
Preface

We are coaches. In our professional lives, we coach literacy educators, principals, reading coaches, reading specialists, teachers, and parents every day. In our personal lives, we are coaches and coached as well—Nancy is a long-distance cyclist; Tamie is a runner. We do not separate our personal and professional learning; all aspects of our lives contribute to who we are and how we wish to grow and help others. Our vision is to be the best we can be—professionally, personally, and physically—and each aspect of our busy lives complements the others. We wrote this book to help others as they begin the journey of literacy coaching or for those who are well on the way and want to check their progress. We have found coaching to be a journey, an exciting, challenging, and occasionally frustrating journey, but well worth the trip. Come along for your own personal challenge.

Purpose

As public schools are faced with increased challenges resulting from state and federal achievement policies, districts around the nation are seeking evidence-based, effective, and practical ways to meet all learners' literacy needs. As a result, the concept of literacy coaching has gained considerable attention in research and practice in the past several years, with literacy coaches being employed at increasing rates in elementary and secondary schools. While on the surface, additional personnel in schools may appear to be a remedy for improving instruction, the individuals being hired as literacy coaches often do not have the requisite knowledge base of literacy, instruction, professional development, leadership, and experience to successfully negotiate the varied roles and responsibilities that come with being an effective coach.

Our book offers practical recommendations that will aid coaches with varying experience levels of teaching and coaching. It focuses on the pillars of adolescent literacy that coaches must consider when providing instructional support to teachers of all content areas. The book also provides suggestions for implementing differentiated and ongoing professional learning for teachers. Leadership in instructional support and professional learning is necessary if districts expect to see long-term positive changes in approaches to adolescent literacy, and our book provides coaches with the tools and capacity to promote growth with both teachers and students.

We entered coaching through the role of reading specialist. We both have previously been reading specialists in elementary, middle, and high school, as well as in an alternative school. Through experience, we learned that the way to make a difference in the literacy lives of our students was by working with teachers. In those days, we were called mentors, and we believe that mentoring is one facet of the literacy coach's role. Nancy's experience at all levels informs her current work as Supervisor of Literacy and Humanities programs for a growing suburban school district, and Tamie's work led her to the role of professor, teaching literacy professionals at the university level. Informed by our experiences, we share recommendations, ideas, and suggestions for the seasoned as well as the new literacy coach.

Audience

We invite all literacy professionals to peruse this book. Reading specialists, literacy coaches, and reading teachers are our targeted audience, and our colleagues within each group have vetted the contents with an eye to making the book helpful and informative to everyday practice. We also believe this book will assist principals and literacy and/or reading and English supervisors, as they understand the roles a literacy coach may be asked to perform, and convey these expectations to classroom teachers.

Contents

We begin the book with a historical overview. We believe the lessons from history are important and form the foundation for future practice. Next, we build on the historical foundation to establish five pillars for adolescent literacy programs. With the five pillars in place, we

devote the next chapters to practical suggestions for literacy coaches, as they support the pillars and work on building walls and ceilings for their schools. In Chapter 3, we continue the discussion of the many aspects of literacy coaches' job descriptions. Instructional conversations lay the groundwork for planning in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 expands these instructional conversations into more formal plans for teachers' literacy instruction. Chapter 6 discusses follow-up conferencing and where to go next as a coach, and Chapter 7 discusses the challenges of concurrently doing all these tasks in the confines of each short day. We end with the interior decorating, with the important paint and color of professional learning for teachers and all literacy professionals supported by the coach in Chapter 8. Our hope is that our readers will read our text, reflect, reread, mark, and copy sections of this book as they integrate ideas into their professional lives.

We hope you enjoy our blueprints and adapt our building design to fit your literacy goals.