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Models of Staff Development

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CHAPTER THREE

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DIRECT SERVICE MODELS:

Helping People Do Their Thing

*My biggest challenge is when I'm sure I'm right and my mentee is sure she's right.
...our reflective observer*

The Mentorship Continuum

Survival — Maintenance — Enhancement — Redevelopment

Here we discuss the largest complex professional development model ever organized in the United States. There are probably more participants in workshops on designated staff development days. Learning communities of groups of teachers in schools have become common. All teachers are visited by principals or district supervisors, some of whom coach the teachers intensively. But, in terms of changes in roles and relationships, nothing like the organization of teachers to give one-on-one professional/personal support to other teachers has happened in the history of school improvement or professional development.

By personal/professional service we mean assigning an individual teacher to get to know another or several other teachers (possibly an entire school faculty), diagnose needs (with the teacher or teachers), and try to provide help in agreed-on professional areas. These are not informal friendships. What we characterize as personal/professional direct service models are formal programs. Currently, there are several types of them, all very large. In, roughly, order of size, these are

- Mentors for new teachers,
- Generic coaches to school staffs,
- Literacy coaches to school staffs, and
- Coaches in other content areas staffs and individuals.

These services are in addition to those provided by principals, assistant principals, department heads, district central office staff, and the staffs of regional agencies.

This remarkable development has occurred from a combination of government actions and the intensive lobbying of national organizations, including the national and state offices of the teachers' union. In many states legislation has required that new teachers have a mentor for a year, and in many cases for two years. In California, about 15,000 teacher candidates annually graduate from college and university preservice programs and those programs depend on what have traditionally referred to as cooperating teachers. Current legislation requires that the new teacher have two years of mentoring after they take employment and that teachers moving to California from other states also have two years of mentoring. Not until the end of the second year does a novice teacher get a "clear" credential. If mentors are classroom teachers who continue to teach classes, we would need 30,000 each year if each one mentored one novice and 15,000 if each mentored two new teachers.

Coaching is also sizeable. If full-time coaches were employed and each was assigned to an average of 10 teachers we would need 300,000 nationally who, during their tenure as coaches, would have to be replaced by another teacher. Or, if they continued to teach students and each offered part-time coaching to a school staff, we

would need as many as 100,000 to cover all school staffs. And reaching all staff *is* the ambition of some of the national organizations.

There has to be a reason for a movement of this size. The obstacles are formidable and yet many are being solved without the level of controversy and resistance that frequently accompanies a simple school improvement initiative:

- To support coaching school districts have to make serious budgetary decisions even though Federal programs like Reading First and Title I contribute funds (and, as they do so, press districts to recruit, train, and assign coaches). States generally support most of the direct costs of mentoring, but there are sizeable ancillary costs.
- Moving this quantity of teachers from the classroom to mentoring or coaching duties has serious implications. And, there are educational costs attendant to taking those who are regarded as the best teachers and assigning them either full or part-time to support others.
- These roles are relatively new ones and issues about preparation have to be faced. There are not thousands of experienced coaches and mentors queued up for the job – folks accustomed to show up at a school and say, “I’m here to help.” And the expansion of mentoring of new teachers requires positions for persons who are not only believed to be effective teachers, but who can develop strong relationships and successfully impart their lore to the novices. Seeking enough cooperating teachers to meet needs has always been difficult, but seeking tens of thousands of mentors and coaches is daunting. Nonetheless, these models of professional development are growing rapidly and the major thorny logistical problems described above appear to be taken in stride in most settings. Let’s take a close look at both of them, beginning with mentoring.

MENTORING:

Variations on a Supportive Theme

We begin with the rationales for mentoring, consider what it should accomplish minimally, and then examine a hierarchy of objectives that can guide work with the mentees.

On need – there are three related rationales for mentoring programs.

1. The fundamental argument is that teaching is complex, so much so that it takes several years to learn to teach knowledgeably and skillfully. Essentially, the preservice programs orient teacher candidates to schooling and teaching and an introductory knowledge base. But, following student teaching, another year or two is needed to learn how to manage a classroom, implement curriculums, and assess student learning. From this perspective, mentoring can shepherd the teacher candidates through the early months and years of practice, with the mentor tutoring the new teacher and complementary workshops providing additional information and routes to skill.
2. The second rationale focusses on defects in the culture of educators and school systems. Even after thirty years of intense publicity about the problems of new teachers and the development of inductive programs, most advocates for mentoring maintain that, new teachers are often given the most difficult students, difficult subjects, including multiple preparations, and poor settings – having to teach in multiple venues while more experienced teachers have home classrooms to which their classes come.

Thus, mentors are seen as protective companions, reducing the poor treatment of novices where it occurs. They accomplish this officially by working with superintendents, central office staffs, principals, and department chairs and by taking leadership when the culture of veteran teachers has not been protective of their new colleagues.

3. A third rationale is to pull the level of teaching higher than current present practice. Mentoring is increasingly seen as more than a vehicle for socializing new teachers into teaching as such, but going beyond that level to help new teachers develop 21st Century teaching skills for students needing 21st century learning skills and knowledge.

From these elements of rationale, mentoring in general has the goal of providing companionship, protecting the novices, and helping them develop good professional knowledge and skill and beyond.

General effects to be expected

Fundamental is the development of competence. Mentored teachers should have superior skills. And, *mentoring should reduce attrition of new teachers. A good many do not make it through the first year of teaching – or the second, third, or fourth – and mentoring should affect this.*

Levels of Mentoring

At the beginning of the chapter we presented the following continuum of levels of mentorship programs. Moving from left to right, each level is incorporated into the next one. Although we will focus on the objectives and what the mentor does to achieve them, the good and better inductive programs have sets of seminars and workshops for both mentors and mentees. These generally focus on basic teaching skills, more advanced models of teaching, and curriculum content and materials as well as processes of mentoring and studying teaching.

Survival/Basic Competence

This level focusses on the tendency of NEW TEACHERS teacher candidates to feel overwhelmed by the problems of navigating classroom management and teaching. The mentor provides companionship, helps explain the curriculum and how to teach it, and, if needed, works with the administration and other teachers to eliminate hardship conditions and build relationships with the new arrival.

Maintenance

This level works on helping the candidate organize the curriculum areas, gather materials, assess student learning, and learn to use basic cooperative learning strategies. The survival and maintenance levels can be carried out simultaneously. The novice is learning to handle the situation, manage the students, and instruct and assess at a level at least equal to the norms in the school.

As the Santa Cruz Center puts it, “Keeping people in teaching is not the same as helping them become effective teachers.”

Enhancement

The mentor (and workshops and seminars) introduce the teacher candidate to more sophisticated models of teaching, as basic inductive and concept attainment models and more complex cooperative learning skills. The goal is to help the new people reach a level above the norms. Workshops and coaching by the mentor are generally combined to bring new practices into the repertoire of the novice, including ways of assessing higher-order cognitive and social outcomes. Mentors can provide companionship and technical support as the mentees implement an increasing array of curricular and instructional strategies.

Redevelopment

At this level mentoring takes on the look of a school improvement program. The mentor and mentee study 21st Century teaching and learning models and implement them, including assessing student learning. The mentee has progressed from good to excellent to outstanding!

Critical Issues and Considerations in the Development of Mentoring Programs

Developing programs is a multi-sided affair and there are issues to be dealt with – total agreement has not been achieved in every area where decisions have to be made.

Selecting Mentors

Mentors work by nurturing and instruction. They provide emotional support by nurturing and point the way to manage the classroom and teach effectively by instructing. They teach the new teacher. The demands at each level are somewhat different.

Survival/Basic Competence Mode

The mentor needs to be a solid teacher and warm and supportive. They need to be oriented toward making friends with strangers (their mentees) and willing to play an advocacy role when necessary.

Maintenance

The mentor needs to have a repertoire that provides options to engage in the basic tasks of teaching. They possess a variety of tools to relate to students and teaching strategies for accomplishing higher-order and lower-order goals. As at the other levels they need warmth and affirmativeness and a willingness to advocate.

Enhancement

Now the mentor's range of tools needs be larger and good skills for helping the mentee learn new things are needed as well.

Redevelopment

Now, in addition to the foregoing, our mentor needs to be willing to learn new curricular and instructional models and team up so that the mentee learns them as well. The mentor program needs to provide the opportunity to add to curricular and teaching repertoires.

Full or part time? From the same school or not?

There are debates about these questions. We lean toward keeping mentors in their classroom and assigning them to no more than two mentees. Our primary reason has to do with demonstration, which is much easier and more powerful in one's own venue. And, we continue to have their services with children. They can teach in the same school or come from another.

Most advocates prefer full-time mentors assigned to a dozen or so new teachers. There is no research on this subject and we are not sure that a definitive study could be designed.

Full-time mentors can be very effective and get the opportunity to reach a good many students through their teachers. Most will want to employ video demonstrations to their entire coterie rather than demonstrating in each classroom. We think a "caseload" of about ten is plenty.

Is there a pool of potential mentors (and coaches)?

The personal/professional service models rest on the assumption that there are skilled and knowledgeable teachers who have much to offer new and experienced teachers, have or can acquire the tools to do so, are willing to help others, and can be released for several years from all or a portion of their teaching duties. Thirty years of experience with mentoring and ten with coaching give us reason to believe that all of these are true. There are top professionals who can and are willing to help others. The organizational arrangements have been proven to require some changes that are not always easy to bring about, but they can be.

The mentor/supervisor/assessor/administrator complex

The major teachers' organizations are often adamant that teachers who assume roles as coaches and mentors NOT play any role in assessment and evaluation – those are the province of supervisors. For example, in California where the districts will award the clear credential, (universities awarding only the preliminary credential) the mentor will know the most about the teacher candidate. It is unlikely that their knowledge will not be transmitted to some extent, but there is a real official conundrum to be solved. In California today it is *illegal* for mentors and principals to share information that might be used in assessment of teacher competence. In New York, if local districts work it out with the local union, information can be shared.

Supervision-like behavior

Less-discussed is the relation of supervision-like behavior in the roles of mentor and coaches. Mentors and coaches have to approach the task of getting to know their clients in ways familiar to supervisors who have the same role. This is a complex issue – are the functions of the mentors actually supervision without the formal assessment role that resides in official supervisors? In practice, we'll find more overlap than the unions would like. An anomalous issue is whether persons with supervisory responsibilities can ALSO provide mentoring services. Several times in this book we have asserted, and will do so again here, that a supervisor CAN certainly mentor a new or experienced teacher. That is an important part of their job. The notion that a mentor or coach cannot deal with evaluation of a teacher is one thing. That a principal or central office person cannot be a mentor or coach BECAUSE they have supervisory responsibilities is quite another thing. We cannot accept the idea that the head of the school, or a leadership group, or central office personnel cannot help the new teacher or, for that matter, the more experienced who need help.

Mentor as Protector

Although we dealt with this topic briefly in the summary of rationales for mentoring, a further consideration is worthwhile. We have to say that we are shocked that bad treatment of novice teachers still occurs. Until recently we believed that the old practice of giving the new teacher the struggling students and the smallest classroom was far in the past (IT CERTAINLY IS PASSE' WHERE WE WORK) until we realized that many of the current books on mentoring suggest that the practice is still common. That stimulated us to conduct some interviews and, shockingly, found that there are still settings where the novices are treated badly – and their students as well.

Here is a list of the cruelties by one of the more prominent authors (Sweeny, 2008) who writes about mentoring teacher candidates and novice teachers.

The new teacher is given

1. The most preparations of any role on the staff.
2. Multiple school sites. (This is a district/central office problem).
3. Multiple classrooms – what we call the “migrating” classroom.
4. Classrooms stripped of resources. (Cannibalized by the neighboring Staff).
5. The most difficult and challenging students.
6. Multiple extra-duty assignments.
7. And, they often have courses to take to complete certification or meet the special requirements of a district.

This and similar lists are used partly justify the need for mentors who can try to “protect” the new teacher from being victimized.

If a district follows such scurrilous practices as those in this list, then we do not believe that a mentor program is in order. Administrators who engage in such practices should be disciplined – probably demoted. Mentorship is

not the avenue to correct such abuses. And mentors cannot thrive in their role in a district or school that tolerates such practices. Because novices – and their students – have been treated badly in some backward school systems, teachers’ organizations should be vigilant and take whatever action is necessary to correct the situation. In large secondary schools, department heads have major responsibility for determining the conditions for new teachers. Principals have the responsibility for overseeing practice.

We have come to believe that school charters may need to include provisions to ensure optimal conditions for new teachers – and the place of mentors in the working culture of the school.

In mentoring, agreements need to be made that new teachers will NOT be given the most difficult students, most preparations, and poorest rooms and facilities. Rather, they will be given normal classes, fewer preparations, and good facilities. If not on the faculty, the mentor will be welcomed as a part time member of the staff and other teachers will come together to support the new professionals. Principals will support the new teachers with a caring relationship, , counsel, and observation and advice. In a small school, the principal may be the mentor.

Research on mentoring is badly needed.

A large-scale study piggybacked on the National Assessment program and investigated whether the connection of mentors with novice teachers reduced attrition, and it did not (Smith and Ingersall, 2004). The most complex form of mentoring programs involve information to principals so that they can cooperate in helping the mentee, and sets of workshops for the novice teachers. This complex form, which was rarely used, reduced attrition somewhat. The design did not permit learning whether the workshops, rather than the mentoring relationship, might have been responsible.

Another Note on Mentees and Attrition

New teachers are somewhat older than many people expect. In California, internship programs graduate twenty-five percent of beginning teachers and data from Michael McKibbin, the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, director of the internship programs, their average age is 36. Many have had years of experience in other fields. And, officials in the Commission believe that the average of the 15,000 teachers who are graduated each year from college and university programs is about 31 years. The average graduate of career-change-oriented programs is 35 years. Thus, many mentees are experienced and mature adults with considerable knowledge of the society. They are *not* 21-year-olds thrown into difficult schools to sink or swim. If they *are* thrown in, they are experienced adults.

Attrition: Is some a good thing?

The current literature regards attrition as a nearly totally bad thing and one produced by an unsupportive environment. That may not be the whole story about attrition.

We suspect that a good many teacher candidates will stop at the point where they have the preliminary credential – that is, they will not apply for work in teaching. A number of others will put their toes in the water for a few months or a year and then pull their feet back. Thus, the often-stated object of mentoring – to help new teachers stay in teaching by better managing the complexity of the job and the sometimes terrible conditions they are put in – may not be the whole story. Some newly credentialed people may have decided, during teacher training, that they do not wish to teach. And, heresy here, some new teachers might well be happier in another line of work. That one tries teaching and then leaves it may not be a bad thing for everyone who makes that choice. Some sources indicate that, without mentoring, only about 10 or 15 percent of new teachers leave teaching after their first year. That small number might actually be a good thing, for them at least. New teachers who are ambivalent about teaching can legitimately test the waters and mentoring may have much less influence than their own assessment about whether “teaching is for them.”

Also, a number of teacher candidates may simply NOT be well-suited for the circumstances of classroom teaching. We have known quite a few literacy-oriented teachers who were repelled by the classroom-management

side of teaching and went on to other things. We find no fault in that.

In addition, some people get through teacher education programs before it becomes apparent that they do not have the combination of personal characteristics that are needed for teaching. That they weed themselves out is better than the alternatives.

At times mentors may be riding in a race that is already run and the outcome due to factors out of their control.

The Coaching Continuum

Companionship — Enhancement — Redevelopment

COACHING:

Further Variations on a Supportive Theme

We will begin with rationale, then to the three levels in the continuum, and then to issues and considerations as programs for coaching are developed.

Rationales

The needs for generic coaches and coaches in literacy and other curriculum areas are expressed in similar terms.

1. Improving student achievement is fundamental. While the most-mentioned concerns supporting mentoring are socialization into teaching as is, and mitigating the problems attendant to poor treatment of novices, the case for coaching rests on improving student achievement. This can be done by providing service designed to bring everyone up to snuff or by focussing on the elevation of general or subject-related practice.
2. Second is that, to achieve 21st Century levels of achievement, many teachers need to improve their knowledge and teaching skills. From this perspective, coaching becomes an avenue for modernizing the curriculum improvement and can morph into general school improvement initiatives. Many of the documents supporting the use of coaches in mathematics simultaneously emphasize coaching to ensure traditional basic skills and curriculum reform.
3. Third is the proposition that some teachers have exemplary knowledge and skills that are teachable to others and would like to help their colleagues. In addition they know how to provide assistance and/or are willing to study how to do so. That assistance can include helping colleagues engage in personal and collaborative inquiry into teaching and learning.

Effects to be expected

The overall goal is to help professionals develop better skills and knowledge either across the curriculum areas or in a particular one – literacy the most prominent at the present time. The degree of change can range from acquiring or polishing basic teaching skills to the implementation of new curricular components and even to the development of action research for school improvement.

At the beginning of the chapter we presented this continuum – it has noticeable similarities to the continuum of mentoring programs.

Again, we see types of service with increasing complexity that are consistent with the levels of objectives. They range from providing a companionable environment to enhancing repertoire to developing outstanding capability.

Companionship

Essentially companions provide support through the development of a nurturing rapport. Within it a teacher can examine his/her practice and the response of the students and make decisions about making positive changes. The creation of a social space that is both safe and analytic is at the center of the process. And both coach and coached spend time reflecting together on practice and how to improve it.

Enhancement

As in mentoring, coaching programs at this level seek not only to polish current practices but to elevate them to a standard of excellence. Through workshops and the coaching relationship new strategies for managing the classroom and teaching and assessing learning are introduced. With the help of the coach the teacher implements the new content and, reflecting on student learning, seeks to elevate it.

Redevelopment

Again as in mentoring, at this level coaching begins to become leadership for school improvement. Both parties study 21st Century teaching and learning models and implement them, including assessing student learning. The goal is outstanding, forward-looking performance.

Critical Issues and Considerations in the Development of Coaching Programs

The development of a program involves some of the same decisions as in the case of mentoring models, but there are additional ones because entire staffs of experienced teachers are involved.

Selecting Coaches

All need to be good, solid instructors and affirmative managers of students. And, willingness to provide help to others is essential. At the higher levels, a greater repertoire of teaching strategies is important as well as the desire to inquire into teaching and master new curricular and instructional models.

For most coaches, professional development needs to help them learn how to engage with new colleagues and how to help them learn new material. Assigning teachers to coach entire school faculties is a relatively new practice and organizers need to realize that they as well as the coaches and school staffs will have to learn many new things and procedures may have to be modified – *will, in fact, have to be modified, possibly several times* – before optimal ones are found.

Full or part time? From the same school or not?

As in the case of mentoring, for service to individual teachers we lean toward keeping coaches in their classroom and assigning them to no more than two teachers. Again, our primary reason has to do with demonstration, which is much easier and more powerful in one's own venue. And, we continue to have their services with children. They can teach in the same school or come from another. However, coaches assigned to schools need to be full-time and will be assigned to one school where they have not taught.

The clients of coaching

School faculties and their teachers are the clients. And, they are not identical – it takes time and effort to figure out where coaching might begin. And, the clients come with various social climates and states of growth. There will be omnivores and active consumers, some of them are at the top of their profession before the coach arrives. Generally, they will be glad to welcome a good colleague.

Passive consumers will be acquiescent but friendly, but finding out their needs can take work – they will tend to let the coach do the decision-making. Reticent consumers will ward off support. Coaches need to learn that their off-putting manner is not personal – they are “that way” with everybody. Feeding the omnivores the best you can is a good strategy. There will be plenty for everyone.

Funding a program and assigning state and district coordinators is the easy part – much easier than implementation. We will deal here with just two aspects of implementation – preparing coaches and preparing schools.

Implementation needs – preparing coaches

The experts on mentoring and coaching, particularly those who have been mentors and coaches, are agreed that a considerable amount of effort needs to be put into training. Successful programs include have what amount to courses for all parties. In mentoring, the Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project is a national leader not just in visibility, but in offering service to many states and districts large and small. After initial orientation training, mentors are brought together at least monthly – more often is better – to share ideas and experience training ranging from building relationships to reflecting on teaching to learning new repertoire. The mentees have a parallel set of experiences. Thus, the mentor programs are not just a matter of finding experienced good teachers and assigning them to novices, but also sets of training experiences to support mentor and mentee.

Coaching of schools has not been around as long as mentoring of new teachers, but the history has brought participants and observers to the same conclusion – coaches need more training than was originally envisioned, training of the same magnitude as mentors. And, where a particular curriculum area is involved, intensive training in that area, as literacy, is vital. In our own projects, where support personnel provide training and coaching, for two to three years those people receive 10 to 15 days of formal training each year, meet weekly or more, and study implementation and student learning on a formative basis. And they always feel they should have more.

Implementation – For Schools: Paving the Way with the Charter

We believe that building a charter or its equivalent is very important if either mentoring and coaching programs are to thrive. With a charter in place the mentoring and coaching programs need to be considered by the school faculties and voted on.

Agreeing to have a school-wide generic or curriculum area coach – and by the 80 percent vote or better – is critical to the success of the coaching program. The faculty members will be agreeing to be observed and to have discussions about teaching – *their* teaching. They will be agreeing to learn more strategies and more curricular and instructional models. If they don't make these agreements in advance, staff members can feel free to avoid coaching, attendant workshops, and collective effort to improve curriculum and teaching. Also, the faculty, including the principal, should interview potential coaches and both coach and faculty should agree that they have a good match. *Without these procedures, assigning a “coach” to go to a school, introduce him/herself to the principal and faculty, and starting to build helping relationships is a recipe for failure.*

The Work of Coaches and Mentors

Although both induction programs and service to experienced teachers include seminars and workshops and networking meetings, the role of mentor and coach are the fulcrum of these movements, Here we will examine advice given by national organizations and experts in these models to coaches and organizers of coaching programs by national organizations. Most of this applies to mentoring as well.

We need to acknowledge the work of Bean and Deford in their *Do's and Don't's for Literacy Coaches* (Northwest Educational Lab, 2008). We used their sequence of advice to guide much of this section. We will alternate quotes and paraphrased sentences from their book and from documents generated by national organizations with our own commentary and advice. In this section our passages are in italics.

Term and Rationale

Let us begin with the statement that the term, “coach” is a colloquial, general term as used today. What is important is the core of the initiatives that, in mentoring and coaching, are bringing thousands of practitioners to serve their peers. Our focus here is on the category called “literacy coaches.” A clear rationale is that their service is justified by the needs of teachers in the general literacy area. Above the primary grades literacy has not been included as part of their general preparation to teach the core curriculum subjects. However, as many

literacy coaches are assigned to the primary grades, the rationale is that the primary teachers also need additional help in the teaching of reading and writing. Generic coaches work across the core curriculum areas and elementary school grade levels. If one understands the role of the literacy coach, one only needs to think across the curriculum to understand the generic role.

Bean and Deford begin with the statement that “literacy coaches are assuming a range of complex tasks within schools.” (p. 1) They go on to mention instructional planning, assessment of students, talking to teachers about instruction, and coaching – observing, demonstration teaching, and discussing instruction in relation to the demonstrations and observations.

From their examination of the literature and interviews with coaches, they have developed a set of guides for new coaches that are echoed in the rest of the relevant literature. They begin with

Introduce yourself and your role. The new coach needs to talk to the principal and “take a few minutes to talk at a faculty meeting” and distribute a flyer. Many small-group meetings are needed to enable teachers to say what they need and to hear what the coach brings to the equation.

Here we need to say again that we believe that the development of a charter should precede a DECISION BY THE SCHOOL FACULTY that a coach is needed. The leadership team should interview candidates, select one or two and then introduce the new staff member to the faculty and take responsibility for integrating them into the operation of the school. Without a charter, the entire faculty should vote on whether to find a coach and invite them to the school.

Work with all teachers. The coach needs to contact everybody and not to fall into an easy trap, which is to work only with those who are most amenable to the process. Bean and Deford bring up an issue that is virtually oxymoronic. “One of the quickest ways to reduce teacher interest is for the teachers to think the coach is there to ‘fix them up’ as if they are not doing their jobs or are considered to be weak. This FIXIT approach breeds fear, resentment, and resistance. Coaches who find themselves in this predicament have a difficult time working as a colleague with teachers.” (p. 2).

Therefore the oxymoron. The coach is assigned to the school because the teachers need help in the literacy area but they are to convince the teachers that they are really O.K.. Wow! For mentors this problem is not as severe because the difference in experience makes the difference in their roles obvious, but some new teachers can resist help as fiercely as a hard-bitten veteran. The coach is there to help but the teachers can believe they are in fine shape without the help. That is another reason we like the charter. The teachers acknowledge the need and help select the coach.

Work first to establish a relationship of trust. Everyone discusses this and, judging from the literature, the coach is seen to have the major responsibility.

Again, we believe that the integration of the coach into the faculty is the responsibility of the staff, not the coach. We make much of the need for schools to make understandings about participation in initiatives. If the charter specifies that when the faculty votes overwhelmingly to take a particular course, and that has been done in relation to literacy, then a coach can be engaged to help the staff work on their literacy skills. In some cases described in the literature the coach is assigned to the school, presumably by the district central office, and then must work his/herself into the good graces of each faculty member. That is a daunting task. In a bad case, the are pressed to accept the staff’s reason why achievement is low: Not a product of poor instruction but a consequence of poor parenting, a poor neighborhood, and the characteristics of the (again poor) students. There are schools where all the classroom doors are locked! Not locked against the coach, just locked. AND where all the little windows in the doors are covered with layers of construction paper. And where the principal, in an intro-

ductory visit through the school, says things like “Let’s not go there. She doesn’t like to be observed.” Changing those conditions should not be the job of a new coach who has to persuade strangers to change, but is the task of the district supervisors who have authority as well as persuasiveness.

The clearinghouse for coaching includes a sidebar of advice from a coach to new coaches that includes putting your office away from the principal so you won’t be confused with administration. She noted that she put her desk next to the bathrooms where she could “coach” while teachers waited for their students to do their business.

Now, we see no reason to ask a “coach” to run a gamut like that.

Specific Processes

Again, Bean and Deford’s specificity and sensibility are useful. In their view the coach needs to:

“Listen carefully.”

Yes, we should listen to the folks we hope to help.

Maintain Confidentiality.

Yes. Don’t spill the beans to those who evaluate. Some exponents believe that teachers are concerned that the mentor or coach might be a spy for assessors. In our view, few people would agree to spy. Those who would, should not be Coaches. In California, it is actually illegal for a mentor to discuss a mentee with a principal.

Work from teachers’ agendas.

Clearly, one wants to take the teachers’ frame of reference into account. Like asking what they might want to learn. However, the mentor or coach is there precisely to help the teacher progress beyond their own frame of reference. Asking people what they want to learn when you are there to try to influence them to do something different is an intricate task.

Be positive.

This is an old saw, but an important one. In the words of experienced psychological counselors, “sugar works a lot better than vinegar.” If you look at another practitioner, you may find behavior that you would like to correct. Don’t start there.. Find what feels good and build on it. Eventually you can get around to some less fine behaviors, but do so in the context of helping them learn new and more effective teaching strategies.

Be assiduous about follow-through.

Follow-through in this context means living up to agreements of various sorts. If you say you will be there, be there! If you will provide certain kinds of materials, provide them! Teachers are very sensitive to whether agreements are kept. On the other hand, you are not their servant. You do your best.

Work with your administrator.

The principal and school leadership team are important keys to the success of the coach. Essentially the principal and coach work together to ensure the success of curriculum and instruction. There is no question about the importance of this item.

Recognize – and appreciate – differences in teachers and how they work.

There are whole books on this subject. The import is that teachers have their own personalities and have generated their own personal styles of teaching. The admonition to learn about them and modulate the coaching/

mentoring approach to them captures the title we have given to this family of models: personal/professional approaches. Throughout this part of the literature, the coach is seen as the one who studies the client and carefully respects individual differences and modulates to them. Sometimes the teacher is seen as a somewhat fragile person who is accommodated to rather than accommodating to the coach. Rather than an impersonal professional who is offering service impersonally, the coach is almost in a therapeutic role.

As we indicated earlier, teachers come from all states of growth. If someone is off-putting, it may be that the person is generally reticent. The behavior may have nothing to do with the coach or the concept of coaching. And, a gourmet omnivore may be ahead of the coach in many areas.

Recognize your own beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning.

This is a companion to the advice given above. The coach is to offer help in areas of need, but is not a bulldozer. Rather, the coach is to work from self-awareness of his/her style and preferences, leading from strength but carefully.

Be a learner.

This one pretty much goes without saying. And, one of the advantages of the coaching/mentoring role is that one is continuously trying on perspectives and finding areas for personal growth. A curiosity in the role is that every teacher, including ones who are poor at teaching literacy, does some things that the skilled literacy teacher can learn from. To this day, after we have observed literally thousands of teachers and offered training to a huge number, we will visit a classroom and see something we can add to our repertoire or use as a good illustration in a training session. Coaches will learn a good bit about teaching unless they fall into the pit of thinking they are complete.

Let the data lead!

Throughout the literature the advocates of coaching/mentoring stress that a core practice is to observe and analyze and develop the intervention from the actual situation rather than developing a set approach that assumes that the client somehow needs it. This is another tricky area. The coach needs to work from his/her strength without assuming that everyone needs the same treatment.

Don't evaluate teachers.

Evaluation "limits teachers' acceptance of them (coaches) and their role (p. 4)." In other words a helping relationship is incompatible with an evaluative function. Bean and DeFord stress that principals need to understand this and not co-opt the coach into giving them information about the teacher. They suggest that if a principal sees something that needs attention, he/she should mention it to the teacher. *"The teacher should then be the one to contact the coach."*

We add that principals should to continue to visit teachers and offer help and not drop the role of instructional leader because coaches are also studying the teachers and helping them. And, principals CAN be instructional leaders. In small schools in small districts they can be the primary literacy trainer in their school and others. Some of the best trainers we have ever worked with are principals. As are some of the best nurturers of new teachers. Writing off 150,000 principals and assistant principals would be a terrible mistake. *Don't fall into the trap of acting like the "expert."*

The consensus is that the coaches need to work collaboratively with the teachers and that, if they position themselves as expert, they will be asked to provide solutions to problems rather than thinking through solutions WITH the teacher.

We like the collaborative mode here, but one has to be careful. If a teacher is shooting him or herself (and the students) in the foot with a poor practice, one may have to be direct and suggest an alternative.

Don't jump in and expect immediate change.

From their interviews the investigators concluded that new coaches greatly underestimated the time that change would take and felt “burned out” (their words) if their advice did not result in immediate change.

If you want rapid change, pick things that can change rapidly. The Literacy Coaches Clearinghouse is a joint project of IRA and NCTE: www.literacycoachingonline.org

In sum, what can be expected from Coaches? Mentors?

The answer is A large variety. This family of models defines a huge movement and the personnel recruited will vary widely and, perhaps more important for variance, the schools, principals, and staffs will vary enormously. This is the first time that such a large school improvement initiative has been attempted. There is little programmatic research and the results will have to be assayed over time,

Standardization: How loose should be the tether?

Consensus from both advocates and disinterested observers is that practice within these models varies widely. In all areas: selection, placement, training, and actual implementation behavior, standardization would be a foreign concept. *And that is not necessarily a bad thing.* The very core of the beliefs that rationalize this movement supports individual practice as contrasted with the history of support initiatives such as clinical supervision, where disseminators of teaching practices were trained to a standard and expected to use it. Thus, the mentors and coaches, whether working with novices or school faculties, are to use their knowledge of practice and their skills in imparting that knowledge as best they can in the situation where they find themselves. We will find criticism of this diversity. The critics complain that mentors or coaches vary so much in their practices. Our answer is that they SHOULD be quite different from one another. The whole point of these models would be lost if they were trained to a cookie-cutter way of working. However, “standards” for coaches are published, which apparently reflects the view that practice should be controlled to some extent, probably through training. “Most observers agree that reading coaches provide a powerful form of professional development – if they are skilled enough to meet coaching’s varied demands.” (IRA, 2004). We think the answer to their problem is good professional development for the coaches – that gives them strength in such a way that it capitalizes on their individuality.

As we state regularly, teachers as a whole are very resilient. And they are not fragile – they can cope with change and easily handle the strain of new learning. A coach who knows how to teach literacy to children will find a capable learning machine on the other end of the transaction. Some (our dear reticent) will resist learning, but that is to be expected and not to be dwelt upon. No coach should be expected to reach every teacher in a collaborative relationship, nor should every principal. Stubborn adults can be VERY stubborn. **MOST FOLKS ARE REALLY PLEASANT AND ARE HAPPY TO IMPROVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. TEACHERS AS A WHOLE ARE A FINE POPULATION TO WORK WITH AND WE HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND OF THESE DECENT FOLKS.**

