

KEYSTONE STATE READING ASSOCIATION

Position Paper:

Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching is increasingly used for school-embedded professional development in classrooms across the United States. The major goal of literacy coaching is to increase student achievement by fostering improved literacy instruction in K-12 classrooms. Progress toward this goal is accomplished through teacher mentoring that includes collaborative planning, modeling, and co-teaching followed by feedback.

In 2005, the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, (NCTM), the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) published the *Standards for Middle and High School Coaches*, a report that significantly expanded the resource role of reading professionals and shifted their focus from working with students to providing professional literacy development for content area classroom teachers. In addition to the IRA's coaching standards, a number of states provide a certification/endorsement for literacy coaches. Although national education organizations and state departments of education support highly skilled reading professionals in a coaching role, the position often may be filled by inexperienced or less skilled educators.

Traditionally, the main focus of the reading specialist has been on the instruction of students to improve their literacy skills. According to the International Reading Association (2004), however, there has been a shift away from "direct teaching and toward leadership and professional development roles" (p. 1). This shift has caused the role of the literacy coach to evolve as an equally important, yet distinct position for the reading specialist. According to Shaw et al. (2005), literacy coaches collaborate with classroom teachers when they: 1) train classroom teachers to interpret assessments that inform instruction, 2) help teachers prepare curriculum materials, 3) assist teachers in selecting best practices, 4) demonstrate effective literacy lessons, 5) facilitate study groups, and 6) present professional workshops (p. 6). Therefore, literacy coaches should not be placed in a supervisory or administrative role over the teachers with whom they work.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality currently does not offer literacy coaching certificates, therefore the Keystone State Reading Association recommends that literacy coaches should:

- Be highly qualified teachers of reading who have had at least three years of successful literacy teaching experiences.
- Be certified reading specialists who upon completion of a college, university, or Intermediate Unit literacy coaching program be awarded a letter of endorsement as a literacy coach.
- Possess in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction.
- Have successfully completed advanced courses that require the demonstration of literacy-related professional knowledge and research.
- Exhibit the skills and dispositions to work successfully with adult learners serving as collaborative teaching mentors.
- Consistently demonstrate successful experience facilitating professional development sessions with teachers.
- Reflect regularly on their own practices and make adaptations that improve instruction.

- Demonstrate dispositions that support collaboration and professional growth, including ongoing reflection and professional development while in the role of the literacy coach.
- Collaborate with paraprofessionals, teachers, principals, other administrators and the community served by the school.

Selected References

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