

## Where we've been, where we're going

By Dana Anderson, ESD 113  
Assistant Superintendent

In Washington state the conversation about how to improve student learning is shifting toward a focused effort to identify what constitutes quality instruction. The state curriculum and assessments systems are very well articulated and fairly uniformly implemented across school systems. Although the connection between instructional reforms has lagged behind curriculum and assessment reforms, the movement toward identifying instructional standards is gaining momentum (Baker et al., 2005). Supporting the transformation to powerful teaching and learning requires that teachers have the opportunity to experience it themselves by observation, through modeling and in a context they find familiar (Showers et al., 1987). This is more than engaging teachers in annual planning activities; it is a deliberate, ongoing effort to change instruction. It is, in the words of one educational researcher (Schmoker, 2004), an "ongoing, messy work" that has been notably absent in the typical experience of most school staff. This at least partly explains the failure of most reform to significantly raise levels of student achievement.

In support of changes in classroom practice, school systems are seeking new ways to support staff through professional development activities. One

significant shift is the move toward job embedded, ongoing professional development (Sparks and Hirsch, 1997). Often referred to as 'Coaching', 'Peer Coaching', or 'Mentoring', this form of professional development typically involves employing an external staff member, with both deep content knowledge and specialized training in supporting staff development activities. The primary defining characteristics

(Loucks-Horsley et al., 1996) of Peer Coaching are a focus on using effective instructional practices, modeling of instructional strategies with teachers' students and the development of a learning community. The coach functions in a wide variety of roles, all of which are highly personalized and varied based upon the context and needs of the learner. This makes it very difficult to clearly define the roles

*(Continued on page 2.)*

## Coaching to improve teaching

“Coaching provides a model of respectful collegial reflection about instructional decisions. The benefits are seen in student learning gains, increased teacher efficacy, and increased satisfaction with one's work and the collaborative culture found in the school,” according to Kathryn Harwell-Kee, an assistant superintendent from Texas, writing for the Journal of Staff Development published by the National Staff Development Council.

“Coaching is teachers talking and acting in a purposeful way, with the goal of continuously improving their teaching practice,” Harwell-Kee explains. “A coach is a critical listener/observer, who asks questions, makes observations and offers suggestions that help a teacher grow and reflect and produce different decisions. Coaching activities provide a structure in which these interactions can take place.”

She goes on to say that, “mentoring is one form of coaching, but not all coaching is mentoring.” Mentoring refers to an experienced teacher working with a newcomer, while coaching “is a continuous growth process for people of all experience levels.”

Explaining that good coaches are also good listeners, she advises that teachers who seek to engender understanding in students are exhibiting behaviors that will make them good coaches.

This publication offers a look at coaching and at how the staff at ESD 113 can help districts with this important aspect of professional development. We have provided:

- ◆ Brief background information,
- ◆ Items you can use as you lead discussions with staff and others in your community,
- ◆ Materials you can use in your district communication efforts, and
- ◆ Resources for additional information and assistance.

## Where . . .

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of a coach or mentor (Wildman et al., 1992). The primary roles tend to fall into the following functions: role model, instructor/promoter of thinking skills, teacher, motivator/promoter of realistic values, and mentor.

For the past six years, ESD 113 has offered the support services of content specialists to schools and districts within our region. Our staff has developed a model for professional development that provides a continuum of service in the area of instructional coaching.

At one stage in the continuum, ESD content specialists work directly with classroom teachers through ongoing, job-embedded professional development activities. Our goal is twofold, to provide support for teachers who are striving to improve their own instructional practices and to create a professional learning community within the school. Working directly with teachers for multiple days we are able to build strong relationships and facilitate building-wide change.

### Where we are going

ESD 113 staff will also provide mentorship, training, and support to district staff members who are coaching others in their districts. We have learned that strong classroom teachers make effective instructional coaches, but they need training and support as they move from working primarily with students to working primarily with fellow staff members.

Drawing upon research and our own experiences, our staff will provide coaching support for the coaches. We believe that our staff will provide valuable support through this program to districts that have previously not felt the need to partner with the ESD for professional development programs.

Although we have moved away from workshops as a primary training tool, we continue to provide them for the purposes of raising awareness and building common understandings. In the area of instructional coaching we will provide workshops and short duration training events for school leaders who are exploring what it means to offer professional development in new ways, as well as, short courses on what it means to be a content area specialist or a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA).

At ESD 113, we believe we have built a sound model for supporting

professional development that is based on research and proven to improve student learning. If you are interested in learning more about how we can partner with you in reaching your school improvement goals, please feel free to contact any of our staff in the Teaching and Learning Department. We look forward to serving you.

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Contact Anderson at [danderson@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:danderson@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6711. See the list on this page for other contacts at ESD 113 regarding teaching and learning.

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## ESD 113 Teaching & Learning Staff

Dr. Kathy Budge, Assistant Superintendent,  
[kbudge@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:kbudge@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6710

Dana Anderson, Assistant Superintendent,  
[danderson@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:danderson@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6711

### School Improvement Specialists

Sue Feldman, [sfeldman@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:sfeldman@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6719  
Charlene Allen, [callen@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:callen@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6715

### Content Specialists

#### Reading & Writing

Ann Carper, [acarper@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:acarper@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6707  
Cheryl Vance, [cvance@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:cvance@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6706

#### Math

Janet Collier, [jcollier@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:jcollier@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6703  
Joel Williams, [jwilliams@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:jwilliams@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6705  
Heather Dorsey, [hdorsey@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:hdorsey@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6704  
Tom Boyce, [tboyce@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:tboyce@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (253) 912-8724

### Special Ed., Parent Involvement, ParaProfessionals

Sheila Chaney, [schaney@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:schaney@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6718

### Early Childhood

Mary Perkins, [mperkins@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:mperkins@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6716

### Math & Technology

Cindy Jouper, [cjouper@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:cjouper@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6708

### Peer Coaching & Technology Infusion

Dick Barnhart, [dickb@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:dickb@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6725

For general information or to schedule an appointment, contact Wanda Rathsack at [wathsack@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:wathsack@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6713

# ESD 113's Teacher Connection Project

By Dr. Kathy Budge, ESD 113  
Assistant Superintendent

**Se hace camino al andar.  
"We make the road by walking."**

**D**uring the 1998-99 school year, ESD 113 staff began an internal reorganization to better meet the needs of schools and to promote research-based school improvement strategies. Staff from throughout the agency, with expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment, special education, early childhood, Title 1, technology integration, safe and healthy environments, professional development, community involvement, and extended learning opportunities, began collaborating and planning. Traditionally operating separately and often in isolation, staff members from several departments and programs began learning about each other's programs and areas of expertise and formed what became known as the School Improvement Program Team (SIPT). After working together for a year, the team articulated a shared purpose and a set of beliefs and covenants as a foundation for continued collaboration in providing innovative service delivery models to schools and districts.

Nine of the forty-five school districts in ESD 113 had curriculum directors or internal assistance in the areas of curriculum and instruction at the district level. The capacity of small, rural, and remote school districts to improve instructional practices without support from external sources was clearly a challenge, and districts were increasingly requesting more on-site assistance. Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) provided

common content standards to which local curriculum could be aligned, and the Classroom-based Assessment Tool Kit provided models for assessing student progress; however, the "missing link" between aligned curricula and student assessment was "instruction." To improve instruction, teachers needed opportunities for professional learning.

ESD 113 hired a school improvement specialist and a team of veteran teachers as content specialists. These master teachers had expertise in reading, writing, math, science, technology integration, and working with disadvantaged and disabled students. Eight schools selected to participate in a two-year project coined the Teacher Connection Project (TCP). Content specialists provided on-site, job-embedded opportunities for professional learning. Studies have shown "a large and dramatic" increase in the ability of teachers to integrate new knowledge and skill into

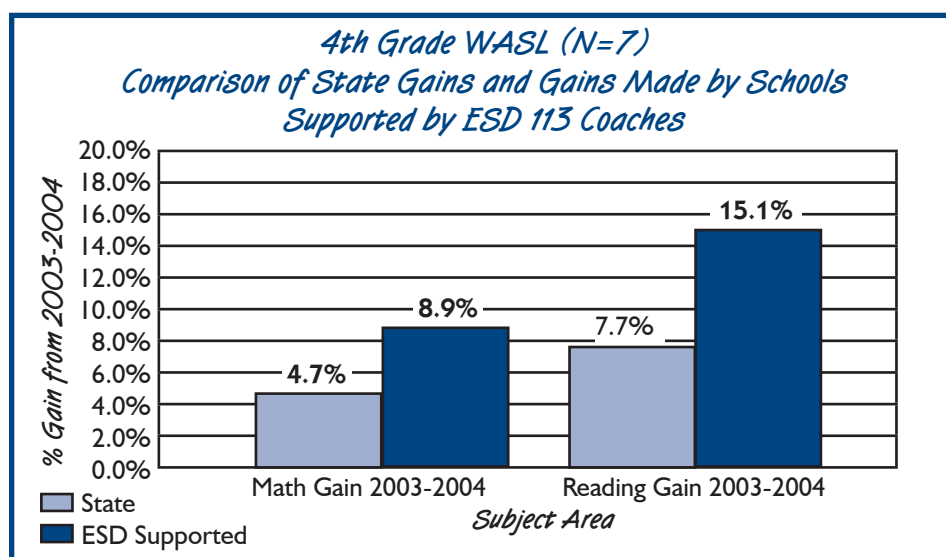
their existing repertoire when in-class coaching is included in a professional development model (Joyce & Shower, 1988). Following the first two-year cycle, additional schools were selected to participate in the subsequent two years of the project. Due to changes in funding, the ESD is no longer able to offer the program as a grant, thus TCP is now offered to the region's school districts for a fee.

Although a small sample, student achievement data shows that students in schools served by ESD 113's Teacher Connection Project have made greater achievement gains than other students from throughout the state. Not only have teachers and students learned, Teacher Connection Project staff "made the road by walking" with those they served and learned a great deal too.

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Contact Budge at [kbudge@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:kbudge@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6710.

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# What is a professional learning community?

Reports in the literature are quite clear about what academically successful professional learning communities look like and act like. Transforming a school organization into a learning community requires:

- ◆ Supportive and shared leadership: the collegial and facilitative participation of the principal who shares leadership – and thus, power and authority – through inviting staff input in decision making;
- ◆ Shared values and vision: a shared vision that is developed from an unswerving commitment on the part of staff to students' learning and that is consistently articulated and referenced for the staff's work;
- ◆ Collective learning and application of learning: collective learning among staff and application of the learning to solutions that address students' needs;
- ◆ Shared personal practice: the visitation and review of each teacher's classroom behavior by peers as a feedback and

assistance activity to support individual and community improvement; and

- ◆ Supportive conditions: physical conditions and human capacities that support such an operation.

Professional learning communities can be a significant force for empowering staff that leads to school change and improvement and increased student outcomes. This may require, however, changing the belief held by many in the public and in the teaching profession that the only legitimate use of a teacher's time is standing in front of the class, working directly with students. Teachers will be using a greater portion of their time in planning, conferring with colleagues, working with students individually, visiting other classrooms, and engaging in other professional development activities.

#### **For staff, the results include:**

- reduction of isolation of teachers;
- increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigor in working

to strengthen the mission;

- shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success;
- powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice, that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners;
- increased meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles that they play in helping all students achieve expectations;
- higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students;
- more satisfaction and higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism;
- significant advances into making teaching adaptations for students, and changes for learners made more quickly than in traditional schools;
- commitment to making significant and lasting changes; and
- higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental, systemic change.

#### **For students, the results include:**

- decreased dropout rate and fewer classes "cut";
- lower rates of absenteeism;
- increased learning that is distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools;
- larger academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools; and
- smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.

Source: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), <http://www.sedl.org>

*“Coaching is a relationship between two equals, one of whom is committed to making personal and professional improvements. These improvements may come in the form of wanting to learn new strategies, to get unblocked or unstuck, to reevaluate beliefs or values affecting professional outlook. It could be to look at habits or change strategies. Whatever it is, the person being coached – the coachee – takes ownership of his or her own improvement. Therein lies its power.”*

From "Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching," by Stephen G. Barkley, Executive Vice President of Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

# Centralia uses coaches to align curriculum, assess progress & improve instruction

A three-pronged approach to teacher coaching is helping the Centralia School District meet the challenges of preparing students to pass mandatory tests as a graduation requirement.

“We want to know how students are performing throughout the school year,” said John Bash, director of teaching, learning and special programs in Centralia. “Our goal is to assess students often

so we can intervene early, and our coaches are helping us in that effort.”

Bash said teacher coaching in Centralia began three years ago when the district became part of an OSPI-sponsored program called Math Helping Corps, which was aimed at middle school math students. The use of coaching for teacher professional development has increased considerably since then, and the district presently contracts with ESD 113 for teacher coaches throughout the system from kindergarten through grade 12.

Bash listed three purposes for using teacher coaches, the first of which is to align the district’s core curriculum with state grade level expectations and learning standards.

The second purpose is to help in the development of assessment tools “so we know along the way how our students are progressing,” Bash said. The third purpose served by coaches is to improve instruction.

“Coaches are modeling lessons for teachers; they are observing teachers and giving them feedback, and they are teaching our teachers about best practices in math, reading and writing,” he said.

The decision of how coaches are assigned in Centralia is based on the greatest need, which is determined through data analysis by subject area and grade level.

Bash said feedback from teachers receiving coaching assistance has been very positive.

“They continually ask us for more coaching than we are currently providing which tells us they value this support,” he said.

*“Coaches are modeling lessons for teachers; they are observing teachers and giving them feedback, and they are teaching our teachers about best practices in math, reading and writing.”*

– John Bash

“Teachers also are seeing more opportunities to collaborate with each other as a result of their experiences with coaching.”

He explained that coaches facilitate many collaborative activities and training with groups of teachers often made up of grade level teams, departments or an entire school staff.

Bash said coaching provides an ideal model for professional development because teachers are collaborating with colleagues facing similar teaching and learning challenges while also receiving guidance and training from skilled coaches.

“Feedback from teachers has been extremely valuable in improving practices and in identifying where kids are struggling so we can help them during the year rather than waiting for WASL results which come after the school year ends,” Bash said.

The coaching program in Centralia has been developed using a two-phase approach. The

first phase is based on Robert Marzano’s research showing that to improve achievement a district needs to make sure the curriculum being taught truly aligns with state learning standards.

Bash said that in this first phase, coaches work with teachers to design unit plans, lessons and assessments that are aligned.

“In reviewing core curriculum, they add to it and take away from

it based on what the grade level expectations indicate,” he said.

Phase two is a more intense focus on improving classroom

instruction as teachers implement completed unit plans.

“At the end of phase one we end up with a curriculum map,” Bash said. “Beyond the text books and teacher resources purchased from a publisher, we now have unit guides that teachers can use to strategically plan instruction.”

Phase one and two activities promote continuity and consistency in what is taught in all schools throughout the district. This is important in Centralia as students from several elementary schools move to a single middle school program in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Development of a complete set of unit plans takes an entire school year in Centralia. The focus this year was elementary mathematics from kindergarten through grade six. Bash said plans are being implemented as they are developed by teachers and coaches.

While it takes a considerable amount of time and resources to

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## Centralia . . .

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develop a complete plan, the effort is a necessary part of professional development for teachers and program improvement for our system, Bash explained.

He said that while events such as one-day workshops and seminars provide initial enthusiasm, there is usually no real long range effect.

“It is a continuing process,” he said. “When you provide teachers with ongoing feedback and support regarding specific initiatives you are implementing, the likelihood of those things succeeding is far greater than single events or one-time training.”

What does it take to be a good coach? According to Bash, the essentials include much more than content expertise.

“Our most effective coaches not only have strong content expertise, they also have effective communication skills, facilitation skills, human relation skills, and an ability to work with a wide range of personalities and learning styles.”

Financing of coaches in Centralia comes from five sources, including federal Titles I and IIA, plus Initiative 728. Other funding comes from the Basic Education budget and state Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funds.

Bash said the long-term goal of the coaching program is to help teacher teams develop the capacity to continuously review and improve curriculum, instruction and assessments together as a team. Coaches are helping develop this capacity by modeling and facilitating planning agendas and activities and encouraging long-range planning for this with school and district leaders.

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For more information about the Centralia program, contact Bash at [jbash@centralia.wednet.edu](mailto:jbash@centralia.wednet.edu) or (360) 330-7600.

“It’s impossible to have exemplary schools without exemplary principals. Beginning principals deserve the chance to become exemplary leaders by training with a masterful coach. From Bacall to Baryshnikov, Pavarotti to Pacino, every great performer has a coach!”

From “Scaffolding for New Leaders” by Suzette Lovely for The School Administrator, American Association of School Administrators

## Why is coaching an important part of professional development?

Jeanne White Murphy, senior project director for the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center, writes that coaching:

1. Is essential for implementation of new curriculum and instructional strategies into classroom practice.  
Just because a teacher has read about, heard about, or attended a “training session” on a new instructional strategy, does NOT mean it will be used in the classroom. Research shows that results will be very low if only theory, demonstration, and practice are used to teach new instructional strategies with an expectation that implementation will occur. However, when peer coaching is included, the implementation of new instructional strategies into classroom practice is much higher.
2. Directly influences implementation and teacher effectiveness which leads to increased student achievement.
3. Deepens subject matter knowledge of teachers by encouraging teachers to examine student work, curriculum materials, and subject matter in relation to content and performance standards.
4. Breaks down isolation and gives teachers opportunities to plan lessons together, observe and learn from each other, share materials and strategies.
5. Offers meaningful intellectual and social engagement with ideas around teaching and learning practices and thus increases the thinking a teacher does about student work and classroom practice.
6. Provides follow-up, support and ongoing, professionally-embedded assistance.  
“Successful staff development rests not so much in the initial training, but in what happens afterward. It is the follow-up, the support, and the ongoing professionally-embedded assistance that make the real difference.” (Guskey, Journal of Staff Development, Spring, 1998)
7. Builds communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft. Ongoing conversations can be incorporated into teacher’s daily work through joint planning, study groups, and peer coaching.
8. Uses data to inform teaching practices and encourages teachers to jointly collect and examine student achievement data and use it to determine the areas of focus and intervention.

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Adapted from the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center’s participants’ materials for “Coaching for Results”

# How do teachers learn to acquire new skills?

**B**ruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, authors of “Student Achievement through Staff Development,” use research on training, curriculum implementation, school improvement and change and their own experience of sustained, systematic development programs to identify practices, attitudes and skills which seemed to help teachers develop an aptitude for learning. These include:

- ◆ **Persistence:** every educator knows the importance of practice for children. From their evidence base they conclude that persistence, even when initially uncomfortable, was a characteristic of successful learners.

- ◆ **Acknowledgement of the transfer problem:** teachers need to understand that the transfer of training is a separate learning task from the acquisition of knowledge or skills.

- ◆ **Teaching new behaviors to students:** students are discomfited by change, especially when they are succeeding in existing conditions. Teachers who directly teach both the cognitive and the social tasks required by specific innovations are more likely to achieve successful transfer.

- ◆ **Understanding the importance of the underlying theory:** teachers who master the theory

underlying new behaviors are more likely to achieve similar results to with their own students as those obtained in research settings.

- ◆ **Proactive and productive use of peers:** teachers who used peer support for mutual problem solving, observations, collaborative teaching and planning were more successful in transferring new skills to their own practice.

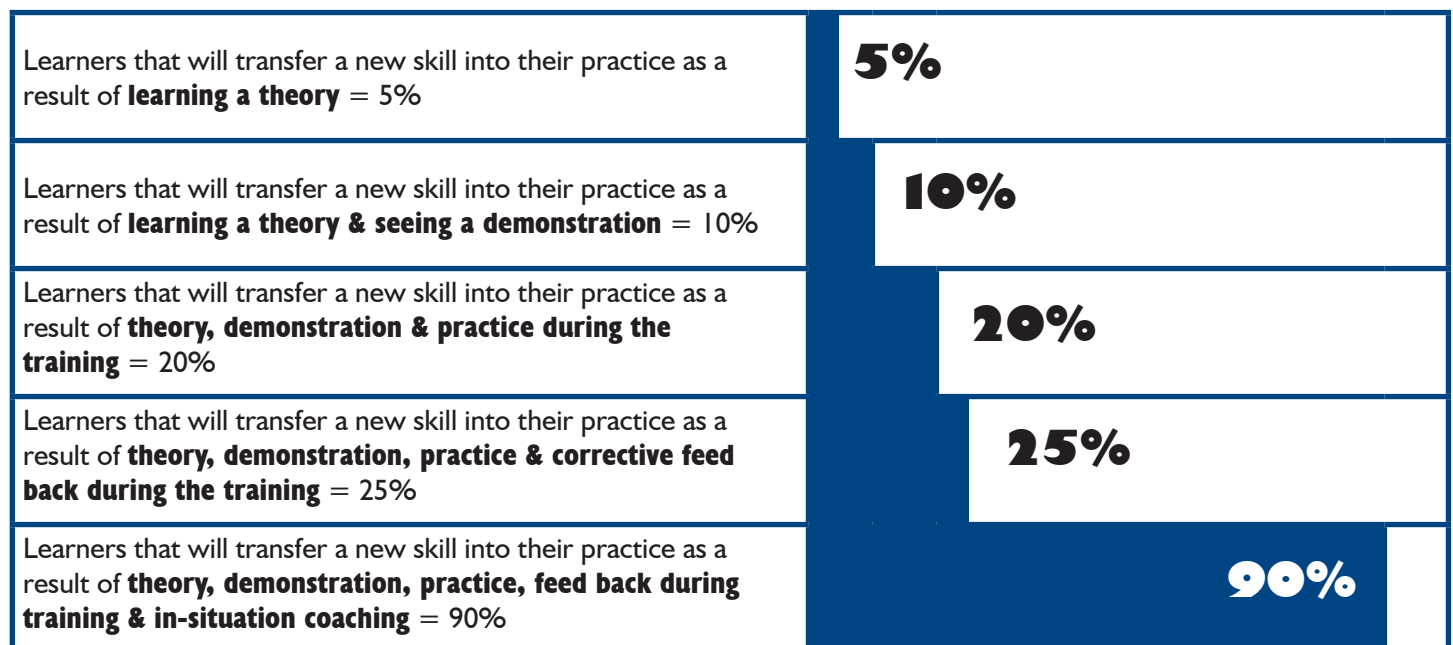
- ◆ **Flexibility:** teachers need to develop a spirit of enquiry, a willingness to experiment with their own behavior and an openness to evidence that alternatives have something to offer.

## Transferring training into practice

In 1987, Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers released the findings of their research into the extent of someone using a new skill in relation to various modes of training and follow-up support. Their findings dramatically show the value of including “coaching” in a comprehensive professional development program, especially if the goal is to make sure that employees implement in practice what they have learned in trainings.

*In their comments regarding these findings, Joyce and Showers acknowledge that no one will take the risks of growing in front of another person, or their advice and coaching, unless they first have a relationship of mutual trust.*

**Joyce and Showers research on the need for in-situation coaching showed that:**



# Researchers share key concepts of coaching

**L**earning how to learn is just as important for teacher professional development as the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, according to Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, authors of "Student Achievement through Staff Development." In their writing they explore a model of coaching in which joint planning and resource development, together with mutual observation and learning from each other are the key elements.

Following are some of the key findings of their research.

- ◆ In addition to the development of knowledge, skills and effective implementation, professional training should allow people to learn how to be more effective learners.
- ◆ Training consists of four main components: developing knowledge, through exploring theory to understand the concepts behind a skill or strategy; the demonstration or modelling of skill; the practice of skill; and peer coaching.
- ◆ The more complex the desired outcomes and the greater the degree of transfer required, the more necessary it will be to use all four training components; however a multi-faceted design is necessary whatever the desired outcome.
- ◆ For teachers to become effective learners, they need specific attitudes and skills, including persistence, understanding of the transfer of training, understanding of the need for theory and the ability to use peers productively.
- ◆ Peer coaching not only contributes to the transfer of training; it also facilitates the development of new school norms of collegiality and experimentation.
- ◆ The primary activity of peer coaching is collaborative planning and development.

## Why staff development?

### Curriculum Implementation

- Clarify content knowledge in curriculum
- Increase or update content knowledge in subject area
- Gain cooperative compliance for essential program elements
- Encourage adaptation of flexible program elements
- Model what successful implementation looks like
- Coach for technical support and to resolve implementation problems

### Instructional Improvement

- Improve technical skills of teaching
- Increase repertoire of instructional strategies
- Develop teacher's individual strengths
- Build competence and strengths in teacher's weaker areas
- Develop collaborative structures and supportive relationships

### Professional Development

- Establish norms of:
  - continuous adult learning

- experimentation & openness to new ideas
- openness to feed back from peers
- Encourage
  - responsible autonomous decisions that reflect district goals & values
  - child-centered, engaging instruction
- Build a collaborative work culture
- Develop skills of:
  - reflective self-analysis
  - self-assessment
  - goal setting for improvement

### School/Organizational Development

- Create clarity, integration & commitment to goals at all levels
- Improve the quality of interactions & relationships to improve group effectiveness
- Improve the professional work climate
- Improve structures that facilitate improvement
- Eliminate dysfunctional structures and practices

- Design processes to provide feed back for renewal

Source: Barry Sweeny, president of Best Practice Resources, <http://www.teachermentors.com>

## Nine roles of the school-based coach

- ◆ Catalyst for change
- ◆ Classroom supporter
- ◆ Curriculum specialist
- ◆ Data coach
- ◆ Instructional specialist
- ◆ Learning facilitator
- ◆ Mentor
- ◆ Resource provider
- ◆ School leader

From: An article by Joellen Killion and Cynthia Harrison for the National Staff Development Council

# Principles for adult learning

The following principles for adult learning were adapted from the research of John Goodlad.

## Adults prefer learning situations which:

### 1. Are practical and problem-centered, so...

- ◆ Give overviews, summaries, examples, and use stories to link theory to practice.
- ◆ Discuss and help them plan for direct application of the new information.
- ◆ Use collaborative, authentic problem-solving activities.
- ◆ Anticipate problems applying the new ideas to their settings and offer suggestions.

**Caution:** Guard against becoming too theoretical.

### 2. Promote their positive self esteem, so...

- ◆ Provide low-risk activities in small group settings.
- ◆ Plan for building individual success incrementally.
- ◆ Help them become more effective and confident through guided practice and establishing routines.

**Caution:** Readiness to learn depends on self-esteem.

### 3. Integrate new ideas with existing knowledge, so...

- ◆ Help them recall what they already know from prior experience that relates to the topic of learning.
- ◆ Share your agenda and assumptions and ask for input. Adjust time for topics to fit their needs.
- ◆ Use a continuum that describes a range of skill and knowledge. Ask them to apply stickers or marks showing what their current level of knowledge/skill is in the topic(s).
- ◆ Ask what they would like to know about the topic.
- ◆ Build in options within your plan so you can easily shift to address needs.
- ◆ Suggest follow up ideas and next steps for support and implementation after the session.

**Caution:** Collect needs data, and match the degree of choice to their level of development.

### 4. Show respect for the individual learner, so...

- ◆ Provide for their physical needs through breaks, snacks, coffee, comfort.
- ◆ Provide a quality, well organized, differentiated experience that uses time effectively and efficiently.
- ◆ Avoid jargon and don't "talk down" to participants.
- ◆ Validate and affirm their knowledge, contributions and successes.

- ◆ Ask for feedback on your work or ideas, provide input opportunities.

**Caution:** Watch your choice of words to avoid creating negative perceptions.

### 5. Capitalize on their experience, so...

- ◆ Don't ignore what they already know, it's a resource for you.
- ◆ Plan alternate activities and choice so they can adjust the process to fit their experience level.
- ◆ Create activities that use their experience and knowledge.
- ◆ Listen and collect data about participant needs before, during and after the event.

**Caution:** Provide for the possibility of a need to unlearn old habits or confront inaccurate beliefs.

### 6. Allow choice and self-direction, so . . .

- ◆ Build your plans around their needs, compare desired behaviors (goals) and actual behaviors.
- ◆ Share your agenda and assumptions and ask for input on them.
- ◆ Ask what they know already about the topic (their perception).
- ◆ Ask what they would like to know about the topic.
- ◆ Build in options within your plan so you can easily shift if needed.
- ◆ Allow time for planning their next steps.

**Cautions:** Match the degree of choice to their level of development. Also, since there may be things they are unaware that they don't know, use a mix of their perception of needs AND research on needs and organizational needs and calendar to guide your planning.

## Outcomes of Coaching

Embedded within the coaching process are three outcomes that are enjoyed by the person being coached – the teacher.

### Celebrations

The first outcome of coaching is Celebration. Celebrations are opportunities to give colleagues recognition. This recognition adds quality to a teacher's life. This is their chance to have a "wow" (quality) experience.

### Options

The second outcome of coaching is Options. Who are the greatest teachers? The greatest teachers are those with the longest list of options at their disposal. They are not great teachers because they know what to do. They are great teachers because they always

*(Continued on page 10.)*

## Conditions that support coaching

**P**rior to determining that it wants to initiate a coaching model, a district would do well to ask itself the following questions:

- ◆ What are our professional development goals and what do we want to accomplish with our overall professional development program?
- ◆ What would we gain from having coaching as part of our repertoire of teacher/principal learning opportunities?
- ◆ What would coaches do to help us achieve our instructional goals?
- ◆ Are there other approaches to achieving our goal, and might they be more appropriate for us?
- ◆ What else, in addition to coaching, would we have to support to help us reach our instructional goals?

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### Coaching outcomes . . .

*(Continued from page 9.)*

have something else to try. They never give up. If one thing doesn't work, they try something else.

### Conscious Practice

The third outcome of a coaching program is Conscious Practice. Learning a new strategy or skill takes one through various steps of achievement. As teachers try different techniques, they are given opportunities with a supportive coach to practice those techniques consciously, without fear of reprisal. They practice in a safe, trusting environment. This not only provides more confidence but underscores the value of more options available to practice.

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From "Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching," by Stephen G. Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

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As you contemplate these questions, be prepared to provide an organizational structure that will sustain reform efforts, and remember that for coaching to be effective, district leaders need to:

- ◆ Provide clear, explicit and continuing support for the coaching program.
- ◆ Understand the reforms in which schools are engaged and possess the knowledge and skill with which to support schools in implementing them.
- ◆ Ensure that the coaches have well-specified roles and make coaches' roles and responsibilities clear to all of the district's educators.
- ◆ Provide principals with professional development that enables them to create a school culture in which coaching is both routine and safe.
- ◆ Ensure that the process of selecting coaches at the district and school levels is rigorous and fair and results in the hiring of coaches who will be credible to the teachers and principals with whom they work.
- ◆ Honor coaches' roles and not divert their time to other school needs.
- ◆ Acknowledge that conversations between coaches and principals about teachers' work might cause tension.
- ◆ Have substantial knowledge about the content reforms their teachers are trying to implement.

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Source: "Coaching: A Strategy for Developing Instructional Capacity" by Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper, published by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

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## What your staff developers can do to support schools

**B**rUCE Joyce and Beverly Showers, authors of "Student Achievement through Staff Development," suggest a number of specific behaviors which staff developers can incorporate into their training and support for teachers and principals.

### They can:

- ◆ Help schools and teams of teachers to redesign their workplaces. Instead of just recommending schools provide time for collaborative working, for example, they can begin to help them solve the problem of finding the time;
- ◆ Ensure that peer coaching study teams are formed on the first day of training, to give them opportunities to experiment with productive ways of working together;
- ◆ Provide examples of structures or formats for collaborative planning, for example by offering a structure or scaffold for a sample planning activity; and
- ◆ Build in time for peer coaching teams to plan how they will monitor their implementation of the new initiative and how they will determine the effect of the initiative on their students.

Joyce and Showers acknowledge the extra time (and hence costs) of these types of activities in training sessions but conclude that the additional effort is well worth the investment.

# Napavine uses coaching to support staff, enhance program for students

**A** dreaded double levy failure last year brought cuts in custodial maintenance and administration, but the instructional program, including coaches for the teaching staff, was maintained intact in the Napavine School District.

The strategy has paid dividends, and George Crawford, Napavine superintendent, is proud of the fact that students in his district have exceeded all state requirements for improved test scores. He said the district ranks at the top of its category as defined by OSPI.

“We have limited resources, and getting the most we can out of them is essential,” he said. According to Crawford, coaches are “one part of an overall effort to bring research-based effective practices to our district.” Coaches in Napavine are provided through a contract with ESD 113.

Napavine voters approved a levy this year, so levy-loss problems are fading, but that has not changed the focus on academics.

Crawford said coaches fit well in the district where consensus building has been a priority for everyone – beginning with the school board and continuing through the administration and teaching staff.

“We foster an environment of consensus building where staff members have an expectation of being involved and having some say in how things are done,” he said. “It is not a top down environment. We encourage and include people, and we (the administrators) step aside and let others share in the leadership.”

Teacher coaching was a natural for such an environment.

Doug Skinner, the district’s high school principal, said the quality of the coach is an extremely important consideration.

“A successful coach has to be an individual who can come across as not being a know-it-all, but as someone who is obviously very competent,” Skinner said. He added that such a coach must be “someone who has the energy and

The Napavine administrators agreed that another benefit of coaching is that teachers are learning from someone who understands what it is like to be a classroom teacher and to meet expectations of preparing students to meet test requirements.

In varying ways, they said coaches were not the entire answer and added that the willingness of the entire Napavine staff to work together and cooperate on

improving student learning was equally as important.

“If there was not a good climate in our district, I don’t think changes could take place,” Hunt said.

Crawford praised the teaching staff as “the best around”.

“They work well

together. They step in and take an active involvement, and they provide leadership,” he said. “They are the ones who make things happen. We (administrators) are really here in a support role.”

His advice to other school administrators was one of restraint – listening is better than talking sometimes, and everything need not be taken personally.

“Most of my experience in public school settings where there are problems is usually the result of the poor choices and responding or reacting without working as a team,” he said.

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For more information about coaching in Napavine and how that district works with ESD 113, contact Crawford at [gcrawford@napa.k12.wa.us](mailto:gcrawford@napa.k12.wa.us) or (360) 262-3303.

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**“A successful coach has to be an individual who can come across as not being a know-it-all, but as someone who is obviously very competent, . . . someone who has the energy and vivaciousness to bring and generate enthusiasm by his or her own thoughts and actions.”**

– Doug Skinner

vivaciousness to bring and generate enthusiasm by his or her own thoughts and actions.”

“We have been very, very fortunate both this year and last year to have been associated with people who obviously love their jobs, but who listened to us as opposed to simply telling us what to do,” he said of the coaches.

Robert Hunt, elementary principal in Napavine, said coaches were able to align the curriculum to help teachers better prepare students for mandatory testing.

“On-going, hands-on, feedback-type coaching results in our teachers feeling like something is getting done,” he said.

Hunt contrasted coaching with workshops where teachers “get a notebook and some instructions and then, as often times happens, come back to the classroom where they forget what they have learned.”

## Benefits of coaching

There is reason to think that coaching, thoughtfully developed and implemented within a district's coherent professional development plan, will provide teachers with real opportunities to improve their instruction, principals with real opportunities to improve their leadership, and districts with real opportunities to improve their schools.

There is evidence that coaching can produce the following outcomes, which are likely to improve instruction:

- ◆ Better targeted school-based professional development that addresses teachers' and principals' learning needs in light of students' needs;
- ◆ Teacher learning that carries over into classroom practice because the coach helps teachers implement what they have learned;
- ◆ A willingness among teachers to share their practice with

one another and seek learning opportunities from their peers and their coaches, and a willingness to assume collective responsibility for all of their students' learning;

- ◆ High-quality principal leadership of instructional improvement; and
- ◆ School cultures in which instruction is the focus of much teacher and principal discussion, and in which teachers and principals reflect on their practice and its impact on students and use achievement data to drive instructional improvement.

In sum, coaching holds a great deal of promise for districts willing to meet the practical challenges of this difficult work.

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Source: "Coaching: A Strategy for Developing Instructional Capacity" by Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper, published by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

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## Three Kinds of Coaching

All coaching is geared toward a specific goal, whether skills based, theory based, behavioral, or attitudinal. Robert J. Garmston, in his article "How Administrators Support Peer Coaching" (1987), identifies three different coaching approaches. The approach used depends on the ultimate result desired.

### Technical Coaching

Technical Coaching is said to assist teachers in applying their staff development training in the classroom. It relies on the concept that objective feedback can improve teaching performance. Technical coaching is generally given following staff-development workshops on specific teaching methods, such as learning styles or cooperative learning. Its intent is to impart a specific strategy the teacher can apply immediately in the classroom.

### Challenge Coaching

Challenge Coaching involves a group effort. A team forms to resolve specific and ongoing problems – thus the word "challenge." Unlike other forms of coaching, the team may consist of noneducators called in to provide their perspectives and expertise to help resolve a problem. This team approach in a coaching environment requires mutual trust among colleagues as they focus on solving the problem together, whether in the curriculum, instructional techniques, logistics, school structure, classroom management, or any other persistent issue.

### Collegial Coaching

Collegial Coaching focuses on giving teachers time and support to think metacognitively about their work in a safe atmosphere with plenty of support. Its

*(Continued on page 13.)*

“Coaching can move good teachers to become great teachers. It provides the strongest return on the investment of teaching. Coaches may cause discomfort at times. However, great coaches create environments where the coachee is comfortable with discomfort. Discomfort is key to growth and change. When good teachers become uncomfortable, that discomfort gives them impetus to improve, to wake up and get out of their box; it stimulates positive change. Coaching only struggling teachers misses the point of who could be coached, and it often eliminates the opportunity to coach good teachers to greatness.”

From "Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching," by Stephen G. Barkley, Executive Vice President of Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

## What do coaches do?

“Coaching is school-based professional development designed in light of the district’s reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools’ specific instructional learning needs,” according to Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper in “Coaching: A Strategy for Developing Instructional Capacity” published by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

### Change Coaches

Change coaches address whole-school, organizational improvement. Neufeld and Roper say that change coaches can:

- ◆ Help principals understand the importance of recruiting teachers to assume instructional leadership roles to drive whole-school change.
- ◆ Act as strategists and assistants in building capacity for shared decision making.
- ◆ Model leadership skills for principals as well as for teachers.
- ◆ Assist in scheduling.
- ◆ Help principals organize their time so that they are able to

### Kinds of coaching . . .

*(Continued from page 12.)*

intent is to improve teaching practices, enhance relationships with colleagues, and increase professional communication about teaching practices. The underlying notion – backed by research – is that a teacher will acquire and deepen teaching strategies, habits, and reflection about his or her teaching when given an opportunity to develop and practice these skills with feedback from peers.

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From “Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching,” by Stephen G. Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

visit classrooms regularly to observe instruction and offer feedback to teachers.

“Change coaches understand that the focus of their work is on developing instructional leadership knowledge and skill in principals and in teachers. And these coaches understand that, even through their work takes place in a district with a specific approach to school reform, each school varies and coaches must ‘customize’ their work to each school’s particular needs,” write Neufeld and Roper.

### Content Coaches

Content coaches focus their attention on helping teachers improve instruction in a particular academic discipline. The work at both the classroom level and the school level to:

- ◆ Help teachers transfer what they learn about new practices to their classrooms.
- ◆ Help establish a safe environment in which teachers can strive to improve their practice without fear of negative criticism or evaluation.
- ◆ Help teachers develop leadership skills with which they can support the work of their colleagues.
- ◆ Provide small-group professional development sessions for teachers.

“Content coaches do not have a scripted role. They must understand the instructional reform they are helping teachers to implement, they must be skillful in working with adult learners who may be skeptical about – or threatened by – the reforms, and they must know how to adapt their coaching methods to the knowledge and skill of the teachers with whom they are working,” write Neufeld and Roper.

## Are you pretty good?

Rafe Esquith (2003), winner of the American Teacher Award, inspires and challenges us to rethink the way we educate our children in his award-winning book *There Are No Shortcuts*. He cites this poem given him by Charles Osgood of CBS News.

### Pretty Good

There once was a pretty good student,  
Who sat in a pretty good class;  
Who was taught by a pretty good teacher,  
Who always let pretty good pass—  
He wasn't terrific at reading,  
He wasn't a whiz bang at math;  
But for him education was leading  
Straight down a pretty good path.  
He didn't find school too exciting,  
But he wanted to do pretty well;  
And he did have some trouble with writing,  
And no one had taught him to spell.  
When doing arithmetic problems,  
Pretty good was regarded as fine—  
5 plus 5 needn't always add up to be 10,  
A pretty good answer was 9.  
The pretty good class that he sat in  
Was part of a pretty good school;  
And the student was not the exception,  
On the contrary, he was the rule.  
The pretty good student, in fact, was  
Part of a pretty good mob;  
And the first time he knew that he lacked was  
When he looked for a pretty good job.  
It was then, when he sought a position,  
He discovered that life could be tough –  
And he soon had a sneaking suspicion,  
Pretty good might not be good enough.  
The pretty good town in our story  
Was part of a pretty good state,  
Which had pretty good aspirations,  
And prayed for a pretty good fate.  
There once was a pretty good nation,  
Pretty proud of the greatness it had,  
Which learned much too late, if you  
want to be great,  
Pretty good is, in fact, pretty bad.

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From “Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching,” by Stephen G. Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

## My eCoach supports coaching teams

**M**y eCoach is an online learning community dedicated to supporting coaching. This Web site includes easy-to-use communication, collaboration, coaching, curriculum and publishing tools all in one place. Teams are set up by certified eCoaches who have been trained to build and sustain an online learning community. There can be one or more teams in the community with one or more eCoaches. The eCoaches help their team members develop learning goals with individual learning plans; guide them as they meet their goals, and guide them to connect with each other, plan together, and create and publish standards-based curriculum

projects to the Internet. Certified eCoaches can also coach any of their team members to become eCoaches for others in their schools or districts.

The NO LIMIT grant at ESD 113 uses My eCoach as its communication and collaboration tool. Coaches at the ESD share resources with participants, facilitate discussion boards, and coach participants through the development of curriculum projects.

“The schools in NO LIMIT are spread around our region,” Cindy Jouper, ESD 113’s NO LIMIT Coach, explained. “My eCoach has made it much easier for us to maintain contact with our participants. We have also used it

as a collaboration tool for our team of coaches to plan trainings and communicate with one another. We have used everything from chat, to blogs, to discussion forums, to Web resource lists, to the extensive eLibrary. We really appreciate having all of these coaching tools in one place.”

My eCoach offers free accounts with partial access to all of the Web site’s features so that interested educators can check out the program. Visit <http://my-ecoach.com>.

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To set up an online learning community for your school or district with your own eCoaches, contact Cindy Jouper at [cjouper@esd113.k12.wa.us](mailto:cjouper@esd113.k12.wa.us) or (360) 464-6708.

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## Coaching versus supervising

“Coaching duties sometimes look similar to duties performed by supervisors,” Cathy A. Toll, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, says in an article entitled, “Separating Coaching from Supervising.” She writes that, “Coaches need to maintain teachers’ trust while having good communication with the supervisor.”

She offers these tips to coaches and supervisors.

### For coaches

1. Separate yourself from the performance assessment of teachers. Do not participate in any aspect of others’ performance assessment process.
2. If you see a supervisory matter, trust that the supervisor will see it, too.
3. Communicate with supervisors in a neutral manner.
  - Provide a written summary of coaching meetings—individual and group—to those involved and to the

principal routinely.

- Summarize coaching activities as a whole (or by grade level or department, if there are great differences in the work you do among such groups).
  - Consider having a coach’s advisory team with a broad range of representation that will help you evaluate the coaching *process* (not you or your colleagues) and report on the process to supervisors and staff.
4. In difficult situations with teachers, you can avoid acting like a supervisor while taking steps to move ahead by:
    - Asking a peer (teacher or coach) to sit in on a meeting and provide feedback as a critical friend.
    - Discussing with the teacher your concern and asking how to move beyond it.
    - Working with that teacher one-on-one rather than in a group, which will lessen

the negative influence on others.

- Inviting the teacher to take a leadership role in sharing successful practices or leading a study group.
  - Discussing the matter with the teacher’s supervisor *if* you and the supervisor can be sure that the other will not in any way reveal to others that the conversation took place. (Do this rarely and only as a last resort.)
5. If a supervisor tells you that a teacher needs your help in improving performance to the satisfactory level, politely tell the supervisor that you’ll wait for the teacher to approach you about the matter and then you’ll be glad to help.
  6. If a supervisor repeatedly asks you to perform activities that are supervisory in nature, ask for assistance in clarifying your role.

(Continued on page 16.)

## Tenino principal is the team coach

If you are around Tenino High School Principal Jeff Johnson very much, you are going to be subjected to a steady stream of sports metaphors.

Johnson freely admits he is too “coachy,” but adds that such is his style. He said it comes from being a high school athlete at Castle Rock High School in the 1970s and as a high school coach along the way to becoming a principal.

“I’m not the boss, I am the captain of the team,” Johnson said. “I was a high school quarterback and have played sports a lot. From that experience, I learned that the team is only as strong as the weakest link.”

“My job as captain of the team is to recognize our strengths and weaknesses. You rely on everybody, and everybody brings different strengths and weaknesses to the table,” he explained.

He said building a teaching team that works together and whose members support each other is essential to the academic success of our students.

Being flexible in seeking help is also key to keeping the education program on the right track, according to Johnson. He said that sometimes the usual or standard way of doing things “just won’t get the job done.”

He said he ran into just such a problem with the writing test scores of the sophomore class. No matter what was tried, the scores remained bogged down in mediocrity.

“I am smart enough to know when we need help. We had been doing it my way or our way for three years and scores were still in the 50s. It was not for lack of effort. We were taxed out,” Johnson said. “The game had changed, and so we brought in a fresh person with some new ideas.”

**A Closer Look @ Coaching**

In this case, the fresh person was Ann Carper, a content specialist with ESD 113.

“She did not come in here as a know-it-all, but rather brought suggestions and techniques that have helped in other school districts,” Johnson said. One of the strategies she helped us develop was to show students what to expect through the use of simulated WASL tests.

“We can’t expect the kids to do well unless they have had some experience with what they are expected to do and some repetitions at doing it,” he said.

Johnson, who said he knew in the third grade that he would be a coach and team captain someday, thinks lessons learned on the football field or as an athletic coach are serving him well as a principal. He said it is important in the drive to build an academic team to recognize differences in the teaching staff, just like there are differences among athletes.

“Every day I am coaching,” he said. “I know who my star players are. I know who needs help. I know who needs a pat on the back, and who needs more repetitions in order to be able to do better,” he said.

Peer coaching and mentoring within the high school faculty is an important strategy in the team-building process, Johnson said. He said it is good that a beginning teacher can learn from more experienced co-workers. The process also allows teachers to share ideas and breaks down feelings of isolation that sometime develop.

“In education, we get ‘thrown to the wolves’ from time to time, and teachers need to know they can go to somebody to talk things over without being threatened or censured,” he said. One of those people at Tenino High School is the principal.

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Contact Johnson at johnsonj@mail.tenino.k12.wa.us or (360) 264-3500.

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“Coaching is all about change. Change occurs in small actions, week after week. It happens when we change what we do, what we think and believe and how we see the world. Coaching helps leaders implement personal and organizational change by supporting them through the change process. About six of ten businesses today offer coaching to their executives, according to a survey by Manchester Inc., a Jacksonville, Fla., consulting firm. As Bob Nardelli, CEO of Home Depot, has said: “I honestly believe that people, unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities.” School leaders deserve the same advantage so they too can perform at their peak.”

From “Why Coaching Matters,” by Karla Reiss for The School Administrator, American Association of School Administrators

# Readiness for peer coaching

**T**his is what coaches have said are the success characteristics of teachers who are ready to participate in coaching.

- ◆ Has to see the need and purpose for this work.
- ◆ Able to see how fun it is.
- ◆ Have to be able to see that it is

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okay to make mistakes or ask dumb questions.

- ◆ Open to learning, open to being helped.
- ◆ Works well if teacher has an existing relationship with peer coach.
- ◆ Committed to learning, willing to try new things out.
- ◆ Feels okay about taking risks and failing.
- ◆ Flexible classroom, including willingness to change teaching style, curriculum and scheduling.
- ◆ Able to make use of this opportunity. For example, some teachers want a lot of

training, but don't ultimately incorporate technology in their classroom; teachers who already have their classroom set up for group work and project-based learning are more likely to integrate technology in their curriculum.

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Source: The Peer Coaching Program Handbook, a curriculum created by Microsoft in collaboration with Puget Sound Center for teaching, learning and technology. For more information about this program, visit [http://pc.innovativeteachers.com/mpc\\_web/default.aspx](http://pc.innovativeteachers.com/mpc_web/default.aspx).

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“Coaching is common among corporate CEOs and middle and upper management in the business world. In November 2001, MetrixGlobal LLC reported an almost 529 percent return-on-investment for an executive coaching program for a Fortune 500 company. The company using executive coaching placed its value at more than five times the cost. The figure increased to 788 percent when including financial benefits from employee retention and improved culture.”

From “Why Coaching Matters,” by Karla Reiss for The School Administrator, American Association of School Administrators

## Coach vs. Supervise . . .

*(Continued from page 14.)*

### For supervisors

1. If you believe that a teacher you are supervising needs to work with a coach in order to improve performance to a satisfactory level:
  - Place responsibility in the hands of the teacher, not the coach, to initiate the coaching conversation.
  - Ask the teacher to outline

who will do what in the improvement process.

- Ask the teacher to provide notes of his or her work with the coach (*don't* ask the coach to do this).
- 2. Meet regularly with the coach, and be aware of coaching activities in general, without asking about specific supervisory problems.
- 3. If the coach broaches the topic of a particular teacher, ask whether the teacher

should be the one sharing the information with the supervisor.

4. Don't require the coach to “report” on individual teachers.
5. Don't share confidential supervisory information with the coach.

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From “Separating Coaching from Supervising” by Cathy A. Toll, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

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