



COACH'S NOTEBOOK

Kathy Perret

WHATEVER PATH YOU'RE ON, LEARNING IS VITAL

From local connections to global collaborations, the collective pursuit of knowledge propels us ahead.

Most professional paths, like personal ones, are winding. As educators, we go through unexpected moments — some good, some challenging — that shape who we are and how we work. Amid the ups and downs, the thing that keeps us moving ahead is learning. Learning helps us grow, keeps us on track or sets us on a new track, and helps us be our best for students.

As I reflect on my 40-plus years as an educator, three essential elements have significantly shaped my journey of continuous learning: working with a coach, expanding my perspective through multiple forms of professional learning, and embracing innovation.

FIND A COACH OF YOUR OWN

Finding a coach of my own was perhaps the most pivotal part of my learning journey and has continued

to play a key role in shaping my career. My coaches' and mentors' questions, advice, and wisdom continue to be a source of guidance and inspiration throughout all my roles and experiences. In *Compassionate Coaching: Helping Teachers Navigate Barriers to Professional Growth*, Kenny McKee and I wrote about a 2017 TED Talk in which surgeon Atul Gawande (2017) points out that all athletes, even the top players, work with a coach.

McKee and I explained that coaches benefit from coaching, too: "Learning the importance of helping others reflect and grow is one thing, but experiencing the benefits firsthand is quite another. You deserve a confidant who will reflect with you just as you do with teachers" (Perret & McKee, 2021). My coaches and mentors have helped me by modeling the art of guiding others, whether students or adults.

As you seek out coaches and mentors, remember to let your journey extend beyond the physical boundaries of your school or district. For example, you can connect with individuals offering distance or virtual coaching. The location of your coach is less important than finding someone you can trust, someone who can provide valuable insights and partner with you to unlock your potential.

EXPAND PERSPECTIVES

Actively seeking out diverse viewpoints through professional learning opportunities, collaborations, or global experiences has broadened my understanding of education and enriched my approach to teaching and coaching.

When I'm coaching or facilitating professional learning, I emphasize that "the answer is always in the room" because colleagues are the best sources of insight and expertise. But today, "room" is a metaphor because we're no longer limited by physical space. The digital landscape has transformed how we expand our rooms, allowing us to bridge geographical gaps and create a virtual space where diverse perspectives converge for the collective learning of the education community. The larger our room, the more diverse perspectives we can learn from.



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I learned about the power of expanding virtual networks when I received my first laptop in the late 1990s. I was charged with learning how to use it and teaching at least 10 others. My quest for learning led me to discover online education communities predating the social media platforms we are familiar with today. Fast-forward to today, and X, formerly known as Twitter, has become my go-to source for connections.

Regardless of the platforms you use or the “rooms” you enter, I encourage you to take advantage of the global network of educators, foster collaboration, and exchange insights about teaching practices.

EMBRACE INNOVATION

Embracing innovation has been a cornerstone of my continuous learning. Staying open to new technologies, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches has allowed me to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape of education, ensuring that I remain relevant and effective in guiding

teachers, coaches, and school leaders to prepare students for their futures.

Consider how the changes in education over the past five years have been marked by unforeseen innovations. For instance, in January 2020, educators couldn't have anticipated the swift transition to fully online teaching just two months later. Embracing the new landscape while building on existing technology integration was essential.

We now find ourselves in the artificial intelligence (AI) era. We have a choice: Ignore its growing presence or explore how it can enhance our personal and professional lives. I choose the latter. In my coaching sessions, we delve into AI from each educator's unique perspective and raise awareness of the possibilities because major challenges may arise if educators lack a solid understanding of these technologies when students regularly use them.

It is impossible to know what innovations will shape our schools and students in the coming years. That's why we need to commit to being aware,

staying open, and continuing to learn.

LEARNING TOWARD THE FUTURE

My professional journey shows the importance of prioritizing continuous learning — and so does yours. Whatever path you are on, learning is a vital part of it, not just for you, but for students. The progress of education relies on our dedication to adaptability and openness to new possibilities. From local connections to global collaborations, the collective pursuit of knowledge propels us ahead, crafting a future where learning is an intrinsic aspect of our lives, consistently enhancing our educational and human experiences.

REFERENCES

- Gawande, A. (2017, April). *Want to get good at something? Get a coach* [video]. www.ted.com/talks/atul_gawande_want_to_get_great_at_something_get_a_coach
- Perret, K. & McKee, K. (2021). *Compassionate coaching: How to help educators navigate barriers to professional growth*. ASCD. ■

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

Announcing Changemakers

A new 2024 column in *The Learning Professional*

Changemakers is a new feature designed to showcase success stories about people making positive impacts through professional learning. Debuting in February 2024, this column will shine a light on the people behind the inspiring work of improving student outcomes, fostering collaborative cultures of improvement, and showcasing professional learning that supports success for all.



Nominate a changemaker today:

