Strengthening the application of SIM through Peer Coaching

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Peer coaching is a method of improving teaching effectiveness in which teachers work with one or more colleagues to achieve specific instructional goals through a process of regular observation and feedback. It is intended to promote shared responsibility for professional growth by establishing a collegial atmosphere to improve instruction and student learning. It is also an effective means of promoting effective applications of the Strategic Instruction Model in classrooms.

Throughout the past 22 years, I have participated in at least 1,000 building-level, district-level, state, or national conferences or university-based staff development sessions aimed at improving my skills and practice as a K-12 teacher or preservice teacher educator. In addition, I have conducted, presented, or taught more than 300 of the "one shot" staff development sessions.

In the past, I often felt as if these staff development activities were a bit like a visit to the doctor. After an injection or a few pills in the form of a one-day inservice session on a hot topic, I (or the teacher I was training) was expected to improve. Enthusiasm ran high, everyone had a good time, and there was hope that new instructional strategies would be integrated into classroom instruction. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm and commitment dissipated rapidly as Monday morning and the daily routine arrived, leaving little time or support for thinking about or practicing new skills or techniques.

Too many educators still believe that teaching behavior can be changed with "one shot" workshops. Studies indicate this is not true. "When efforts cease following training workshops, 90 percent of the investment in the improvement of instruction is lost" (National Staff Development Council, 1995). Follow-up sessions and repeated use of the new skill soon after training are necessary if workshop participants are to retain the skill in their teaching repertoires (Joyce and Showers, 1988; Wells-Welsh, 1988). Peer coaching can be an inspirational and concrete part of this process.

As illustrated in Figure 1 on page 2, presentation and demonstration of information through workshops, conferences, or even college course work result in increased knowledge but relatively little skill acquisition or classroom application. The addition ➤

Calendar

Ninth video nearly completed

The ninth video in our Stratellite Connection video series is almost ready for distribution. This video features highlights of the 1997 National SIM Trainers' Conference, including Anita Archer's keynote address "Enlighten the World: Brighten Your Light."

Training Effectiveness

Degree of proficiency attained in knowledge, skill, and application from staff development activities

	Knowledge	Skill Acquisition	Classroom Application
Presentation of Information	40-80%	10%	5%
Presentation + Demonstration	80-85%	10-40%	5-10%
Presentation+Demonstration +Practice and Low-Risk Feedback	80-85%	80%	10-15%
Presentation+Demonstration +Practice/Feedback+Coaching	90%	90%	80-90%

Adapted from National Staff Development Council, 1995; Fullan, 1991; and Joyce and Showers, 1988

Figure 1

of practice and low-risk feedback into training activities not only results in knowledge acquisition but also facilitates skill acquisition. Nevertheless, classroom applications of knowledge and skills occur when peer coaching is added.

Definition and purposes of peer coaching

Peer coaching has nothing to do with evaluation. It is not a remedial activity or a strategy to "fix" teaching. Instead, peer coaching is "a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; refine and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the work place" (Robbins, 1991, p. 1).

Peer coaching is a vehicle for providing feedback about instruction. It creates an opportunity for teachers to take risks and try out new ideas, instructional strategies, or different approaches to the curriculum.

Used in this way, peer coaching

- Builds communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft
- Develops a shared language and set of common understandings necessary for the collegial study of new knowledge and skills.
- Provides a structure for the follow-up to training that is essential for acquiring new teaching skills and strategies

Especially important within the peer coaching paradigm is the agreement among participants that curriculum and instruction need constant improvement and that expanding one's repertoire of teaching skills requires hard work, in which the help of colleagues is indispensable.

Peer coaching appears to be most ►

Phase I: Preconference Form

Teacher Name: Loraine   Observer Name: Leon
Lesson Topic/Class: Paraphrasing: Model Stage
Date: March 27   Time: 2:10
Special requests from teacher to the observer: sit at the desk near the chalkboard

Skill to be observed: Model stage: Paraphrasing

Criteria: Review of the strategy, advance organizer, a demonstration of RAP on model paragraphs, involvement of students in demo, post organizer, chart completion

Figure 2

appropriate when teachers want to master teaching patterns and strategies that require new ways of thinking, new learning objectives, and new processes by which students achieve the objectives.

This article focuses on one of many approaches to peer coaching, an approach designed to help teachers transfer into classroom practice the new skills they have learned in a workshop, training session, or college class. This type of coaching usually follows

record teaching behaviors, and provide feedback during the critical stages of the peer coaching process: Preconference, Observation, and Feedback.

Phase I: Preconference Discussion and Planning

During Phase I, team members decide on a target behavior (for example, the Model Stage of the strategy). Team members discuss what specific behavior or actions must be in place to implement the desired target behavior.

Phase II: Peer Coach Observation Form

Observer

1. You demonstrated the Model Stage in the following manner: During the review, you asked students to define the word "paraphrasing," had them name the steps of RAP, and had them explain how to find the main idea and details of a paragraph.

    This review is important to the Model Stage because it focuses student attention on the strategy and actively involves students in learning the strategy.

2. You demonstrated RAP in the following manner: You used a model paragraph to illustrate how you would read a paragraph, asking yourself what is the main idea and important details

    This is important to the Model Stage because it provides a clear picture of what the strategy looks like from beginning to end.

Figure 3

training in specific strategies or methods. After providing training for a specific strategy in the Strategic Instruction Model, for instance, the coaching process would focus on how the teacher implements that strategy in the classroom. Teachers pair with one another so feedback can be given about the application of the new strategy in the classroom. The peer coaching activities are directly related to the workshop or training content. Research has shown that this approach promotes skill transfer (NSCD, 1995). To be effective, coaching activities must be focused and sustained over time.

Peer coaching process

Peer coaching teams consist of two or three teachers who observe each other and provide professional stimulation, practical help, and personal support to each other. Written records (Figures 2 through 5 on pages 2 through 4) help teachers think through the process,

The teacher being observed provides a clear delineation of the skills and activities he or she would like the peer coach to observe on the Phase I: Preconference Form (Figure 2 on page 2). The team discusses the date and time for the peer observation, class or lesson topic (if appropriate), and any special requests from the teacher to the observer (such as where to sit or anticipated behavior from a challenging student). Team members should arrange a signal in case the teacher wants the peer coach to leave the room at any time during the lesson.

Phase II: Observation

In this phase, the peer coach comes to the peer teacher's classroom on the designated day and time. During initial peer coaching sessions, students should be informed about the presence of the visiting teacher. After a few peer coaching observation sessions, students will be used to having visitors in the classroom. ▸

Benefits of peer coaching

1. Teachers generally practice new strategies more frequently and develop more skill in the strategy than do uncoached teachers who participate in identical initial training.

2. Teachers use new strategies more appropriately.

3. Teachers exhibit greater long-term retention of knowledge about and skill with strategies in which they have been coached.

4. Teachers are much more likely to teach the new strategies to students in a way that ensures students understand the purpose of the strategy and the behaviors expected of them when using the strategy.

5. Teachers exhibit clearer cognitions with regard to the purposes and uses of the new strategies as revealed through interviews, lesson plans, and classroom performance than do uncoached teachers.

6. Peer coaching facilitates professional and collegial relationships as they relate to continuous study and improvement of teaching.

Sources: Baker and Showers (1984), Showers (1985), and others.

Elements of peer coaching

A peer coaching program is
- Non-evaluative
- Based on the observation of class teaching followed by constructive feedback
- Aimed at improving instructional techniques

Source: Ackland (1991)

Videotape alternative

An alternative to actually observing in the classroom if peers are not physically located in the same building is to videotape the instructional session. One caution: If you use this method, make sure all the key players (including the teacher, students, and paraprofessionals) have individual microphones or are close enough to a microphone to be audible. A student or another teacher may have to assist with the videotaping to ensure the visibility of all classroom participants.

Paraphrasing Observation Guide

Stage 3: Model
_____ A review of the strategy was presented.
_____ An advanced organizer was provided.
_____ A demonstration of all key steps of the Paraphrasing Strategy was provided, including use of Cue Cards 1, 2, and 3.
_____ Students were involved in applying the RAP Strategy to one or more paragraphs.
_____ A post-organizer was provided.
_____ Progress Chart and Management Chart entries were made.

Comments

———————————————————————————————Figure 4

During the observation, the peer coach should record only those behaviors that were mutually agreed upon during the preconference. Documentation of observations should be recorded using the Phase II: Peer Coach Observation Form (Figure 3 on page 3) or a checklist developed for use in peer coaching (Figure 4, above). The peer coach might want to make a photocopy of the observation form or checklist and share it with the teacher before the feedback session. This allows the teacher to reflect upon and study the strategy implementation comments before discussing them with the peer coach.

Phase III: Feedback

As soon as possible after the observation period has ended, the peer coach and teacher should meet to debrief. During the feedback session, discussion should be as objective as possible.

The peer coaching literature suggests that a good way to begin the feedback session is for the teacher to describe what went well and what could be improved. The peer coach can use the peer coaching observation form or checklist to document specific examples illustrating both what went well and what needs improvement.

Feedback should be accurate, specific, and nonevaluative (for example, "You did _____. That was an example of _____."). The peer coach should refrain from offering personal comments regarding his or her own applications of the strategy in the classroom. The peer coach also should ask the teacher to project how he or she will vary instruction the next time the lesson or strategy step is taught.

Finally, the peer coach should ask for feedback, too. For example, the peer coach might ask the following questions: Were the data collected in an easy-to-use format? Were appropriate conferencing strategies used? ►

Phase III: Conference Agenda

1. Establish comfort.	Take a minute or two for each of you to share something positive about the day or week.
2. State the purpose for the conference.	e.g., Loraine, you invited me into your classroom yesterday to observe you teaching the Model Stage of the Paraphrasing Strategy.
3. Ask the teacher to describe how he or she thinks the lesson met preconference objectives.	
4. Give examples of teaching skills.	(The peer coach should refer to the Phase II Observation form or checklist, providing two or three examples illustrating aspects of what occurred during instruction).
5. Provide opportunities for the teacher to ask questions about the lesson.	
6. Ask the teacher for feedback about your role as peer coach.	

———————————————————————————————Figure 5

Follow-up

Continuing peer coaching is ideal. Six to eight weeks after initial training in the Strategic Instruction Model and peer coaching, the trainer should conduct a follow-up session to reassemble teachers as a large group to discuss issues related to learning strategies instruction and peer coaching. Difficulties with individual strategies or peer coaching also can be discussed, with the possibility of focused "retraining" if needed. Examples of curriculum materials, lesson plans, and success stories can be shared. (CRL)

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CRL study group tackles the future in scenario planning exercise

We're attempting to part the curtain and see the future.

A study group here at the Center has tackled the question "How can CRL position itself to respond to the needs and realities of learners to participate in tomorrow's society?" The group is following a process called scenario planning as it looks at the possibilities for the future of education, special education, and the Center.

This process involves pulling together information from a variety of sources in many different disciplines. Once we have collected the information, we will sift through it looking for trends and the driving forces of change that could affect our work.

Our efforts will result in a set of scenarios, or stories, designed to help us understand the future and our changing roles in it.

As we gather information for this process, we hope to tap your vast store of expertise and ideas. We would like to hear what you think about such topics as what a typical school will look like 10 or 20 years from now and what trends will have the greatest effect on education in the next 20 years.

We plan to ask questions about these topics and more at regional conferences throughout the year. We also plan to pose the questions on StrateNet, and we hope all trainers will want to participate in the discussion. (CRL)

CRL notes

- In August, David Scanlon, assistant scientist at the Center, left for a teaching position in the Teacher Education Department in Boston College's School of Education. We wish David the best in his new endeavors.

- During the past year, Jim Knight became a full-time researcher at the Center. Jim, long familiar to members of the International SIM Trainers' Network, is studying school change and the integration of content enhancement and learning strategy instruction. He also is leading the development of the Center's new Institute for Research on Organizational Learning. Jim's research on *Partnership Learning: A New Approach for Staff Development* has been adopted as the training methodology for strategies trainers in the United States and Canada.

- Don Deshler, director of the Center for Research on Learning, has received the 1997 Outstanding Professional Award from the Council for Learning Disabilities. The award recognizes exceptional service to the field of learning disabilities.

Directory deadline

It's nearly time to publish the 1998 StrateDirectory. To be included in the directory, you must complete a Directory Information Form. If you haven't done so, please fill out the form on page 7 and return it to KU-CRL, StrateDirectory, 3061 Dole, Lawrence, KS 66045, by December 1. If you have been listed in the directory in the past, you do not need to complete a new form unless you want to update your information.

Problem solving in action

Katherine B. Ferro and Mary Petrucha refuse to let a little distance keep them from learning and sharing. Katherine, who lives in Pocatello, Idaho, and Mary, who lives in Decatur, Illinois, have taken their study group sessions to an on-line setting. The two SIM Trainers individually watch Stratellite Connection videos, then discuss the program over the Internet. Mary and Katherine have participated in traditional face-to-face study groups in the past, but Katherine's move to Idaho made this technological solution necessary for them to continue their group.

Something new: Stratechats

Starting in November, the Center for Research on Learning will offer one more way for members of the International SIM Trainers' Network to connect.

We're planning a series of discussions focusing on current topics. Rather than bringing people together face to face, we'll bring people together through computers.

To participate in one of these sessions (Stratechats), you will need to be able to use the FirstClass software that serves as the basis of our StrateNet system. The software will allow up to 12 people to "talk" at one time. If you have not yet connected to StrateNet, call Andy Barker for help signing on and using the software. Andy can be reached at (785) 864-0673.

The first Stratechat will be "Adaptations of SIM Strategies for Use in Elementary Classrooms." Barbara Glaeser will host this November discussion.

More information, including scheduling information, for Stratechats will be available in future issues of Stratenotes and on StrateNet.

If you are interested in participating in one of these Stratechats, if you would like to host a chat, or if you would like to propose a topic for a future chat, please contact Julie Tollefson at (785) 864-4780 or e-mail Julie through StrateNet or at jtollefson@ukans.edu.

Tentative schedule

December: Strategies and General Education; Don Deshler, host

February: Organizational Learning; Jim Knight, host

March: Creating a Learning Community through the Course Organizer; Keith Lenz, host

Unscheduled:
• Troubleshooting with Resistant Participants; Helen Waldron, host
• Creating Good Course Questions; Keith Lenz, host

Stratellite Connection study groups forming now for 1997-1998 year

Stratellite Connection study groups are being formed for the year.

Study groups meet one to three times a year to discuss Stratellite Connection videotapes and other study group materials prepared by the Center for Research on Learning.

If you would like to form a study group or be part of an existing group in your area, please contact Janet Roth at (785) 864-4780.

The following people are continuing to lead existing study groups or are forming new ones:
• Bonnie Barnes, Sun City, California
• Larry Bemish, Ypsilanti, Michigan
• Melissa Clark, Cedar Falls, Iowa
• Katherine B. Ferro, Pocatello, Idaho

• Joan Fletcher, Oakton, Virginia
• Connie Gentle, Orlando, Florida
• Alice Henley, Middletown, Connecticut
• Berna Levine, Marietta, Georgia
• Mary Luysterburg, Tampa, Florida
• Anne Millea, Omaha, Nebraska
• Pat Monson, Madison, Nebraska
• Judy O'Malley, West Palm Beach, Florida
• Pat Parrott, Richmond, Virginia
• Judith Porter, Ukiah, California
• ReNae Wheeler, Burlington, North Dakota
• David Wallace, Maquoketa, Iowa
• Deb Wickwire, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania
• Sue Woodruff, Muskegon, Michigan

Plan to join the fun!

1998 SIM Directory Information Sheet

Date:_____

Name: _____

Home Address: _____
_____

Primary Employment Site: _____
Title of Position _____
Work Address: _____
_____

Preferred Mailing Address: _____Home _____Work
E-mail Address: _____
Fax Number: _____

Check the professional categories that describe you:

_____college/university professor
_____full-time staff developer
_____high school teacher
_____junior high school teacher
_____middle school teacher
_____elementary teacher
_____administrator
_____post-secondary teacher of students with learning disabilities
_____general education teacher
_____special education teacher
_____independent trainer
_____other

Check all of the following categories that apply to you as a SIM Trainer:

_____Certified Inservice Trainer
_____Preservice Trainer (university/college teacher)
_____Potential Trainer (working on requirements to become a certified inservice trainer
_____other

Check the category or categories that best describe the school districts in which you are the most comfortable or experienced in providing training:

_____inner city   _____rural
_____suburban   _____other

Indicate the student populations with which you are most familiar:

_____ESL   _____TMR
_____EMR   _____At Risk
_____LD   _____Adults
_____ADD   _____Other
_____BD

Check the strategies and routines in which you feel that you are an expert and are willing to advise others.

_____1.   Collaborative Problem Solving
_____2.   Concept Mastery Routine
_____3.   Self-Advocacy
_____4.   Error-Monitoring
_____5.   FIRST-Letter Mnemonic
_____6.   Lesson Organizer Routine
_____7.   LINCS
_____8.   Math Strategies
_____9.   Paragraph Writing
_____10. Paraphrasing
_____11. Progress Program
_____12. SCORE
_____13. Sentence Writing
_____14. Slant
_____15. Social Skills
_____16. Teamwork
_____17. Test-Taking
_____18. Visual Imagery
_____19. Word Identification
_____20. Concept Anchoring Routine
_____21. Unit Organizer Routine
_____22. Self-Questioning
_____23. Assignment Completion
_____24. Concept Comparison
_____25. Surface Counseling
_____26. Paired Associates
_____27. Clarifying Routine
_____Other

What are your main areas of interest related to SIM?

About how many teachers do you train annually?
(*KU-CRL may use this information for writing grants.*)

Comments/Questions:

It's not too early to make your plans to attend the 1998 National SIM Trainers' Conference. Join us in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.

When: July 8, 1998, Preconference
           July 9-11, 1998, Conference

Where: Crowne Plaza Hotel
           4445 Main Street
           Kansas City, Missouri

Reservations: (800) 2-CROWNE
              (800) 227-6963

Room rates: $92/night, single or double plus
              12.1% room tax

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