

# T3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS

## ROLE: School leader

**PURPOSE:** To work collaboratively with school's formal leadership to plan, implement, and assess school change initiatives to ensure alignment and focus on intended results.

BY JOELLEN KILLION AND CYNTHIA HARRISON

*Fourth in an eight-part series about roles of the school-based coach*

To influence the school in a systemic way, coaches assume a leadership role in the school. With a vision for the school's success and a moral commitment to the success of all students, the coach may serve in an informal or formal leadership role. "Leaders must act with the intention of making a positive difference," asserts Michael Fullan, a leading expert on school change (2001, p. 3). The very premise of the role of a coach is to make a positive difference in their schools. They do this by serving on the school improvement team, meeting with other coaches or resource personnel within the school to coordinate services to teachers, leading a variety of school committees, serving as liaisons or key communicators to central office, and serving on district committees such as content-area curriculum committees.

T3 presents one role of the school-based coach each month.



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**Our goal: All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.**

**SCENARIO:**

**School leader at work**

During June, Taletha Coleman agrees to help the administration and school improvement facilitator design and facilitate Everwood High School’s\* new school improvement team meeting. The team is meeting for the first time to begin developing next year’s school improvement plan. The principal tells the planning team that it is essential that the meeting be motivating and focused, and move the team members to significant action. Coleman asks other team members to share their ideas related to the meeting. She charts the ideas as members share their vision. Coleman asks team members if they want to use the list she wrote as the criteria for a successful first meeting of the new school improvement team, and they agree.

Next, Coleman asks the team to generate a list of essential items for the meeting’s agenda. Coleman suggests examining student achievement data. She records their ideas and asks them to prioritize the list. When they agree to make data analysis the major portion of the meeting, Coleman suggests several ways staff can interact with the school’s data. She also recommends that the agenda include some activity to have the school improvement team members see themselves as leaders.

With the principal and school improvement team facilitator, Coleman co-designs several sections of the agenda to actively involve

members. She suggests a data analysis protocol. After a highly successful meeting, Coleman asks the planning team to assess the meeting using the criteria they established for success.

As a result of the first meeting of the school improvement team, Coleman volunteers to facilitate content-area, course- and grade-level groups to look at student achievement data in their areas. Coleman notices some teachers are not buying into the need for change when looking only at school-level data. She meets with individual teachers to help them with data analysis to understand student growth in their own classrooms. As she meets with individual teachers, Coleman asks them to think about what department, grade-level and individual actions might be needed to increase student achievement. This schoolwide data analysis process will help the school improvement team, course, grade-level, and content-area teams, and individual teachers establish goals and plans of action to increase student achievement.

Coleman encourages each teacher to examine his or her students’ achievement data and to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Based, Time-Bound) goals for their individual classrooms. As Coleman meets with teachers individually, she helps them transfer what they did as a large group to their own individual data. She ensures that teachers, not she, are doing the hard work of analyzing the data and considering how they can alter their instruction based on the data.

*\* Fictitious person and school*

Another role of coaches as school leaders is to be another set of eyes for the principal, helping him or her think through the work of significant school change. Coaches can offer the teachers’ perspective, consider how initiatives relate or clash, maintain a focus on student learning, and be a critical friend to the principal. Among teachers, the coach is a champion for quality teaching and learning and a peer who can influence needed instructional changes in classrooms. Through

informal conversations, the coach assesses teachers’ perceived barriers to change, seeks out the resisters and listens to understand the causes of resistance, and provides information about how change initiatives will benefit both teachers and students. The coach is a teacher at heart and a leader of change.

**Knowledge and skills**

Coaches understand the change process and

**9 roles of the school-based coach**

- Catalyst for change
- Classroom supporter
- Curriculum specialist
- Data coach (T3, Oct. 2005)
- Instructional specialist
- Learning facilitator (T3, Sept. 2005)
- Mentor (T3, Nov. 2005)
- Resource provider
- **School leader**

From  
*9 Roles of the School-Based Coach*  
by Joellen Killion  
and Cynthia Harrison

how to bring about systemic change. Coaches also know at least one model for planning, designing, and implementing school improvement. Being able to discern between first- and second-order change (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) is a skill that helps coaches exercise appropriate leadership behaviors to advance any change effort. Coaches have a full range of leadership skills such as sharing a vision, engaging the unengaged, monitoring progress toward the goal, and reporting progress. The coach facilitates alignment among various school improvement strategies. Coaches use skills such as questioning, research, relationship, and communication in this role.

### Challenges

One of the challenges of this role is providing differentiated services or resources to accommodate staff members' various stages of concern related to innovations. Some staff members are ready to delve into new behaviors, while others

struggle with understanding the reason for the change. When implementing a district-directed change, coaches are challenged with creating schoolwide and individual buy-in to the initiative.

Another challenge is walking the fine line between being an administrator who supports the change and a member of the teaching ranks. Coaches must straddle this line artfully so that teachers continue to trust coaches to influence their classroom behaviors and administrators trust that coaches are committed to moving school and district initiatives forward.

Protecting teachers from unnecessary work or distractions is another challenge to coaches in the role of school leader. In most schools, numerous interruptions, emerging problems, or new demands can easily sidetrack teachers' focus and energy. The coach must be a strong advocate for keeping the focus on student learning and the identified initiatives within the school's improvement plan. ♦

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Bill Jackson, left to right, meets with Ronna Bachman, Heather Crawford, Sunjoo Kim and Joe Adriulli.

## Lesson study invigorates math coach — and his school

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

**E**ight years ago, curiosity changed the course of Bill Jackson’s professional life.

The classroom teacher became transfixed by the Japanese process of lesson study, eventually becoming the facilitator for the process in his home school and one of the most notable proponents for lesson study in the U.S. Much of his value as an advocate for lesson study comes from his ongoing, on-the-

ground experience as a teacher who coaches other teachers in the process in his school, Paterson School No. 2 in Paterson, N.J.

“The point of lesson study is not to teach one great lesson. It’s to transfer all of what you’ve learned about teaching into all of your teaching,” Jackson said.

“Lesson study shows me how I can help other teachers in a more powerful way. It reduces the isolation of teachers and fosters collaboration

between teachers. It provides a common understanding of teaching practice and promotes a consistency of teaching throughout a building. It shows a teacher how to become a high-quality teacher over time,” he said.

Jackson’s journey into lesson study and teacher leadership began in 1997 when he was a classroom teacher at School 2 and accepted an invitation to join a math study group started by the school’s then-principal Lynn Liptak.

The math study group attended workshops on the TIMSS videotapes of math classrooms and Jackson was intrigued by the Japanese style of teaching which he thought was more powerful than his own instruction. Working from what he had observed in the videotapes, Jackson tried to imitate what he saw happening in those classrooms, not really understanding the process that the Japanese teachers had gone through to create the lessons he observed.

Soon, the math study group learned about lesson study, the intensive professional development process that Japanese teachers use to improve classroom lessons. Through researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College in New York City, School 2 teachers were able to connect with teachers from Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School, a relationship that continues to this day.

Jackson greatly values the relationship with the Greenwich teachers. “That’s the best professional development for me. Working with them is how I stay sharp,” he said.

When the work with Greenwich began, Jackson was one of 16 teachers who volunteered to spend some time every week developing and refining math lessons. “I was one of the very enthusiastic lesson study participants. When teachers were afraid to teach publicly, I volunteered. I was never shy about that,” he said.

By the 1999-2000 school year, the principal had seen enough to convince her to carve out time to enable the volunteer teachers to meet from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. every Monday in lesson study groups. Two years later, all teachers were expected to participate in lesson study groups 80 minutes each week. Jackson became math facilitator with his primary work to guide the lesson study groups.

Jackson continues as the school’s math facilitator but, because of a districtwide change in school schedules, School 2’s principal was unable to provide time during the workday for teachers to participate in lesson study. A small group of volunteer teachers is continuing the process after school.

Until this year, School 2’s goal had been to develop at least one research lesson per year per grade. Teachers worked in grade-level math groups and selected lessons that they’d had difficulty with in the past or which they knew had caused students to struggle. Eventually, one of the teachers volunteered to teach the lesson to students with other teachers observing. The observers followed a precise protocol. Teachers gathered after the lesson to debrief what they had observed. Then, the same teachers refined the lesson. The lesson was re-taught, using the refined lesson. After teaching the lesson a second time, teachers once again met to discuss it. Finally, they wrote a report on what was learned during that lesson study cycle. Teachers presented these reports with PowerPoint at staff meetings. The reports with lesson plans, discussion notes, conclusions and recommendations along with videotapes of the lessons are stored in the library.

In addition to facilitating the lesson study groups, Jackson also provides intensive support for teachers. Rather than observing an occasional lesson here or there, he observes every math lesson taught by one teacher during the school’s 90-minute math block over a one- or two-week period. “They teach. I observe. We talk,” he said in describing the process.

That process, he said, is ideal because teachers are not teaching special lessons but allowing him to observe their everyday practice. This also allows him to have frequent short but timely debriefings.

In addition, Jackson teaches model lessons while other teachers observe. That also is followed by a debriefing about the strengths and weaknesses of his lesson.

Changes in School 2 and the district have presented Jackson with new challenges this year. Teachers are no longer required to participate in lesson study and teachers who are interested in

### Benefits of lesson study

→ It shows me how I can help other teachers in a more powerful way.

→ It reduces the isolation of teachers and fosters collaboration between teachers.

→ It provides a common understanding of teaching practice and promotes a consistency of teaching throughout a building.

→ It shows a teacher how to become a high-quality teacher over time.

— Bill Jackson

**WILLIAM JACKSON**

**Position:** Mathematics facilitator/teacher, Paterson School No. 2

**School district:** Paterson (New Jersey) Public Schools

**Professional history:** Before becoming math facilitator at School 2, Jackson had been a classroom teacher for 17 years, teaching grades 3 through 8 as well as bilingual education and adult ESL classes. At School 2, he has been the lead teacher in the school's lesson study work. He has managed the school's lesson study relationship with the Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School. He also has

co-authored the math curriculum for grades 7 and 8 at his school, based on the findings of the TIMSS study and what Paterson teachers learned about student learning through their work with lesson study.

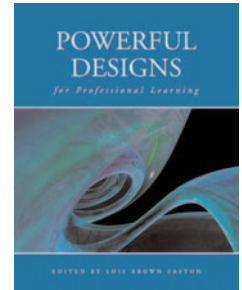
**Education:** Earned his bachelor's degree in economics from Rutgers University, 1982 and a master's degree in education with a concentration in bilingual/bicultural education, William Paterson University, Wayne, N.J., in 1997.

**Honors/accomplishments:** Awarded Fulbright Memorial Scholarship by the government of Japan to study the Japanese educational system

in Tokyo and Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan, 1999. Member of select group of educators to represent the United States at U.S./Japan Mathematics Seminar in Park City, Utah, July 2002.

**Professional service:** Jackson is an active participant in the lesson study work in the United States. He presents frequently at mathematics conferences regarding lesson study and is a regular participant in the lesson study conference hosted by Greenwich (Conn.) Japanese School.

**To continue** this conversation, e-mail Jackson at [wjack@optonline.net](mailto:wjack@optonline.net).



**Lesson study is one of the 21 strategies featured in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*. Buy it at [store.nsd.org](http://store.nsd.org)**

the process must join a voluntary after-school group led by Jackson, who's also volunteering his time. He believes that lesson study made a profound impact on the culture of the school and was beginning to impact student achievement.

"Conversations have changed. It's real common for teachers to say, 'come look at my blackboard. I want you to see my students' work.' It literally has transformed the feeling in this building," Jackson said.

"At my school, teachers don't have to know everything. We know that we can learn to be good teachers. But, first, we have to let our guard down," he said.

But he worries that these improvements will fade if administrators don't make their support more tangible. "It's very easy to slip back into the same old same old. That's what I'm struggling with right now. Without support, you're a Lone Ranger," he said.

"You need administrators who let the staff know that this is part of the professional lives of

teachers in this school. There was a time when lesson study was 'the way we do business' in this school," he said.

Jackson also worries that the American tendency to favor a quick fix is out of step with a learning process as intensive as lesson study.

"Americans have little patience for anything that doesn't produce immediate results. Lesson study produces slow but steady improvement over time," Jackson said. School 2 made AYP in 3rd and 4th grade but "the test scores didn't jump through the roof."

Without commitment from the district, he wonders how long he'll be able to share his passion for lesson study with other teachers at his school.

"If you're not getting support from the top, I don't see how this can work long-term. You hear a lot about lesson study being teacher-driven. I'm not sure that's true. It's teacher-driven if teachers are allowed to drive it," he said. ♦

**"Americans have little patience for anything that doesn't produce immediate results. Lesson study produces slow but steady improvement over time."**

## Be the change you want to see in others

**T**eachers who assume formal or informal leadership roles within their schools and districts share responsibility for the academic success of all students. As leaders, teachers contribute to improvement efforts, advocate for and support high-quality professional development, and serve as instructional leaders among their colleagues. These are some of the many ways teacher leaders guide continuous improvement within their schools.

Teachers contribute to school- and districtwide improvement efforts by taking an active role in setting the direction for changes within their grade or department and school. Working collaboratively with their colleagues, teacher leaders examine data about student performance, set goals for improvement, and work as a learning community to reflect on their instruction and assessments, align their classroom improvement goals with school and district goals for improvement, and contribute to planning and implementing change initiatives to reach those goals. For example, when a school adopts a reform mathematics program, teacher leaders might facilitate learning for their colleagues, coordinate the examination of student work, provide support as they implement the new curriculum and instructional strategies in classrooms, lead data dialogues to explore the impact of their efforts, and communicate with parents and the community.

As advocates for high-quality professional development, teacher leaders contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of school-based professional learning. They organize and coordinate learning teams that meet regularly to learn with and from each other. Teacher leaders design opportunities for ongoing learning

for themselves and their colleagues. They use NSDC's Standards for Staff Development with their fellow teachers to guide school and district decisions about professional learning. As leaders among their peers, teacher leaders believe that those within the school who share a common vision and goals can best solve complex problems. Teacher leaders are learners themselves and engage in an instructional leadership development program to hone their leadership skills.

Teacher leaders serve on or facilitate school or community committees, assist with developing monitoring systems to assess implementation of reform initiatives, and ensure ongoing follow-up support. They model core values about their role in student success and ongoing improvement. They collaborate with others to make evidence-based decisions related to improving student learning.

Outside their schools, teachers serve in leadership roles within their districts, their professional associations, various networks, and agencies. As members and leaders within these organizations, teachers have opportunities to broaden their understanding of

issues, policies, and practices beyond their individual schools. With expanded perspectives and opportunities to learn, teachers refine their leadership skills.

Teachers who serve in formal and informal leadership roles contribute to a culture within the school that promotes joint work, shared responsibility, and focused effort. Teacher leaders working side by side with principals support deep change and continuous learning. They actively contribute to establishing priorities, establishing theories of change to achieve their goals, and monitoring the impact of their actions. Teacher leaders model the behaviors that are desired in all teachers. ◆

### LEADERSHIP

Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.



Joellen Killion is director of special projects for National Staff Development Council.

For more information about the NSDC Standards for Staff Development, see [www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm)

## LEVELS OF YES AND NO: Just exactly how much do we love or hate that option?

**PURPOSE:** Provides a visual display of the positions held by team members, identifies concerns, and determines how to address those concerns.

**TIME:** 70 to 90 minutes.

**MATERIALS:** Flip chart, felt-tip markers, 3-inch sticky notes (two per team member).

1. Clarify the option the team is considering. Write the option on the top of a flip chart page. Ask team members to pair up and share their understanding of the option, checking to see if all team members can paraphrase the option being considered. **Time: 5 minutes.**
2. Facilitate a dialogue and discussion about the option. **Time: 20 minutes.**
3. Re-clarify the option. Read the statement from Step 1 and ask if everyone still agrees that this really is the option being considered. If the answer is yes, the group proceeds. If the answer is no, repeat the process again, beginning with Step 1. **Time: 5 minutes.**
4. When the group agrees that the option statement is accurate, replicate the chart on p. 9 on the flip chart underneath the option statement. Walk the group through the Levels of Yes and No.
5. Ask team members to think about the situation and choose the number that best represents their current opinions about the option. Ask each participant to record his or her number on one of the sticky notes and to write a brief rationale for his or her rating. (Signing notes is helpful but should not be required.) **Time: 5 minutes.**
6. Have participants place the sticky notes on the flip chart in a column next to the number that matches their rating. The resulting bar graph will provide a visual display of the team's opinions. **Time: 2 minutes.**
7. Read the statements of rationale from all of the sticky notes. Ask participants to listen analytically, looking for categories of rationale as well as similarities and differences among the categories. **Time: 5-10 minutes.**
8. Focus the team on the rationale statements that express a concern, beginning with those mentioned most frequently. Examine concerns from both the Yes and the No sides. **Time: 5 minutes.**
9. Invite participants to speak for each side of the option, beginning with the No side. Invite questions from the participants. Remind all participants to stay open to the influence of others. **Time: 15-30 minutes.**
10. When everyone has been heard, repeat Steps 5 and 6. Ask the team to evaluate the Levels of Yes and No chart to determine if "most" has been reached by either side. If "most" has been reached by the No side, then the option is rejected. If "most" has been reached by the Yes side, then the team moves to the declaring phase. Regardless of the results, label the chart page with the date and retain as part of the group memory. **Time: 10 minutes.**

School-based staff developers are often required to run meetings within their school and often districtwide meetings as well.

Some of these are learning meetings but many are meetings in which participants will be expected to reach some agreement on one or more agenda items.

This tool will introduce you to a method for identifying the Levels of Yes and No within a group.

If everybody is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking.

— Gen. George S. Patton



**Page 2  
of a two-page tool**

10 =	Absolutely yes	
9 =	Strongly yes	
8 =	Strongly yes	
7 =	Somewhat in favor	
6 =	Mildly in favor	
5 =	Mildly opposed	
4 =	Somewhat opposed	
3 =	No	
2 =	Strongly no	
1 =	Absolutely no	

Have participants place the sticky notes in a column next to the number that matches their rating. The resulting bar graph will provide a visual display of the team's opinions.

Let go of your attachment to being right, and suddenly your mind is more open. You're able to benefit from the unique viewpoints of others, without being crippled by your own judgment.

— Ralph Marston

SOURCE: Levels of Yes and No, reprinted with permission from *Putting Sense Into Consensus*, by Connie Hoffman and Judy Ness (VISTA Associates, 1998).