position by her principal. Without an official hiring process, Sally was the obvious choice for the job as the former reading specialist. She explained that she was not surprised by the offer, and confessed: 'Whether or not that was by the book, I don't know. But that's what happened' (Sally, interview). Of the three coaches, Sally had the most experience with 20 years as an educator, most of which were at Stafford. Sally also held advanced licenses in English and reading, the only one of our coaches with such certification. As the reading specialist Sally had introduced AR, and she continued to administer it in her current position. Sally was known and seemed to be trusted by the teachers, characterized as 'hardworking' and 'approachable' (Stafford, Teacher 1, interview).

Another teacher said, 'She is a credible resource, and the improvement of reading scores over the past years is evidence that she is doing a good job with the reading program' (Stafford, Teacher 2, interview). Her contact with the teachers was primarily AR-related, although she expressed her willingness to help teachers in any way she could (Sally, interview). She felt confidence that everyone in the building was willing to work with her.

Sally decided to take the position because, as she put it in her interview, 'I figured that I was already doing the job' (Sally, interview). While her title changed, her role remained very similar. She continued to monitor AR, which made up the bulk of her work as a literacy coach. Unlike Lydia and Tricia, who saw the new position as an opportunity for professional growth, Sally described her move as a funding opportunity. She appeared keenly aware of the importance of remaining in good standing with the district in order to preserve her role. When asked how long she planned to stay in the job, she said 'as long as they will let me. I love this job' (Sally, interview).

Findings

Drawing on our analysis of these three cases, we found that the everyday practice of literacy coaching focused primarily on the development of trusting relationships with teachers. Below, we describe this fundamental responsibility of coaches, and then examine how the coaches we studied sought to fulfill this responsibility through the following practices: the use of symbolic gestures, selecting locations for interactions and shaping the content of the discourse.

Relationships as fundamental

Personal interactions with teachers are at the heart of the coaching initiative. Hargreaves wrote about the possibility of transforming people through 'the meanings and language of human interaction' (1995, p. 11). The relationships that coaches build allow them to interact with teachers about the very important work of school improvement. In the case of these three coaches, these interactions were in fact fundamental to their everyday practice.

Their task was not easy, with many obstacles to creating successful relationships. As Bredeson pointed out, teachers 'find ways to shield themselves from personal affront, disappointment and ridicule' (2003, p. 125). Most school cultures have evolved strategies to protect teachers from conversations about practice. Bredeson explained that 'powerful norms of privacy and individualism continue to characterize professional work in schools' (2003, p. 63). As reformers acknowledged this challenge, the coaching model emerged as an attempt to break down those barriers of isolation by putting a peer in the position of providing formative, non-evaluative feedback to teachers. The design of the Greenfield coaching model purposefully tried to support the coach–teacher relationship by keeping coaches in the official position of teacher, so that when teachers felt threatened, as they inevitably did, coaches were able to remind them that they were peers, both on the pay scale and in terms of authority.

This left the coach to navigate a tricky middle-ground. They were teachers, but with unique responsibilities; they were instructional leaders, but with no official capacity for authority. The three coaches in our study were very sensitive to their liminal positions as both insiders and outsiders in the classroom. As former classroom teachers themselves, they were attuned to traditions of privatized practice and proprietary expertise, as Sally explained:

> The idea of someone going in your classroom, showing you how to do things better is very demeaning and undermining of the teacher in the room unless it is handled a little delicately. You can't step on people who have a lot of experience.

When the coaches took on their job, they were all confronted with some degree of resistance from the teaching staff. Both Lydia and Tricia described the initial Professional Development in Education 749 challenge of entering the new position. In the following field note, Lydia described the beginning of her coaching career:

> I ask her how she handles issues of trust with the teachers and ask what it is like to be neither a teacher nor administrator. She explains that at first, it was tough for teachers to get used to it. One teacher spoke out against her in a faculty meeting, wanting to call the union. Of course, the union was behind her, but she felt terrible. (Lancaster, field notes)

Tricia also talked about the difficulty of being accepted by the staff. In her first year, she noted that the teachers constantly 'question me as an educator' (Thatcher, field notes). One of her strategies for gaining acceptance was to remind teachers of her equal status. She explained in her interview: 'I have to remind the teachers all the time that I am still a teacher. You know, I had to tell them, you cannot grieve me because I am teacher, I am under the same contract as you are' (Tricia, interview). Sally used a different tactic to remind teachers that she was part of their union. She volunteered to serve as the Building Representative for the union, and during our visit spent almost an hour conferencing with a teacher about a union concern. Each of these coaches sought out ways to interact with teachers outside their roles as coach.

In fact, we found that building relationships and establishing rapport were the foremost concerns for literacy coaches in their first months on the job and continued to be central throughout their time as coaches. All three coaches we observed adopted powerful coping mechanisms with which to maneuver through these muddy waters of trust, authority, position and rapport. From the tasks they were willing to perform for teachers to the way they framed their conversations, the coaches modified their roles in order to develop trust among their colleagues, therefore allowing them to approach teachers' well-guarded instructional practices.

Specifically, we identified the following practices related to relationship-building: the use of symbolic gestures, selecting locations for interactions, and shaping the content of discourse with teachers. Through these practices, the coaches negotiated and maintained working relationships within schools that facilitated their efforts at instructional improvement.

We describe each in detail below.

Symbolic gestures

One of the ways the three coaches developed and sustained relationships with the teachers in their school was through a willingness to do just about anything. Sally explained that, 'she's willing to make herself useful in any way she can. She tries to do whatever people need. "If they need copies, I'll do it. If they need Kleenex, I'll bring them Kleenex"' (Stafford, field notes).

In the following example of Lydia's willingness to help out as needed, she also showed that she acknowledged the difficult and hectic job of a teacher: 'A teacher waits behind Lydia, and she offers to give up her spot to let the teacher hurry through. The teacher refuses the offer, explaining that she has some free time, and patiently waits for Lydia to finish' (Lancaster, field notes). On the day we visited, Tricia stopped by the classrooms of teachers for which she had scheduled a field trip to a nearby university to make sure they had everything they needed.

The gestures the coaches made to their teachers in the interest of building trust and strengthening relationships were numerous. All three of our coaches made 750 R. Lowenhaupt et al. concerted efforts to be useful and kind to the teachers in their building, and teachers seemed responsive to this message, expressing appreciation and respect in their interviews.

As seen above, the interactions the coaches had with teachers were not bounded by the official expectations of the coaching role. In addition to the types of symbolic gestures exemplified above, coaches were willing to take on discipline issues for teachers. In an example of this:

> Lydia brings another student with worksheets to sit in the classroom with the students she has just led down. The teacher, an African-American woman, is extremely pregnant, and Lydia walks her class down as a favor. In return, the disrespectful student will sit in her class for the rest of the day completing worksheets for another teacher. (Lancaster, field notes)

This willingness to assume responsibility for discipline was also seen in Tricia's somewhat offhanded comments to a student while interacting with his teacher about a question regarding an upcoming workshop:

> As they discuss, the students begin to get off task. Tricia and the teacher look up from their discussions and make comments such as 'Are you finished yet?' The teacher comments about one student's misbehavior throughout the day and Tricia asks the student, 'Do you need to come with me?' (Thatcher, field notes)

As seen in previous field notes, Lydia was also very involved in supporting classroom management.

In addition to taking on a variety of tasks to help teachers out, all three coaches made themselves remarkably available throughout the day. While they fulfilled scheduled obligations such as lunch duty, district meetings and formal observations or conferencing, they were very clear that if teachers came to them then they made the time to address their needs.

One of the teachers at Thatcher related that if she had a problem for which Tricia did not have an immediate answer, Tricia always responded to her right away. By the end of the day, Tricia would peek into her classroom and let her know the answer to her problem (Thatcher, Teacher 2, interview). The literacy coaches as well as the teachers stated that while interactions were often not as frequent as they would like due to the many demands on the coaches' time, the coaches were eager to help out on an as-needed basis.

Despite the fact that interactions may have been infrequent, we saw no evidence that teachers perceived the coaches as unavailable or unapproachable. In fact, one teacher, who remarked early in her interview that she very infrequently interacted with Sally, later described Sally as 'approachable' and said that if she ever had a problem she knew that Sally would have taken the time to help her (Stafford, Teacher 1, interview).

Despite demonstrating competence in their official coaching duties, the three coaches in our study spent much of their time engaged in activities that would not be considered official coaching. We found in our study that these activities generally took the form of these symbolic gestures, which served a critical purpose in relationship-building.

Location of interactions

Another practice used by these coaches to establish relationships was the creation of safe spaces for instructional conversations. For example, Lydia worked to make her office a welcoming space. The following field note describes it:

> Lydia's office is within the library, a spacious room with every wall full of books. Her office is bright, with windows facing out to the front of the building, and she has a desk with a computer on one side of the room, a conference table at the other, and another computer up against the windows. The whole back wall is covered with resource materials, primarily DI textbooks and workbooks. (Lancaster, field notes)

While Sally did not have an office, she made herself available in the library, another pleasant and comfortable room where she spent most of her day. Her decision to model lessons in the library and conference with teachers there allowed her to interact with teachers on neutral territory.

Sally's motivation to keep interactions to the public space of the library may also relate to her own beliefs about providing feedback to teachers. Unlike the other coaches, she explicitly expressed discomfort with telling teachers how to teach. In her interview, she explained that when she first took the position, she went into classes and tried to help them. She felt that a lot of the teachers were already doing great work, so she decided it was more important to give them a break. She viewed modeling as an opportunity for teachers to relax, while she took over their class (Sally, interview). When asked about conducting observations or providing feedback, she explained:

> I guess I haven't done that. I find that a little more difficult to do in a formal sense. Informally, yes, especially if they're wanting some information about something, I can easily make some suggestions on this or that. But as a formal thing? No. Part of that is, we're all teachers, I'm not their supervisor. I may or may not know how to do this better, maybe this is the best it can be done for today given this group of students … I just don't really have that inside of me. I'm just really a collaborative kind of person. (Sally, interview)

In this quotation, she highlighted her equal status with other teachers. If people asked for advice, she was more than willing to provide it. But telling someone what to do was out of the question for her, particularly as a fellow teacher.

Tricia expressed a related concern about the spatial situation of her interactions with teachers. She explained: 'now I don't come into their classroom and say this is how you are going to do this, but I do offer methods for teaching' (Tricia, interview). She was more willing than Sally to offer advice, but still avoided making teachers feel as though they were being told what to do, particularly in the context of teachers' own classrooms. Taken together, these practices suggest that coaches purposefully selected locations for interaction that would support the development of trusting relationships.

Content of the discourse

An analysis of the kinds of conversations these coaches engaged in with teachers highlighted a concerted effort to remain

on neutral territory, not only in location but in discourse as well. Rather than explicitly addressing teaching style in a way that 752 R. Lowenhaupt et al. might be construed as personal criticism, they grounded discussions with teachers in external curricular goals. Each school embraced its own focus with regard to literacy instruction around which nearly all conversations about instruction took place.

At Lancaster, Lydia considered her role as inextricably tied to DI: 'A more accurate name for me would be the DI coach', she says (Lancaster, field notes). During our visit, we observed several instances of Lydia mediating the program in conversations with teachers. Several times during the day, teachers asked Lydia specific questions about instruction under the DI model. During her interview, she explained further:

> So, yea, I think we're doing some really good things with the literacy/reading aspect. I was going to say, being a DI school, I've become more of a DI coach, as opposed to the literacy coach, taking on more of the program than specific literacy, and not winning the battles in other areas.
> (Lydia, interview)

In this comment, Lydia indicated that her tactic for improving instruction centered on DI, which she viewed as the most effective way to bring about change.

In Stafford Middle School, conversations about instruction revolved around the use of AR. An example of the interaction was as follows:

> A teacher comes in to ask for a list of points. 'Does my class need to have 75 points?' … Sally answered her question and asks her how the teaching is going. She asks if she needs help teaching any strategies and asks about how the new workbook is going. The teacher answers that the students like the workbook, because it makes them think about what the story is trying to say. Sally asks a few more questions, and the teacher leaves with a print-out of points for each student. (Stafford, field notes)

In this example, questions about AR precipitated the opportunity for interaction. The conversation was about curriculum, rather than how to teach.

While Thatcher lacked a comprehensive curricular approach, consensus existed around the schoolwide goal of improving student achievement in writing. Here, coach–teacher conversations focused specifically on writing instruction:

> The principal and Tricia look through the book, commenting on the class' progress. They speak with me about the work she has done with the kindergarten teachers benchmarking student work in writing. Prior to this year, the four-year-old classes were producing more advanced work than the five-year-old classes. Tricia has been meeting with the teachers to foster collaboration around writing and to help the teachers hold students to higher standards. (Thatcher, field notes)

Additionally, on the day that we visited, the model lesson we observed introduced students to descriptive writing skills. Her relationships with teachers were framed around agreed-upon writing assessment goals. For each case, the primary interactions revolved around these external and agreed-upon curriculum reforms, rather than particular instructional practices.

Discussion and conclusions

Acknowledging the challenge of designing successful professional development in schools, the district created the literacy

coaching initiative in an attempt to provide Professional Development in Education 753 relevant, contextual instructional support in a non-evaluative form. The district stated a vision of coaching as support for embedded professional development, with official coach duties that included conducting observations, providing feedback, modeling lessons to teachers and serving as a resource for instructional support about literacy. The district's vision aligned with professional development literature, which has emphasized the importance of local, contextual instructional support (Smylie 1995, Bredeson 2003). Recognizing that the culture of isolation served as a barrier to conversations about practice, the district decided to implement a peer-coaching model. However, such structural arrangements required the coach to mediate trust within the traditional school setting.

Consistent with previous studies (Elish-Piper and L'Allier 2010), we observed the coaches wearing many different hats, several of which were unrelated to their official capacity as a coach. We interpreted this tension between the official responsibilities highlighted by the district and the actual duties performed by the three coaches as a coping mechanism for navigating the challenges of their role.

The coaches we observed willingly took on additional duties in order to establish rapport with the teachers, adapting their positions in ways that detracted from their time actually coaching. While these adaptations did not fall neatly into the job description created by the district, they probably served as the necessary precursor to the kinds of coaching activities idealized in the literature.

While the ultimate goal of school district instructional coaching initiatives is to improve student achievement through increased professional capacity at the school level (Coburn and Woulfin 2012), we found that the success of this strategy depends on the ability of the coaches to navigate the specific realities of their schools through symbolic gestures, positioning of interactions and the content of those interactions. Understanding the disparity between the actual implementation and the initial vision of coaching requires a practical acknowledgement that coaches must focus on building trust with teachers in order to engage in difficult conversations about instruction. There seems to be consensus, not only among researchers and school leaders, but among coaches as well, that direct interaction with teachers about instruction is the goal of the strategy. Yet establishing a receptive culture and professional relationships with teachers is a complex, time-consuming task, which often takes time away from the official activities associated with coaching.

While many interpret these activities as detracting from the efficacy of coaching, we view the situation differently, positing that in fact meeting these competing demands is not only the reality of the coaching position in many schools but is also key to accessing the greatest affordances of a coaching initiative. We hope to inform a better understanding of the role trust and culture play in the effective implementation of coaching as a model of school improvement. In recent years, these issues of trust have become all the more challenging in the United States, where recent policy initiatives have placed teachers and teaching practice under the microscope of accountability, particularly with regard to new systems of teacher evaluation (Hill and Grossman 2013).

This study offers theoretical insights for models of instructional coaching, namely the need to contextualize these initiatives in the culture of schools and to support the establishment and further development of relationships. Our findings lend support for the theoretical model of coaching proposed by Atteberry and Bryk (2011), which posited that instructional coaching activities with teachers need to be preceded by relationship-building for coaching to effect change in teaching and 754 R. Lowenhaupt et al. learning. We also hope that this understanding will in turn inform the structure, expectations and implementation of future coaching initiatives in the United States and elsewhere. As one coach indicated in our study, coaches might be provided with preparation around building teacher–coach relationships or mitigating barriers to effective instructional coaching in schools; for example, teacher resistance.

In an empirical study of Canadian elementary literacy coaches, Lynch and Ferguson (2010) also found that coaches desired support in cultivating productive relationships with teachers.

In this current era of school accountability and austerity in the United States and internationally, school district and other policy-makers are under immense pressure to evaluate the impacts of their reform initiatives in terms of student outcomes and other metrics (Mehta 2013).

This study highlights the need for consideration of local contexts and teacher–coach relationships in the evaluation of instructional coaching initiatives, as well as the importance of taking a long-term view of evaluation outcomes. While the larger study of this coaching initiative raised concerns about the fidelity of implementation, our study revealed that while coaches were involved in a number of other activities that were not coaching per se, these relationship-building activities laid the groundwork for effective coaching. As policy-makers and educational leaders incorporate instructional coaching into instructional improvement efforts, they must consider the everyday realities facing those in this position and account for the local context, interactions and relationships in their implementation and evaluation of such initiatives.

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Note

1. All names, including the school district, school and coach names, are pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

End of Handout 5

Self-Study 1: Reflections on Session 2 and Communication

Directions: What steps can you take to enhance the quality of the conversations with teachers at your school? Reflect upon the topics below and describe how you address each of them. What have been some of your successes? What challenges have you faced? If you have successfully overcome them, how did you do that? **Please note any questions from Session 2.**

Session 2.

1. Identifying a purpose for the conversation:
2. Addressing the preconceptions of teachers:
3. Identifying perspectives of teachers and working to address them:
4. Ensuring that the positioning you take as a coach is one of a collaborator and not an expert:

Questions from Session 2:

Self-Study 2: Video Viewing Guide for Video 3 and Video 4 Coaching Conversations

Directions: During this self-study activity you will watch Video 3 and Video 4 and complete the video viewing guide below. Be ready to debrief at the beginning of Session 3.

Question	Answer
1. What are the four important elements of coaching conversations that Diana Beabout presents in Video 3?	
2. Jot down some notes about each one of the four elements of coaching conversations. You will refer to these notes during the rest of this self-study activity.	
3. Watch Video 4. What is the goal of the conversation between the coach and the teacher?	
4. Watch Video 4 again. Note where you see evidence of the four elements of coaching conversations that were presented in Video 3. What element(s) were used the most in the conversation between the coach and teacher in Video 4?	
5. Describe how you saw each of the four elements used in Video 4.	
6. Which of the four elements do you think you need to be more intentional about using in the conversations you have with teachers?	