The Boston Plan for Excellence's 21st Century Schools Program

Mid-Year Evaluation Report: 1998-1999

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Written By

Barbara Neufeld and Katrina Woodworth

With Assistance From

Jessica Evans and Guiomar Garcia

Education Matters, Inc.
Cambridge, MA

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the end of Education Matters' first year of evaluating the 21st Century Schools program, we wrote a report that detailed the hard work that schools were undertaking in order to implement the Essentials of school reform developed jointly by the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Boston Annenberg Challenge (BAC), and adopted by the Boston School Committee in November 1997.[1] In that report, we reviewed (1) the design of the 21st Century Schools program and the supports available to the schools from the BPE; (2) the ways in which the focus on teaching and learning was playing out in our sample of schools with respect to the implementation of the BPS Citywide Learning Standards; (3) progress with the early phase of looking at student work (LASW); (4) opportunities for teacher and principal professional development; and, (5) the ways in which the BPE and BPS were working together to support one reform agenda.

We concluded that the design of the reform was strong, and that the instructional focus and its link to literacy-based professional development was leading teachers to start to work together in new ways. We reported that LASW was proceeding slowly and depended on the presence of a coach or other facilitator and that both whole school change (WSC) and content coaches were essential to the continued implementation of the 21st Century Schools program. We noted that principals were beginning to consider what it would mean to work as instructional leaders and that the BPE and BPS were forging new relations in an effort to increase student achievement.

Our second evaluation report was scheduled for completion in July 1999. However, with the agreement of the BPE, we decided to write a mid-year report in order to provide the BPE with information it could use in making program decisions at the end of the 1998-1999 school year. Our third report, which will be completed by the end of September 1999, will focus on the role of the BPS and the BPE in supporting whole school change and standards-based reform. It will include attention to the implementation of reform in Cohort III. This component of the evaluation, designed into the OERI grant which supports Education Matters' work, will enable us to consider the ways in which the BPS is learning from the 21st Century Schools (Cohort I) as it implements reform from within the BPS. We intend that report to coincide with the second quantitative report to the BPE from Policy Studies Associates (PSA).[2] The PSA report will provide data from a second set of surveys to principals, coaches and teachers as well as an analysis of student achievement data from the Stanford-9. Subsequent reports from Education Matters will follow-up on the implementation and impact of the 21st Century Schools program at the school and classroom levels. Our final report, due June 2001, will review the progress of reform and its impact on a) students' opportunities to learn, and b) their actual achievement.

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[1]Neufeld, B., and Woodworth, K. *Evaluation Report on Year Two: The Boston Plan for Excellence's 21st Century Schools Program*. July 15, 1998.

[2]The first PSA report, *Evaluation of the Boston 21st Century Schools Program: Report on the Year 1 and Year 2 Surveys,* was dated November 1998.

In this second report, we follow-up on two components of the 21st Century Schools program that we consider integral to deep implementation of the reforms. They are (1) the implementation of an instructional focus on literacy, and (2) the continuing work of the WSC and content coaches. These two components of the reform merit review at this time because they direct attention to the improvement of teaching and learning and to the development of schools as learning communities in which all adults work together to forward student achievement. We focus on them now, as well, because we want to inform BPE staff about program progress and alert them to areas that may need attention. This may be especially important given that the BPE is considering whether to phase-out the work of the WSC coaches in some schools. We intend this report to provide timely information that the BPE can use to make program adjustments where they are needed.

We begin with a discussion of the early phase of implementing a literacy focus. Then we turn to a discussion of the work of the coaches. We end with a review of our findings.[3]

II. LITERACY: EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

When the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE)launched its 21st Century Schools program, the number one requirement, or essential, was to "develop a vision and focus for the school's academic priorities."[4] The idea behind this directive was to "mobilize collaboration across the school toward one instructional goal or approach." In this sense, the instructional focus would "serve as an initial entry point for standards-based reform." The BPE indicated that choice of an instructional focus should emerge from a review of student work and achievement data. Whole school change (WSC) coaches were provided to assist school staffs in coming to consensus on their instructional focus.

By the end of their first year as 21st Century Schools, most schools had selected literacy as their instructional focus. In that year (1996-97), as well as in Year Two (1997-98), schools began to define the ways in which they would address literacy. Some schools decided to adopt research-based, "balanced" literacy programs; others opted to develop their own.[5] Balanced literacy programs included the Early Learning Literacy Initiative (ELLI), Success for All, First Steps, and others.[6] For those schools that adopted a program, the timing of professional development

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[3]Our analyses are based on interview data with BPE staff, coaches from all but one or two 21st Century Schools, and teachers and principals at our seven sample schools. All interviews were conducted during the first half of the 1998-1999 school year.

[4]The characterization of this "essential" comes from the February 1997 issue of *Focus*.

[5]A balanced literacy approach, one that relies on "a mix of specific strategies, assessments, and interventions," is recommended by the national Research Council's Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children in Snow, C. E., Burns, S., and Griffin, P. (Eds). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998.

[6]By the Fall of 1997, the BPS was encouraging all elementary schools to adopt a literacy model.

varied depending on (a) when a school selected a program, and (b) how the program's professional development was structured. For example, schools that selected a literacy program by the end of Year One and had teachers participate in program training over the summer (i.e., Success for All) were up-and-running with the new approach to literacy by the fall of 1997. Schools that selected the ELLI program had literacy coordinators trained during the first year; then, these individuals trained their colleagues the subsequent year. In such cases, the professional development for participating teachers is typically taking place in Year Three (1998-99). Finally, for schools that have developed their own approach, the "roll out" is unique on a school-by-school basis.

In this report, we provide a snapshot of where schools are with the implementation of their new approaches to literacy instruction. We begin by presenting teachers' reactions to having an instructional focus — what it means to them in terms of creating a shared sense of purpose and how it is beginning to impact their work with students. We then turn to a discussion of the ways in which teachers and administrators are being supported as they work to implement new approaches to literacy instruction. Next we turn to the issue of literacy in the upper elementary, middle, and high school grades. While the options for literacy "programs" in these grades are few, we document some emerging efforts to address students' literacy needs. Finally, we identify challenges to the implementation of these new approaches to literacy instruction. We present them as an argument for providing continued support for implementation.

In our visits to schools and observations of classrooms over the past year, we have seen much evidence of these new approaches to literacy instruction. While the changes are particularly vivid where teachers are implementing specific literacy programs such as ELLI and Success for All, the changes are also evident where the programs or approaches are not so clearly defined. During this early phase of implementation, we used classroom observations as a basis for discussing with teachers what they are learning in their literacy professional development and what they think of its early impact on them and their students. In later reports, we will describe in greater depth some of the literacy practices that teachers are using in their classrooms. We do want to say, however, that in most cases we see teachers working hard to implement these new approaches.

Finally, we want to note that the data that inform this section of the report come from schools in which teachers are actively working to implement new approaches to literacy. We are also aware of schools in which virtually no progress has been made in terms of literacy implementation. This lack of progress persists despite the resources provided by the BPE, including the expertise of the content coaches. It is not clear to us that this lack of progress can be solved by the BPE. In some cases, the BPE reform design may not be well-suited to the school; in other cases, the problems may be beyond the purview of the BPE and may require official district attention.

A. Teachers' Reactions to Having an Instructional Focus

In this section, we describe teachers' reactions to the selection of an instructional focus. Teachers said the focus on literacy created a valuable, common sense of purpose. They talked about how this shared sense of purpose facilitates communication with their colleagues and how they expect it will lead to coherence across classrooms and from grade to grade. They also indicated that the single focus supports their looking at student work with colleagues and this, in turn, supports their teaching. Finally, they spoke to us about student reactions to the changes in literacy instruction, and their initial observations of increased student learning.

Many teachers expressed relief at having a shared instructional focus after years of working in isolation. In this sense, the instructional focus seems to be achieving its initial purpose: to mobilize collaboration.

> It has kept this school on task. First time in 30 years in this building, or 20 whatever, that I've seen each teacher working towards a common goal... so that we're not all doing our own things. So I think, for us, it's great. I expect to see scores go up. (Teacher A)

> I think it's good to have a focus. I think that it's overwhelming to teachers when there's ten different things we're supposed to be focusing on. So I still sort of feel sometimes like there are ten different things, but I think it helps teachers and kids. There's more of a focus... this is really important. (Teacher B)

Teachers are particularly excited about the potential impact on student learning because students are exposed to consistent strategies as they move through the grades.

> What happens is the kids will be doing this for the next two or three years. Where I stop off, they just start right up in September again. All in all, I can see that we need that sort of consistency. You kind of lose the creativity part of it, the kids who jump ahead and whatever. But, I think it's a good thing for our kids. So that there aren't always those four low kids that end up being the repeaters every year. (Teacher C)

> It just feels so good, because now that [last year's kindergarten] kids are in first grade, the first grade teachers are coming back to me and saying, "Wow, these kids are really prepared." We're all on the same page now. So it's just even, it's just so rewarding... that the kids really did learn and they're more prepared than they've ever been... And although there's been a shift in the personnel on this team... we all were doing [the literacy program]. We're all still doing the same thing. (Teacher D)

In addition to establishing coherence across grade levels, teachers reported that the shared focus on literacy and the accompanying learning opportunities for teachers contribute to the development of "a real community of learners." The literacy coordinator at one school described the composition of the ELLI course she teaches.

> I have all the K-2 teachers... [And two administrators] attend the class. The two speech teachers, the two special ed teachers, the librarian, paraprofessionals, the music teacher. And a 3rd grade teacher. Bilingual and monolingual. It's really been, I think, wonderful. It's a real community of learners. We're all at the same place. So we're all learning together. (Teacher C)

The fact that literacy programs are uniting teachers across programs — for example, English-only and bilingual teachers — was mentioned in each school where communication between groups of teachers is an issue.

> Before [we adopted this literacy program], bilingual class was over here, English speaking classes over here, and we never met. Now these kids are coming into us, and I think it makes for a general feeling of one school now. I mean, we're one school. And just that alone is helpful for the teachers and for the kids. For the kids in learning. (Teacher A)

The focus on literacy, and on specific strategies, also provides direction for some for whom there was none in the past.

> Well, I just like the direction. Because for so many years we SpEd teachers flew by the seat of our pants, really. And now, to have a focus to have things clearly identified, and it's been a challenge for me. It's given me a new direction. Plus I found that the organization you need is, it's just unreal... This really focuses you to get your act together. (Teacher E)

The instructional focus also raises issues of accountability. For example, that teachers are all implementing the same strategies in their classrooms lends itself to increased accountability in the form of shared expectations among them.

> The one piece that [our literacy program] does is [create] consistency in the school. That every teacher should be teaching the same way, working with the same things... So that when they leave the 2nd grade, [where they are learning] sequencing on a very low level, and go to 3rd grade, which is sequencing on a harder level, and come to the 4th grade, that's sequencing on the hardest level, that when these kids leave and go on to the 5th grade, they should be perfect. Now did everybody teach sequencing last year? Probably not... But the one thing this program does keep in check [is] consistency. I'm sure there were people not being consistent. But it's hard to get away with it. (Teacher F)

Finally, a coach observed that the development of a common language facilitates communication around instructional issues and, at least in this case, that communication can take place from kindergarten through fifth grade.

> It does come up very clearly that there is a set of ways to assess and talk about kids as emerging readers, beginning readers, proficient readers, so that everyone gets a common language of how to kind of instructionally diagnose the kids. And then the tools they get trained in are common. And it's the same kind of Australian, New Zealand model. It's this balanced reading. It's the same thing, just organized in a little different way. (Coach E)

This development of shared expectations and a common language has supported increased communication among teachers about student work and instructional strategies. These informal forms of professional development, combined with the more formal, are leading teachers to make significant changes in their practice.

> [If you'd seen me teaching three or four years ago,] I would be using the basal. And I would have kids really hating reading because they don't understand. See, here they read, but they read stuff that they can read. And they're not afraid... And three years ago it would have been more me up at the board, the kids at their desks, [not moving around much]. But I definitely have to say that the change is due to a lot of the training that I have gotten. (Teacher G)

> I think that it has met my expectations. I went into it with high hopes thinking that maybe this will help us. After a month into it, initially, I thought, "Wow, this is overwhelming. How can we do this?" ...And I found out that once you get into it and it becomes part of your daily routine, it begins to flow. (Teacher A)

A couple of middle school mathematics teachers talked about how the focus on literacy impacts the way they teach. They talked about what they can learn from their colleagues now that they share this common focus across content areas.

> Last year when I was just teaching math I did more writing with kids than I've ever done anywhere. That was mainly because of the focus on literacy, and because I had the support of the other [team] members, the teachers who were doing humanities. And when we'd meet on Tuesdays to look at student work, the expectation was right out there that I would be bringing writing along with them. And I got a lot of good ideas and support from them on how to do that, and then I really found it a very useful thing to have kids do in math. (Teacher E)

This teacher and another indicated how much they can learn from their students' work now that they have them writing about their understandings in mathematics.

> They did one on fractions in the third quarter. And kids who could kind of get through the steps of how to add fractions, when they had to explain it in writing, it was probably the first time they really had to break it down for themselves and think about, OK, what do I do first, what do I do— exactly: The beginning, the

> middle. What do I do first? What do I do next? And it made it really clear to me who understood it and who was just kind of stumbling through it. (Teacher I)
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> You find out who really knows what they're doing. Because some kids can do the computation, but to ask them how and why, they're like, oops... I found that a lot of the activities that I used, you have to tell me why. Write it. Even verbalizing it. I found that to be very helpful. Because then I knew right away who knew what. (Teacher E)

Language arts teachers at the middle school level have also noticed this shift on the part of content area teachers.

> Well, I think the kids are writing better... In the first year of the program the social studies teacher was like, "Well, I don't correct their writing. That's the ESL thing. I'm just looking for content." And the same thing [with] the science a little bit, too. It's just like, "Well, I'm just looking to make sure they have their content and not really paying attention to whether, to how they're writing." So I think that's been better because that's changing. That now it's like, sure content is important and that's where we kind of, I like to start with that... But I think they're just starting to realize that yeah, this is science, but that doesn't mean that you can't, that you know, you can have a messy paper and you don't have to spell properly, or anything like that. (Teacher J)

These reported changes in teacher practice are being met with positive responses from students. This is encouraging to teachers and will undoubtedly contribute to the continued use of the new approaches.

> You can just tell. [Students are] independent, they're working at the centers, their joy of writing and reading is incredible, absolutely incredible. It has such a wonderful, it's such a wonderful program. And you come in here and they, I mean, they get mad when they have to clean up. And I feel bad for them. I hate to tell them to clean up because they're having so much fun reading and writing. (Teacher H)
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> They love the independence... they love the writing center... That's one of the benefits. They love literacy. They love it. And they love the books. My goodness. When you compare really, this [the basal], which is what we were using before, the text is, the illustrations are nice and everything. A lot of the stories [the basal] they can't relate to at all. A lot of the stories don't make any sense. They hated it... [Now] they have their folder, they have their book, and they're like, yes! What's our next book? More books. More books. More variety. And they love it. They love it. (Teacher G)

At the middle school level, the introduction of writing in math, however, comes as a surprise to students. Nonetheless, this teacher, for one, is committed to staying the course.

> And you know, lots of resistance, lots of, "This isn't English class. Why are you making us write? Why are you, why do we have to have sentences? Why do we have to spell things correctly?" And you know, you just kind of hold your ground and work through it. (Teacher I)

Fortunately, teachers report that students not only enjoy the new approaches being implemented in their classroom, they appear to be learning more.

> The rate of growth is really showing in the primary levels. And that's what's great about it... They're moving, and they're doing a lot. So that two years down the line, if somebody is in the [second grade] level right now, they're going to be in the fourth grade. So we should see the dividends. It should pay off for us, too. (Teacher A)

> The last essay that they did for me last year was a compare and contrast essay. And there were some kids for whom it was definitely the best piece of work that I got from them all year, and I think it was because they had been through the process a couple of times. They knew, they kind of knew what they could and couldn't get away with. They just couldn't give you some sort of half-baked, half-thought-out thing. (Teacher I)

> I've been trying to look for different ways of how we're reaching these low level readers. Because they're not reading. And I think that since September, I see that my low level readers have come up a little bit. But I think that what I see most is that they're more comfortable with reading, they're enjoying reading, they're enjoying writing. And it's not seen as this task that can never be done, or that they don't want to do. (Teacher K)

These initial reports of student progress, combined with their enjoyment of the process,[7] are feeding teachers' desires to continue to improve their practice.

> For me this is a wonderful experience... Developing the kind of community that I want in my classroom. The kind of learning that's happening in my classroom is very rewarding for me... But I think they're getting a sense of, developing a sense

[7]We do not want to overstate the importance of teachers' reports of students' enthusiasm. However, we do want to note that this does *not* seem to be an instance in which students are enthusiastic and engaged in fun activities that, in fact, have little bearing on important learning. We are aware that this was a problem with some reform efforts in the past. Our sense in this case is that students' enthusiasm about reading is important because reading is a central academic goal and an area which teachers say students formerly disliked.

of responsibility, more accountability, and respect for each other, supporting each other. (Teacher L)

As this teacher describes, some of the new approaches to literacy go well beyond imparting a set of skills to students, and simply implementing a few new strategies. In many cases, teachers are changing their practice in profound ways. Change of this magnitude requires significant support. In Section B, we write about the sources of support for teachers as they work to implement these changes.

B. On-Site Support

During Year One of the 21st Century Schools program, WSC coaches assisted schools in identifying, researching, and choosing a literacy model or developing their own home-grown approach. Coaches described the process of selecting models as including a reasonably thorough investigation of a variety of options. Sets of teachers and coaches perused written materials, attended presentations, and visited schools that were using different literacy models before making their decisions. Once they had gathered the information, they shared it with the whole staff and schools made their decisions. Schools that developed a home-grown model went through a different process, but many of them also learned about program options. This information gave them insight into the components of a balanced literacy program. With this information in hand, they tried to examine their existing program, identify missing pieces and redesign it as a home-grown model that included the essential elements of a balanced literacy program.

In this section of our literacy discussion, we describe two complementary and often intersecting roles that support teacher learning about literacy: school-based literacy coordinators and content coaches. Literacy coordinators are attached to the formal literacy programs that schools have chosen. For example, schools involved with ELLI or Success for All (SFA) each have had one teacher trained to be their on-site coordinator.[8] Content coaches are available to support the implementation of both adopted and home-grown literacy programs.

1. The Role of Literacy Coordinators. Many of the literacy models require an on-site person to be trained and serve as the school's "literacy expert." These literacy coordinators receive in-depth training in the model being implemented at the school. ELLI literacy coordinators, for example, go through a year-long course at Lesley College; during the next year, these literacy coordinators train their colleagues back at the school site. SFA literacy coordinators are trained by staff from Johns Hopkins University to support implementation. However, SFA staff , in addition, train all teachers in the SFA model during workshops prior to the start of a new school year. Coordinators support teachers as they learn to implement SFA. Most programs provide on-going support and training for the literacy coordinators. The roles that these coordinators play

[8]Some programs call their on-site, trained teacher a coordinator and others call this person a facilitator. In this report, we use literacy coordinator to refer generically to the on-site person who supports the implementation of a formal literacy program.

and their involvement in supporting teachers varies from school to school and model to model. In this section, we highlight how literacy coordinators support teachers as on-site resident experts.

Some literacy coordinators have a role in providing formal training to teachers. The ELLI program, for example, expects literacy coordinators to teach a course on ELLI strategies at their school, implement the program in their own classroom, and open their classroom to their colleagues as a model. Literacy coordinators are also expected to observe and give feedback to their teacher colleagues as they implement the model.

> You can't just be an ELLI school, at least through the training you get through Lesley, and not provide professional development for the staff. It comes with the package. That's their whole philosophy... Getting that training and giving it right back to your staff through a professional development course. And we had to create a syllabus... We had to fill out contracts so that we could get modules, training modules that we could use for the class. (Teacher Y)

The SFA coordinator conducts meetings to discuss implementation issues, and leads workshops about the different SFA components. The coordinator also observes classrooms during the SFA literacy block and gives teachers feedback on their implementation.

Literacy coordinators often lead meetings, conduct workshops or teach classes at the school site regarding specific "components" or strategies of the model. Here, one literacy coordinator describes the content of her bi-weekly class.

> The syllabus starts with assessment of children and talks— and goes into the ELLI framework. We've covered the work board and centers, independent learning, guided reading, which is the crucial part of it. We're doing Writing Workshop and independent writing and sharing writing... [I get] lots of questions, lots of interest, lots of talk. (Teacher C)

Literacy coordinators spend time in classrooms observing and giving feedback. They report that most teachers seem to appreciate feedback specific to their classroom.

> Two mornings a week I go into the classroom and coach teachers. I meet with them briefly, maybe the day before, to find out what it is that they're working on, that they'd like to have a conversation about after I go in. I talk with them later, have a conversation with them. (Teacher C)

> They were really receptive of me coming into their classrooms, and I had a schedule of when I was coming into their classes that they had in advance. We would talk about what they wanted me to look at. And then, after I observed, I took notes so I could have something to talk to them about after the whole

> observing experience. Whether it was after school, the next day, I did it over the phone with some teachers, we talked about what I observed. (Teacher Y)

Literacy coordinators also facilitate administrator learning. At some schools, administrators participate in literacy classes along with their teachers. This not only demonstrates the administration's support for the changes that teachers are trying to make, but also allows the administrator to be informed about the model being implemented at the school site.

> They're seeing that I'm trying to support this to make it work. So by being a learner myself, by saying it's OK, that I don't expect you to be perfect at it when you're on a learning curve right there with me and with the director of instruction. And validating and appreciating what they're doing, that it is hard. (Administrator B)

Administrators report that knowledge from such classes helps them understand what they are seeing when they visit classrooms and talk with teachers about their literacy work.

> The ELLI program, I took the whole Lesley College component. So I pretty much, I know that if I went to a classroom, if I see the teachers doing it I will know what she's doing. And I could even take over the class and do it, continue it myself. (Administrator C)

> The course is excellent. I go to the course every week... [The instructor] teaches it here... And she's excellent. I also go to the course so that when I'm observing or speaking with teachers, we're all on the same page and I have a better understanding. (Administrator A)

Literacy coordinators take on significant responsibilities for the professional development of their colleagues. Therefore, it is encouraging to hear teachers speak positively about all of the support literacy coordinators provide. Most teachers find the classes and workshops helpful, and appreciate the fact that an on-site person is teaching these courses. This is particularly true at schools where teachers have the opportunity to work together on implementation issues.

> I find that when the facilitator does an SFA piece, that it's helpful. Last week she gave us a whole thing on meaningful sentences and all kinds of sheets. And I gave out all the sheets and the children used them and really and truly— and things that I never would have thought of. And, you know, worksheets. And it really helped them do it. So, yes, it's helpful when it's done by the people working on it in the building. (Teacher F)

> I think two hours of structured class along with reading, along with books, along with talking to other colleagues in my school, actually practicing it, having discussions, experimenting, failure, figuring out what to do, talking to my grade level team, which has already been trained, I think that's good. (Teacher H)

Teachers also appreciate having the literacy coordinators as a resident experts who are easily accessible to observe their teaching, give them feedback, and model the new strategies.

> Every time I need or am confused on certain things I go to her. She has come and observed me in my classroom. She has given me ideas about how to keep on doing another follow-up lesson on an interactive writing activity, or shared reading, reading out loud. She has given me, she has observed me and said, "Well you can do this next time. I noticed that this kid did not enjoy what you were doing. Maybe if you do this with this kid he will get more involved." So she has been very helpful. (Teacher U)

> And I just kept on going to [the literacy coordinator], kept on going to [another teacher], going everywhere. Reading every book that I could find to learn about it. And then the classes that we have every Thursday, every other Thursday, that helped out in learning more... It took me a good long time to get everything going and to really understand what was going on. I had to keep going to [the literacy coordinator] and asking her about how does this work because the book says this, but sometimes you don't understand what it means until you really see it done. (Teacher Z)

Literacy coordinators play a significant role in implementation of the models and in providing support for teacher learning. As we have noted, these resident experts conduct workshops and/or teach on-going classes. They observe teachers, give them feedback, and, in some cases, demonstrate lessons. Literacy coordinators are the direct link to the literacy model and the expertise available through it. Having a literacy coordinator at each site who is the "resident expert" is helping schools build internal capacity. Such capacity increases the likelihood that literacy expertise will remain in the school and that the model will continue to be implemented when the grant cycle ends.

2. Support from the Content Coach. Content coaches also support implementation of the literacy focus. With the input of teachers and administrators, informed by the outcomes of LASW sessions and by their own observations, they help determine staff learning needs.

> Generally speaking, the way it's going now is that I meet with the grade level teams and I hear what their issues are. And I don't necessarily all the time develop just the models that I want to show them. I mean, we brainstorm in terms of what kinds of mini-lessons could you do based on what you're seeing with these kids' work. (Coach S)

> Right now we've done, I administered an alternative assessment piece in reading, got the data back, and now we're working in two different ways. I will be going into the classrooms, modeling strategies to improve reading comprehension, and [the WSC] coach is going to be working, both of us will be working on this, too,

> is actually instructing, giving teachers professional development in using reading strategies for students in the classroom. (Coach B)

The work of the content coaches and the WSC coaches often intersects in LASW sessions. In some schools, both coaches attend and facilitate these sessions. In at least one school, the WSC coach facilitates the sessions, but the results are used by the content coach to plan professional development. For example, the content coach may use the action plan from the LASW sessions as the basis for classroom observations and feedback as well as demonstration lessons.

Once coaches have helped determine where teachers need support, content coaches garner external resources, such as books, articles and professional development providers to address those needs.

> We've had [a coach from another school] come in and do a guided reading [workshop]. Last year we had a panel of people who came, to talk about what does using leveled books in a classroom look like— sort of a question and answer with four different people from Boston schools. (Coach J)

In addition, coaches share their expertise with the staff by meeting with instructional teams and through one-time and on-going workshops.

> The principal decided last year that there were several areas that she wanted the school to focus on and asked me if I'd give a series of workshops, which I did. So I gave a series, and they were voluntary, and the teachers volunteered to attend after school. And one was a series of four workshops, they were two hours each, on the writing process. And another one was a series of workshops on comprehension strategies in the classroom. So I did that. (Coach L)

Some coaches are able to utilize within school expertise by creating opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. Coaches encourage teachers to lead discussions, visit one another's classrooms, and provide professional development for one another.

> What used to happen there is that they would bring all of the teachers together and have one person do professional development for the whole staff. And I noticed that it was not working very well. It just wasn't meeting the needs of the teachers. So what we've begun to do now is I make up a menu of things and I go around and I invite people to come in and do professional— people mostly from, on the staff. And we give people options. You can either go to option A or option B Some we mandate. (Coach G)

> We want to talk about what people are doing around the four kinds of reading and writing, how much they're doing it. Then they're going to visit each other's classrooms empty with guiding questions to see what's going on. Then that will

> be followed up by a visit while a teacher is engaged in some activity around the literacy block. And then we're going to build from there. (Coach A)

In addition to facilitating conversations, raising questions, organizing professional development opportunities, bringing in research and articles, and guiding teachers in developing new practices, coaches also work on an individual level with teachers, modeling lessons, observing instruction and offering feedback.

> And then I'm doing some demonstration lessons. My background is writing skills... I've ended up with two years working with [a teacher] and her kids on writing skills... I go in and do demonstration lessons on the process of writing with her. And I'm hoping that that will expand to other classrooms. (Coach M)

> Overall, I find, you know, there's a difference between last year in terms of I was much more in the demonstration role continually. And now I'm an observer, I'm giving feedback, all those kinds of things. Plus we're kind of creating some of the staff development together. Not all of it. But it's a step in the right direction that we're creating it from the collective needs of what they have. (Coach S)

Coaches report that as they spend more time in schools, teachers feel more comfortable coming to them and asking for help. The teachers' trust in the coach and desire for assistance is encouraging because it indicates a willingness to reflect on their practice.

> I think that this year particularly, people are using me more. They're more comfortable. I think they feel like they have to. Because there's a lot coming down that they have to do and they don't know how to do it. I only know how to do it a little bit more than they do. But I can give them some guidance, I can provide them with materials or conversation or talk about what it is that they need to bring to the table so that we can have a conversation about how you place a kid on the developmental continuum. In terms of guided reading, it's opened up a big, huge avenue for conversation. Because in the meetings that I have with people one on one, or in teams, or as a whole group, people are interested. (Coach J)

> I'm willing to go with them as long as they're willing to follow out the process. And that's a movement... Last year some of those classes, I would do it and there wasn't really participation. They were watching. This year the teachers are participating and they are following up. (Coach S)

Content coaches are vital to literacy implementation. They determine the learning needs of the teachers at the schools and then facilitate meeting those needs in a variety of ways. Where they support adopted literacy programs, their role complements the work of the literacy coordinators and extends the instructional focus beyond the set of teachers involved with the literacy

programs. Where schools have developed home-grown approaches, content coaches help create much-needed structures and then either provide, or locate, appropriate support.

3. Summary. Literacy coordinators and content coaches provide teachers and administrators with an array of learning opportunities. While the literacy coordinator keeps focused on the adopted program, the content coach works with teachers who are using the program and those who are not because, for example, they are not primary grade teachers or the school did not adopt a program. Literacy coordinators provide support for teachers by teaching courses, leading workshops, demonstrating lessons, observing teachers and providing feedback. Content coaches support teacher learning by facilitating workshops, bringing in external resources, leading LASW sessions, and sharing ideas and practices. Both forms of on-site support help build internal capacity at the school by creating opportunities for teachers to open their practice to one another in an effort to improve instruction. These roles are essential to enhancing and sustaining schools' literacy focus.

Therefore, we encourage the BPE to sustain its support for these on-site resources. Certainly, no school at the present time is ready to move forward without coaching support. Furthermore, we anticipate that as implementation of the new approaches to literacy continues, more classroom-based support will be necessary. As teachers' work goes deeper, they will have new questions to address. They will continue to need the support of content coaches and literacy coordinators.

This leads us to raise a question about potential overload for the literacy coordinators. The coordinators, especially those involved with ELLI, teach for part of the day (during which time they may be observed by others) and fulfill their other coordinator obligations during the other part of the day. As schools try to develop approaches for the upper grades that are connected to the early literacy models (see Section C) and more teachers are involved, the demands on coordinators will likely increase. We think literacy coordinators will run the danger of being overwhelmed by demands for their expertise. For this reason, we recommend maintaining the content coaches. For the same reason, we think schools would be wise to develop literacy coordinator expertise in others and/or shift some of the coordinator responsibilities to other trained teachers as they gain expertise.

Finally, as we said at the start of this section, schools have a considerable amount of support to implement their literacy programs. Some schools are taking great advantage of the support and their teachers are excited by what they are learning and doing. Other schools are not at this stage of implementation. Whatever the reasons for such variation, it seems clear that schools that have made little progress need to step up the pace with which they are attending to literacy if the children entrusted to them are to have the opportunity to achieve at high levels. It is probably time for the BPE, perhaps in collaboration with the BPS, to determine what is standing in the way of progress at such schools and then take steps to remove the obstacles.

C. Challenges and Opportunities at the Upper Elementary, Middle, and High School Grades

The upper elementary, middle, and high school grades present unique challenges for educators attempting to implement new literacy practices. At the upper elementary grades, many teachers felt left out when a primary grades literacy program was chosen as if it were the whole school's approach to literacy implementation. And, at the middle and high school level, where the options for externally-developed literacy programs are few, many teachers and administrators find themselves without clear ideas about how to develop or address their literacy focus. Schools have handled this dilemma in a variety of ways. Some elementary schools have either selected a literacy program that spans the grades or adopted two literacy programs — one for the primary grades and one for the upper grades. Others are developing "home grown" solutions. In this section of the report, we briefly review the challenges facing educators working with older students. We then highlight two promising "home grown" responses to these challenges. First, we describe how educators at schools that have adopted primary literacy programs are developing upper grade strategies that link to the primary program. Second, we describe how others are analyzing student work and assessment data to determine their needs for literacy-based professional development. At some schools, these two approaches are being used concurrently.

We wrote in our July 1998 report that some teachers at the upper grade levels felt left out without a program. We indicated that this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to find ways to include these teachers in the literacy work. The opportunity comes from many teachers' eagerness to learn new approaches to literacy instruction. In July 1998, we wrote the following:

> Those not involved [in literacy professional development] feel they are missing an opportunity to learn new practices; they wonder how they will build on what the primary teachers are learning. This realization that all teachers are not yet able to learn new strategies and that they are unhappy about that, is important for two reasons. First, the finding reveals that teachers are eager to learn how to better work with their students. They hear good things from the teachers who are engaged in focused professional development and they want to be a part of this opportunity to learn. Second, upper grade teachers will need to build on the strategies implemented by the primary teachers if they want to sustain the hoped-for increases in student achievement. Coaches have discussed the frustrations of middle and high school teachers who would like to have the option of trying literacy models for their students. They feel they have insufficient access to literacy strategies that will help them and their students. We think it is important to assure teachers that all of them will have access to important professional development. If all teachers cannot be participants at the same time, then it will be useful to explain how they will be phased into the professional development opportunities at a later time.

In our visits to schools in the fall of 1998, we continued to hear from teachers that they are being left out of literacy-based professional development. One teacher clearly covets the support that her colleagues at the primary grades are getting.

> They had training after school. We're not getting that. We're not getting that kind of support yet. You can't expect me to do things without training, without thinking it through. They've gotten all that kind of support, teacher coaches, meeting once or twice a month or something for two hours, and they have team meetings to talk about it. (Teacher M)

Other teachers indicated that they knew nothing about the literacy program being implemented in the primary grades. This is understandable given that the model is not intended for the upper grades and consequently these teachers have received little or no training about the model. However, this could have repercussions for the coherence of the literacy implementation across the grades.

> I don't even know what ELLI is. I know it's early learning literacy something. But I don't know how that works. And I don't know what that is. I've never, we've never been invited to a lesson or a workshop or anything, so we really don't know what's going on with ELLI. I mean, I know what it is, but I've never seen it. So we, no, haven't been part of it. (Teacher N)

While these divisions at the elementary schools persist in some cases, the high schools face even more daunting challenges. First, there are few focused literacy programs, so far as we know, targeted for high school teachers and students. Second, high school English teachers do not usually think of themselves as literacy teachers. And, third, while high school English teachers may need to explicitly teach reading and writing, all teachers will need help dealing with these skill areas in order to teach their particular content.[9]

Despite these challenges, several of the schools we visited in the fall of 1998 are forging ahead with the implementation of new approaches to literacy instruction at the upper grades by determining needs, identifying professional development, and implementing new practices. We discuss these approaches next.

1. Developing Upper Grade Strategies that Build on Early Literacy Programs. Despite not having training in the literacy model, educators at schools that have adopted primary literacy programs are in the early stages of identifying ways to develop upper grade strategies that build on these programs. Content coaches and, in one case, an administrator are working closely with upper elementary and middle school teachers to develop appropriate practices for their students that are consistent with the philosophy of the early literacy program. The impetus for this work

[9]We know that Sheila Brown, Director of Cohort III, is leading a task force that is focused on literacy at the secondary level.

came from teachers and administrators who identified a need for new approaches to literacy instruction, and recognized the benefit of employing consistent approaches through the grades.

An administrator describes how the upper grade teachers at her school began to identify the need for a new approach to literacy instruction.

> Everyone thought it was important to expose children to grade level material. At the same time, trying to meet their needs at the instructional level... [At] a staff development day... I worked with fourth through eighth [grade teachers] through most of the day. And it was just an amazing discussion... People were very open to exploring both. But there's still a feeling of not really knowing how to do that. (Administrator A)

Teachers and administrators also talked about their desire for consistency across the grade levels. Interestingly, some of the most concerned teachers are at the primary level.

> I think a challenge that is really coming down the pike is what is going to happen to these kids in fourth and fifth grade. Because K-three by the end of this year, hopefully, everyone is going to really be involved in [the program] and using it... It really concerns me, because we're really working so hard and seeing results with these kids. And they will see them when they get to fourth and fifth grade. But it needs to continue. (Teacher D)

Educators at these schools are employing several different strategies aimed at creating links between the primary literacy program and upper grade strategies. As mentioned earlier, content coaches play a key role in providing support for this work.

> [We're] trying to coordinate, correlate the four-five with the elementary. The four-five ELLI program is really not established in stone as clearly as it is at the lower grade levels. So it's getting grades four and five to see that they're making progress, that they still are ELLI... So trying to keep some of that connection going. And yet really trying to modify it for their needs. And how do we go about that? Having the staff understand that it's still in the planning process, that it's an experimentation, that we're trying to adapt. (Coach K)

In this case, the coach not only worked with teachers herself, she also helped to bring in external support for the upper grade teachers.

> I felt as if my role was looking at what I'd learned and my knowledge, and thinking about how it would work in fourth and fifth grade, and going in and doing some professional development with them, holding workshops, and then also coaching them, giving them feedback, demonstrating lessons and then having them do it and myself observe, and then kind of debrief and talk about it. But also bringing in outside resources from things that were relevant to that particular

> grade level, for example. We had a workshop on ... literature circles, how it looks, how guided reading is moving towards literacy in upper grades, and so we got somebody to come in to talk about it. (Coach R)

Finally, at one school, an administrator is providing professional development for upper grade teachers that will help them build on their primary literacy program.

> I have tried to align the workshops [for upper grade teachers] with that, with the pieces of ELLI so that when children go from third grade to fourth grade, there will be some continuity for them. And I think a strength of ELLI is that there is something for teachers to latch onto. It's not just a theory or good practice, but really giving them a way to put it into practice. And so that's what the workshops are. (Administrator A)

In addition to on-site support for implementation, some teachers are participating in a study group on how to build on early literacy strategies in the upper grades. Several teachers and coaches with whom we spoke mentioned participating in, or being aware of, this study group. We also heard about teachers going to workshops outside of their schools. For example, the teacher quoted below, who works at an ELLI school, talked about an opportunity for upper grade teachers to go to Lesley College for training.

> I did go to a workshop at Lesley College on literacy for the upper grades, three and up... We had someone from Ohio come... he came and did a really nice whole day session. Some of the things we could adapt outright, some other things we'd need to adjust... A whole group of us went, upper grades. It wasn't the lower grades, the primary grade people that went. It was [grades] three and up. And there were a lot of us. I think there were like eight or nine of us that went to that session. So you can see the interest is there. (Teacher O)

This same teacher talked about one of her upper grade colleagues participating in the primary grade training and trying to identify what components are appropriate for the upper grades. She also indicated her interest in going to visit other schools where they are farther along with this scaling up.

> One of the third grade teachers is actually taking the ELLI course, the ELLI training that's happening in the school twice a month. And she's trying to identify what are the things that they're doing in second grade that we could transition to third grade... We talk about this continuously. About... what's going to happen with ELLI when it moves up to third grade? And there are schools... that are already piloting a three to five program and there's a lot of talk about we need to go out and maybe sit in for a day and see what they're doing there. There's a lot of questions about how it will transition to third grade. Because some of the activities are very primary and I really don't know. I mean, as far as what's going

> to happen, I don't know. But I'm sure someone will tell me before too long. (Teacher O)

In other cases, upper grade teachers and specialists, who in some cases are also excluded from training, told us that they are trying to learn to build on the early literacy programs on their own. While we admire this initiative, we also wish to caution against relying on this approach in place of formal professional development.

> I can't wait because there's a need for the kids to really, you know, figure out what would make kids want to read, want to write and connect it to, you know. I figure I'm intelligent, I can rig up some kind of process. You don't need a whole bunch of people to do that. So I'm just [doing the process] by myself. I can't share what I don't know. So I need to just process this whole thing, [find out] what makes sense, see what happens. (Teacher M)

> Last year, because I was special ed, I didn't get to be in the [literacy] class or anything like that. I wasn't included in that. I was really upset. But I read the books, and I have a close friend who is one of the ELLI teachers... I talk to her a lot. And I started implementing a lot of just the concepts of ELLI with the centers, pulling more homogeneous grouping. And it completely changed the way I taught last year; completely. Everything was different about what I did. (Teacher H)

Finally, at least one teacher expressed concern about the idea of extending ELLI into the upper grades. She feels that the explicit reading instruction done at the primary grade level is not appropriate, and will not be necessary, for upper grade students.

> I don't agree that ELLI should be [in grades] three, four, and five. Because once kids get basic reading skills down, they should be applying that in science, social studies, history, you know, whatever. And that isn't sort of an ELLI experience. And what they're trying to do is sort of keep phonics or something in upper elementary. And if kids have done well in K through two, what do they need that for? But it's like the superintendent's mandate is that everyone will have a literacy program and math program. So, therefore, they are creating something that maybe shouldn't be. (Teacher P)

This teacher makes an important point. We agree that by the upper elementary grades students should be reading to learn, not learning to read. Nonetheless, at this early stage of reform, there are many students in the upper elementary grades and beyond who still need explicit reading instruction. We hope that one outcome of this reform will be the elimination, or dramatic reduction, of the need for such instruction. Until then, some attention to reading, appropriately adapted, will need to be part of the upper grade curriculum.

Despite some doubt and confusion, teachers, administrators, and coaches are working on ways to develop sensible approaches to literacy instruction in the upper grades that build on the primary grade programs. These efforts demonstrate determination and creativity. The challenges these educators face also indicate a need for on-going support.

2. Using Student Work and Assessment Data to Determine Professional Development Needs and Develop Instructional Strategies. Some of the most promising approaches to dealing with the upper elementary and middle school grades come from coaches and, in one case, an administrator working with teachers to look at student work and assessment data as an entry point to working on literacy issues. This work enables these educators to identify students' literacy needs.

At one school, LASW defines their approach to literacy professional development. Not only are the sessions learning opportunities in and of themselves, they also help teachers to identify the professional development that can support them in their work with students. This teacher describes how the focus of their LASW sessions has expanded over time.

> I guess the [literacy] model that was... taken on by the school for some type of consistent approach was looking at student work. So we... began to look at student work just in language arts using rubrics provided by the city, and then moved to individualized teacher-made rubrics. And then throughout the year we switched from language arts to writing in the content area. (Teacher Q)

Another teacher at the same school talked about how she finds these sessions to be helpful in terms of how to improve students' writing.

> We talk in our [team] about curriculum things, but just focusing on how they're writing and how we're going to improve it, looking at the samples of their writing. It's really helpful. It really is. (Teacher R)

Looking at comparable pieces of writing over time helps teachers to see trends in students' work. For example, processes such as the one described below can lead to the implementation of new strategies.

> [They came to realize that some of the problems kids were having with writing had to do with how little they read.] But how we got here was that... we have done baseline, beginning of the year, midyear, and end of year writing samples. And then had everybody rate them to come up with a sense of where kids were, set goals, identify strategies that we want to focus on. (Coach C)

At another school, they assessed students' reading skills in order to identify needs and then organize students, based on these needs, for weekly reading instruction. As this teacher noted, she thinks that directly addressing these reading skills is essential for her students' future.

> We leveled. We put the kids [in groups] according to the skills that they need... [The reading instruction for these groups] will be once a week for two hours... We gave them the comprehension test at different levels and then we leveled that out... I think it's important that we go back and, whatever the reason is that they've missed it, I think it's an important thing that we go back and fill in the gaps. Because there's no way they can go on if the gaps aren't filled. (Teacher S)

At some schools, the approaches to literacy in the upper elementary and middle school grades emerge from an analysis of the data from required standardized tests.

> The upper grades, since they're not really doing the ELLI program right now, they do, they're doing a lot more around standardized testing, and developing testing skills in the students. And we've done a lot more analyzing data from the tests and then trying to figure out what we can do in the classroom and beyond, even, to help the kids do better. But the teachers are doing a lot of the professional development themselves. (Coach G)

The description of the work in this quote does not make clear the nature of the professional development underway. We caution that such an approach may focus too narrowly on test-taking skills.

A similar approach involves using MCAS writing prompts to focus literacy efforts. In this case, it is clear that the focus will be on writing, but it is not clear how teachers will learn to more effectively teach students to write.

> When we were doing the writing prompt, we had fifth, sixth, and seventh and eighth [grade teachers] meet together... talking about the prompt and talking about, because we were saying fifth through eighth has to do persuasive writing, because that's MCAS at eighth grade. So we're saying everybody has to do persuasive writing, so you guys talk about what this means. (Coach F)

This data-driven approach to the literacy focus is most promising when it is coupled with professional development. We described above how LASW sessions can help identify needed professional development. Similarly, at another school, once students' needs were identified, on-site workshops were instituted to support teachers as they worked to develop these skills. This teacher describes how an administrator at her school began to lead these workshops.

> Our [administrator] is very good. And she's going to work with us and give us workshops. Sort of refresher things about literacy and approaches to teaching reading and things like that. So I think that will help a lot... The skills that our low level readers need to develop are skills from way back when. Like context clues, decoding, phonics. All that. So it's okay because she's just very good. She reads. She understands. She asks good questions. She's very good. (Teacher T)

Another teacher at the same school talked about how these workshops, coupled with the assessment information, has impacted her practice.

> I've been doing something right from the literacy class... We tried to do this, really a change in the way that language arts instruction has been taught in the upper grade levels, going more to an early literacy model... Whereas in the past I think, at least from speaking with other teachers who have been here longer, the way that literacy instruction has been handled in the upper grades has really been more following a reading program or literature program, and not a literacy program... Now we've really turned to more of a, like I said, I started incorporating Writers' Workshop... [And] word study where we're actually looking at the way words are formed, and decoding skills, as well as doing instructional level reading. Because in the past they've only been exposed to the grade level, grade level, grade level. And nobody has ever remediated what they didn't receive on the instructional level... So my approach right now has been to do the grade level reading in an oral reading, and have them do [a] response to the reading, be it written or acting out a drama or whatever. And then the Writers' Workshop and a word study center, and then a silent reading. (Teacher K)

We think these data-driven approaches to improving literacy instruction are promising. They provide clear indicators for changing instructional practice and are a resource for identifying professional development. In most of the schools where we saw these practices in place, the analysis of student work or assessment data was accompanied by additional professional development. In a few places, this connection was unclear. We think the coupling of professional development with data analysis is essential if these approaches are to yield meaningful change. Finally, we caution against a narrow focus on data from standardized tests. In most schools, we saw that the literacy focus was interpreted to include a broad set of skills; in other places the focus was unclear to us. We will continue to pay attention to the data that are used and the ways they influence instruction in light of our concern about this narrow focus.

3. Summary : The Challenges and Opportunities at the Upper Elementary, Middle, and High School Grades. Teachers, administrators, and coaches are working hard to come up with literacy strategies that are appropriate for implementation at the upper-level grades. In this report, we highlighted two ways in which these educators are approaching this work. At the schools in which efforts are being made to extend some of the early literacy strategies into the upper grades, we encourage the BPE to continue to offer support for the teachers, principals, and coaches. For example, the principals' networks appear to be an ideal forum through which principals could share approaches to extending their early literacy programs and band together to identify needed support. Small groups for coaches are another forum that seems promising for this in the sense that they would enable communication among content coaches struggling with similar issues. Another source of support would be to identify professional development or "best practice" schools that could be a resource for teachers. Providing quality support for the implementation of literacy programs in the upper grades is particularly critical in light of the potential to keep the focus on *early* literacy. Whatever new approaches to literacy are identified

and implemented, great care should be taken to ensure that these strategies are intended to accelerate student learning towards grade level norms.

At the schools in which people are using LASW and student assessment data as an approach to literacy, we are encouraged by the thoughtfulness of their work. Nonetheless, we want to reiterate two points in regard to the continued use of this approach. First, we want to emphasize the importance of coupling this work with more formal professional development. Second, we encourage educators to continue to use multiple sources of data, including daily student work samples, as they forge ahead with this important work.

At this point, we have seen almost no systematic literacy focus at the high schools. Although content coaches may work with individual teachers in productive ways, we have no evidence that their impact will extend beyond the few teachers who have chosen to take on this literacy work. There are several reasons for this situation. First, given the design of the 21st Century Schools program, high schools may not be getting sufficient support to initiate and sustain a literacy focus. The one-day-per-week coaching model enables a coach to reach only a few of the many teachers who make up a high school faculty. Second, currently, there are no literacy models or programs for use in high schools. As we noted earlier, this situation could change as a result of the task force on secondary literacy led by Sheila Brown. Third, high schools are devoting much of their common planning time to issues associated with developing a school restructuring plan as required by the district. This has the effect of limiting time for discussion of literacy and literacy instruction. And, fourth, many high school teachers across the content areas do not yet see themselves as responsible for literacy development. As a result, they are not eager to engage in literacy focused professional development. We have no evidence to suggest that, at the current time, headmasters are working to change teachers' conceptions of their role with secondary literacy development.

D. The Importance of On-going Support for Implementation

Many teachers are engaged in serious work around implementing new approaches to literacy instruction. As reported in Section A, they are excited about the changes they are making in their classrooms. However, these same teachers admit that they face considerable challenges in their efforts to implement the new approaches. The challenges take many forms. We present them here as an argument for sustained in-depth support for teachers as they learn to implement these programs.

The primary challenge to implementing new literacy programs may be the time it takes to learn a new set of skills. A related challenge has to do with the complexity of the work. Teachers and coaches talked with us about developing new skills and mindsets and the difficulty of implementing all of the various components of a literacy program at once. Teachers also spoke of their attachment to past practices, and their understandable reluctance to give them up for something new and unfamiliar. Some of this tension regarding past practices may be a result of the shift towards "balanced" literacy, an approach with which most teachers seem comfortable, but some find lacking in attention to practices they consider essential.

Teachers are at various stages of implementing new practices in their classrooms. In many cases, the stages have to do with how long they have been involved with literacy training. Two teachers, at different schools with different literacy programs, talked about how they feel much more comfortable with the program this year, their second of implementation. One of these teachers also noted that the change is hard for students, too.

> It took me a year to get into the program. I was good last year, I'm better this year. That's just the way it is. And whenever you do something, the more you do something, the better you become hopefully. And if you don't, then you need to rethink that. But it is very hard for the students. (Teacher F)

> This whole ELLI, the whole concept of ELLI is just a very complex concept. The whole philosophy of this whole ELLI program, it encompasses so many -- so many things. And now is when I can say I got it. Now I know! I know what this whole thing is all about. Last year, it was my first year implementing it in my classroom. So I had so many questions, concerns, because I really wasn't clear as to where I was heading with this program. I was sort of getting my feet wet, you might say, and just seeing, okay, this is what works, this is how you see. Now in this year, I started right away in September with the program... My challenge for this year is just continuing to implement this program in my classroom the best way I could. To get the best benefit for my kids. (Teacher L)

Others who have just begun training this year indicated that it would take time to understand their new literacy program well enough to implement it fully.

> I have learned from ELLI, [but] to be honest, I haven't completely implemented the ELLI program in my classroom. It has taken me a long time and a lot of work and of concentration. I'm hoping by the end of this year I will have it ready. (Teacher U)

Another teacher talked about how it will take time to implement the literacy program her school has adopted if teachers are to change their practice in a meaningful way.

> It looks to me like it's probably a five-year initiative to get up to a point where you're totally... Because you need to be doing an awful lot of things. You need to have a serious amount of planning. And I just think that the training is going to have to be— I think we're getting an overview. I think that people are not going to be thoroughly trained a year from now... A lot of people have picked up the ball and they're really going along with it. But it's sort of— I don't want to say it's superficial, but it's like an introductory level that they're at and they think they're doing it. Which is fine because they— hopefully, they will find out how much more involved it really is... the thing is, it really is a philosophy and a religion, I think. (Teacher P)

BPE leadership also recognize the possibility that implementation of these new practices could be superficial.

> [With] some schools that have [a] model there's sort of already some kind of cohesive feeling, but the coaches are concerned that that's superficial, that you can buy into a model because everybody is doing the same thing, but it doesn't mean that practice is really going to change. And in the schools that are just now adopting a model or are not going to adopt a model, the struggle of what we're going to do and how we get people to agree feels very, very complicated. (BPE Staff)

One of the reasons why meaningful change in literacy instruction will take time is because the work involves making multiple changes at once. Teachers talked with us about how they're struggling to become comfortable putting the pieces together.

> I think because there's so, especially with writing, it's broken down into content, style and voice, organization, mechanics. And I think the challenge for me is which area to focus on. Do you focus just on one? That's been hard. Because I tend to, it's hard for me to look at a paper and if I'm just looking at content without, if I see it's got like a ton of mechanical mistakes, but I don't want to overwhelm them with too much at one time. So that's where I find the challenge, is where, kind of how much do you do at once, where do you draw the line and build on? That's a big one. (Teacher J)

Teachers who are working to implement ELLI in their classrooms talked about the difficulty of reorganizing their instruction into centers, a relatively complex way of organizing instruction. This teacher described what it takes to prepare to implement ELLI, even on a basic organizational level.

> I will have a listening center, a writing center, an ABC center, guided reading, shared reading, and computer center. I have that set. I have my work board almost set. Right now I'm making the list of levels for my guided reading groups. And I still have to work on how to do the activities in each group... My concern is how a certain group is going to work by themselves while I do the guided reading group. That's my main concern. But that's, I'm hoping that in two weeks I will start my groups in my guided reading. (Teacher U)

Another teacher, who is also just beginning to implement ELLI, shared her concerns about moving forwards with all of the changes at once.

> The work board... It's like the easel chart, and their names are on it. And what they do is they look at the icon. For example, there is an icon for the ABC center, for the writing center, and for the art center. So they would see their name, they would look at the icon, and this is what I need to do now for 20 minutes. Then I

> need to switch to the next one. I'm still not comfortable with that. Because they're not used to it yet. I'm still with them at the point where I take all the directions and I read it to them before I let them go... I'm letting them go, in a sense, but I still have more control... I'm supposed to be doing three to four guided reading sessions in one literacy block. I'm not quite there. And I spoke about that at the meeting last week. And they were like, "You're only doing one or two?" And my response is, "Well, you know, I'm not used to it yet and I don't think it's going to be effective if I'm rushing the kids." That's where I'm at right now. Maybe I'll get to the point where I can see three or four, but I don't feel that I've had enough practice yet to do it in a way where the kids, where I won't be stressed out and I won't be stressing out the kids. (Teacher G)

Coaches have also observed these struggles. One of the coaches talked about the different kinds of challenges teachers are struggling with as they try to see how all of the pieces of a literacy program can fit together.

> You heard another teacher talk about today that the grammar is not being taught, the grammar is not being taught. Well, Writers' Workshop teaches grammar; it just teaches it within the context of the student papers. Writers' Workshop gets bounced around because you have to have it at least three times a week, five would be great, but there's a lot on their plates. And so people really haven't thought, and they're not at the point where they can see other ways to integrate other realities into the writing workshop. [For example], kids are not going to write nonfiction, usually. You have to teach them how to write nonfiction. But in social studies and science you're studying things that give themselves over to nonfiction. So when you teach nonfiction writing, you could incorporate some of the things you're doing in science and social studies, and incorporate it such a way that the kids would still feel like they have ownership, or at least some sort of negotiated ownership over the topic that they were doing. Those thought patterns are not in place yet because people are struggling with the techniques, they're struggling with getting the time every day to write. (Coach S)

Another coach talked about the problems that can arise if the approach to literacy is not sufficiently comprehensive.

> And what we realized this year is that... kids progressed to a point, and we were having trouble getting them to really get into much more sophisticated, reflective analytical writing. So that's when we decided well maybe part of the problem [is] how little kids are reading... And so the goal now is to continue the strong focus on writing, but shift to also focusing on reading comprehension. (Coach C)

Still another coach discussed how teachers are struggling with the day-to-day implementation of new literacy practices, particularly around how to address the academic needs of students who are at different stages in their literacy development.

> In the book, *Guided Reading*, [Fountas and Pinnell] talk about the importance of oral language development. But I don't know how a lot of the kindergarten teachers, I suspect they're not doing a really good job of helping the kids to catch up in terms of oral language. And I think a lot of it has to do with the pressures that they feel, not just from the system, but you know, here's a kid who's in kindergarten and already, quote unquote, behind. So you want to accelerate. But on the other hand, you can only accelerate so much, and I think they really get caught, and I'm not sure how well they're able to balance both. (Coach N)

A teacher also shared her struggle to address the needs of students at a range of levels. She expressed concern about meeting the needs of her students who are reading well above grade level. She indicated a need for professional development that addresses this kind of acceleration.

> I've got some kids who are reading like high school novels, excellent readers. And those are the kids who, when I was in a meeting and I said, "OK, I know what to do with my kids who... need that extra boost. What do I do with the kids who are just soaring?" I'm not going to sit with them during a guided reading group and say, "Read to me." I think they would look at me like, "What, you want me to read you a chapter? What do you want me to read to you?" So I don't normally grab them for guided reading. I push their writing skills... The response was that on our syllabus there was a class on that. But it's not until March. I was like, "OK, it's January; help [me] now." ...It still isn't very clear to me... What am I going to give them? (Teacher G)

Coaches talked about teacher learning that's just beginning to take place, and how successful implementation of this learning is going to require significant work. For example, this coach says that teachers are going to have to become writers themselves in order to more successfully teach writing.

> They're moving from ... being a teacher to being a writer. Seeing themselves as writers is what I'm trying to move them to. So less teaching, more being a writer. And [from becoming] one who writes, to [then] teach writers what they need to know to progress. Because [without] that, it becomes too instructionally sequenced, and then eventually the research indicates that it dies. It becomes, it just dies. [The] writing process becomes instructional steps. (Coach S)

The way that this coach talked about learning to teach writing goes well beyond learning a set of skills. Nonetheless, we know that some teachers do not realize the potential magnitude of the required changes. In this sense, relying on a structure or recipe is very different from the way the coach quoted above characterizes the learning required to become a good writing teacher. We agree that the instructional improvement these literacy models seek to generate will not come about as a result of adopting practices in the absence of a deeper understanding.

Coaches also talked to us about forms of resistance to implementing the new literacy programs. Some of this resistance results from teachers' attachment to the instructional approaches that they have used in the past. Teachers are understandably committed to using practices that they feel have worked for them in the past.

> You have to remember that the teachers were really [veterans] in the Collins approach... And we had to integrate that nicely because teachers, as soon as you try something new, they think you're throwing something new at them. And rightfully so. So what we did is... we said, "Well look, you have your focus corrections. Let's focus on one section of the rubric." So our focus corrections are only going to deal in content. Or only on grabbing the reader's attention and using descriptive adjectives, or something like that. (Coach B)

Coaches also reported that teachers may resist the change because they have been through many previous cycles of reform.

> I think there's always reluctance to try something new, and there's often the feeling, "Oh my goodness, here we go again. Whoops, first it's, you know, anthologies for the whole class and everyone reading the same story, and then here we are talking about guided reading and little groups of trade books. What's it going to be next?" There are teachers who've been here for years, and they've seen these incredible cycles... And so there's a little bit of that skepticism, if not cynicism. And yet a lot of them are trying it in their own fashion. Some of them are not. (Coach L)

In other cases, coaches did not identify the reasons for resistance, but still indicated that it is a factor.

> There's all, there's a spectrum [in terms of the school's involvement with ELLI]. So it depends... I think it's going fairly well, yet there are some people who are at some stages that obviously need a lot more work, and some people who have just come aboard and understand what it's all about. It's going. It's happening. Some people still don't want to believe that they're in an ELLI school... a small minority, and mostly upper grades. Although there are a few resistors. (Coach K)

Teachers also spoke of their own approaches to literacy instruction and their attachment to certain practices.

> When you know a lot of things that really work in your classroom or your curriculum area or your grade level, you tend to keep those and then try to add the new stuff on top. And you've really got to let go and it's hard for me right now. And I'm sure people say this all the time. You can't let go when you don't have anything to replace it with. And that superficial level, the introductory level is

> not enough substance in order to make my class look like a class that's leaving my room in June every year. (Teacher P)

In some cases, attachment to past practices manifested itself in a desire to tilt the "balance" of the literacy program toward one side or the other. For example, in some cases, teachers articulated their belief that the programs they adopted lack adequate emphasis on phonics instruction and fail to incorporate a broad enough set of language arts skills.

> Where it's lacking is probably in the field of phonics. I think that it assumes that by the time you're on [the fourth grade] level, that kids have all the phonetic awareness that they need. Many of our kids here, being from such diverse backgrounds, I wish that they could put a little more emphasis somehow on phonics. (Teacher A)

The concerns about the narrowness of the program are in some ways related to the district English language arts requirements, and teachers' sense that they are struggling with competing demands.

> They [the literacy programs] don't provide a language [arts] program... And for me, that's kind of lacking. And in fourth or fifth grade, they should include some kind of language [arts]... How do you use the verb? How do you use a sentence? How did you use a compound sentence? If they expect me to have the kids produce something with compound sentences, how am I going to get compound sentences? (Teacher W)

Another teacher, at another school, talked about her concern that their adopted program lacks grammar and spelling instruction.

> With [our literacy program], that's a really big concern of mine, grammar... I'm a true believer in the traditional spelling class. It should be a whole class thing, we should be reviewing words, we should be playing with words. But [our literacy program] doesn't seem to really foster that. I don't really know how to do it. [The program] does a lot of games, and the kids are familiar with the games and everything. But the rules, you've got to teach them the rules of spelling. And maybe it's something that [the program] is going to get into and I don't know it yet... I need to really focus on their spelling. Their spelling is atrocious... I'm really concerned. I also do a lot of... what's a noun, and we say a noun is a person, place, or thing, and we do the whole, old style. But they love it. They love it. They like it. And I don't care if it's the old way. I think the old way can be good. (Teacher G)

At yet another school, a teacher articulated her sense that phonics instruction would need to be incorporated into the program.

> And as they get older, I guess they do different things. Maybe synonyms. You know, we need to touch on the phonics-based language arts aspects that we don't get a chance to teach a whole lot of. (Teacher X)

Some coaches also described this struggle regarding balance. In this case, the coach described how a faculty's commitment to phonics-based literacy instruction affected their decision not to adopt an externally-developed model.

> I would say a couple of years before I came, they decided to adopt a phonics program... And they bought that hook, line, and sinker. They bought the training, the teachers do it. They're committed to it, they feel that it's made inroads into kids' reading and writing. So that was in place. That was a given. And it takes up an enormous amount of time... So having done that... they had a financial investment in it, I think a philosophical investment, and certainly a time investment. They felt that they were not interested in putting their resources or their time into yet another program. And so part of [their decision not to adopt a model] then was kind of default decision. But I think that the current thinking is that even though it's hard work and messy and an erratic procress, I think the feeling is that we will be better off because we thought it through for ourselves in a way that suits this population and these teachers. And there is a phonemic aspect to guided reading. So they've taken care of that in spades. (Coach L)

Finally, a teacher summed up her sense of teachers' reactions to the balanced literacy program that her school adopted. She talked about how the philosophical shift is much more significant for some teachers than others, depending on where they started.

> I think that people are really overwhelmed. I think that for some people it's a very different style of teaching. For me, [our literacy program] was such a natural process. That's how I teach anyway. Like doing learning centers, I always have done centers so it wasn't that much of a shift. But it was. But philosophically it wasn't. But I think for other people who are philosophically in a whole other place, it's a huge shift and it's very overwhelming. (Teacher D)

Given all of these challenges and the complexity of the changes, it is not surprising that impacts are somewhat slow to be realized. A couple of coaches talked about the progress that has been made implementing balanced literacy programs in their schools. However, they also voiced frustration — their own and that of their teachers — regarding seeing the results of their hard work.

> After two years, I think I've got the [school] teachers talking very well about balanced literacy, looking at student work, and all of that. I've seen some changes in their classrooms, but not changes to the extent that I thought I would see. So I've got to figure out how to drive that, how to get everything back into the classroom. (Coach N)

Another coach said that she feels like ELLI is going well, but that the high level of teacher commitment and involvement has created some frustration on the teachers' part. She told us that although they have seen growth in the students' reading, they would like to be seeing faster growth given the amount of energy they are putting in to implementing the model.

Despite significant progress in the implementation of new approaches to literacy, many challenges remain as teachers work to implement their literacy-based instructional focus. We think that one challenge will be to provide schools and teachers sufficient time to complete their learning and implementation. We know that everyone wants to see results quickly and that it will be tempting to consider three or four years sufficient for the implementation of new approaches to literacy. If that is the case, then it is likely that much-needed supports will be withdrawn from the schools on the mistaken basis of assuming the reform to be complete. Based on our data and on the experiences of others, we think that the BPE, and perhaps the BPS, need to argue for adequate learning time for teachers so that implementation can be effective. Teachers need time to learn, to implement the multiple components of the literacy models they are attempting, and to let go of long-held beliefs and practices when they are no longer appropriate. During this process, teachers will continue to need sustained, high quality support. We think that the initial investment in literacy programs and the instructional focus merits a continuing commitment via sufficient time and support.

E. Conclusion: Literacy

In this discussion of our findings regarding the early implementation of new approaches to literacy instruction, we highlighted progress and identified challenges. As signs of progress, we reported that teachers value the new shared sense of purpose at their schools that has come about as a result of a common instructional focus. We wrote that teachers are beginning to change their practice in response to literacy-based professional development, and that they are observing increases in student engagement and learning. We then highlighted the importance of content coaches and literacy coordinators. By providing an array of learning opportunities, these individuals play critical roles in building a school's internal capacity to implement new approaches to literacy instruction. We urged the BPE to continue to provide support to schools via this type of school-based capacity building.

We then turned to challenges. We noted the unique challenges facing the upper elementary, middle, and high school grades. And, although many are stymied by these challenges, we described how educators at some schools are working to extend some of the principles of their school's primary literacy programs into the upper grades, and/or are using data, including LASW, as an entry point to working on literacy. We noted that these approaches demonstrate determination and creativity. We also emphasized the importance of coupling this work with quality, literacy-based professional development. Finally, we wrote about overall challenges that slow, or in some cases impede, implementation. For the most part, they have to do with the time it takes to learn a new, complex set of skills. In light of these challenges, teachers will continue to need on-going support. We urged the BPE to follow through on its initial investments with

this sustained support. Finally, we noted that some schools have made little or no progress implementing new approaches to literacy instruction. In such cases, we suggested that it is time for the BPE, perhaps in collaboration with the BPS, to determine what is standing in the way of progress and then take steps to remove the obstacles.

III. COACHES AT WORK

In our August 4, 1997, memo, *Focus on Coaches,* we described the ways in which WSC coaches worked with their schools to support principals and teachers in beginning the process of whole school change by implementing the First Year Essentials (FYE).[10] We wrote:

> Education Matters' interviews with the coaches suggest that the BPE has selected talented individuals who are knowledgeable and well-suited to their work. All ten principals with whom we spoke during the process of selecting schools for the evaluation sample agree. They found the coaches helpful in focusing on the FYEs, identifying "best practices" for further consideration, and, in many cases, helping them learn to facilitate conversations among their teachers and between teachers and themselves. In schools where faculty relations have been strained, principals reported that the coaches made it possible for teachers to talk with one another, an important first step in the process of developing an instructional focus or making progress with reform, in general. To the extent that schools made progress during this first year, in our view, and in the view of the BPE staff, the coaches made a significant contribution. Coaches reported that they valued their role at the schools, saw progress at the schools and felt that their work was integral to the schools' progress. (August 1997, p.5)

Our latest data collection reveals that the coaches continue to be essential to the implementation of the 21st Century Schools program. During the 1997-1998 school year, most schools had two coaches — a WSC coach and a content coach — each of whom spent one day a week in the school. Both coaches help teachers implement their instructional focus. WSC coaches work closely with principals supporting their work as instructional leaders and leaders of whole-school change, assist with implementing the BPE's focus for the school year, and support the work of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Without this continuing coach support, it is doubtful that schools could keep their attention on whole-school change and on activities that focus on teaching and learning.

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[10]Schools did not have content coaches during the first year of implementation. Starting in the 1997-1998 school year, content coaches helped schools implement their literacy focus. A number of schools, however, did not have content coaches as a result of a) participating in a program such as Success for All that has its own support structure, and b) not being able to identify a content coach who could meet the school's need. Some schools had the same individual fulfilling the role of content coach and WSC coach. At least one school had a math content coach, instead of a literacy coach.

Our data also reveal that the BPE has made significant progress in addressing the professional development needs of the content and WSC coaches and engaging them more in shaping their work within the context of the 21st Century Schools program. Coaches now influence the agendas of their required meetings. With the help of Claudia Grose, a support person for the coaches, new organizational structures enable the coaches to work collaboratively on issues they identify as important to their work. As a result, coaches know much more about their colleagues' on-going work and areas of expertise. This is all to the good.

To further explore the role of the coaches, we turn first to a review of the ways in which coaches work with principals. Second, we turn to the coaches' role in assisting with LASW. Third, we review the role of the BPE in supporting the coaches' work, identifying ways in which the BPE has responded to the coach concerns we raised in a previous report (August 1997). We conclude with a discussion of the challenges both coaches and the BPE face as they move their work forward.[11]

A. Work With Principals

The 21st Century Schools program requires principals to take a greater leadership role with respect to instruction than most had taken in the past. At the same time, the reform requires principals to be more collegial with teachers through the work of the ILT, for example, and by participating in LASW sessions. Many principals are challenged by the increased focus on collegial leadership and instruction. Some have maintained an authoritarian stance toward their teachers and the process of decision making for years. Others have taken a passive stance to leadership of the school's instructional program, preferring to leave that in the hands of teachers. As a result, most principals need to make significant changes in the way they implement their role if they are going to successfully develop and support whole-school change. Therefore, coaches devote a considerable portion of their time to assisting principals implement their new instructional leadership role in a context in which teachers have a greater role in decision making.

WSC coaches in particular, but not exclusively, talk about their multifaceted efforts to help principals develop interaction styles that will mesh well with the collaborative nature of whole-school change that is represented in the ILT and other aspects of school reform. Coaches talk often about helping principals participate, but take a less dominant role, in those sessions. They also support teachers who are learning to work with their principals in new ways.

> He tends to do a lot of talking in the LASW group. And I've gotten feedback from people that they don't find that particularly helpful. So I've been working with him in terms of what his role is. So, I basically support the groups themselves, the people who run the groups, and then the principal who is now becoming very involved, which is a wonderful thing, in this process. (Coach A)

[11]Coaches' work with the literacy focus was discussed in the previous section of the report.

> And [the WSC coach] and I are on her constantly. And she's really come a long way. Less dictatorial, and just more facilitative. Hard for her to do, because she sees the big picture. It's tough [for her] to do. (Coach B)

Overall, coaches are trying to help principals understand that their instructional leadership role does not have to include directing everything.

> So you don't always necessarily need to be the leader of the discussion, but you're seen as an active participant and driver of the discussion. You don't have to be bringing all the ideas to the table, but that you're helping create a culture where it's the norm to be talking about those issues, and you're seen as a vital contributor. (Coach C)

How do coaches do this work? One coach described how she approached the problem in light of her understanding of the basis for the principal's actions.

> He usually grasps things long before the group does. So sometimes he doesn't see the need for prolonged conversations around a topic. So I have to come and say, "You're really talking too much in the group." Which he's like, "OK, all right, I can take that. Let me think. What should we do?" And we talk about it, and at the next group he tries to stifle that natural urge that he has. He's willing to take suggestions, where I'm not sure everybody would be. He's not saying, "Go away, I'm going to do this the way I'm going to do it." He really wants to be successful. (Coach A)

Another coach asked the principal to stay away from ILT meetings due to his inability to refrain from dominating discussions. After considering new strategies for the principal to try, he returned to the meetings and is trying to use them. This coach described the initial situation and her approach to changing it.

> [The principal] has been coming to the instructional leadership meetings more this year. And I consciously didn't want him to come to the meetings in the past because he tends to take the meeting over. And that's not helpful to people. Then people just feel like he's telling them what to do instead of them owning the problem. But I've said to him, "You know, there are times when you do need to come, but you need to come and listen to people as much as you need to come and give them a sense of what your parameters are." And [I told the principal] that we will get where we need to go a lot less painfully and a lot quicker if we trust them more and attend to this process stuff more. So when he came to the meeting at the beginning of the year I felt like he was very clear about what his expectations were, which people needed to hear, and what the scope of our authority was, which I think was very important. But then he really did a good job of listening throughout the rest of the discussion. (Coach D)

These coach comments make several important points. First, to be successful, coaches must have the knowledge and skill with which to develop coaching strategies that address individual principal's needs. Second, they need to have established some credibility so that principals listen to their opinions. And third, although this item is outside of the coach's control, the coach needs to work with a principal who agrees that it will be worthwhile to make the changes under consideration. Almost all of the coaches with whom we spoke suggest that they are able to speak directly with their principals. Not all of them, however, conclude that their principals are eager or even willing to learn new ways of interacting and new strategies for collaboratively moving reform forward.[12]

While coaches are attempting to shape administrators' behavior, they also need to enable teachers to understand that their principals are trying to work in new ways. They need teachers to continue to participate on the ILTs, for example, even while principals are not yet adroit at collaboration. Coaches need to prevent situations in which teachers stop attending the ILT because it is principal dominated. To accomplish this, some coaches explicitly talk with teachers about the hard work and role change that their principals are attempting.

In addition to helping principals with their roles on the ILT and LASW teams, coaches report assisting principals with their leadership role as it pertains to spending time in classrooms. Principals have been learning to pay attention to the nature of instruction, to the kind and quality of student work, to the changing role of the teacher and to the importance of student engagement, for example. Coaches report that, nonetheless, some principals do not yet know what to look for when they visit classrooms or how to provide useful feedback to teachers. As a result, coaches provide principals with guidance about both of these leadership activities.

One coach, for example, gave the principal specific strategies to use in classrooms by asking her to consider the following kinds of issues:

> Are you going into rooms and really looking at what teachers are doing and what kids are doing? [I need to help administrators] know that when they go into rooms, the first thing they do is talk to kids and ask kids what they're doing. You ask a kid, "What are you doing today?" If you do that with three or four kids, you'll get a quick idea of the level of instruction that's going on in the room. For example, if a kid says, "We're doing chapter three," that's very different than if a kid says, "We're working on our sentences to make them better." [It tells you] whether they're talking content or whether they're talking something else. So that's a concrete strategy. What do you say to kids when you're in the room? (Coach E)

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[12]We know that over the first two and one-half years of the 21st Century Schools program not all coaching relationships have worked well. In some instances, the BPE has removed coaches from the schools to which they were assigned. In other instances, principals have requested a change in coach. Our comments, therefore, reflect the views of coaches who are currently working in schools where they have established reasonably productive relationships with principals and teachers.

Coaches sometimes have to convince principals who do spend time in classrooms to see that they are not looking for what they need to know and are not asking questions that would give them pertinent information. For example, one coach, after discussing with the principal his strategies for learning about the use of a new curriculum, reported the following interaction:

> I'm telling him that I think he's being very ineffective and that he's not going to get people to – My question to him is, "You've got all this wonderful curriculum. Are teachers using it? How do you know that teachers are using it?" He says, "Well, I go around to the classroom and I see that they're using it." I said, "Give me some evidence of that." And he couldn't do it. He could not give me evidence. "OK," I said, "You've been around to the third grade. Have you hit a math one?" "Oh yeah, I've hit a math one." "Are they doing it? Tell me which ones you saw them doing." Couldn't do it. I said, "That's where your focus needs to be. Push this stuff. And you need to be able to see that they're using it. And then you need to ask the question, why aren't they using it?" (Coach F)

Another coach asked the principal to attempt some of the strategies that teachers were learning in their early literacy programs. In this way, suggested the coach, the principal would have a better understanding of what teachers are trying to implement.

> It's not always easy to learn to do running records and observation surveys. And so teachers sort of get a little bit upset about it, and it is hard. It's a hard thing to learn to do. So what I try, and it's the hardest part, is to get the principal to go in the classroom and sit down and let other teachers see her fumbling with this but keep going, keep going. I'm having a really hard time with that. The principal will say to me, "I can't do this, it's really hard." And I keep saying, "Neither can I, neither can your teachers. But we all have to get in there and sit down and try it." I said, "You know, the best model for them to see is you trying it. You know? Don't be afraid to go in and try it. Let them know, gee, this is hard. But don't stop. Keep doing it." So the other day I tried to get her up into a classroom to do it with me. (Coach G)

Whether principals are comfortable observing or are just learning this skill, they often lack strategies with which to provide useful feedback to teachers. Some are in the habit of telling teachers what they need to do differently. They do not take the time to help teachers reflect on their practice so that they can develop some insight into what they might do differently to help students learn. In this respect, many principals' interactions with individual teachers reflect the same pattern they demonstrate in ILT or LASW sessions. When this is the case, coaches aim to teach principals alternative feedback approaches. For example, one coach talked about what she considered counterproductive and what she suggested to the principal.

> The piece that I think that he needs to still work on, and I've told him this, and I see it as part of my role in helping him in his role as instructional leader, is when you go into someone's classroom and you have feedback for them, the manner in

> which you give them feedback, I think, is really important. And I think if you give somebody a memo with "these are the five things *you* need to do differently," they don't own the problem and they don't own the solution. They're being told what to do and they don't feel like they're being treated as professionals. [This principal] will admit that he doesn't really have the patience for really helping someone come to their own understanding of the problem. And I have said to him, "Nine times out of ten, you're going to come up with the exact same five things the person is going to [need to] do differently tomorrow. But if you tell them that they have to do those things, they're not doing them because they believe that they're necessarily the right way to go. They're doing them because you're the boss and you told them they had to do it. Versus taking the time to really sit with someone and say, "I saw these things. How do you see it? What was going on for you? And what are you struggling with?" And then, "Let's, have you thought about it this way?" And letting people, through a dialog, own it. And that's something he knows he's got to work on. Because he's not good at that. (Coach D)

Another coach reported that he and the principal did some training that involved,

> ...keeping your sticky pad with you all the time, and as soon as you leave a classroom you write some quick notes to the teacher or yourself. Tell them three really good things you saw going on, and then the one suggestion. As opposed to telling them nothing, which is what's typical, or I just tell you what's bad. (Coach E)

Those who try the coaches' suggestions and see some changes in their capacity to do the work, often feel encouraged to maintain their attention to instruction. Coaches report that they may enlist the teachers to support the principal in such efforts.

> So, at the same time, that I might be working with the principal about trying one of these new strategies out, I'd be talking to a group of teachers and saying, "Have you noticed any change in the role? What have you noticed in [the principal's] behavior?" And if they said to me, "Well, I noticed she came into my room," I say, "Will you thank her? Will you tell her that? Will you give her some feedback? Because she's working as hard as you are to change what she's doing." Sometimes, getting that feedback back to her from someone other than me would help her know that this [classroom-based work] is worthwhile. (Coach E)

Despite their efforts and intentions, coaches report that a few principals are unwilling to make the changes they suggest. Such principals have not observed more effectively in classrooms and they have not yet changed their approach to providing feedback to teachers. A few have not even begun to spend any time in classrooms. Coaches conclude that these principals do not see this as a part of their role given the time they need to spend on management and other issues. At

this point in the 21st Century Schools program, coaches are not convinced that they will ever be successful in helping such principals devote time to on-going instruction.

> My sense is that there's nobody in classrooms, that the administration does not see it as their job to supervise teachers. I mean, they don't see it as their role. And I do. So they don't see it as a priority to really spend time... [observing in classrooms], the principal, forget it. I never even consider her doing it. She's sort of in a whole other place doing a whole other job. (Coach H)

Coaches also realize that a few principals who do not visit classrooms avoid this work because they are not knowledgeable about the content being taught and are uncomfortable watching teaching and learning under such circumstances. It is not clear how to help those principals take on this new and challenging leadership role.

When principals do want to take on an instructional role and visit classrooms, coaches report that many have trouble finding the time to devote to these activities. The coach role, in such cases, might be to help guide principals to consider how they currently use their time and what they could do differently.

> It can be something as simple as how you're using your morning time. "How much of your time is spent in classrooms, versus your office? And when you are in classrooms, are you standing around talking to the teacher? What are you doing?" So it's, at each one of those things I just described there is a different set of activities that a principal would be engaged in. So for example, "I'm not in my office, I'm going around the building." "If you're going around the building, what are your eyes seeing when you're going around? What are the things you're looking for? Are you looking at repairing the sinks and cleaning the floors and why aren't the bulletin boards on straight because that's what easier for you to do?" (Coach E)

We want to note that requiring that principals pay greater attention to teaching and expecting them to implement that role quite quickly does not reflect full appreciation of how little many principals might know about taking on such a role. It does not reflect sufficient appreciation of the fundamental change it represents in how principals construct and are rewarded for their work. We support the BPE and BPS initiative to stress principal leadership and we do not want to condone principal behavior that thwarts this change. However, we also want to note that principals need time and on-going support to develop their new roles. A number of coaches feel they do not currently have this time.

> To become an instructional leader, I think you need time and distance to form your thinking. And they don't have that. And they're dealing with so many reform efforts all at once, that this one just, it's just one on a list. And if you don't get why these things are important, and some of these, like, looking at student work seem like kind of far out, to tell you the truth. It really isn't so clear

> how it's going to be helpful immediately. You know, they have a fight, they're doing discipline. So, getting a grasp on why this would be important and why it would help the day to day running of the school when they have so many reform efforts — the Stanford 9, the MCAS, the citywide standards. And the Boston Plan. And running the school. They need help, too. (Coach I)

Before concluding this discussion of the coaches' role with principals, we want to note that coaches could not work in any of these sensitive areas if they and the principals with whom they work had not developed strong, trusting relationships. They could not work effectively with individual teachers or teacher teams if principals did not support their work. So, although we know that some coaching relationships have not worked, for the most part, our interviews reveal that principals trust the coaches who work with them and do not object to the ways in which the coaches are trying to help them improve their work as instructional leaders. In the few instances in which the principal is unwilling to learn, the coach can be "close to useless" as one coach put it. The coach has no authority to insist on changes that the principal does not agree to make.

Coaches continue to help keep principals' attention on the instructional focus of the school. They do this through their work with the ILTs, in their support of principals as instructional leaders, when they discuss the use of time, personnel and financial resources, and in their efforts to help teams implement LASW (discussed in the next section). In continuing their attention to these areas, coaches' work has become more complicated. As more and more is demanded of the principal and of the teachers, as well, principals and teachers often want more of the coaches' attention. This is good news, on the one hand. On the other, coaches feel stretched thin as they try to respond to new requests while sustaining earlier efforts. We will return to the issue of the structure of the coaches' job amid accelerating school reform in the last section of this update report.

B. Looking At Student Work

The BPE has consistently stressed that looking at student work (LASW) is to be a central component of schools' professional development. LASW is one of the essentials of whole-school-change that was adopted jointly by the BPS, the BPE and the Boston Annenberg Challenge. The purpose of this activity has been made clear: to stimulate instructional improvement by using discoveries made when looking at work to plan instruction, choose professional development, and establish annual goals (BPE, *LASW: Clear Expectations for Phase II,* N.D.). The BPE has advocated a process that relies on reflective conversations focused on teaching and learning. Coaches spend a considerable part of their time assisting teachers and administrators in LASW sessions.

In our July 15,1998, report, we discussed how our sample schools were progressing with the implementation of this work. We wrote:

> The schools and teams which have made the most progress in LASW report the active support of the WSC and/or content coach or another facilitator. At a basic

> level, the presence of facilitators helps to ensure that teachers' common planning time is used to look at student work. At a deeper level, the support and guidance provided by these trained facilitators is helping teachers develop an understanding of the implications of LASW. At this point, teachers' understanding of the purposes of the process varies tremendously. This variation indicates a need for on-going support of this work. (p. 31)

We also wrote that the BPE, through the work of the coaches, should continue to stress the use of LASW models that make explicit the link between this activity and classroom instruction. We were concerned that teachers often ended their LASW sessions having scored student work but without having developed plans to alter their instruction in order to achieve better student learning outcomes. We based our conclusions on data from teachers, administrators and coaches.

We begin our discussion of the coaches' role in supporting LASW with a description of the roles they take in this activity. We then revisit the issue of identifying and using a model for LASW and the importance of linking LASW to pedagogy.

1. The Role of the Coaches in Facilitating LASW. Coaches take on a number of different facilitation roles in LASW sessions. In schools or on teams where the work is close to becoming part of the culture, they may act as observers, interjecting comments when they feel it is necessary. In such settings, they also work to develop teacher and administrator capacity to implement LASW without an external coach. In schools or with teams where the work is not yet part of the standard operating procedures, coaches report taking a more directive role. They help keep discussions focused on the work at hand; they remind teachers about the steps in the protocol. They may even find it necessary to re-instruct teachers about the purpose of the work and, therefore, its importance. In a small number of schools, coaches report that the work is still at an early stage with teachers, as yet, unable to share comfortably the work of their students.

In detailing these different stages of implementation and the ways in which the coaches tailor their roles, we begin with a few examples from schools or teams in which teachers are still uncomfortable sharing their work with one another and do not yet see the benefit of the work.

> [They're beginning to] open up, opening up, showing what their kids are producing. And the other challenge is taking responsibility for that. (Coach K)

Without doubt, working in such settings is a challenge to coaches. Some of the content coaches, in particular, have been trying to change negative or tentative responses to LASW since their work with the 21st Century Schools began. Their task has not been easy. What keeps them going is the realization that a) LASW is an essential component of improving teaching and learning and b) once teachers see its value, they agree to continue the work. One coach, who detailed the difficulty of getting teachers to come to LASW sessions, described the outcome of persisting with the effort.

> [After a while,] they saw that it was pleasurable and they were getting something out of it. It was making their instruction better, it became a regular thing and people were saying, "What day is it going to be next month? When are we going to do it?" And now it's just sort of, by the end of last year it was common practice. They look forward to it, there are no teachers who are reticent about bringing their work, everyone took their turn. And what I saw as the biggest result of those looking at student work sessions was teaching becoming more public and less private. It was the thing I noticed the most. People were more open about what I'm doing in my room, and more likely to say, "What are you doing? How did you do that?" and less just in their own little spot. (Coach E)

Most coaches are not working in schools that are at the very early stages of implementation. However, many work in schools or with teams where LASW is not yet well-established, where the coach finds it necessary to take a directive role, establishing the agenda and making sure that teachers "stay on-task" and grapple with difficult issues.

> Well, it depends on the group of teachers. There's one group who has a whole bunch of issues but doesn't want to meet, so they try to take looking at student work time to talk about that. I'm like, "No, no, no, this is my time. You have another period between times we meet where you can talk about that." That week where we meet for 45 minutes they have the second period where they can chat. (Coach K)

> I mean, has LASW taken on a life of its own? I don't think it has. I don't think it's embedded in the system yet. I think that teachers could articulate the fact that they see some value in it, but more often they think that it's just one more thing that they need to do, out of many things that there are. (Coach L)

> I want it teacher driven and not driven because the coach is sitting there. They called me the task master last year. I would show up and they'd have to [do it]. So we were really pushing on trying to get across, trying to turn looking at student work into something that is not a ritual that has to be gone through because the coach says it has to be gone through, or the principal says it has to be gone through, or the Plan, but something that really informs their teaching and that they find useful, and that they do because it's useful to them. (Coach M)

In schools that are further along, coaches describe a facilitation role in which they act as "participants," listening to the conversations, offering comments, asking probing questions, or offering feedback after LASW sessions.

> Actually, we [content coach, WSC coach, and the principal] all play off each other. The person who is going to present the work starts. And then we all respond. And the only time that one of us will sort of jump in is when we see that there's someone who's not, who's sort of like withdrawing. And then that's our

> job to sort of bring them into the discussion in a positive way. But generally they pretty much take over the meetings, which has been really nice. (Coach B)
>
> I'm another participant. I think sometimes I am a pusher. I might ask a question, or I might refer back to the protocol to make sure that we're actually staying on task, or you know, maybe there's another way to look at this. Or have you thought of, or could we take another look at this, ask a probing question, or, I was wondering if. So it's those kinds of reflective questions. But I'm really just a participant. (Coach J)

Coaches reported that even during the early stages of implementation, using LASW activities helped teachers have higher expectations for students' work.

> I think another role I had was to sit in the groups, and I knew after a few times who especially had lower expectations around kids' work. So when X person would say, "My kids can't meet these standards, they're too high." I was there to ask the question, "Let's look at the way teacher Y's kids did. Teacher Y, what did you do? Because you all have the same kids. Teacher Y, what did you do differently?" And those are a couple of concrete things they had to think about every time, once the logistics were up and going they could take care of it themselves. (Coach E)
>
> In the very beginning it was just getting them to agree upon a consistent set of standards by which we assess student work. Also, at the same time trying to ratchet up those standards to a higher level. Because there were very low expectations for kids' work when we first started here. That's why we spent a chunk of time not taking already constructed rubrics, but having the school construct their own. And we actually had the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades construct their own and then compare. We found out that in actuality the sixth grade at the time had higher standard rubrics than eighth grade. So we brought that up as a discussion. So that created some good discussions around teams, about what is the standard of work that we're all going to expect of kids. (Coach C)

In schools that are most advanced with LASW, coaches are trying to build teachers' and principals' capacity to do the work without the coach.[13]

> And there were also teachers, a couple of teachers in each site, who were really ready to take on some of the responsibilities that I had kind of assumed. Not chairing, but facilitating the looking at student work sessions. And they had not agreed to do that, but I looked at their skills, and the principals looked at their

[13] We know that the BPE is providing training to develop school-based leadership capacity for LASW during the second half of the 1998-1999 school year.

> skills, and I knew that if I just spent the year kind of supporting them, or doing half and half, kind of modeling and then supporting them in the spring, that they would be able to assume that responsibility. Some of that I think is in place, or will be in place by the end of the year. (Coach N)

Our data reveal that schools are at different points on the continuum of implementation and effectiveness with respect to LASW. What seems clear is that, despite considerable coach attention to LASW, schools have quite a distance to go until they implement this work in ways that suggest that teachers appreciate its values. It will likely take longer than anyone anticipated to get this component of the 21st Century Schools program firmly embedded in the on-going work of schools. Coaches remain essential to the continuation of LASW in most schools; in a few, it may be possible to develop in-house capacity to sustain the work.

2. Using Models to Look at Student Work. There have been numerous discussions among coaches, between the BPE and the coaches, between standards facilitators and coaches about what model to use to look at student work. The BPE is clear that the purpose of examining student work is to learn about what students understand and are struggling with, to analyze the instruction that produced the work, and then, as necessary, to develop instructional strategies better able to help students produce high quality work. As a result, the BPE trained coaches and teachers in the Education Trust Model, an approach that encourages teachers to examine on-going, everyday work that is at the heart of the curriculum. This model directs teachers' attention to creating an action plan for changing teaching practices, based on what they learned from looking at samples of student work.

As teachers and coaches were working to implement this model, the BPS asked teachers to consider at least some student work in light of Task Descriptions developed by the district to support standards implementation.[14] The Task Descriptions defined standards-based Products that students were expected to produce during the school year. The presence of Task Descriptions and Products tended to focus teachers' attention on specific work that the district wanted to see and on components of that work defined not by the teachers but by the district. We reported in July 1998 that, for the most part, teachers saw Products as an add-on, as outside the curriculum they were to teach. BPS attention to this aspect of standards reform left teachers, principals and coaches in a quandary about how to proceed with LASW. To add to the puzzle, the advent of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) led some teachers, principals and coaches to want to use their LASW sessions to figure out how to help students respond to specific MCAS-type prompts. Boston middle schools and grades six through eight in K-eight schools are also involved in Turning Points, a middle school reform effort connected with the Carnegie Foundation. Turning Points approaches LASW as a vehicle for assessment. Still other schools do LASW sessions using strategies designed by other programs in which they participate.

[14]Task Descriptions are scoring guides that identify criteria for a particular district-required product. To assess work using the Task Descriptions, teachers must decide whether student work meets the criteria.

Until the 21st Century Schools program provided training in a model that it wanted schools to use, the myriad methods of LASW existed independent of one another. They bumped into each other, however, due to the BPE's decision to train teachers in the Education Trust Model at a time when it was important for principals and teachers to find LASW strategies that would meet the demands of the BPS and the state assessment system. In this context, BPE had a small group of coaches extend the Education Trust Model to enable schools to bring multiple strategies to LASW. What remained essential, however, was that the model include a) collaborative examination of student work, b) clearly defined standards, and c) explicit attention to developing and implementing an action plan that would address classroom instruction. The extended LASW approach was called the Embedded Model. Using the Embedded Model, coaches have helped teachers develop a number of hybrid approaches to look at student work.

At the time of our data collection this fall, we heard coaches talk about multiple approaches to LASW. They discussed strategies for helping teachers through the different stages of analysis, raising questions to support and deepen the conversation and pushing teachers to think about how the information gathered through these LASW sessions can improve instruction. For the most part, their descriptions were of efforts to use the Embedded Model.

> There's so much dialog going on, because we continually ask each other questions. What do you think about this piece? And it's never quiet. It's not like people whipping through papers at all, even though they're using that very defined, and already developed Task Description sheet that a lot of people don't necessarily like to use. But they understand the information that can be gotten from it. There's always a lot of dialog in there taking place. And then after we actually score everything, then we'll start to get the sort of analysis of really where are our major weaknesses, and then from that conversation, "What are we going to do about that now? What are our action plans?" If we know, for instance, that our kids pretty much have the thesis statement piece down but they absolutely do not understand how to do a concluding sentence or a concluding paragraph, then we'll start to strategize among ourselves, "OK, so what are we going to do in the classroom now? What are we going to take into the classroom to make our students stronger?" And that's where already you hear these conversations taking place. Even just during the scoring. Teachers will say, "Look at this thesis statement. This is how I taught it, what are you doing? Do you do something different?" (Coach G)

> This year we're trying to be more clear about the process and stay within the protocol. Somebody brings work to the table, and they talk about what it is that they had in mind for this particular assignment, and maybe because Payzant is now asking why, they might even talk about the strand, relate it to the strand that they had in mind. And then we look at the work, as individuals and give it a score. And then come together to have conversations about what it is that we saw and why we thought this was a [certain score] based on the criteria that you've given or not. And then [we] raise questions, clarifications, and then talk about

> implications for instruction. And then sort of follow up extensions that might be able to happen for those particular kids who may not be where we would like them to be, and why is that. Is it as a result of how the instruction was carried out? Is it something in the language of the assignment? And then sort of flesh that out and record what we have said. (Coach J)
>
> We spent so much time sort of looking at and analyzing the work that we didn't get to, "OK, so in spite of the analysis, what should you do tomorrow?" And so today I purposely watched my watch and left the last 20 minutes to make sure there was some discussion of that. And so I think for this year the difference was going to be that instead of using one model or either the rubric or the Task Descriptions or some developmental continuum, we're going to use all three. And we won't necessarily use them all and match the work to each one, but we'll use all three to inform us about what we think of the work. (Coach N)
>
> Well, I think we're relating this to the standards. As we're going through we look at the standards to see which things they're understanding and see that those are part of the, which standards are things that they're saying the kids are developing in the work. And we're also thinking about, my understanding about the Embedded Model is that it was supposed to be translating at some point to how they could inform, how it could inform best practices in the classroom. So we talk in this question section, we talk about what could you do to further their understanding? Where would you want to go from here? (Coach O)
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> Another thing that we've been using also, and that we're going to use at both schools, is the MCAS scoring guide. And so, we're also using the MCAS at different points. Because we want to present it to our students with the exemplars that we're given, and then so kids can get used to seeing what it takes to become a strong writer for the MCAS. Not just for the MCAS, but for the testing, as well, as in the classroom. (Coach G)

In our July 15, 1998, report we explicitly stated that LASW could be done successfully with a number of models. We stressed, however, that the focus needed to be on developing teaching strategies in light of the student learning that was revealed in LASW sessions. Unlike the data we presented in our July 1998 report, when coaches and teachers suggested that their work stopped short of attention to pedagogy, we note that these more recent coach comments reflect explicit attention to linking LASW to pedagogy. We see this as evidence of growth in an important link that was previously missing. We know that such progress is not present in every school, but we also know that it is an explicit goal for the coaches, one that they repeatedly mentioned in interviews.

> That goes back to the looking at student work. They're good at looking at it, they've had wonderful conversations about quality, they're able to articulate the

> strategies. But that's as far as it goes. So the whole piece for this year is to then take that and go back into your classroom and actually do something. (Coach A)
>
> I think they look at the writing itself as an assessment that they can use to see whether or not strategies they're using in the classroom are working. The whole notion of assessment and evaluation drive curriculum. That's how I look at it. That's the model that we've been using. And that when the work comes back, and if it's improved, like if we see that our content is much better than it has been, then we can go to another area, and go to organization, and then go to style and voice, and start to really improve the overall writing response. (Coach B)

This last quote leads us to a point about the links between assessment of student work — the scoring of it — and improvement in instruction. During LASW meetings, teachers and coaches spend a significant amount of time grappling with issues of assessment as they score student work. At these meetings, coaches play an essential role by supporting teachers as they argue and disagree while trying to come to consensus on issues such as what criteria to use to score student work, what they want to find out about the students' performance, what methods to use to assess the work, or how a certain type of rubric might support a specific assignment. Coaches play a pivotal role encouraging and supporting teachers as they engage in deep and complex conversations in this area. We want to note that such conversations about assessment have the potential to strengthen the ways that teachers conceive of and implement on-going assessments in their classes. They have the potential to enable teachers to better embed assessment in on-going work rather than rely on, for example, end of unit tests or reports. As such, this component of LASW sessions is important to the improvement of teaching and learning.

There is, however, a potential danger with the focus on assessment given the current Massachusetts context. Every proponent of LASW envisions it as an important component of raising student achievement. Every educator is concerned that students' increased learning shows up as high scores on required tests. For the people leading the 21st Century Schools and for most of the coaches, increased test scores are assumed to be a function of increased implementation of high quality standards-based curriculum taught with appropriate pedagogy. Therefore, they stress LASW sessions that attend to the on-going, daily work of teaching and learning academic content.

There is likely to be tremendous pressure now, however, to operate from a somewhat different perspective. Rather than seeing higher student test scores as a function of much-improved daily teaching and learning and curriculum, it will be tempting to see it as a function of direct instruction on the kinds of questions asked by the external accountability system, to operate as if there were weaker links between curriculum and measures of student achievement than those assumed by the BPE, for example. As a result, teachers and principals may increasingly use LASW sessions to examine work that students produce in response to cold prompts that replicate work required on the MCAS. The LASW sessions, as a result, may come to address only classroom instruction geared to such prompts.

Based on our work in Kentucky, where we have seen numerous schools and districts take a direct approach to preparing students for the state assessment, we think that such attention to prompt-driven work is not likely to lead to increased student achievement.[15] That is because it places too little emphasis on the quality of on-going curriculum and daily teaching practices. As one disappointed Kentucky administrator put it, students learned how to respond to prompts in a number of subject areas but had nothing to say about the subject at hand. This is because there had been too little attention paid to curriculum and instruction. We are not saying that students should not have guidance in how to respond to particular kinds of high stakes questions. They must have an opportunity to learn that skill because they will need it. We are saying, however, that such focused attention will have the likely impact of skewing the curriculum so that students will have scant opportunity to achieve the broader goals of standards-based reform. Coaches may face a new challenge as they facilitate LASW sessions and try to keep attention focused on a broad range of student work.

Having said all of this, we want to emphasize that the on-going nature of LASW, regardless of the kind of work that is examined, has created in many schools a new culture in which it is safe and expected that teachers will share student work. Although, as we discussed at the start of this section, there is variation in the extent and quality of implementation, the changes that have taken place are significant. Coaches report that teachers are having cogent conversations about their work that would not have happened before the implementation of the 21st Century Schools program.

> There's a lot of good conversation in most of the groups. This year, shifting the focus, trying to get to that later piece on instruction. They really focus on: What is good work? What do we mean by good work? Do we mean the same thing? Is this good work? And they were wonderful conversations and they went very deep. And a lot of instructional issues were raised, but in a round about way, and sometimes just between a few people. Teachers would talk together afterwards and say, "Oh, I looked at your work and I noticed you were doing this. Could you show me how to do that?" And those little connections were made. Those were very important. (Coach A)

> I think it's made the conversation about what we're doing and how we're doing it and how we need to improve more public. There are people talking about instruction more, and they are more willing to give and take criticism about the work they're doing. I think it's also raised the level of conversation about expectations, about whether these kids are going to meet these standards or not. (Coach E)

Indeed, in some schools, the culture created through LASW has led teachers to try other collaborative, professional development activities. For example, there are now teachers who

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[15]See Neufeld, B. (August 1998) *Standards-Based Reform in the Jefferson County Public Schools: Update Report.* Prepared by Education Matters, Inc. for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, NY.

want to engage in peer coaching. They want the opportunity to observe and be observed by their colleagues.

> LASW took off slowly. We kept plodding away at it, even with some negative feelings by staff. I just kept, let's keep going. By the end of the year they were really, really good at it. And we do it in a lot of different ways. We try to pretty much follow the Ed Trust Model, but of course we manipulate that to fit our needs. And it's from the looking at student work that really the peer coaching has sort of been an outbreak of that... The teachers really got good at looking at student work here last year. And from that it's begun creating conversations about: What does this mean in the classroom now? What are we going to do in the classroom? And they're starting a peer observation process where they're going to be giving each other support within the classroom. (Coach G)

We can be reasonably sure that such changes in teachers' relationships with one another, their desire to learn from one another, are a positive outgrowth of their LASW activities.

There are other ways in which LASW is linking with professional development as well. Now and then, a coach points out that teachers have trouble making the link between LASW and pedagogy because they do not have a sufficient repertoire of alternate strategies from which to choose. In such instances, coaches report, they now have the opportunity to suggest getting important, targeted professional development that addresses concerns raised by the teachers themselves and is tied to the quality of the work their students are producing. This, too, we see as a positive impact of LASW regardless of the model being used. It is an explicit goal of LASW.

3. Summary. Coaches spend a great deal of time and energy working with teachers to help them implement LASW sessions and understand the value of them for on-going instruction. In a number of schools, LASW sessions are well-established and teachers see the value of the work. As noted above, coaches describe the ways in which they stress the links between LASW and an action plan for improving instruction. This represents progress with the essential. In another number of schools, however, our data confirm little progress with LASW. Coaches continue to struggle with principals and teachers who seem not to understand the importance of this essential. Sometimes the resistance to this work is schoolwide; sometimes it is localized in a grade or team. In these instances coaches report that they have not been successful in engaging teachers with this work. Coaches also report that finding the time to do the work remains difficult. Even in schools where teachers are willing to engage in the work, time often runs out before the discussion has concluded. Some coaches report that it is difficult to sustain the focus from one LASW session to another.

Despite these continuing difficulties, we feel confident reporting that there is progress in the coaches' success with implementing LASW. Our data suggest that coaches and teachers are using the Embedded Model and that teachers are finding better links between, for example, Task Descriptions and assessments, and the focus of LASW sessions. However, we must also report

that there is considerable variation across the 21st Century Schools in the extent to which this work is entrenched in the on-going organization of the school and the extent to which coaches think they can make a meaningful difference in this situation during the current school year.

C. The BPE's Role in Supporting the Work of Coaches

Throughout this report we have described the work that coaches do and their importance to the progress of reform. At the school level, WSC coaches, in particular, help principals take on new roles as instructional leaders and support the work of the ILTs. Content coaches focus most heavily on helping teachers implement their school's literacy focus. Along with WSC coaches, they facilitate LASW for purposes of measuring student achievement and improving teaching. In collaboration with one another, they support all aspects of the school's reform agenda. Coaches do not do this work in isolation from the BPE and its leadership. Therefore, we turn now to the ways in which the coaches' roles are supported and sustained by the BPE. To do this, we highlight the coaches' voices with respect to a) how the BPE has organized their required meeting time so that it better meets the coaches' professional development needs, b) the ways in which the part-time structure of the work influences both the coaches work and their relationships with the BPE, and c) challenges to consider as the coaches' work with the 21st Century Schools continues.

1. Required Coach Meetings: Opportunities for Learning. At the end of the first year of implementing the 21st Century Schools program, coaches reported that their BPE organized meetings a) were dominated by the BPE's agenda, b) did not give them an opportunity to discuss pressing issues they were encountering at the schools, and c) did not enable them to help shape program implementation. BPE staff acknowledged these difficulties but were not sure how to foster implementation of the model if they turned over some of the meeting time to the coaches' agenda and if they gave coaches flexibility in implementing some Essentials based on their judgment about a school's readiness.

Just over one year later, coaches report that their meetings have changed considerably and for the better. Meeting time is no longer used solely for BPE presentations to the coaches. According to BPE staff and coaches, the decision to merge WSC and content coach meetings was a good one. So was the BPE decision to involve a group of coaches in the process of planning the coach meeting agendas. Those meetings, we were told, are now used, primarily, for professional development work.

During their meeting times, coaches discuss pressing issues among themselves. Under the leadership of Claudia Grose, they created small study groups in which they address issues of their own choosing. Whether coaches are talking among themselves, working in their study groups or listening to someone presenting, they are engaged in professional development. Coaches are pleased with these changes in the use of required meeting time. They described how they are now able to draw on colleagues' knowledge and skill by having them make formal

presentations at the coaches' meetings. Outside speakers bring additional expertise to the coaches.

Speaking about their whole-group meetings, coaches made comments acknowledging positive changes.

> After the report from the first year, [the BPE] did a really good job of responding, and really hearing and understanding that they needed to do work with the relationship between the coaches and the BPE. Last year there were several opportunities to turn coaches meetings into small-group problem-solving sessions and not just one-way directives... In terms of professional development for coaches, I know that they're making really good faith efforts to create a variety of things to meet the needs of the different people. So I would just say it's what they should continue to do. (Coach E)

> I think they finally took seriously having people sharing their expertise, and sharing their experiences. If I remember correctly, way back to the September meeting, there was a panel of us who did a presentation, and then some of us presented different tools that we used when we work with schools. I thought that was one of our better meetings, just because it was really focused more on the work we do. And I know from looking at the agendas this year, that they've tried to do that more this year. And I actually, for the first time, wished I had gone to a meeting or two. Which I didn't care the first couple of years. (Coach C)

> The woman from Hingham was really addressing the kinds of things I'm working with. She talked a lot about facilitation, and she talked a lot about co-facilitation and what she called transparent facilitation. And one of my main goals this year is to build further capacity with the ILT, so eventually I'm not needed. While they've made great strides, the thought of my not being in the group panics them still. And I want to give them the skills so that they'll be able to go on without me. And the kinds of models she was talking about were very interesting in terms of what I was hoping to do. When she talked about transparent facilitation and having a co-facilitator lead the meeting, but you actually talk out loud about why you're making decisions to facilitate in the way that you're doing, I really thought that was interesting, and it's something I'd like to learn more about and that could be helpful to me in my work. I think that what's useful to me is to have things where I learn, where my skills improve. (Coach A)

> If I go to a BPE meeting and I hear somebody who really talks knowledgeably about making work public and stuff like that, I'll immediately leap on it, because that's what I'm trying to work with those teachers on. So if BPE is thinking, "We have heard that our teachers are struggling with making their work public to each other, so let's get in some experts who are really doing it with teachers, [and have them] talk to the coaches because then the coaches can contact that other person directly," that works for me. (Coach P)

Other coaches applauded the formation of small study groups.

> The BPE has provided lots of opportunities in terms of the coaches' meetings and the training. This year what they've done, which I really like, is instituted these small group meetings where there are about six of us who get together and set the agenda and meet around topics related to us. I learn a lot from the other coaches, in terms of what their experience is, what they're doing, what kinds of things are happening in their schools. We can set the focus. It's basically talking about our work. So for the next session we're going to have an hour related to guided reading because lots of schools are implementing guided reading. Then we're going to spend an hour on implementing the consultancy models, which another coach talked about at the BPE coaches retreat. It's a place to go and talk about what you're doing and get help from other people who have expertise. It's really worked out. (Coach A)

> In terms of coaches working together, I find it far more useful if it's task specific, if we're oriented around a common issue that we're trying to come a consensus on. Like reworking the looking at student work model. Then there's a much more purposeful sharing. I think my criticism of some of the coaches meetings is that they, you can't just get, particularly a large group of people together and say talk, without a focus, or with questions that might come in that are good questions but might not be particularly at the heart of what the coaches are dealing with, and find it particularly useful. And so I find the format of the work groups to be much more valuable, both in terms of professional development for me and in terms of spending time to be doing that than to go to the coach meetings, which are often the Plan saying this. (Coach M)

The coaches' views of the role of the BPE in providing learning opportunities is positive, but not every coach appreciates every coach meeting. Some are more interested in the topics than are others. A few feel that certain topics have come too late or too early in the school year. Although coaches have a role in setting the agenda, sometimes activities at the schools or issues that arise lead them to have wanted to use meeting time in another way. More than a few coaches do not take advantage of these coach learning opportunities because of scheduling conflicts.

Overall, however, the tone and content of the coaches' comments about the organization and substance of their coach meetings is dramatically different than what we reported in our August 1997 report. Coaches recognize the good faith efforts that the BPE has made and appreciate them. They value the meetings in which they can learn and find the content of the sessions relevant to their work. Nonetheless, as the coaches' work has become more complex, so have their learning needs. We turn next to a discussion of what else coaches would like to know in order to better implement their school-based work.

Coaches who work in high schools and in some middle schools mention that they need significantly different content than their elementary school counterparts. High school coaches, in particular, say that they want help with literacy issues. When they listen to the coaches of elementary schools talking, too often, the issues do not relate to work at their level.

> The people I really want to sit down with are the other high school coaches. The elementary coaches are really struggling with different issues. I mean, some of the issues are the same, but a lot of them are not the same. I think that what's useful to me is to have things where I learn, where my skills improve. And the things I need are around literacy at the high school level, assessment, benchmarking, measuring student progress, how do we chart progress over time, all those kind of things would be incredibly useful to me and I would love to get more help with those things. So that kind of help that's content specific is very helpful. I think that the Plan has been making some very good faith efforts to try to make that happen. I know [BPE staff are] worried that the coaches meetings aren't really meeting the needs of the high school people. There are so few of us. How do we make this more productive for people? (Coach D)

Since there are so few high school coaches, coaches at the secondary level suggest that one way to address their issues effectively might be to have Cohort I and Cohort II high school coaches meet together regularly as a small group.

A number of coaches talked about needing to learn more about how to move a school forward, how to overcome resistance to change. Such coaches struggle with this issue whether they have been with the BPE since the beginning or whether they became coaches during Year Two.

> I think [we need to learn/talk about] how you overcome resistance, how you help people deal with power issues, what it really means to be a leader, a formal position leader or an informal leader. How does somebody from the outside come in and move a system along, or help move a system along? I mean, some people come in and say here's what you've got to do, and they lay it out. Other people come in and say, "Let's figure out where you are and let's move from that position," always having in mind this is kind of where we're going to go but there are different ways to get there. I think we need to talk about that. In some schools, it works one way; in other schools, it works the other way. (Coach F)

> [I want to learn] a little bit more about conflict resolution. I have resistors, people who are difficult to work with. I need a few more strategies to deal with them... And how to deal with a lot of things about this job that I didn't know I was getting into. (Coach K)

Still other coaches want to learn more about the balanced literacy models that their schools are implementing and the meaning of the terms that are used by the BPE and the schools. They want help in identifying schools that are implementing well the literacy programs that are just

beginning at their schools. They worry that their use of current jargon masks a lack of real understanding of the work they are doing, an incomplete vision of what good practice should look like.

> What is best practice? Everybody throws the term around, but do we really have common understanding amongst this group about what that means. Guided reading? Well, is it Fountas and Pinnell? Or is it Sharon Taborsky, or who is it? And I think a lot of times we're asked to be the expert, and I feel like, while I probably know more than the average person, I'm still not sure. (Coach J)

> I've asked since I've been here, for a list of schools where things are happening. Not just a list of ELLI schools, but a list of where ELLI is really happening, where it's working, where Writers' Workshop or any of the techniques, resource allocation, any of the Essentials, are in full bloom. Even partial bloom. It would help me [identify] places that I wanted to visit. And that's a form of professional development to me. (Coach P)

Finally, some coaches want the opportunity to get feedback on their use of the skills they have. They would like the opportunity to have a mentor, to have someone observe their work with teachers and principals and engage them in reflective conversations that could lead to improved coach practice. As the next coach notes, this desire for reflection and continuous learning for coaches is comparable to what coaches and others are urging become a part of on-going practice for teachers.

> I think that teachers do need professional development even if they're expert teachers, because they need to keep reflecting and have more grist for their reflecting mill. So it's in that spirit that I think I need more professional development. It's not because I don't know what I'm doing, but because I want to be helped to do stuff better. So I read all the time, and I'm buying books and I'm trying to go to conferences and stuff. And I would even like mentors or help being paired up with mentors. (Coach Q)

Although they may wish it were otherwise, many coaches realize that they cannot possibly learn all they need to know at formal coach meetings or in their study groups. They describe, therefore, informal ways in which they seek additional opportunities to learn by reading books and articles, calling one another and people they know doing similar work in other school systems, meeting for dinner or chatting over e-mail to get advice and share their experiences. Several talked about informal conversations they had with BPE staff, particularly with Gloria Woods and Claudia Grose, that helped them deal with specific situations at their schools. These informal, unscheduled activities reflect the coaches' desire to work as a supportive team and to learn from one another in order to better implement their roles. It reflects that they, like teachers, principals and BPE staff, need to be engaged in continual learning opportunities in order to fulfill their complex roles.

A small number of coaches engages in additional formal professional development opportunities through local universities, for example. Some of them would like the BPE to pay for such formal professional development; others do not mention cost but talk about the time commitment needed to enhance their learning. Some have the time and indicate that they are "happy to make the time available if I feel like it's a benefit." Others do not have the time.

These data reveal that coaches are pleased with the changes in their relationship with the BPE as reflected in the use of required meeting times. They appreciate their opportunity to share and learn with one another in small and large-group coach meetings. They attribute the improvements to the way in which the BPE responded to their concerns and to the knowledge and skill of Claudia Grose who facilitated much of their joint work. Overall, coaches value most professional development work that is task specific and helps them with their school-based emphases. They stress the importance of coming to common understandings about what they are trying to accomplish.

2. The Structure of the Coach Role and Issues of Time. Coaches repeatedly told us that they did not have enough time to do their school-based work or to meet the demands of the BPE for meetings. BPE staff agree that time is an issue, that in an ideal school reform model, content, if not WSC coaches, would be in each school several days each week. As it is, for the most part, coaches are assigned to their schools for one day each week. Some coaches work only in one school, others have as many as four. As a result of the organization of coach work on this per diem basis, there is little additional time available for coach collaboration, professional development and meetings with the BPE. In addition, since coaches are part-time employees of the BPE, most work at other positions. This means that the time they have available for meetings might not mesh with the time set by the BPE. Whether a coach works one or four days each week, finding the time for all aspects of the work is a problem.

In addition, many of the coaches feel that the one day assignment is unrealistic given the demands of the work. One day in schools does not translate into one day of work. Coaches need to prepare for their school-based work, they need to find resources, at times, for teachers and principals, they need to confer with colleagues to find out how to approach a particular problem, for example, and they need to attend formal meetings.

Spending one day at a school does not always make sense, either, in light of how the school schedules its reform-related activities. For example, it is difficult to find schools in which, on the same day of the week, the teachers meet to examine student work, the ILT and other important committees meet, and the principal is available to work with the coach. It is even more difficult to find such days when both coaches can be in the school. As a result, although the BPE and the individual coaches are doing better than might be expected at implementing their roles, there are structural difficulties that stymie them. And, it is these issues of structure and time that lead to most of the current criticism of the BPE and its organization of the coaches' work.

> I think, while the Plan allows one day per school per role, it figures that because of the rates they're paying you can put in the Plan-wide meeting time. But I don't think they allow for the fact that coaches spend a lot of time in preparation and planning in addition to their day on site for each role. (Coach M)

> It turns out that my two days in the system are Wednesdays and Thursdays. The ILT meetings are Monday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon. Then I go in for my looking at student work session with one of my schools on Friday. I'm going in five days a week. So that has been a big issue. It's in my contract that [I must go]... So I am going in five days a week so that I can feel connected with the staff, I can sense their issues. (Coach K)

> It's a logistical nightmare. The demands on coaches' time in the schools is so great, I think, that it's hard to find two hours, even if it's just once a month. And then the other complication, not for all of us, but for some of us, is that if you only work for BPE half time, and this is your second or your third year, you've learned that you have to be careful not to steal time away from your other jobs to go to all the things that you might want to go to. (Coach N)

> There's no time provided or no provision made for those of us who have other work. So it means that I leave my other work early, so I feel like I'm slighting them. (Coach J)

For many coaches, issues of time center on the fact that they are part time at their coaching work and have other job obligations. The result is that the coaches who cannot attend meetings miss out on important professional learning opportunities and their colleagues miss out on the chance to learn from them. Some suggest that the use of e-mail and other electronic strategies might help.

> I know [staff at the BPE are] trying really hard to create networks, and find ways for coaches to collaborate. I suggested, because Gloria and I were talking on the phone the other day, I just made a, started thinking up some more virtual ways to do it by conference calls and whatnot. Because there are several coaches like me, who can't seem to make a lot of these meetings. So I know they're trying really hard. But I can't tell you what the content has been probably since about April of last year, because I've really dropped out of most of the ability to go to those meetings. (Coach E)

Others suggest that this strategy would not help because the absolute time demands of their BPE work remain too great.

There are coach coordination problems that also arise out of the part-time nature of the role. Although, ideally, the content and WSC coaches would coordinate their days and work together

where appropriate, in practice, many coaches who work in the same schools cannot be there on the same days. This makes collaboration virtually impossible.

> I think one of my major complaints about the BPE is that the whole-school-change coach and myself are not there on the same day. So we take a lot of our own scheduling and our own time to bend and make it passable. We're obviously two people who believe in the process and are willing to commit more time than is deemed. We do e-mail, phone calls, whatever. We're there on days that, we try to be there on days, we're both there at the ELLI training. We coordinate. We do. Even though we're not there on the same day... It really needs to be a, each one needs to be at least there two days; one day each on their own and a third day together. (Coach K)

The time issues that coaches raise pose genuine dilemmas to them and to the BPE and the schools. We return to them in our discussion of challenges facing the coaches and the BPE.

3. Summary. Without doubt, the BPE has done a great deal to respond to the coaches' concerns about the use of their meeting times and their desire to work as colleagues with one another. Coaches have expanded their roles at their schools and with the BPE. The BPE has recognized their expertise, and has involved them in designing the Embedded Model for LASW and making presentations to their colleagues and to principals and others within the 21st Century Schools. Coaches now have more flexibility to use their considerable judgment in helping their schools implement the Essentials in ways that make sense at the school level. Our data reveal that the coaches are aware of and appreciate what the BPE has done. The following coach speaks for many with this comment about the BPE-coach relationship.

> I think that [the BPE staff] have changed a lot. The structure of how the BPE deals with the coaches is certainly not the same. One of the things you realize being the first cohort or the first group through, and that's an experience I've had many, many times in my career, is that it evolves. And the kinds of meetings and the kinds of things we worked on the first year are not the kinds of things we meet and talk about now. They're much more responsive to our needs and what we're asking for, and what we're looking for in terms of training and development. So I think right now I'm pretty happy with what I'm getting... The group of people who remain earnestly want to work along with all the people at the BPE, and they honestly want to work alongside of us. So the relationship after that first year got a lot better. And I think everybody is relaxed and they really listen to us there. (Coach A)

Nonetheless, the organization of the coaches' work creates problems for the coaches, the schools and the BPE. Coaches have one day to allot to each of their schools. Whether they are the WSC coach or the content coach, that is very little time in which to attend to all of the issues they need to address. We return to the issue of the design of the coaches' role in the next section of this report.

D. Challenges for the Coaches and the BPE

When the BPE designed the 21st Century Schools program it budgeted for a WSC coach to be in each school one day each week and coaches were hired as consultants to the BPE. From the outset, BPE staff wondered if allotting the same amount of coach time to each school was appropriate given variations in school size and organization. They wondered whether they would get a suitably qualified array of candidates who could do the work at a high level of quality. There was much uncertainty with respect to designing and implementing the coach role. However, and necessarily, the BPE forged ahead with the model we have described for WSC coaches knowing that it would have to learn from its experiences with this model of in-school support.

By spring of Year One of implementation, the BPE leadership knew that, by and large, it had a strong cadre of coaches. It also knew that some aspects of implementing the WSC coach role were going better than others. It knew that some schools were making better use than others of the expertise brought by the coaches. The BPE also knew that schools would need additional in-school support if they were to successfully focus attention on implementing their instructional focus. Out of this realization, the BPE developed and recruited for the role of the content coach. Content coaches were also consultants to the BPE. Within a month or so of the start of the Year Two of the 21st Century Schools program, participating schools, with a few exceptions, had two coaches to support their whole-school-change efforts.

At the start of the initiative, the BPE had thought it would phase-out the WSC coaches at the end of Year One or Year Two of implementation. It became clear, however, from observing the pace and complexity of whole-school change that this was not a good idea. Principals and teachers involved with the ILTs in particular felt that they needed the support and guidance provided by the WSC coach. As a result, schools began Year Three with two skilled coaches to assist them for the equivalent of two person days. This is a remarkable increase in school-based, focused support from what schools had before the 21st Century Schools program began.

During the past two and one-half years, the coaches' work has shown results in some arenas but not in others. A few WSC coaches who work in schools that are internalizing the work of the ILT and LASW sessions, for example, have begun to feel that they could develop leadership capacity among the teachers and administrators in the school. They feel that they could phase themselves out and be reasonably sure that the reforms would continue. Other coaches feel that their schools are making progress, but that it would likely halt without the continuing presence of the coach. A few other coaches work in schools making scant progress with whole-school change. No one thinks that it is time for content coaches to end their work with the schools. As a result, the resources put into coaching continue to be far greater than what was initially envisioned by the BPE and by most of the coaches.

Throughout this period of time, the BPE and the coaches have negotiated and navigated their roles with one another. The goal of all involved has been to support and hasten the implementation of meaningful school reform in 21st Century Schools in order to increase student

learning and measured achievement. Coaches and the BPE have always agreed about the goal of their work. They have not always agreed on how to achieve it.

We include this review to set the context for our discussion of the challenges facing the BPE and the coaches. The challenges we present are real and they are serious. They arise out of the experience of developing and implementing the 21st Century Schools program and the role of the coaches. BPE staff and coaches have had different sets of experiences; they bring to the table the accumulation of different frustrations and high points from their work. Neither could have known at the outset what they know now. It is not clear that anyone could have designed the coach role and the relationship between the BPE and the coaches perfectly at the outset. It is with this in mind, and with recognition that the 21st Century Schools program is necessarily evolving and developing as it is implemented, that we turn to the question of challenges.

1. Phasing Out the WSC Coaches. For the entire time that we have been evaluating the 21st Century Schools program we have heard coaches and others worry as they talked about the end of the coaches' role. Many coaches thought that their work would be over at the end of Year One; many thought that Year Two was their last year; now we hear WSC coaches saying that Year Three is the last year of funding for their positions.

> There's a lack of knowing on the part of the coaches as to how long their roles are going to go on. Last year there was a strong feeling among the coaches, and there were some hints dropped, that the change coaches might not be in place this year. And it wasn't until March that we found out that we were going to be going back as change coaches for another year. And there's that same uncertainty in place, except now it also involves the content coaches... And Ellen stood up at the Dedham meeting and said, "We're looking for the money. We know change is a lengthy process. You can't finish it, necessarily, in three years. So we're looking for the money." But there is an uncertainty on the part of the coaches that I think leads to coaches looking for other opportunities and that leads to some communication difficulties with the schools. Because everybody is uncertain as to what the time frame is. And I don't have any idea of how those decisions are being made. There has been some reference to "Well, it'll vary with the school." Which doesn't give any guidance to anybody. (Coach M)

> Last year there was discussion about phasing the coaches out, and that we might not even have coaches this year. I think that that conversation, if that's still a burning issue for the Plan that they want people to begin to phase out, they need to say that now rather than in the spring, which is when they said it [last year]. So it felt like, "Wait a minute, you start talking about that in April?" I didn't feel like I had begun to do that, because it wasn't on my radar screen that I needed to do that. And I thought it was premature. And definitely the school people thought it was premature. I think the work just takes a lot longer than two or three years. (Coach D)

Uncertainty about the tenure of the coaches is problematic. For one thing, coaches have to consider looking for other work if their job is ending. And, they have to consider how to prepare people at the schools to continue the work on their own. Schools have to consider what they will do without the support of the coach. Uncertainty about this important component of reform can undermine the coaches' and the schools' support for the BPE.

We know that the BPE must raise money to pay for the coaches and, therefore, that it cannot always know well in advance whether there will be funds to continue the position. In addition, since the BPE cannot know in advance whether the schools will need the coaches, it does not want to commit funds too soon to an expensive position that may not be needed. However, the combination of these factors has proven challenging to coaches, the schools, and the BPE. With hindsight, it is easy to see that the coaches could have been assured jobs for three years. With foresight, this was not apparent.

At this point, when the process and timeline for phasing out the coaches may not yet be determined, we want to identify variations in implementation of the Essentials that might influence such decisions.

- There are a few 21st Century Schools that have developed significant in-house capacity with the Essentials and that have principals who are reasonably strong instructional leaders. In such schools, coaches say they are working to phase themselves out and think the work would continue with in-school personnel.

- There is a much larger number of 21st Century Schools, however, which have just begun to make progress with the process and goals of whole-school change. For that reason, they are not ready to continue without a coach. It would seem wise to continue coach support in such schools.

- Our data suggest that there is another set of schools that have made virtually no progress despite the resources and strategies provided by the 21st Century Schools program. Among these are large high schools which face daunting challenges when attempting whole-school change. The 21st Century Schools program may be a poor fit for high schools given their size, organization and the restructuring demands currently on these schools. At this point in program implementation, it seems timely to consider how to better work with high schools to achieve the goals of whole-school reform.

- Finally, there are schools in which the principal may not be willing or capable to implement the Essentials and where only a handful of teachers may be attempting to implement their instructional focus and change their teaching. If this is the situation after two to three years of BPE support, we think the BPE should consider withdrawing its coaching (and other) resources. The model is clearly not working in such schools and it is unlikely that the BPE has the authority or resources with which to solve the problems that prevent implementation of whole-school change.

All of this argues for a school-by-school consideration of the need for WSC coaches in particular. In our estimation, most schools would benefit from yet another year of this kind of coach support, in particular, if it focused on capacity building among administrators and teachers to sustain the reform after the coaches' work is complete.

During deliberations about phasing-out the WSC coach, in particular, the BPE and coaches might consider several other issues.

- First, coaches need to have a role in training teachers and principals to facilitate the work of whole-school change. Some of the coaches question whether they have the skills to provide such training. They recognize that having the skills is not the same as teaching them to someone else. As a result, some coaches have asked for help in implementing this aspect of their role. BPE staff agree that this is a need.

  > By and large I think the coaches do have facilitating skills. But several of them have said [that] one of the problems with this model is you really need to be able to train other people to be facilitators. It's not just a question of coming together and looking at student work, but how you train a standards facilitator or a teacher to be a facilitator. So I think that's a piece [of coach professional development] that's been missing. It's important for this turnkey model [and] it's hard. Especially when you're moving so fast. (BPE Staff)

- Second, there are schools in which the coach has not been able to find individuals willing and capable to take on leadership and facilitation roles. This presents a critical challenge to sustaining the work of the 21st Century Schools program. We do not have a way to solve this problem, but we think it is worth noting as the BPE and the coaches formulate their phase-out plans.

- Third, and finally, a few coaches face the unique situation in which they are a teacher and a coach at the same time. Some of them wonder what it will be like to phase-out and still be at the school.

  > And when you think about disengaging, it makes it all the harder, because you don't get to go away. You're still here. So we're starting to have these conversations about, "Well, what do you do when the coach [officially] is not here?" (Coach A)

As we said at the beginning of our discussion of the challenges that face the coaches and the BPE, the work of reform gets more complex as implementation proceeds. Coaches, teachers, principals and BPE staff need to know more and deal with more issues than they ever imagined. Since, for the most part, this need for more knowledge and skill is occurring in the context of developing a strong model for whole-school change, addressing it is likely to lead to beneficial

results. Nonetheless, we do not want to minimize the amount of energy and hard work that will have to go into figuring out the phase-out strategies to use in ending the WSC coach role.

2. Structuring the Role of the Coach. No one involved with the 21st Century Schools thinks that the program could have gone forward without the hard work and skill of the coaches. By the same token, no one thinks that the job description and structure of the coach roles – WSC and content coach – were as well developed as they might have been. Throughout the last two and one-half years, BPE staff and coaches have been trying to figure out how to best define, organize, implement, and support the roles.

In this section of the report, we want to review structural aspects of the roles, reflect on various options that coaches, teachers, administrators and BPE staff have considered for configuring differently the roles of the coaches, and offer some thoughts on how such a role might be constructed for future cohorts. In doing this, we address aspects of the role that have been problematic. They include: the consultant rather than staff status of the position; the part-time nature of the work; the number of days devoted to coach work in each school; the amount of time built-in to the job for coach reflection and professional development; and, the reality of unstated benchmark standards for school progress and, therefore, the absence of explicit indicators of coach efficacy and success. Although we can list each of these features of the jobs independently, they are interconnected in practice. For example, the per diem aspect of the job leads to issues of time available for professional development. The uncertainty of continuing funding leads to an inability to structure the job for more than one year at a time. It would be difficult to solve all of the dilemmas posed by the design of the coach roles by summing up the pieces. Therefore, we highlight a few aspects of the role and note how they are connected to one another. Our goal is to provide a basis for further discussion. We begin by highlighting the per diem structure of the work.

Coaches are hired to spend one day each week in each school they coach. The first question that arises from this fact is the decision about which day to choose. Coaches, in consultation with principals and others, choose based on their schedules, if they work at other jobs, and based on their judgment about which meetings – ILT, Instructional Team (IT) – they deem essential. The result is often a compromise that leaves coaches unable to work with all teachers or all significant teams. In some cases, as we described earlier, coaches decide to spend part of two different days at their schools. While this solves one problem, it leaves the coach in the position of committing far more time to the coach role than was envisioned at the outset. The one-day, fixed commitment to a school makes sense in light of the part-time nature of the work and the accompanying reality that many coaches work at other jobs. But it does not make sense given the nature of the work.

The one day per week arrangement has other consequences as well. When schools are dealing with difficult issues, it might be beneficial for coaches to work with them more than one day per week, to work several days in a row to get over the specific difficulty. The current coach assignment pattern does not permit such flexibility. As a result, weeks go by between ILT meetings, for example, and the coach, teachers and administrators have to remind themselves of

where they were before they proceed. Dilemmas that might have been solved in three or four consecutive days, if they had continuing attention, drag on for three or four weeks. Especially during difficult times and with complex issues, the one day per week arrangement seems incompatible with the goals of the reform. It also seems like an intractable problem if the role remains part-time.

Therefore, we consider next what might be involved in making the coach role full-time. We think it is worthwhile to consider the implications of creating a full-time coaching role that has built into it time for coach meetings and coach professional development. We recognize, of course, that a salaried coach would cost more than a per diem coach, but, as one of the BPE staff members notes, there could be benefits to such an arrangement.

> If we were all starting fresh tomorrow, I think the design of the coaching model would be a little different. It's hard to have as big a cohort of coaches – although they bring a wonderful variety of expertise and I wouldn't trade in a single one of them – and build a team when they are that disparate in terms of the time they can give and their experience. And also because, [with those who are working in only one school] the investment is a little bit dissipated, simply because they have too many other hats they've got to wear. So I think I would argue for a smaller team of coaches [who were more full time]. And I certainly would have built into their contractual obligations, if not a full day, a half day of planning and training time. I know that has profound financial implications, so it's a very different model. But I think that it would have, even when there were problems, I think it would have provided a way of pushing through whatever issues are on [the table]. Certainly it would provide a better chance, more chance for training, deeper training, and certainly would provide a more even support process for the coaches, both among themselves and with outsiders. (BPE Staff)

Many, but not all, coaches would have benefitted from coaching as a full-time job. They would have agreed with the potential benefits outlined above. With full-time work, coaches might have allocated time to schools depending on the schools' needs at different phases of implementation.

However, a requirement for full-time work would have led to the loss of some talented coaches for whom the part-time organization was ideal. Some of those coaches brought invaluable experience to the coach role because of their other work. A few, for example, were already working in BPS schools before the 21st Century Schools program began. They were able to extend their work by adding on the coaching component. Those who work at local colleges were able to forge links between research and practice due to their "other" work. Some excellent coaches could not have considered the work if it were not part-time. Therefore, although we think there would be benefits to offering coaches full-time employment, we think that if the BPE were to reconstruct the role, it would do well to leave some part-time options available.

We think it is also worthwhile to consider the benefits and drawbacks of having coaches employed as staff members rather than consultants whether they work part- or full-time. On the

benefit side, coaches would officially be integral to the reform by virtue of their status as core BPE staff members rather than as consultants to it. As such, it might be easier to forge a team of coaches and involve them in the work of program development as well as coaching. Such an arrangement might have reduced the BPE's early concerns about the coaches' commitment to the 21st Century Schools model of reform. It might have resulted in more initial attention to how to include sufficient coach integration into the BPE through development of an initial, in-depth orientation to the concepts and components of the reform, as this BPE staff member suggests.

> And then the other thing I think I would have done is in the beginning, before the year began, is do some kind of training for the coaches. Both around team building [and the Essentials]. What struck me, [was that] it took me a while to figure out what all the Essentials really mean. And what strikes me is that still, many of the coaches really don't have that deep confidence that they understand what they are. They certainly don't know what the Embedded Model is all about, [nor do they] understand this Essential about measuring student progress....And I don't say that all the coaches feel insecure about that, but I do know that [some do]. So I think that it would have been important to have probably two or three days of some kind of training before the year started, and to have some things that continued through the first year, and then build on those [in later years]. (BPE Staff)

It might have led to early attention to how to include sufficient coach planning and professional development time, as this coach suggests.

> Wouldn't it be great if I knew that two half days a month instead of coming to a school I would go, say, to the Plan, and all the coaches would be there. And it might be for a meeting, but it would be more for reflection time and kind of getting together with other coaches for a peer kind of thing where we could find one another. And some of the small groups that people have set up on their own would have that time to meet. So we wouldn't have to say, "Oh my God, when are we going to get together?" We would know that we've got that time and we would come together and I would be in this group and you would be in that group and some of the time you might read yourself, or you might share an article with someone else. And you also could use it to say I'm having a problem in my schools. Or, I really had a problem with a principal and I don't know how to repair that relationship, or the ILT meetings, no one comes. Like how do I, what do I do? (Coach Q)

Such an arrangement would enable the BPE and coaches to plan professional development targeted to each kind of coach, where necessary. It would also provide a forum in which the BPE could legitimately bring issues and concerns to the coaches for joint discussion and decision making.

Such an arrangement, however, would further change the BPE as an organization. When the BPE took on the work of designing and implementing the 21st Century Schools program, it changed profoundly the nature of the work in which this local education fund had been engaged. Now, it had to employ individuals who could work with schools, the BPS administration, the coaches and others to forward program implementation. Its staff grew as the work of reform enlarged. Were coaches to become BPE staff, they would create another component of the BPE. It would be as if the BPE were establishing a staff development component. From the BPE perspective, this might not be advantageous. From the perspective of nurturing and sustaining reform, however, it might be beneficial.

For example, were the BPE to have a staff development component that addresses on-site professional development of the sort provided by coaches, it might have been better able to design supports for the role. With consultant status, many things were left unsaid. Most apparent was the absence of a design for the role. As far as we know, there is no blueprint or trajectory, however tentative, for how a coach enters a school, develops and sustains the work of reform, and then withdraws. Having to hire coaches into the BPE might have led to such considerations. It might also have left the organization overwhelmed with the added enormity of the task it was undertaking. So, it might have made sense, at the outset, to have the coaches as expert consultants to the BPE and to the schools.

Perhaps the BPE needs to pause and consider what it has become and what it intends to remain as its role with Cohort I schools evolves over time. What kind of role and relationship will it have with the BPS when each of the cohorts has completed its term of reform work? What comes after the 21st Century Schools? Such questions, of course, extend beyond the issue of whether the coaches should be consultants or BPE staff members. But considering them might help the BPE a) decide about its continuing need for coaches during the next few years, and b) determine whether it makes sense to change the employment relationship between the coaches and the BPE.

Finally, in thinking about coaching and supporting coaches, we wonder whether the BPE has learned some lessons from its work with coaches that could inform coaching in the other three cohorts. In considering questions about the coaches' roles and the structure of their work within the BPE, it might be useful for the BPE to tease out some of those issues in an effort to enhance the district's work with schools. In thinking about the role of coaches, it might be interesting to consider whether there are ways in which Cohort I coaches could a) become coaches in subsequent cohorts and/or b) provide guidance to coaches in those cohorts.

3. Endemic Uncertainties of the Coach Roles. Coaches are in the business of developing human capacity to forward the work of school reform. Their efforts go toward enhancing whatever expertise already exists in schools. Like teachers, they must work with those who present themselves. Like teachers, they can have a powerful impact on learners, but they cannot "make" the learners learn. Rather, coaches and teachers can use knowledge and skill, tailored to their informed diagnosis of the learners' needs. They can try multiple approaches and repeated practice. Where necessary, the teacher or coach can be replaced. But, in the end, if the learner

cannot learn or is unwilling to learn, neither the coach nor the teacher can be successful. The issue here is what to do with educators who cannot or are unwilling to learn.

This reality of the coaches' work raises questions about how to evaluate their success. Should it be on the basis of absolute criteria or should it depend on where the school was when it entered the school reform process? If a school entered "behind," should it be required to move more quickly than a school that was further advanced to begin with? Should the coaching strategies be different depending on the school's initial capacity for reform? Should the overall intervention be different depending on the school's initial capacity? We think these are good questions for the BPE itself to consider when it is evaluating its own success with the 21st Century Schools.

These kinds of questions plague us, the BPE and the coaches, and we do not think there are easy answers. We do think that the questions must be made explicit and coaches made more clear about what is expected under the real circumstances of school reform. The coaches have high expectations for themselves and they are distressed when they see little change at the schools despite their best, well-informed efforts. The BPE, along with the coaches, need to figure out how to sustain the coaches in their work when they have high expectations and see few results. They need to figure out how to have realistic expectations in a context in which everyone wants measurable improvement immediately.

> I see coaches being extremely hard on themselves, because they have high expectations, and they feel frustrated, and they feel pressure to produce. And so we spend a lot of time going back and really looking at some of the small steps and recognizing that those small steps may seem very small when you look at the long term goal, but if you look backwards to where you began, they aren't so small. The very fact that you have an ILT that's actually sitting down and talking together is progress in some schools. Or, that [a principal at a school is letting the ILT actually make some decisions. Or, that you have two teachers now who have word walls, or who are really regrouping their kids in different ways, whereas in September they wouldn't let [the coach] into the classroom. So I think it is moving along. And so, to that extent, I think it's going pretty well. I think that it's a long haul. (BPE Staff)

4. Summary. In some respects, the challenges facing the BPE and the coaches have become simpler. Because coaches have been accepted as knowledgeable supports by the schools, for the most part, they rarely need to gain legitimacy anymore. They can focus on the core of their work. BPE leadership, which worried at the outset about the extent to which the coaches would keep their attention on the Essentials, feel more confident that the coaches are forwarding the agenda of the 21st Century Schools program. Coach meetings are better regarded by the coaches.

However, there still are challenges that face the BPE and the coaches as they continue their work.
In this section of the report, we reviewed three of them. The first concerns how and when to phase out the WSC coaches, in particular. Our data lead us to conclude that this role remains

important to most of the schools in our sample. Only a small number of 21st Century Schools may be ready to continue the process of whole-school change without their WSC coach. Therefore, the BPE needs to consider how to tailor individual phase-out strategies for each school, perhaps in consultation with coaches and principals and in light of progress on the areas identified on the phase chart.

The second challenge concerns the actual organization of the coaches' work schedules. We described the benefits and the problems associated with the consultant status of the role as well as with the one-day each week assignment to schools. Although it is not clear whether or to what extent the BPE will continue to use coaches, we suggest that it would be worthwhile to consider the potential benefit of alternative employment and assignment strategies.

Finally, we discussed the endemic uncertainties of the coaching role. Coaches must develop the capacity of the individuals with whom they work and they can be successful if a) they are competent and b) their clients are willing to learn. This situation raises questions about how to evaluate the success of the coaches and how to consider the impact of the schools on the capacity of the coaches to be successful.

E. Conclusion: Coaches at Work

We have covered a lot of territory in this discussion of the coaches' work and the BPE's support of it. We reviewed how coaches' work with principals, stressing a) the challenges that principals face in trying to lead collaboratively and shift their attention to instruction, and b) the challenges that coaches face as they offer principals support and guidance in these areas. We concluded that coaches remain essential for establishing and sustaining the principal's role in whole-school change. We also noted that coaches have no formal authority with which to ensure that principals make changes that lead them to a greater focus on instruction.

We also focused our discussion on the way in which coaches are supporting the implementation of LASW sessions and noted a) increasing reference to using the Embedded Model and b) repeated coach references to the links between LASW and teaching practices. This represents a positive change from the findings we reported in our July 1998 report. Despite the continuing emphasis on LASW during the last two years, however, this practice is not fully institutionalized in the schools. Coaches report that they still have situations in which teams of teachers are reticent to share their work; they still have difficulty scheduling sufficient time for this work and sustaining its momentum from session to session. In a small number of schools, however, LASW has become part of the school routine and coaches report that teachers are seeing its value. We concluded that coaches remain essential for further developing and sustaining this important component of the 21st Century Schools program.

Finally, we turned to the ways in which the BPE has been developing stronger relations with coaches. We described this year's approach to coach meetings and study groups and reported the coaches' positive responses to them. Coaches reported that many meetings now enable them to learn from one another as well as from outside experts. We also noted that assigning a BPE

staff member, Claudia Grose, to the coaches, facilitated their work and provided them with much appreciated support.

While these changes are all to the good, coaches and the BPE still struggle with the organization of the role. Coaches do not have time for all that is demanded of them; they do not think that the one-day per week school assignment is always the best way to use their resources. Although we do not have solutions for all of the problems associated with the organization of the coaches' role, we suggest that the BPE, along with the coaches, discuss the issues we have raised in order to think through how to make the best use of the coaches' talents during the next few years of the 21st Century Schools program.

IV. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

In this report, we present findings from our review and analysis of two elements of the 21st Century School reform agenda: 1) the progress of implementing an instructional focus on literacy and 2) the work of coaches. Overall, our findings suggests that the work of reform is moving forward in most of the 21st Century Schools and that, by and large, teachers are pleased with what they are learning and implementing in terms of literacy, and that coaches are continuing to contribute to the reform effort in important ways. Specifically, *we reported the following findings in our section on the implementation of the literacy focus.*

Teachers report that the focus on literacy has created a valuable, common sense of purpose that facilitates communication with their colleagues. They expect it will lead to coherence in literacy instruction across classrooms and from grade to grade. They indicate that the focus supports their LASW sessions with colleagues which, in turn, supports their teaching.

On-site support, specifically literacy coordinators and content coaches, plays a vital role in implementation of the instructional focus and in providing support for teacher learning. These individuals conduct workshops and/or teach on-going classes, observe teachers, provide feedback, demonstrate lessons, bring in external resources, lead LASW sessions, and share ideas and "best practices." Having a literacy coordinator, who supports implementation of an adopted literacy program, helps schools build internal capacity. Such capacity increases the likelihood that literacy expertise will remain in the school and that the program will continue to be implemented when the grant cycle ends. Content coaches support the work of the literacy coordinators, often by extending the instructional focus beyond the set of teachers involved with the adopted literacy program, and work with teachers and administrators to develop "home grown" approaches to literacy instruction.

Our review highlights the absolute necessity for continued support for the literacy focus if it is to be implemented deeply enough to truly change children's learning opportunities. As implementation of the new literacy approaches continue and teachers' work demands more sophistication, it is likely that school-based support will be even more necessary. For this reason, we think it would be wise to develop additional literacy expertise in teachers who will remain at the school when the support personnel are gone.

With a scarcity of literacy models to choose from, educators at the upper elementary and middle grades are forging ahead with new approaches to literacy instruction. High schools have not yet begun this work in a systematic fashion. Educators at schools that have adopted primary literacy programs are in the early stages of identifying ways to develop upper grade strategies that build on these programs. Content coaches are working closely with upper elementary and middle school teachers to develop appropriate practices for their students that are consistent with the philosophy of the early literacy program. Some of the most promising approaches to dealing with the upper elementary and middle school grades may come from coaches and others who are working with teachers to look at student work and assessment data as an entry point to working on literacy issues. This data-driven approach to the literacy focus seems most promising when it is a) based on multiple sources of data, including on-going student work and b) coupled with more formal professional development. We look forward to reviewing the impact of the secondary literacy programs that are being developed to address the needs of high schools, in particular.

Despite significant progress in the implementation of new approaches to literacy, many challenges remain as teachers work to address their instructional focus. The primary challenge to implementing new literacy programs may be the time it takes to learn a new set of skills. A related challenge has to do with the complexity of the work. Teachers and coaches talked with us about developing new skills and mindsets and the difficulty of implementing all of the various components of a literacy program at once. Teachers also spoke of their attachment to past practices, and their understandable reluctance to give them up for something new and unfamiliar. Some of this tension regarding past practices may be a result of the shift towards "balanced" literacy, an approach with which most teachers seem comfortable, but some find lacking in attention to practices they consider essential.

In light of these challenges, we urge the BPE and the BPS to provide sufficient time for learning and implementation. We know that everyone wants to see results quickly and that it will be tempting to consider three or four years sufficient for the implementation of new approaches to literacy. However, teachers need time to learn, to implement the multiple components of the literacy approaches they are attempting, and to let go of long-held beliefs and practices when they are no longer appropriate. During this process, teachers will continue to need sustained, high quality support. We think that the initial investment in literacy programs and the instructional focus merits a continuing commitment to sufficient time and support.

In our review of the work of coaches, we presented three main findings, as follows.

In most cases, principals are not ready to continue the process of whole-school change, which demands their attention to instruction, without the support of a coach. In light of the fact that both the district and the BPE are stressing principals' working as instructional leaders, our review of the coaches' work demonstrates some of the ways in which coaches work with principals to forward this agenda. These include working with principals to re-think how they use their time, how they communicate with their faculty, and how and with what effect they

spend time in classrooms. In the context of the coaches' work, we want to note that requiring that principals pay greater attention to teaching and expecting them to implement that role quite quickly does not reflect full appreciation of how little many principals might know about taking on such a role. It does not reflect sufficient appreciation of the fundamental change it represents in how principals constructed and were rewarded for their work. We support the BPE and BPS initiative to stress principal leadership and we do not want to condone principal behavior that is designed to thwart this change. However, we also want to note that many principals need time and on-going support to develop their new roles.

On the other hand, there are principals who have not yet observed more effectively in classrooms and have not yet changed their approach to providing feedback to teachers. These principals seem not to see such activities as part of their role. At this point in the 21st Century Schools program, coaches are not convinced that they will ever be successful in helping such principals devote time to on-going instruction. If this is case, the BPE, probably in collaboration with BPS, may have to seek alternative approaches to dealing with such principals.

Despite considerable coach attention to LASW, it will likely take longer than anyone anticipated to get the LASW component of the 21st Century Schools program firmly entrenched in the on-going work of schools, and coach support remains essential. While our data reveal that schools are at different points on the continuum of implementation and effectiveness with respect to LASW, we found ample evidence that coaches are working hard to forward the BPE agenda with regard to LASW. Nonetheless, in some schools, coaches struggle with principals and teachers who seem not to understand the importance of this essential. And, coaches report that finding the time to do the work is remains difficult. We concluded that in the majority of schools, coaches remain essential to the continuation of LASW; in a few, it may now be possible to develop in-house capacity to sustain the work.

The BPE has made great progress in designing professional development supports for coaches and opportunities for them to work with one another; however, the organization of the coaches' work makes it difficult for them to meet the real obligations of their work. Coaches recognize and appreciate the good faith efforts that the BPE has made to improve their opportunities for professional growth. They value the meetings in which they find the content of the sessions relevant to their work. Nonetheless, as the coaches' work has become more complex, so have their learning needs. Coaches who work in high schools and in some middle schools mention that they need significantly different content than their elementary school counterparts. Coaches across the spectrum of grade levels indicate their need for help with literacy issues. In addition to these learning needs, interconnected structural difficulties — including the consultant rather than staff status of the position; the part-time nature of the work; the number of days devoted to coach work in each school; the amount of time built into the job for coach reflection and professional development; and, the reality of unstated benchmark standards for school progress and, therefore, the absence of explicit indicators of coach efficacy and success — often frustrate the coaches' as they do their work.

We concluded by urging the BPE to carefully consider its own organizational identity as it anticipates future challenges and plans for the eventual phase-out of coaches. In our estimation, most schools would benefit from yet another year of both WSC and content coach support, in particular, if it focused on capacity building among administrators and teachers to sustain the reform after the coaches' work is complete. Beyond that, our findings argue for a school-by-school consideration of the need for WSC coaches. During deliberations about phasing-out the WSC coach, the BPE and coaches might consider several issues. First, coaches need to have a role in training teachers and principals to facilitate the work of whole-school change. Second, there are schools in which the coach has not been able to find individuals willing and capable to take on leadership and facilitation roles. This presents a critical challenge to sustaining the work of the 21st Century Schools program. We do not have a way to solve this problem, but we think it is worth noting as the BPE and the coaches formulate their phase-out plans.