

Chapter One

What Is Content-Focused Coaching?

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The impact and effectiveness of traditional professional development seminars and workshops has increasingly been questioned by educators and researchers (Fullan 1995; Huberman 1995; Wilson & Berne 1999). Efforts to introduce new teaching strategies are more successful if in-class coaching is part of the training (Joyce & Showers 1995; Showers, Joyce & Bennett 1987). There is, however, no generally accepted coaching model: specific structures, scripts, and procedures vary greatly (see also, Anderson & Snyder 1993; Brand 1989; Costa & Garmston 1994; Schon 1987). For example, is the relationship between coach and teacher supervisory or collegial? Does the coach help the teacher understand underlying theory or train the teacher in specific skills and methods?

Coaching is especially popular in business (Thomas 1995; Whitemore 1992), where the coach's primary role is to facilitate reflection and growth. Identifying specific problems is the client's task, not to be taken over by the coach. Coaches frequently know very little about the client's business. This kind of coaching is especially appropriate with regard to personal problems and personal growth.

Coaching in the teaching profession, which is designed to scale up teaching expertise, must be much more specific. Coaches themselves need to be excellent teachers in the same discipline as the teacher being coached, able to provide situation-specific assistance adapted to that teacher. Content-Focused Coaching is a professional development model designed to promote student learning and achievement by having a coach and a teacher work jointly in specific settings, guided by conceptual tools (Staub, West & Miller 1998; Staub 1999; Staub 2001). Coach and teacher collaboratively plan,

enact, and reflect on specific lessons, acting as resources for each other. In Content-Focused Coaching, theory-based conceptual tools assist coaches and teachers in deciding what to focus on in coaching conversations and how to guide such conversations. A framework for lesson design and analysis (Figure 1 – 1), a set of principles of learning (Figure 1 – 2 and Appendix 1), and a set of core issues in mathematics lesson design (Figures 1 – 3 and 1 – 4) help coaches guide teachers' thinking in relation to the highly complex tasks of lesson design and classroom teaching, and about the issues surrounding student learning. In addition, goals and coaching moves provide concepts for reflecting on, guiding and developing coaching conversations.

Content-Focused Coaching is related to apprenticeship, in which an apprentice is observed while carrying out a task and the master craftsman offers hints, provides support, gives feedback, models, gives reminders, and poses new tasks aimed at bettering performance (Collins, Brown & Newman 1989). Such assistance may be highly idiosyncratic. Content-Focused Coaching is distinguished from traditional apprenticeship in that the guidance is informed by a conceptual framework that is supported by specific tools. In addition, coaches still view themselves as learners, continuing to refine their teaching, learning, and coaching as a result of the lessons they coach and the conversation they cultivate.

Even knowledgeable master teachers are not always successful when working with adults, so coaches must have excellent social skills and be able to communicate effectively. Coaching a teacher in the classroom necessitates communication and coordination among coach, teacher, and students.

Content-Focused Coaching centers on students' learning in the lessons but is also about teachers' learning from the process. In the short term, teachers refine how they teach particular lessons to specific groups of students. In the long term, they develop professional habits of mind and general teaching expertise. Expert teachers know both their subject and the best pedagogical practices by which to bring the subject to their students. Content-Focused Coaching zeroes in on the daily tasks of planning, teaching, and reflecting on lessons by suggesting a framework and tools for addressing standards, curriculum, principles of learning, and lesson design and assessment. It does not prescribe particular methods or techniques of teaching.

To be most effective, Content-Focused Coaching has to be seen in relation to and coordinated with other elements of professional development. The challenge in onsite coaching is to help teachers design and implement successful lessons and to engage with and reflect on the issues that are relevant to student learning. Prerequisites include establishing trusting working relationships among principal, coach, and teacher and building organizational structures within schools so that coaching can take place.

Goals and Features

Content-Focused Coaching is not a quick fix for bad teachers. Instead, it provides structures for ongoing professional development that

- Helps teachers design and implement lessons from which students will learn.
- Is content specific. Teachers' plans, strategies, and methods are discussed in terms of students learning a particular subject.
- Is based on a set of core issues of learning and teaching.
- Fosters professional habits of mind.
- Enriches and refines teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.
- Encourages teachers to communicate with each other about issues of teaching and learning in a focused and professional manner.

The Setting

Content-Focused Coaching takes place in schools. The teacher and coach have a prelesson conference; observe, teach, or coteach the lesson; and have a postlesson conference. The coach and the teacher are jointly accountable for initiating and assisting effective student learning. This very important feature ensures that the coach is intimately involved in all aspects of the lesson. Depending on a particular teacher's needs and background, a coach's active involvement may vary considerably. When pre- and postlesson conferences are held and how long they last also varies considerably and depends on district and school policy. (These issues are dealt with more specifically in the chapters on working with the teacher, the principal, and the district.)

The Prelesson Conference

At the prelesson conference, the teacher explains the goals for the lesson and how he or she plans to teach it. The coach becomes acquainted with the teacher's thinking, beliefs, and knowledge. They talk about how the lesson will foster student learning and how curriculum materials can be a starting point for customizing lessons to fit particular students. Teacher and coach collaboratively design or redesign a particular lesson or aspects of a lesson. Developing a shared view of the understanding, strategies, concepts, and skills that students are working toward, together with agreeing on a lesson design, makes it possible to have postlesson discussions focused on student learning. Establishing clear, explicit learning goals related to specific content also increases the likelihood that the lessons will

revolve around important mathematical ideas and that the coach and teacher will work together effectively during the lesson.

The Lesson

A coach's role during a lesson can vary considerably. She or he may enter different kinds of collaborations with the teacher and take on the responsibility for conducting different parts of the lesson. A coach's involvement may increase from observing only, to coteaching the lesson, to modeling the lesson while the teacher observes. Because lesson plans are shared or coconstructed during the preconference, the coach and the teacher are to some extent jointly responsible even for lessons that are taught solely by the teacher. Teacher and coach negotiate how they will collaborate during a specific lessons based on the teacher's needs (stated by teacher and perceived by coach) and on what will make the lesson one in which students learn.

Modeling is especially appropriate when a coach wants to demonstrate specific teaching strategies or methods (such as ways of leading accountable talk in the classroom). The goal of modeling is for the teacher to build and understanding of new teaching moves. Modeling often is the start of a longer process during which the teacher learns to use the new strategies.

Even during lessons that are taught primarily by the classroom teacher, the coach's role is collaborative. This may mean, for example, that the coach intervenes during the lesson – but only in a particular way. The coach negotiates in advance whether the teacher is comfortable with this kind of intervention. The intervention is never directed toward something the teacher may have done inadequately; rather, the coach addresses students' understanding and learning, perhaps by asking a question related to a student's crucial idea or particular misconception. Coaches and teachers are jointly accountable for initiating and assisting effective student learning. The coach is a partner with the teacher in working toward the shared goal of student learning, not a critic of the teacher's practice. Over time, the coach will decrease and eventually phase out modeling and situation-specific interventions.

The Postlesson Conference

After the lesson, the teacher and the coach talk about how the lesson went. How successfully was the lesson plan implemented? What problems arose? More important, did the students learn what they were supposed to? This joint evaluation often includes looking at student work. If necessary, the conversations also addresses the lesson's appropriateness to the goals set – and even the

appropriateness of the goals themselves. Postlesson conferences often segue into a prelesson conference for the next lesson.

What Should Coaching Conversations Focus On?

Different issues emerge during coaching conversations. In the preconference, teacher and coach mostly deliberate goals and lesson plans. During the lesson, they participate in classroom talk and perhaps have a brief private exchange about a whole-class teaching move or how to help individual students. During the postconference, student learning and challenges met during the lesson come to the fore. Whatever the setting, there are an infinite number of potential issues that can be addressed.

A Framework for Lesson Design

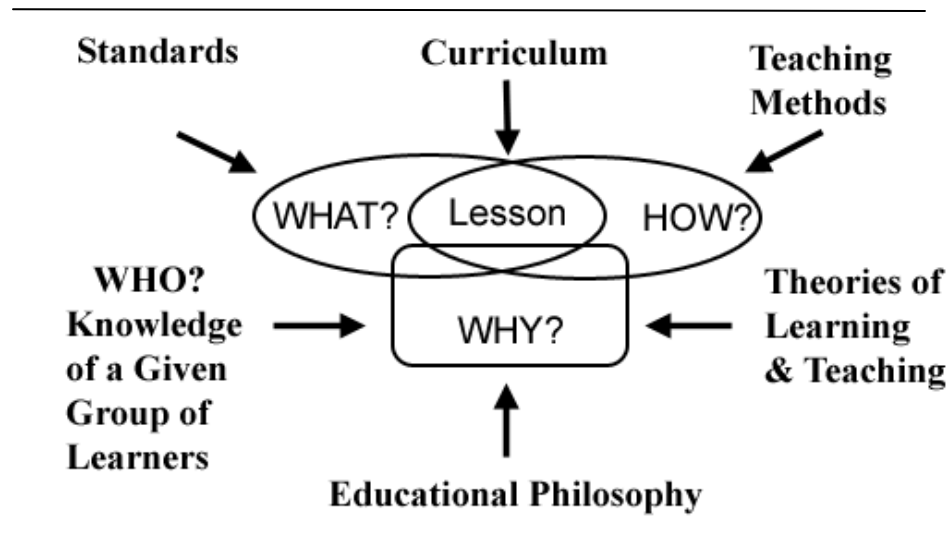
Teaching is a very complex activity (Bromme 1992; Stigler & Hiebert 1999; Leinhardt 1993). It can be looked at from many perspectives and discussed at different levels of abstraction, depending on one's knowledge, theories, and beliefs. The conceptual frame presented here reflects a profound change in the definition of teaching – from teaching as *mechanically implementing* curriculum to teaching as *mindfully making use of* curriculum. Teaching requires sophisticated reasoning in choosing and prioritizing lesson goals and designing lessons that enable a given group of students to reach given standards. At the core of this kind of reasoning are two basic questions:

1. *What is the curricular content to be learned by the students?*
This question is often answered by naming curricular themes, tasks, or activities, or by describing instructional strategies. Although all of these relate in various ways to what students are to learn in a particular lesson, they do not fully capture the subject matter to be learned. Goals for what students are to learn at a given grade level are delineated in district, state, or national standards. In order to state the learning in a lesson specifically, teachers must know – thoroughly – the particular content and how it relates to the standards.

2. *How is this content to be taught?* What are the teacher’s underlying teaching methods and strategies? The execution of a lesson can be described and discussed in terms of specific practices and general teaching methods, such as inquiry-based learning, using worksheets, and cooperative groupings. The teacher’s repertoire of methods and strategies determines the number of potential teaching moves he or she has to choose from.

Lesson design takes place at the intersection of *what* and *how*. What is the relationship between curriculum and teachers’ work in the classroom? In the United States, curriculum is most often thought of as an “organizational framework, a ‘curriculum-as-manual,’ containing the templates for coverage and methods that are seen as guiding, directing, or controlling a school’s, or a school system’s, day-by-day classroom work” (Westbury 2000, 17). In other words, these manuals set forth *what* to teach and *how* to teach it. For a time, it was even hoped that a “technology of teaching” would lead to fully specified curricula that would guarantee effective teaching no matter who the teacher happened to be. The aim of constructing “teacher-proof” curricula, however, has turned out to be out of reach and based on a naïve conception of what effective teaching involves. Even when curriculum materials specify lessons in some detail, a competent teacher still needs

Figure 1 – 1
 Framework for Lesson Design and Analysis
 (adapted from Staub 1999, 2001)



to adapt a given lesson to the context of the particular classroom and to the individual characteristics, needs, and backgrounds of the learners in it.

When teachers are encouraged to be thoughtful professionals who do more than follow their intuition based on experience and traditions, then they deliberate about and debate *why* they choose particular content or methods. There are therefore two more basic questions at the core of teachers' professional reasoning:

3. *Why is this specific content to be taught?*
4. *Why will it be taught in this particular way?*

In addressing these basic questions, teachers choose the subject matter, transform it into lesson content, and design lessons that help students reach standards. We don't mean that these basic questions need to be posed literally in this abstract form. The general *what*, *how*, and *why* questions are guiding heuristics for thoughtful teaching. Taking up these questions in connection with each other leads to new learning and new insights about how particular content can be taught effectively to the students of a given classroom or why a specific method is especially suited to a particular learning goal. In addressing these questions, coach and teacher also draw on available research about which strategies and methods work effectively for specific purposes. Posing the generic questions alone, however, doesn't get the work done. For teachers to recall or construct appropriate answers, they must be knowledgeable about content, standards, teaching methods, curricula, assessment, the theory and psychology of learning and teaching, and educational philosophy.

When *why* questions cannot be answered by referring to an existing standard, a curriculum, or regularly practiced teaching methods, teachers need to reason deliberately about their design choices. Such deliberation, however, presupposes criteria and theories. By what criteria do we decide on the particular content and a specific design for a lesson? Teachers have a lot of leeway in how they choose to help their students achieve a given standard. How we deliberate about *why* a particular method is useful for teaching specific content to a given group of students depends on our beliefs and theories about learning and teaching, our knowledge about research on effective practices and about the particular learners to be taught, and on our educational philosophy. What teachers believe about the learning and teaching of a specific subject matters not only to how they behave in the classroom but also to student achievement (Staub & Stern 2002). While districts can mandate particular instructional programs and approaches, a change in teaching practice will only be sustained over time if it is supported by coherent underlying beliefs.

Only part of the knowledge that is relevant to lesson design can be acquired through experience and experimentation. It is primarily through interaction with knowledgeable others, texts, and tools that teachers revise their beliefs and develop habits of mind and knowledge relevant to effective lesson design.

An Orientation Toward the Content of Learning and Teaching

During much of the twentieth century, the dominance of behaviorist and associationist theories of learning meant that content and pedagogy were often dealt with separately. European theories of education and teaching rooted in philosophy (Klafki 1963) and based on a cognitive view of learning and teaching (Aebli 1951, 1983) argued against this separation between teaching methods and content. Klafki's and Aebli's general theories of teaching (known as *Didaktik*) share an orientation toward the content of learning and teaching. Effective and responsible teaching requires educators to thoroughly think through the meaning and the structure of the content to be taught. Clarifying the underlying structure has primacy over questions about how to teach a particular content. When designing lessons, clarifying the *what* usually precedes specifying the *how*. To grasp the design of a given lesson unit from curriculum manuals, teachers must clearly understand the intended *what*, as well as *why* an already given *how*, supports learners in reaching the goals. Such reasoning may lead teachers to modify the *how* or even to change the lesson's goals. Teachers' anticipation of and planning for specific teaching – learning processes are intimately related to the content. The teaching of subject matter has to be understood in relation to the particular content and the learners being taught.

Cognitive psychology has demonstrated the important role of knowledge in reasoning, thinking, and learning (Aebli 1981; Resnick 1987). Learning is an active process of interpretation and inference based on what people already know. Resnick and Hall (1998) refer to the core of this theory of learning as *knowledge-based constructivism*. There is no thinking without content, and without thinking there is no acquisition of new knowledge. There is no direct transmission of knowledge. For the cognitive-constructivist, learning is an active process through which learners construct new knowledge on the basis of the cognitive structures already available. The teachers' role is to initiate learning and to prompt and assist particular learners as they construct rigorous, specific knowledge. Coaching conversations that are meant to help teachers develop practical ways to initiate and guide student learning thus need to be very content specific.

Knowing what methods and teaching strategies are useful for helping students learn a specific content and how to adapt these methods and strategies to particular learners is the pivotal ingredient in

teaching expertise. Shulman (1987) calls this kind of knowledge *pedagogical content knowledge*, “the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, prepresented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (8). Not all of this knowledge is explicit. Some of it is based on experience alone and remains implicit. It is the coach’s role to focus on and make explicit those aspects that are highly relevant in a given situation.

A knowledgeable other (the coach or the teacher, in Content-Focused Coaching) can introduce any knowledge related to the *what*, *how*, and *why* of a specific teaching situation. Elements brought up by a coach or through discussion or her or his own teaching may lead to teaching situation that are different from what the teacher would have arrived at along. Coaching conversations that address and relate the *what*, *how*, and *why* of lessons can foster learning that goes beyond situation-specific assistance and therefore builds explicit pedagogical content knowledge.

Core Issues in Lesson Design

A set of research-based principles of learning proposed by Lauren Resnick (Resnick 1995a, 1995b) and further developed by the Institute for Learning (Resnick & Hall 2001) succinctly captures pivotal theories of learning and teaching that are believed to be relevant for an educational system designed to enable all students to achieve a high level of performance. Figure 1 – 2 depicts three of these principles (see Appendix 1 for the list of all nine principles).

For these principles of learning to be of practical use in lesson design, they need to be related to the kind of reasoning teachers use daily in the classroom. Therefore, the coach participates on the job, helping the teacher deliberately plan and teach lessons that produce student learning. The principles of learning are general and abstract. In order for coaching conversations to reach a content-specific level when designing and reflecting on lessons, Content-Focused Coaching makes use of an additional kind of tool, the Guide to Core Issues in Mathematics Lesson Design (see Figure 1 – 3). The Questions in this guide prompt the coach and teacher to address issues at the heart of instruction in content-specific ways (Staub, West, Miller 1998; Staub 1999).

The idea for such a tool is based on a set of questions, developed by Klafki (1958, 1995), that is meant to ensure that teachers’ long-term

Figure 1 – 2
Three of the Institute for Learning’s Nine Principles of Learning
(Resnick & Hall 2001)

Clear Expectations

If we expect all students to achieve at high levels, then we need to define explicitly what we expect students to learn. These expectations need to be communicated clearly in ways that get them “into the heads” of school professionals, parents, the community, and, above all, the students. Descriptive criteria and models of work that meet standards should be publicly displayed, and students should refer to these displays to help them analyze and discuss their work. With visible accomplishment targets to aim toward at each stage of learning, students can participate in evaluating their own work and setting goals for their own effort.

Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum

Thinking and problem solving will be the “new basics” of the twenty-first century. But the common idea that we can teach thinking without a solid foundation of knowledge must be abandoned. So must the idea that we can teach knowledge without engaging students thinking. Knowledge and thinking are intimately joined. This implies a curriculum organized around major concepts that students are expected to know deeply. Teaching must engage students in active reasoning about these concepts. In every subject, at every grade level, instruction and learning must include commitment to a knowledge core, high thinking demand, and active use of knowledge.

Accountable TalkSM

Talking with others about ideas and work is fundamental to learning. But not all talk sustains learning. For classroom talk to promote learning it must be accountable – to the learning community, to accurate and appropriate knowledge, and to rigorous thinking. Accountable talk seriously responds to and further develops what others in the group have said. It puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion. Accountable talk uses evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., proofs in mathematics, data from investigations in science, textual details in literature, documentary sources in history) and follows established norms of good reasoning. Teachers should intentionally create the norms and skills of accountable talk in their classrooms.

curricular and lesson planning is accountable to the underlying structures of the discipline, takes into account the learners' prior experience and knowledge that are relevant to the learning goal at hand, and anticipates future contexts in which the knowledge to be learned may lead to useful applications. This selection of the kind of theoretical perspectives taken up with the questions in the Guide to Core Issues in

Figure 1 – 3
Guide to Core Issues in Mathematics Lesson Design

What are the goals and the overall plan of the lesson?

- What is your plan?
- Where in your plan would you like some assistance?

(Based on the teacher's response, the coach focuses on one or more of the following ideas.)

What is the mathematics in this lesson? (i.e., make the lesson goals explicit)

- What is the specific mathematics goal in this lesson?
- What are the mathematics concepts?
- Are there specific strategies being developed? Explain.
- What skills (applications, practice) are being taught in this lesson?
- What tools are needed (e.g., calculators, rulers, protractors, pattern blocks, cubes)?

Where does this lesson fall in this unit and why? (i.e., clarify the relationship between the lesson, the curriculum, and the standards)

- Do any of these concepts and/or skills get addressed at other points in the unit?
- Which goal is your priority for this lesson?
- What does this lesson have to do with the concept you have identified as your primary goal?
- Which standards does this particular lesson address?

What are students' prior knowledge and difficulties?

- What relevant concepts have already been explored with this class?
- What strategies does this lesson build on?
- What relevant contexts (money, for example) could you draw on in relation to this concept?
- What can you identify or predict students may find difficult or confusing or have misconceptions about?

(continued)

Figure 1 – 3
(continued)

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- What ideas might students begin to express and what language might they use?

How does the lesson help students reach the goals? (i.e., think through the implementation of the lesson)

- What grouping structure will you use and why?
 - What opening question do you have in mind?
 - How do you plan to present the tasks or problems?
 - What model, manipulative, or visual will you use?
 - What activities will move students toward the stated goals?
 - In what ways will students make their mathematical thinking and understanding public?
 - What will the students say or do that will demonstrate their learning?
 - How will you ensure that students are talking with and listening to one another about important mathematics in an atmosphere of mutual respect?
 - How will you ensure that the ideas being grappled with will be highlighted and clarified?
 - How do you plan to assist those students who you predict will have difficulties?
 - What extensions or challenges will you provide for students who are ready for them?
 - How much time do you predict will be needed for each part of the lesson?
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Mathematics Lesson Design, in addition to other sources, has been influenced by Aebli's general theory of teaching (Aebli 1983), which is grounded in cognitive psychology. Aebli's theory asks teachers to understand and thoroughly analyze the content to be taught and to think through and anticipate learning processes in content-specific terms. Teachers need to take into account that knowledge to be acquired is constructed using students' prior knowledge.

The coach should not use the questions in Figure 1 – 3 verbatim. The particular issues to be addressed and the wording of the questions used to address them need to be adapted based on the coach's knowledge of and relationship with the teacher. The questions are intended to prompt a shared understanding of the lesson's learning goals and a coordinated plan for and understanding of how students can be helped to achieve those goals.

Clarifying lesson goals is pivotal. For teachers to communicate Clear Expectations, they must be clear about the standards of achievement and specific goals of learning toward which their students

are to work. Arriving at a clear understanding of the particular content-related goals of a lesson is also necessary to foster Accountable TalkSM and Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum. Initiating and orchestrating talk that is truly accountable to accurate and appropriate knowledge and rigorous thinking requires the teacher to deeply know and have thought through the content of the discipline and to have clarified the learning goals. Teachers' explanations are also of great importance. The

Figure 1 – 4
Abbreviated List of Core Issues in
Mathematics Lesson Design

- Lesson goals.
 - Lesson plan and design.
 - Students' relevant prior knowledge.
 - Relationship between the nature of the task and the activity on one hand and the lesson goals on the other hand.
 - Strategies for students to make public their thinking and understanding.
 - Evidence of students' understanding and learning.
 - Students' difficulties, confusions, and misconceptions.
 - Ways to encourage collaboration in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
 - Strategies to foster relevant student discussion.
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nature of classroom discourse contributes to or hinders students' socialization as intelligent and responsible members of their culture (Resnick and Nelson-LeGall 1997). In order to make reasoned decisions about appropriate learning goals and to fine-tune individualized student learning, teachers need to know about their students' prior knowledge as well as their difficulties and misconceptions. In order to assess student learning, teachers need to be clear about the evidence of successful learning and to think about how a lesson design will initiate and allow students to make public their thinking and knowing.

While a knowledge of all the Core Issues in Mathematics Lesson Design can be helpful to teachers and coaches, when first working with the Core Issues, it is impossible to focus consciously on all of them at once. Teachers and coaches are thus encouraged to concentrate on a few at a time. (An abbreviated version of the core issues is shown in Figure 1 – 4.) It is also important to understand that the core issues are *scaffolds*: prompts to get teachers to think through important aspects of learning and teaching. Scaffolds are by definition temporary. Once a new structure has been built, the scaffold can be

removed. After coaches and teachers have worked with the Core Issues for some time, the related reasoning will ideally become second nature.

One way for coaches to learn to work with the Core Issues is to write and use their own summaries of the list shown in Figure 1 – 3. From time to time, however, it is helpful to go back to the original version and identify which issues they concentrate on in coaching conversations, then to make a conscious effort to incorporate the ones they tend to ignore.

Guiding and Developing Coaching Conversations

How does a coach know what to focus on in coaching conversations? In Content-Focused Coaching, two main goals guide the work of coaches. Although at times they may compete for priority, both must be kept at the fore and in balance. The two goals are

1. *Fostering student learning* in the coached lessons. The coach must help teachers, in practical ways, design and implement lessons that are conducive to student learning. The coach and teacher are jointly accountable for student learning.
2. *Supporting the professional development of teachers.* Coaching must help teachers develop habits of mind in lesson design, learn to reflect on their teaching, and enrich and refine their pedagogical content knowledge. It must also help them become better at communicating with each other about issues of teaching and learning in a focused and professional manner.

Settings that do not hold coaches jointly accountable for student learning and ask only that coaches give feedback on lessons already taught do of course result in interesting observations and suggestions; however, their practical impact on teachers' future actions is uncertain and remains untested. Content-Focused Coaching builds on the assumption that in order to best support teachers' professional development on the job, coaches and teachers need to be partners doing their very best to foster student learning in the coached lessons. The on-the-job setting is most likely to engage teachers and coaches in the complex work of designing and implementing lessons that are conducive to student learning. The focus on student learning thus becomes a guiding criterion for deciding which aspects of teaching need to be assisted.

Coaches assist the teachers they coach by way of *coaching moves*. A *move* is “any action that is accomplished with the intention of bringing about a state of affairs that directly or indirectly will (probably) lead to a desired global goal” (van Dijk & Kintsch 1983, 66). For example, flying from New York to Zurich may include the

“moves” of taking a cab to the airport and boarding the plane. Incidental actions, such as reading a paper while riding to the airport, are not moves, because they are not functional in bringing about the desired final goal. In Content-Focused Coaching, all actions that a coach undertakes to work toward any of the two global goals of fostering student learning and developing teacher expertise are coaching moves. They may include observing a lesson, giving feedback, teaching a lesson, coteaching a lesson, intervening in classroom talk, suggesting lesson designs, assessing student learning, presenting a new teaching method, or explaining content, to name a few.

In particular, a coach may help a teacher by raising questions, making suggestions, and refining the teacher’s plans with respect to what to teach and how to teach it. Coaches get teachers started and support them in making lesson goals explicit. Coaches also facilitate thinking through the design of the lesson in a content-focused way from theory-based points of view that are pivotal for student learning. Coaches not only help teachers deliver successful lessons, they also create opportunities for teachers to refine and develop their teaching expertise. Coaches may therefore also inject explanations relative to any of the knowledge areas depicted in the Framework for Lesson Design and Analysis (Figure 1 – 1). Coaches may even argue for certain designs. When a teacher’s and a coach’s view differ, the ultimate decision remains with the teacher. The teacher and coach can, in the postconference, discuss the extent to which the course of action chosen produced the desired outcome.

The most important power of coaching is the potential for highly interactive and collaborative processes, which allow the coach to fine tune the help being offered to the individual and situation-specific needs of the teacher being coached. Such highly customized assistance, however, is only possible if coaches respect and take into account teachers’ knowledge and underlying beliefs about learning and teaching by encouraging them to share and discuss their own ideas, suggestions, and reflections. Coaches also need to check their own understanding by paraphrasing and summarizing what the teacher has said. The pivotal aspects of coaching are accomplished through two basic kinds of coaching moves:

1. *Moves that invite teacher contributions.* Statements or questions by the coach that initiate and invite the teacher to verbalize perceptions, thoughts, plans, deliberations, and arguments.
2. *Moves that provide direct assistance with lesson design.* Statements by the coach that provide guidance and explanations for specific designs and ways of implementing a lesson.

Moves that invite teacher contributions can be very general: “So, tell me about this lesson.” They can also be more specific, depending on the coach’s knowledge of lesson design in general and understanding of the teacher’s specific lesson plan:

Coach: Do you anticipate any confusion between the story and what you’re trying to get them to do?

Teacher: I hope it will be clear. We’ve been talking about counting books and this is more of a counting book. However when we did counting books before, they had lots of different pieces of paper, and they knew they were drawing one and then two and then three....

Variations of core issues may be used to stimulate teachers to think through and verbalize important aspects of a lesson. For example, the coach may ask, “How can we find out how students actually understand the task?” Such an invitation does not directly suggest how the lesson should look. In raising questions related to core issues, however, coach and teacher begin to communicate and deliberate about the design issues that are relevant to student learning and may need to construct new or refined lesson designs.

Moves that provide direct assistance offer specific suggestions (and to some extent arguments) for lesson design in a particular teaching situation. For example:

Coach: So, if you are going to read this book, I think it’s going to take you off your task. Even though it has the same title, the mathematics is different. Unless you wanted to make up a story about fruit salad that’s more like this problem.

Teacher: Yeah, I think that would be better. Maybe I could say, “We’ve just had Thanksgiving, and there was a nice fruit salad for dessert, and there were only tow kinds of fruit....”

Moves to provide direct assistance need to be based on the coach’s knowledge of the teacher’s plans and understanding of the lesson. They don’t need to specify a lesson design in full. They can also lead to genuine coconstructions by the coach and the teacher.

In order to support professional development, coaches need to keep a balance between invitational moves and moves of direct assistance. Guided only by the goal of fostering student learning, a coach may do too much of the work on lesson design and teaching, for too long, without creating enough opportunities for genuine collaboration with the teacher. On the other hand, it is not enough for coaches to limit themselves to eliciting teacher reflection with general questions and offer no direct assistance in designing the lesson. Based

on their professional knowledge, coaches need to provide substantive contributions that will have an impact on the quality of the coached lessons and thus create opportunities for teachers to learn from practice. Some novice coaches tend to concentrate exclusively on being active listeners without providing substantive input that helps to design or analyze the teaching situation. Others deliver long prescriptive monologues without allowing the teacher to participate in a genuine dialogue. Naturally, given different levels of teaching expertise and different areas of learning, the balance between invitational moves and direct assistance will shift. While at times it may be useful for coaches to take on a lot of the design and teaching work, the long-term goal must be to phase out direct assistance.

In contrast to collegial coaching, Content-Focused Coaching expects coaches to have more teaching expertise than the teachers being coached do. Ideally, coaches should have hands-on knowledge in the discipline and be very familiar with official standards, teaching materials, teaching methods, students at the corresponding grade levels, and theories of learning and teaching. (There are, of course, many exceptions to this ideal.) Because of their respective levels of professional knowledge, the interaction between teacher and coach will not be symmetrical.

Despite these differences, however, certain conditions and strategies foster professional collegiality between coach and teacher. First, the coach does not have the power to formally evaluate the teacher (the principal usually does). Second, based on the coach's accountability for student learning during the coached lessons, the coach's main focus is on what the teacher can do to assist the students' content-specific learning, not on evaluating how well the teacher uses specific teaching methods. Furthermore, coaches understand (or learn to understand) themselves as learners. They acknowledge that each new lesson design and each enactment of a lesson is to a certain extent an inherently uncertain creative act from which something can be learned. A stance of genuine curiosity and collaboration can be made manifest by wording suggestions tentatively: "I wonder if doing such-and-so would ..." Productive collaboration that successfully fosters student learning will strengthen a trusting relationship between teacher and coach.