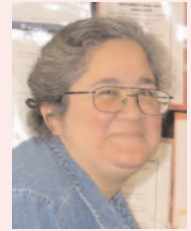


T3 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS

WHAT'S INSIDE



NSDC PROFILE
Lucilla Landin brings a businesslike approach to her work as a campus coach for reading in Dallas.

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RESEARCH-BASED

What looks like research may not be, explains Joellen Killion.

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NSDC TOOL

There are many ways to adapt instruction and the **Differentiated Classroom Observation Form** can point to those.

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National Staff Development Council
(800) 727-7288
www.nsd.org

ROLE: Instructional specialist

PURPOSE: To align instruction with curriculum to meet the needs of all students (differentiate instruction for English language learners, special needs, gifted, low achieving, etc.).

BY JOELLEN KILLION AND CYNTHIA HARRISON

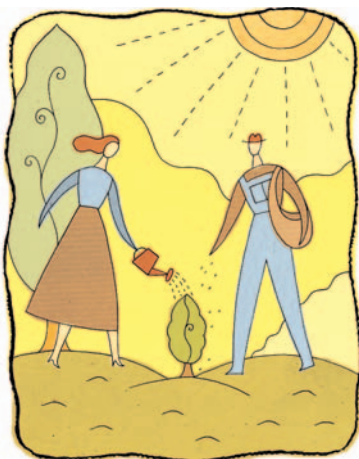
Sixth in an eight-part series about roles of the school-based coach

Most coaches spend most of their time in the role of instructional specialist. The role of instructional specialist ensures that teachers implement effective, research-based instructional strategies. As coaches, they help teachers select and implement the most appropriate strategies to meet the learning needs of all students. This role is frequently combined with the role of classroom supporter; coaches often plan with teachers and then demonstrate, co-teach, or observe and offer feedback to teachers. Even when there is

effective training for teachers on various instructional strategies, there is often low-level implementation of these strategies in classrooms. Training often falls short of helping teachers know how to select strategies to align with the curriculum and adjust strategies to address the needs of diverse learners. A major responsibility in this role is to differentiate instruction and to select the best strategies for the learning. A coach may spend time with individuals and small groups discussing appropriate instructional strategies to reach the desired student learning outcomes.

Knowledge and skills

To be successful in this role, coaches have a deep understanding of the research on effective instructional strategies and know how to align instruction with content. They know and have implemented



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

SCENARIO:
Instructional specialist at work

Lilly Pham is the new instructional coach at Preston Elementary, a Title I school whose student achievement scores declined three years in a row. Pham is a veteran teacher from a similar Title I school in the district. She has been very effective with students in her own classroom. She has a particular passion about working with students and teachers in high-needs schools.

Pham discovers that Preston teachers lack unit-planning skills. They are planning each day of instruction without a big picture of overall student learning outcomes. The school has no planning template or protocol, or any consistency or common language about instructional strategies used within the school. She asks the principal to release teachers in each grade level for a full day to work on a model for planning. On planning day, Pham wants to help teachers become more competent about instructional decisions.

Pham asks her central office staff development coordinator, Laurie Stevens, to help her design the day-long meeting and to facilitate the first team meeting. Pham and Stevens decide to share a mod-

various strategies and know when each is effective. Being an effective teacher is essential in this role since coaches in this role not only teach other teachers about various instructional processes and how students learn, but they also model effective instruction. Coaches also understand standards-based planning, including how to plan instruction to achieve the selected content standard. Assisting teachers to look at the big picture first and then planning instructional and assessment strategies are essential skill for coaches. Facilitation skills help coaches in this role since much of the planning occurs in small groups of teachers. Asking the right questions to move teachers ahead in planning is another key to success.

Coaches in this role are more successful when they understand how students learn and how teachers make decisions. When coaches know about, can exhibit, and can articulate their own thinking about selecting and using various instructional strategies, they are better able to support teachers. In addition to instruction, it is helpful when coaches know about and can imple-

ment sound classroom management, higher-order thinking skills, and engagement strategies. When coaches understand how to differentiate instruction for all students, they will be better able to assist colleagues to improve instruction.

el unit with teachers to start the day, so they create a unit map for literacy that integrates social studies and science and that identifies differentiation strategies for their large population of English language learners and special education students.

As Pham and Stevens move in and out of the role of learning facilitator and instructional specialist, they engage teachers in dialogue about standards-based instruction, content standards, assessment, and integration of content areas. Pham and Stevens ask teachers to help them revise the unit-planning template before they work with other grade levels.

After three planning meetings with different grade levels, Pham tells Stevens that a 1st-grade teacher who was frustrated on their first day reported, "I finally get it. I understand the need for the big picture. I was only thinking about my classroom and not about what happens to my students when they leave 1st grade." Several days later, this same teacher asks Pham to review several units she redesigned over the weekend. Pham makes an appointment to meet with her after school to review the units.

** Fictitious person and school*

Challenges

Coaches are challenged when they have only implemented a few instructional strategies in their own classrooms or have worked with a more homogeneous student population. Sometimes coaches may be learning instructional strategies along with teachers in their schools and will not have had opportunities to practice those strategies to understand how to implement them successfully. Reading research, practicing new strategies, and introducing new strategies to teachers are continuous challenges facing coaches in the role of instructional specialist. Another challenge for coaches is integrating innovations, especially when most schools are implementing multiple, parallel innovations. ♦

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 (T3, Feb. 2006)
- 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
9 Roles of the School-Based Coach
by Joellen Killion
and Cynthia Harrison



Lucilla Landin, center, meets with 3rd grade teachers Latasha Bell, left, and Monica Delgado. They are discussing recent student assessment data and how the data will determine teachers' instructional decisions for the next two weeks.

Lessons of business apply to work with teachers

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

For Lucilla Landin, the third time may be the charm.

At age 46, Landin is in the midst of her third career as a reading coach for the Dallas Independent School District. “I really enjoy working with adults. You get the same sense of accomplishment with adults that you do when you work with students. But, sometimes, it’s more immediate than with students,” she said.

Landin, who has undergraduate degrees in sociology and criminal justice and a master’s in

urban affairs, worked in business management and as a social worker for almost 20 years before becoming a teacher. “I wanted to stay in public service but I was burned out with social service,” she said.

DISD hired Landin, who is bilingual in English and Spanish, after she completed a year-long alternative certification process. She spent 11 years as a kindergarten teacher before becoming a Reading First coach at Henderson Elementary School in spring 2004. Reading First coaches serve at a variety of DISD schools, typi-

cally with one coach per school.

The federal Reading First program provides grants to states and local districts to improve reading ability. But Reading First also specifies that grantees must use reading programs based on scientifically based research. Reading First programs must ensure that students are systematically and explicitly taught five key early reading skills:

Phonemic awareness — the ability to hear, identify, and play with individual sounds (or phonemes) — in spoken words.

Phonics — the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.

Fluency — the capacity to read text accurately and quickly.

Vocabulary — the words students must know to communicate effectively.

Comprehension — the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read.

Dallas requires every K-3 teacher on a Reading First campus to complete an online professional development program that includes four-hour modules that focus on the five components of literacy skills.

Providing the basic training ensures that every teacher has the same foundational learning about literacy, Landin said. Adding the reading coaches ensures a greater degree of faithful implementation in the classroom, she said.

Coaches are available to demonstrate, co-teach and follow-up on lessons and strategies that were discussed as part of the coursework.

After two years, Landin can point to increases although she believes it's too early to expect substantial changes. When the Reading First coaching program began, she estimates that one-third of Henderson's early elementary students were reading on grade-level. After two years, between 30% and 60% of the early elementary students are on track at mid-year. "Our expectation is that all of them should be on grade-level by the end of the year," she said.

"The goal of a coach is to help teachers to work smarter, not harder. Our teachers were tutoring before school, after school, on Saturdays. They got tired, and the kids got tired. That's not an easy situation because nobody wins

in that situation," she said.

Since Reading First began, the amount of tutoring has decreased somewhat which has given everybody a healthy break and the energy they need to focus on reading during regular school hours, she said.

Landin's challenges are significant. Virtually all of Henderson's 860 students live in poverty. The student population is about 80% Hispanic, 18% black, and about 1% white.

About 45% of the students have limited English proficiency. Because of the diversity of students, Henderson uses three different reading programs: one for students who speak predominantly in English, one for students who speak predominantly in Spanish, and one for native Spanish speakers who have limited ability to speak in English.

Equally as daunting as the poverty and the language readiness of the students are the varying degrees of teacher preparation.

Several years ago, Texas provided alternative certification as a way to increase the number of bilingual education teachers in schools like Henderson. Although those teachers bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences to the classroom, they also bring different needs from teachers who have undergone a more traditional pre-service program. "With those teachers, we really have to start with classroom management, routines, and procedures, and then work into instructional issues," she said.

Landin has found that her business experience has provided some significant lessons for working with teachers. "Education has become much more goal-oriented, much more like the way businesses are run. Teachers need to learn how to work backwards, how to work with the goal in mind. They have to ask themselves, 'If I want student achievement to be at a certain level, then how will I get my students to that level?'" she said.

Most of Landin's time is spent visiting classrooms. She estimates that she spends 60% of her time in classrooms. "I could be demonstrating. I could be co-teaching or I could just be observing. How I spend my time depends on each teacher's needs," she said. The rest of her time is spent analyzing data, using the data to design instruc-

"The goal of a coach is to help teachers to work smarter, not harder."

— *Lucilla Landin*

5 KEY EARLY READING SKILLS
under Reading First

1. Phonemic awareness
2. Phonics
3. Fluency
4. Vocabulary
5. Comprehension

tional focus for small group intervention, conferencing with teachers, and developing other learning opportunities for teachers.

She meets once a week with each grade-level planning group to walk through their lessons for the next week. “This helps them see all of the components and maybe pull out some areas where they need to concentrate,” she said.

“If we know that kids are weak in phonemic awareness, for example, then we’ll try to focus on that component. We’ll really walk through that lesson with fine-tooth comb,” she said.

LUCILLA LANDIN

Position: Reading First Campus Coach

School district: Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, Texas

Professional history: Had a career in business management and as a social worker before becoming a kindergarten teacher in 1991. Worked as a kindergarten teacher for 11 years before becoming a master reading teacher at Henderson Elementary School, a position which involved working with other teachers on reading instruction. Became Reading First coach at Henderson in spring 2004.

Education: Earned her bachelor’s degree in sociology and criminal justice from Southern Methodist University and her master’s degree in urban affairs from University of Texas at Arlington. Completed Texas’ alternative certification process to become a teacher. Later earned certificates in reading, bilingual/ELS, and mentoring.

Honors/accomplishments: Twice selected Henderson Teacher of the Year.

Professional service: Served as national trainer for Edison Schools in several curricular areas, grade-level chair, district textbook adoption committee, and frequent presenter on topics related to reading, data analysis, and English Language Learners.

To continue this conversation, e-mail Landin at lulandin@dallasisd.org.

Teachers will leave with the plan developed and with the materials to teach the lesson.

In addition, the Henderson teachers have agreed to devote one of their grade-level planning periods each week to doing the online training which Landin facilitates. This means that every teacher sees her at least twice each week.

The support for the work of the Reading First coaches is substantial, although it didn’t begin that way. Dallas’ Reading First coaches began working in spring 2004 before they had had much training for the job. For several months, they scrambled as they learned the many elements of their work.

Kathy Kee, a veteran Texas educator who coaches the Reading First coaches, puts their task this way: “They had a huge list of assessments that they were supposed to know and a huge bank of instructional tools that they were supposed to master and when you put it all together, it was literally thousands of pieces of information. And, once they had that content knowledge, they had to learn how to work with other people.”

During the summers of 2004 and 2005, however, all of the Reading First coaches came together for an intensive period of learning about literacy development as well as coaching skills. “We lived in each other’s back pockets during both summers,” Landin said.

Now, during the school year, the coaches meet every Thursday afternoon for 4½ hours. “It is our sacred time. We know that we just don’t schedule anything in our building for that time,” she said.

That weekly professional development time for the coaches continues to be focused on literacy development and coaching skills. But it also provides time to bounce ideas off each other and to share the challenges of the job, she said.

Like most coaches, Landin can point to a mix of attitudes toward coaching among the teachers in her building. “I have a few who are uncomfortable with the idea of coaching. They see it as an intrusion in their classrooms. It’s very difficult to change that mindset,” she said.

“That’s what we commiserate about the most,” she said, with a laugh. ♦

Landin meets once a week with each grade-level planning group to walk through their lessons for the next week. “This helps them see all of the components and maybe pull out some areas where they need to concentrate,” she said.



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

Leaders help teachers to define research

Frequently, teacher leaders feel uncomfortable accessing and using research and are less certain about recognizing effective research, yet they have a responsibility for helping teachers understand and use research to inform decisions they make about their practice. They help teachers:

- Distinguish research from opinion or best practice;
- Recognize the elements of effective research; and
- Conduct action research.

Teacher leaders can assist their colleagues in determining what is research and what isn't.

Frequently, teachers perceive that what they hear or read is research because it appears in a professional journal, is recommended by an expert, or is offered in a workshop. Formal research is a structured study using specific designs driven by the rigor of scientific investigation. Most research is published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals such as *American Educational Research Association Journal*. Research is also summarized or reviewed in journals such as the *Review of Educational Research*. Teachers typically do not have easy access to these journals, nor do they often read original research.

However, when critical decisions are being made related to teaching and learning, articles and journals presenting original research are useful. Teacher leaders may also make abstracts of research related to key school initiatives under consideration or in use available to their colleagues. Teacher leaders can assist their colleagues to distinguish among research, perspective, recommendation, opinion, and best practice.

Effective research has a number of elements that distinguish it from best practice. It first includes a rigorous study guided by a research

question and uses an accepted design for structuring the study.

Teachers today hear a great deal about scientifically-based research. The federal government has established parameters for scientifically-based research that include quasi-experimental and experimental design. **Experimental research** uses random assignment of participants to either a treatment or non-treatment group in order to compare the impact of the treatment or intervention. **Quasi-experimental research** does not include random assignment of participants although it compares the results of treatment in one group to another group that did not have the treatment. Other forms of accepted research,

although not defined as scientifically-based by the U.S.

Department of Education, include **qualitative research** that includes the study of a specific group or groups of subjects. In qualitative research, the research studies one or more groups and does not compare results with non-treatment groups. The hallmark of all

research is its adherence to the scientific process and strict guidelines established to ensure that the results are sound.

Best practice, on the other hand, is often a practice that is producing results and has not been subjected to rigorous research or evaluation. The results from one site are not easily generalized to another group because the scientific process or the use of comparison with treatment and non-treatment has not occurred. Best practice, in essence, is what works in one school or district and may have the potential to work in another. Research, on the other hand, permits some degree of certainty that the intervention has a strong likelihood of working in another setting. So even though an article about a particular teaching practice appears in *Mathematics Teacher*, *Reading*, *Science Teacher*, etc., it may

RESEARCH-BASED

Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.

For more information about the NSDC Standards for Staff Development, see www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm

not be research. It may be the description of a practice that worked in one school or district.

Another way a teacher leader can assist teachers is to help them engage in action research. **Action research** is practitioner's research. When teachers engage in action research, they follow a scientific process to conduct a study within their own classroom or school. In simple terms, they ask a probing question about their own practice such as what reading instructional strategies improve the reading performance of below-level young adolescent male readers.

Teachers then collect data from their own classroom work, look for patterns and trends within their data, and draw conclusions from their data. Often, they share their results with other teachers and use them to inform their own classroom practice. Using research to provide

Resources for research-based practices

- Killion, J. (2002). *What works in the elementary grades: Results-based staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.
- Killion, J. (2002). *What works in the high school grades: Results-based staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.
- Killion, J. (1999). *What works in the middle: Results-based staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2003). *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousvid/index.html
- U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse www.whatworks.ed.gov/

background knowledge, deepen teachers' understanding about the potential for success of a particular practice, and to inform crucial decisions is essential to ensure that teachers' classroom and other schoolwide decisions will have a strong likelihood of producing the results expected. Taking a gamble on unproven practices is a decision not to be made lightly. ◆

A teacher leader can help teachers to engage in action research, following a scientific process to conduct a study within their own classrooms or schools.

Teachers Teaching Teachers

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THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Coaches can use the following form to help teachers understand the many areas in which they can adapt their instruction to meet students' unique differences. Although this is set up as an observation form, a coach can also encourage teachers to use the characteristics to reflect on their practice.

Check the appropriate box next to each item. Use the comment box to provide ideas for improvement in specific areas. If the form is completed during multiple observations, use tally marks. Review the results with the teacher as soon as possible to identify specific areas for improvement and to praise strengths.

Teacher: _____ **Grade Level/Subject Area:** _____ **Observer:** _____ **Date:** _____

Evidence of implementation

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	LITTLE OR NO	COMMENTS
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT				
Presents an inviting, relaxed environment for learning.				
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.				
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.				
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.				
Is arranged for teacher and student movement during work sessions.				
Provides work areas for individual needs, including knowledge/ability levels.				
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.				
TEACHER BEHAVIORS				
Work with total groups, individuals, and small groups.				
Monitor individuals and small groups.				
Use a variety of ongoing assessment tools such as checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records.				
Apply assessment information to guide instruction.				
Address academic, emotional, social, and physical student needs.				
Provide time for students to actively process information.				
Give specific feedback to individuals and/or small groups.				
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT				
Exhibits on-task behavior while working alone.				
Works effectively in small groups.				
Works on their individual knowledge or ability levels.				
Uses materials/resources on the student's own level of success.				
Feels respected and emotionally safe.				
Uses self-discipline.				

HOW TO BE A CATALYST FOR DIFFERENTIATION

The following acrostic provides a way to view the key components of differentiated instruction. Staff developers can personalize this list by allowing time for grade-level teams or interest groups to develop an acrostic that describes their differentiated classroom.

D I F F E R E N T I A T E

- D**etermine the standards to be taught.
- I**dentify student needs with strong assessment tools before, during, and after learning.
- F**ormulate plans that link the targeted standards with individual needs.
- F**ind effective strategies and activities to teach the information.

- E**ngage students in activities that employ their interests and the ways they learn.
- R**elate learning to the students' worlds.
- E**ncourage risk taking with wise choices.
- N**urture the social and emotional aspects of the students.
- T**arget the learners' needs with flexible grouping designs.
- I**gnite each student's desire to learn.
- A**adjust assignments to match the learner's abilities, knowledge levels, and interests.
- T**ailor lessons with student-focused activities.
- E**ntice and ignite lifelong learners.

Evidence of implementation

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	LITTLE OR NO	COMMENTS
MATERIALS/RESOURCES				
Include a variety of reading levels that are related to the subject or topic.				
Are accessible to students.				
Support the standards and topic.				
Are age-appropriate.				
Are up-to-date.				
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.				
Include appropriate reference sources and materials.				
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES				
Use a variety of assessment tools before, during, and after learning.				
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities to teach standards.				
Meet the diverse needs of learners.				
Engage students in various flexible grouping designs.				
Use centers and/or stations for individual and small group instruction.				
Engage students with projects and/or problems-solving activities.				
Present students with choices in learning activities.				

Source: "11 practical ways to guide teachers toward differentiation," by Carolyn Chapman and Rita King, *JSD*, Fall 2005.