

Coaching and second-stage teachers' learning: "Flavor of the month" or meaningful work?

A paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

Megin Charner-Laird

March, 2009

The research was generously supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation. The views expressed are solely those of the author.

Introduction

Accountability mandates have changed the field of teaching dramatically in the last ten years. Teachers, particularly those in urban schools, are under greater pressure to increase the achievement of all of their students. Schools in urban areas face additional challenges, such as chronic low achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2003) as well as increased pressures to improve outcomes for students in more subgroups than in suburban schools (Kantor & Lowe, 2006). Additionally, urban schools experience higher levels of teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001), with teachers often leaving for less urban settings (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Although schools in urban areas have used a variety of approaches to meet demands to increase student performance, teacher learning lies at the heart of most improvement strategies (Desimone, 2001; Fullan, 2000; Valli & Buese, 2007). Research shows that teachers have a direct effect on student performance and are the single most important school-based factor in student learning (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Nye, Konstantanopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Increasing teachers' knowledge and skill, then, is perhaps the best strategy for increasing student achievement.

Policymakers and administrators recently have focused on improving the instructional capacity and tenure of urban teachers. From creating teacher education programs focused solely on preparing urban educators (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Quartz, 2003) to targeting induction for novice urban teachers (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999), many *new* teachers in urban districts have had ready access to support and resources. This support is vital given high attrition rates among novice teachers – rates that can reach 50% in five years in urban districts (Ingersoll, 2002). Yet, once teachers move past the novice stage, the targeted support and learning opportunities usually diminish. Second-stage teachers (those with 4-10 years of teaching

experience¹) express learning needs distinct from their novice and veteran peers (Charner-Laird, 2007; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990) and continue to be at risk for leaving the profession. In fact, attrition rates for teachers with 4-9 years of experience remain nearly as high as for novices (Marvel et al., 2007).

While targeted support for novices is crucial to their success and sustainability (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), most in-service learning opportunities for more experienced teachers are disconnected from their daily work inside the classroom (Borko, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2002). Often these opportunities are packaged as traditional professional development, where teachers sit in large groups listening to outside experts. These types of learning experiences may fail to provide teachers with effective teaching strategies for increasing achievement for all of their students (Valli & Buese, 2007).

This study examined the professional learning experiences of 85 second-stage teachers in an effort to understand both what types of learning they experienced and how, if at all, they deemed that learning useful to their instructional improvement. While all of the teachers in the sample described a variety of different professional learning opportunities, they found that much of this learning was not of use to their teaching. Often teachers described sitting through professional development sessions merely to log hours towards recertification or because they were required to by their department head, principal, or district administrators.

I found that participants' experiences of professional learning varied by school site. At two schools in particular, teachers experienced site-based learning opportunities that were linked to student data and identified teacher and student needs. Teachers from these schools described

¹ We have been studying second-stage teachers (those with 4-10 years of experience) at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers for the past three years. Although we are the first to use this specific term, as outlined later in this proposal, the span of time between years 4 and 10 of a teacher's career has been of interest to researchers for quite a while.

learning alongside their colleagues and both learning from colleagues' experiences and being able to share their own expertise as well. At most of the schools in the sample, however, participants described school-based learning that was helpful only occasionally, if at all. At many of the schools in the sample that had repeatedly failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), school-based professional learning, and instructional coaching in particular, was used as a direct response to this failure. Unfortunately, instead of responding to teachers' instructional needs and students' learning needs, professional learning at these sites often became a way to avoid punishment for continued poor student performance and to comply with external mandates.

In this paper, I will illustrate the different ways that participants described professional learning at their school sites. In particular, I will focus on learning opportunities that built on the existing success and capacities of a school, as well as those that were implemented in response to student failure. These findings demonstrate the important role that school sites play in teachers' professional learning experiences, and particularly how second-stage teachers experience learning and growth.

Professional Learning in a New Era²

Many scholars assert the need for new approaches to professional learning that are responsive to both schools' and teachers' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Johnson & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Lieberman, 1996; Little, 1999). Such approaches may take various forms.

Teachers may examine student work together, seeking to discern areas where further instruction

² For this study, I rely on Wilson and Berne's (1999) comprehensive definition of teacher learning, which includes formal and informal learning; mandated learning opportunities, as well as voluntary ones; coherent, ongoing learning and short-term learning; site-based learning and learning beyond the school site.

is needed (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003). Coaches may provide ongoing support for teachers in their classrooms (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Groups of teachers may work together on pedagogy through collaborative lesson study (Fernandez, 2002), or teachers may choose to conduct a targeted study based on their own goals for improvement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

This new model of professional development (e.g., Elmore, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2002; Hawley & Valli, 1999) emphasizes the need for teachers to learn in novel ways so that they can meet the new demands of their work. Key to this model is a multi-faceted approach that engages teachers in analyzing school-wide data to inform instruction. Teachers work collaboratively to draw on each other's expertise and to solve problems of practice. They have frequent opportunities for site-based learning that encourage them to focus on the specific needs of their students. For example, Little (1993) argues that teachers learn best when learning opportunities are "embedded in the social organization of schools" (Little, p. 147). In addition to learning that is school-based, many researchers argue that collaborating with colleagues lies at the heart of effective professional development (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Lieberman, 1996; Rosenholtz, Bassler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 1986; Smylie, 1996). Not only do scholars note that school-based, collaborative learning is important, but they also assert that this learning must be grounded in data on student achievement (Hawley & Valli, 1999) and be ongoing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Lieberman, 1996). Finally, many researchers call for schools to create learning opportunities that actively engage teachers in the process of learning rather than have outside experts deliver information and advice to teachers as a passive group (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2002; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Ultimately, effective schools are those that create conditions for continuous teacher learning (Fullan, 2000).

Teacher Learning and Urban School Reform

The challenges to teacher learning may be greater in urban settings³ than in other school contexts. As urban schools struggle to meet the needs of their diverse population of students, many implement reforms that focus more on changing the content and amount of what teachers teach than on supporting them as they learn relevant, new instructional approaches (Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Stein & Coburn, 2008). Researchers often reject these traditional approaches to professional development because of the minimal gains that such approaches produce in student achievement (Hanushek, 2005). And yet, when carefully conceived and implemented, professional development can support teachers in producing significant gains for their diverse groups of students (Darling-Hammond, 2009). In a research review focusing on how teachers can gain the knowledge necessary to teach diverse learners, Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) argue that a new approach to professional development, which pairs the site-based use of student assessment data with teachers' existing deep pedagogical content knowledge, can lead to changes in teaching that improve student achievement. Other, more informal means of learning,

³ For the purpose of this study, urban districts are those located in densely populated areas; they have a relatively high level of poverty (as measured by free- and reduced-price lunch rates); they have a relatively high proportion of students of color; and they have a relatively high proportion of students with limited-English proficiency. Researchers and policy makers frequently use these indicators to determine a district or school's urbanicity. They are often used in combination with other factors such as chronically low levels of student achievement as well as high rates of teacher turnover. See, for example, the Center for Technology in Education at Johns Hopkins University (http://www.sitesupport.org/urbanedu/ses1_act2_pag1.shtml) and The Center for Urban Schools at SUNY-Oswego (http://www.oswego.edu/~prusso1/what_makes_any_school_an_urban_s.htm).

such as conversations with colleagues can also play a role in improving teacher practice (Charner-Laird, 2007; Little, 1990; Szczesiul, 2007)

Too often, however, the professional development that teachers encounter in contexts of urban school reform serve to increase, expand, and intensify their roles and their work (Valli & Buese, 2007). The “policy press” experienced in urban schools places new learning demands on teachers, such as analyzing student achievement data or implementing mandated curricula. These learning opportunities, however, are frequently detached from teachers’ daily work in classrooms. Valli and Buese (2007) described the irony of teachers in high-poverty schools scrambling to learn how to read student data and regroup students accordingly, without any opportunity “to engage in ‘rich deliberations’ about the substance of their teaching” (p. 552) or how to use these data to best meet their students’ diverse needs.

Ongoing teacher learning is crucial for improving and maintaining school quality (Smylie, 1997). This is of particular importance for urban schools, which struggle to attract and retain teachers. In fact, according to Feistritzer, (2005), only 31% of *all* teachers are willing to teach in large urban settings. Since over one-third of teachers in urban schools are second-stage teachers (Marvel et al., 2007), finding the best means to develop these teachers’ instructional capacity is crucial. Valli and Buese (2007) conclude that teachers are eager to learn new skills when they see a direct relationship between their learning and their teaching. Providing this learning to urban second-stage teachers may be an essential component both to retention of this population of teachers and urban school improvement.

Methods

Data for this paper are drawn from a qualitative interview study of 85 urban, second-stage teachers. This project, conducted with the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (PNGT) built on our previous research on novice teachers (Johnson, 2004) as well as our exploratory research on second-stage teachers (Charner-Laird, 2007; Fiarman, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Qazilbash, 2007; Szczesiul, 2007).

Second-stage Teachers

Our research at PNGT has found that this generation of teachers, who currently are moving into the second stage of their career, think differently than their predecessors about their work in the classroom and in schools (Johnson, 2004). Our exploratory studies revealed, in fact, that teachers in the second-stage of their career report feeling confident with classroom management and curriculum design and find themselves ready to collaborate with colleagues and learn new teaching strategies or fine-tune curriculum (Charner-Laird, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Szczesiul, 2007). In some cases, second-stage teachers are eager to take on leadership roles to support other teachers' instructional improvement (Charner-Laird, 2007; Fiarman, 2007). Finally, having overcome the challenges of their novice years, they now have some freedom to make decisions about how to spend their time and energy in the classroom and the school (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Other research literature affirms the important characteristics and contributions of this cohort of teachers. First, second-stage teachers comprise approximately 20% of teachers nationwide (Feistritzer, 2005) and over 33% of teachers in urban areas (Marvel et al., 2007). Yet, they continue to leave the profession at rates nearly as high as their novice counterparts (Marvel et al., 2007). Huberman (1993) called this career span the "danger zone." Second-stage teachers

bring greater expertise to their work than novices (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Rockoff, 2003), making them an asset to their schools. Yet some researchers conclude that that many teachers stop learning and improving their practice after their third year in teaching (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006). Given the unique needs and characteristics of second-stage teachers, as well as the lack of research on this group, this study aims to help researchers and policymakers better understand how these teachers think about their work at this point in their career.

Site and Sample selection

We constructed our sample using a nested approach (See Appendix A for a detailed description of our sampling strategy). First, we identified three urban, Massachusetts districts. These districts have diverse student populations and are all struggling to meet accountability measures (MATells, 2009). Within each district, we targeted 3-6 schools (depending on school configuration and district enrollment) representing the elementary, middle, and high school level. We looked for schools that were representative of district demographics and achievement patterns. Finally, within each school we targeted a sample of teachers across the spectrum of the second stage of the career that taught a range of subjects and grade levels.

In order to select teachers to participate, we were given district data on teacher employment at each school site. These lists provided data on the number of years a teacher had taught in a given district, as opposed to the total years of her teaching career. Given this, we invited teachers from the lists who had between 1 and 10 years of experience within the districts, knowing that some teachers who had taught for only one year in a district may have taught

elsewhere for five years. Ultimately, our sample included 85 teachers from 14 schools across three districts (see Table 1).

Table 1. School demographics and participant count

	School Pseudonym	Total Student Enrollment*	Free & Reduced Price Lunch (%)*	Students of Color (%)*	Made AYP 2008		Total number of Participants		
					Math	ELA	Elem	Mid	High
District 1	Gansford High School	1739	55%	65%	Y	N	.	.	8
	Conifer School	867	62%	71%	N	N	2	4	.
	Greentree School	1117	67%	70%	N	Y	3	3	.
District 2	Bingham High School	231	78%	67%	Y	Y	.	.	4
	Williams High School	1121	75%	70%	N	N	.	.	10
	Deer Park Middle School	584	84%	70%	N	N	.	6	.
	Hill Middle School	581	65%	61%	N	N	.	5	.
	Lane Elementary	345	81%	79%	N	N	5	.	.
	Partridge Elementary	377	83%	72%	Y	N	3	.	.
District 3	Dryden High School	3421	60%	61%	N	N	.	.	12
	Montgomery Middle School	558	82%	62%	N	N	.	6	.
	Allendale Middle School	575	88%	64%	N	N	.	5	.
	Alpine Elementary	482	70%	56%	N	N	3	.	.
	Keller Elementary	470	66%	74%	N	N	6	.	.
Totals							22	29	34

* Figures taken from state DOE website for the 2008-2009 academic year

Research Questions

Given the fact that, traditionally, learning opportunities have been ill-matched to teachers' specific needs in the classroom and have offered little targeted support for second-stage teachers, my research focused on learning how second-stage teachers experience the opportunities they have for learning and what types of learning they find most valuable at this point in their career. It was guided by these overarching questions:

1. How do second-stage teachers in three urban districts describe their learning as it relates to their instructional improvement?
 - a. Do they describe ways that school or district contexts foster or inhibit these learning experiences?
2. What kinds of learning experiences do these teachers say have improved the quality of their teaching?
 - a. In particular, what role do outside experts, coaches, formal professional development offerings, colleagues, and collaboration play in these learning experiences?
 - b. What specific changes in their teaching do they ascribe to their learning?

Data Collection and Analysis

This study was conducted collaboratively with three other members of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. We were all involved in the data collection and analysis. Data were gathered through 60-90 minute, semi-structured interviews with participants (see Appendix

B for interview protocol). Following each interview, we wrote thematic summaries to capture the salient points of the interview as they related to the main foci of our research (professional learning, teacher autonomy, teacher engagement, and differentiated roles for teachers).

We generated a shared code list, which we then applied to all of the interviews using Atlas.ti qualitative software. Our codes were derived both from related literature and from themes that emerged through our analyses of the thematic summaries. Following coding, I generated matrices in which I looked across participants at their experiences of a variety of professional learning opportunities, including district-level professional development, working with colleagues, professional reflection, and school-based coaching.

Findings

My analyses of the second-stage teachers' learning experiences revealed distinct patterns both in the types of learning teachers were involved in and how effective they perceived this learning to be for their own instructional improvement. These differences were apparent at the school level. At a few of the schools in the sample, teachers described learning experiences that were school-based, related to their daily efforts to improve student learning, and led to ongoing changes in their teaching practice. Notably, these schools already had proven track records of success with the majority of their students. Teachers described learning at these school sites that was part of an overall organizational strategy. This strategy was focused on interdependence among staff and building on the internal capacities that already existed at the school sites. For example, at Bingham High School, about which one teacher said, "We've created ten years of data that suggests that whatever it is we are doing here is pretty damn good," teachers met weekly to discuss how they could improve and learn from each others' teaching practice. Most of

the participants, however, worked in schools that consistently failed to make AYP. These teachers either experienced professional learning that was prescriptive and mandated or described working in schools where professional learning was optional or neglected altogether.

To illustrate how participants experienced these different types of professional learning environments, I am going to focus here on how teachers at different schools described the role of coaching in relation to their professional learning. Of late, instructional coaching has become a central player in professional development, in part because it fulfills many of the ideals of professional learning in that it is site-based, ongoing, and often directly related to teachers' work with students. Teachers at almost all of the schools in the sample reported that coaching, in some capacity, existed at their school sites. There was, however, tremendous variety in terms of how participants experienced coaching and how, if at all, they felt it helped them to learn and grow as professionals.

Interdependent Capacity Building

Teachers at two of the schools in our sample described their professional learning experiences as embedded in organizational cultures that are focused on continual improvement. These schools have proven records of success with their students in spite of serving a high-poverty, high-minority population. Teachers and administrators work interdependently to figure out ways to improve on what they are already doing. Participants described how they discuss pedagogy with colleagues, observe them informally, and use data to inform their instructional decisions.

Coaching at Lane Elementary

At Lane Elementary, participants described how their work with literacy and math coaches was embedded in the school culture – a culture in which everyone is focused on continual improvement and interdependent work in order to best serve their students. Teachers at Lane saw coaching as central to their work of meeting standards and developing curricula to reach all learners. For example, Anya described how she and her colleagues worked with the math coach, “analyzing testing data together,” and “try[ing] to figure out exactly where their struggle is and how to bring them up to a higher level.” Similarly, Laura described weekly “data meetings,” during which the coach facilitated discussions about data in which they looked at students individually to discern their needs. Together, then, the teachers and coach would craft a plan to help each child to improve based on the needs revealed in that data.

At Lane the principal has developed a culture of high expectations and a focus on providing students with what they need to learn and succeed. As Eliza described it, “everybody works together and they’re supportive and they’re energetic.” This makes her “want to give a hundred percent every day.” Within this culture, coaches were seen as playing a central role in teachers being able “to give a hundred percent.” Not only did they guide teachers in looking at data, but they also provided curricular supports so teachers could implement effective data-based instruction. Anya, for example, noted that coaches provided her with materials to help her meet her instructional requirements. She was focused on “creative ways to hit all those benchmarks” and was able to draw on the expertise of the math and literacy coaches in order to teach her effective ways to do that. Jack, too, described working with the literacy coach “to get better strategies to supplement the reading program.” He described the coaches as “instrumental” in helping him learn to teach effectively.

Notably, these teachers saw the coaches as a resource to help them learn how best to support their students. They approached the coaches in order to gain knowledge that would help them supplement or enhance their curricula. The coaches were not merely handing out decontextualized teaching tips to the teachers. Instead, their work was deeply connected to teachers' curriculum and pedagogy, focused on helping them to learn what they needed in order to help every student at the school meet achievement benchmarks. It seems clear that the culture at Lane, where all teachers are "on board" with the principal's commitment to giving 120% and always striving for success with the students, is a place where coaching is viewed as a natural and vital component of teachers' learning and instructional improvement; it is central to the organizational improvement strategy at the school. As Eliza stated, "I never feel like I'm swimming upstream; I always feel like there is somebody in this building that I can go to...and I will get the help I need to help me work with my kids."

Responding to Failure

Compliance-based professional learning

Deer Park Middle School, like the majority of schools in the sample, has consistently failed to make AYP. The school is currently under state control for their pattern of poor performance and lack of a sound improvement plan to address students' learning needs. While the district implemented middle-school coaching district wide, at Deer Park the literacy coach became a key player in helping the school in its efforts to attain proficiency on the state test and to be removed from state control.

Like other forms of professional learning, coaching at Deer Park was mandated by the administration. Teachers needed to work with and learn from the coach. The principal, in order

to comply with state improvement mandates, prescribed her focus. Thus, she worked almost exclusively on ways to improve students' MCAS scores. And in spite of the fact that she was officially a literacy coach, she worked with teachers in disciplines beyond English and Reading in order to help teachers learn new ways to improve their students' MCAS performance.

Some teachers at Deer Park appreciated Allegra, the literacy coach. They saw her as someone who gave them valuable tips and resources. For example, Dianna noted that “MCAS is huge” and Allegra was “an amazing resource,” helping her analyze MCAS questions and figuring out how to help her students do well on the more difficult questions. Jeanine, too, described Allegra as helping her figure out the minutia of teaching in her early years. Now she helps her by “coming up with little things” that Jeanine saw as valuable additions to her teaching, such as sharing a teaching idea or resource that she found online.

Although Jeanine and Dianna mentioned ways that Allegra was helpful beyond supporting MCAS improvement, the majority of comments about Allegra revolved around MCAS. Jeanine said that “she does all the MCAS work,” and Dianna described her as being “in the forefront” of school-wide professional development on MCAS. Participants saw her as the MCAS resource, always at the ready with literacy tips. Because teachers and administrators at Deer Park were so narrowly focused on improving their MCAS scores, these tips inevitably focused on helping teachers to do just that – improve test scores. Coaching at Deer Park, thus, was instrumental in nature – tied almost exclusively to test-preparation methods.

Sometimes Allegra's tips were not responsive to a teacher's subject or current instructional needs. Oliver, a science teacher, described how he felt put off by Allegra's “flavor of the month new strategies.” In his eyes, the ideas she shared were more likely to come from the latest article that she read as opposed to coming from an understanding of his teaching, his

students' needs, and what he might need to learn to improve their learning. Oliver also took issue with the fact that Allegra, a literacy coach, worked with teachers beyond English Language Arts. He relayed an example of Allegra suggesting that he teach students to use the text of a question in their open-response answers on the MCAS. She pushed him to focus on the use of the text in those responses as opposed to the importance of the answer to the question posed. Yet in science, as Oliver explained, "you have to know the answer," and there is just one answer.

Working with a literacy coach, as Oliver was required to do, exemplifies the way learning mandates were made at Deer Park without careful consideration of the utility of the learning being provided. Jeanine summarized her experience of the Deer Park context when she said, "We're constantly being told what we have to do, what we're not doing right, what we have to do to improve." Coaching was one of the things the teachers "had to do" in order to improve their teaching as well as to comply with state-issued mandates. Yet coaching did not necessarily help them. Or if it did, it meant teachers learning new tips or tricks, usually related to testing. Ultimately, coaching was used, like other professional learning at Deer Park, as a way to stem the tide of failure on MCAS as opposed to a way to engage teachers in ongoing learning and critical collegueship (Lord, 1994).

Schools where professional learning is fragmented and optional

While some participants described a prescriptive approach to professional learning at schools like Deer Park, teachers at other struggling schools described schools where professional learning was viewed by administrators and teachers alike as an optional activity. At Montgomery Middle School, teachers described a number of different ways that they engaged in professional learning, including coaching, working with colleagues, and district professional development

sessions. Yet among the six participants from that school, there was little consistency in both how they learned, how that learning was useful to them, if at all, and if they even felt required to participate in professional learning. Opportunities for learning were fragmented, and teachers perceived little pressure from the administration to participate in professional learning. Professional learning did not have a clearly-articulated role in the organizational strategy for instructional improvement.

Scott, a special education teacher, exemplified the optional nature of working with coaches at Montgomery. He described the instructional specialist as offering him suggestions: “You could try this, you could try that.” He welcomed those suggestions but ultimately, in figuring out how best to meet his students’ needs, he saw himself as his own greatest resource. Scott felt no pressure from his administrators to either work with or use ideas from the instructional specialist. Instead, it seemed completely voluntary and left to him to judge both whether he worked with her and if he used her ideas. In fact, Scott interacted with her mostly by chance since he taught part of each day in a shared space in which she also worked.

Natalie, on the other hand, very much enjoyed and relied on her work with the math coach. She described planning together with Ashley, the coach. They observed each other teach and discussed their observations afterward in order to inform future lesson planning. To her, working with Ashley was a “team effort,” and she saw this work as a useful resource and source of learning that improved her teaching. Natalie knew that she could go to Ashley “any time,” and she seized this opportunity for learning and growth.

Yet, as both Natalie and Ashley described, few teachers at Montgomery actually made use of the option to work with the math coach. Not required by the administration or seen as a key component to reducing the school’s chronic failure, a number of teachers at Montgomery

filed a grievance about the role of the math coach at the school. These teachers viewed the fact that another teacher was coming into classrooms, observing, and offering instructional advice as a breach of the union contract. Ashley described being told by a union representative that the only part of her job that she could do, according to the contract, was to administer and score quarterly math assessments. Yet, as Ashley pointed out, her job, too, was “union approved.” In spite of this, many teachers were wary of allowing her in their classrooms. This, coupled with the fact that the administration did little to indicate that math coaching was anything more than optional, meant that Ashley found only a few teachers willing to invite her into their rooms.

Schools with an absence of professional learning opportunities

While most participants described schools that had some sort of professional learning available, even if that learning was overly prescriptive or seemingly optional, a few participants described work contexts where their schools’ failing AYP status was seemingly ignored. At these schools, the organizational strategy seemed to leave professional learning by the wayside.

Williams High School is a place with administrators whom participants described as hands-off. In fact, Elliot described teachers at Williams as “like independent contractors.” In this setting, where teachers’ work was under little guidance from the administration, teachers’ learning was left up to individual motivation since there was an absence of institutional opportunities for learning. While a number of Williams teachers reported valuable learning from working informally with colleagues or from off-site courses that they pursued, none of these learning opportunities were organized, sanctioned by, or required by the administration.

In fact, the few administration-sponsored learning opportunities that participants described petered out and lost administrative support over time. This included ninth-grade team

meetings, during which all ninth-grade teachers discussed the needs of their students. After a short time, these meetings “dissolved,” in Lori’s words. This also included coaching. A few years back, the school received grant funding for a literacy coach. But now, “She’s not around ... She got cut,” Francesca, an English teacher, said. In letting the ninth grade team meetings and the literacy coaching dissolve, the administration demonstrated their inattention to teacher learning at Williams.

Remarkably, the only Williams teacher who missed the literacy coach was the former coach herself. Other teachers described the benefits of coaching only in passing, such as Mike, who noted using a graphic organizer the coach had given him only “once in a while...with the lower kids.” It seems that, even when the coach was present at Williams, her role and utility were not clear. She did not play an integral role in teachers’ instructional improvement. Instead, the Williams administrators failed to integrate the literacy coach into an overall strategy for improvement. The fact that coaching disappeared at Williams is emblematic of the culture teachers described at the school – one in which teachers, as independent contractors, are left to “fend” for their own learning as their learning needs are seemingly ignored by the administration.

Discussion

Based on participants’ descriptions, it is clear that schools in this study responded in very different ways to external accountability pressures. At most schools, professional learning generally, and coaching specifically, were used as a means to moderate the threat of accountability pressures. Faced with the need to improve instruction, administrators turned to coaching (and other means of professional learning) as a way to fix low test scores. Yet without a

coherent strategy for school-wide improvement or a shared commitment to this strategy, learning opportunities at these schools were often either too narrowly focused (on test scores) or approached casually by administrators and teachers alike.

At schools like Lane, which can be characterized as a “learning organization” (Senge, 1990) – where staff are always working on new ways to create student learning, participants described a culture in which teachers were committed to examining their practice collectively, to learning new teaching strategies, and to working together to best serve their students. Coaching was a natural component of this culture. Teachers embraced it as a useful learning opportunity and utilized what they learned from their work with coaches on a daily basis. The teachers from Lane discussed what could be described as an ever-expanding capacity to improve, supported by coaching and other professional learning experiences. This capacity is a key component to the school’s success in spite of serving a high-poverty population.

Working in a learning organization (Senge, 1990) is ideal for many second-stage teachers. We know that these teachers have reached a point in their career where they feel competent and confident (Charner-Laird, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Szczesiul, 2007). We also know that these teachers are of a generation looking for opportunities for challenging, collaborative work (Johnson, 2004). The learning opportunities in schools like Lane pushed the second-stage teachers in this sample to engage in such collaborative work. The coach-led meetings in which teachers discussed data and used those data to inform their instruction afforded participants the opportunity to work with and learn from each other. In fact, the school was organized to facilitate these interactions. Not only that, teachers could also share and be recognized for the expertise that they possess at this point in their career when engaging in these collective discussions.

The flexibility of coaching as a learning opportunity that can adapt to second-stage teachers' current learning needs made it ideal for the SSTs at Lane. No longer struggling with basics such as management and lesson planning, these teachers could work with coaches to analyze their teaching, find areas of weakness, and devise appropriate ways to support their instructional improvement in those areas. Notably, the culture at Lane allowed for SSTs to learn from coaches in ways that met their immediate needs. It was understood that everyone on staff was working to support the improvement of student learning and coaching allowed this learning to be personalized. Participants, then, saw coaching as an integral component of the learning culture at Lane, as opposed to a delivery tool for specific learning tips and techniques.

Unfortunately, professional learning was not so responsive or flexible at other schools in this study. At schools that were struggling with external accountability mandates and repeated failing AYP status, participants described learning opportunities that responded more to these external pressures than to teachers' actual learning needs. By prescribing what and whom coaches worked with, leaving work with a coach as optional, or failing to provide opportunities for teacher learning and the role a coach could play in that learning, many schools in this study, according to participants, existed in survival mode.

“Survival learning,” (Senge, 1990) at these schools meant the reactive use of coaches in a frenzy to improve MCAS scores. Alternately, it meant schools where administrators took a back seat with regards to teacher learning, allowing teachers to choose the option of working with coaches only if they wanted to, or failing to provide opportunities for teacher learning altogether. While some of the SSTs at these schools were able to find meaningful learning opportunities for themselves (informal collaborations with colleagues, off-site courses, or professional reading and

reflection), their learning was not embedded in their school contexts. They were left to determine for themselves how, if at all, to use what they learned to improve their teaching.

On the other hand, working with coaches who had narrowly-prescribed teaching roles within their schools (such as Allegra at Deer Park) meant that some SSTs, such as Oliver, experienced professional learning that was focused on improving MCAS scores as opposed to their particular learning needs. For teachers like Oliver, the school-based learning that was available to him in the form of coaching proved unhelpful and left him skeptical of future information shared by the school's literacy coach. Thus, even when schools have models of professional learning that may seem to fit current ideals for school-based teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2009) there is no certainty that teachers, and particularly second-stage teachers, will learn or learn well. Without a coherent organizational strategy, one that places student and teacher learning at its core, school-based learning is likely to be mediocre and not responsive to teachers' different learning needs

Conclusions and Implications

The way that participants in this study described their experiences with instructional coaching can be instructive in a number of ways. First, teachers who experienced coaching at Lane Elementary experienced this learning in the context of a learning organization. There was a school culture committed to ongoing instructional improvement. They knew that their continued examination of their students' needs and their teaching practices would help them to meet external accountability demands. Yet coaching was not a meaningful source of learning for teachers in many other schools in this study. At schools struggling to find effective ways to meet

accountability demands, coaching was often either a reactive approach to meeting those demands or an optional resource that teachers could use if desired.

Ultimately, the success or failure of coaching as an effective learning tool for participants in this study depended on school context. Although schools and districts frequently turn to coaching as a new means to support teacher learning, this study points to the need to examine the context in which that coaching is taking place. Bringing coaching into a setting such as Williams, where teachers are left on their own to teach and learn as they will, there is likely to be little learning associated with the coaching experience. However, at schools where staff share a vision for teaching and learning, coaching can be a useful learning strategy when coaches build on current capacities and address teachers' particular learning needs.

Although SSTs in this study experienced coaching across contexts, they experienced it in vastly different ways. While it was effective for some, others found it to be an extra burden, unrelated to their teaching. Professional learning, and its effectiveness, was tied up not only in the method of learning but in the learning context as well. Thus, as we think about the learning needs of this new generation of teachers, many of whom are now in the second stage of their career, we must attend not just to the type of professional learning that we offer, but also to the context in which the teachers will be learning.

While coaching may be effective for those in learning organizations or organizations with a sense of internal coherence and vision (Elmore, 2004), SSTs working in fragmented cultures or schools focused exclusively on accountability mandates may benefit from other types of learning. These teachers may learn best removed from their school contexts, at least temporarily – in learning networks with like-minded teachers, engaged in study groups, or working on teacher research. Whatever the context, it is important that school leaders support their second-

stage teachers in finding professional learning that meets their specific needs at this stage of the career – needs that, according to participants, are often different from those of novices or more veteran teachers. Ultimately, both for teachers and students to learn well in the long-term, schools must focus on becoming places where there is a culture of learning, a culture focused broadly on instructional improvement instead of narrowly on raising MCAS scores. Until then, though, some SSTs may find their learning needs best met beyond their school contexts.

References

- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33 (8), 3-15.
- Charner-Laird, M. (2007). "Ready and willing: Second-stage teachers and professional collaboration." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 2007.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2003). The multiple meanings of multicultural teacher education: A conceptual framework. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 30, 7-26.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1996). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. In M. W. McLaughlin & I. Oberman (Eds.), *Teacher learning: New policies, new practices* (pp. 202-218). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Desimone, L. (2001). The role of teachers in urban school reform. ERIC Digest. Retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-1/reform.html> on March, 2, 2008.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R. (2004). Toward teacher development for the urban in urban teaching. *Teaching Education*, 15(4), 339-350.
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). Bridging the gap between standards and achievement. In R. F. Elmore (Ed.), *School reform from the inside out* (pp. 89-132). Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). When accountability knocks, will anyone answer? In R. F. Elmore (Ed.), *School reform from the inside out* (pp. 89-132). Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1013-1055.
- Feistritzer, E. (2005). *Profile of Teachers in the US 2005*. National Center for Education Information, Washington, DC.
- Fernandez, C. (2002). Learning from Japanese approaches to professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(5), 393-405.
- Fiarman, S. E. (2007). "It's hard to go back: Career decisions of second-stage teacher leaders." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 2007.

- Fideler, E., & Haselkorn, D. (1999). *Learning the ropes: Urban teacher induction programs and practices in the United States*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2000). Three stories of education reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(8), 581-584.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 915-945.
- Hanushek, E. (2005). *Economic outcomes and school quality*. Education Policy Series. International Academy of Education and International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO.
- Hanushek, E., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *Journal of Human Resources* 39(2), 326-354.
- Hawley, W. D., & Valli, L. (1999). The essentials of effective professional development: A new consensus. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession* (pp. 127-150). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Huberman, M. (1993). *The lives of teachers*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). *Why do high-poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers?* Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future.
- Ingersoll, R. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(631), 16-31.
- Ingersoll, R. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 499-534.
- Jacob, B. A. (2007). *The challenges of staffing urban schools with effective teachers*. *Future of Children*, 17(1), 129-153. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ795883&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Johnson, S. M., & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. (2004). *Finders and keepers: Helping new teachers survive and thrive in our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kane, T. J., Rockoff, J. E., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). *What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness? Evidence from New York City*. Unpublished paper. Harvard University.
- Kantor, H., & Lowe, R. (2006). From new deal to no deal: No child left behind and the devolution of responsibility for equal opportunity. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(4), 474-502.

- Kirkpatrick, C. (2007). "To Invest, Coast or Idle: Second-stage Teachers Enact their Job Engagement," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. *Review of Educational Research, 24*, 211-247.
- Lieberman, A. (1996). Practices that support teacher development: Transforming conceptions of professional learning. In M. W. McLaughlin & I. Oberman (Eds.), *Teacher learning: New policies, new practices* (pp. 185-201). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Little, J. W. (1993). Teachers' professional development in a climate of educational reform. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis, 15*(2), 129-151.
- Little, J. W. (1999). Organizing schools for teacher learning. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession* (pp. 233-262). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Little, J. W. (1990). "The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations." *Teachers College Record, Vol. 91*(4), 509-536.
- Little, J. W., Gearhart, M., Curry, M., & Kafka, J. (2003). Looking at student work for teacher learning, teacher community and school reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 85*, 185-192.
- Marvel, J., Lyter, D. M., Peltola, P., Strizek, G. A., Morton, B. & Rowland, R. (2007). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2004-2005 teacher follow-up survey*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute for Education Sciences.
- McCaffrey, D. F., Lockwood, J. R., Koretz, D. M., and L. S. Hamilton. (2003). *Evaluating Value-added models for teacher accountability*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.
- Murnane, R. J., & Phillips, B. R. (1981). What do effective teachers of inner city children have in common? *Social Science Research, 10*, 83-100.
- Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute Program on Education.
- Nye, B, Konstantopoulos, S. & Hedges, L. (2004). "How large are teacher effects?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Vol. 26*(3), 237-257.
- Quartz, K. H. (2003). "Too angry to leave": Supporting new teachers' commitment to transform urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 54*(2), 99-111.
- Rockoff, J. (2003). *The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from panel data*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

- Rosenholtz, S. J., Bassler, O., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. (1986). Organizational conditions of teacher learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 2(2), 91-104.
- Rosenholtz, S., & Simpson, C. (1990). "Workplace conditions and the rise and fall of teachers' commitment." *Sociology of Education*, 63 (4), 241-257.
- Sikes, P. (1992). Imposed change and the experienced teacher. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher Development and Educational Change* (pp. 36-55). London: The Falmer Press.
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.
- Smylie, M. A. (1996). From bureaucratic control to building human capital: The importance of teacher learning in education reform. *Educational researcher*, 25(9), 9-11.
- Szczesiul, S. A. (2007). "Initiatives and Initiative: Second-stage Teachers' Assessment of Autonomy," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Timperley, H. & Alton-Lee, A. (2008) "Reframing teacher learning: An alternative policy approach to strengthening valued outcomes for diverse learners." *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 32,(1), 328-369.
- Valli, L. & Buese, D. (2007). "The changing roles of teachers in an age of high-stakes accountability." *American Educational Research Journal*(3), 519-558.
- Wilson, S. M., & Berne, J. (1999). Teacher learning and the acquisition of professional knowledge: An examination of research on contemporary professional development. In A. Iran-Nejad & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 173-209.

Appendix A – Detailed Sample Selection

District Selection

We drew our sample from 3 urban districts in the same northeastern state because research indicates that urban districts face greater challenges maintaining a qualified teaching force (Brian, 2007; Ingersoll, 2004). Selecting three districts enabled us to compare teachers' experience across districts. Because urban schools from the same state operate in the same state-level context with the same accountability requirements, selecting districts within the same state facilitated comparisons between districts and schools by eliminating state-level variation.

In each district, we obtained the district's permission for the study and requested a list of all teachers that had been employed in the district for 1-10 years. Although we were only interested in speaking with teachers who had taught for 4-10 years, we decided to request district lists of teachers who had been employed in the district for 1-10 years since we knew the lists did not reflect teachers' experience prior to entering the district. Thus, it was necessary to invite some teachers who may have taught in the district for fewer than 4 years. Additionally, because some teachers with 1-10 years of experience in a district actually had more than 10 years of total teaching experience, some of the teachers on these lists were not eligible to participate in the study.

Despite this problem, the lists indicated roughly how many potential second-stage teachers worked at each school in the district. Thus we could target schools with more than one or two second-stage teachers. These lists also enabled us to contact teachers without involving school personnel and, thus, we could protect the confidentiality of participants.

School Selection

Within each district we selected three to six schools from which we invited teachers to participate. In part, the schools were selected because each of them seemed to have ample second-stage teachers. Also, we aimed to include teachers who taught at the high school, middle school, and elementary levels in our sample. Thus, we selected schools in each district to achieve this distribution (see Table 2). In District 1, we selected the one and only high school in the district and, two of the districts' K-8 schools. In District 2, we selected two high schools; one a mid-sized comprehensive high school, and the other a small, alternative high school. We also selected two middle schools and two elementary schools. In District 3 we selected the only high school in the district as well as two middle schools and two elementary schools.

Except in District 2, where there was only one high school, our decisions were based on a number of factors. First, we wanted schools with sufficient numbers of potential second-stage teachers. Second, we selected schools that were not extremes in their districts in terms of student demographics. That is to say, we selected schools that neither had the lowest nor the highest percentage of students with free & reduced priced lunch, percentage of students of color, or percentages of dropouts. Size was a factor when it came to the selection of the high schools in District 2, and we selected 2 schools that were very different in size. In total, we selected 14 schools from these 3 districts, and principals were sent a letter informing them that we had received permission from the district to interview teachers in their schools.

Teacher selection

Once schools were chosen, we selected teachers from the lists provided by the district. Since these lists had teacher subjects/grade taught and years of experience, we were able to use them to ensure variation along these variables. We also tried to invite both men and women to

participate, but had to make these determinations using only participant names as gender was not a field on these lists.

We sent invitations by mail to participants' schools. In each school we over-sampled anticipating that some teachers would refuse or not respond to our invitation⁴. Follow-up emails were sent to those teachers who did not initially respond. After 2-3 follow-up emails, we attempted to contact teachers by phone. Table 2 describes the number of invitations and response rate at each school.

We confirmed the teachers' years of experience prior to scheduling an interview, since many teachers had more experience than the lists indicated. In some cases, additional invitations had to be issued in an attempt to meet our school targets. Targets varied depending on the size of the schools⁵.

We conducted individual interviews at the convenience of participants (see protocol in Appendix B). Most interviews occurred after school in the teachers' classrooms. On average, interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. Each interview was recorded for the purpose of transcription. Participants' background information including age, education history, number of students, and employment history, was collected prior to each interview. Later, each interview was transcribed, and names and identifiers changed in order to protect participant confidentiality.

⁴ Since we obtained permission from districts at different times, teacher invitations in each district were sent out at different times. As such our over-sampling strategy evolved. In District 1, we minimally over-sampled teachers and spent a great deal of time contacting invitees. However, when it came to inviting participants from District 3, we had less time to contact participants before the end of the school year, and therefore, over-sample much more.

⁵ For smaller schools we hoped for between 3-5 participants. We interviewed many more participants in the larger high schools.

Table 2. Obtaining the Sample of Second-Stage Teachers (SSTs)

	School Pseudonym	Total possible SSTs	Teachers invited	Invited teachers who were not SSTs	No Reply or Declined	Interviewed*
District 1	Gansford High School	52	14	2	4	8 (67%)
	Conifer School	39	16	1	9	6 (40%)
	Greentree School	39	20	3	11	6 (33%)
District 2	Bingham High School	9	9	2	3	4 (57%)
	Williams High School	36	25	1	12	10 (42%)
	Deer Park Middle School	10	9	0	2	6 (67%)
	Hill Middle School	36	16	1	10	5 (33%)
	Lane Elementary	8	8	2	1	5 (83%)
	Partridge Elementary	10	9	3	3	3 (50%)
District 3	Dryden High School	141	27	3	9	12 (50%)
	Montgomery Middle School	31	16	3	7	6 (46%)
	Allendale Middle School	25	10	2	3	5 (63%)
	Alpine Elementary	14	9	2	4	3 (43%)
	Keller Elementary	22	14	1	7	6 (46%)

*Percentage of teachers interviewed is calculated by dividing the number of teachers interviewed at each school by the number of teachers invited minus the number of teachers who were invited but were not SSTs

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Introduction

This is a study where we're interviewing teachers. We're interested in the experiences of teachers who have been teaching between for four to ten years. First I have some questions about you and your entry into teaching.

1. How many years have you been teaching? How many in this district? In this school? And you have professional status or tenure?
2. Did you enter teaching right out of college?
 - a. **If no**, What did you do prior to entering teaching and for how long?
3. Where did you do your teacher preparation?
 - a. Undergrad? Graduate? Alternative certification?
4. What do you teach? Have you taught other subjects or grades?
5. Have you worked in any other role that takes you out of the classroom (i.e. coach, lead mentor)?

Engagement

Segue: Now I'm going to ask you about different areas of your work.

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? (keep brief, if possible)
2. Since you started teaching, have your reasons for being a teacher changed? If so, why?

3. Do you enjoy being a teacher today? (Compared to when you first started) Has this changed since you started teaching? Why?

4. New teachers often describe being overwhelmed and not having enough time to do what they need to do. Was that true for you? Has it changed? [Potentially probe to get at their evaluation of *how much* time and effort *now verses then: Are they more or less overwhelmed?*]

5. Do you spend time on different things than you did as a new teacher?

Probe: Do these changes (or lack thereof) make teaching more/less enjoyable?

Probe: So, does that take more time or effort than it did when you started?

6. Does anyone or anything [in school or out of school] guide you, instruct you, or otherwise influence you about how to spend your time as a teacher?

[Alternate ways to ask the question: Employees, teachers included, often have to make choices about how much time and effort to put into their work, and how to spend their time. What influences your decisions about how you spend your time as a teacher? Are there people or things at your school that you consider before you make a decision about how to spend your time?]

Probe, depending on how they interpret the question:

a. Do you have other responsibilities or commitments that influence whether and how you spend your time as a teacher?

Teacher Autonomy and Decision-Making

Segue: We're also interested in understanding how teachers like you decide what and how to teach at this point in your career.

- Could you tell me how you decide **what** and **how** you teach in Math/Science/ELA/SS?

Probe for details if they have a hard time answering: For example, could you tell me in your X class, yesterday what did you teach and how did you teach? (Why did you decide to teach what you taught? Why did you decide to teach it the way that you did? Listen for: curriculum, team, other teachers, etc)

- Looking for what types of support and material they get, where it comes from (teacher generated, district mandated, etc.), and whether they think what they get is any good. Also would like to know if they change what they get; if so, how? [*What kinds of support or materials do you get when it comes to planning? Do you change what you get? If so, how?*]
 - Looking to find out if they are coordinating w/ others to prepare curriculum or teach in particular ways: [*Are other teachers in your school or in the district using the same curriculum or the same teaching strategies? If so, why? How did that happen? Is that good?*]
- Want to know if they have all that they need to feel prepared to teach their students (materials, training, time to prepare, opportunities to improve). Also want to know if they have what they need in all of their classes (is it different in US History than Civics). [*Do you feel you have everything you need to teach? Is this the case in all subject? If no, what do you need?*]

Probe for influences on HOW they teach; if they don't touch on it, ask again: *How do you decide HOW to teach?*

- Want to know if teachers in the school/district/department are required to teach in particular ways (*Do they have to use project-based learning? do they have to use cooperative grouping? Do they have to assess in the same ways?*)
 - *If they are required to teach using specific strategies, how do they learn them and what do they think of them?*
 If not, would they like to be taught new strategies? (what types, by whom) [*Would it appeal to you to have required ways of teaching*]

Teacher Learning

Segue:: I'm interested in understanding how at this time in your career you learn best and how you use what you learn in your teaching.

1. Think of a recent time where your teaching improved. What kind of learning experience led to that improvement? Could you discuss two of these experiences? They could be formal learning opportunities or informal ones. [What did you learn? How did you change your practice?

2. How do you use [learning experiences #1 ()] in the classroom with your students/in your teaching?
 1. Probe: What did it [discussion, activities, classes?] look like before and after this learning took place? How is your teaching better? How has this affected your curriculum?

Pedagogy? How did it help your students/why was it good for your students and their needs?]

How you deal with different students? Why was this “the right thing” for your students (or vice versa: Why wasn’t what you learned a good match for your students?)?

Another possible probe: Before this learning experience, your class looked like this...

Depending on what they discuss, follow-up with probes about:

- Coaching: Was a coach involved at all in this learning? If so, how?
- Teaming: Did you work with a team of other teachers on this? Was this required or voluntary?
- Formal PD at school or district: Where did this learning take place? Was it required? [Is it expected that this is going to be part of your teaching repertoire? Who is expecting it? What happens if you don’t use this?]
- Outside of school learning: teachers’ network, external workshop, etc. Listen for this, but this isn’t a direct question.
 - Does this connect to anything that is going on in your school?
- How the learning took place (alone, with others, interactive, receptive, one-shot deal, ongoing)
- Admin support for the learning (e.g. was there time set aside for team meetings?)/What makes this learning possible? Is there anything that the school or admin does to support learning that matters to you?

3. *If we know they have a coach, structured teams, etc, and they don’t mention them, follow-up to see if they have helped them learn anything valuable: I know that you have time set aside at your school for team meetings (grade or subject). Did that team structure support your learning in this example at all? If so, how?*

4. Have you had to learn any new things because of MCAS? Or, has MCAS shaped your learning in any specific ways?

Differentiated Roles

1. **Roles Lead-In:** Do any teachers here have special roles that take them out of the classroom to work with other teachers? If so, what are they? **[If the respondent has such a role, skip to questions 1A-4A]**
2. Have you worked with (a teacher in such a role) [name it: coach]? If so, was it worthwhile?

3. Do you think it's a good thing for the district to sponsor such roles?

4. Would you be interested in taking on such a role some day? Why?/Why not?

1A. You mentioned that you have worked as a [literacy coach]. What are/were your responsibilities in that role?

2A. Can you describe what it was/has been like to have this role? [Note whether it was school-based or district-wide.]

3A. How did your principal and colleagues respond?

4A. What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks of such a role? Do you think it's a good thing for the district to sponsor such roles?

Note: If they talk a lot about individual benefits, then push for school or district or student benefits and vice versa.

Teacher Retention

Seque: You've talked a lot about the teaching experiences you've had over the past x years.

1. When you think about where you are now, what do you think about your future career plans? How long do you plan to stay in teaching?

2. How will you decide?

3. Has this always been the case?

a. Probe: Did you ever consider teaching as something you might do for your career? Did you ever consider teaching as something you might do short-term? If it changed, what changed it for you?