

T3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS

ROLE: Curriculum specialist

PURPOSE: To ensure implementation of adopted curriculum.

BY JOELLEN KILLION AND CYNTHIA HARRISON

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

- A**s a curriculum specialist, coaches have multiple responsibilities. They include:
- Deepening teachers' content knowledge;
 - Developing teachers' understanding of the structure of the curriculum (hierarchical, thematic, conceptual, etc.);
 - Aligning the written, taught, and tested curriculum;
 - Developing pacing guides;
 - Identifying power standards and/or essential learnings;
 - Dissecting a standard to identify the essential knowledge and skills students need to achieve the standard;
 - Writing benchmarks to measure progress toward the standard;
 - Identifying what to assess;
 - Analyzing curricular materials to discriminate which parts of those materials support achievement of the standards; and
 - Integrating the content areas to pro-



vide additional opportunities for students to practice and apply their learning.

Coaches serve as curriculum specialist when they assist teachers in developing pacing guides, preparing unit and lesson plans, developing assessments, and designing accommodations for various

WHAT'S INSIDE

NSDC profile

The first day of school presented new anxieties when Christy Christian moved from the classroom to become a reading coach.

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NSDC tool

Four-step reflection process helps teachers look back on lessons.

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Focus on the NSDC standards

Joellen Killion tackles the Quality Teaching standard.

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

SCENARIO:
Curriculum specialist at work

At the beginning of the year, Jerry Fenton, the instructional specialist at Tomlin Elementary School, assesses the level of implementation of the math curriculum in each classroom. The school is in its second year implementing the Everyday Math program. The biggest issue for teachers last year was keeping up with the expected pace of the curriculum. Teachers struggled with students not mastering every skill before they moved on to the next unit.

In the first few weeks of school, Fenton observes classroom practice and has teachers assess their own level of implementation against the implementation innovation configuration map (Hall & Hord, 2001). He discovers that most teachers are at the developing (second of four) level. Fenton meets with each grade-level team to discuss his observations and their self-assessments. They also examine student performance from the pretests. Based on these three sets of data, they identify the support they want from Fenton. He learns that they all want help with pacing and knowing when

to move on. Fenton reminds teachers about the concepts of developing and secure goals for students. This reminder assuages teachers' anxiety about making an incorrect decision related to moving on, especially when they are teaching to developing goals that do not require mastery.

Second-grade teachers decide they want to plan a unit together with Fenton so they can learn how to map the amount of time needed for all parts of the unit and how to assess progress throughout the unit. Fenton gathers materials, sets an agenda for the meeting, and facilitates the 2nd-grade team meeting. They examine the curriculum and decide which goals are developing and secure goals for 2nd graders. They select one goal to use as the focus of their unit and begin to identify both the concepts and skills within that goal so they can sequence them for instruction. They work together over three meetings to plan the unit and look forward to implementing it. Fenton suggests that one teacher volunteer to teach the unit and that others observe before they implement it in their classrooms to ensure they have included the best examples, problems, and practice for their students.

** Fictitious person and school*

learners. Increasing teachers' understanding and implementation of the written curriculum is a major focus of coaches' work because, along with instruction, consistency in and alignment of curriculum leads to increased student learning. When teachers use the curriculum to plan instruction, differentiate what is essential from what is "nice to know," identify power standards — those standards upon which others depend — instructional time is more focused. Coaches help teachers recognize interdisciplinary connections within standards across disciplines to maximize students' opportunities to learn and apply their learning.

Knowledge and skills

To be successful in the role of curriculum specialist, coaches depend on their understanding of national, state, and local curriculum in all disciplines, how those curricula are structured, the distinction between demonstrative and procedural knowledge, and discrimination and task analysis skills. Coaches know how to determine broad and finite learning outcomes, recognize the

sequential, hierarchical, and conceptual relationship within the curriculum, how to "peel" a broad content standard into its essential knowledge and skills, and how to plan pacing guides.

Challenges

The major challenge facing coaches in the role of curriculum specialists is having an adequate understanding of the curricula of all disciplines. This is especially challenging for coaches who have developed expertise in one content area but who work with teachers in all content areas. This challenge is particularly apparent in secondary schools when teachers with a content major in one subject area become instructional coaches of teachers in other content areas. Establishing credibility as a curriculum specialist becomes more challenging in these situations and may lead a coach to choose other roles than curriculum specialist to maintain the coach's comfort and credibility with other teachers. Choosing other roles may be problematic if decisions related to curriculum are the source of low student achievement. ◆

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

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 (T3, Dec./Jan. 2006)

From
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by Joellen Killion
and Cynthia Harrison