Coaches

in the High School Classroom

Studies in Implementing High School Reform

Prepared by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform

Schools for a New Society
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Schools for a New Society
An Initiative of Carnegie Corporation of New York

Throughout its more than ninety-year history, Carnegie Corporation of New York has been committed to improving education and ensuring all students the opportunity for full participation in our democracy and our society.

The Corporation believes that if this goal is to be achieved, high school reform in urban communities is an urgent need, from an economic, social, historical, and moral standpoint. In that context, the Corporation is dedicated to revitalizing America's high schools by focusing on district reform. We believe that preparing all of today's high school students to succeed in our complex, knowledge-based economy requires more than one or two good schools: we must have in place entire systems of excellent schools.

In October 2001, Carnegie Corporation, with additional support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, committed $60 million to Schools for a New Society (SNS), a five-year, seven-city initiative involving 140,000 students in more than 100 schools. The goal of SNS is to reinvent the high school experience so that schools become places with high expectations, leading to high achievement, for all students.

In each of the SNS sites, community-based organizations serve as core partners with the school district. The school district–community partnerships are:

- Boston Public Schools – Boston Plan for Excellence, Jobs for the Future, Boston Private Industry Council
- Hamilton County Department of Education – Public Education Foundation (Chattanooga)
- Houston Independent School District – Houston A+ Challenge
- Providence Public Schools – Rhode Island Children's Crusade for Higher Education
- Sacramento City Unified School District – Linking Education and Economic Development (LEED)
- San Diego City Schools – American Institutes for Research
- Worcester Public Schools – Clark University (Worcester, MA)

In addition to direct support to the communities, the initiative includes funding for technical assistance and evaluation. A technical support team – drawn from the Academy for Educational Development, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, and the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University – collaborates on providing expertise and tools to support change at the school and system levels and to engage the community in the transformation of high schools. SRI International and American Institutes for Research conduct the national evaluation.

This report explores the experiences of two SNS sites – Houston and Boston – with instructional coaching, a promising new approach to improving teaching and learning that figures prominently in SNS work. We believe these lessons are valuable for others who are implementing and supporting urban reform efforts.

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by Molly Schen, Sanjiv Rao, and Ricardo Dobles

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Efforts to increase student achievement in the 1980s and well into the 1990s focused on pinpointing achievement gaps by race and socioeconomic status, examining beliefs that unwittingly undermine student performance, and creating standards for academic performance. These efforts were no doubt important, even necessary as a first step in describing and identifying some of the causes of the persistent and widespread problem of low achievement. But, at least at the high school level, they did not "move the needle" of student achievement very much. In the late 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century, the field of literacy came to the fore in response to the continuing pressure to improve student performance.

Districts began pouring tremendous resources into new strategies for helping youth, and particularly urban youth, gain skills in literacy and numeracy. High school literacy specialists and teachers acquired concrete tools for differentiating between the ability to read out loud and the ability to read for comprehension, between simply finding new information and linking new information to other ideas. They began creating sophisticated content standards for literacy. But the literacy professionals realized that these steps did not go far enough. Teachers needed a powerful infrastructure, one that addressed their teaching moves *in the classroom*, so that every teacher had the capacity to teach deep literacy skills.

Today, many districts are marching to the drumbeat of "literacy, literacy, literacy." This commitment to dramatically bolster students' skills has resulted in a new game plan, one

that shifts professional development from single workshops to the classroom and transfers responsibility for literacy acquisition from the English teacher alone to *every* teacher. The effect is being felt across the system, in high school as well as elementary classrooms: in the science class, when the teacher gives students a roadmap for approaching an intimidating textbook; in the social studies class, when the teacher asks students to analyze the root of the word *dictator*; in math, health, and music classes, when teachers expect full-sentence rather than single-word answers.

To bring about these kinds of changes in instructional practice, many districts have created a cadre of literacy coaches to work closely with teachers in their classrooms. Coaching represents a significant departure from familiar forms of professional development such as prepackaged workshops and in-service days. Coaches typically draw on a specific body of research, theory, and practice adopted by the district. They offer in-class support to teachers, work with all staff on literacy acquisition strategies, and individualize their work with small groups of teachers as well as one-on-one over a long period of time.

More study is needed to understand the impact of coaching on student achievement, but the burgeoning body of literature on theory and practice about literacy coaching (for example, resources available at the National Council of Teachers of English Web site and the RAND report on progress toward national and state literacy goals [McCombs et al. 2004]) has identified a num-

ber of related benefits. The Annenberg Insti-
tute (2004) has found that:

- Effective coaching encourages collaborative,
  reflective practice.
- Effective embedded professional learning
  promotes positive cultural change.
- A focus on content encourages the use of
  data analysis to inform practice.
- Coaching promotes the implementation of
  learning and reciprocal accountability.
- Coaching supports collective, intercon-
  nected leadership across a school system.

At the same time, there are significant chal-
lenges to effective coaching. For example:

- What is the content of coaching?
- How much should the coach follow the
  teacher's questions, and when does the
  coach have the responsibility to introduce
  new lines of questioning and suggest tools
  and strategies?
- How well do coaches reflect the demo-
  graphics of the students in the district, and
  what is their preparation for working with
  English language learners and students with
  special needs?
- How is coaches' work integrated into the
  work of the district and school?

This paper, presenting portraits of six coaches,
is intended to deepen understanding about the
role of the instructional coach.

To support this new and promising approach,
Carnegie Corporation of New York, with
additional support from the Bill & Melinda
Gates Foundation, is funding seven school dis-
tricts and their communities for five years in
the $60-million Schools for a New Society
(SNS) initiative, launched in 2001. SNS
focuses on secondary schools, supporting
structural changes that transform huge urban
high schools into small schools or small learn-
ing communities within larger buildings with
the goal of improving instruction. It promotes

the reform of district policies and practices so
that every student meets high standards. SNS
also helps build partnerships between school
districts and community organizations.

Instructional coaching figures prominently in
the SNS districts' plans. In several districts, it
has drawn significant district resources.

Three years into the SNS initiative, the time
is ripe to see coaches' work close up – both
the successes and challenges. These portraits
reveal the experiences and insights of six
school coaches in two SNS districts – Boston
and Houston – to understand the processes,
choices, and challenges posed by this promis-
ing, but as yet unproven, role of the instruc-
tional coach. The cities were selected for their
contrasting coaching structures and varied
length of experience with coaching. Houston
was in its first year of coaching and used
a flexible, open-ended job description for
coaches; the expectation was that the coach's
role would adapt and evolve. Boston, in
contrast, was in its ninth year of coaching
systemwide and had a well-defined role for
coaches.

The thumbnail portraits of six coaches
are intended to provide fuel for discussion,
primarily for coaches and coach coordinators.
Before each set of portraits of coaches, there
is a brief description of the district and its
coaching model. Guiding questions are
offered in sidebars for individual reflection
or group discussions. Following the portraits,
several tools are suggested for discussion,
analysis, and assessment of these and other
models of coaching in Schools for a New
Society districts.

Coaching in Houston

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Everyone from the superintendent and the school board to parents to the newspaper editorial board agreed: student achievement in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) needed to improve. Only 45 percent of the 50,000 high school students in the nation's seventh-largest school district graduated within four years. Fewer than 40 percent of its tenth-graders passed the English Language Arts section on the state test that students must pass in order to graduate. Many HISD stakeholders agreed that reforms were in order.

Poor literacy skills were seen as the single most pressing academic problem in the schools, spawning failures not just in English classes, but in every class that required reading, writing, and critical thinking. The biology teacher who assigns twenty pages of textbook reading and a current scientific article, the history teacher who asks students to compare excerpts from two primary sources, and the math teacher who gives a multistep, real-world math problem – all rely on their students' reading comprehension abilities.

Houston Schools for a New Society was born as a partnership between HISD and the Houston A+ Challenge to redesign high schools into small learning communities and ensure that all graduates possess requisite skills – including the core skills of literacy. In the spring of 2002, with SNS-initiative support, HISD began a concerted effort to explore ways of improving student literacy.

In a few months, the district completed a "literacy scan" of high schools, which identified several areas needing urgent attention such as literacy in the content areas, curriculum alignment, and English language learning. After researching best practices in literacy, Houston Schools for a New Society developed a literacy framework, which was adopted in the spring of 2003, to guide the work of Houston's high schools. The framework integrates the literacy initiative into every level of the organization: the school, the district, the community, and professional learning.

One key outcome of developing the literacy framework was a decision to employ literacy coaches for each of Houston's twenty-four comprehensive high schools. About two years prior to literacy coaches, the position of school-improvement facilitators, or SIFs, had been created. School-improvement facilitators were responsible for helping schools develop or maintain small autonomous learning communities.

These two new positions added resources to a school, but also added complexity. Both positions were district initiatives with school-based responsibilities: individual SIFs and literacy coaches worked under frameworks established by the district, but they had flexibility to create work that fit with the schoolhouse goals and strategies. From the perspective of the schoolhouse, there were new challenges to coordinate individuals with new roles.

Twenty-eight literacy coaches were hired to begin work in the 2003–2004 academic year. Most literacy coaches had been teachers in

HISD with backgrounds in teaching middle and/or high school English language arts, although a handful had taught other subjects, including social sciences, English as a second language, and special education. Notably, in 2004–2005, only a few new coaches needed to be brought on board, indicating considerable stability in the coaching network.

From the beginning of the literacy coaching initiative, the goal was to improve literacy instruction – and, thereby, literacy achievement – in the high schools. The district avoided prepackaged programs in favor of granting the newly hired literacy coaches flexibility in navigating their new roles. Like the school-improvement facilitators, the coaches were expected to work with structures and decisions made at the level of the schoolhouse.

The coaches soon found that the literacy framework was a broad-strokes guide; by design, the district did not present a "prescription" or "formula" for how to support improved literacy teaching and learning in secondary schools. While coaches were given a brief job description called the "Literacy Coach Framework," it was understood that their work would evolve throughout the year, supported by central office staff and local partner staff. For example, where the framework states that coaches "offer ongoing professional development based on campus needs," in some cases the newly autonomous campuses were not prioritizing adolescent literacy. Thus, the coach's work shifted to building a case for prioritizing literacy.

The coaching framework outlined the broad ways in which coaches were to spend their time. The framework allocated 40 percent of coaches' time to demonstration and/or model teaching in their own "lab" classes or while visiting "host" teachers' classes. An additional 20 percent was to be dedicated to classroom observation and in-class coaching, 20 percent

to participating in the coaches' network meetings, and 10 percent each to all-staff professional development and research/data analysis.

Each coach was required to teach at least one class or group of students on a weekly basis. This teaching responsibility ensured that coaches had the credibility to execute the other aspects of their work – particularly modeling, classroom observation, and professional development – to all staff on-site. Many coaches ended up teaching one or more classes daily or multiple times per week.

? Houston coaches are required to teach at least one class. In what ways might multiple responsibilities affect a coach in his/her work? What are the benefits and challenges of having a coach also teach a regular class? How do you keep from spreading yourself too thin?

The portraits that follow capture three Houston coaches at work near the end of HISD's first year of literacy coaching (2003–2004).

R O S E

"Starting small, starting strong"

Rose[1] had taught English as a Second Language (ESL) at another school for twelve years before coming to her new school. By the time the new school year began, she had been given the extra assignments of esl department chair and part-time literacy coach – in addition to teaching four classes. She felt encouraged by very supportive colleagues and the administration at this new school, so she readily accepted the challenges that came with these new positions.

? What should coaches know about their school context? When a literacy coach is new to the school, what advantages and disadvantages does that bring?

Reflecting on her first year as a school coach, Rose summed up, "This first year was really about defining my role, how to dialogue, how to exchange ideas, how to observe teachers." She noted how important it was to make teachers comfortable sharing their work – often by sharing her own work first.

> My own experience in teaching is that together we are better than what we could be on our own. I have always enjoyed sharing ideas with colleagues and expanding on things that I try in my classroom. This is how I define my role as a teacher, so my perspective as a coach is shaped in the same way. I considered myself a good teacher, but I knew I was better with someone else than alone.

Her aim was to create a habit of collegial dialogue and sharing in the school, and for every lesson to be stronger as a result.

She learned a great deal about facilitating adult learning. "As a teacher I have my students' attention and I know how to do that, but with adults there are things that have to be different." For example, when working with colleagues, she noted that the coach must provide practical resources and strategies to help their students gain skills in reading and writing.

School culture

In this first year for the literacy coaches, Rose's school was led by a supportive acting principal. Because the coaches were themselves new and there was no permanent principal, it was difficult to figure out how to establish a schoolwide literacy goal and plan. "We [literacy coaches] were introduced as people working with teachers in each academy, but nothing more defined than that, nothing specific."

The coaches had hoped to provide professional development to all teachers in their academies, but, by the time they were hired, the calendar had been established and agendas for professional development already slotted. What did work, structurally, was having Tuesdays and Thursdays safeguarded for coaching work. Rose also noted the additional layer of support she gained by having other coaches working in the same school.

> Having multiple coaches on-site allowed us to participate in the network but also have site-based support. This allowed us to vent and connect with each other. We were a unique group within our school as well as within the literacy coach network in the district.

We knew we had to focus on literacy, but needed to figure out how. That open-endedness was good because we were able to tailor approaches.

The principal put money and support into multiple literacy coaches. This was important because it was a concrete demonstration of her willingness to put money, resources, and people into the school. Having more than one literacy coach gave teachers alternatives; there were many coaches to work with if a specific academy's coach was not an ideal fit.

Multiple roles and responsibilities

Rose continued to teach classes while she coached others. This was a requirement of all literacy coaches in HISD, and one with plenty of payoffs, according to Rose. "Teachers can see my approach, see that I teach well and reach my students." In addition, she used her classroom as a kind of laboratory for new instructional strategies and resources, and was able to recall recent events as fresh reference points when she was coaching.

She noted that many coaches have other responsibilities in addition to teaching and coaching. Rose's included ESL department chair, newcomer academy contact, and Title III lead teacher. The downside for these new coaches of teaching and having multiple roles,

Rose pointed out, was simply finding time to coach.

> Typically, my teaching schedule was 8 am to 4 pm Mondays and Wednesdays. We had all-day coach network meetings on Tuesdays. Thankfully, Thursdays were safeguarded for coaching. Fridays were split between coaching and teaching. It was so hard to juggle multiple duties.

It was not just the shortage of face-to-face coaching time that frustrated Rose. The coaches had limited time for planning and, as noted above, no opportunity to schedule whole-staff professional development offerings.

Classroom coaching

While Rose bemoaned the short amount of time she had for dedicated coaching this year, she was grateful for the flexibility granted by the fairly loose job description. She explained, "We knew we had to focus on literacy, but needed to figure out how. That open-endedness was good because we were able to tailor approaches according to our own styles and to the particular circumstances." She attributed some of her success to her personalized approach. It also helped that coaches were not teacher evaluators. "If I come as a colleague and not as administration, I have a better chance of getting in the door," she explained.

Her strategy was to start with a strong, respected, and very capable teacher. This entry point was as much to set the stage for Rose to experiment with strategies for professional dialogue as to set the example that coaching was about collaboration, not "I'm the expert and you need my help and I'm here to save you." Rose was able to offer this teacher many literacy tools – such as *dialectic*

journals,[2] *graphic organizers*, and *discussion strategies*. She demonstrated how to incorporate them more deeply into the substance of the lesson or offered them as strategies to be used in future lessons.

Rose believed it was important for everyone – coaches and teachers – to bring their own stories to the table to co-construct the work. Rose's first strong teacher was an AP biology teacher. Like Rose, she had a background in ESL. The teachers talked about using articles from scientific journals and figured out ways to pull important ideas and key points from the pieces. A dialectic journal, *T-chart*, and *pre-reading strategies* were ways to support this science teacher's desire to improve rigor and quality while making texts more accessible to students.

Rose learned that, as a coach, she had important things to offer, even to a biology teacher. She learned she could support teachers by bringing in outside materials to enrich the curriculum and talking with them about ways to improve teaching and learning. Working with this strong teacher helped Rose develop her approach to working with other teachers.

Still, it was frustrating for Rose that neither she nor her colleague coaches were able to get to all the teachers in their respective academies. Moreover, since the coaches defined their responsibilities slightly differently (using the flexibility granted to them by the district), it was difficult for the teaching staff to see whether every coach was doing his or her job. A schoolwide survey, sortable by academy, provided information that validated the coaches' work, but also shed light on underlying issues, such as "I'm sorry to admit, but I'm not sure what the literacy coach is supposed to be doing." The survey led to some changes in

how coaching resources will be used and how the coaching schedule will be set up in Year

? What are some indicators of success for literacy coaches in their first year? Think about *broad* impact, *deep* impact, and significant *gains* in student achievement.

Two, some of which are built into Rose's specific plans for Year Two, below.

Rose's plans for Year Two

- Space is still an issue. I want to be housed with my academy for my ESL duties, although the literacy duties are schoolwide.

- I will only teach two classes next year (instead of four), but we coaches have more of the school to reach. It is great, because I have more time, even though the numbers are bigger. I feel bad about leaving the classroom even more, but all my work seems to fit together.

- Through the coaching network, I have learned enough that options, strategies, and conversation starters are now in my head. I will need less time early in the year to define what I need to do. Still, the how is to be determined.

- I need to plan a variety of coaching opportunities, from small-group work (department meetings, for example) to general staff development in order to raise awareness about literacy issues.

- I plan to open dialogues with more teachers, building on the start I got last year. The core coaching work will still be one-on-one. Another approach is about pairing people together, calling on folks' expertise and spreading the wisdom around a little more.

- I'll work on clarifying the coach's role. There is a widespread notion that coaches work with "bad" or "new" or "struggling"

[2] Literacy terms in *italics* are explained in the glossary of Literacy Strategies and Terms on page 42.

teachers, when in reality lots of us are working with strong teachers, identifying those who are more likely to take the message of literacy to others in their departments or academies. This is how we build capacity.

- There are two literacy coaches at my school for Year Two. We must work together and collaborate to establish our plan of action for our school. We need to make the literacy action plan clear for every stakeholder on campus. We must involve both teachers and students, and we must ensure that everyone is aware of our focus on literacy as a means of reaching higher levels of student achievement and success. We still have the benefit of an in-house support person as well the strong bonds in the literacy coaching network. We still have a lot of work to do!

Example of Rose's work

The AP biology teacher and Rose talked about ways that the teacher uses supplementary materials from the real world in her classroom. She often finds scientific articles that she assigns as homework. The students may be asked to respond to these articles in a variety of ways, such as:

- Write a one-paragraph summary of the article and one paragraph explaining how you feel about this topic.
- Write the article as a scientific experiment: What is the problem? What is the hypothesis? What are the independent variables? What are the dependent variables? What are the controls? What is the result?
- Write a one-paragraph summary of the article and one paragraph telling how you would explain this article to someone else.

In one of their conversations, they discussed additional strategies for approaching these articles, such as using graphic organizers to organize the information from the article. They also discussed using dialectical journals to help students find key quotes in the articles and respond to them. Another strategy was *text annotation.* Rose modeled how to do text annotation and gave the teacher notes to follow while using these reading strategies (below).

Reading Strategy: Annotating a Text

EXPLANATION
Reading and understanding a text is a complex and active process; one way to help students slow down and develop their critical analysis skills is to teach them to annotate the text as they read.

There are numerous ways of annotating a text. Students may:

- highlight important facts as they read
- comment on the main idea and details
- show connections to the text (text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world)
- write their questions in the margins
- summarize each section
- label literary devices in the text
- identify cause and effect within a text
- highlight or circle difficult or new vocabulary words
- write Facts, Questions, and Responses (FQR) in the margin of the text.

In every case, the goal is for students to pay attention to what they are reading and interact with the text so that it will make sense for them.

Implementation: during or after reading.

PROCESS
- Students will read the selection.
- As the student reads or after one quick reading, the student will make annotations on the text itself.

NOTES
- Annotating a selection should be modeled numerous times in a whole class setting before students are expected to do this on their own.
- To add a listening and speaking component to this activity, students can share their annotations with a partner in a pair/share setting, if desired.
- Annotations can also be done in a collaborative setting with various students making comments on the same text.
- If the selection is in a textbook that can't be written in, Post-it notes can be used for annotations.

STEVE

"Do you want some help with your kids' writing?"

Steve had taught English at a large Houston high school for only three years before becoming its literacy coach. He had known since high school that he wanted to be an English teacher and had worked hard in the classroom, in extracurricular activities with students, and with his colleagues. He was proud of the fact that his students' lowest average passing rate on the state reading and writing tests was 87 percent. He created an award-winning newspaper program, a student book club, and a philosophy club at the school. He also led a team of teachers in creating a "literacy attack plan" which emphasized reading and writing across the curriculum.

When the position of literacy coach was posted, many colleagues assumed he would apply. He hesitated because he still loved to teach. "Truthfully, I wasn't going to take this position," Steve recalled. The principal persuaded him, arguing, "You're a great teacher, and you're the leader of the literacy team. Right now, you're making a difference for 100 students. The question is, can you make the same impact on a larger body of students?"

Steve thought it over and ultimately agreed to become a literacy coach. His aim was to tailor support for individual teachers in the classroom, as well as to provide resources and professional development for staff on issues ranging from test preparation to data analysis.

? How can a coach like Steve be confident that he/she is having "the same impact on a larger body of students"?

Two years prior to Steve's becoming the coach, the school recognized that there was no culture of reading on campus. Students weren't actively engaged in reading for any real purpose, and the school was not supporting any substantive reading or writing initiatives. No posters regarding books or reading were in the hallways. There were no poetry clubs, no book clubs, and no reading-for-pleasure programs.

Recognizing the problem, the school devised a literacy plan. The plan was to embed reading and writing into daily life at the school, thereby making reading and writing regular parts of school culture. As literacy coach, Steve was able to focus on this priority. His presence was a concrete sign that the school was taking literacy seriously.

When Steve was the literacy team leader, his role was to facilitate the team's action plan. When he became literacy coach, people's assumptions were that he would work full-time in that capacity, supporting teachers in classrooms, planning professional development, and providing resources.

However, all Houston coaches have multiple responsibilities beyond direct coaching. They must teach at least one class of students and attend intensive coach training and support sessions. Steve conceded,

> I might be a bit more removed from teaching than a lot of the literacy coaches, because my class is the school newspaper. But still, I make a point to get in classrooms to teach lessons on writing or reading as often as possible. This helps me to stay connected. Ideally, this position would have a coach in the office as little as possible. That would mean the coach is teaching, observing, and consulting constantly.

School culture

The school had a plan to build a "culture of reading" on campus, with general ideas about how to accomplish this goal. Steve recognized the importance of his position in implementing the plan. "The problem is that it's one thing to encourage a culture of reading, but in my coaching position, I'm not able to provide incentives or make mandates." He found himself saying to teachers, "It's not that you've got to do this, but there is a solid rationale with things that are simple to do."

In Steve's view, the programs that worked were the ones with visible impact that were easy on teachers, such as DEAR (Drop Everything And Read), Banned Book Week, the Shakespeare Festival, and National Poetry Month activities. The more complex programs, such as the schoolwide book talk (which attempted to work as a whole-school book club), were less successful. He explained, "We were asking the teachers to read a book that they might not want to read, promote it with students, get the students to read it, and then discuss the book. That is asking a lot!"

Still, Steve felt that he needed to have some successes – which often involved ease of implementation – in order to set the stage for the more complex, deeper-level work to come. One way Steve tried to push a "culture of reading" on campus was to develop a literacy Web page as part of the school's Web site. This page, developed with his colleagues on the literacy team, included documents, standards, and tools to help the school community know about the coach's work and why a focus on literacy was important. By making his own work public, Steve hoped to contribute to and model a focus on literacy.

? If you had to pick two or three leverage points in the literacy coaching repertoire that have the best promise for impacting instructional practice and, therefore, student achievement, what would they be?

Classroom coaching

Rather than impose himself on teachers and risk being viewed as heavy-handed or evaluative, Steve wanted to support teachers in their planning and instruction. He told his colleagues, "You come to me, tell me what you want, and I'll support you." He asked colleagues if they needed any help with reading or writing in their classrooms. While he had a "canned" strategy for writing that he could use in all subject areas, he modified it as needed. He was willing and able to model strategies with whole classes, in small groups, or in one-on-one interactions with students. "I wanted to help teachers, and I hoped that they would spread the word that I was actually helpful," he noted.

? What are some of the ways that coaches can "enter" their new roles? What are the most effective strategies?

He wondered if he would get any takers. Maybe only the most confident and skilled teachers would approach him, or only the first-year teachers, eager for help in everything from classroom management to getting supplies. As crucial as it was to begin gently and gain teachers' trust, Steve also recognized that he had to get inside classrooms, to "bolster rigor" that pushed students' abilities to read critically and write powerfully.

Soon, a few people started to come into his office. Steve recognized that these were the

teachers who were letting down their guard, willing to hear suggestions, and seeking support. These conversations sometimes led to invitations to observe classrooms and to model certain strategies. He inquired about how they wanted the visitations to go and worked with each teacher individually to construct a plan of action.

Steve became more comfortable in his role as resource and coach. In classroom observations, he affirmed activities and small teaching "moves" that already incorporated solid literacy practices before suggesting additional strategies. In one such example, Steve explained that a science teacher working on science fair projects needed assistance with teaching MLA (Modern Language Association) format and bibliography. "The lesson was natural to a person in my position," he states. "She asked for some assistance that I was more than happy to help with. Who would have done it if there were no coach?" By helping with simple requests, Steve hoped to gain trust and eventual access to more challenging issues of reading comprehension in science texts and academic rigor for all students.

Some of the assistance he provided required the skills of a diplomat and translator.

> One teacher had some difficulty with her teaching, which came to the fore after an administrator did an observation. The administrator suggested she find other ways to vary her teaching because the students weren't getting it. The teacher, on the other hand, suggested that the students were the problem – that they just weren't willing to learn. She came to me and asked me to observe a class. She was upset because she felt the administrator didn't understand.
>
> I was very careful and made sure she knew I would give her an objective perspective,

based on what I saw her do and what I saw the students do. I came in, saw the lesson, and described what I saw in a post-observation meeting. I think I was able to convey the same ideas as the administrator – but in a way that she could hear.

> I was not evaluative or authoritative; my aim was to give constructive ideas to modify her classroom based on best practices. I gave no recommendations at first, just some simple observations of what I saw. When she began asking questions about the notes I made, I was able to redirect her into new learning. She saw that her practices needed to change to best make the experience work for her and the students.

As Steve thought back on the first year, he recounted some significant successes.

> I feel the coaching year at the high school was successful. By the end of the year, I had observed, consulted, and co-taught with over half of the faculty. I provided monthly whole-school professional development in literacy. I feel that I have in fact affected more than just 100 students: I've affected a whole school of students and teachers.

Given that people are willing to visit each other's classrooms, now I need to figure out how to structure those visits so they are productive. What should teachers look for? What can they take back to their own classrooms?

On the whole, while entry into classrooms was successful, Steve taught more classroom lessons than he performed classroom observations. Perhaps it is part of the necessary process of gaining trust and credibility that a coach start with just a few classrooms, but next year he plans to increase the number of classroom observations he makes.

Data analysis

Steve studied the achievement data of the school's students. He noted that, for the most part, students passed many sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) but failed the essay and, therefore, failed the entire test. He diagnosed the problem: students were not getting enough practice in the writing process in their classes. His goal was to find ways to embed the writing process in all classrooms, not just the ones that proactively sought his help. His strategy? He helped the staff study the TAKS data, just as he had done.

The result was gratifying.

> The data helped teachers see that we needed to tackle the open-ended, big essay. They were willing to try some new stuff around writing. The teachers tried some things and came back with questions and requests for more support. As a literacy coach, I was able to suggest some ways to address the various issues. It made me feel like it was more than just me being here: I was actually being used as a real resource.

2003–2004 TAKS data showed overall improvement on all writing portions of the TAKS test for the school. While the short answer questions only showed slight increased improvement, the longer essay portion showed widespread improvement. For example, in two years, eleventh-graders' English/Language Arts passing scores doubled from 31 percent to 62 percent.

? What are various ways for coaches to use data to guide student, classroom, and schoolwide improvement?

Steve also used the A+ Challenge peer review process to examine various aspects of coaching.

> The peer review made me collect the stuff that had been going on in my work: handouts, flyers, meeting minutes, teacher conferences, student work, just tons of things that had been produced from my work for the year. I was forced to look at the mass of work and assemble it together.

> If I look at it now, the missing piece might be the number of classroom observations, something I did not do as much as I would have liked. This is at the top of my list for next year. If a goal of the literacy coach is to make sure reading and writing are happening in every class every day, I need to

see it happening. The peer review process helped me set regular classroom observations as a goal for next year.

Steve's plans for Year Two

Steve has clear plans for his second year of coaching.

- Early in the year, I'll present to the faculty what I can and will provide, explicitly describing my duties and the resources available to the school.
- I'll do more classroom observations, as many as I can without being thrown out of classrooms.
- Teachers are doing some truly exceptional projects. Next year, I want to share those with the school, as examples of ways to engage students while building their literacy skills.
- Given that people are willing to visit each other's classrooms, now I need to figure out how to structure those visits so they are productive. What should teachers look for? What can they take back to their own classrooms?
- I will revamp the literacy Web page in order to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate, while at the same time expanding its resources.
- I really miss teaching. I have the explicit goal to be in classrooms teaching, observing, or modeling every single day.

Example of Steve's work

I was asked by two American history teachers, "What do you know about the Puritan society? About American literature at the time and about *The Scarlet Letter*?" I needed more information and asked a series of probing questions. Together, we arrived at what they needed for their class lesson: they wanted students to understand something about Puritan society, such as its strict religious life. I suggested that students read Jonathan Edwards's sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

The teachers were unfamiliar with the text and uncertain about how to teach it. I offered, "Why don't I come in and recite it as a sermon! I'll dress the part, holler and shout as the evangelical Puritan minister, and then you can discuss the experience afterwards with the students?" The teachers loved the idea. We commenced with the lesson, and I followed up with a post-conference. It was a great experience that reveals the many-faceted ways a literacy coach assists teachers.

JESSICA
"Rocky start"

Jessica had a vision of what her role as a coach could be – and she knew from the outset that she faced considerable challenges getting necessary supports from the school administration at her high school. The school had undergone dramatic restructuring in the previous four years. During that time, the school's population changed from 3000 students of mixed ethnic and economic backgrounds to one of almost exclusively immigrant and low-income students. The school model had shifted from one large, comprehensive school to ten small schools, each with its own theme. With an emphasis on maintaining separate, fairly autonomous learning communities, a school-wide approach to any initiative became very difficult.

Jessica's plan was to gain consensus about what each small learning community needed in the area of literacy instruction, then have conferences with teachers to plan, provide resources and suggestions, and observe classrooms, as well as model some instructional strategies. "I had enough trust with enough people to feel like there would be traction," she reflected, looking back on the first year. She had taught for three years as a special education English teacher and case manager. Her role as case manager had given her occasion to share her professional knowledge with colleagues and had given her credibility to take on the coach position.

Like many Houston literacy coaches, Jessica wore multiple hats. In addition to being a literacy coach for the school, she was the small learning community (SLC) coordinator for one of the communities, and she also worked on enrichment activities with students. These multiple responsibilities got in the way of the coaching work. Jessica commented, "Manag-

ing a small learning community and/or a community of teachers takes a lot of work." She often felt that she was groping, "making up the coaching work as I went along," struggling to "balance it with the other jobs I was responsible for."

School culture

The school was awash in multiple programs and initiatives, and the administration made no claim about focusing on literacy. There was a more generalized focus on active engagement and "quality teaching and learning." To improve instruction, the district administration's strategy was to build capacity with SLC administrators rather than working directly with teachers. In this school, the initiatives sometimes tugged and strained against one another. SLCs were, fundamentally, self-contained communities with their own priorities; the literacy coaching initiative was intended to be a schoolwide effort.

> **?** For coaching to be effective, what commitments seem most important, or even non-negotiable, on the part of coaches, teachers, principals, and district leaders?

Contradictory expectations further complicated the tangle. The school administration seemed to anticipate a concrete, structured literacy program, unlike the district's choice of an open and flexible literacy coaching design. The district's model was not an off-the-shelf coaching program, but a "build it from a light sketch" kind of design. From Jessica's perspective, "The administration at this high school was not prepared for or invested in the position of literacy coach" as it was defined.

Seeking a solution to the seeming impasse, the administration agreed to field-test the first

Things First literacy program put out by the Institute for Research and Reform in Education. The program consists of thematic units with a *constructivist approach* to reading comprehension. Teachers model critical reading skills, and students practice those skills. The curriculum includes strategies to aid reading comprehension such as graphic organizers, *read alouds/think alouds*, and *cloze devices*. While the curriculum has a great deal of structure, there is latitude for teachers to contribute their professional judgment.

Jessica was excited about the component of the program that encouraged peer coaching and collaboration. Her role in the following year would be to oversee program implementation and to provide support to teachers. She was optimistic about the coming year, as the principal has stated that there will be a focus on literacy.

Classroom coaching

Jessica made coaching inroads with teachers she knew well. She met with them at the only commonly available time – between 7:15 and 8:15 in the morning or after school. While she enjoyed the collaborative work, she and the teachers found it difficult to sustain, both because of time and because of the uncertain priority placed on this work at the school. Jessica asked, in her reflections, "How does this work align with the other pieces we are working on? Do we agree on what student engagement means and how we, as teachers, are responsible for it?"

Lacking a schoolwide priority and administrative stamp of approval for the literacy work, Jessica felt stymied in her efforts. She asserted,

? Literacy coaching requires classroom observation and time to talk. What structures can facilitate these activities?

"I had some isolated examples of working with individual teachers and groups of teachers, but not in sustained ways that I feel had lasting impact."

Professional development

Jessica conducted several kinds of professional development at her school. She led a series of workshops on literacy instruction – for example, how to tap into students' prior knowledge, how to use graphic organizers. What was the impact? "I sort of tickled people a little." She made short presentations on specific instructional strategies that supported literacy, and she followed up by observing teachers incorporating those strategies in classrooms. English teachers raised the issue of student plagiarism. In response, Jessica worked with the teachers to create a specific set of instructions and expectations to avoid plagiarism.

? What kinds of professional development did literacy coaches create in their first year in Houston? How well do these offerings square with the research on best practices for staff development?

Jessica's plans for Year Two:

- From the new literacy curriculum, I'll identify pieces that can be easily generalized to other content areas. If it is presented in the language of those disciplines, it will feel more like teaching the discipline than teaching literacy in that discipline.
- I want to coach others by modeling rigorous, quality literacy instruction with my students.
- I want to support teachers by asking what they need and figuring out how to get it to them.
- I intend to visit more classrooms and make more observations, co-teaching when possible.

- I will work on building my own knowledge around literacy. I'm curious about research on grouping and the impact co-teaching can have on literacy achievement.
- One of the pieces involves how to look at and identify quality teaching and learning. Having my own classes will help in my particular setting because it will allow me to invite other teachers into a sort of laboratory setting.

Example of Jessica's work

Jessica worked with a science teacher on ways for students to gain meaning from the science textbook. In the following example, she modeled ways of *scaffolding* through vocabulary development and pre-reading strategies.

The students were asked to read four paragraphs about global warming. Before they read, however, the teacher led a brief discussion about nine vocabulary words and asked them to consider seven questions. Once the students had finished reading the text, they could clarify their initial understandings. "Students often know a lot more about topics than we give them credit for," she explained. "This gives them a chance to share their knowledge and predictions – and for you to realize how much prior knowledge they have, which you can build on."

The following specific methods were used to make the text more accessible:
- Bolded words were defined before the reading.
- Key terms were underlined and students were alerted to them.
- Students were given the purpose for reading (understanding the issue of global warming) to keep them focused throughout the reading.
- Students first guessed at answers, using their background knowledge and hypotheses.
- During reading, they corrected answers and filled in missing information.
- After students read, they shared answers with one another and then as a whole group.

Vocabulary before reading:
- insulator: that which keeps _____ from escaping
- abundant: a lot of, much, many
- escalate: to _____ in size
- indiscriminate: without any thought or _____
- range: _____ where an animal may live
- parasite: any living thing that must live _____ another animal
- ice caps: the ice existing at the _____ of the earth
- conclusive: certain
- dissenters: people who do not _____

Scaffolding example: Making text more accessible

Questions	Your Best Guess	Answer from Reading
1. What is global warming?		
2. What human activities might cause global warming?		
3. What are greenhouse gases?		
4. In nature, how are greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere?		
5. What are two ways humans contribute to the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere?		
6. What might happen if it became warmer in all the regions of the world?		
7. What are some of the disagreements scientists have about the causes and effects of global warming?	Make 2 predictions:	4 possible negative effects:

"Coaches learning how to coach"

Their voices fill the room as coaches from across the district trickle into the weekly coaching network meeting. (In 2003–2004, coaches attended day-long literacy coach network meetings each week. In 2004–2005, these meetings were reduced to half a day to give coaches more time in the schools – and in recognition of the fact that the vast majority of the coaches were returning, so they had already received a great deal of training.) The mix of laughter, papers shuffling, and conversation about meetings, students, and experiences create a cacophony of sound as the numbers grow to between twenty and twenty-five coaches. As the clock approaches 8:00 am, the coaches take their seats around tables arranged in a horseshoe.

Tim Martindell, a staff member at the local education partner organization, the Houston A+ Challenge, and coordinator of the coaching network, welcomes the group and typically begins each session with "connections," an opportunity for coaches to reflect on their work from the past week or on issues they are currently facing. This time for open reflection emphasizes the importance of listening and offers opportunities for coaches to articulate their concerns succinctly, clearly, and diplomatically.

These strategies are typical of the coaching network, for one goal of the group is to engage in the behaviors that they hope to foster in their sites with groups of teachers. In that vein, the weekly network meetings also usually involve coach presentations of literacy strategies they are using in their work with teachers and discussion about the implications of their work as coaches. In Martindell's words, "It is easier to own the work if you are doing the work."

In one recent network meeting, a lively debate erupted around the nature, purpose, and methods for documenting the work of coaches. Coaches' questions ranged from "So, what counts as documentation of what I'm doing, why I'm doing it, or the change my actions created?" to "How am I supposed to find the time to document on top of teaching and coaching?" This range suggested how the network has evolved into a professional learning community where coaches share, reflect upon, and question their work.

Many coaches credited the district coaching network with helping all the new high school coaches begin to "figure out how to approach the administration, teachers, and how to make literacy a focus schoolwide." With all-day meetings once a week, the network afforded the time and opportunity for coaches to engage in their own professional learning. They had to figure out (and still are figuring out) how to create a literacy-rich environment throughout an entire school that supported a unified focus on literacy. This raised an ongoing issue for the network, which involved balancing an emphasis on relationship building and group processes with the pressing urgency of infusing high school classrooms with rigorous teaching and learning strategies around literacy in every content area.

? What are the major benefits of a coaching network, according to coaches? What needs do you predict the coaches will have in coming years?

How do I choose between the two? There is a meeting or a task to be completed on campus, and the coaching network is discussing important facilitation strategies like cfg [Critical Friends Group] protocols at the same time. . . . I might have chosen wrong sometimes, but it's tough to choose.

While the coaching network offered considerable support, coaches sometimes found conflicts between on-campus obligations and network meetings. As one coach lamented,

> How do I choose between the two? There is a meeting or a task to be completed on campus, and the coaching network is discussing important facilitation strategies like cfg [Critical Friends Group] protocols at the same time. . . . I might have chosen wrong sometimes, but it's tough to choose.

The issue of time away from campus led to fresh thinking about how to construct this professional development time for the coaches. In 2004–2005, coaches' professional learning will include small groups of coaches visiting and observing other coaches on-site. These visits are designed to keep coaching work (including professional development) resident in schools and to model for administration and teachers the kinds of work coaches hope to engage in with school staff.

The first year of the coaching network focused on building a cadre of coaches who can work with and learn from each other. A recent emphasis on documenting coaches' work has had an additional purpose beyond encouraging reflective practice; it also helps "make the case" for coaching and its effects to principals, teaches, and central office.

Coaches have built their knowledge and practice through the network during the first year, and their comments reflect the diversity of the work in their weekly meetings. "I know a lot about literacy, but the chance to practice facilitating groups before doing it in my school has eased my mind," said one young coach. Another said,

> I sort of view myself as an ambassador for literacy, but I can only be that if I can convince teachers at my school that I know what I'm talking about. The network has

helped me think about how to interface with people at my school and how to use our district data as part of my work. That's stuff I would have had a hard time doing without a forum with other coaches.

The coaching network focused on instructional and learning strategies for helping teachers. But more recent conversations also led participants to reflect more on their roles as change agents. They began to construct methods for documenting their work, such as "collaborative logs" that capture conversations between each coach and teacher on multiform, carbonless paper, recording big ideas and next steps for both the teacher and coach. They are also exploring ways of writing mini-cases.

Recent meetings have raised important questions about their work within the network, but also about how the work of literacy coaching is situated more broadly in the work of high school improvement efforts in Houston. For example, how does the work of literacy coaches and school-improvement facilitators fit together? One coach commented,

> Our work is a work in-progress. We sort of see ourselves as pioneers, at least in this district. We might not have it right yet, but we are willing to figure it out together, and that's why the network is key. Figuring it out together is a lot easier than doing it alone.

Some of the questions from coaches about the coaching network were:

- How do we spend our time within the network? Is there enough rigor and focus?
- Is there a sufficient focus on high school literacy, as opposed to teaching reading/early literacy?
- What is the nature of the dialogue and debate about approaches?
- How do we handle teachers (or coaches) who might be using outdated practices?

- How do we best use our learning about literacy strategies to help teachers? Modeling in the classroom? Planning a lesson together? Debriefing a lesson? Partnering in the classroom?
- We know we need to be held accountable for our work. What work should we document? How should we document it? Some of us keep logs, others reflection journals, others use data and surveys. How might the documentation work be made systematic?
- How do we all most effectively interface with school, district, and central office administration?
- How can we use our positions as instructional coaches as leverage for being change agents?

Some of the questions from coaches about Houston's high school reform in general were:

- Elements of reform efforts sometimes appear disjointed. How can we align the principals' network and the school-improvement facilitators' network with the literacy coaching network?
- What about our data? What kinds of data/evidence should we concentrate on using and documenting?
- How is our work, ideally, supposed to fit in with small learning communities and personalization?
- What do we need to know about the district's reform efforts in order to best live up to our expectations and communicate a common message to the teachers with whom we work?

Coaching in Boston
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In 1995, the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) partnered with the Boston Public Schools (BPS) to select, train, and support part-time coaches to focus on literacy and the close examination of student work. By 2003, almost eighty coaches were working in the schools from kindergarten through grade 12. The advent of literacy coaches in every high school began in 2001 when BPS, in partnership with BPE, Jobs for the Future, and the Boston Private Industry Council, received a grant through the SNS initiative.

The aim of the coaching endeavor has always been to improve student achievement by supporting classroom instruction. Boston's superintendent, Thomas Payzant, views school instructional coaches as a key strategy in helping the district reach its ambitious goal to "be the first urban school district in the nation to have all students achieve proficiency" in math, reading, and writing.

Instructional coaches in BPS have a very well-defined role. Typically, coaches support two schools in collegial conversation about classroom practice; having more than one school context to consider gives them a perspective on their work, even though it can be difficult to juggle the demands and schedules of two sites. Coaches help teachers help each other through a professional development design called Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) – which is now the primary method of professional development districtwide.

? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the way the coach's role is defined in Houston and in Boston?

CCL components include:
- an eight-week cycle of inquiry and study;
- regular demonstrations of teaching strategies in classrooms;
- follow-up between the literacy coach and the individual teacher.

CCL almost always attends to some aspect of "Workshop," an approach to structuring instruction that is now the primary method of instruction districtwide. This structure is characterized by use of mini-lessons, independent work, and sharing.
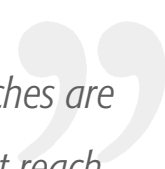
The districtwide shared expectations for CCL and Workshop help clarify the coaches' role. CCL components include professional reading, pre-conferences at a classroom, demonstration lessons, and debriefings. Coaches are responsible for facilitating up to five CCL eight-week professional development cycles at one time, which involves facilitating inquiry groups, setting up lab sites and model lessons, facilitating debrief sessions, and following up with participating teachers. In addition, they attend their own all-day coach network meetings twice each month. First-year coaches attend a three-day orientation institute in August.

In addition to literacy coaches, there are other instructional coaches in Boston. Language acquisition coaches, math coaches, and a few history and science coaches also support teachers in the classroom, and until 2003 there were also "school change" or "capacity" coaches.

Although Boston has had this coaching model for many years, challenges remain. For example, language arts teachers are expected to use the Workshop format, but, according to one coach, a school with five years of instructional coaching is only seeing 30 percent of teachers implementing these formats. Also, principals (known in Boston as headmasters) vary in the support they offer to their coaches. While headmasters are increasingly savvy about selecting coaches that are a good fit for their schools, some still struggle to find the time to meet with their coaches regularly.

On the other hand, the district boasts steady gains in student achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment of Skills (MCAS) from 1998 to 2004, suggesting that some instructional improvements have taken hold.

The three portraits that follow highlight the work of coaches in the ninth year (2003–2004) of Boston's coaching program.

In Boston, school instructional coaches are a key strategy in helping the district reach its ambitious goals.

CHLOE

"The importance of administrative support"

In her first year of coaching, Chloe worked with two very different kinds of high schools: a small high school of 400 students in South Boston, and a school almost three times the size with a new principal in another part of the city. She had taught English at the college level for five years, as well as another five years teaching high school English. She knew the basic literacy needs of Boston students well and felt that coaching would give her a way to provide a coordinated system of support to hundreds of students and their teachers.

? With responsibility for very different schools, in what ways might a coach approach the work differently at each site? How should a coach think about building capacity at a large school vs. a small school?

School culture

At her large school, Chloe facilitated many CCL cycles. In light of the size of the school and the literacy needs of the students, she felt that she was being underutilized. She told the school administration she wanted to be busier and more integrated in the work of the school, to no avail. Perhaps the administration was not particularly receptive to coaching, or perhaps they viewed her as an "outsider" – she wasn't sure.

She noted that when Carnegie Corporation officers made a recent site visit, some staff commented that they "don't really like outsiders coming in and telling us what to do." She figured this might apply to her as well. Since she was only able to meet with the

administration a few times during the entire year, she often felt out of touch with the daily operations of the school. "If administration views you as an outsider, the faculty will view you as an outsider," she postulated.

? While principals' support is widely acknowledged in these portraits to be crucial to coaching's success, there is almost no mention of the principals' own professional development here. What are the distinctions between the principal as "instructional leader" and the literacy coach as "instructional support"? How might they best work together?

By contrast, at her small high school, Chloe met with the principal at least once a week and received support in many forms. She felt that these weekly meetings helped her get solidly grounded in the work of the school and gave her credibility with the staff. Moreover, the administration of the small school provided opportunities for work to get done. For example, the administration provided coverage for classes and found funds for teachers to work after school. Chloe felt she was in a much better position to be effective because the administration believed in and supported her work, and, as a consequence, the staff trusted her more as well. For her part, Chloe helped write the school's self-assessment, developed formative assessments for the school, and helped with the tracking of student-achievement data. She also coordinated much of the professional development for the English teachers.

Classroom coaching

At the small school, Chloe facilitated CCL cycles for history, science, and Sheltered English Immersion teachers as well as for English teachers. The math teachers, too, initially told Chloe they wanted to do a cycle with her. But in the spring, several of them voiced concerns about the timing. "We don't want to leave our classrooms now," they said. They gave good reasons: the district's "pacing guide" had them on a strict timeline, and they also wanted to prepare their students for upcoming state tests. They still wanted to do the right thing for kids, though. Chloe assured the teachers that she understood their hesitancy. "Would you be willing to meet after school, if we had funds to pay you for that time?" she asked. They were willing, and the principal found the funds.

? What would you do if you were in this coach's shoes?

Chloe decided to work with the math coach on this CCL, since the math coach was not familiar with literacy strategies and she herself was not comfortable with math content. She believed that her own apprehension about mathematics helped the teachers see content from a student's point of view. Once, when they were doing a "think-aloud," she gave the math coach a problem he had never done before. He started talking aloud about his approach to solving the problem, then fell silent. "No, don't stop talking," the teachers said. "Tell us what you're thinking!"

Chloe and the math teachers profited from studying test results. Students who had less difficulty with "pure" math problems frequently had difficulty with word problems. Clearly, students were struggling to understand these problems and to explain their own thinking in writing. Chloe shared reading and writing strategies with these math teachers and was thrilled at the teachers' receptivity. She noted how she had to put aside her own assumptions; she assumed that math teachers would not be enthusiastic about studying literacy. To her delight, she found that this was not at all the case: the teachers clearly cared about helping their students, worked very hard, and incorporated new strategies into their teaching.

Chloe also had stories to share about work in science and English classes. Science teachers discovered that students could make connections between readings and lab work if they clarified the purpose of reading beforehand and slowed down to establish the students' prior knowledge of each topic. And in her work with a young English teacher, Chloe was able to coach the concept of continuity throughout the entire year. For example, she helped the teacher develop ongoing book clubs and use reading strategies that connected one reading to another and deepened students' thinking. Chloe counted it as a real coaching success when she observed students engaged in speaking about the text and putting forward their ideas – with the teacher at the side of the room, not at the center.

Chloe observed that, across the board, teachers were desperate to be treated as professionals. It was very important to her in her work to honor teachers, to inquire with them where they thought their efforts were not reaching students, and to work with them to address these challenges.

Politics and teachers' unions

In Chloe's view, one thing that makes coaching successful is that coaches are part of the teachers' union. Coaches really are peers, and they defer all questions of policy and policy mandates to the principal. Chloe was able to

take a clear stand on issues and to show solidarity with teachers by joining with them – at one point, even to the extent of participating in picket lines.

On the other hand, the coach's position is tricky to navigate because he or she needs to maintain an ongoing relationship with the principal. Chloe sees herself as a teacher advocate in that she is concerned with teacher

learning and teacher growth. She is emphatically not a teacher evaluator or a policymaker.

? What are the possible ramifications of this coach's actions?

Example from Chloe's coaching

Chloe works with various teachers on lessons that focus on literacy. In one conference, the teacher sought suggestions for ways to help students see that there can be more than one "correct" interpretation of a text. If an interpretation can be substantiated with text, than an interpretation can hold.

Chloe suggested working with the Roethke poem "My Papa's Waltz" because it is short enough and accessible enough to make the point in one class. She and the teacher discussed how students tend to interpret the poem in one of two ways: reading the poem as a nostalgic reverie about childhood and reading the poem as a lens on childhood abuse. Both readings can work, and the conversation that ensues is invariably lively.

Chloe shared the following protocol, adapted from *The Literature Workshop*, by Sheridan Blau (2003).

On Your Own:

Read the poem "My Papa's Waltz." Read it a few times to be sure that you've read it fairly well. When you are finished, please do the following:

1. Underline any words or lines you find confusing. Next to the line, write out your questions.
2. Choose what you think is the most important line in the poem. Write out that line and write a paragraph about why you think it is the most important line in the poem.

In Groups of Four:

1. Share any problems you had with specific words or lines. See if you can clear them up.
2. Read your paragraph about the line you picked.
3. When everyone has read, talk about the similarities and differences in your reading.

My Papa's Waltz

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

—Theodore Roethke

P E T E R

"English language learners and literacy coaching"

Prior to becoming a language acquisition coach, Peter had been in the Peace Corps, taught high school, and developed a deep interest in educational access for English language learners (ELLs). He researched various kinds of interventions and programs and advocated for ELLs. Originally from Iowa, Peter entered the Peace Corps after college and taught English in Cape Verde. He came to Boston largely because it has a sizeable Cape Verdean community. He commented, "Once you leave Iowa for a place like Cape Verde, there's no going back!"

Peter taught English as a Second Language (ESL) for four years and was a bilingual history teacher for two years. He studied the implementation of "Question 2" – the ballot initiative passed by Massachusetts voters, requiring public schools to educate English learners through a "sheltered English immersion" program normally not lasting more than one year. He had also studied what happens when districts lack personnel with expertise to test children in their native language – for example Haitian and Cape Verdean – finding them sorely underserved as a result. In 2003–2004, in addition to being a coach, he was a doctoral student in an urban school leadership program.

? Who should become a coach? Why is it so important for districts to build capacity among their coaches to support teachers of English language learners and special needs students?

School context

Like the other coaches in Boston, Peter had responsibilities for two schools. One school understood that Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) was to become a schoolwide practice; the staff there gave coaches high status. As a result, Peter was able to accomplish things easily there simply by asking. For example, when he said they needed time to meet together, time was immediately scheduled. This eased his work and demonstrated to the teachers that administrators valued his work. Teachers sometimes remarked in disbelief, "How did you get us that time together?"

The other school seemed to view CCL as the sole responsibility of the literacy coach and gave very little administrative support to Peter, as the LAC. Peter talked with the director of professional development to underscore the importance of having someone follow up with the coaches' work. For example, could classroom observations incorporate some of the agreed-upon literacy and ELL strategies? However, the work remained strictly within the coaches' purview at that school. The two schools embraced Peter's work very differently and the impact varied accordingly.

? For coaching to be effective, what commitments seem most important or non-negotiable on the part of coaches, teachers, principals, and district leadership?

Within the schools, Peter gradually realized the balancing act required of teachers working with multiple coaches. He was there to support teachers' use of literacy strategies, to help them teach ELLs. But a math teacher would simultaneously receive advice from the math coach, and would be hearing messages from

the district's guides and administration's messages about instructional priorities as well. As Peter put it, "Math teachers listen to math coaches, listen to me, have the [district's] pacing guide that ensures they have covered the content on the state test, and then have to discover a place on their own." The work is complex but "worth it," in Peter's view.

? What are some strategies for coordinating people, resources, and supports for teachers?

The Language Acquisition Coach

Unlike literacy coaches, who often stay with their schools for years, the Language Acquisition Coaches (LACs) only stay in a given school for one year. Therefore, they work not only to efficiently provide new skills and knowledge to staff in their schools, but they also try to identify individuals who can continue to do some professional development and advocacy for ELLs after their coaching year is over.

They may run CCL cycles, and they also do action research, adapting to what is already being done for ELLs and the professional development work underway. As Eileen de los Reyes, the director of the LACs, put it, "We're not putting in an additional layer. We're working within Workshop." She admits that it is difficult, with just seventeen LACs for the entire district, to provide enough support to teachers and to do follow-up for schools that no longer have an LAC. As another strategy to leverage the knowledge and skills of LACs, de los Reyes has worked with the literacy coach coordinator, Cathleen Kral, to bring the two groups of coaches together for cross-training.

? One person can only do so much. What can coaches do to build capacity in their schools? What structures exist in schools that could help coaches?

Perhaps the best scenario occurs when the coaches at a given school work together as a team, recognizing that they each have a body of knowledge to share. When principals recognize the power of this teamwork, the coaching model works extremely well, and the capacity-building work of the LAC is enhanced.

The LACs recognize that Question 2 put pressure on classroom teachers and whole schools to figure out how to address the needs of ELLs. According to de los Reyes, principals have given LACs and ELLs a lot of support by creating language-specific sites. These schools have a large cluster of ELLs, and the district is then able to focus second-language resources (teachers, materials, and ancillary supports, including LACs) on these few schools, rather than having a patchwork of services in each school across the city. The district has also worked hard to create clear guidelines for when a student should transition from a Sheltered English Immersion classroom to the regular classroom.

Coaching in the classroom

Peter's typical day included meeting with a teacher for one block (80 minutes), doing a class observation for one block, and having a meeting with an administrator for a third block. While he was frustrated at the lack of time to work with more than one or two teachers each day, he felt a sense of accomplishment in one of his schools. "I was in at least a hundred class sessions [classrooms] over the course of the year," he stated proudly. Where Peter felt most successful was in mak-

ing the teachers aware of language in the classroom – having the teachers think about language in their lesson planning and lesson delivery, for instance, by emphasizing key vocabulary words and being aware of their own language pacing and use of jargon.

Most of the teachers he worked with were formerly bilingual teachers. After Question 2 passed on the ballot initiative, Boston Public Schools had decided that bilingual education teachers could be Sheltered English Immersion teachers. But it was a significant challenge for teachers to teach content in English, due to their own dependence on using students' native languages. At one of his schools, Peter observed up to 75 percent native language use in some classrooms, probably because the school had a well-established culture of working with ELLs and had a strong language center.

He worked with one history teacher in an ESL classroom who said quite candidly, "The students have no idea what is going on. My teaching is not working." Peter asked, "What should we do?" The teacher replied, "The problem is that there are many concepts the students should know. There is no way we are going to get through them all." Peter helped the teacher select topics, formulate key vocabulary and concepts, figure out instructional strategies, and gather resources outside of the textbook. In just one month, Peter saw noticeable changes in the teacher's instruction. "The teacher even said, 'Oh, now I get it. Language, language, language.'"

Peter noted, however, that the teacher was not able to find enough time to plan lessons. "Although he understood what he needed to do – identify vocabulary and have the students write paragraphs – the fact that he did not devote much time to his planning really limited his ability to implement what he was learning." Peter lamented that this was a problem shared by a number of teachers:

"They get it, understand the importance of language, but the amount of planning involved . . . limits the extent to which they put it into practice."

Peter also related the story of working with a math teacher. Almost immediately, the question with this teacher became how to put language into lessons while keeping to the district's "pacing guide." Peter modeled in this teacher's classroom a half dozen times, showing the teacher how to incorporate vocabulary and writing into math lessons without slowing down the pace.

> I was never able to get him to teach math the way I did. . . . But he did change his practice, asking students to use complete sentences in their responses and writing out the steps for solving a problem. He asked them to use graphic organizers in their writing. Overall, his teaching improved with respect to supporting the learning of ELLs, as evidenced by the students' comprehension in classwork assignments.

Professional development

"The CCL model is very effective, even though it takes a bit of time and organization to pull off," Peter said. "Teachers come up with a focus and then I help to frame it within the context of ELL." The strongest part of the CCL, according to Peter's teachers, was visiting other classrooms and seeing how teachers did certain things. The last CCL of the year focused on Sheltered English Immersion teachers, who were very interested in the use of native language in the classroom.

SUSAN

"Supporting coaches"

Susan taught English for thirty years at the middle and high school levels and was an English department head for many years, as well, before becoming a literacy coach in 2000. Her work during 2003–2004 was to be a literacy coach at two high schools and also to support the other high school literacy coaches at both schools by developing some shared expectations for their work, procuring materials they needed for their work, and planning next steps in the coaches' work. She commented, "It seems that each year expectations increase for what coaches should be doing!" But she loves her work. Her key questions remained: "How do I help teachers become more reflective about their practice?" and "How do I help teachers see strategies in Workshop as doable?"

Classroom coaching

Susan had many successes. She found that teachers who were used to asking questions and reflecting on their practice were very open to the Workshop format and the CCL cycle of inquiry. "These teachers say, 'I never realized that the students could do this!'" she exclaimed. One teacher reported seeing students connect questions to larger concepts for the first time in her career.

Who is doing the thinking in the classroom?

Susan admitted she faced several challenges as well. The two most reluctant teachers she encountered assigned reading and tested students on their recall of information. Even though their students continued to show significant areas of need in reading comprehension, the teachers claimed their instructional practices "worked." While they may have appreciated what Susan presented as the literacy coach, they did not change their practice.

Susan tried to redefine for them what reading is really about. "It is beyond getting facts and information: it is about understanding, analyzing, and evaluating complex ideas," she explained. They nodded, but their classroom practice remains the same. Similarly, while some teachers focus on writing as a matter of form and structure, Susan stresses that writing is a way to probe and develop complex ideas.

? What would you do if you were in this coach's shoes?

Professional development for teachers

When Susan first came to one of her schools, she met with teachers in small groups. Most of them were receptive to the literacy work. She was able to facilitate many CCL cycles, and the teachers opened up their classrooms for collegial observation. Susan was a bit surprised that some teachers, rather than resisting being observed, resisted making observations in other classes: they did not want to leave their classrooms!

Susan planned "inquiry" sessions, designed to help teachers get students to think more critically when they read. They analyzed student-achievement data and found that their stu-

dents struggled to make inferences in their reading. She worked with the teachers to help them engage students more deeply with the text – to search for the nuances and complexity. She taught them strategies of think-alouds and marking up texts. They were challenged to consider, "Who is doing the thinking in the classroom?"

They began to realize that students can do more if they are given the opportunity. In Susan's view, CCL has proven itself to be a "wonderful structure." Even though it is difficult to schedule common time with high school teachers, the work that goes on in the professional development sessions is deep and productive. She notes about doing demonstration classes, "if it's planned from the group, it is very successful."

Professional development for coaches

Susan has listened to and thought about the challenges to improving literacy instruction at the high school level. She articulated the problems that are useful for coaches to discuss as follows:

- High school students are masterful at avoiding work by getting teachers to do the thinking. At the same time, some teachers are masterful at creating a system that keeps students "domesticated" – calm and well behaved in the classroom.

  But the Workshop model works because it insists that both teachers and students think. Students can be won over by the freedom they feel in expressing their ideas, and teachers win because management issues are not such a problem once students are engaged in thinking.

- Some teachers fervently believe that students need particular skill sets before they can read texts in a sophisticated way. For example, some believe students need a lot of vocabulary, or that they need to read short

Even though their students continued to show significant areas of need in reading comprehension, the teachers claimed their instructional practices "worked."

selections such as short stories rather than novels. Students may readily adapt to these expectations and resist being pushed to think more deeply.

- Another challenge is gaining the support of administration to follow through, for instance, asking teachers for evidence that students are marking up their texts or keeping interactive journals. Susan acknowledges that for literacy instruction to succeed, everyone in the building has to be on the same page.

- All coaches struggle to find the right balance in their relationships with teachers. They need to appreciate teachers' knowledge and skills while, at the same time, encouraging them to be reflective, motivating them to improve, and teaching them helpful skills. "It is a delicate dance to help teachers improve while not losing them, particularly if they are reluctant," Susan commented.

Accountability

As Boston Public Schools grows in its familiarity with CCL and the Workshop method of instruction, some accountability measures are being used. Susan detailed them:

- Coach assessments of teachers in their schools
- Teachers' surveys to select topics to study in their CCL
- Student surveys
- Teachers' reflections on each CCL cycle
- Rubrics for peer observations of classrooms

A work-in-progress is taking stock of reading strategies used by students. "Last year," Susan notes,

> We filled out reports on teachers' levels of implementation, as we saw it. It was all done without names, of course. We gave a copy to the headmaster and to the ILT [Instructional Leadership Team] to inform the school's improvement plan. For my teachers, for example, there were 15 percent of teachers who were fully advanced in incorporating Workshop methods into their teaching, and another 20 percent who were experimenting/emerging.

Susan believed that her work was making significant inroads.

> **?** What are other indicators for coaching's effectiveness? Think about *broad* impact, *deep* impact, and significant *gains* in student achievement.

Plans for next year

- Susan benefited from a survey she administered to students at the end of the year. Some of her coach colleagues did the same. Next year, all of the coaches will survey students and teachers early in the year as a way of gathering information on prior knowledge and goals.
- She would like to consider ways for coaches to learn more from each other, as well as to connect their work to the district goals more explicitly.
- Susan would like to pilot a strategy in 2004–2005 in which teachers each write case studies of several students.

Using the Portraits

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

The portraits can be used in many ways. Solo readers can reflect about their own work related to coaching. Discussed in a community, the portraits lend themselves to cross-case analysis and may lead to developments or changes in the coaching model. Discussion questions – many of them contributed by readers of early drafts of the portraits – are provided in this section. There is also a description of the reactions of several Houston core partner staff to the portraits of first-year coaches in their district, which may also provide material for further discussion.

While sharing information about each of their districts, Tim Martindell and Cathleen Kral, coach coordinators in Houston and Boston, respectively, expressed a desire to get together with other coach coordinators to talk in more detail about issues raised in the portraits and further extend the discussion. Some possible topics and activities for such a "forum" are presented in the Coaching Forum Outline in this section. The proposal includes samples of suggested resources that could be shared at a coaching summit, such as a bibliography for literacy coaches, coach self-assessment tools, and coaching logs.

Discussion questions

If a group has read all of the portraits, the discussion leader can select several questions for cross-portrait comparison. Alternatively, a group may want to consider within-district issues and read portraits from one district. Or a discussion leader may select single portraits or selected portraits for the group because of particular issues they raise. These questions are intended as thoughtful provocations and starting points.

▲ **Understanding and navigating the school context.**

What did the coaches know and do about their school context? How might you have handled one of these contexts differently? How important is the role of the principal/school administration?

▲ **Professional development.**

What were the sorts of professional development offerings that literacy coaches created in their first year? How well did these offerings square with the research on best practices for staff development?

▲ **Multiple responsibilities.**

In what ways might multiple responsibilities hinder a coach in his/her work? What are the benefits/challenges to having a coach also teach a regular class? How do you keep from spreading yourself too thin?

▲ **Coaching network.**

What were the major benefits of the Houston coaching network in its first year, according to these coaches? What needs do you predict the coaches will have in coming years?

▲ **Building capacity.**

One person can only do so much. What can the coaches do to build capacity for literacy instruction in their schools? Many coaches are working in small learning communities (SLCs). What new structures are created in SLCs that could help coaches?

▲ **Leveraging change.**

If you had to pick two or three leverage points in the literacy coaching repertoire that have the best promise for impacting instructional practice and, therefore, student achievement, what would they be?

▲ **Documenting success.**

What are some indicators of success for literacy coaches in their first year? Does this documentation strategy (writing small portraits) support or enact change? How might the indicators shift over time? Think about broad impact, deep impact, and significant gains in student achievement.

▲ **Assessment and accountability.**

What are some ongoing ways of assessing the value that coaches give to teachers and students? What accountability structures should districts, schools, and individual coaches have in place?

▲ **Planning next steps.**

If you were involved in the coaching effort, what might your responses and/or actions be with respect to planning next steps?

▲ **Inclusiveness and expectations.**

Consider the voices not represented in the case studies. For example, imagine the voices of governors, mayors, superintendents, and school board members in their educational speeches, forums, and school meetings. Consider the voices of students. Consider the voices of parents. Whose voices sound most urgent? Do politicians and members of the school community share the same assumptions about the work that is required to bring about gains in student achievement? How long are politicians willing to give the enterprise? How long do members of the school community believe it will take?

▲ **Professional development for principals.**

While principals' support is widely acknowledged in these portraits to be crucial to coaching's success, there is almost no mention of the principals' own professional development here. What are the distinctions between the principal as "instructional leader" and the literacy coach as "instructional support"? Might principal evaluation be linked to their effective use of coaches?

▲ **The big picture.**

There may be other ways of building up teachers' skills in literacy, such as working with teacher training colleges to deepen the literacy training for all teachers or preparing a districtwide orientation program for new teachers. Is it possible that districts will fine-tune the coaching model at the very time that it will no longer be needed? If one looks ten, or even five years down the pike, how long would it take for a pre-service and orientation model to suffice, with perhaps only modest in-classroom coaching?

▲ **Relationships vs. rigor.**

Coaches often talk about the difficult balance between fostering relationships and pushing for rigor. What are some rules of thumb or strategies for managing that dynamic? What other tensions exist for coaches?

▲ **Non-negotiable commitments.**

For coaching to be effective, what commitments seem most important or non-negotiable on the part of coaches, teachers, principals/headmasters, and district/central office leadership?

▲ **Using data.**

How can coaches support and further the active use of data to guide student, classroom, and schoolwide improvement?

▲ **Readiness criteria.**

What factors might help a coach determine a teacher's or group of teachers' "readiness" for coaching?

Issues raised in the Houston portraits: A discussion among the core partner staff

In the summer of 2004, staff from the core partner – the Houston A+ Challenge, which provides coordination and support for coaching work in Houston – read and discussed the portraits of the Houston coaches. What follows is a summary of their discussion, which ranged over important operational considerations. We hope their thoughts will lend insight to other districts' work with their own school coaches.

"Well," said Michele Pola, director of the Houston A+ Challenge, as she and colleagues from her staff huddled around a cafeteria table, "the coaches' stories really gave us rich food for thought!" The discussion also included Jocelyn Mouton, director of programs for Houston A+, Suzanne Sutherland, a former principal in Houston, and A+ staff member Tim Martindell. "We found the literacy coach portraits very helpful and meaningful for understanding the complexity of their role," Pola said. "They also raised some questions for us as core partner staff in thinking about improvements and ways to structure professional learning for coaches and for schools."

In their analysis, core partner staff identified the following issues:
- Clarifying the role of the coaches
- Support for coaches
- Accountability

Clarifying the role of the coaches

How much job definition? How much flexibility?

In general, core partner staff seemed pleased to have used a flexible framework for the first year. But with some history and experience with coaching, they felt the need to revisit the job framework with the coaches and construct one that factors in the experiences coaches had in Year One and provides more structure and guidance for coaches and schools.

For example, the focus – beyond the ambiguity of the word "literacy" – was often left to the coaches to decide. The core partner staff felt that articulating somewhat defined areas of work for coaches would assist them in planning and executing their work. This would also allow district staff and central office to coordinate their efforts more effectively. In Martindell's words, "It's our job to help clarify the roles of the coaches and the supports they need."

The group's discussion focused on action, such as revising the literacy coach framework and the literacy framework itself. "If the job description is not what's happening, we can't go on with that. We need to set clearer standards and expectations for the coaches. We want to get to the point where if the literacy coach does X, then teacher practices will look like Y," said one. There were also many comments about the core partner staff's role in clarifying roles and expectations. For example, is the coaching network optional? Can some opt out of it? Who is keeping track of what the coaches are doing at their sites? These questions, as Pola said, "are not just about accountability, they're also about support; we don't want the coaches to feel like they are floundering out there."

The group decided their work would focus on ensuring a clear alignment between the framework, coaching, and district supports. This alignment will help clarify coaches' roles and the focus on literacy. If, for example, a school were to opt out of literacy coaching as an approach to improvement, then that school must have a solid alternate plan and focus on literacy – with data backing up their thinking. These checks and balances, the group figured, would not be possible if roles, jobs, and responsibilities were not crystal clear.

Support for coaches

How much time do the coaches need to do their work? How much time and support do coaches need to learn more about the work and useful tools to support it?

The core partner staff responded to the portraits by thinking about actions they could take to assist coaches in their work. Several interrelated themes emerged in the course of their conversation: time, tools, communication, and coordination. Time was a recurring issue for most coaches, and the time needed to coach, teach, and learn proved to be a challenge.

The core partner staff recognized this immediately and considered ways to help coaches with this issue. Revisiting the coaching framework to modify the time requirements for the coaching network, adjusting the nature of those meetings, and modifying the teaching demands on coaches all emerged as possible ways to mitigate the issue of lack of time.

Managing time well depended on effective communication and coordination strategies between administration, coaches, and core partner staff. The relationship between administration and coach seems to be key. As Martindell said, "If a coach and principal

The coaches' stories raised some questions for us as core partner staff in thinking about improvements and ways to structure professional learning for coaches and for schools.

don't have the kind of relationship that is required, chances are the coach's time, not to mention work, will be compromised." In Rose's example, the coaching time was preserved and viewed as untouchable. In Jessica's example, on the other hand, a lack of communication about coaching and literacy made it feel like it was not a priority. Further, linking the various networks – School-Improvement Facilitator (SIF), principals, and literacy coaches – emerged again as a promising way to address issues of time, common goals, and coordination of work.

Perhaps the overarching theme was the need to develop tools to help coaches define their work, document it, and be able to choose from a menu of approaches to address challenges at their sites. The group approached this task by identifying key questions in the portraits and considering ways to develop tools or strategies to address the issues raised by the questions.

Some of the key questions were:

- How do we preserve a non-evaluative per- spective if there is an assessment and/or accountability piece to the coaches' jobs?
- How do I, as a literacy coach, interface with the administration and SIF?
- Is there a series of questions to help make decisions about the instructional approaches that are and are not OK? We need to have a set of framing, hard questions that guide those difficult situations.
- What are the practices, standards, or processes that help deal with dilemmas?
- What are you going to do with the training on topic X?
- How will you use the data to think about the relevance of a given piece of training in your coaching role? What is the measure of what a coach does and how they do it?

As Jocelyn Mouton suggested,

> How coaches take their learning back with them to implement things with principals and teachers with help from the district offices will make or break this work. We can't ask them to work in a vacuum on their own; that's not fair. . . . We have to ensure that the umbilical cord is present.

Accountability

*How do we hold ourselves accountable to a **process** of coaching as well as to coaching outcomes?*

Despite the negative connotations of the word *accountability*, core partner staff felt this was an important element of the plan if coaching was to be successful. "If we think about accounta- bility in the right ways, it really is a form of support," said Sutherland. "We don't want coaches to feel like they are floundering, and so we need to develop expectations not only for them but for principals and SIFs." Indeed, the group universally supported the notion that the conversations at the school level must include whole teams, and that area district staff need to know what to look for with respect to literacy in the high schools.

"We need to hold ourselves accountable," declared one, who went on to say, "As core partner staff, part of our role is to ask the hard questions but also to deliver on our promises. We have to support coaches by communicat- ing their work well to the central office and school leadership teams." This notion of a common message as an underpinning for any set of accountability measures for coaches, schools, and the district met with many nods of support and comments of approval.

The group wondered:

- What are the non-negotiables for coaches' work?
- To what extent do coaches need to assess work – either their own work or the work of the teachers with whom they are working?
- What things are at the coaches' discretion?

- Who will do the monitoring (e-mails to the right people describing concerns, etc.)? Who will receive the results of the monitoring? Who will do follow-up? How will the follow-up occur?
- For literacy coaches: If a given coach has not been to the training or has not done certain things, should he/she be called a literacy coach?
- How much of the coaching work needs to be recentralized?
- What is our theory of action for change? Is something that is in our circle of concern also in our circle of influence?
- What tool or framework can the coaches use to ground their documentation and/or self-assessment?
- There has to be a mandated, consistent training that all coaches must have, and some sort of accountability has to be in place at the high school: What should that look like?

Coaches' self-assessment

(Could use a scale of 1–10, from "Not at all" to "Somewhat" to "Very")

Roles and responsibilities

- How clear am I about my role and responsibilities as a coach?

Expertise

- How proficient am I, myself, in the literacy strategies the district recommends?
- How proficient am I in working with a range of adult learners?
- How well do I model instructional strategies for teachers?
- How well do I engage teachers in identifying issues on which they want to work?
- How well am I able to mesh teacher-identified issues with district objectives?

Relationship/rapport with teachers

- How clear are most of the teachers with whom I work about my role and responsibilities?
- How comfortable are teachers in approaching me with "easy" questions (e.g., about books)?
- How comfortable are teachers in approaching me with "hard" questions (e.g., about engaging a disinterested group of students)?
- How well am I able to provide practical resources and strategies to teachers?
- How successfully do I encourage teachers to try new strategies, even beyond their comfort zone?
- What, in general, is my relationship like with most of the teachers (from "Weak" to "OK" to "Strong")?

Relationship/rapport with administrators

- What is my relationship like with the principal (from "Weak" to "OK" to "Strong")?
- What is my relationship like with the coach coordinator (from "Weak" to "OK" to "Strong")?

Organization

- How good am I at following through in a timely manner?
- How well do I juggle my myriad responsibilities?

Continued learning

- How much do I participate in coach network meetings?
- To what degree do I seek out learning opportunities on my own?
- How well do I share new learnings with my coach colleagues and teachers?

Collaborative coaching log (from Houston)

Literacy Coach:	Date:
Teacher:	Content area:
What's working:	Current focus-challenges-concerns:
Teacher's next steps:	Coach's next steps/resources needed:
Date for next meeting:	Focus:

Listening skills	Reading/viewing skills	Research skills	Writing/representing skills
• Listen for a variety of purposes • Listen to analyze, appreciate, evaluate	• Expand vocabulary • Use strategies to comprehend • Read a variety of texts with various purposes • Read to expand knowledge of cultures • Respond to readings through writing	• Research self-selected and assigned topics • Use various resources to locate information • Use primary and secondary sources • Analyze the characteristics of texts	• Produce research in various forms • Use a variety of formats to compile written ideas and representations into reports • Use technology to produce writing/products • Appropriately use citations for idea attribution
Speaking skills	**Thinking skills**	**Pedagogy**	**Classroom management**
• Speak for a variety of purposes • Speak to analyze, appreciate, evaluate	• Show evidence of use of each level of Bloom's taxonomy	• Use language of successful teaching • Engage students • Plan lesson/cycle	• Appropriately set up physical environment • Accept accountability • Use data analysis

Coaching forum outline

This section proposes some ideas for a "coaching forum," in which coaches and coach coordinators from different schools and districts could meet and share knowledge. There are many reasons for such a forum. Literacy coaching is a young field receiving substantial resources; it makes sense to compare models, agree on some common indicators of success, learn about successes, and help one another with challenges.

The agenda should be jointly constructed by participants, but could include the following.

▲ Comparison of coaching models

Participants could create a poster presentation of their coaching model, using a similar template that allows for ready comparison (e.g., "Job description of the coach," "Recruitment and selection of coaches," "Coach training," "Literacy framework," "Coach entry strategies," "Description of typical coach-teacher interaction"). After participants carousel to read one another's posters, discussion starts with questions and answers, followed by a facilitated discussion of benefits and challenges of different models. The session ends with each participant writing a reflection on something they prize in their model and on something they want to try or change.

▲ Indicators of success

How do we know coaching is working? Is coaching leading to more effective instruction? When districts join together to create common indicators of success for literacy coaching, they can all benefit in lobbying for sustained or increased resources. Should coaches be judged on the number of teachers with whom they work? On teachers' assessment of their effectiveness? On standardized test scores? When is it reasonable to expect certain results? Sharing end-of-cycle and end-of-year reports may reveal promising indicators.

▲ **Political context**

Without the support of the principal and district administration, a coach's work invariably flounders. When union negotiations are underway, coaching can be a source of contention as well. SNS deliberately builds a structure of community partners with the district, but in some cases the perception is that the partner "owns" the coaching work, not the district. What strategies could be used for building support and ownership for coaching?

▲ **Equity**

How are coaches distributed among schools in a district and within a given school? Do the most savvy principals get the best coaches, or do the schools with the highest need get the best and most coaches? Are teachers with the most need pressed to use the services of a coach? What is the racial and ethnic make-up of the cadre of coaches? How well do they reflect the teacher population? The student population?

▲ **Workshop on using assessment data**

The art of asking worthy questions, as well as strategies for getting answers from assessment data, would help coaches, coach coordinators, and the teachers they serve.

▲ **Portrait development**

In many SNS districts, coaches share "critical incidents" in their coaching work with one another at coach network meetings. Coach "logs" are also places to document what transpired in classrooms and at professional development meetings. Portrait development goes deeper, taking verbal and written documentation to another level, as coaches are encouraged to look at themselves over time and consider the patterns, large issues, successes, and challenges in their work. Coach coordinators may want to create several "new coach" portraits to help train new coaches to navigate common dilemmas.

▲ **Capacity building**

The long-term sustainability of coaching still needs to be worked out, as a coach cannot work with a teacher forever. How long should a coach work with a given teacher, and with what intensity? What kinds of follow-up support can be provided? How does a coach build capacity within a teacher or group of teachers? How can a school build capacity?

▲ **Resource fair**

What tools, books, articles, frameworks, videotapes, external trainers, and consultants are the coaches and coach coordinators using? Sharing formats for a "coaching log" would be helpful, as would the first-year coach-training packet.

Glossary

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Literacy Strategies and Terms

Cloze devices

A selection of text from which key words have been eliminated. Students are asked to guess at the missing words, being conscious of how they use semantic and syntactic context and prior knowledge to help them make predictions.

Constructivist approach to reading comprehension

A theory based on the premise that reading is an active process of making meaning from text. Using this theory, teachers coach students to formulate questions as they read, make predictions, connect the text to their own lives, relate the text to the world, and make connections between the text and other texts they have read.

Dialectic journals

Teacher-student correspondence, or an exchange between two students, as a way to reflect on thinking, learning, and reading. Also known as dialogue journals.

Graphic organizers

Visual displays of the ways ideas are related, structured, and connected, such as Venn diagrams, T-charts (see definition on this page), vocabulary squares, and outlines.

Discussion strategies

Techniques for eliciting and deepening student thinking through conversation in a group. Examples include: fishbowl, Socratic seminar.

Pre-reading strategies

Methods of preparing to become actively engaged with text prior to reading. Examples include: anticipation guides, "K-W-L," or "What I **K**now, What I **W**ant to Learn, What I **L**earned."

Read alouds/think alouds

Students read the text aloud, pausing occasionally "to think out loud about connections they are making, images they are creating, problems with understanding that they are encountering, and ways they see of fixing those problems" (Beers 2003).

Scaffolding

The deliberate process of supporting student learning by teaching the skills and knowledge needed to take on a complex task or to comprehend a novel idea.

T-chart

A graphic organizer of two columns that encourages students to compare and contrast two entities. For example, students may compare and contrast two main characters in a story.

Text annotation

A way to get students to slow down, pay attention to what they are reading, and interact with the text so that it will make sense for them. Students can annotate texts in many ways as they are reading or after one quick reading, such as highlighting important facts, noting connections to their own lives or to the world, or writing Facts, Questions, and Responses (**FQR**) in the margin of the text.

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