INTRODUCTION

What Is This Book About?
Who Is It For?

- Why did I write this book?
- Who is the target audience for this book?
- How has coaching changed over the last decade?
- What essentials are the same as they were when I wrote the first edition of this book?
- What *is* in this book?
- How is the second edition different from the first?

A decade ago, I found that I had a book in me. After years of coaching teachers and coaches, I recognized that I understood some things and used some practices that were not to be found in the professional literature at the time. I began paying extra attention to my coaching practices and reflected on the underlying research, theories, and beliefs that shaped them. Soon I was drafting the first edition of this book, and I held my first copy in my hands in 2005.

I'm delighted that the first edition has been labeled a best seller by the International Reading Association, that it has been called the coaching bible by some, and that one colleague rereads it every August before starting another year as a literacy coach. The book is in large part the springboard for consulting work that I have done across the United States and in parts of Australia and Canada. It has served coaches well, and it has been deeply meaningful to me.

Over the same period of time, education has changed. No Child Left Behind has faded in impact, and Race to the Top, the Common Core State Standards, PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments, and Response to Intervention have become focal points instead. Programs of literacy coaching have changed as well. In schools where Reading First provided the additional impetus for coaching, there is an expanded vision of what literacy coaches can do and who they can work with; in districts that began coaching at the elementary level, there is now coaching in middle and high schools as well;

and universities, regional offices of education, and state departments of education now offer training and resources for the demands of this work.

I have changed, too. Although the fundamentals of coaching remain the same for me—develop trust, communicate well, start with the teacher, develop partnerships, focus on learning—I now give greater priority to the coaching conversation and de-emphasize directing teachers toward goals or outcomes that are not their own. I hold even stronger the conviction that coaching must be separate from supervising and recognize even more that classroom observations are not essential for effective coaching. And because I now have interacted with thousands of coaches from across the world, I have an even greater appreciation for the work of coaching and an even greater sensitivity to its challenges.

It is time for the second edition.

As I wrote in the Introduction to the first edition, I want this book to provide for literacy coaches and those who work with them a great deal of practical information. In addition, I want to give literacy coaches just enough background and perspective to coach in the most effective way. Finally, I want this book to be friendly, like a conversation. I believe the best coaching takes place in a supportive relationship. Therefore, I want my voice to come through in this book so you sense me as a person who is working alongside you, helping you become the literacy coach you want to be. I still value these qualities as I write this second edition and hope you find them in this book as you read on.

Let's Get to Know Each Other

I come to this work as someone who has been a literacy educator for over 35 years. I have been a classroom teacher at the elementary, middle, high school, and postsecondary levels; a reading specialist; a district reading coordinator; an elementary school principal; a university faculty member; and a consultant to teachers, literacy coaches, administrators, and others. I have provided leadership in federal education laboratories and state departments of education.

I currently lead Partnering to Learn, an organization that specializes in serving literacy coaches and those who support them. In this capacity, I provide training workshops, one-to-one and small-group coaching, consultation, print resources, grant writing, research, and evaluation for literacy coaches and leaders of programs that include literacy coaching.

I've done a great deal of reading and some research on change in literacy education and on coaching in general. I'll confess, though, that most of what I believe about literacy coaching is influenced by my experiences. To be candid, I've made practically every possible mistake, both as a teacher and as a leader.

However, here's the good news: I work very hard to learn from my mistakes. My practical struggles have caused me to study change and the leadership of change and to develop new, more effective practices and perspectives. To my pleasant surprise, I've discovered that the insights and practices that I have developed, based on my formal education and my education in the real world of schools, enable me to coach literacy coaches with a high degree of success.

When I wrote the first edition of this book, I predicted that readers would be literacy coaches who were fairly new to their position and who likely worked in an elementary school. I do not expect that readers of this edition will necessarily fit that profile. Over the years, I have encountered math coaches, technology coaches, instructional coaches, and myriad others reading this book because so much about literacy coaching applies to other areas of coaching in education. I also assume that readers will work across the spectrum of educational levels, from those whose coaching partners are preschool teachers to those who work with university graduate students, and everything in between. At this point, interest in coaching occurs throughout our profession. As for the newness of coaches who read this book, I expect that there is a range of coaching experience. Some readers likely are new indeed, but others surely have several years' experience in coaching.

The increased diversity of coaches' work and experience is heartening because it demonstrates the widening impact that coaching has in education. I welcome coaches of all kinds to the readership of this book! I also welcome those who support coaches as program leaders, administrators, trainers, or university faculty members.

Some of you, too, will be readers of the first edition of the book who are looking for more. This second edition contains over 65% new material, so I hope you find that it enhances your work and perspectives.

I am eager to begin or continue the conversation about coaching with all of you!

The Organization of This Book

To make this book accessible, I've divided it into sections consisting of a few chapters each. I've also provided a list of questions at the beginning of each chapter to indicate which of your questions that chapter will answer.

The main part of the book is divided into three sections. Each section addresses a major group of questions asked about literacy coaching. The questions corresponding to the first section of this book address the basics of coaching: What is coaching, why does it matter, and how does it influence teachers' learning? Chapter 1 is devoted to those first two questions as well as a comparison of literacy coaches with reading specialists and mentors and a brief discussion of the need for literacy coaches.

Because coaching exists to support change, Chapter 2 considers the kinds of changes that literacy coaching might aim for and offers new perspectives on educational change itself. Chapter 3 continues in this vein by delineating how coaches might use their time for greatest influence and how they can most effectively position themselves in relation to teachers they are trying to influence.

The second section of the book focuses on practical strategies to bring about literacy coaching's potential. Chapter 4 helps coaches get off to a good start with teachers, principals, students, and parents and provides suggestions for beginning to collaborate with individuals and teams. Chapter 5 addresses communication, providing general approaches to effective communication as well as specific strategies for communicating well. Chapter 6 provides specifics on the coaching conversation, including the problem-solving cycle, coaches' tasks, and tools for record keeping. Chapter 7 is all about coaching with teams, including coaches' possible roles, adjustments in the coaching conversation, and understanding team development over time.

Specific coaching challenges are the focus of the third section. Chapter 8 helps coaches deal with difficult situations, such as resistance in teachers, intimidation in groups, problems in goal development, and coaches' own anxieties and defensiveness. Chapter 9 is about coaching for initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards and Response to Intervention; it delineates coaches' stances and strategies for helping teachers bring these initiatives to life as well as tactics to use when there is disagreement with these endeavors. Chapter 10 will help coaches who are struggling to enjoy their work and feel successful.

I end the book with an overview of activities to do and to avoid as a literacy coach in the Conclusion and with a narrative bibliography in the Appendix that provides references to which you can refer for more information on many topics that I address throughout the book.

I'd like to add a bit more about resources and references. As an author, I strive always to give credit to others whose ideas I use in my work. I do that in this book, using typical reference citations, when I specifically refer to others' work. On the other hand, much of what I write about in this book is not taken directly from the work of others but, rather, reflects my own work in the field and in theorizing and researching literacy coaching. My thinking is influenced by a wide range of reading that I have done. I would like to make you aware of that reading, both to acknowledge the contribution of other authors and to help you understand how my ideas have evolved. My concern is that if I fill the main part of the book with references to a lot of additional sources, the book may become less user-friendly. I've resolved this dilemma in two ways: First, I've included a few key resources at the end of each chapter, which will provide you with additional ideas or background information. Second, I've provided information about additional sources in the narrative bibliography.

I've attempted in this narrative bibliography to continue to talk to you, the reader, rather than just list resources. I hope that style is helpful and engaging. Of course, I also provide a traditional list of references at the end of the book.

Conclusion

There is no doubt in my mind that literacy coaching is an effective model and that the need for literacy coaches is great. A book such as this will assist literacy coaches in doing the job that lies before them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Flaherty, J. (1999). *Coaching: Evoking excellence in others*. Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Knight, J. (2008). *Coaching: Approaches and perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Rodgers, E.M., & Pinnell, G.S. (Eds.). (2002). *Learning from teaching in literacy education: New perspectives on professional development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sweeney, D.R., & Harris, L.S. (2002). Learning to work with—not against—a system. *Journal of Staff Development*, *23*(3), 16–19.

Toll, C.A. (2008). *Surviving but not yet thriving: Essential questions and practical answers for experienced literacy coaches*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.