



StrateNotes

The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning • Winter 2004 • Volume 13, Issue 3

Calendar

January 4-8, 2005

SIM Learning Strategies
Institute for Preservice
Educators
Lawrence, Kan.

January 6-8, 2005

Instructional Coaching
Institute
Lawrence, Kan.

January 13-15, 2005

Northeast Region SIM PD
Conference
Washington Marriot
Hotel, Washington, D.C.
Contact: Joan Fletcher,
jfletcher@
winningwaysinc.com

January 14, 2005

Administrators' Literacy
Leadership Workshop
Washington, D.C.

March 3-5, 2005

Southeast Region SIM PD
Conference
Holiday Inn Historic
District, Charleston, S.C.
Contact: Jerri Neduchal,
neduchj@ocps.k12.fl.us

March 14-18, 2005

Maho Bay SIM PD
Conference
St. John Island, Virgin
Islands
Plan to bring families.
Contact: Ed Pieper,
piepere@hotmail.com,
or Vicki Cotsworth,
vcots@ku.edu

May 31-June 4, 2005

Teaching Content to
All: Effective College
Teaching
Lawrence, Kan.

June 13-17, 2005

Strategic Instruction
Model Institute Writing
Strategies
Lawrence, Kan.

(More calendar on page 2)

Instructional Coaching

Jim Knight, Center for Research on Learning

Recently, interest in using coaches to facilitate professional learning has exploded as schools across the country have hired literally hundreds of literacy coaches, reading coaches, cognitive coaches, and inclusion coaches. The Reading Excellence Act of 1998 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 both allotted unprecedented federal dollars for professional development, and across the country many states are spending those funds to hire coaches. In the Boston Public Schools, for example, each of the 139 public schools has a literacy coach on site at least 50 percent of the time each week (Richardson, 2004).

This turn to coaching is encouraging because it suggests that there is a growing awareness that professional learning programs are more effective when they involve intensive forms of support. At this point, however, little research has been published identifying what works and what doesn't work when it comes to coaching. This lack of research puts schools and districts at risk; because little is known about effective coaching practices, decision-makers risk spending valuable dollars on coaching programs that

end up being unsuccessful. This article has been written to provide an overview of some recent research CRL has conducted on coaching so that decision makers will have a better understanding of the potential advantages and stumbling blocks that any coaching program might encounter.

What is Instructional Coaching?

An instructional coach (IC) is an on-site professional developer who teaches educators how to use proven teaching methods. In CRL projects, instructional coaches have provided on-site professional development in CRL's Content Enhancement Series, Learning Strategies Curriculum, Community Building Series, and Strategic Tutoring as well as, recently, materials from Randy Sprick's Safe and Civil Schools program (see the box on page 2 for more information).

Instructional coaches employ a variety of professional development procedures to foster widespread, high-quality implementation of interventions. The procedures coaches employ include the following:

- conducting one-to-one or small-group meetings to identify how best to collaborate with a teacher or teachers to address their most pressing concerns
- guiding teachers through instructional manuals, checklists, and other materials
- collaboratively planning with teachers to identify when and how an intervention might be implemented
- preparing materials for teachers before instruction
- modeling instructional practices in teachers' classrooms
- observing teachers using interventions
- providing feedback.

Instructional coaches provide what Wood and McQuarrie (1999) have described as "on-the-job learning."

Instructional coaches, as we define them, also base their actions on the Partnership Principles of Partnership Learning (for more information, visit www.kucrl.org/partnership). Thus,

CRL coaching studies

During the past nine years, CRL researchers have conducted several studies to answer some central questions about coaching. Three projects in particular have provided funding for our extended study of coaching: the Strategic Advantage Project (conducted in Lawrence, Kan., and funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, 1996-1999), Pathways to Success (conducted in Topeka, Kan., and funded by GEAR-UP, 1999-present), and Passport to Success (conducted in Anne Arundel County, Md., and funded by a Maryland Department of Education State Improvement Grant, 1997-present). Some of the results of those studies are reported in this article.

More calendar

June 13-17, 2005

Potential Professional Developers
Institute for Learning Strategies
St. Louis, Mo.

Contact: Mary Ellen O'Hare,
mohare@ssd.k12.mo.us

June 20-24, 2005

Potential SIM Professional
Developers Institutes for
Learning Strategies and Content
Enhancement
Lawrence, Kan.

June 21-24, 2005

SIM Reading and Writing Strategies
(Formerly SIM Level 1)
Lawrence, Kan.

June 21-24, 2005

More SIM Strategies
(Formerly SIM Level 2)
Lawrence, Kan.

June 22-25, 2005

Cal-SIM
Bakersfield, Calif.
Contact: Tony Van Reusen,
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(More calendar on page 3)

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instructional coaches respect teachers' professionalism and focus their efforts on two-way conversations that lead to creative, practical application of research-based practices. Instructional coaches see themselves as equal partners with teachers in the complex and richly rewarding work of teaching students. More than anything else, instructional coaches work in partnerships to accelerate teachers' professional learning through mutually enriching, healthy relationships. Instructional coaches are colleagues, friends, and confidants who listen with care and share valuable information with teachers at the time when teachers most need it.

Safe and Civil Schools

Randy Sprick is the author of several behavior management programs that collectively are referred to as the Safe and Civil Schools Series. In the past year, Randy and members of CRL's Institute for Effective Instruction have been exploring the relationship between effective instruction and behavior management. One component of Randy's Safe and Civil Schools program, CHAMPs, also has been introduced into several schools in Topeka, Kan., that are partners in CRL's Pathways to Success project. An interview with Randy appeared in the May 2004 issue of *Stratenotes* and is now available on CRL's web site, www.kucrl.org/archives. Other sources of information about the Safe and Civil Schools Series:

Sprick, R.S., Garrison, M., & Howard, L. (1998). *CHAMPs: A proactive and positive approach to classroom management*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Sprick, R.S., & Garrison, M. (1999). *CHAMPs: A proactive and positive approach to classroom management* (Video Program). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Sprick, R.S., Garrison, M., & Howard, L. (2002). *Foundations: Establishing positive discipline and school-wide behavior support* (2nd edition). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

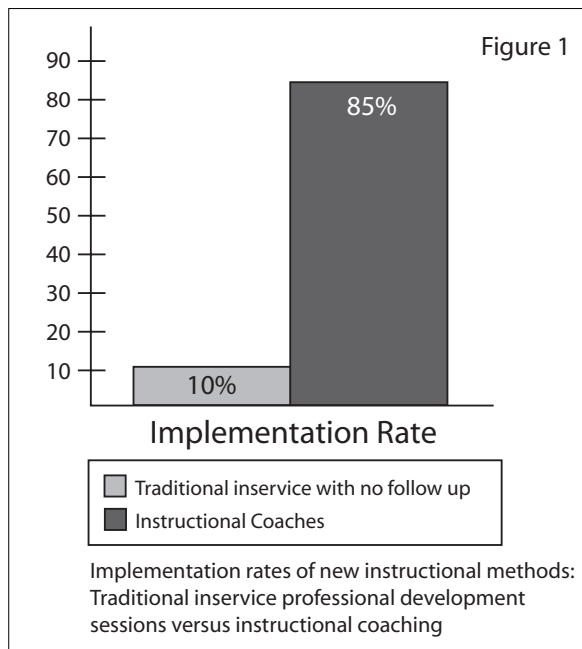
Three Questions

1 Does coaching lead to implementation?

We have conducted several studies to assess whether or not coaching leads to implementation in schools. What is emerging from our data is that coaching does indeed lead to implementation *when the right conditions are in place*. In the Pathways to Success project in Topeka, Kan., (which involves six middle schools and three high schools) and the Passport to Success project in Anne Arundel County in Maryland (which comprises five middle schools), well-constructed programs have consistently generated implementation rates of at least 85 percent, with schools frequently getting every teacher on board to teach several interventions. For example, the four original Pathways to Success schools have maintained implementation rates of better than 85 percent for the past three years.

Recently, Pathways to Success researchers followed up with teachers who attended Pathways Summer Workshops to see how many teachers are implementing aspects of what they learned during summer workshops. We found that within six weeks of the start of school, 85 percent of Pathways to Success teachers (70 of the 82 teachers we contacted) already were implementing at least one teaching practice they had learned in the summer (for example, a Content Enhancement Routine, a Learning Strategy, or Sprick's CHAMPs classroom management program). Coaches from the Passport to Success project in Maryland also report that more than 90 percent of teachers who attended their summer institute returned to their schools to implement a teaching practice they learned at that institute. In contrast, as is illustrated in Figure 1 on page 3, research conducted by Showers, Murphy, and Joyce (1996) suggests that traditional in-service with no follow up is likely to get about a 10 percent implementation rate.

The high success rate currently experienced in Pathways and Passport to Success schools has not occurred in every situation, however. In those cases in which implementation rates have been



low, we have found that at least one of two critical conditions—administrative support and highly qualified coaches—was not in place.

Administrative support. Coaches struggle to be successful when they do not have the explicit formal and informal backing of administrators within their school and at the district level. Principals significantly increase coaches' effectiveness when they collaborate with coaches to identify teachers who could benefit from a coach's services, respectfully apply pressure to teachers who need improvement, lead school improvement teams to institutionalize the interventions provided by coaches, evaluate teachers' use of the interventions they learn from coaches, and celebrate the success teachers experience using materials they learned from coaches. Additionally, principals are more effective at supporting coaches when they know that the coach's efforts are important to district decision-makers. Without district support, many principals are hesitant to fully support a coach's efforts.

Qualified coaches. Not everyone has what it takes to be an effective coach. Instructional coaches need a deep understanding of the interventions that they are sharing with teachers. For example, an instructional coach who provides professional development in SIM strategies or

routes needs to have the same knowledge, or access to the same knowledge, as a certified SIM Learning Strategies or Content Enhancement Professional Developer. Additionally, we have identified personal qualities that are equally important to the success of instructional coaches. In fact, on the Pathways and Passport to Success projects, we have come to believe that *how* a coach works is just as important as *what* a coach knows.

Our Pathways and Passport to Success experience has shown that effective coaches have to be master teachers who are comfortable going into any classroom. Effective instructional coaches have to love students and love the chance to work with them in schools. Simply put, no matter how much coaches know, they won't win over teachers unless they can be successful in the classroom. Additionally, in our experience, instructional coaches are more effective if they have what we have come to call an "infectious personality." Instructional coaches need to have energy and a positive outlook, and they need to be the kind of person that others enjoy being around. Coaches need to be, as one coach has commented, "respectfully pushy." Most importantly, at their core, coaches need to continually communicate their deep, honest belief in teachers, even when they also are communicating specific ways in which teachers might need to improve their teaching practices.

Coaching can quickly make a difference in a school when district leaders, principals, and highly qualified coaches all work together in partnership to improve the quality of instruction experienced by students. However, when administrative support is lacking or when instructional coaches lack knowledge or important communication skills, a coaching program may never get off the ground.

More calendar

June 27-30, 2005

SIM Institute: Introduction to Content Enhancement Level 1
Lawrence, Kan.

July 11-15, 2005

Potential Professional Developers
Institute for Learning Strategies
Minnesota

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July 18-19, 2005

SIM Preconference
SpringHill Suites, Lawrence, Kan.

July 20-22, 2005

International SIM Conference
SpringHill Suites, Lawrence, Kan.
Contact: Janet Roth, Mona Katz, or
Joyce Stevens, crl@ku.edu

July 25-28, 2005

SIM Institute: More Content
Enhancement Level 2
Lawrence, Kan.

Resources

In December 2003, the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (a joint project of CRL and Vanderbilt University) sponsored a two-day symposium focusing on responsiveness-to-intervention (RTI) issues.

The speakers, discussants, and participants assembled represented the wide diversity of individuals with a vested interest in LD determination issues. Advocates, instructional staff, researchers, and state-level education officials brought their collective and considerable expertise to the discussions.

Materials from this symposium, including the speakers' papers, are available on the NRCLD web site, www.nrclld.org.

Just added: An executive summary of the symposium.

2 What about fidelity?

By collaboratively planning instruction, sharing information, modeling in the classroom, observing teachers give lessons, and providing constructive feedback, instructional coaches not only increase implementation, but they also can increase the likelihood that teachers will implement an instructional practice with fidelity.

But is fidelity important? Does it matter if teachers teach in a manner that is close to what is written in an instructor's manual? We decided that this was an important question to answer if we were going to make fidelity a central goal of coaching. With this in mind, we set out to see how well students were achieving in what we refer to as "hi-fi" classrooms (those in which teachers used practices that were close to those outlined in instructional manuals) and "low-fi" classrooms (those in which teachers left out significant components of the teaching practices outlined in instructional manuals).

To conduct this study, we compared the difference on pre- and posttest assessments in the number of complete sentences written by students learning *Fundamentals* and *Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy* in "hi-fi" and "low-fi" classrooms. We identified four levels of fidelity of implementation. Instructional coaches, who worked with the teachers, then ranked teachers as being level 1, 2, 3, or 4 in terms of implementation. We compared results of students who were taught by teachers at level 1 and 2 ("low-fi") with results of students who were taught by teachers at

levels 3 and 4 ("hi-fi").

In total, 562 middle school students learned aspects of sentence writing in "low-fi" classes, and 1,302 middle school students learned aspects of sentence writing in "hi-fi" classrooms. As Figure 2 indicates, students in "low-fi" classrooms wrote 76 percent complete sentences on their pretests and 80 percent complete sentences on their posttests. In contrast, students in "hi-fi" classrooms wrote 73 percent complete sentences on their pretest and 87 percent complete sentences on their posttests. In total, as Figure 3 on page 5 indicates, students in "hi-fi" classrooms improved by 13 percent, and students in "low-fi" classrooms improved by 4 percent. The results seem to clearly indicate that fidelity mattered.

After viewing these results, Pathways to Success and Passport to Success project leaders have experimented with several practices to increase teacher fidelity to research-based practices. For example, we have developed detailed checklists outlining critical teaching behaviors, and we have emphasized the importance of teachers observing instructional coaches as they perform critical teaching behaviors. Recently, we conducted a survey of teachers asking them whether or not watching an instructional coach helped them teach with more fidelity. Thus, we turn to our final question.

3 What do teachers think about instructional coaching?

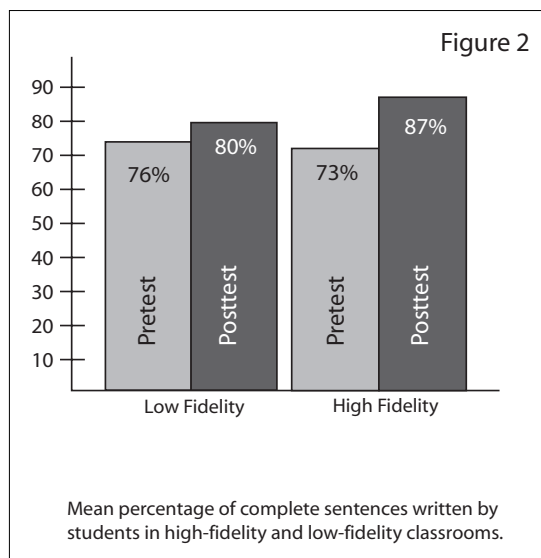
To better understand teacher perceptions of the value of instructional coaches modeling in their classrooms, we surveyed teachers who had observed an instructional coach within the past year. Of the 107 teachers surveyed, 93 taught in one of five middle schools, and the remaining 14 taught in one of two high schools. Teachers were asked to complete a short questionnaire consisting of 10 items. Teachers responded to each item by circling a number from "1" to "7," with "1"

representing strongly disagree and "7" representing strongly agree.

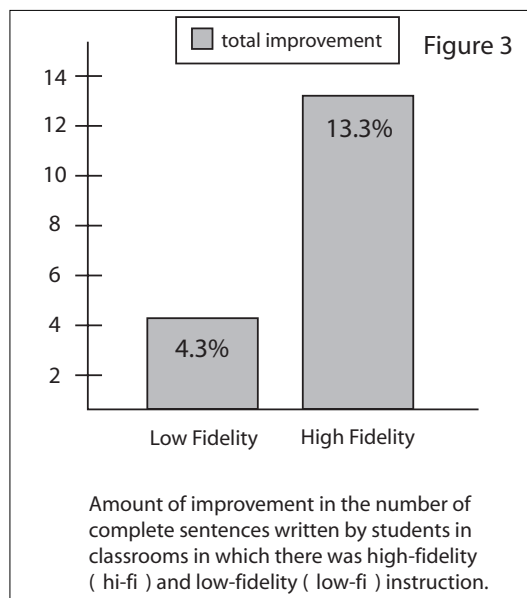
The questionnaire items were written to gather information about teachers' perceptions concerning five broad questions:

- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson made it easier to implement an instructional practice?
- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson increased their fidelity to instructional practices?
- Do teachers think watching a coach demonstrate a lesson made them more confident about implementing an instructional practice?
- Do teachers think they learned other teaching strategies while watching a coach demonstrate a lesson?
- Do teachers think coaches have enough content knowledge to demonstrate a content lesson in the teachers' classes?

Results from the survey may provide insight into when coaches should and should not be modeling in the classroom. As Table 1 on page 5 illustrates, teachers reported that watching an instructional coach in the classroom was very helpful. Teachers strongly agreed that watching an instructional coach made it easier for them to implement an instructional practice, increased their fidelity to the instructional model, increased their confidence, and enabled them to learn other teaching techniques. From the



CRL has launched a new web site called **instructionalcoach.org**. Instructionalcoach.org provides a broad overview of instructional coaching, including CRL's instructional coaching theory and research. In addition, the site provides information about CRL's Instructional Coaching Institute, which will be January 6-8, 2005, in Lawrence, Kan. You may download registration forms for the institute from this site.



teachers' perspective, watching a coach in the classroom was an important part of professional learning.

Teachers also were clear that they did not believe that coaches have the skills and knowledge necessary to teach content in the classroom. While the mean scores for teacher responses to questions about the benefits of watching instructional coaches teach were all in excess of 6 on a 7-point scale, the mean score for responses to questions about instructional coaches being able to teach all content received a mean score of 3.18. The results suggest that teachers believe it is very beneficial to watch a coach model

instructional coaches can quickly achieve a high-degree of implementation in schools. We believe that two essential conditions for coaching are administrative support and highly qualified coaches. Second, our results indicate that coaches should pay particular attention to enabling teachers to teach in ways that are close to the research-validated methods. Fidelity, in our study, did lead to higher student achievement. Finally, our results suggest that one way to enable fidelity to research-validated instruction is through modeling in the classroom. Teachers reported that watching an instructional coach made it easier to implement, increased fidelity, increased their confidence, and introduced them to other effective teaching practices. However,

instruction associated with a Learning Strategy, Content Enhancement Routine, or classroom management procedure, but teachers do not believe it would be beneficial to watch an instructional coach teach more specific content in a course.

Conclusion

These studies by no means provide a comprehensive picture of what effective instructional coaching looks like, but they do provide a starting point for a deeper understanding of what instructional coaches can and cannot do. First, our results suggest that when the right conditions are in place,

the results also suggest that coaches need to be careful not to try to teach every aspect of a teacher's course and should limit their instruction to particular strategies, routines, or practices.

References

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- Showers, B., Murphy, C., & Joyce, B. (1996). The River City program: Staff development becomes school improvement. In B. Joyce and E. Calhoun (Eds.) *Learning Experiences in School Renewal: An Exploration of Five Successful Programs* (pp. 13-51). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 401 600)
- Wood, F.H. & McQuarrie Jr., F. (1999). On-the-job learning. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20(3), 10-13.

Other coaching resources

- Costa, A.L. & Garmston, R.J. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- International Reading Association. (2004). *The role and qualifications of the reading coach in the United States* [Brochure]. Newark, DE: Author.
- Knight, M.J. (2004). Instructional coaches make progress through partnership. *Journal of Staff Development* 25(2), 32-37.
- Sturtevant, E.G. (2003). *The literacy coach: A key to improving teaching and learning in secondary schools*. Washington, DC: The Alliance for Excellent Education.

Table 1

| | |
|--|------|
| Do teachers think watching a coach model practices made it easier to implement? | 6.51 |
| Do teachers think watching a coach model practices increased their fidelity to instructional practices? | 6.4 |
| Do teachers think watching a coach model practices made them more confident about implementing? | 6.22 |
| Do teachers think they learned other teaching strategies while watching a coach model? | 6.13 |
| Do teachers think coaches have enough content knowledge to model all the instruction in teachers' classes. | 3.18 |

Scale = 1 (strongly disagree) to "7 (strongly agree)

Teachers' perceptions of the value of observing instructional coaches modeling practices.

CRL division receives \$2M grant

CRL's Division of Adult Studies has received a \$2 million, five-year grant as part of an effort in Kansas to improve health care services for high-risk individuals, to help them stay employed, and to help them remain independent. Jean Hall will lead CRL's efforts.

"As a person who has experienced a chronic illness and been labeled 'uninsurable,' I have always wanted to help develop programs that can help people get the health care they need before they become so ill that they can no longer work or feel productive," Hall said.

For more information about CRL's Division of Adult Studies, visit its web site, <http://das.kucrl.org>.