Coaching: Not Just for Athletes
By Sue Land, M.Ed.

When was the last time you attended a workshop or a conference and learned a teaching strategy that you wanted to implement in your classroom the next school day? You carefully reviewed your notes and handouts and gave the strategy a try. Much to your dismay, the strategy bombed with your students! You thought it looked so easy and you wondered what you did wrong. Did you decide that it was just too much work and abandoned it, continuing to use your “tried and true” methods?

What you needed was someone to talk with, to plan with, to model the strategy for you, and to ask the right questions to move you forward—someone like a coach. Emerging research suggests that school-based coaches contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in schools (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Coaching can lead to sustained implementation of new teaching practices in schools (Hall & Hord, 2006).

Coaching exists in a variety of formats and models (e.g., cognitive coaching, literacy coaching, executive coaching), this article focuses on instructional coaching. An instructional coach is a “full-time, on-site professional developer who works with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices” (Knight, 2007, p. 12). How can a coach help you improve your teaching practices? A coach performs a variety of roles, to include resource provider, data coach, curriculum specialist, instructional specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Five of the 10 roles described by Killion and Harrison (2006) are highlighted on the following pages. Examples are provided for Mr. Smith, an experienced special education teacher, and Ms. Jones, a general educator new to teaching. They began co-teaching for the first time this school year. Even though they attended a workshop on co-teaching, they don’t know where to begin. They are not sure of their teaching roles or responsibilities. They want to support each other and feel they can be a good co-teaching team, but don’t want to overstep their boundaries. They enlist the help of an instructional coach, who provides a variety of supports.
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<th>Role</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<td>Resource Provider</td>
<td>“to expand the teacher’s use of a variety of resources to improve instruc-</td>
<td>Mr. Smith and Ms. Jones with the assistance of the coach, identify their areas of need: co-teaching formats, roles and responsibilities, and communication skills. The coach gives the teachers a DVD illustrating co-teaching variations or formats. She also provides them with a list of successful co-teaching teams to visit and a handout of questions for new co-teachers to consider. Finally, she offers to cover their co-taught class while they visit a team and meet to plan weekly lessons.</td>
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<td>tion” (Killion &amp; Harrison, 2006, p. 31)</td>
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<td>Data Coach</td>
<td>“to ensure that student achievement data drive decisions at the classroom</td>
<td>The coach assists the teachers in examining data and identifying students’ strengths and weaknesses to determine strategies and co-teaching formats to meet their needs. After reviewing their students’ informal writing samples with their coach, the teachers determine writing weaknesses. To meet student needs in their co-taught class, they plan to set up writing skills centers through which the students will rotate. They also determine which centers will be teacher-supported and group students.</td>
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<td>and school level” (Killion &amp; Harrison, 2006, p. 35)</td>
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<td>Instructional Specialist</td>
<td>“to align instruction with curriculum to meet the needs of all students” and implement research-based instructional strategies by differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners” (Killion &amp; Harrison, 2006, p. 47)</td>
<td>The coach helps the teachers select and implement the most appropriate strategies for meeting their students’ needs. To assist the students with their writing, the teachers explore the writing process and focus on effective pre-writing strategies.</td>
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Killion and Harrison (2006) state that “traditional professional development usually occurs away from the school site, separate from classroom contexts and challenges in which teachers are expected to apply what they learned, and often without the necessary support to facilitate transfer of learning” (p. 8). With the support of an instructional coach, however, teachers will grow in their skills to implement research-based strategies and effective teaching practices. For descriptions of Killion and Harrison’s book and Knight’s book, go to the Check It Out section of this newsletter.

**References**


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<td>Classroom Supporter</td>
<td>“to increase the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction” through modeling, co-teaching, and observing and giving feedback (Killion &amp; Harrison, 2006, p. 53)</td>
<td>The coach plans a lesson with the teachers and models a pre-writing strategy with their students. The teachers use the same strategy with their students later in the week and the coach now observes and gives feedback through a “reflective conference” (Costa &amp; Garmston, 2002).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Facilitator</td>
<td>“to design collaborative, job-embedded, standards-based professional learning” (Killion &amp; Harrison, 2006, p. 67)</td>
<td>Based on the teachers’ identified needs, the coach suggests further school-based professional development opportunities and provides them with current journal articles on co-teaching. The teachers plan to read and discuss the articles.</td>
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Content Teaching Academy at James Madison University
June 23-27, 2008

The goal of the Content Teaching Academy is to provide high-quality professional programs for the educators of Virginia by offering in-depth studies in a range of content areas and pedagogical emphases that engage participants in critical dialogues of practice.

Register at: [http://www.jmu.edu/contentacademy/](http://www.jmu.edu/contentacademy/)
Implementation of §300.320(a)(7)(b)(1) obligates local education agencies to use transition assessment data to inform the development of students’ postsecondary goals. These data may be acquired through informal and formal measures. Informal measures, developed locally or obtained through a variety of publications, include rating scales, curriculum-based assessments, surveys, interviews, and checklists. Formal measures consist of achievement, cognitive functioning, adaptive behavior, personality, quality of life, aptitude, social, self-determination, prevocational/employability, vocational, and transition knowledge and skills (Clark, 2007).

Systematic compilation of transition assessment data includes several steps.

**Step 1:** Identify students’ interests and preferences.

IDEA’s definition of transition services consist of seven domains of adult life for which assessment data must be collected.

- Postsecondary Education – Coursework at a community or four-year college in a degree-seeking program
- Vocational Education – Coursework in a vocational school or program needed to secure employment
- Integrated Employment – Competitive employment among people without disabilities
- Continuing/Adult Education – Classes that enrich our personal or professional lives; secondary school academic coursework for adults seeking a high school diploma
- Adult Services – Agencies and organizations that improve quality of life
- Independent Living – Activities of daily life
- Community Participation – Activities that relate to mobility and contributing to the community

Data collected about students’ interests and preferences provide insight into their visions for life after high school and serve as a starting point for further transition assessment.
**Step 2:** Conduct environmental analyses of adult educational, living, and working environments in which students express interest.

Identify knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of these environments. Within each of the seven domains of adult life, consider four questions:

- What are characteristics of the physical environments in terms of layout and accessibility?
- What activities or tasks must be performed to be successful in the environments?
- What levels and types of social interaction are necessary?
- What are characteristics of climates and cultures of the environments? (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007)

Only after environmental analyses have been completed should strategic assessment of students’ strengths and needs begin.

**Step 3:** Assess students’ strengths in relation to the demands of desired adult environments.

Determine the extent to which students possess the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the adult worlds they envision. Begin by compiling and reviewing existing data that correspond to the requirements of these environments. This analysis may reveal gaps that, in turn, will inform the need for additional assessment.

**Step 4:** Compare students’ strengths to the requirements of their desired post-school environments.

Students with sufficient strengths in areas of interest and preference are ready to write postsecondary goals that reflect their visions for adulthood. (The February/March 2006 issue of *Link Lines* [www.wm.edu/tta/Newsletter/index.html] provides samples of postsecondary goals.) Now transition services and annual goals may be designed to address specific needs identified during the assessment process.

When students lack sufficient strengths in areas of interest, time for reflection is in order. In what related areas of interest might students have sufficient strengths? Do they demonstrate strengths that could be aligned with life planning options they have never considered? What additional assessments and experiences are necessary to answer these questions? It is this process of shaping students’ visions of adult life through assessment and experiences that results in eventual development of postsecondary goals that reflect realistic, satisfying visions of the future. Only after a match is found between students’ interests and strengths should the process of designing appropriate measurable postsecondary goals begin.

**References**


Today's educational environment requires that school leaders focus on continually improving teaching and learning in their schools. Professional development is frequently cited as an important element of effective schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), but traditional forms of professional development (e.g., workshops without follow-up) typically do not result in substantial changes in classroom practice (Collins, 2000).

Coaching is one form of follow-up that teachers may find helpful as they learn new instructional skills to meet the needs of all students. (Please refer to the cover article in this Link Lines issue for additional information on instructional coaching.) While few rigorous studies have been conducted to prove that coaching contributes to improved student outcomes, existing studies indicate that coaching does contribute to improved instruction (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

What can a principal do to ensure that coaching is effective in his or her school? First, the principal should work collaboratively with the coach. The partnership between coach and administrator is crucial because the coach must clearly understand the principal's vision for school improvement, and the principal must fully understand the assistance that the coach can offer (Knight, 2007).

Killion and Harrison (2006) note that principals can actively support school coaches by:
- Introducing the concept of coaching and its purpose to the faculty
- Introducing the coach to faculty and describing the coach's work, including the confidential nature of interactions between the coach and individual faculty members
- Explaining to the faculty how to access the coach's services
- Setting and communicating expectations for staff interactions with the coach
- Meeting with the coach on a regular basis to problem solve and discuss the coach’s work
- Making sure that the coach has access to central office personnel who can provide important curriculum or demographic information
- Meeting regularly with a school team comprised of resource personnel, general educators, special educators, and the coach to align resources and services
- Being supportive of the coach’s participation in professional development opportunities

School leaders are encouraged to consider the merits of coaching as they seek to support teachers who are learning new instructional skills. The following websites provide additional information on coaching: http://www.instructionalcoach.org/, http://jimknightoncoaching.squarespace.com/, http://www.edcoaching.com/ and http://www.instructionalcoaching.com/.

References
Check It Out!

The following materials are available on loan from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. To request materials, please call 1-800-323-4489 and leave a message. The materials will be sent to you along with a postage-paid return mailer. A complete listing of professional resources available through the T/TAC William and Mary lending library may be viewed at: http://www.wm.edu/ttac. Simply click on the Library link to view holdings, complete an online search, or order materials.

The resources below are companions to the articles in this issue of Link Lines. These resources will provide in-depth, expanded coverage on the topics in the newsletter.

**Assess for Success, 2nd Edition**
By: Patricia Sitlingon, Debra Neubert, Wynne Begun, Richard Lombard, and Pamela Leconte

Aligned with the re-authorization of IDEA, this book discusses self-determination and career development. It demonstrates how to utilize methods for transition assessment, use assessment outcomes in IEP development, and collaborate effectively with team members and other participants to match students to appropriate transition environments. (TR180)

**CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management for Grades K-9**
By: Randall Sprick, Mickey Garrison, and Lisa Howard

CHAMPS stands for Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation. This kit provides educators with the framework for establishing a proactive and positive approach to classroom management. It consists of two books and a facilitator's guide to the accompanying video series. (BM186A and BM186B)

**Foundations: Establishing Positive Discipline Policies**
By: Randall Sprick, Marilyn Sprick, and Mickey Garrison

This program is designed to assist a school staff in developing a comprehensive school plan for improving discipline and teaching student responsibility. The goal is to develop a systematic written procedure that allows everyone to work consistently and collaboratively toward improving student behavior and increasing motivation. The set includes six videotapes with guide books. (BM122)

**Positive Behavioral Support in the Classroom**
By: Lewis Jackson and Marion Veeneman Panyan

This book blends research and practical strategies to assist educators in evaluating children with challenging behaviors. It is designed for preservice educators, classroom teachers, behavioral support staff counselors, and administrators. (BM214)

**Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-based Coaches (2006)**
by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison

This comprehensive resource is indispensable for schools wishing to incorporate school-based coaches to support instructional initiatives. The authors describe the roles of school-based coaches and provide practical strategies for implementing and sustaining effective coaching programs. The book comes with a resource CD of printable tools for each of the 18 chapters. (Coming soon! Check the T/TAC library for availability.)

**Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction (2007)**
By Jim Knight

This engaging book presents a research-based method for supporting instruction in schools. The author expertly describes instructional coaching and explains the essential skills instructional coaches must possess. Each chapter contains first-person stories from successful instructional coaches, highlights of important information captured in easy-to-read sidebars, additional resources, and useful tools such as logs and checklists. (Coming Soon! Check the T/TAC library for availability.)
The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Parent Involvement Priority Project (PIPP) is working with the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University to help parents and educators learn how to create collaborative standards-driven individualized education programs (IEPs). To this end, a team of educators and parents is developing a workbook and training materials that are currently being field tested in two Virginia school divisions.

A primary purpose of this initiative is to integrate new requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) into training provided by the Partnership to support a collaborative and interactive IEP development process in which:

- All participants, including students and parents, feel they are equal members of IEP teams
- Team members see annual IEP development as a process, not a one-time event
- Teams develop IEPs that capitalize on students’ interests, preferences, and strengths
- Teams employ family-friendly language that avoids the use of unnecessary jargon
- IEPs are person-centered and support students’ visions for adult life
- Educational placements are based upon knowledge of students, not disability “labels”

(Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities, 2001)

Another significant purpose of the initiative is to teach IEP team members to align IEP components with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Standards-driven IEPs, as these documents are known, include:

- Students’ present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including how students’ disabilities affect their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
- Annual goals that address students’ involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
- Appropriate supplementary aids and services, accommodations, modifications, and supports that enable students to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum
- Appropriate accommodations necessary to measure academic achievement and functional performance of students on state and district-wide assessments

(The Access Center, n. d.)

The result of aligning students’ IEPs with Virginia’s standards-driven curriculum is “increased exposure to challenging curriculum, higher expectations for learning, and improved performance in the state accountability system” (The Access Center, n. d., p. 6). Additionally, “collaborative IEP development can lead to students with disabilities experiencing educational success, having friends, and being integral members of their school communities” (Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities, 2001, p. 6). Together, standards-driven, collaborative IEP development can help create productive futures for students that include “post-secondary education, meaningful jobs, friends, community membership, and fun and recreation” (Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities, 2001, p. 6).

References
Time and Task Management Using Portable Computers: Solutions for Transition-Age Students

By Tony Gentry, Ph.D., OTR/L

The challenging behaviors and academic difficulties of secondary-school students are often misunderstood by faculty, who may resort to aversive interventions that only exacerbate these problems. In many cases, these difficulties arise as students strive for independence in all that they do. For example, personal supports such as reminders or other cues can begin to seem like nagging or harassment to them. Interventions that engage students’ interests, while helping them take control of their own activities, can improve self-confidence, academic performance, and interpersonal behavior.

Over the past five years, I have conducted research with secondary-school students across Virginia, training them to use handheld personal digital assistants (PDAs) as time and task management tools, both at school and in the community.1 Students with autism, ADHD, mental retardation, and other attentional or cognitive disabilities, have learned to complete and hand in their homework, manage medications, attend class and other appointments on time, and negotiate social challenges independently using these inexpensive technological aids. By learning to follow a schedule of their own devising, for instance, students are able to take charge of their daily lives, in preparation for the challenges that will face them in the world after secondary school.2

PDAs are available at any office supply store, ranging in price from less than $100 (for a basic model) to over $500 (for a premium model with expanded memory, digital recorder, and wi-fi Internet capability). Even the least expensive PDA allows students to create daily calendars with reminder alarms, and to develop to-do lists, course schedules, address lists, and other important tools. The devices come in two models (which use competing operating systems): Palm PDAs and MS mobile devices. Either model works well, though the Palm system is less expensive and offers more flexibility in customizing its features to the needs of a particular student. For most of my research participants, the basic Palm Z 22 ($90) has been sufficient for helping them better organize their daily activities.

Often parents seem doubtful that their teens can learn to operate a PDA, but I have been pleasantly surprised by how readily students take to these devices, often learning to use them entirely on their own. Typically, training takes only three one-hour sessions, followed by occasional trouble-shooting visits. On the first visit, I show the student how to enter data on the PDA (an onboard tutorial reinforces this training), load calendar and back-up software on their home PC, and help the student create four or five calendar reminder alarms for each day of the following week (typical reminders include medications, chores, homework, or extracurricular appointments). A return visit, a day or two later, includes training in the use of to-do lists and contact information. The third and final visit, one week later, involves a review of previous training, discussion of how well the student has begun to incorporate the device into her/his daily routine, and additional training in the use of auxiliary features (such as games, digital photos, podcasts, beaming information between PDAs, or other topics of interest to the student). Whenever possible, I include a parent in the training, to provide at-home trouble-shooting assistance and encouragement, as needed.

Though adaptive technology is available for PDAs (including wireless keyboards, vibrating alarms and screen magnifiers), the best candidates for using PDAs are students with sufficient dexterity to manage either a stylus or thumb-pad for entering data and those with functionally intact vision and hearing. Students seem to love the practicality of PDAs, their versatility and their “cool” factor, but for most students, the most important benefit is the freedom they provide from parental and faculty “nagging.”

As students learn to use these devices to manage their activities independently, their self-assurance grows. Many students show improved academic performance and less reliance on social supports. As one parent stated, “The PDA is part of my son now. He carries it everywhere he goes, his whole day is right there in his pocket, and he’s proud to be in charge of his own activities at last.”

1 This work was conducted at the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University, under a grant from the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Fund.

2 The Partnership hosts an instructional website on the use of assistive technology for cognition at http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/pda.
What Do You Mean? A Common Understanding of the Language of Behavior  
By Butler Knight, Ed.S.

When we think about discipline, our frame of reference is most often shaped by experience. The word itself conjures up memories of following rules, both spoken and unspoken, living up to adult expectations, and working hard. Recall how you learned the value of discipline and hard work. Was it through the threat of punishment, fear of “getting in trouble,” or perhaps guilt from disappointing someone if you didn’t meet expectations? If this was the case, you have probably adopted discipline practices that reflect these experiences and subsequent beliefs about behavior.

Traditional disciplinary practices are based on the premise that children are “inherently bad” and will learn more appropriate behavior through increased use of punishment. Punitive practices include zero tolerance policies, increased surveillance, and removal of students through suspension and expulsion (Sugai, 2007). Students are blamed for non-compliance, removed from the school setting, and expected to behave differently upon their return to school because they should “know better.” As schools move toward more positive approaches to managing behavior, preexisting beliefs and habits linger and pose barriers to building responsible student behavior.

Many states have adopted some form of schoolwide positive behavior support (SW-PBS), known as effective schoolwide discipline (ESD) in Virginia. ESD integrates desired academic and behavioral outcomes, the science of human behavior, empirically validated practices, and systems change. The science of human behavior has determined that children learn better ways of behaving by being taught directly and by receiving positive reinforcement for behaving as expected. In the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Implementers’ Blueprint and Self-Assessment (2004,) the authors note that the outcome of an effective systems approach is an organization (school, district, state education agency) that shares a common vision, a common language, and a common experience among its members. The language and experience of traditional disciplinary practices are decidedly different and more negative than the language and experience of positive behavior support. For example, when teachers “expect “ students to arrive on time to class, what do they mean? In the language of positive behavior support, this means to look forward to the likelihood of the occurrence. When teachers use the word “consequences,” are they referring to outcomes that reinforce or maintain behavior in the PBS sense, or are they still thinking “punishment” for bad behavior?

The science of behavior examines the function or purpose of behavior, the antecedents or events that occur prior to the behavior, and then the consequences that occur following the behavior. The function of behavior is typically to get something or to get away from something that is social, sensory, or tangible in nature. The behavior occurs in response to antecedents, or the events that increase the likelihood of its occurrence. Consequences follow the behavior and serve to maintain or extinguish the behavior. For example, tardiness to class is a common behavior in school settings. An antecedent to this behavior may be the lag time in the cafeteria between the end of lunch and the next class when students are socializing. The tardy behavior may be unintentionally maintained by the consequence of the classroom teacher’s acceptance of the behavior and reintroduction of the lesson for latecomers.

The counterproductive behavior of tardiness can be “retaught” by changing the antecedents and consequences. For example, a pre-tardy bell could signal three minutes prior to a tardy bell to alert students (antecedent). Students who arrive to class on time could have their names entered into a monthly drawing, earn a coupon redeemable for 10 minutes of free time, or receive a homework pass as a positive consequence to reinforce arriving on time (consequence).
Take a minute to consider the behaviors that you expect of your students. What language are you using to communicate these expectations? How do your beliefs affect both your expectations and your practices? Do you emphasize and reward the positive behaviors you expect, or do you find yourself punishing negative behaviors? What kind of educator do you choose to be- positive or punitive - and how will you communicate this to students and colleagues?

References

Additional Resources on Positive Behavior Support
The following materials are available on loan from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. A complete list of professional resources available through the T/TAC William and Mary lending library may be viewed at http://www.wm.edu/ttac.

Beyond Discipline - From Compliance to Community
By Alfie Kohn (BM 47.1)

CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management for Grades K-9
By Randall Sprick, Mickey Garrison, and Lisa Howard (BM 186)

Foundations: Establishing Positive Discipline Policies
By Randall Sprick, Marilyn Sprick, and Mickey Garrison (BM 122)

Positive Behavioral Support in the Classroom
By Lewis Jackson and Marion Veeneman Panyan (BM 214)

“Say YES”
Your Education Solution to College
A College Transition Program for Students with Disabilities
Campus of Old Dominion University
May 30-31, 2008

For additional information, contact
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