

13 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS

COACHES ZERO IN ON **BEHAVIOR**

By Valerie von Frank

As dean of students at one high school and now assistant principal at Cabrillo High School

in the Long Beach (Calif.) Unified School District, Matt Brown was familiar with the complaint: How can we teach when students are so disruptive and defiant?

"The names and faces of the kids changed, but it was always the same issue," Brown said. He said that in Cabrillo, a school with high transiency and truancy rates, he saw that a group of



teachers needed support to take on the challenge of meeting all students' needs. So he did what many in his district are now doing. He called in a team of specialists.

For two years, Long Beach has offered schools the services of a coaching team to work with staff specifically on classroom management and student behavior. The team members provide ongoing training, conduct classroom observations, coach and support teachers, and collect and analyze data to inform behavioral practices across the district. Either administrators or individual teachers can request coaching services.

The three specialists on the team come from different backgrounds. Two were part of the district's special education department, where they worked as team leaders and facilitators,

What's inside

Lessons from a coach

The coach is no longer just a resource provider, says Luis Planas.

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Focus on NSDC's standards

Motivate team members and meet the Learning Communities standard.

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NSDC tool

Learn what motivates your team.

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and a third has a background as a school security officer trained in nonviolent crisis intervention.

A widespread challenge

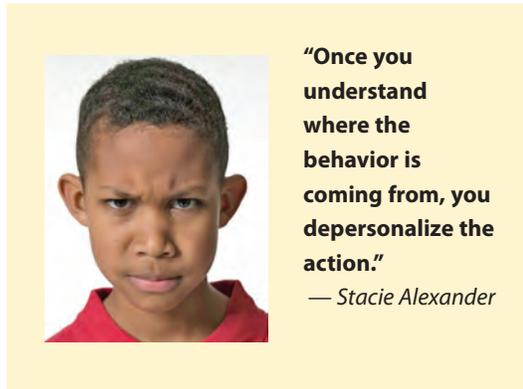
Behavior remains a significant challenge for teachers across the country, according to national surveys. The *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Past, Present, and Future* (2008) found that only half of those responding agreed that they spent the majority of their time teaching as opposed to dealing with discipline or other matters. *Teaching for a Living: How Teachers See the Profession Today*, a 2009 report from Learning Point Associates and Public Agenda, found that nearly seven out of 10 teachers believe addressing student discipline would improve their overall effectiveness. And in 2000, a survey by Scholastic Inc. and the Council of Chief State School Officers, *Teacher Voices*, showed that 86% of respondents identified classroom management skills as the area of greatest need for new teachers' professional development.

Stacie Alexander, one of Long Beach's Behavior Intervention and Coaching Team (BIC) members, said most teachers are not prepared well in classroom management. "Credentialing programs don't focus on behavior," Alexander said. "Typically, it's covered in one class that's not mandatory. A lot of teachers are prepared to teach content, but are not prepared to manage the behavior of human beings in the classroom."

Alexander noted the problem does not necessarily go away with experience. Brown said his first observation at Cabrillo showed him a teacher who was managing fairly well, having students comply and focus on the task, but who could have improved the lesson by providing a measure showing students whether they achieved the objective. Other classroom observations revealed veteran teachers struggling, with students talking over the teacher's lecture, introductory warm-ups that took 20 minutes of a 55-minute period because of student disruption, and the same students volunteering answers again and again while others sat idly, not even taking notes.

Leveraging professional learning

For Brown, the answer was a dose of pressure along with support. Once a month during a



departmental meeting, Brown has turned the time to professional learning. Three of this term's sessions will focus on classroom management. He has asked several teachers to meet individually with the coaches as well.

"Increasing routines is essential to get the curriculum across," Brown said. "If you don't have a well-managed classroom, you could have the best instruction in the world and students will not be able to learn."

Alexander said teachers need to learn to depersonalize students' misbehavior. "The behavior isn't about them, about bugging the teacher," she said. "Teachers need to understand that they have the power and control as classroom managers to change student behavior, but that change doesn't come from saying, 'You must do' It comes from building relationships and being able to connect with kids on a personal, yet professional level. Once you understand where the behavior is coming from, you depersonalize the action."

Children, Alexander noted, "don't pick behaviors out of a hat. They act in ways that work for them." Some may be focused on concerns outside of school; others aren't developmentally able to focus for the length of time the teacher is expecting students to sit. The key is discerning factors that contribute to poor behavior, a process helped by the data Alexander and the coaches collect during classroom observations.

The coaches observe teachers, collecting data on environmental factors, such as space within the classroom for students to move around, instructional pacing, student engagement, and clearly posted rules and consequences that are referred to

NSDC'S BELIEF

Every student learns when every educator engages in effective professional learning.

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— Matt Brown

during instruction. In all, the team has developed 20 factors and an implementation rubric of what the factor looks like when practiced (or not) on a scale of one to five. Two coaches observe the lesson together for about 45 minutes. While one collects the environmental data, the other collects data on teacher interactions with students.

The BIC coaching follows the cycle of meeting, observing, problem solving with the teacher, and then coming up with strategies to address concerns. The coaches offer tips for being proactive in classroom management, including such ideas as reducing the number of directions aimed at students at one time and providing specific praise to individual students, including making sure that the praise to directive/criticisms is a ratio of at least 4:1.

“A lot of the teachers say, ‘I used to do that; I don’t know why I stopped,’ ” about some of the suggested strategies, according to Alexander.

“Others say, ‘I can’t believe the solution was that simple’ ” after they’ve made changes in the classroom that positively affect student behavior.

The coaches follow up through e-mail, through administrators’ direct support, and with subsequent observations four to six weeks after the initial observation. Specific data remain confidential, although Alexander noted that some aggregated data may be provided to the administrator if the coaching was part of an evaluative process and initiated at the administrator’s request. Otherwise, aggregated data are provided to the teacher.

A systemic solution

The district decided to use the coaching model, Alexander said, to give teachers the skills to implement strategies themselves rather than simply solving issues one child at a time. With 95 buildings and 88,000 students, a systemwide effort is required to make a difference, she said.

“If we have Johnny struggling and being disruptive and we help with Johnny, if the teacher doesn’t see what we do as helping her gain skills in classroom management, when Johnny leaves there’s going to be another Johnny next year,” Alexander said. “This isn’t about a kid. It’s about an environment. Even in the best environments, there are improvements that can be made. We saw a need to provide skill building to teachers in a supportive,



collaborative process.”

While Alexander isn’t claiming the BIC team is the sole cause, she said those schools which have worked intensively with the behavior coaches are seeing decreases in the number of students referred for discipline problems to the office and to suspension centers.

While any changes at Cabrillo aren’t yet noticeable since the coaching has just begun there, Brown says he’s hopeful.

“It’s a gradual process to change the culture,” he said. “The true measure will be a reduction in referrals to the office and an increase in student attendance — and because of fewer referrals and increased attendance, an increase in student achievement.”

References:

Goldberg, P.E. & Proctor, K.M. (2000). *Teacher voices: A survey on teacher recruitment and retention.* New York: Scholastic & CCSSO, Available online at www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4310

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— Matt Brown



Luis Planas (lplanas@bridgeportedu.net) is a numeracy instructional coach at High Horizons Magnet Elementary School in Bridgeport, Conn.

Role of coach changes with time

Q What has nine years of experience taught you about coaching successfully?

When I first became a coach, the role was primarily a resource teacher — find out what materials teachers need and supply those, pull students out of the classroom to assist. Now, the role has changed significantly. The push is for in-class assistance, to work directly with teachers to hone their craft.

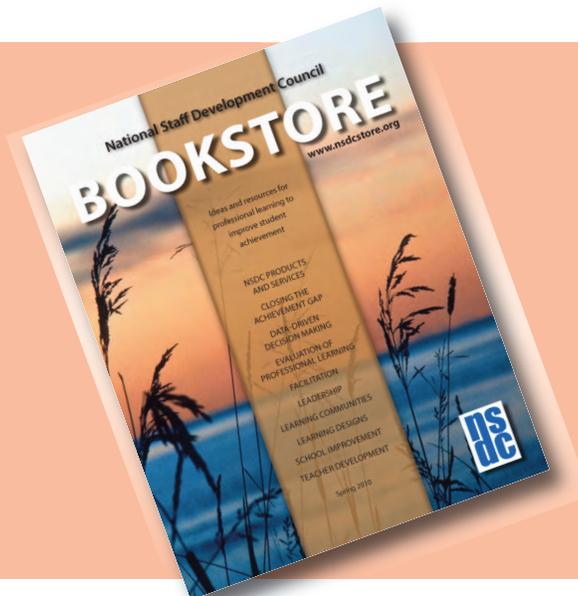
One of the key ingredients of coaching is establishing a focus for instructional help. It's really looking at what the data are saying to you. If we find in a particular grade level that students are not doing well in one area, this is a conversation you need to have with the staff. We need to find out why. Is it that the curriculum is not addressing that area well enough? Is the problem that we didn't have enough time to cover the topic? These data open up the door for me as a coach to provide professional development that teachers might need.

The teachers are very forthcoming at times in saying, "I wasn't sure how to teach that," or "I don't feel confident teaching that area." That's where I can come in and say, "Would you mind if we sit together? We can look at what you have already tried and I can give you a little background on this? Do you want me to model a lesson?" Data really open the door for a coach to know when to provide professional development..

I'm a believer in helping people. I always try to accommodate teachers into my schedule as much as I possibly can.

My feeling is that teachers need to know they can count on me, so I try my best to keep to the promises I make them. Teachers need to feel supported. When you go out of your way to help and you make promises and keep those promises, prove to them that when you say something you mean it, that goes a long way. People learn to trust you. They also need to see that you're good at what you do. These things build the relationship you need as a coach. That's what's been helpful to me. ♦

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Joellen Killion is deputy executive director of National Staff Development Council.

Learning communities can motivate us

Communities of learners share goals and responsibility for student achievement. Members commit to support one another in refining their practice, the success of their students, and their community. Not only do learning communities focus on results for students, they also focus on developing the expertise of team members and expanding their own function as a team.

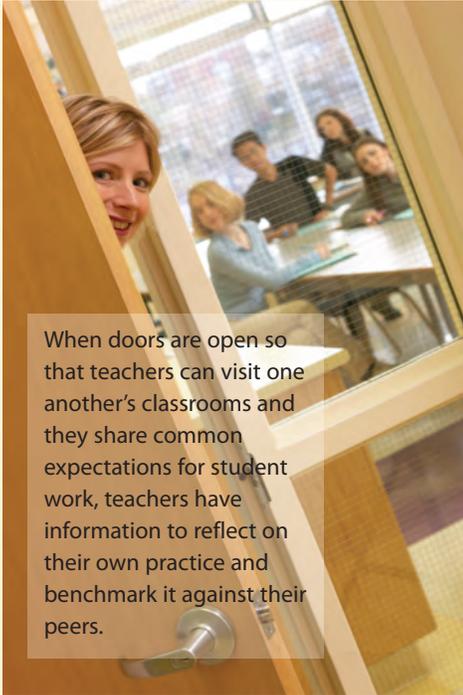
Successful learning communities depend on more than shared goals, expectations for collaboration, and time to interact.

Members use a cycle of continuous improvement to guide the work of the team. In several cycles throughout the school year, lasting about six to nine weeks, team members:

- Examine data about student achievement;
- Use those data to develop goals for student learning;
- Develop goals for educator learning;
- Design and implement educator learning;
- Move the new practices into classrooms;
- Review student work resulting from the new practices;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of their learning; and
- Repeat the cycle using the most recent data.

In addition to supporting one another's learning, community members also commit to refining their processes for collaborative work and professional interaction. They examine their team operations and establish goals for team effectiveness alongside their goals for student and educator learning. How teams work together influences their capacity to achieve results. Dysfunctional teams have members who compete rather than collaborate, set goals as individual team members rather than shared team goals, and seek individual benefits rather than team benefits. When teams solidify their development, their operations become more refined

NSDC STANDARD



When doors are open so that teachers can visit one another's classrooms and they share common expectations for student work, teachers have information to reflect on their own practice and benchmark it against their peers.

Learning communities: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.

and their potential for results increases.

In his recent book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink describes three motivators that move people to achieve — autonomy, mastery, and purpose. These three motivators are inherent in successful learning teams.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the freedom to be creative, innovative, and solve problems of practice. It generates

Determine how well your team motivates its members. See NSDC tool on p. 8.

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

motivation because those who are given autonomy feel trusted and valued. Autonomy increases sense of self worth and commitment to the work. Micromanagement or reducing the work to low-level cognitive tasks impedes motivation and results.

Working with autonomy does not mean working solo. When learning teams come together, they define their common areas of focus, the challenges they want to address, and data-driven needs that emerge for analysis of student data. They work collaboratively to identify what they want to learn in order to increase student performance. When they use professional judgment and link their focus area to the complex challenges they face in their daily work, team members heighten their autonomy. Team members operate within parameters that are often set by district and school goals and available resources. Yet, they are given the opportunity to exercise professionalism, make decisions related to their learning, reflect on and evaluate their practice, and hold one another accountable for success. For example, when faced with students who learn differently, a learning community experiences autonomy when its members define clear goals, read studies about what others have done to address situations like theirs, and invent their own approach to the challenge. Their autonomy cements their collective responsibility for student and team member success.

Mastery

Mastery, as Pink defines it, refers to a sense of confidence about one's ability to take action, the quality of one's preparation or readiness, and the certainty with which one acts. When people believe they know what to do and feel competent to do what is required, they are more motivated. In learning teams, members contribute to each other's mastery and have opportunities to refine their own mastery. Regular, clear, and specific feedback on one's practice, driven by evidence from student assessments or other forms of student work, increases awareness, an essential first step in improving practice. When doors are open so that teachers can visit one another's classrooms and they share common expectations for student work, teachers have information to reflect on their own

practice and benchmark it against their peers.

Working in isolation provides no referent for the quality of one's work. Without comparison to a standard or to others, it is difficult to conduct a genuine assessment of one's competence. Having opportunities to compare practices or the results of one's practice, as when learning community members examine student work, gives teachers a point of reference to assess their own work and to learn about their strengths and those of their colleagues.

Learning communities enhance mastery. Together teachers deepen their skillfulness and learn how to adapt to meet the needs of students with a wide range of learning needs. By sharing successes, creating strategies to address challenges, and reflecting on the effectiveness of their work, community members refine their own skillfulness and extend and expand their practices, thereby increasing their mastery.

Purpose

Purpose motivates people when they contribute to something larger than themselves, something that has meaning to them and others, and something that they value. People want to make a difference. They want to leave a mark.

Teachers have purpose. They want to make a difference in the lives of their students. Many view teaching as a vocation rather than a job. In learning communities, teachers have significant purpose as they strive to increase student achievement. Their work is focused on ensuring that all students succeed. When teachers expand the reach of their work beyond their own classrooms, their sense of purpose increases. The broader the reach, the stronger teachers' purpose is. Some teachers demonstrate their purpose drive by assuming additional responsibilities within their schools; tutoring students outside class who need extra help; contributing to their communities; serving on or leading committees and task forces within their schools or districts; or serving as mentors, coaches, or teacher leaders. As teachers' mastery grows, their sense of purpose increases.

When teachers share common goals and contribute to one another's learning and instructional mastery, they are driven by a strong sense of purpose to impact student learning within their teams

By sharing successes, creating strategies to address challenges, and reflecting on the effectiveness of their work, community members refine their own skillfulness and extend and expand their practices, thereby increasing their mastery.

and schoolwide. When teams are trusted to focus their attention on their students' most critical areas of need, their sense of autonomy increases. As learning community members share decisions related to instruction and examine evidence of the effect of their instruction on student learning, their mastery of instruction increases. Membership in learning

communities motivates members to share responsibility for increasing student learning and generates professional and personal satisfaction for their work.

Reference:

Pink, D.H. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us.* New York: Penguin. ◆

Teachers Teaching Teachers (T3)™ is published eight times a year by the National Staff Development Council
504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056

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MAIN BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
513-523-6029
800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
NSDCoffice@nsdc.org
www.nsdco.org

Editor: Tracy Crow
Designer: Kitty Black

NSDC STAFF

Executive director

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What drives our team?

DIRECTIONS

1. Read Joellen Killion's column on pp. 5-7 and consider the following aspects of what motivates educators.
2. Use the table below to consider how your learning team contributes to members' motivation and success.
3. Discuss the team's areas of strength and specific challenges.
4. Together, determine what steps you will take to improve.

AUTONOMY	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 agree	4 strongly agree
Our team has the freedom to be innovative in solving problems.				
Our team contributes to each team member's sense of professionalism.				
Our team identifies what we need to learn through shared data analysis and decision making.				
Our team encourages members to be accountable for the success of all students in the school.				
MASTERY	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 agree	4 strongly agree
Our team improves member practice through the use of specific and clear feedback to its members.				
Our team gives members standards or benchmarks to assist in assessing their competence.				
Our team shares strategies and practices that build members' skills and confidence.				
Our team has opportunities to reflect on what works and what needs to improve.				
PURPOSE	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 agree	4 strongly agree
Our team defines and shares common goals to strengthen our sense of purpose.				
Our team expands each member's sense of purpose beyond his or her own classroom.				
Our team contributes to each member's personal and professional satisfaction with work.				

NEXT STEPS

Identify three ideas to improve your learning team's contribution to team members' motivation to succeed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Source: This assessment is built around concepts outlined in Daniel Pink's *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* (Penguin Books, 2009).

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