

Foreword

Improving teaching and student learning requires intensive focus on refining the interaction between teachers and students in classrooms. Professional development holds the potential for dramatically improving teaching and student learning. Yet not all professional development produces such lofty results. For some teachers, professional development is more torture than treasure.

Menu-driven professional development models, while offering multiple opportunities for teacher learning, fail to create a laserlike focus on what happens each day in classrooms. This kind of focus results from professional development that occurs daily as a regular part of teachers' workday, focuses on the content they teach and their school's goals for improvement, expands their pedagogy, deepens their content knowledge, and engages them in professional collaboration with their colleagues. This kind of professional development builds collective responsibility among a school staff for student success and shifts the culture within the school so that everyone learns every day. This type of professional learning requires developing the capacity of professional development leaders in each school who serve as learning facilitators.

A learning facilitator orchestrates, supports, organizes, leads, or guides the learning among educators. As one of the ten roles of coaches (Killion & Harrison, 2006), a learning facilitator understands how to structure learning experiences that allow teachers to learn with and from each other in productive and efficient ways. In many schools, learning facilitators are coaches who work to enhance teaching.

Coaches are frequently master teachers who work in a single or multiple schools. They may also be district-based staff, school- or district-based administrators, or external assistance providers who provide classroom- and school-based support to improve instruction, content knowledge, leadership, and student learning.

The Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development: Coaching Inquiry-Oriented Learning Communities offers support for learning facilitators as they engage teachers in collaborative action research. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey drill deeply into the action research process to offer coaching strategies that amplify teachers' learning at each stage of the process and build a community of professionals.

x ● The Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development

The authors draw on their extensive experience with action research, professional learning communities, and coaching to provide guidance on shaping a culture of inquiry, building trust and safe places for risk taking, reflection, and revision. They offer new insights on action research and demonstrate how coaching promotes learning at each step of the process. They share examples of interactions between coaches and teachers to model skillful questioning, laserlike focus, and authentic inquiry. Each chapter is filled with useful and easy-to-access tools that coaches can use in their work.

The authors' most valuable contribution may be their insight on how to generate opportunities for productive collaboration in learning communities focused on deep reflection and inquiry on practice and learning. Within these collaborative interactions, teacher expertise emerges and contributes to student learning. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey are clear that when teachers collaborate about their practice and engage in inquiry using action research, there are two beneficiaries—teachers' professionalism and students' academic success.

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