Personal, Professional Coaching: Transforming Professional Development for Teacher and Administrative Leaders

Janet Patti, Ed.D.
Professor of Administration and Supervision
Department of Curriculum and Teaching
Hunter College
New York, NY
jpatti@hunter.cuny.edu

Allison A. Holzer, M.A.T.
Senior Consultant, Training and Coaching
Ruler Group
New Haven, CT
allisonaboud@gmail.com

Robin Stern, Ph.D.
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Education
Teacher's College
New York, NY
rs601@columbia.edu

Marc A. Brackett, Ph.D.
Director, Health, Emotion, and Behavior Laboratory
Yale University
New Haven, CT
marc.brackett@yale.edu

Abstract

This article makes the case for a different approach to the professional development of teachers and school leaders called personal, professional coaching (PPC). Personal, professional coaching is grounded in reflective practices that cultivate self-awareness, emotion management, social awareness, and relationship management. Findings from two case studies support the benefits perceived by teachers and administrative leaders who participated in coaching to enhance their leadership potential and performance. A description of the content and process of coaching is provided.

Introduction

Amidst many reform strategies in education, few would argue that a key ingredient for improving student achievement is high quality leadership. While leadership skills may come naturally to some, most educators need some form of practice, coaching, or mentoring to become high quality leaders. Yet, professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators who function in a leadership capacity are often too scarce or narrow in focus to cultivate lasting and effective improvement (NSDC 2001). Most school systems regularly provide teacher educators with just two or three days per year of professional development, typically aimed at improving literacy and mathematics scores. For principals mentoring support is often provided during the first year of employment, but most learn their skills through trial and error. Education, the most humanitarian of all professions, falls short in developing its own human capital – its most valuable asset in addressing student achievement (Rotherham, 2008).

This article makes the case that effective professional development happens when the adult learner connects personally to the new learning. When educators participate in reflective practices that cultivate self-awareness, emotion management, social awareness, and relationship management, they are in a better position to deliver high quality instruction and leadership. This article addresses findings from teacher and administrative leaders who have participated in coaching to enhance leadership potential and performance.

Coaching in Education and Business

> *"We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves."* Galileo

In a coaching relationship, individuals reflect on their own strengths, challenges, and experiences to develop insights and to experiment with new ideas and behaviors. For decades, coaching has been used in the public and private sectors to develop employees' skills and performance and to meet organizational goals. In education, coaching has traditionally supported teachers in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities that target student achievement. Many are familiar with one of the earliest, formal uses of coaching that began in the 1980s through the work of Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers. In their peer-coaching model, teachers observe one another, provide feedback, and engage in collaborative planning for upcoming lessons. This process promotes collaboration and communication among teachers, increasing the likelihood that they will use new instructional practices and curricula (Showers, 1982). Literacy or Mathematics

Coaching, widely utilized today, focuses on instructional practices of literacy and math (Toll, 2005). This Instructional Coaching targets the craft of teaching by focusing on knowledge transfer, modeling, skill practice, and feedback (Knight, 2007). Finally, Cognitive Coaching asserts that instructional behavior is a reflection of beliefs; teachers must analyze and change their beliefs in order to change their behaviors. Coaches ask teachers to reflect on their beliefs about the classroom to facilitate making changes or improvements (Costa & Garmaston, 2002).

Unlike education coaching, the focus of business and life coaching tends to be on personal growth and performance enhancement through self-awareness, goal setting, and leveraging of strengths. Different styles of business and life coaching, such as Goal-Focused/Solution-Focused, Co-Active and Positive Psychology, emphasize behavioral change that results from personal growth (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Stober & Grant, 2006; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Kimsey-House, 2007). Corporations, non-profits, universities, and individuals enlist coaching to promote professional and personal growth in tandem, in order to yield desired performance results. A handful of empirical studies have begun to show the impact coaching has at the business and personal level, including increases in hope, well-being, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and improved interpersonal relationships (Grant, 2003; Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006; Kohler, McCullough-Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Ross, 1992; Spence & Grant, 2007). Furthermore, coaching anchored in compassion versus compliance has a greater probability of promoting desired, sustainable change in attitudes and behaviors (Smith, Van Osten, & Boyatzis, 2008).

As these examples illuminate, coaching is used in different ways within education, business, and personal growth industries. The coaching approach we have been employing in pre-service and in-service of teacher and administrative leaders draws from the best practices across these myriad industries. We refer to this type of coaching as personal, professional coaching (PPC).

Personal, Professional Coaching

PPC is grounded in theories of adult learning, motivation, intentional change, emotional intelligence and self-psychology (Patti, Stern, Martin, & Brackett, 2005). This type of coaching creates a safe place for teacher and administrative leaders to strengthen their leadership skills through self-reflection, collaboration, feedback, and enhanced emotional awareness (Carver & Scheier,1998, Cherniss & Goleman, 1998; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Grant, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Spence & Grant, 2007; Slater & Simmons, 2001).

The leadership skills that PPC develops, like emotional self-awareness, are holistic and transferrable across various personal and professional domains. It is common knowledge among educators, business leaders, and mental health professionals that the boundary between personal lives and professional roles is permeable. We come to work after leaving the pleasant or the unpleasant morning at home. By the same token, we go home every day filled with a variety of different emotions after a day at school or the office. The development of key skills that permeate personal and professional landscapes leads to lasting changes that promote quality teaching and leadership.

PPC has been influenced by recent developments in the fields of social and emotional learning (http://casel.org/) and emotional intelligence (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). In schools dedicated to the teaching of academic, social and emotional skills, it is ever more critical that the modeling of adults mirrors the teaching that children receive. PPC helps educators to work with their own emotions to acquire new skills, receive feedback about their practice, and apply the new learning to their classroom or school. By developing emotion skills, teachers and administrative leaders become more self-aware, self-regulated and socially aware-resulting in a more positive, student-centered learning environment.

Description of the Practice

Implementing PPC requires a forward thinking leader with a vision that encourages adults and children to take responsibility for their affective development as well as their cognitive learning. Teacher and administrative leaders participate in at least six one-on-one coaching sessions, one session every two weeks, over a six-month period of time. Coaching sessions are guided by a variety of assessment results, such as the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) that measures emotional abilities and the Emotional Competency Inventory, 2.0 (ECI) that measures social and emotional competencies. Each coaching session begins with a reflection to bridge the learning that has occurred since the lesson prior. Each session ends with a reflection and a journaling assignment for homework. A detailed description of the process for the first six coaching sessions is provided in Table 1.

Establishing trust is the first step in the coaching process. Once trust is established, the coach helps the leader explore and expand a personal vision as well as a vision for the school or classroom. This visioning work serves as the heart and mind of the motivational process. It provides ownership, directionality and commitment to achieve desired change.

Armed with a vision, the leader explores the gaps between behaviors that actually exist and ideal behaviors. The leader then experiments with this new awareness to leverage current skills and reach desired results during daily routines. Where emotional shortcomings present themselves or where recognition of skill deficits exist, coach and leader strategize ways to improve. They begin by taking small steps to meet short-term goals rather than lofty, long-term goals that seem unreachable. The leader brings any obstacles into the coaching sessions where the event or emotional struggle is deconstructed and new goals are established. One six-month series of coaching does not make a seasoned, socially and emotionally intelligent leader. However, the awareness gained from the process becomes part of the leader's daily tools that can be used to deconstruct similar situations. The emotionally and socially aware leader now becomes more mindful of his behaviors. He continually revisits the vision and fine tunes his skill sets. He accomplishes this by reconvening with his coach or by establishing a reflective process with trusted colleagues. This commitment holds the leader to the integrity of this personal, professional internal work.

Table 1
Description of Personal, Professional Coaching Sessions

1	Establish Trust & Encourage Vision	After introductions, a conversation takes place about trust. The client talks about what trusting relationships look like and the coach practices active listening and asks open-ended questions. The coach introduces the concept of Emotional Intelligence. The coach and client work together to create a personal vision about where the client sees him or herself in two to three years; the client continues this activity for homework.
2	Expand Vision & Explore Actual and Ideal Self	The coach begins by bridging the learning from the previous session. Coach and client review, discuss, and expand the client's vision. Client writes down characteristics of his/her "actual" versus "ideal" self as a leader. Coach and client discuss gaps between the two. Coach and client have a conversation about personal values and how they are expressed (or not) in current leadership style and professional life. For homework, client journals about the gap between "actual" and "ideal" self and how this interacts with his/her vision.
3	Interpret Assessments	The coach begins by bridging the learning from the previous session. Coach interprets MSCEIT and ECI results for the client. For homework, client reflects on the assessment results and how to manage self-talk in challenged areas.
4	Explore Strengths and Challenges	The coach begins by bridging the learning from the previous session. Coach and client discuss EI and leadership strengths that can be utilized as tools for development; they also identify and embrace challenges that might present obstacles to achieving the vision.
5	Develop a Short-Term Plan	The coach begins by bridging the learning from the previous session. Coach and client discuss and create a short-term plan for the client to develop one EI related skill or competency. For homework, the client answers a series of reflection questions about strengths, challenges, and values that may impact their success.
6	Develop a Long-Term Sustainable Plan	The coach begins by bridging the learning from the previous session. The client writes a New Story about him/herself that incorporates the values, vision, and "ideal self" discussed throughout the coaching process. Coach and client discuss and create a long-term plan for the client to achieve his or her vision. Coach and client take a moment to acknowledge their work together and bring closure to the coaching relationship.

Research Findings

We have gathered data on the effects of PPC on teacher leaders, assistant principals, and principals in school. What follows is a summary of our findings

from two cases – a large school district in New York City in the United States and a small federation in northern England.

Two Case Studies

Our findings come from two similar yet distinct school systems and samples. In England, at the request of the Chief Executive, we trained 12 internal coaches, teachers and administrators to provide coaching to newly hired teachers in two secondary schools. We studied the impact of this year long development process on the educators as they became coaches and on the educators whom they coached (Patti, J., Stern, R., Brackett, M., Rivers, S., & Holzer, A., 2011). Coaches in training participated in an intensive process in which they received six coaching sessions, attended two week-long trainings, coached two other educators for five sessions and received supervision from a head coach psychoanalyst. We provided coaching to school administrators, school principals and assistant principals in 25 New York City public schools, over four years. The superintendent was committed to developing the emotional literacy skills of her special education students and believed that all adults had to develop and model the same. Each school administrator met individually with a coach over a four to five-month time period. Most of the school leaders also participated in a team coaching process to strengthen their collaboration and communication skills. Together, they created common goals to improve the schools' climate and students' academic, social and emotional success. Through facilitated dialogue led by the coach these school leaders talked about behaviors that were inhibiting and enhancing their common vision.

Using a series of interviews, we asked participants to reflect on the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of their leadership; they shared their goals and process for changing the undesirable behaviors that impeded school progress.

Key Insights

Our findings provide evidence that PPC supports the development of and refocusing on several important teacher and administrative leadership behaviors. Attention to enhancing these skills changes desired behaviors and improves performance. Coaching engages all leaders in a process of self-reflection about their professional roles and practices, leadership strengths and challenges, and emotional and social skill development. With greater self and social awareness they manage conflict better and factor others' perspectives into their decision-making processes. Self-aware and empathic administrative leaders tend to have better relationships with colleagues. They use more collaborative leadership strategies. As the coaching process develops, the changes demonstrate a shift

from the individual leader to the whole organization. Furthermore, their vision for the organization is anchored in a positive school climate and culture.

Teacher leaders, who engage in a coaching process, more willingly explore self-behaviors that may challenge the teaching and learning process. They learn about the important role emotions play in the classroom and in the quality of their instruction. Teachers' relationships with students become more transparent as their newly founded self-awareness increases their empathy and self-management.

Conclusion

In this article we posited that personal and professional development must take place in tandem. As the individual learns and experiments with new emotional and social skills, the student demonstrates new behaviors inside and outside the school walls. We discussed how reflecting on one's purpose and professional vision lays the foundation for the transformational process. We noted that the coaching relationship provides a safe haven for mindful attention to self-change in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. It is through this individual process that the teacher and administrative leader positively impact the culture and climate of the classroom and school. When schools commit to developing the social and emotional skills of adults and children we see many positive improvements such as increased attendance, decreases in suspensions, better student engagement and increased academic achievement (Weissberg & Durlak, 2005).

As one leader participating in PPC said: "As adults and educational leaders, we realize that no person working with children could effect change without a self-realization of who they are. The work we have done this year, especially the team building, helped me to work with staff, whom I thought didn't have the capacity or ability to rise to the occasion. It goes to show that everyone has the ability and capacity to grow." Perhaps we should have more faith in the ability of the dedicated professional to willingly become part of the solution of education reform. Such an investment would far outweigh any possible benefits reaped by current top-down and often fear-based models of individual and organizational change.

References

Biswas-Diener, R., & Dean, B. (2007). *Positive psychology coaching: Putting the science of happiness to work for your clients*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., & Salovey, P. (2011). Emotional intelligence: Personal, social, educational, and workplace implications. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5*, 88-103.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1998). *On the self-regulation of behavior*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press

Collaborative for academic, social and emotional learning (2011). Retrieved from http://www.casel.org.

Cherniss, C., & Goleman, D. (1998). *Guidelines for best practice. Consortium for research on emotional intelligence* (www.eiconsortium.org).

Mayer, J, Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. (2002). *The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)*.

Costa, A., & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Datnow, A., & Castellano, M. E. (2001). Managing and guiding school reform: Leadership in success for all schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 37*(2), 219-249.

Durkak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2005). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 39*(3-4), 269-286.

Goleman, D., & Boyatzsis, R. (2005). *The Emotional Competency Inventory, 2.0. Ma*. Hay Group. The McClelland Center for Research and Innovation.

Grant, A. (2003). Towards a psychology of coaching: The impact of coaching on metacognition, mental health, and goal attainment. *Social Behavior and Personality, 31*(3), 253-264.

Green, L. S., Oades, L. G., & Grant, A. M. (2006). Cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused life coaching: Enhancing goal striving, well-being, and hope. J*ournal of Positive Psychology, 1*(3), 142-149.

Joyce B., & Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teaching. *Educational Leadership, 40*, 4-10.

Kohler, F., McCullough-Crilley, K., Shearer, D. D., & Good, G. (1997). Effects of peer coaching on teacher and student outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(4), 240-250.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

NSDC (2001). *Standards for staff development revised*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Patti, J., Stern, R., Martin, C., & Brackett, M. A. (2005). *The STAR factor emotional literacy coaching manual*. New York. Star Factor, LLC.

Patti, J., Stern, R., Brackett, M., Rivers, S., & Holzer, A. (2011). *Developing and implementing a coaching program for teachers and school leaders in one English federation: findings and recommendations*. (Unpublished manuscript)

Ross, J. A. (1992). Teacher efficacy and the effects of coaching on student achievement. *Canadian Journal of Education, 17*(1), 51 – 65.

Rotherham, A. (2008). *Achieving teacher and principal excellence: A guidebook for donors*. Philanthropy Roundtable.

Showers, B. (1982). *Transfer of training: The contribution of coaching*. Eugene, OR: Centre for Educational Policy and Management.

Slater, C. L., & Simmons, D. L. (2001). The design and implementation of a peer coaching program. *American Secondary Education, 29*(3), 67-76.

Smith, M. L., Van Osten, E. B., & Boyatzis, R. E. (2008). Coaching for sustained desired change. *Research in Organization Development and Change*, *17*, 145-174.

Spence, G. B. & Grant, A. M. (2007). Professional and peer life coaching and the enhancement of goal striving and well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 2*(3), 185-194.

Stober, D. R., & Grant, A. M. (2006). *Evidence based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Toll, C. A. (2005). *The literacy coach's survival guide: Essential questions and practical answers*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Whitworth, L., Kimsey-House, K., Kimsey-House, H., & Sandahl, P. (2007). *Co-Active coaching: New skills for coaching people toward success in work and life*. (2nd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Author Biographies

Janet Patti is Professor of Administration and Supervision, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Hunter College, CUNY. In 2004 she co-created and published The Star Factor Coaching Model for leadership development of educators. The model, derived from the work of Dan Goleman and Richard Boyatzis (2001) encourages intentional change and self-directed learning. She is the co-author of *Smart School Leaders: Leading with Emotional Intelligence and Waging Peace in Our Schools*. Currently, she is co-authoring a book for Teachers College Press titled, *Leadership for Tomorrow's Children*.

As an educator, coach, and educational consultant, Allison provides trainers, administrators, and teachers professional development support on emotional literacy skills, self-awareness, instructional skills, and leadership development. In her current role as Director of Coaching at RULER Group, she manages a team of trainers and coaches that work with over 60 schools that use a Social and Emotional Learning program called The RULER Approach. Her consulting work includes the development of an online learning platform and a variety of implementation support materials for trainers, administrators, and school-based implementation teams. She is currently co-authoring a book called, *Leadership for Tomorrow's Children* with Janet Patti and Robin Stern.

Robin Stern is a licensed psychoanalyst, educator, and author, with over 25 years of experience treating individuals, couples, and groups. She has developed and implemented training programs focusing on personal and professional growth, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, emotional competencies, and ethical leadership. She is on the faculty of Summer Principals Academy at Teachers College, Columbia University, the Training Institute for Mental Health in New York City, and is a senior consultant and lead trainer for the K-12 program *The Ruler Approach* developed by Yale University researchers.

Marc Brackett is a Research Scientist in the Department of Psychology at Yale University; Deputy Director of Yale's Health, Emotion, and Behavior Laboratory; and Head of the Emotional Intelligence Unit in the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy. Dr. Brackett is the Founder of Ruler Group, where he works with school systems in the areas of assessment, training, and leadership development. He is the lead developer of The RULER Approach to Social and Emotional Learning, which posits that teaching children and adults the skills associated with Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions is the foundation to personal, social, and academic success. Over the last decade Dr. Brackett has delivered keynote addresses to dozens of school districts and organizations, and has trained over 50,000 educators in the United States and abroad on The RULER Approach.