



# The Common Core Coaching Book: Strategies to Help Teachers Address the K-5 ELA Standards

BOOK REVIEW BY CHRISTINE A. DRAPER AND LINA B. SOARES

Elish-Piper and L'Allier's book *The Common Core Coaching Book: Strategies to Help Teachers Address the K-5 ELA Standards* provides informative and critical literacy coaching tools that support teachers in planning and implementing instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This series was created with teachers' questions in mind to ensure that the instructional examples provided throughout are not only practical and easy to implement, but also have been actually studied and refined within authentic classroom settings. The text is divided into five main sections that walk the reader through coaching toward the Common Core, facilitating individual, small-group and large-group settings, and provides a final section that includes profiles of highly effective literacy coaches.

Although the CCSS promise to make students ready for college and careers by graduation, teachers often struggle when enacting the Standards into practice. This resource is designed with the K-5 literacy or instructional coach in mind and provides effective coaching strategies that support teachers in implementing Common Core instruction. In Part One of the text the first chapter addresses a brief overview of the layers of literacy coaching, the change process, supporting adult learners, building a literacy leadership team, as well as guidelines for coaching toward the CCSS. What is most beneficial is that the text allows the coaching strategy and CCSS content to be modified or changed depending on the specific needs of the school or group of teachers.

Part Two of the text details what a literacy coach should do if they are just getting started with the coaching process. This process includes establishing a climate for coaching, building a shared understanding and language, support for providing professional development at faculty meetings, and specific strategies to support this work. There are clear-cut procedures provided, copy-ready reproducible forms, and vignettes that detail the strategy in action in varied settings.

Part Three reminds coaches that not all practices can take place in large group settings and that smaller groups like grade-level teams or Professional Learning Communities may be more appropriate for some topics. This section of the text highlights five coaching strategies that work on implementation guides for the

timeline and progression of instruction throughout the school year. Furthermore there are supports that address student assessment data to plan and reflect on instruction and to promote collaboration and shared planning. Finally the coach is reminded to spend time with helping teachers to plan, teach, observe, critique, and refine a lesson in order to improve their effectiveness. By working in these smaller groups the coach is often able to differentiate their support to address the specific needs and goals of the teachers in implementing the Common Core effectively. Again reproducible forms are included as well as classroom vignettes that highlight the strategy in action.

In Part Four the coach is provided with strategies and supports for working with individual teachers. Since this process is time intensive, the author details six research-based coaching strategies that support and enhance individual teachers during this process. These include: goal setting, modeling of instructional strategies, co-planning, co-teaching, and peer observation to offer support, encouragement, and useful suggestions. Again template forms are ready to be reproduced and there are clear procedures noted for the steps to follow.

With all the support and guidance provided in the previous portions of this text, it may be hard to envision difficulties in the coaching process. However, at times things won't always go as smoothly as planned so the authors share portraits of highly effective literacy coaches including: how to establish and maintain principal support, build positive and productive relationships with teachers, work with teachers that are hesitant or reluctant to the process, how one can "stay the course" when challenges and frustrations arise, how to embed literacy coaching into other assigned duties, and useful ideas for getting and staying organized as a literacy coach.

This text includes strategies, tools, and tips that are helpful and useful in the coaching process. Each section details what the strategy is, how it should be implemented, and includes detailed steps to follow. The book is a valuable tool for literacy coaches to understand various aspects of coaching and the difficulties that may arise when supporting teachers' professional development in relation to the Common Core. The authors remind the coach that they should: "Be patient; embrace the change process; remember

that building and maintaining relationships takes time, effort, and compromise; and be the kind of literacy coach you would have wanted as a teacher” (p. 214). This text is jam-packed with practical methods and resources that support literacy coaches through a variety of situations. In addition, this book emphasizes approaches that encourage literacy coaches to be role-models of these strategies in their professional development sessions so they can indeed wholeheartedly practice what they preach while supporting teachers toward implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Elish-Piper, Laurie; and L'Allier, Susan K.  
*The Common Core Coaching Book: Strategies to Help Teachers Address the K-5 ELA Standards*  
 2014. 226 pp. \$28 pbk. Guilford Press.  
 978-1-4625-1557-8. Professional



## FOCUS NEWSLETTER

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