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BUILDING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

MENTORING, COACHING, AND COLLABORATION ARE SHARED PROCESSES, a shared journey of commitment to effective practice and improved learning for all students. In a learning community, adults and children alike are learners as they experiment, give and receive feedback, and use and offer support. When these interactions are embedded in the school culture, a new synergy evolves and a shift occurs—a shift to the forward momentum of collaborative school renewal.

In many states, recent legislation calls for mentoring new teachers to improve their teaching and to help keep them from dropping out of the profession. In response, mentoring programs have sprung up and many schools and districts are working earnestly to implement them. Too often, though, this work is seen as being about "them" (the mentees) rather than about "us" (educators as a group). At the simplest level, this narrow view means that participants see mentoring as a one-way street in which the mentor supplies the new teacher with support and information but receives nothing in return. In more complex terms, experienced teachers lose valuable opportunities to exercise mentoring skills and to support one another in a quest for continuing growth.

Imagine a scenario in which all professional educators in a school are themselves learners. Work is done in partnership with colleagues in pairs, in small groups, and in collaboration with the whole faculty. The focus of this work is ongoing engagement in a process of purposeful inquiry

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designed to improve student learning. This scenario is not yet typical, but it is entirely possible. Pockets of collaboration exist in almost all schools, and the value of expanding them in size and scope cannot be overstated.

PURPOSES AND SKILLS

Mentoring, coaching, and collaboration are types of colleague support that encompass a set of overlapping knowledge and skills relevant to all players in the educational enterprise. Figure 1.1 distinguishes among the various types of colleague support and lists purposes, typical participants, and content and skills pertinent to each type.
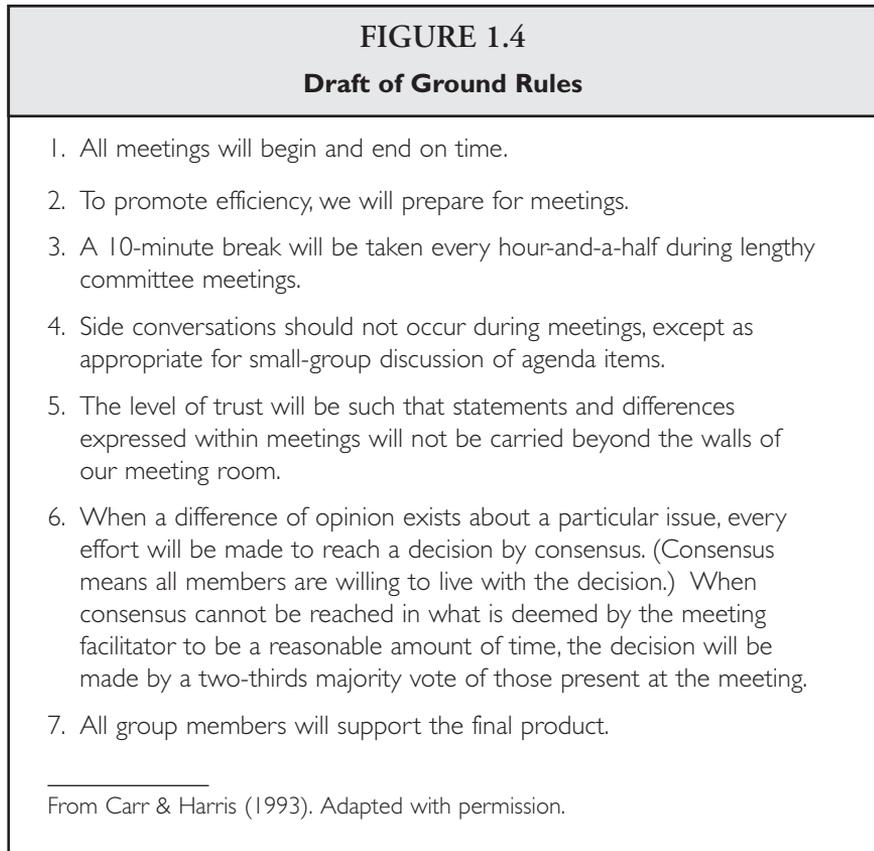
The relationships described in Figure 1.1 are never entirely discrete, but clarifying the roles and purposes of the formal relationships helps to define the knowledge and skills necessary to support a fully collaborative environment. Although some people come by these concepts and processes quite naturally, being clear about roles and purposes and making a commitment to learn and to implement these practices together is the heart of a truly shared journey. Use the information in the figure to plan professional training that supports mentoring, coaching, and collaboration. Figure 1.1 is also a guide for the design of templates and materials that can be used as tools throughout the process of school renewal. It is the framework we used to develop the chapters in this book.

Relationships

Mentoring, coaching, and collaboration are not ultimately about programs, tools, or schedules. Rather, the essence of each is the relationships built around shared purposes and mutual goals among the adults involved. Unlike personal relationships that center on the extent to which the parties *like* one another, professional relationships in schools and districts require understanding of diverse styles, knowledge of effective approaches to communication and dialogue, awareness of critical aspects and stages of team relationships, and the ability to deal with issues in ways that will effectively sustain the relationship.

Personal Styles

Many of the conflicts that arise between people in schools have to do with differences in individual styles of reflecting, interacting, and problem

> **FIGURE 1.4**
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> **Draft of Ground Rules**
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> 1. All meetings will begin and end on time.
>
> 2. To promote efficiency, we will prepare for meetings.
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> 3. A 10-minute break will be taken every hour-and-a-half during lengthy committee meetings.
>
> 4. Side conversations should not occur during meetings, except as appropriate for small-group discussion of agenda items.
>
> 5. The level of trust will be such that statements and differences expressed within meetings will not be carried beyond the walls of our meeting room.
>
> 6. When a difference of opinion exists about a particular issue, every effort will be made to reach a decision by consensus. (Consensus means all members are willing to live with the decision.) When consensus cannot be reached in what is deemed by the meeting facilitator to be a reasonable amount of time, the decision will be made by a two-thirds majority vote of those present at the meeting.
>
> 7. All group members will support the final product.
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> From Carr & Harris (1993). Adapted with permission.

members do their work together. Identifying and agreeing to ground rules at the outset establishes an efficient approach to getting the job done and creates a safe working environment in which differences of opinion can be resolved. A group, working independently, can brainstorm, refine, and adopt ground rules. Many groups start with a draft list of ground rules, such as those shown in Figure 1.4, and work to revise and adapt them to best suit the group.

Once the ground rules are adopted, the facilitator and the group should use them consistently; the group should occasionally assess its use of them. The ground rules may be revised whenever the group as a whole decides to do so.

Creating Agendas. An agenda sets the focus of the meeting, helps to ensure that what needs to get done gets done, and establishes the pace that

FIGURE 4.7
Five-Phase Coaching Model

This coaching model is effective with peer coaches or coaches working with beginning teachers. We recommend two full rounds of coaching to assist and to support change.

Phase	Description	Sample Coach Notes
Pre-Observation Conference*	Discuss standards and evidence, student strengths and weaknesses, classroom management, instructional strategies, and student assessment strategies of an upcoming lesson (e.g., teaching and learning activity or routine). Discuss the teacher's concerns or interests. Teacher and coach agree that the coach will gather data on specific student or teacher behaviors during the observation. They also select or design a data-collection system.	**Suggested prompt for getting the conversation started:** What are you concerned about that might help you improve your practice? This first-year high school mathematics teacher is very concerned about one of her classes. She is discouraged about teaching because of this particular class, although her other classes are going well. She asked me to observe the class and to take notes during the whole 50 minutes. Together we decided that I will observe the behaviors of all students and use codes to denote their on-task behavior (T), off-task behavior (O), and disruptiveness (D). I will observe 16 students. I will watch each student for about 1 minute. After I observe each student for 1 minute, I will repeat the process. We calculated that I will observe each student for a total of 7 minutes.

FIGURE 4.7 (continued)

Phase	Description	Sample Coach Notes
Classroom Observation	Coach observes lesson using observation system agreed on in the pre-observation conference.	(excerpt from observation)
		Ray TTTT O OTTTTTTTT O OTT
		Denise O O O OTTTTT TTTTT TT T
		Charles TTTTTTTTT O O TTTTTTT
		Ed O O O DDDDDDTTTTTTTDD
		Sue TTTTT O OTTTTT O OTTT
	The coach collects only the agreed-upon data.	Marjorie TTT D D D D DTTT TTTT D D
Analysis and Strategy	Coach analyzes observation data and determines best way to report to teacher.	Using Excel, I made a chart revealing what percentage of the time each student was on task, off task, or disruptive.
	Coach determines interpersonal approach to use for the post-observation conference.	Using a nondirective approach, I asked the teacher to look at the chart and see what she noticed. To her astonishment, she found that the students were on task more of the time than she thought.
	Interpersonal Skills (Glickman, 1990)	
	Nondirective approach—coach uses listening, paraphrasing, clarifying and reflecting behaviors.	
	Collaborative approach—coach does more presenting, problem solving, and negotiating.	I also recorded who was disruptive and who else was involved. I asked her what she noticed about this data.
	Directive (informational) approach—coach emphasizes directing and standardizing, giving teacher considerable information and restricted choice.	