

A Guide to  
**Literacy  
Coaching**

**Helping Teachers Increase  
Student Achievement**

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# Preface

**A** *Guide to Literacy Coaching* is intended to help both novice and experienced professionals who serve as literacy coaches in our nation's schools. Professional development is an expectation and requirement for every teacher. Growing as professionals and learning our craft form a dynamic process that hinges on the pedagogical skills we possess, the culture of our schools, and the interactions in our classrooms. Using a guide to aid professional development is certainly an important aspect of coaching. We sincerely hope that this book will be considered worthy of frequent reference and cause for reflection by those who use it for individual or collective professional development. Professional development opportunities and funding are as varied as schools from east to west. Credible resources, such as this book, are tools for aiding collaboration between literacy coaches and the teachers, specialists, and administrators with whom they work.

The role of the coach is both challenging and rewarding. We feel that the availability of a competent literacy coach is the right of every school. However, we recognize that some American schools have no coaches while others have several. This book is not meant to take the place of a coach but to help guide the coaching process. It will be useful for those who study the coaching process in graduate classes and for those who are already coaching practitioners.

The structure of this book was designed to help with the practical nature of daily coaching and feedback to teachers. The ten chapters are arranged to connect the practical and theoretical issues that most coaches will encounter. The sequence of topics proceeds from the nature of the role and the multiplicity of tasks to the various groups of people with whom coaches must be able to collaborate. The final chapter contains information on recent documents that have an impact on instructional practices in our schools and of which coaches should be aware.

The charts and forms included in the resources and figures throughout the book provide practical items that may be used and reused by

coaches in a variety of situations. Readers will find that each chapter is formulated according to a uniform structure. A scenario sets the stage for the content of material presented and the process of coaching that may be imminent for coaches. Each chapter closes with three specific features: (1) opinions of experts who were interviewed about relevant topics within the chapter, (2) a summary of pertinent content, and (3) extension topics for discussion in graduate courses or in professional development settings.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the role of the coach and makes a case for the importance of literacy coaches within both the elementary and secondary schools. Position statements about the coach and qualifications necessary for coaching are discussed. Some historical information is provided about the evolution of the role of coaching.

The multiple roles of the coach, facilitator, observer, colleague, and learner are thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 2. We feel the discussion of multiple roles is a natural link between the nature of coaching and the chapters that follow, in particular the advice that is offered in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 provides in-depth information for those just beginning to serve as literacy coaches. A time line and other practical forms and charts help to make clear, succinct statements about planning and implementing coaching techniques either as a novice coach or as a coach who is continuing in the role.

Chapters 4 and 5 address the specific situations and groups that the literacy coach will encounter in typical work experiences. Chapter 4 offers suggestions for working in primary/elementary, middle, and high schools and in special education classrooms. Since one rarely knows where a professional path may lead, it is important that the coach have a good overview of both elementary and secondary levels as well as what is involved in working in classrooms of special needs learners. The section on interventions offers current information on strategies that all classroom teachers should be aware of when assessing what their students need and how they will provide instruction to meet those needs. Chapter 5 discusses the coach's possible collaboration with parents and educational agencies. It also provides information about professional organizations that serve as resources for the coach.

Chapter 6, "Literacy Leadership," addresses one of the main roles of coaching. As an informal leader who is a colleague to teachers, the literacy coach needs to have a collaborative working relationship with school administrators and other leaders. This chapter addresses these relationships.

The topic of collaboration is thoroughly explored in Chapters 7 and 8. Since difficulties may arise when teachers struggle with either the content or process of teaching, Chapter 7 focuses on how the coach may

assist these teachers. Chapter 8 deals with collaboration with other professionals and school personnel both within and outside the school. This chapter also emphasizes the important role of the coach in facilitating professional development.

Chapter 9 describes the various types of student data with which the literacy coach should be familiar: schoolwide assessments, classroom assessments, and individual student observations and assessments. As discussed in this chapter, the coach should be able to make sound decisions, share assessment information cogently, and write reports based on the data.

Chapter 10 shares information about national documents related to today's educational practices. Although the full documents are not included, we recommend that coaches read the primary sources themselves and have a full understanding of them. The information we have shared provides concise accounts of the documents, as well as some cautions and recommendations.

Whatever your professional role in the schools across America—whether teacher, specialist, or administrator—we hope you find *A Guide to Literacy Coaching* to be a valuable addition to your professional resource library and to your personal professional development.

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