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What can I say besides "sound it out"? Coaching word recognition in beginning reading

Coaching is a highly effective instructional technique in which teachers craft instructional cues that enable students to apply their developing reading skills and knowledge of strategies as they attempt to complete a task.

It's 9:20 in the morning. Five first graders are reading *Cave Boy* (Dubowski, 1988) with their teacher. After they read from the text, "He gets lots of presents. A rock, some wood, a fish, a bone" (p. 19), the following interaction takes place:

Student: "He gets lots of presents and...." [a rock]
Teacher: And....
Student: [no response]
Teacher: Let's see. Have we done everything we know how to do? We can look at the picture. We can take a running start. Think of all the things you can do.
Student: Hope? [rock]
Teacher: Can you say the sounds?
Student: /r/ /o/ /k/
Teacher: Now take a running start.
Student: Rock.
Teacher: Works every time.

In a classroom in another state, four second graders are reading *The Color Wizard* (Brenner, 1989) with their teacher. After they read, "'What we need around here is a little red. Red is bright!' So he painted his coach" (pp. 4–5), a similar interaction takes place:

Student: "So he painted...his...." [coach]
Teacher: Good job. Now just follow your rules. What's that [coach] going to say? Follow your rules. What vowel will you hear?
Student: [no response]
Teacher: Will you hear the *o* or the *a*?
Student: *o*
Teacher: And now what does *ch* say?
Student: /ch/
Teacher: So what's the word? The *c* is making the hard sound.
Student: Cuch...coach!
Teacher: Coach is right! Did you see Cinderella? She had a beautiful coach. That's what this is [picture of a coach].

These interactions illustrate a highly effective instructional technique, that of coaching. In the interactions, knowledgeable teachers have crafted just the right cues for readers to apply their developing knowledge of word-recognition strategies. In doing so, the teachers have incrementally fostered students' ability to become strategic and independent readers. The purpose of this article is to describe the technique of coaching word recognition. I review the reading process, elaborate on coaching, present examples of coaching, share elements to consider when preparing to coach, discuss implications for practice, and offer conclusions about the nature of effective coaching.

The reading process: An overview

Reading is a complex problem-solving process in which readers actively pursue meaning (Graves,

Juel, & Graves, 2001). It is a "message-getting" activity (Clay, 1991, p. 6) in which readers draw on multiple interacting knowledge sources to construct meaning. Readers use these sources as they engage in basic (i.e., word-recognition and syntactic) and higher order (i.e., inferring and reasoning) processes (van den Broek & Kremer, 2000). As educators, we seek to develop students' knowledge of these sources and their ability to coordinate and apply them flexibly as they read.

The challenges readers face as they work to construct meaning vary with skill and experience. In early primary grade classrooms, word recognition presents a significant challenge for students. While they work to construct meaning, they must devote considerable attention to activating, coordinating, and applying their developing knowledge of word-recognition strategies. That so much attention be allocated to acquiring and refining word-recognition strategies is no insignificant matter. Word recognition is a necessary but insufficient condition for comprehension: It alone does not guarantee comprehension, but without it comprehension cannot occur (van den Broek & Kremer, 2000).

Coaching: The concept

Coaching is a technique with roots in the work of Marie Clay. Clay (2001) viewed young readers as active learners working to construct a self-extending system—a system that "bring[s] about new forms of mediation," "alter[s] an existing working system to become more effective," and "compile[s] more effective assemblies of systems" (p. 136). One way children develop this system is through "powerful interactions with teachers" during reading (p. 136). Teachers closely observe students and intervene to support their developing strategic processes. Clay described this approach as an interactive option. Others have referred to it as coaching (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000) and scaffolding (Pressley et al., 2001). Recent studies have identified the technique as characteristic of accomplished classroom teachers (Pressley et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2000) and Reading Recovery teachers (Rodgers, 2000) and as a technique that distinguishes more effective teachers from their less effective peers (Taylor et al.).

The following discussion is derived from my case study (Clark, 2000) of the instructional talk of a subset of teachers identified as most accomplished in a large-scale study of effective practice (Taylor et al., 2000). The case study inquiry occurred after the original study in which the teachers participated and yielded a unique data set and analysis. All teacher and student names used in this discussion are pseudonyms.

All teachers grouped their students homogenously for guided reading instruction based on their perceptions of students' abilities, and each teacher altered the composition of these groups as necessary to meet student needs. I first describe the nature of teachers' instructional cues, then I provide examples of their coaching as it occurred in context.

The nature of teachers' instructional cues

In the case study (Clark, 2000), I qualitatively analyzed teachers' instructional cues using the constant-comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In coding the cues, I engaged in an iterative process in which categories emerged from the data. As successive transcripts were coded, and additional categories emerged and were refined, I returned to previously coded cues and adjusted my analysis. In addition, I used two independent coders to validate my structure.

Teachers' cues to students were of two broad types: general cues to prompt thought and more focused cues to prompt specific action. The cues took the form of either questions or statements to students. The particular characteristics of these cues are as follows.

General cues to promote thought. General cues to promote thought are nonspecific in nature. They prompt readers to think about their knowledge of word-recognition strategies and how to apply this knowledge to the word-recognition task (e.g., How are you going to figure that out? What can you do?). They do not, however, point readers in any one direction. The responsibility for thinking is with the reader. Examples of these cues are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
General cues to prompt thought

Questions	Statements
What do you know about that?	Look for something you already know how to do.
What are you going to do to help yourself out?	Look and think what you need to do.
If you're stuck, what can you do?	
What do you think?	
How are you going to figure that out?	

Cues to prompt specific action. Cues to prompt specific action provide readers with more detailed information about the word-recognition task. They focus readers' attention on graphophonic knowledge, word-part identification strategies, and contextual supports.

Cues that focus readers' attention on grapheme-phoneme correspondences direct them to consider individual letters and sounds (e.g., It's a soft *c*. The *y* is acting like an *i*) and multiple-letter phonic elements such as blends (e.g., What does *spr-* say?), digraphs (e.g., What does *ch* say? Remember, *gh* can make an *f* sound), and *r*-controlled vowels (e.g., Does the *-or* sound like *-or* in corn or in actor?).

Other specific cues direct readers' attention to larger word-part identification strategies. They encourage readers to locate phonograms (e.g., I see one of our word families), known smaller words (e.g., Is there a little word in there? It's a compound word; the first word is....), and inflected (e.g., Take off the *-es/-ed/-ing*) and derivational (e.g., Take off the *-ly*) endings in an unfamiliar print word.

Cues that make use of contextual supports focus readers' attention on the inappropriateness of a miscue (e.g., You said *taking* [thinking] of ways.), the possibilities given the sentence (e.g., What _____ are you counting?), and picture supports (e.g., Use pictures and words). I summarize these cues in Table 2 to illustrate their specific characteristics.

The nature of coaching as it occurred in context

The following dialogues illustrate the manner in which coaching occurred within the context of guided reading lessons. In the dialogues, teachers cue students as they apply their knowledge of word-recognition strategies during reading. The cues reflect multiple instructional focuses.

Grade 1

Mrs. Fry taught first grade in a rural school. There were 22 children in her classroom (20 European American and 2 Hispanic children). Mrs. Fry had a master's degree in elementary education and 11 years of experience, all in grade 1. Mrs. Wilson taught first grade in an urban school. There were 18 students in her classroom, all of whom were African American. She had 10 years of experience, 7 in kindergarten and 3 in first grade. She had a master's degree in curriculum and instruction.

In these teachers' classrooms, leveled texts were used. These are sets of texts that move from simpler to more complex reading and can be matched to students' abilities (Brabham & Villaume, 2002). Mrs. Fry's students read texts she believed would enable them to practice previously taught phonic elements and orthographic patterns. Mrs. Wilson's students read books that came with a reading series.

In the following example, Mrs. Fry's first graders are reading *"Not Now!" Said the Cow* (Oppenheim, 1989), when a child has difficulty recognizing the word *grunted*. The text reads, "'I can't do that!' meowed the cat. 'Not my job!' grunted hog" (p. 24).

Student: "'I can't do that!' meowed the cat. 'Not my job!' grunt...grunt...."

Teacher: If there were an *-ed* at the end of that word, how would you say that?

TABLE 2
Cues to prompt specific action

Grapheme-phoneme correspondences	Word-part identification strategies	Use of contextual supports (sentence structure or picture supports)
The first *g* is hard; the second *g* is soft.	Is there a chunk you know?	This is what you said: Brer Fox is *taking* [thinking] of ways....
It's a soft *c*.	Can you take something off?	Does that sound right?
Throw away the *g-h*.	Take off or cover up the ending and see what the word is.	What _____ are you counting? What would make sense there?
Remember, *g-h* can make an *f* sound.	Look for a little word.	Let's read to the end and see what makes sense.
It's a double vowel.	It's a compound word. What's the first or second word?	Use pictures and words.
It's an *r*-controlled vowel.		What in the picture starts with the letter you see?
What do you think that *e* sounds like?		
Put an /h/ sound in front of *is*.		
The *y* is acting like an *i*.		
It's a blend. I see a blend.		

Student: Grundable?
Teacher: Say it again?
Student: Grunded.
Teacher: Okay, cover up the *-ed* and see what the word is.
Student: Grund.
Teacher: Is it grun*d* or grun*t*?
Student: Grunt.... "Grunted hog."

In this dialogue, the reader's first attempt to recognize *grunted* results in *grunt*. The child recognizes the root of the unfamiliar word *grunted*. Mrs. Fry prompts her to call to mind her knowledge of how to pronounce *-ed* at the end of a word. The reader responds with two inaccurate attempts, *grundable* and *grunded*, in which she has both applied incorrect word endings and replaced the /t/ with /d/. Mrs. Fry then becomes more directive. She tells the reader to cover up the confusing word part and note the remaining word. The reader identifies the root as *grund*. Mrs. Fry repeats the inaccurate partial word identification and presents it with the correct root, emphasizing the ending consonant in each. The reader is then able to identify the correct root, *grunt*, and the unfamiliar word, *grunted*. Mrs. Fry began this coaching episode by being less directive in her cueing of the child. When the child was unsuccessful, Mrs. Fry became more directive and specific in her cueing.

In Mrs. Wilson's first-grade class, the students have difficulty decoding the word *wind* during a choral reading of *Where Does Everybody Go?* (Dodds, 1996). The text reads, "When rain falls hard and cold wind blows, where does everybody go?" (p. 2).

All: "When rain falls hard and cold...wuh...wuh...." [wind]
Teacher: Let's look for a chunk in there.
Student 1: Can I sound it out?
Student 2: Here's a chunk.
Teacher: Where's a chunk?
Student 2: [no response]
Teacher: What is this word right here? [Teacher frames *in* within *wind*]
All: [chorally] In.
Student 2: That's what I said.
All: Wind.
Teacher: Okay. Let's start from the beginning.
All: "When rain falls hard and cold wind blows, where does everybody go?"

In response to the students' attempt to decode the word, Mrs. Wilson cues them to look for a known word part (Let's look for a chunk in there). When the students are unsuccessful, she frames the known word *in* within the unknown word *wind*. With these two cues of increasing support, the

students are able to decode the word and continue choral reading.

Grade 2

Mrs. Green taught second grade in a suburban school. She had a master's degree in curriculum development and four years of experience, with two of those years at grade 2. There were 17 students in her classroom (16 European American and 1 Korean American). Mr. Turner taught second grade in an urban school. He had three years of experience, all at grade 2, and he was completing his master's degree. He taught 22 students, all of whom were African American.

These second-grade teachers' coaching proceeded in a similar manner. In their classrooms, leveled texts as well as more literary texts are used during guided-reading lessons.

In Mr. Turner's class, a small group of students is reading *Red Riding Hood* (Marshall, 1987). The text reads, "Beyond the forest, they came to a patch of sunflowers. 'Why not pick a few?' suggested the wolf" (p. 12). One reader has difficulty with the word *suggested*.

Student: "'Why not pick a few?' snuggled [suggested] the wolf."

Teacher: Okay, try it again. Sug....

Student: [no response]

Teacher: The first *g* is hard. The second *g* is soft. *Sug-juh*....

Student: "Suggested the wolf."

In this exchange, the reader has miscued the word *suggested*. Mr. Turner models the first part of the word, but the child is unable to use this information to recognize the word. Mr. Turner then cues the child to the different sounds the two *g*s make in the word and models each. With this support, the child is able to recognize the word and continue reading. In this dialogue, Mr. Turner models pronunciation of the first syllable. This proves insufficient, so he intervenes with very focused cues.

When another small group of Mr. Turner's students is reading *The Color Wizard* (Brenner, 1989), a reader encounters difficulty when she comes to the word *fence*. The text reads, "So he painted his castle and his fence all blue" (p. 8).

Student: "So he painted his...castle blue."

Teacher: Use your strategies.

Student: "So he painted his castle and his...." [fence]

Teacher: Use pictures and words.

Student: His fuh...fllll...fountain.

Teacher: Pictures and words–*f-e-n-c-e*.

Student: Faces.

Teacher: Look, *f-e-n*, you all should know says *fen*. That *c*, you could either make it a /k/ or /s/. *Fenk*, is that a word?

All: [shake heads negative]

Teacher: So what's left? Look at the picture there [points to the picture of a fence].

All: Fence.

All: "So he painted his castle and his fence all blue."

In this dialogue, Mr. Turner encourages the focal reader and her groupmates to use their knowledge of graphophonic and picture cues to recognize the unfamiliar print word *fence*. The readers are unable to systematically think through the application of their developing strategic knowledge, so Mr. Turner demonstrates the process, becoming more specific in his coaching as he proceeds. He indicates their familiarity with the spelling pattern that comprises the first part of the word (Look, *f-e-n*, you all should know says *fen*). Then he highlights the two sounds the letter *c* can make (That *c*, you could either make it a /k/ or /s/) and models the incorrect choice (*Fenk*, is that a word?). He then directs their attention to the illustration (So what's left? Look at the picture there). With this support, the children are able to recognize the word.

A reader in Mrs. Green's second-grade class has difficulty decoding the word *semisalted* (a word the child reports he has never seen) when reading *My Visit to the Aquarium* (Aliki, 1993). The text reads, "In the coastal stream exhibit, we saw fish that travel. They live in fresh and salt water, and in semisalted coastal streams that lead to the sea" (p. 23).

Student: "In the coastal stream exhibit, we saw fish that travel. They live in fresh and salt water, and in....solt...."

Teacher: Okay, break it up into two parts.

Teacher: [points to a word in the book and sequentially covers the word parts *semi-* and *salted* with her finger] The *i* is long. Just *s-e-m-i*....

Student: Sem....

Teacher: Sem...and then a long *i*.

Student: Semi...salt.... Semisalted.

In this interaction, Mrs. Green directs the child to break the word into two parts and cues him to the vowel sound (The *i* is long). She leads him through the process, and he decodes the first syllable. Mrs. Green confirms the partial decoding and restates the graphophonic cue (and then the long *i*). With this support, the reader is able to recognize the word. Mrs. Green began the interaction by identifying a possible strategy and cueing a relevant sound, and then she became more specific by guiding the student through the strategy.

Eliciting student coaching

In Mrs. Fry's classroom, students had learned to contribute cues during coaching episodes. Mrs. Fry described her rationale for student coaching and how it came to occur in her classroom.

> I think you have to have everybody involved when you're just addressing one child. So one day, I just started saying, "What does everybody else think?" and "Let's give some clues. How could you help her? What are some ways we could get unstuck?" And so then they're just thinking about it. Well, I could cover up that *s*. Oh look! There's a family there. What family is it? Oh, it's the *-at* family. And so everybody just became engaged in the conversation. (Clark, 2000, p. 105)

The following dialogue is representative of such a coaching episode. The students are reading *The Carrot Seed* (Krauss, 1945). The text reads, "But he still pulled up the weeds around it every day and sprinkled the ground with water" (p. 17). Multiple students join Mrs. Fry in coaching a child struggling with *every*.

Student 1: "But he...still pulled up the weeds around the...it...a...a...." [every]

Teacher: What do you think? Can you please touch the letters and say those sounds for me?

Student 1: Eh...vuh...er...ever....

Teacher: There's a little word isn't there? What's the little word?

Student 1: Ever.

Teacher: Ever.... Now, slide to the end.

Student 1: Oh.

Teacher: Jim [another student with raised hand] thinks he knows.

Teacher: What about the *y*? Ever...ever.... What's [the original reader] going to do?

Student 2: I know.

Teacher: You know?

Student 2: The *y* acts like an *i*.

Teacher: Are you sure? Then it would say evr*i* [long *i*].

Student 3: No–*e* [long *e*].

Teacher: E [long *e* sound].

Student 1: "Every...day and sprinkled the ground with water."

When the reader encounters difficulty, Mrs. Fry initially intervenes with a general cue (What do you think?) and a directive to apply a strategy (Can you please touch the letters and say those sounds for me?). With this support, the reader recognizes the first two syllables in the word. The final *y* proves difficult, however. At this point, Mrs. Fry provides a more specific cue that directs the reader's attention to a known word part (There's a little word there. What's the little word?). The reader identifies the little word (*ever*), and Mrs. Fry then gives another directive (Now, slide to the end). The child remains unsuccessful, and another child raises his hand and provides a clue, albeit an inaccurate one (The *y* acts like an *i*). Mrs. Fry highlights the inaccuracy (Then it would say evr*i* [long *i*]). In so doing, she focuses the children's attention on the sound in question and implies they should try the other sound for *y*—a strategy she has taught them to apply. Another child then identifies the correct sound, and Mrs. Fry confirms it. With this support, the focal reader recognizes the word *every* and continues reading.

Preparing to coach word recognition

In coaching word recognition, a teacher crafts cues that enable readers to think to the edge of their knowledge as they attempt to recognize unfamiliar words. To coach successfully, one must be aware of the knowledge sources available for word recognition, have specific knowledge of students' word-recognition abilities, be able to analyze a word, and generate appropriate cues.

Factors to consider

In discussing coaching, the teachers highlighted factors they considered when crafting cues:

- The sounds the vowels or vowel teams (e.g., *oa*, *ea*, *oi*, *ay*, *ou*) make in the word
- The sound the *y* makes when it is a vowel (e.g., *e* or *i*)
- The sounds consonants make, such as *c*, *s*, or *g*
- The presence of blends (e.g., *cr*, *fl*, *sk*, *spr*, *scr*) or digraphs (e.g., *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *wh*, *gh*)
- The presence of *r*-controlled vowels (e.g., *ur*, *ir*, *er*, *or*, *ar*)
- The presence of silent letters (e.g., *e*, *gh*)
- The presence of known word parts, such as phonograms (e.g., *-ake*, *-at*, *-ame*); smaller words within a word; or affixes (e.g., *re-*, *un-*, *-ment*, *-ly*, *-ed*, *-ing*)
- The context in which a word occurs

Generating cues: Two textual examples

The teachers all said that coaching was critical to their success in helping children learn to read, and they indicated it was a technique they acquired after completing their teacher certification programs. Intrigued by this, I now include coaching in reading methods courses I teach. Following are examples of cues my preservice teachers generated.

The first example is from *Lon Po Po* (Young, 1989). The three children menaced by the wolf in the story have climbed a gingko tree to escape and outwit the wolf. He waits below, expecting to be furnished with gingko nuts. The text reads, "'But Po Po, gingko is magic only if it is plucked directly from the tree'" (p. 18).

Our hypothetical reader is unable to recognize the word *gingko*. The following cues will support the reader as he or she works to decode the word.

- Think what two sounds *g* can make (/g/ and /j/).
- What sound does *-ing* make?
- Break it into two parts (*ging* and *-ko*).

The second example is from *My Visit to the Aquarium* (Aliki, 1993). The text reads, "Turtles and other reptiles share the leafy habitat" (p. 22). Our hypothetical student is unable to recognize the word *reptiles*. The following cues might help the reader.

- Cover up the *s*.
- There is a word family (*-ile*).
- The first *e* is short.
- Break it into two parts (*rep* and *-tiles*).
- What kind of animals are turtles and alligators? Think about the picture and the first part of the word (*rep*). What would make sense?

Implications for practice

Coaching word recognition. Three points should be made when crafting cues to support word recognition. First, it is crucial to understand word recognition in beginning reading. While readers draw on multiple knowledge sources to understand what they read (Clay, 2001), not all knowledge sources contribute equally to word recognition. Word recognition relies heavily on graphophonic knowledge (Pressley, 1998). Further, a developmental process is involved in learning to read words, and at different stages of development children read words in qualitatively different ways (Ehri, 1991; Juel, 1991).

Juel (1991) summarized three stages of word recognition: the selective-cue stage, the spelling-sound stage, and the automatic stage. In the selective-cue stage, children recognize words by attending to the environment in which words are placed (e.g., a red hexagon) or to selected print but nonalphabetic features (e.g., the two circles in *moon*). In this stage, children rely heavily on picture and semantic context clues to recognize words; their challenge is to acquire the alphabetic principle and to learn to attend to the letters and spelling patterns in words (Lipson & Wixson, 2003).

In the spelling-sound stage (Juel, 1991), children primarily use letter-sound relationships in their word recognitions and approximations. The challenge at this stage is to fully analyze the letters in words, paying particular attention to vowels and to the spelling patterns that represent the larger parts of words (Lipson & Wixson, 2003).

In the automatic stage (Juel, 1991), children are able to recognize most words they read without conscious attention to spelling-sound relationships.

This ability to read words at sight enables children to allocate more attention to higher level meaning-making processes (van den Broek & Kremer, 2000).

We must recognize these developmental differences as we craft instructional cues, and the cues we craft should support students' movement through the stages of word learning. Children at the selective-cue stage should be cued to attend to print information to build their awareness and knowledge of letter-sound relationships. Those at the spelling-sound stage should be cued to fully analyze the constituent letters and orthographic patterns in words. This is not to suggest that there is no place for syntactic and semantic cues in word-recognition instruction. Rather, such cues should follow students' initial print-driven approximations (Juel, 1991). Once children have achieved automaticity of word recognition, they are beyond the stage at which they can benefit from word-level cues. Cues should address other areas of the reading process, unless a specific word-level need arises.

Second, it is important to craft cues that reflect contemporary understandings of phonics instruction. Two teachers whose practice is shared in this discussion encouraged children to use phonic rules to recognize words. I agree with Cunningham and Allington (2003) and Stahl (2002); we should not emphasize the use of phonic rules with students. As Stahl (2002) noted, Theodore Clymer found that "only 45% of the commonly taught phonics rules worked as much as 75% of the time" (p. 65). The guidelines for exemplary phonics instruction Stahl offered in this article can guide the construction of phonic cues. Cues should be "clear and direct," should focus on "reading words, not learning rules," may "include onsets and rimes," and should develop "independent word recognition strategies, focusing attention on the internal structure of words" (Stahl, 2002, pp. 63–66).

Third, it is important to consider the language we use to convey our assistance. That is, the language of phonics and orthography need not necessarily be the language of phonics and orthographic instruction. It is critical that children develop facility with orthographic patterns and phonic elements (e.g., *ake*, *sh*, *oi*). It is much less important that they become facile with the terms associated with these patterns and elements (i.e., rime, digraph, diphthong). This is not to say discipline-specific language should not be used, merely that we should be mindful of its use. The teachers whose practice is represented in this article used specific phonic terms with students. The terms they used were consistent with their knowledge and philosophies, and they were terms they had taught and reinforced throughout the year. Other teachers may choose different terms or choose not to use specific terms at all.

Coaching across the reading process. The first- and second-grade teachers in this article coached word recognition. This is not surprising; learning to recognize words is extremely important for first- and second-grade readers. However, coaching can and should be applied to other reading processes in the early primary years as well as in later years. Cunningham and Allington (2003) presented one instructional format designed specifically to support coaching across the reading process. They recommended coaching groups—small, flexible groups with whom the teacher meets for 10–15 minutes a few times a week to coach word-recognition and comprehension strategies per students' changing needs. In the groups, students of somewhat varied abilities are coached and learn to coach themselves and others. They then apply their knowledge of coaching in other instructional contexts. These groups seem an ideal way to make coaching a part of an instructional program.

Learning to coach. It is of note that the teachers whose practice is shared in this article reported learning to coach while engaged in professional development efforts in early reading intervention. The Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) training in which Mr. Turner, Mrs. Wilson, and Mrs. Green participated involved an initial half-day workshop, monthly meetings in which they analyzed their videotaped practice, and regular classroom visits by mentors. The Right Start training in which Mrs. Fry participated involved an initial two-day workshop, monthly meetings in which participants analyzed videotapes of their practice, and ongoing observation and support by project staff (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). A primary focus of these efforts was the development of a strategic stance toward reading. Coaching reflects this stance. Teachers learned to support students on a moment-to-moment basis as they applied strategic knowledge while reading connected text. The teachers completed this pro-

fessional development within one (Mrs. Wilson, Mr. Turner, Mrs. Green) and five (Mrs. Fry) years of the inquiry from which this discussion is drawn.

Because coaching is such an effective technique, it would make sense to include it in university reading methods courses. This is likely happening in some teacher education programs, particularly in light of recent discussions of the importance of scaffolding students' learning (Pressley et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2000) and of the provision of a viable model for engaging in such instruction (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). I envision instruction in which preservice teachers in methods courses invoke, build, and make explicit their understanding of our graphophonic system and English orthography, use this understanding to craft cues for words with which their students struggle, and apply these cues as they read one-on-one with students. As in the EIR and Right Start intervention efforts, ongoing analysis and discussion of taped practice are critical to development.

Coaching is a powerful technique

The teachers in this article are highly skilled educators. Close examination of their interactions with children led me to believe three factors contributed to their coaching effectiveness. First, the teachers had considerable explicit knowledge of phonics and English orthography. They understood the relationships between graphemes and phonemes and knew how English words are put together. Second, they maintained a conscious awareness of students' instructional histories. They kept anecdotal records of what they had taught and whom they had taught, and they referred to these records to plan instruction. Third, the teachers were aware of students' individual strengths and weaknesses. When coaching, they drew on their knowledge of phonics, orthography, instructional history, and students' abilities in a coordinated manner to provide tailored, moment-to-moment cues that helped students to identify and apply their knowledge of word-recognition strategies as they read. Strickland (2002) stated that young readers need to view learning to read as "a problem-solving activit[y] that they are increasingly equipped to handle on their own" (p. 80). Coaching is a powerful technique that supports young readers as they problem solve during meaningful reading experiences and develop reading independence.

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