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Coaching Conversations: Enacting Instructional Scaffolding

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Abstract

This study analyzed coaching conversations and interviews of four coach/teacher partnerships for specific ways in which kindergarten and first-grade teachers, and coaches, conceptualized instructional scaffolding for guided reading. Interview transcripts were coded for coaches' and teachers' specific hypotheses/ideas regarding instructional scaffolding. Coaching session transcripts were analyzed for coaches' and teachers' actual use, or enactment, of instructional scaffolding. Significant tensions were evident between hypotheses describing the need for high levels of instructional support versus opportunities for students to read independently. Teachers' expertise for effective instructional scaffolding appeared to be assisted by coaching conversations that enacted instructional scaffolding, demonstrating an analytic, evidence-based approach to instructional problem solving.

Receiving instruction from knowledgeable, skilled classroom teachers is one of the most powerful interventions available to young or naive readers (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Teaching reading well is a complex set of tasks requiring commitment and self-reflection grounded within a problem-solving stance (Frager, 1994; Gibson, 2010), in-depth knowledge of specific instructional strategies and underlying theories of development, and the ability to interact effectively with students' literate thinking during instruction (Ross & Gibson, 2010). In recognition of these challenges, reform efforts rely on the promise of coaching, calling for a critical mass of highly accomplished teachers in leadership roles (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2002).

Research documenting the ability of coaching to effect positive change in teachers' instructional practices, however, is mixed (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Roseblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003). Technical "level 3" coaching (e.g., lesson observation and feedback; Bean, 2004) is one of the most challenging roles faced by coaches (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Roseblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003). Limited information is available on the specific ways in which effective versus ineffective coaches interact with teachers following lesson observation. The Self Assessment for Literacy Coaches (Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, 2009), for example, addresses crucial issues related to coaches' knowledge and leadership abilities, but it does not describe coaching conversations beyond planning, pre-meeting, observation protocols, and reflective dialogues.

Research regarding the conversational interaction between coaches and teachers following lesson observation has not yet clearly delineated the specific expertise needed by effective coaches. Strong and Baron (2004) found that veteran mentor teachers rarely provided direct advice to novice teachers during coaching conversations. The researchers speculated that this approach placed a heavy demand on novice teachers' ability to construct instructional behaviors and activities independently. Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) found that literacy coaches were able to utilize data documenting student responses during instruc-

tion to engage teachers in self-reflection. The researchers, however, did not discuss coaches' differential success with this process. Gibson (2006) documented a literacy coach's maintenance of an expert stance for coaching conversations implemented within a collaborative framework. This single case study did not contrast the specific ways in which coaching conversations varied for more or less effective coaches.

The ability to engage teachers in conversations that are focused on analysis of students' immediate responses to instruction is central to the work of coaches (Bean, 2004; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). Teacher educators and coaches need information on the characteristics and outcomes of such conversations. The study described here meets this critical need by investigating one important aspect of the interaction of reading coaches with teachers following lesson observation, and it presents a rubric for coaches' self-evaluation and professional development. This study investigated the ways in which coaches and teachers both conceptualized and enacted instructional scaffolding during coaching conversations within the context of teachers' guided reading lessons.

Instructional Scaffolding

Instructional scaffolding consists of assistance provided by a more expert person for the performance of a particular task, resulting in the learner's internalization of ways of conceptualizing and acting (Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Instruction is most efficacious when more help is provided as soon as a student is struggling, and the teacher then either withdraws support or raises the level of challenge contingent on student success (Wood, 1998). Instructional scaffolding constitutes a fundamental shift in teachers' interaction with students; what the teacher does is dependent on what students do on a moment-by-moment basis (Rodgers, 2004). Scaffolding is also a dialogic, socially based joint venture (Meyer & Turner, 2002; Palincsar, 1986). Teachers support students in aspects of tasks that they cannot yet complete on their own, while students become more adept at judging the results of their performance and arranging for assistance (Wood, 2003).

Learning how to provide effective instructional scaffolding to students requires more than simply knowing what scaffolding is. Many, Dewberry, Taylor and Cody (2009) found, for example, that preservice teachers' implementation of reflective instructional scaffolding was dependent on their level of understanding of language and literacy development and ability to make complex instructional decisions using multiple knowledge sources.

Guided reading lessons. Instructional scaffolding is an important requirement for effective guided reading instruction. Guided reading is a small group context that supports students' development of strategies for successful processing of increasingly difficult texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). This instruction is effective in developing children's ability to use graphophonetic information, produce semantically and syntactically acceptable miscues, and retell texts cohesively and accurately (Altwerger, et al., 2004). Teacher decision-making (both preplanned and "in-the-moment") is crucial. Teachers select a "just right" text for each lesson and provide a book orientation and prompting during students' independent reading, directly targeted to students' immediate needs. Within each guided reading lesson, the teacher's decisions moderate the level of difficulty. Teachers consider students' emerging expertise, utilizing modeling, questioning and explanation in order to teach appropriate strategic behavior. Virtually all decisions made for guided reading instruction, then, concern the type and/or amounts of scaffolding provided to students. Although they may do so with more or less effectiveness (and with or without explicit intent), it seems clear that reading coaches will address aspects of teachers' use of instructional scaffolding as they engage in coaching conversations.

Coaching conversations. One of the primary ways in which coaches may provide assistance to a teacher is through supportive conversations following the coach's observation of a lesson. These conversations are typically conducted between the coach and teacher shortly after lesson observation and include discussion of what actually occurred within the lesson and how instruction might be refined to meet the needs of students.

Instructional scaffolding is an important aspect of both the instruction provided to students during guided reading lessons and the discussion between a coach and teacher during a subsequent coaching session. Influential literacy teachers are able to monitor their students' literate thinking during instruction and use this information to adjust instruction and scaffold students' new learning (Ross & Gibson, 2010; Ruddell, 2004). Coaches also provide scaffolding for tasks for which *teachers* are not yet expert, implementing modeling and assistance to teachers on a contingent basis. For guided reading, teachers' analysis of students' immediate responses to instruction and their ability to connect this information directly to needed changes in instruction is key to their instructional effectiveness. Similarly, where a coach is enacting instructional scaffolding during coaching conversations, analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses directly

connected to proposals for improving instruction would be evident in the talk of the coach and/or teacher.

This study describes the ways in which four coach/teacher partnerships conceptualized and enacted instructional scaffolding, following the coach's observation of guided reading lessons. Data sources included three cycles of individual interviews and observation of coaching sessions. Transcripts were qualitatively coded, and coding was examined to ascertain coaches' and teachers' viewpoints on instructional scaffolding over time. Data collection and analysis were based on the following research questions:

1. What hypotheses and/or ideas about instructional scaffolding do coaches and teachers articulate during coaching conversations and individual interviews?
2. In what ways did coaches' and teachers' enactment of scaffolding within coaching conversations support teachers' ability to reflect on students' need for instructional scaffolding during guided reading lessons?

Method

Participants

A small urban public school district that had recently implemented a district-wide, long-term professional development program for K-2 literacy instruction was the site of this study. This school district was chosen as a purposeful, critical case based on the district's implementation of significant training and on-going support for a literacy coach at each elementary school in the district. A classroom teacher at each of seven elementary schools in the district had transitioned to a full time literacy coach position, charged with implementation of a K-2 instructional framework (i.e., interactive read aloud, shared and interactive writing, word study, content area connections, guided reading, independent language and literacy work, and writing workshop). Each of these coaches had received university-based training and support for this role, which included (a) teaching a 40-hour, on-site class on literacy instruction for K-2 teachers at their own school site, (b) providing in-class coaching to all K-2 teachers, and (c) continuing to teach children for at least 90 minutes per day. The coaches' expertise was supported indirectly through professional development sessions that included feedback following viewing of videotapes of their own instruction, as well as directly through presentation of a coaching framework (e.g., pre-conference, note taking, feedback and coaching, and written plan of action for next lessons). All seven reading coaches in this district were experienced classroom teachers who had completed seven weeks of university training over a one-year period, as well as a subsequent field year in their literacy coaching positions. A convenience sample was utilized for this study, consisting of the four coaches who agreed to participate. All seven coaches had participated together in the same university training experiences, and they were equally experienced in the coaching role.

Each of the four coaches recruited a kindergarten or first-grade teacher for whom he/she was providing individual coaching sessions following observation of guided reading lessons. The choice of a kindergarten or first-grade teacher was made by each coach, based on her perception of the ability of a teacher to participate in the study without undue stress. The two kindergarten teachers who participated in the study had 3 and 25 years of experience and were teaching full day kindergarten (see Table 1). Neither teacher had taught guided reading groups prior to the year of this study. The two first-grade teachers who participated in the study were both in their second year of teaching. These two teachers had limited experience teaching guided reading lessons prior to the start of the study.

Data Collection

Three cycles of observation and interviews were conducted between November and April with each coach/teacher partnership. Each data collection cycle consisted of (a) video recording of a classroom guided reading lesson, (b) observation and audio recording of a coaching session, (c) video recording of a second guided reading lesson, and (d) separate, audio taped interviews with the classroom teacher and coach. Each of the four coaches and four teachers was individually interviewed within each of the three cycles of data collection. These 24 individual interviews were structured both as stimulated recall (Keith, 1988) and in a standardized open-ended interview format. As a stimulated recall interview, a short segment of the videotape of the guided reading lesson or audiotape of the coaching session was played for the teacher or coach, who was asked to comment on his/her decision-making. The standardized open-ended format used with stimulated recall for each interview consisted of a predetermined sequence of standard questions asked of each coach or teacher (Patton, 1990). The following are examples of the stimulated recall and standardized questions asked of each teacher during the second cycle of data collection:

1. What I would like to do now is to learn more about your current thinking processes related both to your teaching of guided reading lessons and of coaching. I'm going to show you a short video clip from your lesson. As you watch it, I want you to reflect on how your teaching for guided reading has been going over the last month or

so. Then I'd like you to tell me about your thinking and the decisions you made today as you taught this lesson.

2. What do you do well/not well in your teaching of guided reading lessons?
3. You and [the coach] have been talking about and reflecting on _____ during your coaching sessions. What is your current thinking on that now and how are you doing with that in your teaching?

The following are examples of the stimulated recall and standardized questions asked of each coach during the second cycle of data collection:

1. What I would like to do now is to learn more about your current thinking processes for your work as a coach. First, I'd like you to listen to a portion of your coaching session from yesterday. As you listen, I want you to reflect on and talk about your thinking and the decisions you made as you interacted with [the teacher] about guided reading lessons.
2. In the past, you and [teacher] have talked about _____. How is that going for him/her?
3. What would you like him/her to come to understand now about guided reading instruction, and how do you feel that you can be of best help to [the teacher]?

Data Analysis

All coaching session and interview transcripts were analyzed to determine the ways in which instructional scaffolding was discussed and enacted by both coaches and teachers. Each of the following data analysis steps used in the study is defined and illustrated in further detail in the sections below:

1. First, all segments within coaching session and interview transcripts that addressed instructional scaffolding were identified.
2. Each of these segments that had been identified as scaffolding-related was then coded for general topic and specific hypothesizes/ideas.
3. A chart was created for each coach/teacher partnership summarizing a timeline of ideas and hypotheses over time.
4. All conversational turns within each of the coaching session transcripts were coded for the type of interaction

Table 1
Participants

Grade Level	Coach	Teacher	Teaching Experience	Grades Taught
First Grade	Kate	Sherrie	19 years 2 years	First, third, fifth, sixth First
First Grade	Rose	Charles	31 years 2 years	Kindergarten, first, second First
Kindergarten	Kristi	Melinda	12 years 3 years	Kindergarten, first, second Kindergarten
Kindergarten	Carol	Daniel	17 years 25 years	First, second, third Kindergarten, fourth

that occurred, defined by coaches' and teachers' enactment of instructional scaffolding.

5. Each coded coaching session transcript was then evaluated for coaches' and teachers' overall enactment of instructional scaffolding.

Grounded theory and open coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were used for data coding. The intent of grounded theory is to insure that all theories or findings emerge from the researcher's systematic coding/categorization of data. Open coding breaks data down into discrete segments, which are then carefully examined and compared for similarities and differences. Grounded theory was an appropriate choice for data analysis for this study based on the need to derive in depth understanding of each coach and teacher's concepts, hypotheses, and/or ideas about instructional scaffolding over time.

Analysis of interview transcripts. First, all statements within interview transcripts that addressed instructional scaffolding were identified. These scaffolding-related statements addressed types of instructional support needed/not needed by students or teachers, based on the definition of scaffolding as more help provided as soon as a student is struggling and withdrawal of teacher support or increase in challenge contingent on student success (Wood, 1998). Because each interview was conducted in response to a specific guided reading lesson and subsequent coaching session, most interview statements addressed the topic of scaffolding. In the following statement, for example, the teacher described a decision she had made regarding both preplanned and in the moment instructional scaffolding in support of her students' decoding of the word *asked* (within the new book read that day):

I had in my plans, originally, to have [students] predict and locate the word *asked*. But then I just abandoned [this task] because I thought, "They're going to just get that [word]." And if they don't, we'll use that as a teaching point [after reading].

This statement was identified as scaffolding-related because the teacher described a decision she had made to provide less instructional support for students' decoding of the word *asked* based on her prediction that such support would not be needed. In the following example, the coach described her analysis of students' success with the text the teacher had selected for that lesson:

I really didn't think that the level of difficulty [of the new book], I mean they [i.e., the students] breezed right through the book. And so there weren't a lot of things, I guess, trouble spots [for students as they read the new book].

This statement was identified as scaffolding-related because the coach described observed evidence demonstrating that students needed additional scaffolding from the teacher. A teacher's choice of a new text for guided reading lessons constitutes scaffolding, as a strong book choice provides a context within which students will need to use emerging

strategies but will be able to do so successfully with teacher support.

All statements identified as scaffolding-related were then coded for general topic and specific ideas concerning instructional scaffolding expressed by the participant. The following statement, for example, was coded as the topic of teacher prompting during text reading and the hypothesis that teachers need to use a wide variety of prompts in order to provide more effective support to students:

[The teacher] does have the prompt sheet [e.g., a list of such teacher prompting language as "Does that word look right?"] right in front of her. And as she was asking yesterday, "Which one should I be using? Because the [prompting language] I'm using doesn't seem to be effective." So as you learn more about those prompts and [in] one of our upcoming classes I want to tape guided reading and have them look at the prompts the teacher uses. To see, "Would you have used the same prompts? What else could you use?" Not just stuck with one or two of their own favorites. And I know from my own experience that that can easily happen. I'm thinking, "Why is this child stuck? Why isn't [my prompting] working?" And as you look at yourself you think, "Well because I'm throwing the same prompt at him every time."

This example was coded for the topic of teacher prompting because the coach described her ideas about teachers' choice of prompting language to use when students encounter word identification difficulties during text reading and the hypothesis that teachers need to use a wide variety of prompts in order to provide more effective support to students because the coach stated that that students' progress will stall if teachers use the same prompt repeatedly.

All coding for the general topic and specific ideas concerning instructional scaffolding expressed within each transcript were charted by coach/teacher partnership and data collection cycle. A chart was created for each coach/teacher partnership summarizing a timeline of prominent ideas regarding instructional scaffolding articulated by each coach and teacher across the three data collection cycles. This process addressed the study's first research question: What hypotheses and/or ideas about instructional scaffolding do coaches and teachers articulate during coaching conversations and individual interviews?

Analysis of coaching session transcripts. Each conversational turn within coaching session transcripts was coded on three levels: (a) general topic, (b) interaction function, and (c) the specific idea(s) concerning instructional scaffolding expressed by the participant. The following segment from a coaching session transcript, for example, was coded as (a) teacher prompting during text reading, (b) coach's replaying of the teacher's delivery of instruction, and (c) the proposition that high levels of teacher-provided support are appropriate for the decoding of proper nouns:

- T: So it sounds like the teaching point thing is something...
- C: Well, I'm thinking that where you, right in the very beginning, you prompted her to think about what's happening in the story and when she had difficulty with the names you popped right in there and provided that support for her so she wasn't stuck on trying to sound out *Michael* and *Anna*.

This example was coded for (a) teacher prompting during text reading because the coach "replayed" the ways in which the teacher had prompted a student to pay attention to the events in the story, (b) coach's replaying of the teacher's delivery of instruction because the coach described how the teacher had provided "tolds" for several characters' names from the text, and (c) the proposition that high levels of teacher-provided support are appropriate for the decoding of proper nouns because the coach stated that the type of support provided prevented the student from getting stuck on proper nouns.

Coding for interaction functions, then, was based on analysis of each coach and teacher's enactment of instructional scaffolding during coaching conversations. The researcher evaluated the function (i.e., asking, telling, analysis, description, summarizing) of each conversational turn. Coding categories that emerged during this process included the coach's or teacher's analyses or requests for information regarding observed student literacy behavior, replaying of instructional moves, analysis of the effectiveness of instructional scaffolding provided, and description of needed instruction.

Criteria were then developed to allow for characterization of the type of conversational interaction that occurred during coaching sessions, analyzing for coaches' and teachers' overall enactment of instructional scaffolding: If the coaches and teachers enacted instructional scaffolding, what processes would they have engaged in?

- Did the coach ask the teacher to analyze the instructional support that had been provided in the lesson?
- How extensive were the coach and teacher's descriptions of students' literacy behavior?
- Were any descriptions of needed instruction tied explicitly to evidence of student literacy behavior?

Coaching session analysis, then, determined the ways in which the coach and/or teacher's examination of students' strengths and weaknesses (directly connected to recommendations for improving instruction) was evident/not evident during each coaching conversation. These results, considered in concert with the timeline of prominent ideas regarding instructional scaffolding across the three data collection cycles, informed the study's second research question: In what ways did coaches' and teachers' enactment of scaffolding within coaching conversations support teachers' ability to reflect on students' need for instructional scaffolding during guided reading lessons?

The coaches in this study were able to engage teachers in conversations about reading instruction. Each of the coaching conversations addressed specific aspects of the observed guided reading lesson. Coaches, for example, discussed book selection and introduction, prompting for students' use of strategies during reading, and recommended changes in instruction. In spite of this achievement, analyses identified potentially consequential, largely unresolved differences in the ways that coaches and teachers conceptualized instructional scaffolding. Significant tensions were evident between hypotheses describing the need for high levels of instructional support versus opportunities for students to read independently. The coaches were generally not able to implement coaching conversations that both enacted and resolved teachers' understanding of instructional scaffolding.

The following sections address the two research questions for the study by presenting examples that exemplify prominent hypotheses and ideas that emerged from analysis of each coach/teacher partnership's propositional statements regarding instructional scaffolding and characterize the ways in which each partnership enacted instructional scaffolding during their coaching conversations. Prominent themes that emerged from data analysis (as described below) included how teaching for student independence is constructed within guided reading lessons, whether instructional scaffolding is a harmful crutch or needed support for students, what kinds of support will result in students' 'real' reading, and how support for students' problem-solving during reading is best structured. Results from two of the coach/teacher partnerships are presented in some detail, while results for the remaining two partnerships are summarized only briefly.

Teaching for Independence: Kate (coach) and Sherrie (first-grade teacher)

Analysis of coded interaction revealed that Kate (pseudonyms used throughout) maintained a focus on instructional scaffolding in all three coaching sessions and did request analysis from Sherrie of the degree to which her instructional decisions had been effective:

Okay. When we had talked about Stephanie and Moriah before, you had concerns about, especially Moriah, being visually balanced. And you talked about, "What are the prompts that you are using?" That was what you wanted me to look at. So as you think back to your lesson, how do you think it went?

Kate's requests for analysis were typically connected to specific concerns that she had identified during her observation of the lesson. Neither the coach nor teacher engaged in extensive description of students' literacy behavior. These findings are also illustrated in the coded coaching session example provided in Table 2.

Kate's recommendations generally suggested specific instructional interaction:

Sherrie: That's one [her student's difficulty reading the word *shouted*], I was trying to think, because you can't look at the picture....so I was at a loss for that.

Kate: If you think about the prompts...I may have taken her back to the previous page and talked about what has happened here and how he felt about that.

Sherrie: So getting her sense of story, that...

Kate: Yes. And you were at a loss, so you just [told] it to her, which is fine. But you might try pulling her back to that book. "Just stop and tell me what happened so far in this story. Now how do you think he felt?"

Try and check the picture."

Sherrie herself contributed minimal description of needed instruction during these coaching sessions, but consistently requested clarification on effective prompting: "How does that work with compound words and explaining that to them? To start with the second [part of the word]. Can you say that? Just find that main chunk and then start the next sound?"

Sherrie felt her students needed to utilize visual cues and word knowledge more independently in order to progress to harder texts. She commented during the third coaching session that she had deliberately limited her scaffolding because

Table 2
Coded Coaching Session Excerpt: Kate and Sherrie

Participant	Transcript	Coding
Kate:	As we talked yesterday and you had asked me to help you look for those opportunities to find those teaching points, as you think back through your lesson and you may not be able to recall this, if you can't that's okay. Did you see any particular point where there was an opportunity for a teaching point?	Coach providing replaying Previous coaching Coach requesting analysis Needed scaffolding
Sherrie:	For the whole group? So that it's directly to the whole group or individuals?	Teacher requesting explanation Recommended instruction
Kate:	Either. Either way.	
Sherrie:	Gosh. You know I'd have to look at my notes and I didn't bring them back.	Teacher requesting analysis Student literacy behavior
Kate:	Okay. Well as I was watching, one of the things that I saw with, they had trouble with the word <i>inside</i> .	Coach providing description Student literacy behavior
Sherrie:	Oh yeah. They got the first part [of the word] but they didn't, couldn't go on from there.	Teacher providing description Student literacy behavior
Kate:	Okay, and [the word] <i>in</i> is on your word wall.	Coach providing replaying Instructional moves
Sherrie:	Um hmm.	
Kate:	So as I was sitting there, I was thinking that you could either stop right there at that point, and look back at the word wall and have them, "You know the chunk <i>in</i> , you've got that, it's on our word wall. Go back and read, check the picture. Because the picture, they're now inside and go past [the word part] <i>in</i> ... and see."	Coach providing description Recommended instruction
Sherrie:	Okay.	

she wanted to see if students could “get [the words] on their own.” Kate, in response, emphasized the role of supportive book introductions:

The purpose of going through the pictures is to plant the whole idea of what the story is about. But also, simultaneously, is an opportunity for you to connect in context words that you feel you want to deal with.

During coaching sessions Sherrie requested practical information on how to improve her students’ use of graphophonic information, while Kate emphasized students’ use of meaning.

This tension was also evident during their discussions of book introductions. In the cycle one interview, Sherrie expressed concern that students might rely too heavily on instructional support: “I’m trying to wean them a little bit on my introductions where they’re doing more of the thinking.” She continued her reflection on the balance between book introductions and teaching for independence within the cycle two interview:

When I did the book with them on Monday and Kate observed, I think that they brought up a few memories and then I just gave them the book. And let them look through [the pages] and then let them start reading. I didn’t go through the pages like I’ve done in the past. And Kate was a little concerned that I had done that. And you know my thinking, that that’s giving them a chance to try to develop that comprehension independently. Giving them a little bit of independence.

Sherrie also emphasized that she needed to hear each student’s retelling of the story’s events in sequence, instead of providing book introductions. Kate advised Sherrie, however, to continue providing supportive introductions and to teach comprehension after read aloud sessions.

Summary. Kate and Sherrie presented opposing hypotheses for several important issues: (a) explicit instructional scaffolding versus assessment and independence, (b) attention to meaning versus the development of graphophonic knowledge, and (c) support for comprehension through book introductions versus retelling assessment (see Table 3 for a summary of these findings). During these coaching sessions, Kate typically requested input from Sherrie when she had identified an area of concern in her teaching, and neither the coach nor teacher related explicit, in-depth discussion of students’ responses to needed changes in instruction.

Crutch or Needed Support: Rose (coach) and Charles (first-grade teacher)

Across the three cycles, Rose and Charles also articulated a set of contradictory ideas about instructional scaffolding. Charles stated that scaffolding is a crutch that will interfere with student progress, and that students should be given hard tasks and taught explicit phonics skills. Rose responded that stronger instructional scaffolding would result in better progress, especially for the use of meaning. These findings

are summarized in Table 4. The interaction between Rose and Charles during coaching sessions, revealed by coding for interaction function, consistently emphasized Rose’s presentation of recommended instruction rather than analysis of teaching decisions or students’ literacy behavior.

Defining “Real” Reading: Kristi (coach) and Melinda (kindergarten teacher)

Kristi and Melinda discussed issues of instructional scaffolding from opposing viewpoints. Kristi emphasized highly supportive, preplanned book introductions. Melinda focused on the need for students to “really read” texts without just copying the teacher’s language and/or a textual pattern. Prominent ideas discussed by Kristi and Melinda are summarized in Table 5. Kristi and Melinda engaged in analysis of students’ success and difficulties only in very general terms, and they did not tie this information explicitly to description of recommended instructional interaction.

Problem Solving: Carol (coach) and Daniel (kindergarten teacher)

Unlike the previous three partnerships, Carol and Daniel’s discussions about instructional scaffolding were consistently contextualized in observation of students’ strengths and difficulties. Daniel believed that students should have opportunities to make mistakes and that texts should have enough challenge so that students needed to problem solve independently. He also evaluated his own teaching decisions in relationship to these ideas:

I should have gone over, at least mention, “Oh, look, he’s wading at the pool. He probably is learning to swim.” ...And *sea*, I intentionally didn’t want to say anything because I wanted to see if they could [read the word independently].

Carol generally agreed with Daniel’s analysis but also extended the conversation with explicit suggestions:

Carol: Just think, “Okay, they’re stuck [on a difficult word]. They’re not doing anything. I’d better teach them what to do.” Then you step back and teach them, try prompting...

Daniel: And have them almost verbalize, “I need to go back, start again, check the picture.” Okay.

Carol: It could be as simple as saying, “Kenny, you’re stuck. What are you going to do?” And if he looks at you with a blank face say, “Here’s what you do.”

During all three coaching sessions, Daniel provided analysis of the level of support that had been provided to students (both at Carol’s request and on his own initiative). When Daniel presented a question or hypothesis to Carol, she often posed a relevant, analytic question back to Daniel (see illustrative example of a coded coaching session segment for Carol and Daniel, Table 6). Such questions were prompts for Daniel to reflect on what had occurred during the lesson, rather than indications that Carol felt something had gone wrong:

Daniel: There were enough known words in the text, words that they could go on, and actually did go on and just try to read through it. So I think that's probably, at least to me it's fine. And they were probably where they need to be.

Carol: And yet, you, did they still have enough reading work that they had to do?

Daniel: I think there was some work with that, yes. I think yesterday Tyler was just kind of on a different wavelength.

Carol: Okay. Well maybe he just wasn't paying attention yesterday, was he? Which is typical behavior for him.

Daniel: Yeah. But I felt like he was engaged and he was really monitoring himself.

Table 3
Timeline of Prominent Ideas/Hypotheses: Kate and Sherrie

Cycle	Coaching Sessions	Coach Interviews	Teacher Interviews
1	T: Students need one type of prompt at a time.	Texts will be too hard if not introduced well.	Students need less supportive book introduction so they will do more of their own thinking.
	C: Students need higher level of scaffolding.	Book introductions need to be preplanned and written.	Students need a mini-lesson on retelling story events in sequence in each lesson.
	T: Some words cannot be solved by meaning.	Prompting should emphasize use of meaning and structure cues.	
	T: Should choose text that has a good sense of story.		
2	T: Should prompt not to point with fingers to improve fluency.	Well-planned book introductions create a strong meaning base for students.	Students need a mini-lesson on retelling story events in sequence in each lesson.
	C: Students needed more scaffolding for the word <i>inside</i> .	High levels of support through book introductions and prompting will result in strong student progress.	Discussing related memories and letting students start to read is enough support.
	C: Good fluency makes word identification easier.		
	T: Should teach something that all students need to learn.	Teachers need to use a variety of types of prompts.	Students not ready for harder books because they don't use visual cues.
3	T: Omitted support to see if students could get on own.	Teachers have to be able to choose a teaching point based on students' needs.	Students need to retell collaboratively.
	C: Teaching strategies causes students to gain independence.	Students need more opportunities to apply new learning.	Vocabulary needs to be introduced conversationally rather than "predict and locate."
	C: Strategies need to be taught in a sequence.		
	C: Teaching strategies will result in strong progress than memorizing words.	Prompting only to initial visual information will not be enough support for students.	Some words not solvable by meaning/pictures and need lots of teacher prompting.
	T: Students need a way to remember specific words.		
	C: Book introductions allow students to hear difficult words in context.		

Daniel's analyses of the literacy behavior of students, often in response to a question posed by his coach, were detailed:

Carol: What do you see, not only Mary but other kids, doing as you were working with them? What are their strengths?

Daniel: Well, I feel like all four of them were really doing some good cross checking. They were looking for chunks on the run in the words, and they were confirming their guesses by looking at the pictures.

Carol and Daniel focused explicitly on the need to plan and modify instruction based on observation of students'

Table 4
Timeline of Prominent Ideas/Hypotheses: Rose and Charles

Cycle	Coaching Sessions	Coach Interviews	Teacher Interviews
1	T: If students successful then level of scaffolding too high.	Effective scaffolding requires understanding of purposes across guided reading procedures. Emergent readers do not yet need to be taught long and short vowel patterns. Emergent readers need to be taught to focus on reading as gaining meaning.	Teaching without reference to vowel sounds makes it harder for students to read. Important not to address too many new understandings. Introductions should provide slight support so students can figure out words on their own.
	C: Texts without a clear story are difficult to teach.		
	C: Strategic behaviors for word solving need to be taught in order.		
	C: Important to choose texts with familiar experiences for students.		
	C: Book selection/introductions avoid need for extended sounding out.		
	C: Word identification strategies matched to students' current development cause stronger progress.		
2	T: Prompting needs to match to students' knowledge level.	Effective scaffolding requires understanding of purposes across guided reading procedures. Most important for teachers to learn how to use meaning-based prompts for emergent readers.	Should teach to meaning first, and then phonics. Knowledge of letter sounds causes stronger student independence. Students need to be given hard tasks and not "babied." In-the-moment teacher decisions better than planned.
	T: If students successful then level of scaffolding too high.		
	C: Texts without a clear story are difficult to teach.		
	T: Students should know letter sounds for word identification.		
	C: Prompting should focus on students' use of meaning.		
3	T: Omitted support to see if students could get on own.	Level of support in introductions need to be matched to most students' needs. Word work should teach strategies students can use in today's lesson.	Minimum scaffolding should be provided so students can work independently. Consistent use of prompts is helping students.
	C: Strategies need to be taught in sequence.		
	C: Attempting to remember words from introduction not effective.		
	T: Different strategies for words not solvable by pictures.		

responses. This focus supported their use of authentic, co-constructed discussions within which coach and teacher worked together to discuss specific instructional moves that might solve students' weaknesses. In the first interview, for example, Daniel expressed concern over kindergarten students' ability to benefit from guided reading lessons:

Developmentally, is that expecting too much, for them to be able to [cross check and integrate cues] and think about the sound? But yet it's something in the process. So I guess if you wait until, I don't know what tells you they're ready other than try it and see how they're doing and either stick with it or chuck it and go on.

By the third interview, Daniel articulated the need to modify instruction on the run based on his observation of students' needs rather than general developmental level:

They were stuck on [a word] and it was, "Okay. We'll work through that." And then we got the mag-

netic letters out and got the boards out, and did some work with that. So it made a real good connection. So had I [taught the word work component] before the lesson I wouldn't have known that was the place where they were going to need the extra help.

Summary. Carol and Daniel's discussions were grounded in observation of students' responses during lessons and in analysis of the instructional scaffolding that had been provided. Although Daniel was concerned that students have opportunities to read independently without scaffolding, Carol's interaction with him during coaching sessions supported his analysis and appeared to lead Daniel to useful reflection concerning the characteristics of the scaffolding needed by his students. These findings are summarized in Table 7.

Enacting Instructional Scaffolding

Distinct differences were identified in the degree to which each coach/teacher partnership enacted instructional

Table 5
Timeline of Prominent Ideas/Hypotheses: Kristi and Melinda

Cycle	Coaching Sessions	Coach Interviews	Teacher Interviews
1	C: Reading the book together was too much support. C: If students don't encounter difficulty reading then the book introduction too supportive.	Effective scaffolding requires use of written plans.	Important to consider students' prior knowledge for book selection. Need to choose books for specific teaching purposes. Students need to be able to read sign words easily. Student-to-student modeling for text reading is helpful.
2	T: Chose the book because had a word students need to learn. C: Introduction needs to insure students know the gist of the text's plot.	Effective scaffolding requires use of written plans. Effective scaffolding requires focus on specific teaching points.	Difficult balance between giving too much and not enough for introductions. Students need to be able to read sight words easily. Students' lack of life experiences interferes with progress.
3	C: Introduction needs to be preplanned and written out. C: Introduction needs to provide explicit information on text's plot and language pattern.	Effective scaffolding requires use of written plans.	Difficult balance between giving too much and not enough for introductions. Introduction shouldn't cause students to just mimic teacher's language. Students need to be able to read sight words easily.

scaffolding during coaching conversations (see overall summary, Table 8). Although all four coaches did request teachers' analyses of the instructional support that had been provided during the observed lesson, three out of four coaches made such requests only for problems or concerns they had identified during their observation of the lesson and without explicit enactment of pedagogical reasoning. Carol, in con-

trast, supported Daniel's analysis of his students' responses to instruction, frequently responding to Daniel's questions with calls for further analysis. Carol and Daniel were also the only partnership in this study that consistently demonstrated frequent and detailed analyses of student literacy behavior and connected this information explicitly to their discussions of needed instruction.

Table 6
Coded coaching session excerpt: Carol and Daniel

Participant	Transcript	Coding
Carol:	You were wondering about these children being able to begin to use beginning visual cues when they were stuck. Did you see any evidence of that during this lesson?	Coach providing replaying Previous coaching Coach requesting analysis Student literacy behavior
Daniel:	Bits and pieces. But I'm not sure they put it together.	Teacher providing analysis Student literacy behavior
Carol:	What did you see them just beginning to do?	Coach requesting analysis Student literacy behavior
Daniel:	Well, I saw, I think I saw each one of them, when they got to the word, I mean it was very obvious that they did check the pictures, so that's good. They're using some cross checking there. If, like in the case of [the word] <i>resting</i> , some of them said, kind of looked back and forth and said, "Sleeping" and it was like, "I can live with that", and they closed the book. So it made sense and it was one word. Now <i>laying on the floor</i> , I saw Jamie do that, or "laying down" I think he said. And he stopped and he noticed that it didn't fit, but he didn't know what to do about it. He was aware of the error but he had, he had no direction.	Teacher providing analysis Student literacy behavior
Carol:	So what would you do tomorrow with this group, say when you see them maybe knowing that they've made a mistake and not knowing what to do, stopping here?	Coach requesting analysis Needed instruction
Daniel:	I think I'll probably try to reiterate, "Okay, you know this, you know this but that didn't fit, that didn't match. Your finger ran out of words. What can you do about that?" And try to get them to say, "Well, I'll stop, go back, look at the picture, get your mouth ready." But I have to do more teaching with that. They didn't, they didn't get it.	Teacher providing description Needed instruction Teacher providing analysis Needed instruction

Most contradictory ideas about instructional scaffolding remained largely unresolved during the study. Daniel's statements about instructional scaffolding, on the other hand, shifted from an early general concern that guided reading

instruction might place too many demands on young learners to modifications to his instruction based on observation and analysis of his students' emerging literacy behavior. Daniel appeared to benefit from his coach's use of instructional scaf-

Table 7
Timeline of Prominent Ideas/Hypotheses: Carol and Daniel

Cycle	Coaching Sessions	Coach Interviews	Teacher Interviews
1	T: Students need to utilize visual cues integrated with meaning.	Students need to read on own.	Need to choose texts with just enough work for students to do.
	C: Students need to read independently in guided reading lessons.	Important to observe students' strengths and then modify teaching decisions.	Students should have opportunity to make mistakes.
	C: Book should have opportunities for student errors.	Teaching decisions need to be clearly focused on goals.	Students can teach each other.
	T: Books should provide opportunities to cross check meaning and initial letters.	Need to teach skills that students can apply immediately.	Students need to hear prompts repetitively and consistently.
2	T: Left some word identification work to see if could do it.	Prior knowledge includes concepts and information, not just knowledge of words.	Decide on goals by trying it and observing results.
	C: Need to support application of students' prior knowledge to new text.	Word work should be generative.	Student-to-student support may interfere with progress.
	T: Students should not be just appealing to/waiting for teacher.	Teaching should help students solve problems independently.	Students need to use strategies not just memorize words.
	C: Need to teach explicitly to what action students should take at difficulty.		Need to leave some problem solving for independent work.
3	T: Student-to-student support may interfere with achievement.	Planned decisions should be superseded by students' immediate needs.	Need to choose texts with familiar experiences and explain concepts and language.
	T: Need to stop pointing, read familiar text to improve fluency.	Teaching should help students solve problems independently.	Students should have opportunity to make mistakes.
	T: Some errors should be ignored by teacher.		Prompting should require students to take action to solve.
	T: Texts with conversation help improve texts.		Students can teach each other.
	T: Can be more effective to let students correct errors on own.		Teaching choices should be based on evidence of immediate need.

Table 8

Summary of Analysis: Enacting Instructional Scaffolding

Analytic Criteria	Kate and Sherrie	Rose and Charles	Kristi and Melinda	Carol and Daniel
Did the coach ask the teacher to analyze instructional support provided in the lesson?	Yes (generally only for specific concerns)	Yes (disagreed with teacher's assessment or did not wait for a response)	Yes (for errors in instructional procedures, as perceived by the coach)	Yes (analysis also provided on teacher's own initiative)
How extensive was the coach's analysis of students' literacy behavior?	Limited	Limited	Limited	Frequent and detailed
How extensive was the teacher's analysis of students' literacy behavior?	Limited	Limited	Limited	Frequent and detailed
Coach's description of needed instruction tied explicitly to evidence of student behavior?	Rarely	Limited	No	Yes
Teacher's description of needed instruction tied explicitly to evidence of student behavior?	No	No	No	Yes

folding demonstrating how to engage in explicit pedagogical reasoning, resulting in his more complex and functional understanding of the nature of instructional scaffolding for reading lessons.

A self-assessment rubric for coaches' use was formulated, based on the overall success of the coaching conversations engaged in by Carol and Daniel as well as differences in the ways that all four coaching partnerships enacted instructional scaffolding within this study (see Appendix). This rubric is designed to help coaches evaluate and improve their own coaching conversations, and may also serve as a basis for professional development for coaches.

Discussion

In this study, coaching conversations and interview transcripts were analyzed to assess the ways in which coaches and teachers conceptualize instructional scaffolding for guided reading lessons and enact instructional scaffolding during coaching conversations. Results indicate that the enactment of instructional scaffolding within coaching conversations may be an important addition to expectations for effective coaching. Teachers' expertise for effective instructional scaffolding appeared to be assisted by coaching conversations that enacted instructional scaffolding, demonstrating an analytic, evidence-based approach to instructional problem solving. Such conversations appeared to result in integration across differences in teacher and coach viewpoints on aspects of

instructional scaffolding for guided reading lessons. Daniel's understanding of the characteristics of supportive teaching may have occurred because the coach and teacher engaged in pedagogical reasoning during coaching conversations.

Reflective experience with instructional scaffolding in action could have resolved the conflicts encountered by coaches and teachers in this study, beyond the too-simple concept "to help or not to help." Each coach's emphasis on supportive scaffolding was important and consequential for student achievement. Each teacher's concern for students to read more independently was also accurate and important. These ideas are not inherently contradictory; a teacher teaches for students' ability to read independently *by* providing supportive book introductions. This perspective requires teachers to help a child extend his reach, rather than to simply test for independence by routine withdrawal of needed support. Well-designed and implemented book introductions, then, should result in increased independence through students' internalization of effective ways of interacting with text.

Three of the coaches in this study appeared to rely primarily on descriptions of needed instruction originating from their own evaluation of the observed teaching and based on prescriptions for practice. Enacting instructional scaffolding as a functional aspect of coaching conversations, however, requires coaches to model and prompt, constructing a discussion centered around analysis of students' responses during instruction and problem solving for needed instructional improvement based explicitly on evidence of student needs.

This shift in the nature of coaching conversations requires coaches to maintain their stance as an expert while structuring advice and input for teachers within pedagogical reasoning. Decisions regarding needed instructional changes would be based on the coach and teacher's co-constructed evidence of student responses to instruction rather than arising from the coach's admonitions or evaluative statements. It is possible that coaching conversations that enact the processes of instructional scaffolding will help teachers internalize and act on these same processes when planning and delivering instruction.

Professional development opportunities for coaches can provide explanation and demonstration of the processes of instructional scaffolding. Useful activities might include:

- Demonstration and in-depth explanation of coaching sessions that enact instructional scaffolding effectively, beyond a standard format consisting of pre-conference, observation, feedback, and a written plan of action.
- Discussion and evaluation of videotaped coaching conversations, providing coaches with the practice needed to notice key aspects of effective coaching.
- Coaches' self-assessment of their own enactment of instructional scaffolding during coaching conversations, using the rubric developed from this study (see Appendix).

The results of the study contribute crucial information regarding the interaction between coaches and teachers in support of improved reading instruction. Limitations inherent to the study are likely to have affected the results, indicating areas in need of further research. A small sample size of four coach/teacher partnerships was utilized for this study. This sample size is appropriate for descriptive research and allowed for detailed data collection and analysis, but limits generalizability. Some aspects of the study's findings may vary by amount of teaching experience, for example, or differences in teachers' professional development. A teacher who has studied instructional scaffolding in clinical settings, for example, would be likely to conceptualize and discuss this complex concept with more depth and clarity. As in all qualitative studies, the design of this study did not allow for all variables to be controlled. The study did not analyze for teachers' ability to actually implement effective instructional scaffolding within guided reading lessons, nor of the effectiveness of guided reading instruction in general. It is likely that the coaches who volunteered to participate in this study were different in key ways than their colleagues. They may, for example, have felt more confident in their coaching expertise than did other reading coaches in the district.

Further research is needed in order to determine whether the findings of this study are typical of effective coaching. It will be important, for example, to verify whether coaching conversations are more effective when they include enactment of instructional scaffolding for other types of lessons beyond guided reading and with teachers possessing varying amounts and types of training and experience. Investigations

identifying additional aspects of coaching conversations associated with differential success in teachers' instructional expertise will also be crucial. It would be useful to study any differences in student achievement data that result from a variety of types of coach/teacher interaction, and further research should also investigate the effectiveness of the coaching rubric utilized in the current study. This research, coordinated with the present study's findings, will fill important gaps in our current knowledge of the characteristics of effective interaction between coaches and teachers. Without the availability and use of this knowledge base for the selection and training of coaches, consistent improvement in instruction and increased student achievement may continue to be an elusive expectation.

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Appendix
Coaching Conversation Assessment Rubric

	1 Ineffective	2 Improving	3 Expert
Description of literacy behavior of students during an observed guided reading lesson, provided by both coach and teacher and integrated into coaching conversation.	Focused primarily on students' affective behavior/attention during the lesson. Limited description of children's literacy behavior.	Coach describes students' literacy behavior, addresses children's use of strategies. Not well integrated with other aspects of the conversation.	Both coach and teacher describe students' use of strategies, and utilize to analyze teaching and determine suggestions for improvement.
Analysis of new literacy behavior/strategies needed by students.	Neither coach nor teacher extends description of student literacy behavior to next steps needed by individual students.	Coach describes next steps in development of strategic behavior. Description explicitly tied to students' literacy behavior.	Coach and teacher co-construct analysis of strategies needed by individual students, integrated into coaching conversation.
Replaying portions of instruction, integrated with analysis of students' literacy behavior and needs.	Little if any description of teaching moves/decisions, generally provided by coach and at points perceived as errors.	Coach describes teaching moves/decisions, primarily areas identified as concerns, and establishes connection to student needs.	Coach and teacher co-construct understanding of teaching moves/decisions, analyzing and describing specific aspects of students' literacy behavior.
Analysis of the type/level of instructional support provided, connected to students' literacy behavior.	Little or no analysis of instruction; emphasizes routine procedures rather than instructional support.	Coach provides evaluation of aspects of teaching; some connection to students' literacy behavior.	Coach and teacher co-construct analysis of teaching decisions, well connected to students' literacy behavior.
Description of specific changes in instructional interaction needed, integrated with students' literacy behavior/needs and analysis of instructional support provided.	Few if any specific suggestions or decisions regarding changes in instruction. Suggestions related to instructional routines rather than students' literacy behavior/needs or analysis of instructional support.	Coach provides specific suggestions for teacher's improved interaction with students, related to observed student literacy behavior. Needed instruction typically described by coach.	Coach and teacher co-construct specific suggestions for improved interaction with students, integrated with observation of student literacy behavior/needs and analysis of instructional support.