

# Foreword

The ongoing emphasis on improving literacy achievement in American schools and the recognition that high-quality teaching is an essential ingredient in generating improvement has led to literacy coaching as an approach for changing teacher practices and increasing student achievement. In *A Guide to Literacy Coaching*, Jay and Strong build on the present knowledge base about coaching to write a book that is thoughtful, practical, and comprehensive; it identifies specific ideas for coaches, who often struggle with questions such as “How do I begin?” “How do I handle conflict?” and “What are my tasks in terms of working with other support personnel in the school?”

In Chapter 1, Jay and Strong provide an overview of coaching, drawing on the various documents of professional organizations that address qualifications and activities of coaches. They also discuss differences between the positions of literacy coach and reading specialist, emphasizing the fact that although both positions require leadership skills in the schools, the literacy coach’s primary responsibility is that of working with teachers, whereas most specialists focus on working with students. In Chapter 2, Jay and Strong identify and discuss four major roles of the literacy coach: facilitator, observer, colleague, and learner. They provide specific examples of how coaches fulfill these roles.

Chapter 3 is an essential chapter for all coaches but especially those who are new to the position. Jay and Strong provide specific examples of how the new coach can develop solid relationships with teachers. They take the readers through the first year of the coach, discussing how the coach can continue to build relationships and increase responsibilities. In Chapter 4, Jay and Strong provide an excellent overview of schools at the primary, elementary, middle, and high school levels; they describe the structure of these schools and identify curricular trends and issues. There is also a section on the special education classroom setting, and coaches are provided with ideas about how to work with special educators.

Chapter 5 provides information about how coaches can work with parents and various institutions, including universities. Jay and Strong

highlight the importance of understanding governmental policies and dictates. In Chapter 6, Jay and Strong emphasize the importance of coaches working with leadership in the school. What is impressive is that they describe not only ways that the literacy coach can work with the principal but also the importance of working with central office administrators.

In Chapter 7, there is a discussion about working with teachers, especially those who might be experiencing some difficulties in teaching or managing the classroom. This chapter also provides specific information about how to deal with the teacher resistant to coaching. Chapter 8 provides an excellent description of how coaches can work with other professionals in the school, including the librarian and the reading specialist. Information about how literacy coaches can support paraprofessionals is also a key part of this chapter.

Chapter 9 focuses on assessment, and literacy coaches are provided with specific information about how to collect, analyze, and use various forms of data. Finally in Chapter 10, Jay and Strong provide a review of national documents and research reports with which literacy coaches should be familiar.

Several dimensions of this text on literacy coaching are especially impressive—aspects that will be helpful to all literacy coaches, both novices and those with experience. First, Jay and Strong include summaries of interviews that they held with various reading experts. Readers get an opportunity to read the reflections of experts such as Richard Allington, Cathy Roller, Rich and Joanne Vacca, Roger Farr, and others. These experts include researchers and those who are experiencing the job every day—literacy coaches themselves!

Second, in addition to the practical suggestions throughout the text, readers will find many checklists that can be used by coaches—forms for observation and demonstration lessons and questionnaires that can be given to teachers to solicit input about coaching, among others.

Third, at the conclusion of each chapter are topic extensions that provide ideas for follow-up work and activities. These ideas would be especially helpful when the text is being used in the university or college classroom. Finally, there are many resources and Web sites that will be useful to practicing literacy coaches who want to be able to continue their learning while on the job.

This is a book for many audiences: university faculty who want a text for students in their coaching classrooms, novice literacy coaches who need a daily guide, and experienced literacy coaches who want a resource that they can consult when they have questions or concerns. These authors used their knowledge of the research and literature along with their understanding of the field to write a book that is current, insightful, and practical.

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