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## The role of literacy coach in an elementary classroom

Patricia Lynn Fecher  
*University of Dayton*

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THE ROLE OF LITERACY COACH  
IN AN ELEMENTARY  
CLASSROOM

Master's Thesis

Submitted to:

The School of Education and Allied Professions  
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Master of Science in Education

By

Patricia Lynn Fecher

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

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BY

Patricia Lynn Fecher

ENTITLED: The Role of Literacy Coach in an Elementary Classroom

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Master of Science in Education

  
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Member

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Date

  
Member

4-26-05  
Date

## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF LITERACY COACH IN AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Name: Patricia Lynn Fecher  
University of Dayton, 2005

Advisor: Patricia Grogan, Ph.D.

This thesis is a qualitative research study designed to explore how a classroom teacher and a literacy specialist work together to improve teaching pedagogy through coaching. The purposes of this study were: (a) to look at the structures and the processes coaches use to assist teachers' performance, (b) to examine the interactions between a literacy coach and a teacher to reveal what they say about the coaching process, and (c) to learn about what teachers can learn about teaching to assist student learning. The cooperating teacher took part in classroom observations, interviews, and weekly planning meetings with a literacy specialist. The results of this study indicate that teachers who participate in on-going embedded professional development through coaching make significant changes to their teaching practice, and that coaching in an inclusion classroom setting is an effective way to make changes in one's teaching practice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to Dr. Patricia Grogan, whom I have had the pleasure of working with over the past four years. Not only has she been my advisor but she has become a dear friend and colleague. Her faith in my ability enabled me to accomplish more than I thought possible.

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To my parents, you have always been my loudest cheering section. Thank you for "Making me a better person." Without your unconditional love and support I would not have become the person I am today. I am truly blessed to have had such wonderful parents who have been so active in my life. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

With the passage of *The No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), state departments of education and school districts are desperately seeking new and innovative approaches to support the learning of all students. One promising area is teacher preparedness and professional development. The research supports the premise that one of the best ways to improve student learning is through improved teacher practice (Bean, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Dole, 2004; Roskos, 2000; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). The research also suggests the most effective professional development occurs school-wide and involves ongoing training to learn new instructional strategies and techniques (Bean, 2004). Vogt and Shearer (2003) state that, "The one-day workshop has been replaced by more extensive long-term professional development" (p. 265).

One such professional development program exists in the state of Ohio. In 1999, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) launched *The Ohio Literacy Initiative* (2001). The goal of this initiative is to re-focus the attention of the role of the educator in meeting the responsibilities of teaching children to read and write (Roskos, 2000). In response to this initiative, ODE created the *Literacy Specialist Project*, a state-wide initiative that links together the Department of Education, local universities, and school districts to improve beginning literacy instruction. The aim of the project is to develop a basic understanding of professional literacy teaching among educators. The project has two



components: *Teaching Reading and Writing: A Core Curriculum for Educators K-3* and *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* (Roskos, 2000).

I began my involvement with the *Literacy Specialist Project* during the 2002-2003 school year. I attended monthly meetings with a field faculty member and other literacy specialists in the area at the University of Dayton. During those meetings the field faculty member trained the participants on how to facilitate professional development sessions. The first year in the project focused heavily on building a knowledge base. I took the information from these meetings back to my building to share with teachers.

That year, 13 teachers joined me to collaborate and grow with me professionally through participation in the *Core Curriculum for Educators K-3*. The curriculum content addresses four domains of pedagogy: knowing, planning, teaching, and assessing. The curriculum is organized into 15 sessions. Each session is designed to develop the knowledge needed to be skilled in teaching literacy. The sessions include theoretical information and research on literacy teaching; activities used for implementation of theory around Ohio's academic content standards; assess-plan-teach instructional cycles; and reflection. Field work is used to provide opportunity to practice concepts in the classroom (Roskos, 2000). As we worked together, I found that even though these teachers were eager to learn new information, little changed within their own teaching practices. Perhaps the change I expected of them was too much, and because of my own teaching responsibilities, I was unable to provide the additional support they needed in their daily work with students.

After several discussions with my field faculty, the decision was made to begin working with the coaching project - *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction*. This component of the project is designed to raise the quality of literacy education for all children through on-going professional development. It focuses on developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to implement K-3 instruction through one-on-one coaching of teachers in evidence-based reading research instructional strategies and interventions on a rotating basis using a reflective practitioner's model (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). The basic assumption is that by providing professional development activities that are on-going and embedded into our school systems, we will increase the expertise of teachers at the individual school level (Roskos, 2000). Consequently, these teachers will become more knowledgeable about reading instruction and student achievement. Simply put, if we provide professional development activities that improve teaching practice, then we will improve student learning (International Reading Association, 2004; Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003). Research has shown that feedback and in-class coaching make it more likely that teachers will take ownership of the new strategies and teaching techniques they have learned (Bean, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Dole, 2004).

The role of literacy specialist/reading specialist is very familiar to schools, however, the role of literacy coach is new (Bean, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). The International Reading Association (2000) position statement, defines the multiple roles of the reading specialist. In this statement they suggest that reading specialists contribute to student learning in three ways: (a) instruction – reading specialists work with students to supplement instruction and extend classroom teachings, (b) assessment – using

assessments reading specialists diagnose and evaluate literacy for developing interventions and instruction, and (c) leadership – reading specialists support individual teachers and administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about reading (International Reading Association, 2000). Until I participated in the *Literacy Specialist Project*, I had been fulfilling a traditional role as a reading specialist, using a combination of pull-out and inclusion techniques to teach students struggling with reading to improve test scores. After several conversations with my principal, the Title I Coordinator, and the District Assistant Superintendent, I was able to shift some of my responsibilities from teaching and assessment to take on more of a leadership role, specifically the role of literacy coach. In this role I would work with teachers to assist them with their implementation of literacy.

In my new role as literacy coach, I feel that there is limited research to guide administrators and literacy specialists making decisions on how to incorporate the coaching process into existing school models. Research states that the literacy specialist should spend time collaborating with teachers, implementing professional development, modeling lessons, providing feedback to teachers, and providing resources to teachers (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002; Dole, 2004; IRA, 2004). However, it does not give a clear picture of how that process plays out in an elementary classroom.

Initial research was conducted through the *Literacy Specialist Project* regarding the coaching process. Rosemary and Kinnucan-Welsch (2003) studied coaching using the Teaching Learning Instrument and had preliminary findings regarding the nature of the interactions that occur during coaching. This research shows great promise for the unique role of the literacy coach; although, clearly more research is needed.

### Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore how a classroom teacher and a literacy specialist work together to improve literacy teaching. The research question was: What does coaching look like in an elementary classroom? Specifically, (a) What are the structures and the processes coaches use to assist teachers' performance?, (b) What do the interactions between the literacy coach and teacher reveal about the coaching process?, and (c) What do teachers learn about teaching to assist student learning?

### Summary

This chapter introduced the research surrounding the literacy specialist field, the history of the project, and the significance of the research. The purpose of the study was clearly stated through the research questions. Chapter Two will present a review of the literature surrounding the role of literacy coaching.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

#### *Research on Professional Development*

In recent years, the standards-based reform movement has led to an increase in high stakes testing as a form of accountability (Darling-Hammond, 2004). This form of accountability focuses on student achievement. If the educational goal is to increase student learning, districts will be more successful if they focus on the broader notions of accountability, by beginning to incorporate professional development policies that are connected by a common vision (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Farstrup & Samuels, 2002).

No one will argue that good teacher preparation programs currently exist; however, there has been no systematic way to ensure that all teachers continue to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be highly effective. McRobbie (2000) states: "We must start by recognizing that teaching is a lifelong journey of learning rather than a final destination of 'knowing' how to teach" (p. 6). In order to embark on this journey, teachers need continued support through professional development opportunities that enrich and enhance their teaching, rather than the one-time seminars that provide few long-term changes (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002; McRobbie, 2000). Elements essential to successful staff development include supportive participant attitude, need for change in teacher beliefs, importance of time frame (setting enough time aside, important not to overload teacher's schedule), and building a community of teacher trust and collaboration (LeFeavre & Richardson, 2002).

A recent review of the literature conducted by Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary & Grogan (in press) identified six design principles that are linked to high quality professional development:

- 1) High quality professional development connects directly to student learning goals that are clear and accepted by all.
- 2) Professional development involves active learning for teachers.
- 3) It is imbedded in the context of work in schools and classrooms.
- 4) It is continuous and on-going.
- 5) Professional development is based on an on-going and focused inquiry related to teacher learning, student learning, and what we know about good instruction.
- 6) Coherence is evident in all aspects of the professional development system.

Research completed by Linda Darling-Hammond as cited in McRobbie, 2000, shows that teacher knowledge profoundly affects student achievement. Darling-Hammond has provided compelling arguments focusing on improving pre-service teacher preparation, as well as continued development of teachers. During a presentation in 2000, she indicated that the strongest and most consistent predictor of a state's average student achievement level is the proportion of well-qualified teachers in the state. She also found the connection between teacher qualifications and student achievement held true even when student poverty and limited English proficiency, as well as selected school resource measures, are taken into account (McRobbie, 2000).

In order to increase teacher knowledge we must first look at what constitutes excellence in reading instruction. Block, Oakar, and Hunt (2002) completed a study

identifying the instructional qualities of pre-school through Grade 5 literacy teachers. The study was based on, “the proposition that what students achieve in literacy depends greatly on the instruction they receive, the classroom context created, and the actions taken by their teachers” (Block et al., 2002, p. 184). They examined the criteria needed to become an exemplary teacher and identified six domains of expertise common to all exemplary teachers: roles and responsibilities that educators perform most repetitively; methods used to motivate students; actions taken to re-teach; instructional techniques used to relate to students; classroom qualities that teachers value; and characteristics of lessons that they create (Block et al., 2002). The information obtained through this research identifies what expert teaching looks like at each grade level and supports the IRA Position Statement (2000) that identifies excellent reading teachers as those who :

- 1) Understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
- 2) Continually assess children’s individual progress and relate reading instruction to children’s previous experiences.
- 3) Know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the methods into effective instructional programs.
- 4) Offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
- 5) Use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.
- 6) Are good reading ‘coaches’ (that is, they provide help strategically). (IRA, 2000)

One way to keep and train exemplary teachers is to employ reading specialists who not only work with struggling readers, but who can also provide training and support to classroom teachers (Bean, 2004). The sections that follow address: (a) the history of reading specialists, (b) the changing role of the reading specialist, and (c) provide the rationale for the current study.

### *Reading Specialists Then and Now*

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 set aside federal money to be used for teaching literacy. These teachers, known as Title I teachers or reading specialists, worked with struggling readers in what became known as pull-out programs. Small groups of struggling readers were pulled out of the regular classroom and sent for remediation with a reading specialist. The instructional focus was on intervention for students. There was not much interaction between the regular classroom teacher and the Title I teacher in terms of the type of instruction students received.

Although students were provided with additional support, researchers found very limited success in these programs (Bean, 2004; Dole, 2004; Jaeger, 1996).

In 2000, ESEA was revised. The goal was the same - improved reading and academic achievement for all students, but the focus changed from working solely with students to working and collaborating with teachers. All teachers, not just reading specialists, must be highly qualified to teach reading. "Every child deserves excellent reading teachers because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read" (IRA, 2000). The current focus is on the instruction occurring in the regular classroom. High quality instruction from highly trained teachers is expected to minimize the number of students who will need intervention or supplementary



instruction. The reading instruction strategies and programs used to teach reading should be scientifically based and should use rigorous, systematic and empirical methods.

Effective and efficient informal assessment techniques should inform teachers'

instruction and assist in monitoring the progress of each child (Bean, 2004; Dole, 2004).

A reading specialist, sometimes referred to as collaborator, literacy specialist, literacy coach, or facilitator, supports teachers in their daily work through planning, modeling, team-teaching, and providing feedback on completed lessons (Dole, 2004, IRA, 2004; Jaeger, 1996; LeFevre & Richardson, 2002). The term reading specialist as defined by the International Reading Association (2000) refers to someone who, "has advanced preparation and experience in reading and has responsibilities (i.e., providing instruction, serving as a resource to teachers) for the literacy performance of readers in general and of struggling readers in particular" (p.2). In Ohio those teachers are identified as reading specialists by adding the Reading Teacher Endorsement to their teaching certificate. The Reading Specialist has three major roles: (a) instruction, (b) assessment, and (c) leadership. It is through this final role of leadership that the term literacy coach has evolved.

A literacy coach is someone who focuses primarily on leadership and professional development of educators by coaching classroom teachers and supporting them in their daily work within a specific school building or buildings (IRA, 2004). "At present, there is little consistency in the training, backgrounds, and skills required for such positions [literacy coaches], and there is little consistency in the general competence of coaches in part because there is no agreed upon definitions or standards for the roles" (IRA, 2004).

Effective literacy coaches share characteristics that make them effective: (a) they have a strong knowledge of the reading pedagogy, (b) they are reflective in their own teaching practice and can engage teachers in reflection to improve their own teaching practice, (d) have the ability to create a trusting relationship, (e) are excellent presenters and group leaders, and (f) have the experience or preparation that enables them to model, observe and articulate critical feedback in a way that it is valued (Dole, 2004; IRA, 2004; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Activities range from informal conversations to more formal activities such as holding team meetings, modeling lessons, and visiting classrooms (Bean, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). Their job is not to evaluate teachers, but to collaborate with them to achieve specific professional development goals (Bean, 2004; IRA, 2004).

### *The Changing Role of the Reading Specialist*

Research on the role of reading specialists as coaches and mentors thus far has focused on what activities they engage in and how their time is divided between these responsibilities. Bean et al. (2002) found that the major functions of reading specialists fall into four categories: instruction, assessment, resource, and administration. Most of their time is spent working with students, either in pull-out instruction or in the classroom. Each specialist indicated that they complete evaluations on students using both standardized and informal assessments and some part of each day was spent working with teachers; as a resource person, providing materials, ideas, and support to classroom teachers. Additionally, reading specialists spend time carrying out administrative tasks such as completing reports and paperwork. The reading specialists

surveyed believed they are not only responsible for struggling readers, but are also responsible for the improvement of all student literacy.

With the call for changes to the role of reading specialist, reading specialists are asked to encompass not only instruction and assessment, but also to take on the role of leadership (Bean, 2004; Dole, 2004; IRA, 2004; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). Reading specialists find themselves serving as a resource to other educators, planning with teachers, providing in-class instruction, and increased paperwork. As the role of the specialist has changed there have been few instances of decrease in responsibility. Reading specialists are doing more than ever. LeFeavre and Richardson (2002) focused on the roles that reading specialists are asked to fulfill in schools. In their study, facilitators (reading specialists) work with a group of teachers over a long period of time to help them change their practices. The facilitators in this study worked full or part-time within a school or group of teachers, doing such activities as observing, consulting, modeling classroom practice, working with students, videotaping classrooms, and engaging in extensive dialogue with teachers.

The findings of this study suggest that facilitators perceive their roles to be that of organizer and communicator, advocate for students with literacy learning needs, assessor of student learning, resource provider, abridger of teacher and program needs, quality controller, coach, visionary, provider of a model for practice and reflection, facilitator of on-going professional community, and a co-learner.

Many dilemmas were encountered by the facilitators. They found that building trust and confidence while pushing things along was difficult. Some educators were not ready for the intensity of the project, expectations for participant involvement,

commitment to the project, and degree of engagement of the project. The teachers were also asked to examine their own practice in a critical way. Facilitators struggled with providing a balance of individual autonomy and external practice. They needed the teachers to work on project goals but to also have choices. The research provided in this article begins to suggest the importance of facilitator participation in reform programs (LeFeavre & Richardson, 2002).

Although research on the role of coaches and mentors is limited, it is not the only field that uses coaches to improve its professional practice. Fields such as school psychology also use mentor coaching, referred to as behavioral consultation, to support teachers or parents in providing services to a child in the school or community setting (Kratochwill, Elliott, & Rotto, 1995; Zins & Erchul, 1995). It may be worth examining this research in order to further explore parallels with coaching practice.

#### *Coaches in the Professional Development of Teachers*

Changes in education are occurring so rapidly that teachers are unable to keep abreast of new teaching techniques. Consequently, the most important activities done by literacy coaches are teaching demonstrations and modeling of lessons (Dole, 2004). The current research in the field of coaching shows us when feedback and in-class coaching were added to theory, demonstration, and practice, significant increases were found in teacher knowledge and skills (Bean, 2004; Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003; Tharp & Gallimore, 1998; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). A literacy coach works with an individual teacher, or a group of teachers, modeling a lesson that has been discussed in a recent workshop. They then observe teachers in their classrooms and provide them with feedback about their lessons. By participating in this form of professional development,

the coach assists the teacher in becoming a reflective practitioner; that is, thinking about the lesson taught, what went well and why, what to do next, and so forth.

This change in teaching practices takes time. When a teacher and coach begin to work together, it takes approximately 20-25 trials in the classroom before new activities become part of the teachers' repertoire (Dole, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Therefore, teachers must be given opportunities to learn new strategies and techniques, to observe demonstration of the strategies, and to practice and receive feedback on the strategies in their own classroom over extended periods of time (Dole, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) state that scaffolding (the deliberate supports provided in pulling forward learning) of teachers in the zone of proximal development while providing effective training is much like scaffolding a student learning to read. This led them to examine teacher training in a way that encourages teachers to think, choose, and reflect about their teaching pedagogy. This theoretical framework guided the research surrounding the *Literacy Specialist Project*.

The goal of the *Literacy Specialist Project* is to "disseminate affordable and accessible foundational knowledge of literacy pedagogy to K-3 classroom teachers" (Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003, p.2). The project created the Teacher Learning Instrument (TLI), an instrument used by coaches and teachers to analyze and interpret lesson transcript data to reflect on the teaching process. The interactions studied using the TLI focused on the teacher as the learner (Rosemary, Freppon, Kinnucan-Welsch, 2002; Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003; Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, Grogan, in press). Using the TLI the *Literacy Specialist Project* has conducted several studies that address the implementation of coaching (Rosemary et al., 2002; Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch,

2003; Kinnucan-Welsch et al., in press). Analysis of the studies showed improvement in teaching as well as positively effecting student learning (Rosemary et al., 2002; Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003; Kinnucan-Welsch et al., in press).

### Summary

Good literacy teachers are always searching for ways to improve their teaching. Most attend one day workshops. Although they enjoy learning new ideas, they state that they would benefit from follow-up sessions (Morrow & Casey, 2004). The research surrounding professional development for teachers, the role of reading specialists then and now, the changing role of the reading specialist, and coaches in the professional development of teachers was reviewed in this chapter. Based on research on coaching, this study will examine the role of a literacy coach in an elementary classroom. The following chapter will focus on the role of a literacy coach in an elementary classroom and will describe the methodology for the study.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how a classroom teacher and a literacy specialist work together to improve teaching methods through coaching. This research study emerged as a line of inquiry generated by *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction*, a component of the larger *Literacy Specialist Project*. This investigation is designed to answer the question: What does coaching look like in an elementary classroom? Specifically: (a) What are the structures and processes coaches use to assist teachers' performance? (b) What do the interactions reveal about the coaching process? and (c) What do teachers learn about teaching to assist student learning?

### *Setting*

Dogwood Elementary School is located in a rural community of approximately 6,049 residents in Southwest Ohio. The district consists of one kindergarten school, four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Among the student population, 12.7% have identified disabilities and 5.9% have been identified as gifted and/or talented. Minorities within the district include Hispanic, Mexican, and Latino, and comprise 4.8% of the student population. Many of these students come from migrant families who move in and out of the district through the course of the school year. Dogwood Elementary serves 467 students first through fifth grade (ODE/ report card, 2004).

Forty percent of the students met the poverty criteria required to be eligible for free or reduced price meals on the National School Lunch Program. This high proportion of low-income students allows the building to upgrade their Title I services from a Targeted Assisted Program to a Schoolwide Program. A Schoolwide program upgrades the instructional services provided in a school building enabling all children, particularly the lowest achieving students, to reach the state's standards for reading/language arts and mathematics (Center for School Finance, 2004).

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were a literacy specialist, a classroom teacher, and a mentor coach. I was the literacy specialist in this study. The classroom teacher with whom I worked during this study was selected based on the following criteria: (a) She had completed a year in the *Literacy Specialist Project Core Curriculum K-3*, (b) She taught in Grades 1-3, (c) She taught in the same building with me, and (d) She had a willingness to participate in the study. The mentor coach identified in this study was a member of the *Literacy Specialist Project* field faculty.

### *Teacher*

Mrs. Emily Smith was a veteran teacher with 26 years of teaching experience. She received a Master's of Reading in 1978 and has worked in the Dogwood School District for 31 years. Mrs. Smith worked in a self-contained classroom that looped from first to second grade. At the time of the study she was serving 20 second grade students, 12 of these students qualified for Title I services. The class was comprised of eleven girls and nine boys. There was one Hispanic student and one African American student.



I approached Emily in the fall of 2004 and asked her to participate in this study. She expressed that she was ready to make changes in her teaching and learn how to be a more effective educator.

### *Literacy Specialist*

Prior to becoming a literacy specialist, I had eight years of teaching experience. All eight years have been spent at Dogwood Elementary School serving in the role of Title I teacher. I have participated in the *Literacy Specialist Project* for the past three years.

Because of my work in the *Project*, my job responsibilities not only encompass the role of teacher and assessor but also that of leader. Leadership as defined by Bean (2004) "is any activity or set of activities associated with working with others to accomplish a common goal" (p.58). It was through this additional role of leadership that enabled me to implement coaching in my building. I retained my role of working with students, using a combination of inclusion and pull-out instruction, and began the new role of coaching teachers in the planning and implementation of teaching practices. This encompassed any teacher/student interactions as they pertained to early literacy development. During the course of the study, I worked in Emily's classroom as an inclusion teacher and a literacy coach. Coaching occurred weekly within this setting.

### *Mentor Coach*

My mentor coach is a member of the *Literacy Specialist Project* Field Faculty. She participates in on-going preparation of training materials by providing feedback and maintains the communication network to support the ongoing implementation, research and evaluation of the program (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). She trained a group of

literacy specialists, including me, using a “trainer of the trainers” model. This training took place in a university setting and was followed up with site visits. All literacy coaches were trained to disseminate pedagogical knowledge using *Teaching Reading and Writing: A Core Curriculum for Educators K-3* and *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* (Roskos, 2000).

### *Research Design and Procedures*

This study employed a qualitative case study design. A case study is a type of ethnographic research that involves intensive and detailed study of one individual or of a group predominantly through observation, self-reporting, and interviews (Mertens, 1998). The purpose of this case study was to explore how a classroom teacher and a literacy specialist work together to improve literacy teaching. In order to accomplish this task, data were collected from four sources: (a) *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool* (ELLCO) (see Appendix A), (b) *Close-ups on Teaching* (see Appendices B, C, & D), (c) weekly planning meetings, and (d) researcher’s journal. Appendix E provides a summary of the research questions and various methods for gathering data to address those questions.

### *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO)*

The ELLCO tool builds on research and provides literacy coaches with an objective tool for describing the extent to which classrooms provide children with opportunities for literacy learning. It is a non-participant observation tool that is administered by two trained, independent observers focusing on various aspects of teaching (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). It is divided into four domains: (a) functional environment, (b) interactive environment, (c) language and literacy facilitation, and (d)

broad support for literacy. Within the four domains are 14 elements that support early literacy (see Appendix F). ELLCO is designed to be used by the literacy specialist to determine the focus areas for teaching and coaching. It is scored with a rubric that documents current practice and compares it against standards of proven practice (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). The rubric identifies evidence present for each of the 14 elements on a scale of one to five. A teacher who receives a score of five shows strong evidence of teaching ability for that element. A score of one indicates minimal evidence is present at the time of the observation. Literacy coaches and teachers are encouraged to select one or two areas to focus their efforts. One of those areas must be in the Teaching Domain of the Core Curriculum - oral language, word study, comprehension, writing (Roskos, 2000).

The ELLCO tool provided the classroom teacher and me with the necessary information to engage in meaningful and on-going conversations about literacy practice, specifically in the targeted areas. A summative ELLCO observation occurred in October 2004 and a formative observation occurred in March 2005. The lessons taught, and the conversations around the ELLCO tool, were audiotaped and transcribed for later examination.

### *Close-ups on Teaching*

Close-ups on teaching build on the prior knowledge a teacher has acquired through their participation in the *Literacy Specialist Core Curriculum K-3*. It is a process used by literacy coaches to focus on specific areas of teaching to support teachers' development in the use of standards-based teaching and the use of research-based teaching strategies. The tool focuses specifically on teaching phonemic awareness,

phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing and oral language (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). Each close-up focuses on a specific protocol as well as scaffolding features used by a teacher during the lesson. Protocols are a set of teaching actions or steps that are embedded in effective teaching strategies (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). Scaffolding is the deliberate supports teachers provide in pulling forward student learning. It is the process that takes place within the lesson framework; it is the fuel that drives the lesson forward (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). During close-ups on teaching the literacy specialist and the teacher engage in a diagnostic teaching cycle that occurs in three phases: (a) pre-observation conference, (b) observation and post-observation conference, and (c) analysis of observation.

*Pre-observation Conference.* The diagnostic cycle begins with a planning session to discuss the focus of the lesson (see Appendix B). During this session the literacy specialist and the classroom teacher set the date for observation and identify the goals for the lesson. They also identify the English Language Arts standards and indicators to be addressed, the teaching strategy or activity to be observed, and the grouping arrangements of the students.

*Observation and Post Observation Conference.* The literacy specialist then observes the lesson and follows up with a post observation conference (see Appendix C). During the observation the literacy specialist scripts the interactions that occur between the teacher and the students during the lesson. After the lesson, the literacy specialist conducts a post observation conference. During that interview the literacy specialist asks the teacher a set of questions provided in an interview protocol (see Appendix C) to gather further information from the observation (Roskos, 2000).

*Analysis of Observation.* The observation notes are read by both the literacy specialist and the teacher for evidence of specific teaching actions (teaching protocols) and scaffolding techniques used. The notes are coded for each teaching action evident (see Appendix D). During the debriefing, specific areas are targeted for the planning of the next lesson and the next cycle of diagnostic teaching (Rosemary, 2003).

Three close-ups were completed across the year. To maintain the integrity of this study, all phases of the close-ups of teaching cycle were audiotaped and transcribed for later analysis. The transcripts were then coded and examined for results and patterns that emerged around the stated research questions.

#### *Weekly Planning Meetings*

The teacher and I met weekly to plan lessons around the focus teaching area. During our time together, I interacted with the teacher and the students using a participant observation model. The methods of interaction included: collaboration with the teacher, modeling of lessons, observation of teaching through close-ups on teaching, providing feedback and team teaching. Data were collected by using audiotaped conversations and planning notes. The information gained from the planning meetings, student work, and assessments were used during the lesson planning sessions. We planned the lessons jointly, and the sessions were audiotaped and transcribed for later analysis by me.

#### *Researcher's Journal*

I recorded my perceptions in my journal periodically throughout the project. The journal entries included informal conversations between the teacher and me. The journal entries also reflected my impressions and observations of the project.

### *Data Analysis*

I gathered a general sense of the data by using a preliminary exploratory analysis method (Crestwell, 2002). During this analysis, I read through the data several times in order to get a sense of the relationship and the nature of the interactions. As I gained a sense of the data, I noted emerging patterns. Data were analyzed for evidence of these patterns and coded.

### *Role of the Researcher*

The role of the researcher in this study was a changing observational role (Crestwell, 2002). I am the literacy specialist in the building. My role was adapted to the classroom situation. At times I took part in the daily teaching activities within the classroom as a participant observer. However, during the close-ups on teaching, I served in the role of a non-participant observer. During these lessons, I sat on the periphery and observed the actions of the classroom teacher. Data analysis was completed using multiple readings. The data that were collected around the ELLCO tool, planning, and close-ups on teaching were audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed by me. Triangulation of the data was achieved by collecting data from multiple sources.

### *Provisions for Trustworthiness*

Triangulation of the data was used to enhance the accuracy of the study: ELLCO observations, close-ups on teaching, weekly planning meetings, and researcher's journal entries. In addition, I obtained permission from the cooperating teacher, the school principal, and the university faculty involved in the study (See Appendices G, H). Confidentiality was achieved by deleting the participant's name from the data following coding and using pseudonyms in the final report.

An audit trail was maintained throughout this study, which includes audio tapes, transcripts of planning sessions, researcher journal entries, records of the ELLCO tool, and records of close-ups on teaching. This study was presented to the cooperating teacher and to the University of Dayton Department of Teacher Education as a thesis.

### Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology used to complete this qualitative study. The chapter included a description of the study, detailed descriptions of the participants and setting, data collection and analysis, the role of the researcher, and provisions for trustworthiness. The results of the data analysis and the patterns that emerged from the study are presented in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

*Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* is a framework for professional development that represents a collaborative effort among professionals to support the goals of schools to raise the quality of literacy education (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). The purpose of this study was to explore how a classroom teacher and a literacy specialist work together to improve literacy teaching. The research question was: What does coaching look like in an elementary classroom? This chapter reports the patterns that emerged between one literacy specialist and a classroom teacher. The results presented here represent the most significant findings gathered across the data.

#### *Structures and Processes*

As I began the school year, I looked at the guide for coaching provided by the Literacy Specialist Project—*Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004). The guide supplied me with two coaching tools: *Early Language and Literacy Observation* (ELLCO) and *Close-Ups of Teaching*. Both tools are designed to focus interactions between coaches and teachers around literacy practices. The ELLCO tool centers on various aspects of teaching in four domains of literacy practice: (a) functional environment, (b) interactive environment, (c) language and literacy facilitation, and (d) broad support for literacy. *Close-Ups of Teaching* focuses on the teaching act in support of teachers' development in the effective use of research-based



teaching strategies and standards-based instruction (Sangeorge & Rosemary, 2004).

Additionally, I utilized weekly planning meetings as a process for coaching.

### *Early Language and Literacy Observation (ELLCO)*

It had been eight years since I had worked directly with Emily Smith providing Title I support. Having been assigned to her classroom as an inclusion teacher, we needed time to establish our working relationship. We used the first two months of the school year to work out our schedules, test the students, and get into a routine. By October, Emily and I were ready to begin the structured process of coaching. At this time my mentor coach and I met with Emily and completed the initial ELLCO observation. We observed Emily teaching a guided reading lesson. The observation lasted 45 minutes. During the observation we gathered evidence around the 14 areas identifying practices and environmental features used to promote literacy and language development. Following the observation, my mentor coach and I conducted the post ELLCO interview using the alternate interview protocol (see Appendix I). During this time, Emily expressed that she was ready to make changes in her teaching.

*Emily: I want to thank you. You know, it's like teaching an old dog new tricks. It's time to make some real significant changes and I'm ready. (ELLCO Interview, October 2004)*

Through this interview, we discovered that Emily was very sensitive to the situations in which she wanted help. When asked where she would like coaching to focus, she identified classroom management.

*Emily: They're so squirrelly. It's like I need to do something ... so they're not so squirrelly. I don't know what to do.*

Mentor Coach: *Well we can talk about... [classroom management]*

Emily: *Oh, bless you! Because that's going to make me stronger...*

Mentor Coach: *You're right... you're right. I think it's great you're sensitive to that [classroom management]. You're not asking us, you're telling us. This is the situation I want help with. And, that's the question we kind of finish with. OK, where do you think you would like the coach to focus? Where do you want assistance? Where do you think you need help?*

Emily: *Well, that would be one of them [classroom management strategies]. We could try different kinds of organizational skills that...because some of them are so squirrely... in the area of reading...it's like just different techniques for the ones that are struggling...What can I do to make them successful...I'm so afraid they'll be so far behind at the end of the year and then what do I do? (ELLCO Interview, October 2004)*

After the interview, my mentor coach and I scored the tool using the ELLCO rubric (see Appendix J). As stated in chapter three, a score of one indicates minimal evidence present and a score of five indicates strong evidence. The results of Emily's ELLCO observation in the fall indicated seven elements needing assistance (scoring at a level 2). The elements were: (a) presence and use of technology, (b) opportunities for child choice and initiative, (c) classroom management strategies, (d) presence of books, (e) writing opportunities and instruction, (f) approaches to curriculum integration, and (g) facilitating home support for literacy. The use of ELLCO in the Project suggests that no more than two areas should be coached at a given time; and, of the two areas, one must be in the Teaching Domain of the Core Curriculum. Because classroom

management was an identified area needing assistance, and Emily expressed a desire to focus there, my mentor coach and I agreed that this would be a coaching focus.

Following our scoring and analysis of the ELLCO, I met with Emily and discussed the 14 elements on which we collected evidence. The following conversation indicates how one area of coaching was identified.

Tricia (Coach): *So this is the stuff [evidence] we found... when she [the mentor coach] and I were talking, we really wanted to focus on #5 [classroom management].*

Emily: *OK, #5, which is management and strategies. Thank you very much, that's great!*

Tricia (Coach): *That's what you had...wanted your focus to be.*

Emily: *Absolutely.*

Tricia (Coach): *Our feeling was that by working on #5, a lot of these [other areas] that were right on the cusp of being up to the next level...[would move up] once we got the kids under control...*

Emily: *Right. I agree. (ELLCO Post Conference, October 8, 2004)*

Once one area of focus was identified, we began to brainstorm ways in which to address the needs of the students. I proposed to Emily that we could continue to work together daily on word study using *Words Their Way* (Bear, Templeton, Invernizzi, & Johnson, 2004), a research-based, developmental spelling and word knowledge framework. We had been using this program with the students from the beginning of the school year. Because we were using it during my inclusion time, it gave us a teaching

process around which we could implement management strategies. Emily agreed, and as a result, word study became the teaching focus.

### *Close-Ups of Teaching*

Close-ups of Teaching are used to study a specific teaching event within a classroom. Each close-up focuses on a specific protocol (teaching action) as well as scaffolding features (support) used by a teacher during a lesson. Emily and I completed three close-up cycles across the year, one in late January and two in March. Each focused on specific protocols and scaffolding features related to teaching about words. Word sort was the featured protocol. Bear et al. (2004) define a word sort as “a basic word study routine in which students group words into categories”(pg.427). Emily and I specifically focused on closed sorts (see Appendix K), in which the categories for sorting the words were defined by the teacher. My mentor coach observed two of the three lessons.

In order to prepare Emily for the close-ups, we did a preliminary observation in November. I had intended to do a complete close-up cycle (pre-observation conference, observation, post-observation interview, and analysis of observation) to establish a baseline of information, as well as to provide Emily with an introduction to close-ups. However, we only completed the pre-observation conference, observation and post-observation interview. Due to scheduling conflicts, we were unable to complete the post-observation conference and the analysis of observation. Although this was an incomplete cycle, I was able to examine the transcript of the lesson and begin the process of modeling around the specific protocol. Because this close-up became an informal observation, Emily was able to focus on the information I presented on how protocols

and scaffolding would be used during the close-up cycle. We were taking “baby steps” into the close-up process. (Personal Journal, November 2004)

At the end of January we completed our first full close-up cycle. During the pre-observation conference we established that one group of students would work with Emily at the overhead on a word sort activity. While she provided instruction for this group, the rest of the class completed seat work and read silently. Careful attention was paid to the grouping of the students. The same students she worked with in November were used in later close-ups. This was designed in order to observe continuity between the lessons. Emily taught a closed sort lesson that focused on the short *o* and short *a* sounds. I sat on the periphery and observed the lesson. While she taught, I scripted the interactions between the students and herself. The post-observation conference occurred the following day. The lesson and the post-observation conference were audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis. I coded the transcript using the word sort protocol (see Appendices K) and scaffolding features (see Appendices L). Once the coding was completed, I conducted the analysis of observation. This conversation occurred three days later, which allowed me time to transcribe and reflect on the lesson. During the analysis, I explained the protocol and scaffolding features present in her lesson and discussed goals for future lessons.

The remaining two close-ups were completed using the same process. The close-ups were scheduled several weeks apart to allow time for continued modeling around the protocol.

### *Planning Meetings*

Emily and I met weekly over the course of the year. These meetings were scheduled during a common planning time in her classroom and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. Additional planning occurred informally during the day before and after school. Time always was an issue. We tried to schedule common time, but it was never enough. I was lucky that I was in Emily's room daily and had many opportunities to interact with her as needed. (Personal Journal, January 2005)

During our planning meetings we focused on teaching that would occur during my inclusion time for the following week. There was no prescribed structure to the weekly planning meetings. We established our own agenda and addressed several topics: (a) where we were with word study, (b) what we needed to accomplish with regards to *Reading with Meaning* (Miller, 2002), a book study group in which we were participating, (c) areas of student concern, and (d) scheduling events such as field trips and assemblies that interfered with teaching.

Additional planning around close-ups on teaching occurred four times across the year during the pre-observation conference. These planning sessions were focused specifically on upcoming lessons around word study and followed the planning format established by the coaching manual (see Appendix B.). During this pre-observation conference, we discussed the setting of the lesson (grouping), materials needed, goals, and the Ohio English Language Arts Standards that would be covered in the lesson. The specific word sort the students would use during the lesson was selected during this meeting. This selection was made based on student assessments from the previous week, as well as teacher feedback. In all, ten weeks of planning were audiotaped and analyzed.

### *Interactions*

Analysis of the interactions between Emily and me across the data sources revealed the following patterns about coaching: (a) the need for sensitivity, (b) a deliberate and self-controlled agenda in the mind of the coach, (c) a gradual release of responsibility, and (d) the need for modeling (show, don't tell).

#### *Need for Sensitivity*

Even though Emily expressed the need to make changes in her teaching, I was concerned that she felt comfortable with the coaching process. She is an excellent teacher with a wealth of knowledge and experience. My role as a coach was to guide her in the use of theory and practice in teaching that required her to think, choose, and reflect (Tharp & Gallimore, 2002). Because I was in the classroom on a daily basis, I already had a sense of what was going on and where I felt coaching might occur. Although I am included in this classroom, I am not the classroom teacher, and I am not the one making changes in my teaching practice. I did not want to go in and tell her what she should do change. I wanted her to have ownership in this process. (Personal journal, 2004)

Therefore, in my interactions with Emily, often the question was: How do I talk about needed change and be supportive and encouraging at the same time? This was the case when I met with Emily to go over the results of the ELLCO tool. As mentioned earlier, Emily's initial ELLCO scores revealed seven areas needing improvement. All of these areas needed to be addressed, but to focus attention on all seven would have been overwhelming and demoralizing. As I prepared for this session, I decided to begin by calling attention to her strengths, then focus on one or two areas we could work on. The

following is an example of how the data were presented to Emily in a manner that was intended to be non-threatening and sensitive to her needs and feelings:

Tricia (Coach): *Your assessments are great! We saw that you are using your knowledge of the children to place them in the groups to work together and support their needs. So, DRA, DIBELS, anecdotal notes . . . all of that is really strong. So, your teaching ideas, what you want to do with the kids, are there. So, that's really good.*

Emily: *Yes.*

Tricia (Coach): *But, we're going to focus on some of the other areas.*

Emily: *That's wonderful!*

Tricia (Coach): *Your books. We see that you have a library, but it's not organized.... I'm not thinking that's a focus area for us right now because we're using my library and the resource room. That's not something . . . because if [we] focus on all this [areas of need] right now . . .*

Emily: *It would be too overwhelming!*

Tricia (Coach): *It's too overwhelming. So, I see that [classroom library] as a free read.*

Emily: *Right.*

Tricia (Coach): *That's not something we want to really tackle at this point. Does that make sense?*

Emily: *Yes, it does.*

As we talked, Emily seemed very comfortable with this process and even stated:



Emily: ...*I really think that if we get that [management] under control some of these others [areas of need] will be bumped up.* (Post ELLCO interview, October 2004)

I felt encouraged by her openness to change and thought that this would be a great experience. (Personal Journal, October 2004)

As we moved further into the coaching process, I became sensitive to the need for Emily to be an active participant. Therefore, all of our conversations and planning took place in her classroom. I felt that the conversations should take place where teaching occurred. This allowed us to explore and utilize all of her resources. Materials and resources from my room were brought in as needed.

In our weekly meetings, we discussed the lessons that would be presented during the following week. At times I took on the role of coach, and other times I took on the role of the inclusion Title I teacher. Much of our time was spent on the logistics of team teaching. Because I am in her room for 45 minutes every day, we spent time planning for word sort activities (coaching focus), as well as whole group guided reading lessons. It was during the planning for a guided reading lesson that another example of the need to be sensitive emerged. At the time, Emily and I were involved in a book study group of Debbie Miller's book, *Reading with Meaning* (2003). It was used to frame our teaching of comprehension. I had just finished a week long study using the book *The Royal Bee* (Park & Park, 2000). I modeled the use of an inside/outside chart. An inside/outside chart is a chart that identifies the outside characteristics of a character (hair, eyes, clothes) and the inside personality traits. Emily was going to teach the next lesson and suggested *Crow Boy* (Yashima, 1972) as a possible choice. During our conversation, Emily

appeared uncomfortable with her decision to use *Crow Boy* and tried to talk herself into using a book I was familiar with instead. I made the decision during this conversation to nudge her into using her book. This would make the experience much richer.

Tricia (Coach): *Do you want to do another story and do an inside/outside chart again?*

*This time do you want to read the story and do the chart?*

Emily: *Sure, I just wish I could find Crow Boy though, because I think he is Korean, but this little boy was not the brightest student but is just like he was so determined to go to school, and um the kids made fun of him. I don't know if we could do...*

Tricia (Coach): *Well let's find the book. Somebody in the building has got to have it and if not we'll go to the library and get it.*

Emily: *I don't know ... it's a 1950 some publication.*

Tricia (Coach): *We'll find the book.*

Emily: *Tell me about Ruby [Ruby Bridges] whatever. How would we do that one?*

Tricia (Coach): *We would do the same thing...*

Emily: *Maybe that one [Ruby Bridges] would have more impact with how things are currently today and not that many years ago.*

Tricia (Coach): *Your kids may or may not connect with it in that way. Somebody has to have Crow Boy. You're more familiar with that story. You've got a connection with that... If we don't find Crow Boy this weekend then we can use Ruby Bridges as a back-up.*

Emily: *Ok that sounds good. (Planning, February 2005)*

Emily decided to use *Crow Boy*. The lesson turned out to be very powerful for her students. She felt that they were able to complete the chart more effectively than they had previously. During a planning meeting she shared, "You know I thought it was really amazing because when we did it the first time [with *The Royal Bee*] it was like pulling teeth for them to know the outside characteristics of Song Ho... Doing *Crow Boy* I thought they were different... Well maybe the more they do it the better they'll become at it (the inside/outside chart)." (Planning, March 7, 2005) I was pleased she chose the book that was familiar to her.

I observed Emily using the close-ups on teaching framework three times across the year. Each time, Emily and I coded the transcripts of the lessons for protocol features (specific teaching actions around closed word sorts – see Appendix K) and scaffolding features (support provided by the teacher – see Appendix L). Using the protocol features during our conversations allowed us to focus on the content of the lesson taught. The evidence was either present or it was not. The conversations always addressed the areas of strength first. Emily's lessons were always well planned and I didn't want the negative to overshadow all of the positive changes she was making.

The following example reflects the difficulty that Emily had with some aspects of the closed word sort protocol (see Appendix K). She had indicated in an earlier conversation that transitions were hard for her, and that became apparent in her transcripts. The evidence around protocol feature P5 - provide practice activities for sorting and explaining categories and protocol feature P6 - observe and provide feedback as children sort and explain the categories were initially weak. The conversation that

follows occurred during a post observation conference. I wanted Emily to think about how she was addressing these two areas and where there was a need for a change.

Tricia (Coach): *...Does it matter what order they [the students] do the steps in [the activity] when they went back to their desks? She [mentor coach] said she was noticing that some were writing their names on their words first, some were cutting, and others were highlighting the vowels. They didn't do it in a specific order. Does that matter... do you care what order it happens as long as it gets done?*

Emily: *It doesn't bother me, but maybe if I were a little more [direct with instructions] it would be better. They wouldn't forget stuff [directions]. I just need to think about that [the way I give directions] a little bit more as I'm teaching. That's good.*

Tricia (Coach): *I think the biggest step that I would not want to have skipped was the highlighting of the vowels. You said that that helped them and gave them a visual when they were sorting later in the week, and I would want to ensure that that was happening. Maybe they need to stay on the floor long enough to do that [highlighted the vowels] and that would be their ticket back to their seat. Once they've highlighted the vowels and you've checked it, they can go back to their seat, cut, sort, and alphabetize.*

Emily: *Ok, right.*

Tricia (Coach): *Overall the lesson went really well. (Transcript, March 2004)*

Through this conversation I was able to scaffold Emily's thinking about how she implemented a routine around word sorts. I guided her specifically to the area of

independent practice in a way that was intended to be non-threatening through the use of specific feedback. Once she was aware of the need for change, I gave her time to think about what we had just discussed. I knew that I would return to my initial question during our next pre-observation conference, and I did not need an answer right away. This worked very well, and Emily made changes in her next lesson.

Another example of being sensitive to this teacher occurred during the coding of a transcript. Emily coded her final close-up independently. After we worked independently, we compared our coding. During this part of the conversation, Emily and I didn't agree, our coding was different. She gave the students directions and monitored them while they completed the task. She interpreted the activity as an example of protocol feature P5 - providing practice activities for sorting and explaining the categories, while I coded it as protocol feature P3 - modeling how words can be sorted by sound and feature patterns. I remember coding my first transcript and it was very intimidating. I needed to be sensitive to how she was feeling as we worked through the transcript together. Through our conversation she was able to think about why she chose a specific protocol feature and understand how the protocols appear throughout the lesson.

The lesson took place with a small group of students. These students were working on a word sort lesson at the overhead projector. Emily had introduced the two categories that the students were going to sort their words into and then worked with them to read the words and sorted them together on the overhead. This is the conversation that occurred as she and I reviewed this transcript and discussed the protocol features that were present.

Emily: *This part right here is different [looking at the two transcripts]... I was just doing glances at his work as he was going through it [working independently].... So that's why I chose that one [P5].*

Tricia (Coach): *I could see how that would work... See how they [the protocols] all overlap. I would probably not put that as a P5 [provide practice]. Although, that was independent work, P5 usually shows up when they go back to their seats. I can see why you're putting P5. They were independently working on something.*

Emily: *Right.*

Tricia (Coach): *I put this [the same place in the transcript] more of P3 [modeling sorts] because they were still doing this whole group.*

Emily: *Ok, it was more monitored.*

Tricia (Coach): *But it can be P5 the way you interpreted that [the actions of the student], because you were providing the practice. I would agree with that and could put a P5 there. (ELLCO, March 2005)*

### *Deliberate and Self-controlled Agenda*

Tharp and Gallimore (2002) state that, "Schooling as assisted performance requires a quite deliberate and self-controlled agenda in the mind of the teacher, who has specific curricular, cognitive, and conceptual goals" (pg. 264). The interactions that occurred between Emily and me, over the course of this study, are much like "schooling as assisted performance."

Classroom Close-Ups yield many advantages. Among those advantages are clear goals and objectives established with teachers by using a common language and identifies direction for improvement with strategies that can lead to improved results (Sangeorge &

Rosemary, 2004). The structures and processes used to facilitate the coaching process enabled me to focus the coaching process. Although the formal coaching process did not begin until October, Emily and I began working together in August. As part of our Schoolwide Title I plan, I was required to administer and track student learning using *Words Their Way*. Using this assessment, I identified twelve students in Emily's classroom that would benefit from word study. Therefore we structured a portion of the time I spent in the room around word study. In October when I began coaching, I needed to guide Emily into choosing a teaching area that we could use during close-ups on teaching. Knowing that we could work on her primary concern of management in any of the teaching domains, I encouraged her to work with word study because it would benefit the students I was targeting. The close-ups would then be a continuation of what we were already doing in the classroom and not a separate entity.

The close-up cycles are modeled after research conducted earlier using the Teacher Learning Instrument (TLI) (Rosemary et al., 2002). During that study, literacy coaches and teachers went "up close" on the same teaching strategy three times. The same planning, observing and questioning format were repeated each time. The structure of the TLI enables the coach and teacher to interact through rich conversation about specific teaching actions and scaffolding features.

The diagnostic cycle of the close-ups on teaching provided the opportunity for Emily and me to analyze the same teaching phenomenon over multiple lessons. The initial observation revealed areas for us to reflect on for future teaching and modeling. During the analysis of her initial close-up we observed many of the protocol features. However, protocol features around P5 - providing practice activities for sorting and

explaining the categories and P6 – provide feedback were weak. I deliberately focused Emily's attention on these areas during our pre-observation meetings and followed up with her during our post-observation conferences.

The following example took place during a post-observation conference and shows how I would redirect the conversation so that we were constantly using the diagnostic cycle to reach our goal. During our pre-observation conference Emily and I discussed ways to improve her application of protocol features P5 and P6. I shared with her the method I had used with my small group. The students worked on the floor, while I monitored them. Emily decided that she would implement this strategy with her group. However, her plan changed during the lesson. This change affected the outcome. I wanted to gather Emily's thinking on this decision.

Tricia (Coach): *OK, ...a couple things my mentor coach and I saw. You and I had talked about before [during the pre-observation conference]... One of the things we talked about was..., you had them bring their scissors, and their yellow crayons on the floor and then you said, 'We're going to do some group stuff and I may sit on the floor with you... [and work with you on your sorts].' However, they ended up going back to their seats. We wanted to gather your thinking about this change in the lesson.*

Emily: *Reason was because one child said I would rather sit at a table. So I thought well ok.*

Tricia (Coach): *[We] heard that as well, we just wanted to get your thinking.*

Emily: *So well you know they didn't feel comfortable on the floor, but it would have been easier for me I think [to keep them on the floor with me].*



Tricia (Coach): *My suggestion might be: we know through working with the group and our oral assessments that [4 students] struggle, so maybe send the rest of the group back and leave those 4 students up there, because those were the ones that you were really purposefully trying to target.*

Emily: *OK*

Tricia (Coach): *That would be my suggestion for that. Even though they said they would be more comfortable at their desks, like you said it would have been easier for you if you had them all together.* (Post observation conference, March 2005)

Two weeks later we sat down to plan another close-up. The following is an example from the transcript on how I directed her back to the last lesson.

Tricia (Coach): *We're going to do another close-up around the sorting. Based on what we discussed with the last sort, ... Which part of the process are we still struggling with?*

Emily answered this question by discussing the pacing of her last lesson. We discussed ways in which to keep the students on target and keep the pace up. After we established a plan for her pacing, I directed her back to the protocol areas in which she was still struggling with -P5 and P6.

Tricia (Coach): *So you can do that [work on pacing] and then we had discussed the area that I saw was still a [struggle] ... you're still trying to figure out the best way to work it [the lesson], ... you expressed that it's [P5-providing practice activities for sorting and explaining categories and observing and P6-providing feedback as children sort and explain categories] still not quite what you would like it to be. Once you've done the sort on the overhead or the alphabetizing, both*

*of which you did well, but they were a little lengthy and the students lost interest.*

*Overall the activity went well. It was the independent practice and how to manage all of that [that you still need to work on]. They wanted to go back to their chairs and they did.*

Emily: *Right, ok, what we said is, what we should have done was with the ones that are capable of doing the alphabetical sort let them go back to their seats, do the sorts, because we know they can probably do it. Then the ones that are struggling, keep them up at the overhead at a little desk area, and go ahead and cut and do the sorts and stuff with me.*

Tricia (Coach): *The other thing we talked about was to have everybody at the floor to highlight their vowels so you know that step is done.*

Emily: *[Writing notes] on floor highlighting vowels. (Close-up planning, March 2005)*

Emily used this approach in her last close-up.

Another example of how keeping a deliberate agenda in mind affected the coaching process occurred during a weekly planning meeting. Many of Emily's students were working below grade level and this was of great concern. In an attempt to address this concern, Emily began to brainstorm other phonics methods to use with the students. Although each method she mentioned was good, the decision had been made to use *Words Their Way*. I was not willing to change methods. I saw the progress the students were making and was afraid that if we introduced too many systems they would become confused and progress would stop. The following is an example of how I acknowledged

Emily's ideas, but deliberately focused her on the *Words Their Way* assessment that we had just administered.

Emily: *The assessment we just gave [Words Their Way]. Let me look again at the assessments then. Ok. Now am I right in assuming that these five are ready for the other vowel patterns [irregular vowels]. These are still having a little bit of problems with long vowel sounds [late letter name] is that correct?*

Tricia (Coach): *Looking at these other kids, [referring to the Words Their Way assessment] they're in this late letter name alphabetic stage.*

Emily: *Should we go back and do um the phonics dance with the [points to the phonics dance posted on her wall]... Should I be doing things with that in there [referring to the phonics dance]?*

Tricia (Coach): *We can take a look at that, but I think we need to stay focused on one system or program [Words Their Way].*

Emily: *Here's the other thing I think you remember when we did that phonics whatever [Logical Phonics] and maybe I get those little cards out just talk about CVC will always be a short vowel. (Weekly planning, January 2005)*

Our conversation continued around the assessment. I decided that we would look at the data provided to us from the assessment and focus our teaching using *Words Their Way* sorts. I felt it was important for the students to remain consistent in one method of instruction. During this conversation we separated the students into two groups based on the data retrieved from the *Words Their Way* assessment. As I reflected on this conversation between Emily and myself, I sensed her strong desire to help her students using different methods at her disposal. I find that she expresses a need to change

methods of instruction often. (Personal Journal, January 2005). Although we continued with the word sort activities, Emily was able to incorporate some elements from the other programs without changing the routine.

### *Gradual Release of Responsibility*

Like any new process it takes time to learn. Initially, I dominated the conversations. During a conversation planning for a close-up, I directed Emily back to the protocol and scaffolding features that we had already reviewed. The purpose here was to have her review what had already been discussed during our analysis of observation conversation. We worked through the protocol again jointly, but the conversation was still dominated by me. Gradually, with guided practice, Emily came to understand how to identify the different protocol features within a lesson.

Tricia (Coach): *I wanted to review with you again the information about the close-up from last time [January close-up] and take a look at the protocol features...[that we discussed]. Here is another copy for you... These are the protocols that we have talked about that happen in a closed sort word sorting activity [looking at my coding for the last close up lesson].*

Emily: *umhum*

Tricia (Coach): *They [the protocols] are numbered and here again are the scaffolding features. They are coded by these initials. Here again, I went through this lesson and looked for evidence of those protocols. So like the first one is to focus attention.*

Emily: *right*

Tricia (Coach): *Um and you did that [focused attention] here in this paragraph where you said, 'This is what we did last week and this is what we will be doing this week looking at the short a....' You also explained the task as well as modeling the task for how the features are going to be identified. You started with that here and really P3 [model task] will go through the whole lesson as well, because you're modeling but you're also providing um how children identify and explain categories. You're really doing P3 [model task] and P4 [assisted performance] throughout. (Planning, March 7, 2005)*

Emily and I worked through all of her close-up transcripts together. However, for our last close-up we coded the transcripts independently. I provided her with directions on how to look through the transcript for evidence of protocols and scaffolding. I sat in the room while she coded the first two pages to answer any questions. She then took the transcript home and completed the coding. After she completed the coding we sat down and compared our results. She appeared pleasantly surprised at how well she did. The following conversation shows how Emily was an active participant in the conversation around the coding.

Emily: *I could see that. Oh it's pretty good. So far, so good. I'm kind of amazed.*

Tricia (Coach): *No, it's good.*

Emily: *[next page] At the beginning I have P3 [model task] & P4 [assist performance], and I have P5 [provide practice] here. That's because we were doing it on the overhead. Well, I didn't really know how to do that one because I was giving them instructions and then going back to shade in the vowel sound. I didn't know...*

Tricia (Coach): *It could be [P5 – provide practice]. I have P4 [assist performance] all the way through because you're assisting with that performance. A lot of times with P5 [provide practice] and P6 [independent performance] it's assigned when the activity is more independent, the students are working at their desks. The others [protocol features] are more assisted. It could be P5 [provide practice] or P4 [assist performance]. It just depends on how you looked at it.*

Emily: *OK, now I put a P1 [ask children to react to selected words]. I didn't know quite how to mark this. Why did I choose that one?, Because, I wanted them [the students] to react.*

Tricia (Coach): *Ok, that makes sense. You're bringing attention to a specific word.* (ELLCO, March 2005)

During our conversation, Emily verbalized her thinking about specific protocol features. We were able to debate why we had each chosen protocol features and come to consensus.

### *Modeling*

Modeling was used often throughout the study as a way of introducing a new method or technique. Because I was familiar with word sorting activities, I suggested lessons that Emily could use to teach a specific concept. I would then prepare the lesson and present it to the class. Following the lesson we would talk about it and then she would teach a similar lesson. This took place throughout most of the study. An example of this occurred in November when we discussed teaching a phonics lesson around short and long vowels using silent *e*. Before she taught the concept, I suggested creating a

lesson that I would teach to model the process. I introduced the word sort activity using short *a* and long *a* using silent *e* and modeled it whole class. Emily sat in the back and took notes on what was occurring in the classroom. Once the technique was modeled, Emily taught a lesson using the same method. (Journal Entry, November 5, 2004) The modeled lesson was discussed during the planning for Emily's first close-up on teaching. The discussion that follows shows how the modeled lesson was reviewed for protocol features and how Emily was guided toward making decisions for her up-coming lesson.

Tricia (coach): *Basically, every lesson you teach has a protocol [teaching actions] that goes with it. In order for it to be an effective lesson you have to complete all parts of the protocol.*

Emily: *Ok*

Tricia (coach): *If we don't complete all the steps the lesson will be less effective. For example, last week when I taught the lesson [long and short a using silent e] I don't think I did a good job with this step here [pointing to the protocol] P4 [assist performance] taking turns reading and sorting words one at a time. I assumed they knew how to do that because we've been doing sorts for so long. Then we had three kids come up and tell us they didn't know what was expected. So, I need to do a better job of that next time I teach.*

Emily: *Right, we're going to introduce the new sort you gave me, is that correct, you gave me the new sort?*

Tricia (coach): *No, I gave you the list of words we could use. Do you need me to pull up the new sort?*

Emily: *I can probably pull them up.*

Tricia (coach): *Do you know what pattern you are looking for?*

Emily: *Was it the one with the o vowel consonant silent e pattern? Was that the one? Do you remember?*

Tricia (coach): *Do you want to do the o or do you want to the i?*

Emily: *I want to do the o.* (Planning, November 16, 2004)

The discussion around the sort ended there, and Emily finished planning for her lesson. She taught her lesson and we coded it for specific protocol features. "I feel that referring back to a lesson I taught was an effective way to teach Emily how to use protocol features." (Personal Journal November, 2004)

The modeling that occurred throughout the year was often directed by me. Emily was very eager to try new ideas, but allowed me to choose the lessons that we would use. However, during one occasion Emily asked me to model an activity so that she could watch and implement the same strategy. The following example is an excerpt of that conversation. We were talking about an extension activity I was using with a group of struggling readers. I met with three students to reinforce short vowels by using a text. The students were instructed to complete a scavenger hunt with me and highlight all the short vowels. I was using specific word prompts with the students. Emily wanted to use the same technique. This was the first time she had requested a specific lesson to be modeled.

Emily: *I might want to [watch] while you're doing that lesson. Where you're working with that group ... I would like to see how you're doing it [extension of word sort activity] so that I'm saying the same kind of thing when I'm working*



*with them. I don't want to get them mixed up because I'm saying it one way and you're doing it another way.*

Tricia (Coach): *right – sure –* .(Planning, March 2005)

### *Teacher Learning*

During the course of this study, Emily stated that prior to this study she had spent little time reflecting on specific teaching actions related to pedagogy and theory. She was very reflective on the needs of her students, but did not have a clear sense of how to provide them with the learning structures they needed. She would often express her frustrations within our meetings.

Emily: *Why is it? I'm just saying this out loud. Some days they get it, some days they don't.* (Transcript, March 2005)

Working together across this school year provided an avenue for Emily to gain knowledge about different teaching practices and time to reflect. As we sat down in March to think about our year together, I asked Emily what she had learned and taken away from our time together. She responded with as much candor as she did in our first meeting.

Emily: *You know after you start talking about it [teaching practices] and these things [pointing to protocol features] that you're not even aware of that we do over and over again and not correct it. You know what I'm saying? Just having a chance to verbalize what is happening has been very beneficial.* (Close-up interview, March 2005)

This research study ended before the school year was over. I wanted to show Emily how she had improved using the ELLCO tool. The final ELLCO observation was

not scheduled to occur until May. My mentor coach and I decided to use data gathered during our last classroom close-up to complete an informal ELLCO observation. The data gathered during this observation were used for formative purposes only. The tool was not scored, but the evidence collected around the 14 areas was shared with Emily. During our review of the tool, I focused Emily's attention on classroom management. In the fall she had scored a 2 in this area. It was important for her to see the growth that she had made.

Tricia (Coach): *Now, classroom management, over the year, knowing where you started from... [pause] we scored you at a 2, how do you feel now? Has it changed? Has the tone of your room been affected?*

Emily: *I think one of the things is that instead of just going ahead and starting and a few getting caught up and trying to go with me, I just wait until I have their eyes. I don't move on....So I think that has changed... I just think I expect more. Where as at the beginning I just thought they'll catch up, they'll catch up, but that's not always necessarily the case.*

Tricia (Coach): *Right, well based on the stuff [protocol features] we saw in this lesson and what I've seen all year I would score you at a three now.*

Emily: *Great!*

Another area that Emily and I focused on during coaching was the need for consistency within her lessons. Emily's lessons were always well thought out, but she got frustrated when they did not go the way she had intended. Because she did not get the results she had hoped, for she changed the way she taught often. This interfered with student learning. The students were never able to master any single strategy for learning to read. The following is an example of how Emily's thinking changed.

Emily: *I think honestly so many times in, because we want immediate results, I'm willing to switch thinking... ok this is going to be a quick fix... But by the coaching, I [learned] it's being more steadfast and giving it a lengthy enough time to prove that this is going to work and calm down.... so that's been good.*

Through close-ups on teaching Emily implemented the same teaching strategy. While examining the post ELLCO evidence, I shared with Emily data collected during our ELLCO observation in October. The lesson she taught then contained several different teaching elements. Each one could have been a separate guided reading lesson, but they were all combined into one. This pattern of teaching was present during our first two close-ups, but disappeared as we continued working together.

Tricia (Coach): *That's [sticking to one method of teaching] changed how you've approached teaching lessons. The ELLCO that we did at the beginning of the year was an excellent lesson. You had a lot of really good teaching in there, but you covered 15 different topics at once. It was too much for the kids. In November when I observed you, the lesson was narrowed down to a specific topic but you still added in extra stuff [teaching elements]. And the January close up you even noticed when we looked at the transcript ... that just did not work at all. You said you didn't set them up for that [teaching elements not present in the protocol]. So you're noticing to slow down and narrow it down.*

Emily: *... maybe I didn't do all of the steps that I need to go through to have the results that I wanted. That's changed and that's good!*

### Summary

This chapter presented the patterns that emerged through this qualitative case study. Additional patterns may have been part of the data, but data that was most significant were presented here. Discussion and implications of the study will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary

This study was designed to fulfill a need for further research on the interactions between a literacy specialist and classroom teacher and how those interactions improved the teaching of literacy. Based on the results of this study, several observations for coaching were made.

The first observation made centered on the role of the literacy specialist as a leader. Although I had fulfilled a leadership role through facilitating after school professional development activities, this was the first time I worked with a classroom teacher across the year as a literacy coach. This proved to be both challenging and rewarding. The designers of *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* established criteria for literacy coaches. Among those criteria was the stipulation that coaches be released from teaching responsibilities (partially or fully). In my particular situation, I was granted time to coach, but not released from my teaching responsibilities. Initially, I thought it would be difficult to juggle the role of inclusion teacher and coach. As an inclusion teacher, my role was to enter the classroom to support the students in reading on a daily basis. There were several students in Emily's classroom that needed intervention in reading. As a literacy coach, my role was to enter the classroom to support the teacher in the teaching of reading. I made the decision to integrate the coaching process within my inclusion teaching.

The way I approached coaching was different than the model my peers in the Project were following. In the Project, a reading specialist schedules a minimum of five meetings with a teacher (two ELLCO observations and three close-ups on teaching). Additional meetings are scheduled as needed for the coach to model lessons and discuss close-ups on teaching. This decision of creating a parallel environment; one in which I was a reading specialist working with children and one where I was a reading specialist working with a teacher, proved to be effective. I was able to integrate coaching components such as modeling and close-ups on teaching into our daily work. Therefore, the decisions I made about what to coach were affected not only by the needs expressed by Emily, but also by the needs of the students with whom I worked.

Emily expressed that she wanted to work on classroom management, but she did not have a strong preference for the teaching domain. I decided that I would nudge her into word study, believing that it would have the greatest impact on the students from her classroom with whom I worked. We discussed why I wanted her to look at word study, and she agreed. Coaching provided Emily and me a way to communicate through the use of a deliberate agenda. The agenda was set based on the needs of her students as well as the components of coaching. This became evident later in the year when I deliberately kept Emily focused on using *Words Their Way*. I was familiar with the program and was seeing improvement. I was not willing to change methods of instruction. I felt that the students would become confused and progress would stop. That decision was made as a teacher not as a coach. If I had not been an inclusion teacher in this classroom I would not have deliberately focused teaching on what I thought would work best. But, Emily's decisions on teaching directly affected my teaching in the classroom. I listened to her

ideas, and we were able to incorporate some of the other teaching methods without abandoning *Words Their Way*. In this particular situation, this approach worked well.

As we continued through the year, the concern for me became one of keeping our relationship collaborative. I did not want coaching to affect the positive rapport that had developed during our work together. Because *Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction* is so well designed, the tools and structures lend themselves to conversations about good teaching practices. The framework is research-based and provided me with an objective tool to describe the extent to which the teacher's classroom supports the development of early literacy. Because of this tool, I perceived that our conversations were much richer and non-threatening. This enabled us to make changes in her teaching practices.

Coaching as a professional development model was new to my building and it required Emily and I to work through the elements of coaching. As we began our work together she was very reluctant to make decisions about her teaching. I attributed this to several factors: (a) coaching was a new process, (b) we were using new materials (*Words Their Way* and *Reading with Meaning*), and (c) taking a reflective look at her teaching practice may have been intimidating. I found myself reflecting on the latter of these factors. Many times throughout the study, Emily questioned the material she wanted to use. It was during this time that I felt the need to scaffold her as a teacher. She was very eager to watch modeled lessons and then implement them herself. However, she seemed to be unsure of herself when it came to selecting materials. I felt that it was my role as a coach to encourage her to make teaching decisions based on her professional knowledge of teaching reading. I hoped that her lessons would be more meaningful, therefore her

reflections would be more in-depth. This lead to my second observation, coaching as describe in this study, supports findings from other studies conducted on the coaching process (Rosemary & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2003; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The analysis of data revealed the structures that are associated with teaching as assisted performance (engage in joint problem solving, building intersubjectivity, maintain warmth and responsiveness, stay in the zone of proximal development, and promote self-regulation) were evident in my study.

The final observation made relates to the approach school districts, as a whole, take towards professional development. Teachers need to experience researched-based teaching techniques within their own teaching environment. One-day workshops, facilitated by experts in the field, are beneficial. However, teachers presented with follow-up opportunities through modeling and discussions with literacy specialists are more likely to make significant long term changes in teaching pedagogy.

I found myself thinking throughout this study about how my school district provides opportunities for professional development. The most common comes in the form of sending teachers to workshops and seminars or bringing experts into the school for an in-service day. These methods of professional development are informative, but they are also costly and difficult to sustain over the long term. As I stated before, we need experts to provide initial training in new pedagogy, but we need to be practical. The professional conversations that Emily and I had around teaching pedagogy improved her teaching practices around word study and classroom management. Thereby, coaching as a professional development model can be linked to our district goals for improved professional development. However, time for coaching conversation is limited. In order



for coaching to be effective, administrators must be supportive by providing time in our schedules. Coaching can provide an opportunity to objectively assess any type of language arts instruction; therefore, embedding professional development into the school system.

### Recommendations

As with any self-study, we don't want to just study our own practice but we want to improve it in a particular direction that will impact what happens in schools, universities and colleges (Feldman, 2003). Because of the desire to impact how professional development happens --i.e., coaching-- I found considering additional areas for further research.

1. My question at the start of this study was: What does coaching look like in the elementary classroom? I identified and studied one very specific scenario of coaching. This scenario was different from other literacy coaches involved in this project in that I was not released from my teaching responsibilities. This study revealed that coaching in an inclusion setting was effective. A valuable extension to this research would be to identify different ways coaches are utilized in school districts.
2. Another valuable extension of this study would be to shift the focus from first year coaching experiences onto second year coaching experiences between the same coach and teacher. Comparisons between the results over the two years would be valuable information in determining future training and support of teachers and coaches.

3. More research needs to be done on how to sustain coaching as a form of professional development over time. The organizational structures of the *Literacy Specialist Project* suggest that collaboration between mentor coaches and literacy specialists is essential to the success of coaching. More needs to be learned about how to maintain effective training for experienced coaches.

The above recommendations for further research are based on the reflections made during this study and address the needs for further study around the coaching project.

### Implications

Three things that I think are important to focus on when we think about coaching:

- (a) We have to use the same approach we use with students. Teachers set an agenda when teaching their students. They have a starting point and an ending point that measures the success of a lesson. Their lessons are supported by data, curriculum, and standards. The same approach can be applied when working with teachers. The coaching methods used in this study provided a framework for working with teachers to improve teaching pedagogy,
- (b) We have to provide a context where a teacher feels less vulnerable. As stated earlier coaching is very delicate work. Changes in teaching pedagogy will only happen if an individual is comfortable with what is being asked of them. If the information gained from coaching is used as an evaluation then teachers will never be open to making changes. In my experience I was working with a veteran teacher. She was asked to reflect on her own teaching practices and to share those reflections with a peer and to make changes in her own teaching. The coaching framework used in this study allowed me to establish what I perceived to be a non-threatening relationship. It was

through this relationship that changes were made, and (c) We need to have someone spearheading change. One individual alone cannot make change happen. Administration needs to take an active role and encourage its teachers to make changes in their pedagogy.

In conclusion, professional development needs to be ongoing and embedded in our school systems. Coaching provides an avenue to make this possible. The benefits this form of professional development can have on maintaining highly knowledgeable teachers is important to the continuous improvement of student learning and is the most valuable contribution this study can make to the field of professional development.

## APPENDIX A

Teacher or Co-Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School and Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation Scoring Form

Item Description	Evidence	Scoring					Q
		5	4	3	2	1	
1. Organization of the Classroom Evidence: status and organization of furnishings, traffic flow, activities and materials available to children							
2. Contents of the Classroom Evidence: Organization and content of materials & classroom displays							
3. Presence and Use of Technologies Evidence: Technologies in evidence and observations of children using technology							
4. Opportunities for Child Choice & Initiative Evidence: Classroom schedule, routines, & observations of how teachers and children use the classroom and materials							
5. Classroom Management Strategies Evidence: Observed interactions between teachers & children, rules & routines and the nature of conflicts and their resolution							
6. Classroom Climate Evidence: Interactions between teachers and children, children & children, equality of treatment							
7. Oral Language Facilitation Evidence: Interaction among teachers and children during lessons and activities							

Adapted from the ELLCO Score Form.

Scoring Notes: Place a check or question mark in the Q box to indicate that you will ask the teacher a question.

Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction: A Guide to Professional Development

## APPENDIX B

Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction: *A Guide to Professional Development*

## Close-Ups of Teaching: Classroom Observation Form

Part I. Classroom Observation Survey (ELLCO): Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

Part II. Close-Ups of Teaching

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level: \_\_\_\_\_ Time observation begins: \_\_\_\_\_ Time observation ends: \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching context: Number of children: \_\_\_\_\_ Group arrangement (circle one): whole class, small group, individual

Materials (teacher): \_\_\_\_\_ Materials (student): \_\_\_\_\_

ELA Standard: \_\_\_\_\_

ELA Indicator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching strategy or activity observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation notes (use reverse for additional space): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

## Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction: A Guide to Professional Development

## Part III. Post Teaching Interview:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Let's review the lesson. What were your goals for the lesson? (What did you expect students to learn?) *Why did you pick the particular strategy? How did you select the material(s)?*

Overall, in what way or ways do you think this lesson was successful? Give some specific examples.

What are some (other) parts of the lesson that you think did not go as well as you would have liked? *Probe: Why do you think so? What do you think about the teaching strategy you used? Do you think it worked? Why, or why not?*

Do you have any other thoughts or reflections about the lesson?

What can you say about student learning based on this lesson? *Do you think you supported student learning? How do you know? Probe: What were student behaviors to indicate learning?*

What assessments do you use? How do you use them?  
If grouping was used for this lesson ask, "How did you determine what students should be included in the group?"

What do you plan to do for the next lesson on \_\_\_\_\_? *Probe: What changes would you like to make? What part(s) would you like to keep the same?*

Observer's comments: (I'd like to add....., suggest....., ask.....)

Teacher's response(s):

## APPENDIX D

## Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction

Analysis of Observations: **PHONICS**

Reread the observation notes. Look for evidence of *specific teaching actions and scaffolding used*. Mark the notes where each of the following is evidenced:

Teaching actions

1. Focus Attention on Task
  - direct student's interest in the task
  - activate prior knowledge
2. Explain Task
  - name the task
  - describe what will take place
3. Model Task
  - perform the task as the student observes
  - verbalize thoughts and define actions
4. Assist Performance
  - make explicit desired expectations
  - provide explanations and ways of thinking that help students organize and justify information
  - encourage dialogue and conversation
  - pose questions to provoke student thinking and assess understanding
5. Provide for Practice
  - provide opportunities for review and practice
  - guide student's practice
6. Monitor Independent Performance
  - observe student's unassisted work
  - provide feedback by responding to details of success or failure

Scaffolding

1. Engage in Joint Problem Solving
  - involve child in meaningful activity
  - work together to problem-solve
2. Build Intersubjectivity
  - come to shared understanding of the goal
  - use language within child's grasp
  - create a positive emotional tone
  - provide verbal feedback that attributes competence to the child and responds to details of response based on expectations
3. Maintain Warmth and Responsiveness
  - maintain child's attention and positive behavior
  - stay in the Zone of Proximal Development
  - organize activities that are challenging for child, but achievable with assistance
  - adjust the amount of support to fit child's needs
4. Use Instructional Talk that Prompts Child to Talk, Encourages Child to Tell More, and Adds to Child's Thoughts and Ideas
  - use instructional talk that prompts child to talk, encourages child to tell more, and adds to child's thoughts and ideas
5. Promote Self-Regulation
  - allow child to regulate the joint activity
  - provide assistance as needed to support child's problem solving
  - relinquish control as soon as child can work independently

Identify in observation notes specific examples of *skill or concept taught*:

1. shapes of letters
2. sounds of letters
3. using letter sounds to perform various reading or writing tasks
4. using initial letter-sound matches to recognize, spell and read words, segmenting words into sounds and spelling the sounds
5. orally reading text containing words with phonetically similar patterns
6. learning correct spellings of words by analyzing letter-sound constituents
7. using time analogy in reading and spelling words
8. analyzing/blending phonemes
9. reading regularly spelled, irregularly spelled and high frequency words in isolation to develop automaticity
10. reading text with phonetically controlled words
11. writing four to six words and a sentence from dictation
12. reading words which contain common times
13. making, breaking and building new words that have similar letter-sound patterns
14. focusing on phonograms or rime spellings in words
15. word sorts

## APPENDIX E

Data Sources	Research Questions		
	What does coaching look like in the elementary classroom?	1. What are the structures and the processes coaches use to assist teacher's performance?	2. What do the interactions reveal about the coaching process?
ELLCO Tool (1 summative, 1 formative)	X		
4 Classroom Close-Ups on Teaching	X		X
Planning Meetings - audiotaped & transcribed	X		X
Researcher's Journal	X		X

Overview of Research Questions and Data Sources



## APPENDIX F

Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction: A Guide to Professional Development

### Framework of The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)<sup>1</sup> Elements of Effective Literacy

#### The Functional Environment

1. **Organization of the Classroom**  
*Status and organization of furnishings, traffic flow, activities, and materials available to children*
2. **Contents of the Classroom**  
*Organization and content of materials and classroom displays*
3. **Presence and Use of Technologies**  
*Technologies in evidence and observations of children using technology*
4. **Opportunities for Child Choice & Initiative**  
*Classroom schedule, routines, and observations of how teachers and children use the classroom and materials*

#### The Interactive Environment

5. **Classroom Management Strategies**  
*Observed interactions between teachers & children, rules & routines, and the nature of conflicts & their resolution*
6. **Classroom Climate**  
*Interactions between teachers & children, children & children, equality of treatment*

#### Language and Literacy Facilitation

7. **Oral Language Facilitation**  
*Interactions among teachers and children during lessons and activities*
8. **Presence of Books**  
*Presence, setting, condition, and content of books*
9. **Approaches to Book Reading (P)/Reading Instruction (S)**  
*Observation of reading instruction settings, teaching strategies, and discussions*
10. **Approaches to Children's Writing (P)/Writing Opportunities & Instruction(S)**  
*Observation of writing materials and opportunities for children and teachers to be engaged in writing*

#### Broad Support for Literacy

11. **Approaches to Curriculum Integration**  
*Ongoing integration of curriculum and activities*
12. **Recognizing Diversity in the Classroom**  
*Observation of ongoing activities, interactions, and curriculum*
13. **Facilitating Home Support for Literacy**  
*Homework, newsletters, and other home - school contact information*
14. **Approaches to Assessment**  
*Observation of opportunities for individual interaction, use of assessment techniques, and adjustments of instruction for individuals*

## APPENDIX G

Dear

August 20, 2004

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study for my thesis at the University of Dayton. I will be asking you to participate in taped interviews, which will be transcribed for my data for the study. The transcripts will not include any identifying characteristics, so your identity will remain confidential. The taps will be destroyed following the study, and only those involved with the study (myself and my thesis committee) will have access to the transcripts.

I will be observing you during teaching time and scribing the interactions you have with your students. Again, your identity will be kept confidential. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time throughout the study.

Thank you again for agreeing to work with me on my thesis. I am hopeful that this research will benefit the field of professional development.

Sincerely,

Patricia L. Fecher

I have read the letter outlining my involvement in this study and willingly agree to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX H

July 20, 2004

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I will be completing the requirements of my masters program at the University of Dayton during the 2004-2005 school year. I would like to implement a research study, under the supervision of Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, that looks at the roles of literacy specialists in schools.

During the course of the study I will carefully examine the daily interactions between myself and the teachers I work with in the building. I want to look at how we improve literacy instruction by reflecting on our own teaching practice through collaboration. I will observe the teachers while they teach and provide feedback on identified lessons. Occasionally I will audio tape lessons taught by teachers as well as conversations and interviews.

Please be assured that all data collected will be kept confidential. Any student work examined during the course of the study will be kept anonymous. I will keep you informed of the results of this study.

Sincerely,

Patricia Fecher

Literacy Specialist

## APPENDIX I

### Coaching for Effective Classroom Instruction: *A Guide to Professional Development*

#### Interview Protocol – Alternate Format

An interview must take place after observing for 30-40 minutes. You should have observed a range of activities focused specifically on language and literacy. In general, asking the following questions takes about 10 minutes. Probes are suggested and should be used if they are needed to score an element.

1. How do you plan your instruction and activities? What determines how topics or particular literature titles are used in your classroom?
2. I noticed a theme related to \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that? How did you choose that theme? How much time will be spent on this theme?
3. What are the ways that you use technology in your classroom? What are the goals? (How do children typically use the computer, tape recorder, etc.?) (What types of computer programs do you use? How do you choose the software?)
4. How do you choose the materials and activities? What are your goals? What are some things you expect children to learn?
5. & 6. How do you establish expectations and routines in your classroom?
7. How do you plan for oral language development? What are the goals? How are they determined?
8. What determines how topics or specific literature titles are used in your classroom? How are the books arranged? How are they chosen?
9. Do you use any particular methods or program for helping children become readers and writers? What are they? How did you come to use these methods or programs?
10. Please describe your writing program. How do you plan for instruction? What is the purpose of the word wall? How is it used?
11. Please describe your approach to curriculum. How do you plan for children's language and literacy development when you are thinking about curriculum?
12. I notice/expect that you have children from different backgrounds. How is the diversity reflected in the classroom? How is it reflected in instruction? In what ways do you work with children who have special learning needs? Are there specialists or others who help with these children? Who are they? How do they help? How do you communicate with them?
13. How do you communicate with families about their children's language and literacy development? In what ways do you interact or communicate with children's families? What methods do you use? How often?
14. How do you evaluate children's individual learning? What assessment techniques do you use? How do you use this information when planning instruction for children?

## APPENDIX J

ELEMENT 9P	5	4	3	2	1
<p><b>APPROACHES TO BOOK READING</b></p> <p><i>The Language &amp; Literacy Environment (Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Version)</i></p>	<p>There is strong evidence of an intentional approach to book reading that is coordinated with goals for children's language and literacy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficient time for shared book reading and discussion of books are included daily in the classroom schedule.</li> <li>Teachers plan for and provide book-reading experiences in a variety of settings and groupings. For example, children may hear books in large groups, small groups, or individually, within the classroom and outside.</li> <li>In addition to planned book reading experiences, there are informal opportunities for children to explore, read, and hear books throughout the classroom and at varied times in the school day.</li> <li>Teachers coordinate book-reading experiences with ongoing curriculum themes and learning goals for children.</li> </ul>		<p>There is <u>some</u> evidence of an intentional approach to book reading that is coordinated with goals for children's language and literacy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time for shared book reading and discussion of books are included at least three times per week in the classroom schedule.</li> <li>Teachers occasionally read books with small groups or individual children.</li> <li>In addition to planned book reading experiences, there are informal opportunities for children to explore, read, and hear books regularly.</li> </ul>		<p>There is <u>minimal</u> evidence of an intentional approach to book reading that is coordinated with goals for children's language and literacy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned time for shared book reading and discussion of books are not evident in the weekly classroom schedule.</li> <li>Book reading may occur, but it is not systematically planned or organized.</li> <li>There are limited opportunities for children to explore, hear, or discuss books in settings other than large groups. Informal opportunities for children to explore, read, and hear books are not evident.</li> </ul>

Evidence: Observation of book reading events, settings, and discussions.

## APPENDIX K

### Blind Sort

- Identify categories for sorting.
- Teacher or student calls out words.
- Student names the category.
- Student places the word card in category, or writes the word in appropriate category.
- Reread the words (name pictures, objects).

### Scaffolding

ENGAGE IN JOINT PROBLEM SOLVING  
BUILD INTERSUBJECTIVITY  
MAINTAIN WARMTH & RESPONSIVENESS  
STAY IN THE ZPD  
PROMOTE SELF-REGULATION

### Word Sort Protocol

- Ask children to react to selected words. (FOCUS ATTENTION)
- Name the pattern and explain how to identify similarities and differences in words. (EXPLAIN TASK)
- Model how words can be sorted by sound and feature patterns. (MODEL TASK)
- Help children to identify and sort words and to explain categories. (ASSIST PERFORMANCE)
- Provide practice activities for sorting and explaining categories. (PROVIDE PRACTICE)
- Observe and provide feedback as children sort and explain the categories. (MONITOR INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE)

### Closed Sort

- Teacher decides the categories.
- Read words (or name pictures, objects).
- Take turns reading and sorting words (pictures) one at a time.
- Reread words (name pictures) in each category.
- Explain the categories.

### Open Sort

- Students create the categories.
- Read words (or name pictures, objects).
- Take turns reading and sorting words (pictures) one at a time.
- Reread words (name pictures) in each category.
- Explain the categories.

### Word Hunts

- Reread familiar text.
- Search for words with feature.
- Discuss feature.
- Write words and categorize.
- Add new words to previously sorted words.
- Reread words.
- Explain the categories.

## APPENDIX L

Graphic 5

**Scaffolding****Components of Instruction that Support Student Learning****(JPS) Engage in Joint Problem Solving**

- Involve child in meaningful activity.
- Work together to problem-solve.

Engage

**(IS) Build Intersubjectivity**

- Come to a shared understanding of the goal.
- Use language within child's grasp.

**(WR) Maintain Warmth and Responsiveness**

- Create a positive emotional tone.
- Provide verbal feedback that attributes competence to the child and responds to details of response based on expectations.
- Maintain child's attention and positive behavior.

Make Connections

**(ZPD) Stay in the Zone of Proximal Development**

- Organize activities that are challenging for child, but achievable with assistance.
- Adjust the amount of support to fit child's needs.
- Use instructional talk that *prompts* child to talk, *encourages* child to tell more, and *adds to* child's thoughts and ideas.

Instruct

**(SR) Promote Self-Regulation**

- Allow child to regulate the joint activity.
- Provide assistance as needed to support child's problem solving.
- Relinquish control as soon as child can work independently.

Step Back

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**The HF Group**

**Indiana Plant**

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**4/27/2006**

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