The Gradual Increase of Responsibility Model for coaching teachers

Scaffolds for change

Vicki S. Collet
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

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Abstract

Purpose – This collective case study investigated the ways in which coaching supports teacher change. Specifically, the purpose of this paper is to consider what types of feedback are best at what times in the coaching process and how coaching supports teachers' application of learning to differing contexts.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was conducted over an 18-month period in three settings: a university reading clinic and two schools. Participants were a coach and two in-service teachers enrolled in a literacy specialist master's degree program. This qualitative study included observational field notes, interviews, lesson plans, and teacher reflections as primary data sources.

Findings – Findings suggest a model for coaching that acknowledges the learner's previous knowledge and experience and continuously gauges support to stay within the ever-escalating zone of proximal development. Specific coaching moves that vary by degree of scaffolding are identified, namely: modeling, recommending, asking questions, affirming, and praising.

Research limitations/implications – This study clarifies the varying roles that coaches may play and how these roles change over time. Additionally, the model has implications for how coaching might change based on variability among those being coached.

Originality/value – The Gradual Increase of Responsibility Model has potential to guide coaches as they engage with mentees to improve instruction.

Keywords Mentoring and learning theory, Mentoring in education, Professional development and mentoring, Mentoring, Professional development for teachers, Mentoring and coaching in educational contexts for secondary education, Coaching, Mentoring for staff development, Mentoring and coaching in organizations

Paper type Research paper

In schools of the early twenty-first century, an atmosphere of accountability and continuous improvement prevails (Bates, in press). Because contexts for teaching are constantly changing, preparation for teaching requires professional development that is discursive as well as dialogic and reflective (Avalos, 2011; Hoffman and Pearson, 2000). Teacher educators should not only present a full repertoire of instructional strategies, they must support teachers' epistemological understanding and flexible and opportunistic use of such strategies, enabling teachers to "populate them with their own intentions" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). Such experiences help prepare teachers to thoughtfully meet the demands of today's schools and those of the future.

Because pedagogical knowledge and practice are dynamic, effective professional learning experiences must be responsive to these changes. For teachers, as for their students, scaffolding in the context of use enhances learning. Unfortunately, most professional development activities are separated from the classroom, and thus from the opportunity for teachers to be supported as they put what they are learning into

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immediate use. Lack of such an activity setting is a problem Tharp and Gallimore (1988) called "the choke-point of change" (p. 190).

In an effort to address this issue, many universities in the USA provide a clinical experience as part of graduate literacy programs. Clinics can facilitate teacher change, focussing on interactions rather than isolated understandings, providing contextualized opportunities for professional practice (Laster, 2013). Supervisors or coaches in university clinics provide scaffolding as teachers appropriate a repertoire of strategies and deepen their understanding of literacy acquisition. Clinical experiences, where scaffolding is provided by a more-experienced coach, have potential for producing lasting change (Collet, 2012).

Risko *et al.* (2009), following their review of research of the teaching of reading teachers, recommended that the process of learning and doing be unpacked, and that use of supervisor feedback be considered in terms of what types of feedback are best at what times in the teacher education process. The current study addresses these recommendations by illuminating the role instructional support and feedback play in teachers' decision making and describing how coaching practices are modified as teachers' competence increases.

The current study informs the growing body of research on literacy coaching by considering the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) Model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) as a theoretical foundation for coaching practice. The GRR was proposed as a model for comprehension strategy instruction but it has since been applied to a variety of situations, including professional learning for teachers (McVee *et al.*, 2015; Walker, 2010). These studies demonstrate that effective support for teachers changes in response to teachers' changing needs and call for a more nuanced understanding of these changes. Therefore, this study considers: how do coaching interactions change over the course of a clinical teacher-education experience?

Exploring teacher change

A goal of teacher education is to initiate changes in instruction. Many factors impact the change process. For example, practical experiences, group and dyadic discussions, and teacher reflection have been found to facilitate change (Blomberg *et al.*, 2014; Boud and Brew, 2013; Garrett and Juarez, 2013). Each of these factors is discussed below.

Coaching in a clinical setting

Practical experiences provide opportunities to enact learning (Dunston, 2007; Whitcomb *et al.*, 2009). In an effort to provide an activity setting for teacher learning, many universities in the USA include a clinical experience as part of graduate literacy programs (Laster, 2013). As sites for teacher education, clinics integrate theoretical and pedagogical knowledge that transfers to and transforms classroom practice (McAndrews and Msengi, 2013; National Research Council, 2010). The clinical environment situates teachers as active constructors of knowledge about literacy learning as they provide students with reading intervention, putting their knowledge into action. In university clinics, supervisors scaffold the learning of pre-service or in-service teachers, who scaffold the learning of their students. A literacy clinic is "a place for active, reflective learning for all participants" (Laster, 2013, p. 4).

Clinics serve as a vehicle for developing teachers' dispositions toward instruction by offering targeted guidance and encouraging nuanced instructional judgments (Kelley and Wenzel, 2013). This activity setting can facilitate teacher change, focussing on interactions rather than isolated understandings, providing contextualized

opportunities for professional practice. Supervisors or coaches in such settings offer feedback as teachers appropriate a repertoire of strategies and support teachers in making theoretical and pedagogical connections to deepen their understanding of literacy acquisition (Lorenzen, 2008).

Facilitated discussion

Coaching in a clinical setting is often combined with professional development methods such as discussion and self-reflection (Dunston, 2007; Nielsen *et al.*, 2008). Little (1981, p. 14) notes, "School improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice." The process of engaging dialogically encourages consideration of new perspectives on experiences. When teachers discuss and critically consider their own assumptions about teaching and learning, they adapt their teaching in powerful, positive ways (Collet, 2011). Extending the clinical teaching experience through dialogue encourages teachers to voice their new understandings and adapt them to other pedagogical contexts (Zwart *et al.*, 2009).

Supervisors and coaches enact important roles in the change process by supporting dialogic conversations (Risko *et al.*, 2009). Thoughtful dialogue encourages teachers to analyze their instructional decisions and the beliefs and thought processes underlying the decisions. As teachers become more cognizant of the thinking behind their own actions, "opportunities for growth and change emerge." Teacher educators scaffold learning by mediating these experiences, probing, prompting, and questioning to encourage re-visioning of practice (Kibler *et al.*, 2014).

Facilitated reflection

In combination with discussion, reflection supports pedagogical change (Collet, 2012; Edwards-Groves, 2012; Whitcomb *et al.*, 2009). Teacher reflection is "the act of recapturing one's experience, mulling it over and evaluating it in order to learn about one's practice" (Collet, 2011, p. 26). Reflection involves consideration of beliefs and recognition of consequences; such reflection maximizes the construction of meaning (Schön, 1987). Through reflection we recognize areas that need strengthening, consider alternatives, and reconstruct teaching actions.

Scaffolds can be provided to encourage or enhance self-reflection that results in changes in teaching practice (Korthagen, 2014). Crasborn *et al.* (2008), in their study of 30 mentor teachers, found that, following a series of nine training sessions focussed on teaching mentors to stimulate reflection, these mentors did create more opportunities for the teachers they were supervising to explore concerns reflectively. Mentors asked for concreteness, encouraged teachers to summarize feelings, and helped mentees to find and choose alternatives appropriate to the instructional context. These practices appeared to stimulate effective reflection during debriefing sessions. Similarly, Gelfuso and Dennis (2014) found that the presence of knowledgeable others helped to focus and enhance conversations about instruction. However, their study of 13 pre-service teachers indicated that, even with this support, the multifaceted dimensions of effective reflection did not occur. They called for additional study into the facilitation process of reflection, suggesting that "understanding how to facilitate the process of reflection" is imperative (p. 10).

Coaching for teacher change

Although the nuances of effective coaching require further investigation, research suggests that practical experiences, discussion, and reflection have increased

effectiveness as part of the teacher education process when they are facilitated by a more-experienced colleague (Heineke, 2013; Shidler, 2009). Coaches can draw attention to "the rub between theory and practice" (Mills and Satterthwait, 2000, p. 31). Working with teachers where and when they are teaching, literacy coaches address problems of practice with an immediacy not possible in many teacher education settings. Coaching provides contextualized professional development, creating opportunities for construction of beliefs and practices to be grounded in teaching experiences. Instructional improvements can occur as teachers practice, observe results, and evaluate effects on student outcomes. Coaches can support this process and encourage its ongoing use.

Mediational role of coaching. Sociocultural theories have been used to emphasize the role of social interaction in learning (Bodrova and Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). This meditational role is also described in the GRR Model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). The GRR model describes changing instructional interactions as learners increase in proficiency. The model, which has been applied to students' literacy learning for over 30 years (Duffy *et al.*, 1986; Dole *et al.*, 1996; Clark and Graves, 2004), has potential for adult learning as well, specifically teacher instruction (Walker, 2010). According to Wertsch (1991), a property of the speech genre of formal instruction is that it is organized so learners "are encouraged to take over more and more of the regulative responsibilities" (p. 112). Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) GRR model conceptualizes this instructional discourse. According to Pearson and Gallagher, any academic task can be conceptualized as requiring differing proportions of teacher and learner responsibility for successful completion. In the setting of the university clinic described in this study, support is created by the coach and by the cultural tools in the setting. Such assistance can be termed scaffolding, the "bridge necessary to support a learner's performance" (Wood *et al.*, 1976). The GRR model describes the journey across that bridge, depicting the varying amounts of scaffolding needed as learners move toward independence. As a tool for understanding teacher learning, the GRR model can be used as a guide for gradually increasing learners' responsibility. This emphasis on the changing role of the teacher-learner focusses attention on the teacher as an increasingly competent practitioner.

Differentiated coaching. Studies on the effectiveness of instructional coaching in facilitating teacher change suggest that teacher coaching is most effective when it is differentiated according to teacher needs (Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Goodwin, 2011). However, there has been little research to describe the varying scaffolding provided to teachers by instructional coaches. A review of research reveals models of coaching that are static in nature, tending not to take into account how teachers' needs and capacities change over time. Some research has indicated mentors and coaches do not change their practices over time to adjust to their mentees changing needs (Hibbert *et al.*, 2008; MacGillivray *et al.*, 2004), a finding which is problematic. Because teachers' professional development takes place at different speeds and their needs change over time (Crasborn *et al.*, 2008), teacher education experiences must "pay more attention to the individual starting points" when professional development opportunities are provided (Kaaisila and Lauriala, 2010, p. 861). However, there is a "paucity of research literature that reports on effects of incremental phases of professional development" (Batt, 2010, p. 998). This study looks closely at those incremental phases, investigating how coaching changes over time. Specifically, this study addresses the question: how do coaching interactions change over the course of

a clinical experience? As a secondary question, the study considers: are changes in participants' instructional processes and practices evident, and if so, are they sustained over time and across settings (i.e. university clinic and classroom)? Evidence related to this question has relevance as to whether coaching was effective.

Methodology

The current study, a collective case study (Merriam, 1998), presents the contrasting experiences of two teachers, Sandi and Betsy, who provided tutoring in a reading clinic as part of their graduate experience. Both teachers also worked in nearby schools and therefore had the opportunity to apply what they were learning in the clinic about literacy assessment and instruction to their classroom context. Examining issues of teacher change through two specific cases over time enabled cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003), allowing important characteristics to more clearly emerge from the data.

Sites and participants

The principal site of this study was a reading clinic at a university in the Eastern USA. The clinic serves two purposes: it provides graduate students with a practicum experience as they finish their literacy specialist program and provides children with reading intervention. Tutoring sessions were held two afternoons a week, with each session lasting 1 hour and 15 minutes. During these sessions, graduate students met one-on-one with children in the university reading clinic, assessing and providing literacy intervention. In addition to meeting with children, graduate students participated in debriefings with their coach following each tutoring session and also participated in weekly seminars conducted by another professor.

Two additional sites for the study were the elementary schools where the two participants, Betsy Durkin and Sandi Smith worked. Betsy worked at a suburban elementary school near a large eastern city. Sandi worked in an elementary school in a rural district about an hour's drive from the same city.

Participant selection for this study was guided by several considerations. First, the participant pool was limited to the 13 teachers in the literacy specialist master's degree program who were participating in a clinical experience at the onset of this study. Because the researcher sought to understand how teachers apply what they have learned in a clinical setting to their classroom teaching, only those who were concurrently teaching in a school setting were considered.

Second, teachers representing variability of perspectives (Creswell, 2007) were sought in order to provide contrast. Sandi and Betsy were identified as potential participants using purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Both were teaching in public school settings: Sandi as a consultant special education teacher working with fifth-graders and Betsy as a kindergarten teacher. Sandi was in her third year of teaching during the initial year of this study; Betsy was a first-year teacher. Although there is similarity in the ages and needs of the students Sandi worked with at the clinic and at school, Betsy's students' ages varied drastically: she worked with five-year-olds at school each day, but her work in the clinic was with an adolescent.

During the first four months of the study, I was an active participant (Wolcott, 2008). I had dual roles: supporting teachers' learning and collecting data about this learning. As their coach, I provided feedback to Sandi and Betsy on lesson plans and weekly reflections, debriefed with these teachers individually and as part of a small group, exchanged e-mails, and provided resources to support their instruction. My role as a coach was supportive rather than evaluative (I did not assign letter grades).

After the first four months of the study, my role as researcher transformed to that of observer and interviewer (Seidman, 2006), allowing me to better understand not only what these teachers were doing in their classrooms, but also the thinking that guided those actions. During interviews, I was able to probe teachers' decision-making processes about the instruction I observed in their classrooms. I chose to be a non-participant observer in the classroom because I wanted to note instructional interactions between the teachers and their students without interference. I had taken a more proactive role as a coach during the first semester of the study, and now it was time to sit back and watch their undisturbed instruction. I noted people, activities, and the physical aspects of the situation (Spradley, 1980). The benefits of the collegiality we had previously developed enhanced our conversations as I learned more about these teachers' instructional decision making at school.

Data collection

Primary sources of data for this study are described in Table I, below. Field notes were taken as Betsy and Sandi interacted with peers and their instructor during a weekly seminar and as they interacted with their coach in formal weekly debriefings and informal conversations. Observational field notes were also taken during each 1.25 hour tutoring session and during 12 classroom observations over the course of the 18-month study. Each classroom observation lasted at least 2.5 hours. These classroom observations and the brief interviews which following each observation provided abundant opportunity to survey these teachers' instructional activities and probe their decision-making processes. Longer interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the clinical experience, five months after the conclusion of the clinical experience, and again when the 18-month study concluded (see protocol for semi-structured interview, Appendix 1). Secondary data sources are also enumerated in Table I. Using these multiple sources of information provided in-depth information and validation for data analysis (Ely *et al.*, 1991). In addition, trustworthiness and credibility of this study were

Data source	When collected
Primary data sources	
Observational field notes	During clinical experience (January-May 2008) During classroom observations (April 2008 – June 2009)
Teacher interviews	At end of clinical experience (May-June 2008) After each classroom observation (April 2008 – June 2009)
Weekly lesson plans	Throughout clinical experience (January-May 2008)
Weekly written reflections	Throughout clinical experience (January-May 2008)
Secondary data sources	
Video recordings of clinical tutoring	During clinical experience (January-May 2008)
E-mails between teachers and coach	During clinical experience (January-May 2008)
Teacher-created documents (educational plan and reports)	During clinical experience (January-May 2008)
Questionnaire (see Appendix 1)	January and May, 2008; June 2009

Table I.
Data collection

increased through use of thick descriptions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); persistent observation (Creswell, 2007); and review by participants, peers, and external consultants (Merriam, 1998).

Data analysis

Data analysis followed a case-study model (Creswell, 2007), including interpretation of data, establishing patterns, and developing possible generalization across the two cases. The purpose was to develop an understanding of how teachers applied what they learned in the clinic to their classroom teaching and the role of coaching to facilitate that change. Analysis proceeded through two stages, with four phases in each stage, as shown in Figure 1 and described below.

Stage 1 of data analysis occurred during and shortly after participants' clinical experience and included all data from the clinical experience plus field notes and interviews from two initial classroom observations. Both of the research questions for this study were considered during this stage. Phase 1 of data analysis was ongoing throughout the study as I integrated data collection and data analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). While taking field notes, I recorded impressions, jotted labels (some of which later became categories), and wrote analytic memos. During Phase 2 of Stage 1, categories emerged following transcription of interviews and review of observational data (see initial categories, Appendix 2). Phase 3 included review of the data for additional excerpts from both primary and secondary data sources and sorting by categories. During Phase 4 of Stage 1, I considered emerging themes in light of my theoretical lenses and research questions, helping me to synthesize the data and bring it into focus.

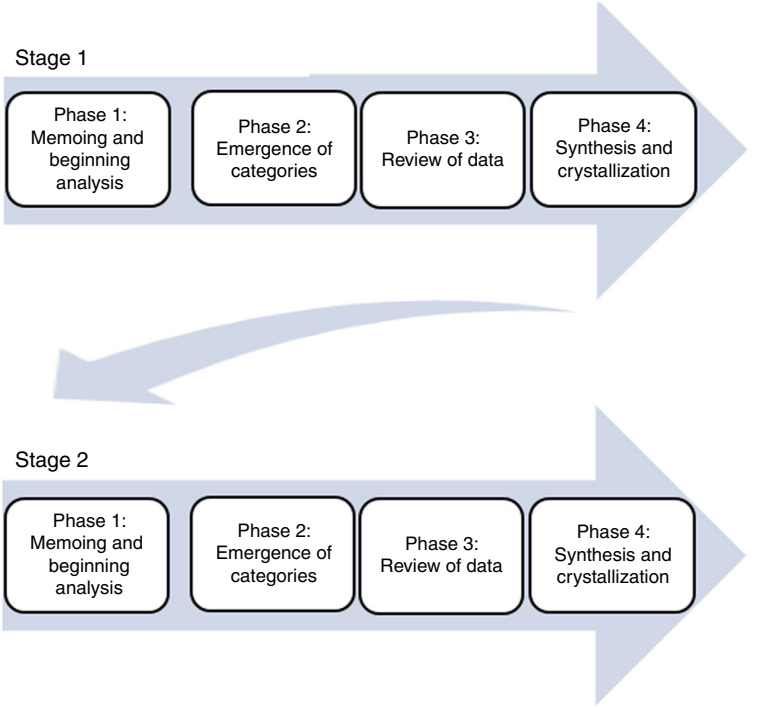

Figure 1.
Data analysis

Stage 2 of data analysis occurred at the conclusion of data collection for the study. Initially, new data collected during follow-up teacher observations and interviews were considered. Subsequently, all data were reviewed to identify agreements and incongruences. As in Stage 1, Stage 2 of data began with bringing together data from the various sources and beginning analysis. Stage 2, Phase 2 of data analysis was aided by having recordings of the interviews. As I listened to them over and over again and transcribed them, salient chunks emerged. I copied these important chunks into a spreadsheet. Also during this phase, field notes from observations were reviewed, excerpted, and coded according to emerging categories. I then compared these categories to the categories identified in Stage 1; similar terms were collapsed and combined; resulting categories are found in Appendix 2. All data were then reviewed and color-coded according to the newly defined categories. This process enabled me to collapse several categories (e.g. "Ongoing Evaluation" and "Understanding Student Needs"), and also raised questions that sent me back to the data for Stage 2, Phase 3 of data analysis.

Using the collapsed categories as a guide, all data sources were again reviewed and additional excerpts were identified and sorted by category. Frequency counts were tallied for each category. As I read the clusters in each category, many of the links I had identified during Stage 1 of the study were confirmed. For example, I found the importance of collaboration was confirmed and strengthened by the follow-up data.

During the final phase of data analysis, themes emerged as I considered the quantity and qualities of excerpts in each category. For example, I noted how characteristics of the support provided through coaching were captured in the codes: reflection, collaboration, probing questions, and background knowledge. When I ordered these excerpts sequentially by date, "patterns and clearer themes emerged." Research questions and theoretical perspectives helped me bring important qualities of the sizeable data set into focus, crystallize findings, and validate the claims that had emerged.

Findings

In this study, I explored research questions related to coaching and teacher learning. I was interested in describing how coaching provides a gradual release of responsibility to support teachers' professional development. Specifically, this study asked: how do coaching interactions change over the course of a clinical experience? Concurrently, the study considers: are changes in participants' instructional processes and practices evident, and if so, are they sustained over time and across settings (i.e. university clinic and classroom)? Evidence related to this second question has relevance as to whether coaching was effective and is considered in the findings below along with the coaching strategies that supported these instructional changes.

An analysis of the data from observations in the clinic and classrooms, interviews, and questionnaires, and written work and electronic communications suggested the following claims:

- the quantity and quality of support provided by the coach changed throughout the course of the semester; and
- collaboration (with the coach and with peers) was of ongoing importance.

Changing support

As the semester progressed, data collected indicated that both the quantity and the characteristics of the coaching support changed over time. Analysis of feedback provided by the coach and notes documenting the support provided for each session

suggested there was a decrease in the amount of support provided as Betsy and Sandi increased in competence and confidence, as evidenced by this interview excerpt from Sandi as she reflected on the coaching process:

> I think in the beginning, there were probably more comments than in the end, because in the end, they weren't so necessary because I'd been doing it for a while, but I think in the beginning it helped to kind of figure out what I really wanted to focus on, because I didn't really know at the beginning.

Analysis of reflections and lesson plans indicated that early in the semester, there were many comments and coaching recommendations, whereas later plans had few recommendations and instead affirmed the intervention strategies that were included. For example, this comment, given early in the semester, was lengthy and was only one of several suggestions provided when Betsy submitted her reflection:

> What level of detail would you expect or hope for Caleb to remember? What level of detail will he need to be able to retain to be successful in school and, most importantly, life experiences? What strategies can you give Caleb to enable him to be successful in these settings? Life isn't about having total recall. I'm posing these questions simply as food for thought as you chart an instructional course for Caleb. Being able to find information may be more important and practical for Caleb than being able to remember it.

These recommendations built on Betsy's use of literal-level questions during tutoring sessions but pushed her thinking about how such questions should be used. The guidance scaffolded Betsy's instructional decision making, focussing not only on what Caleb was ready to do, but on how Betsy was ready to think about her instruction. Comments later in the semester tended to be shorter:

> Your goals for the rest of the semester are appropriate and I believe he'll move toward independence with the writing. This is an area Caleb really needs work with, so I'm glad you've found something that works for him!

Further, on many of these later reflections and lesson plans no comments were provided because I felt none were needed. With less coaching support, Betsy and Sandi were taking on increased responsibility for instruction.

As evidenced in the above excerpts, the nature of coaching comments also changed as the semester progressed. Whereas the comment above from early in the semester is more directive, the later comment took the form of confirming teachers' decisions. Mediation provided by coaching changed over time. Although the change was not perfectly linear, coaching support generally progressed through stages, with characteristic types of feedback prevalent as the semester progressed. The five broad stages identified are: modeling, making recommendations, posing questions, providing affirmation, and offering praise. Stages of coaching were identified by evaluating the preponderant type of support being offered. Table II shows the spread of the most quantifiable of data sources: written comments to teachers' lesson plans and reflections. For convenience of display in this table, the semester has been divided into four time periods and coaching moves are tallied as displayed within that period. The table captures shifts from recommending to questioning to affirming to praising. Each of the five general stages that emerged is described below.

Modeling. A review of field notes and e-mail correspondence indicated that early in the semester, coaching frequently provided models for instruction. This modeling took several different forms. A common form of modeling, where the coach steps in and teaches the student, did not occur in the clinic because of a concern this might be seen

as intrusive and detrimental to relationships that were developing between teachers and students (Poglinco *et al.*, 2003; Ippolito, 2013). At the beginning of the semester Betsy had requested a traditional modeling experience, asking that I teach a lesson to Caleb so that she could observe. When we discussed it at the time, I shared the reasons listed above, and we decided not to have me step in. However, when reflecting during her final interview, Betsy indicated she felt the modeling would have been helpful.

Field notes indicated, however, that other forms of modeling did occur near the beginning of the clinical experience. For example, literacy intervention strategies were frequently modeled as we met to plan for upcoming lessons. I modeled the "Have A Go" spelling strategy (Snowball and Bolton, 1998) when I introduced it to Sandi and modeled how visuals could be used to support comprehension strategies for Betsy's student. Other strategies modeled early in the clinical experience were use of graphic organizers such as Shape GO (Benson and Cummings, 2000) and Five-Finger Summary (Gunning, 2006), a phonics strategy called "Vowel Grab" (Lindamood and Lindamood, 1998) and the practice of sorting words by spelling patterns.

In addition to modeling during planning or debrief sessions, models from online video resources, shared during planning sessions or through e-mail via web links, were also included to support teachers' understanding of new approaches. I also provided models to Sandi and Betsy by sharing DVDs from previous tutors in the clinic and pointing out effective segments for them to watch. Modeling, whether recorded or live, was used regularly early in the semester. Such observed experiences appeared to support teacher change; field notes, lesson plans, and reflections indicated that Betsy and Sandi subsequently used the strategies they had observed in their own instruction, both in the clinic and in their classrooms.

Making recommendations. Another coaching move used frequently early in the semester, as teachers were determining goals for their students and deciding what instructional approaches to take, was making recommendations. Sometimes recommendations came during informal discussions, as Sandi acknowledged during our interview: "Even just talking after the lessons, suggesting like a different strategy or something – that helped a lot." The following recommendation, a comment made on a lesson plan near the beginning of the semester, suggests a specific text and instructional approach: "Give him an opportunity to transfer the skill of reading with expression to real text – otherwise, it's not serving a real purpose. Perhaps he could preview the sample paper by reading it out loud attending to punctuation." Another example, also from an early lesson plan, made an instructional recommendation: "I feel like 30 minutes is too long to spend on word work; he will benefit from time with connected text." Betsy and Sandi appeared to readily accept these recommendations,

Table II.
Changes in coaching comments throughout semester

Type of Comment	Time of semester			
	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period
Praising	4	2	7	*4*
Affirming	9	8	*10*	1
Questioning	11	*22*	2	3
Recommending	*12*	15	6	3
Total	36	47	25	11

Note: Modeling is not included in this table because it was not noted in the data source considered here

as suggested strategies were included in subsequent lessons. For example, after I had recommended the Vowel Grab (Lindamood and Lindamood, 1998) as a possible strategy for Caleb to use when figuring out unknown words, Betsy included it in her lesson plan. Betsy shared Caleb's response:

> He even said, 'Hey, I like this,' and for Caleb that's saying something! And I really think it has helped him to break apart those unknown words instead of just looking at the first two letters and guessing. I mean, sometimes he'll still do that, but a lot of times he breaks the words apart.

Their uptake of recommended strategies suggests that coaching encouraged Sandi and Betsy to attend to important instructional goals. Table III includes a list of instructional strategies that were modeled or recommended during coaching and observed during instruction in the clinic and the classroom, as indicated by lesson plans, reflections, and field notes. Sandi and Betsy seemed responsive to modeling and recommendations as they took up these instructional strategies in their own practice.

As seen in Table II, the incidence of making recommendations decreased sharply after the second period of the semester. Making recommendations appeared to provide support for instructional decision making as teachers were becoming familiar with strategies for intervention in the reading clinic.

Posing questions. As shown in Table II, asking questions became the dominant coaching move as the clinical experience progressed. A coaching comment on Sandi's lesson plan mid-way through the semester shows the transition from making recommendations to asking questions:

> Sandi, tell me about your thinking for using *The Biggest, Best Snowman* and *Frederick*. Would it be more appropriate to use grade-level or longer text with Jason? Text with less pictorial support? Is Jason reading at his instructional level, based on results of his diagnostic testing at the beginning of the semester? As Vygotsky reminds us, instruction needs to "march in front" of his current ability.

Questions such as these were similar to recommendations; they pointed teachers to attend to specific aspects of instruction.

An e-mail discussion later in the semester posed a less-directive question: "Your collaborative use of the rubric seems to be supporting Jason's growth as a writer. Do you think he is internalizing any of the features of the rubric?" This question pushed Sandi to consider implications of her instruction and how she might move forward. In a follow-up interview, Sandi described this type of scaffolding as helpful: "The thing that I found to be most beneficial was like when you would write questions back, because then it kind of made me think like, 'Oh, I didn't think of that before.' "

During debriefings immediately following a lesson, I would often pose questions asking for concreteness. For example, when Sandi said she thought Jason's comprehension seemed better, I asked her for evidence. Describing specific examples led to a further question: "What are some of the things you did that might have supported this change?" Similarly, when Betsy reflected, "I just want to build him up," I responded: "What are some of the successes you could talk with him about?"

As the semester progressed, Sandi and Betsy more frequently included reflective analyses without being prompted; they appeared to be asking themselves questions that promoted a reflective stance. At this point, coaching questions encouraged metacognition about instructional decision making. For example, Sandi included the following comment in a reflection: "I noticed that Jason would tell me what he was

Instructional practice	Description
6+1 Traits of Writing	A model that gives students and teachers a common language for talking about writing. The six traits are: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Presentation was added as a seventh trait
Comprehension Fix-Up Strategies	Approaches readers may use when comprehension breaks down while reading a text. These may include: stop and think, reread, read on, make connections, use background knowledge, and adjust reading rate
Have-A-Go	A technique to encourage writers to think about their spelling. Students circle words in their own writing that they think they may have misspelled. They then write the word(s) in the graphic organizer and "have a go" at stretching it out in the next column. In the third column, the teacher provides the correct spelling; the student checks his/her attempts against this spelling and copies the correct spelling in the last column
PIN	A comprehension strategy where students are asked to state one positive, one interesting and one negative observation from the text
Running Record	A method of assessing a child's reading level and abilities by examining both accuracy and the types of errors made
Shape GO	A graphic organizer used to support students' retelling of a narrative that has been read or heard. A triangle reminds readers to include the setting, characters, and problem/goal from the story. A rectangle reminds readers to summarize main events in the story (typically four). A circle represents the end of the story – coming back to the solution or resolution
SWBST (Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then or 5-Finger Summary)	A mnemonic for summarizing a story; included are the somebody (main character), what they wanted (goal), the "but" (problem) that emerges, the "so" (events leading to the solution), and the "then" (resolution)
Vowel Grab	An approach for decoding unknown multi-syllable words. Readers put a dot under each vowel, then draw a scoop with the pencil to "grab" the preceding consonant or consonant blend in order to break the word into more manageable chunks for decoding (Lindamood and Lindamood, 1998)
Word Sort	An activity where students sort words into categories. In an "open sort" students identify their own patterns for categorization. In a "closed sort" students are provided with categories, often related to phonics patterns, and sort words into these categories

Table III.
Observed instructional practices

going to write first, and then write it down. I think that Jason is comfortable retelling and summarizing orally, but writing is more difficult." The coaching response bridged this observation to lesson planning: "This is an important observation. How can you use this info to help Jason become strategic and independent when summarizing?" As these examples illustrate, the nature of questions changed as teachers became more self-reflective.

Near the middle of the clinical experience, teachers were using effective intervention strategies; questioning helped them refine their approach and seemed to encourage a reflective stance, which was evidenced throughout the remainder of the study.

For example, when Betsy was observed a year after completing her clinical experience, I followed up with questions about her instructional decision making. When asked about her decision to include instruction about word families in the kindergarten lesson I observed, she gave a lengthy response (323 words) that included this insight: "I think it's so important for them because, when they're trying to write, you can use the different code words or category words and say, 'Well, it's like chip' or whatever, and then it helps them, I think. Gives them a jumping off point." Comments such as these suggest that both Betsy and Sandi had internalized and continued reflective decision-making practices.

Providing affirmation. Toward the end of the clinical experience, coaching comments trended toward affirming teachers' instructional decisions. Comments that confirmed the teachers' proposed course of action or pointed out the positive responses to instruction became more prevalent in the data, as demonstrated in Table II. Although comments that affirmed or praised teachers' decisions were present earlier in the semester, these types of remarks increased in frequency as the semester progressed. Affirming comments recognized sound instructional decisions and their results, as shown in this example: "Betsy, Caleb seemed more engaged in the lesson today! He was able to use more expression when reading the ABC activity!" Similarly, commenting on Sandi's written reflection late in the semester, the coach affirmed her decision to display strategy posters: "Having these resources visually available seems very effective for Jason."

Betsy described this kind of support as positive, saying, "You would, you know, give me again, like a different perspective, kind of. To affirm what I was doing that I should be doing, or offer other suggestions." Affirming comments asserted the validity of teachers' actions. This appeared to be helpful when Betsy and Sandi were at a point where they were making sound instructional decisions but were looking for confirmation that they were doing the right thing.

Offering praise. As the end of the clinical experience neared, offering praise became the dominant coaching move. An e-mail to Sandi at the end of the semester included the following: "Sandi, watching you work with Jason is such a joy! Your rapport with him allows you to accomplish so much and have both of you enjoy the experience." An e-mail to Betsy on the same day also includes praise: "Betsy, what a great lesson today! It was worth the hand-wringing, wasn't it!" Offering warranted praise utilized a strengths-based approach. Sandi and Betsy were utilizing effective instructional strategies and appeared to feel confident about what they were doing, no longer looking to their coach for affirmation. In this study, praise appeared to be an authentic response and a beneficial finale to the coaching cycle.

Exceptions. In general, coaching moved from being instructional and very supportive to being affirming and providing praise. As noted earlier, however, the change was not entirely linear. Often comments included multiple types of feedback. For example, when Sandi indicated she was planning to have Jason use a thesaurus during his writing, comments included both recommendations and a question:

> You might first want to see what words are in Jason's brain before going to an outside resource – perhaps he just needs his awareness raised about using interesting words. What did his score on the PPVT indicate about his vocabulary knowledge? I'm leery of sending him first to an outside source, since that can be so disruptive during the writing process. It would be appropriate to follow up with the thesaurus, if needed, during editing, however.

Circumstances sometimes seemed to call for a deviation from the progression through phases offering less support. For example, after Caleb had spent a tutoring session

side-tracking most of Betsy's instructional plans with intentional off-task comments and poor behavior choices, Betsy expressed extreme frustration and asked me to step in and have a conversation with him. Taking this action was a side-step from the coaching path toward increased teacher responsibility, but took into account what Betsy was (and was not) ready to do. In general, however, coaching followed the trend represented by the steps outlined above. Through the coaching process, teachers gradually increased the responsibility they were taking for instruction.

Ongoing collaboration

As the semester progressed, coaching tended to move from a consulting stance to an increasingly collaborative one. By the end of the semester, interactions were more collegial, a stance that was reflected in the teachers' comments: "It was good to think at it from another perspective. I think having two perspectives is definitely important," Betsy said. This comment reflects Betsy's feeling at the end of the semester that she and her coach were collaborators in defining her student's needs and held equally valuable perspectives.

In addition to the collaborative relationships Betsy and Sandi developed with me as their coach, they also developed collaborative relationships with other teachers in the clinic. In the clinic, these collegial conversations were often facilitated by me, a practice that was valued by teachers. "I liked when our small group got together sometimes," Sandi said in our interview, "because then you'd have more people's opinions." Sandi's comment demonstrates the value she gave to these collaborative experiences.

As the semester progressed, teachers in the clinic increasingly sought out one another's feedback. Speaking about Lisa, a partner she often debriefed with after tutoring at the clinic, Betsy said, "The one day where Caleb did really well, I was so excited about it, so that was good that she was like, 'You know, it really sounded like it worked!' " When things went well, Betsy clearly appreciated having a peer with whom to share her successes. She also talked about collaborating with another colleague at the clinic, Rose. "Rose always had a good suggestion. She really did. So I kind of really looked forward to hearing what she had to say about it." As Betsy reflected on these experiences during our interviews, she seemed to emphasize what she gained from the collaboration, although watching her in action during debriefs, it was clear that the collaboration was a two-way street: she often gave suggestions to her colleagues in the clinic as they talked together.

In addition, it appears that fostering collaborative relationships in the clinic may have played a role in encouraging such relationships outside of the clinic. During follow-up interviews after the clinical experience, Betsy and Sandi spoke of the valuable information gleaned from collaborative conversations with school colleagues. Betsy spoke of a colleague who "has a lot of good ideas and different strategies and things to try with the kids." "I'm open to her suggestions," Betsy explained, "because I've developed a respect for her knowledge and her teaching abilities." Betsy's description of her trusted colleague was similar to the relationship she had developed with colleagues in the clinic. Having valued collegial feedback she received during her clinical experience, she was perhaps more open to such feedback from colleagues at school. Teachers' interdependence and collaboration increased as they relied less on the coach and engaged more in collaborative discourse with both the coach and other teachers.

Discussion

A model for increasing responsibility

This study was theoretically guided by Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) GRR model, which suggests that learners benefit from decreased scaffolding over time. Specifically,

the study sought to understand how coaching interactions changed over the course of a clinical experience in support of instructional improvement. This study examined coaching and teacher change within the particular contexts of a university reading clinic and participants' classroom in the schools where they worked. As such, results of this study cannot be broadly generalized. Nevertheless, some insights are offered.

Descriptions of coaching episodes portray teachers gradually increasing their responsibility for instruction. Scaffolding provided by coaching interactions decreased as the teachers became more skillful. In general, coaching support moved from being explanatory and very supportive to being affirming and providing praise. However, the coach adapted the scaffolding provided based on the experiences and changing needs of the teachers. Figure 2, the Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching model, portrays changes in coaching support that represent less scaffolding and increased teacher responsibility as a coaching cycle progresses. The figure is an adaptation of Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) GRR, in that it represents gradual changes in the support provided over time. However, it reflects the coaching moves identified through this study's analysis: modeling, recommending, questioning, affirming, and praising – coaching practices which gave teachers increasing responsibility for instructional decisions. From the learner's perspective, the model represents an escalation, or increase in responsibility over time as the coach provides less support, so I refer to this model as the Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching Model.

In the GIR model, the coaching path (shown by the curving line) starts at a point above the origin on the vertical axis rather than beginning at "0-0," acknowledging that teachers bring funds of knowledge to any learning situation (Moll *et al.*, 2001). Likewise, by having the line end below the upper corner, the model implies that, as asserted by Little (2012), teachers should continue to learn and grow in their profession. Rather than a linear course, this change is shown as sinuous, as was typified in the data, which described a recursive and iterative progression as these coaching moves were utilized. The model illustrates mediation provided by coaching as teachers' competencies were emerging, while the coach provided varying but decreasing support. Although previous research has identified the benefits of differentiated support through coaching (Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Goodwin, 2011), the current study illuminates such differentiation by naming and describing specific coaching moves that provide varying levels of support.

Coaching leveraged teachers' abilities by providing what I have termed progressive scaffolding – support that changed to match teachers' escalating zones of proximal development. Rather than falling within their zone of proximal development, by the end

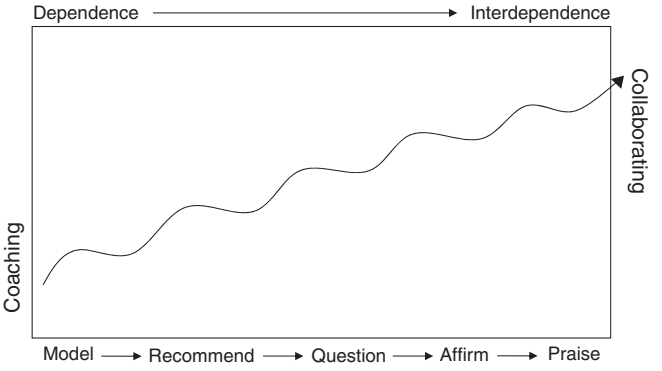

Figure 2.
Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching Model

of the semester, literacy instruction and intervention fell within their zone of actual development (Vygotsky, 1978), indicating ability for more independent performance.

Interactions with a coach supported teachers' increasing expertise and experience and provided the necessary assistance so that students in the reading clinic received appropriate instruction throughout their time at the clinic, with the coach making up the difference by providing and recommending instructional strategies when teachers had minimal experience. Teachers' responsibility for instructional planning gradually increased as the clinical experience progressed. In this study, teachers demonstrated deeper understanding of strategies for literacy instruction and showed evidence of flexibly and appropriately applying their new learning as tutors in the reading clinic and in their own classrooms.

The Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching Model describes changes in coaching over time as teachers rely less on the coach. This model, and the data from this study, suggests that by modeling, making recommendations, asking probing questions, affirming teachers' appropriate decisions, and praising, coaches can provide scaffolding that gradually increases teachers' responsibility for instructional decision making.

Modeling, suggested by numerous studies as an effective coaching strategy (Cantrell and Hughes, 2008; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Sayeski and Paulsen, 2012; Short, 2013; Walker, 2010), is the most supportive coaching move in the GIR model. Whether recorded or live, with students or without, modeling provides significant scaffolding for instructional change.

Similarly, making recommendations appears to be a coaching move that provides significant scaffolding. Studies indicate that taking the consulting role and offering suggestions to improve instruction can be an effective mentoring practice (Darby, 2008; Gibson, 2006). The current study stratifies this coaching move as somewhat less-supportive than modeling.

Previous studies have shown that questioning by asking for concreteness, requesting clarification, and problematizing inconsistencies can lead to improved instruction (Costa and Garmston, 2002; Crasborn *et al.*, 2008; Halai, 2006). The current study suggests that when coaches ask questions as their dominant coaching move, the teacher has the bulk of the responsibility for instructional decision making.

Affirmation and praise are aspects of support that build self-efficacy and help organizations meet their goals (Chapman and White, 2014; Moulding *et al.*, 2014). Studies also link praise to enhanced motivation, creativity, and willingness to take risks (Blasé and Kirby, 2008; Margolis and Nagel, 2006; Stone *et al.*, 2009). Although little previous research exists related to affirming and praising as coaching scaffolds, broader studies indicate that, when tied to effort, praise encourages learners to attempt new things, persist after difficulty, use better strategies for correcting mistakes, and improve performance (Cimpian *et al.*, 2007; Zentall and Morris, 2010). The current study begins to link these benefits with instructional coaching as moves that provide minimal scaffolding. In this study, affirming occurred when teachers were still looking to the coach for confirmation of their instructional decisions, while praise was authentically offered by the coach without the teacher's appeal. Praise was received positively and viewed as a collegial interaction.

In this study, coaching for increased teacher responsibility appeared to facilitate ongoing teacher interdependence and collaboration. This unexpected finding has pertinence in today's educational climate, with school reform literature emphasizing collaboration and the organization as the unit of change (City *et al.*, 2009; Goddard *et al.*, 2004). Interdependence is a personality trait characteristic of mature individuals and inherent in collaboration (Gandhi, 1922; Covey, 1990). Collaboration is a necessary facet of professional learning communities, which are being encouraged as a means for improving education (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Marsh *et al.*, 2015). By gradually

increasing teachers' responsibility and leading toward interdependence and collaboration, the coaching process instantiated by this study prepares teachers for participation in communities of learners.

As a conceptual guide, the Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching Model could provide coaches with increased awareness of how they might adjust their support in response to teachers' changing needs. Just as teachers in classrooms need to consider the varying needs of their students, coaches can support instructional change as they find and follow the circuitous path to mediate teachers' learning while increasing teachers' responsibility for making instructional decisions. By following the pattern of modeling, making recommendations, asking questions, providing affirmations, and giving praise, coaches can help teachers apply new learning and move them toward collaborative interdependence.

Implications for future research and practice

This study's findings have implications for future research. Because this study was limited to one university clinic, it is important to consider how the GIR model might be utilized in clinics with differing practices. In addition, studies with experimental design to compare outcomes of clinics that did and did not use the GIR coaching model would be informative. It is also compelling to consider the utility of the GIR model in school settings; future studies could include this context.

An aspect of the study that was left unexplored was the factors that influenced the degree to which teachers applied and transformed the concepts and practices they had learned. Instructional change seemed to be influenced by: teachers' conditions, including their comfort in the setting; their actions, including their focus on student goals and the planning and reflecting they had done; and the settings and the people with whom they were working. Future studies could address how these factors interact with the coaching model.

While such studies would certainly add rich description to use of the Gradual Increase of Responsibility Coaching Model, the study reported here provides sufficient support for the following recommendations. First, because previous research indicates coaches sometimes do not account for teachers' previous experience and continuing growth (Hibbert *et al.*, 2008; MacGillivray *et al.*, 2004), the GIR model could be recommended as a guide for considering such information. University-based reading clinics that use coaches or supervisors could provide information about the GIR model as part of the training for these coaches, since this study clarifies the varying roles coaches or supervisors can play throughout a teacher education experience. Similarly, the study might provide guidance for coaches in school settings, where coaches work with teachers who have a wide variety of experience and needs. The GIR model could be used by coaches as they consider these variabilities; coaches can "place" teachers on the GIR model as a way to consider the type of coaching support they might provide. Coaches in schools can consider the final stage of the GIR model (Interdependence and Collaboration) as they seek to provide job-embedded professional development and strengthen the work of professional learning communities within their schools.

The Gradual Increase of Responsibility Model describes coaching that facilitated instructional change. By situating the teacher as an active constructor of knowledge and allowing for appropriation of ideas through multiple interactions over time, coaches embody the stance that good teaching is dependent upon knowledge of where the learner is and an understanding of where the learner is ready to move next, modeling this sociocultural concept as a theoretical consideration for learners of all ages.

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Appendix 1. Semi-structured protocol interview questions

Interview questions asked at conclusion of clinical experience

The questions below represent a general outline of those that were asked at the conclusion of teachers' clinical experience. Follow-up questions varied based on participants' responses:

In your school, what influences your reading instruction?

Do you have opportunities at school to collaborate? If so, please tell me about them.

What structures are in place at your school that support you as a teacher?

How much choice do you have about your reading instruction?

What has your experience been in being a tutor in the clinic?

What similarities do you see between tutoring and classroom instruction?

What significant differences do you see between tutoring and classroom instruction?

What are some of the benefits of instructing in a classroom?

What are some of the benefits of instructing in a one-on-one setting?

What aspects of the clinical experience do you find helpful?

Can you tell a story about a time when you made a connection between school and the clinic?

In what ways has the tutoring experience influenced your beliefs or understandings about reading instruction, if at all?

In what ways has your experience in the clinic this semester influenced your classroom instruction, if any?

In what ways has your classroom experience impacted your tutoring experience?

Post-observation interview questions

Post-Observation interviews were brief, since they were conducted within the school day. The intent was to capture factors that influenced the teachers' instructional design and also the decision making that occurred during the lesson. The questions below represent a general outline of those that were asked at the conclusion of each observation. Follow-up questions varied based on participants' responses:

Describe the process you went through in designing today's lesson.

Did you make any changes to the lesson *while* you were teaching?

If yes, what did you notice that made you decide to change your plan?

What was your goal when you made this change?

I followed up by asking about specific points in the lesson, with questions such as:
What did you notice that made you decide to (specific example from observed lesson)?
What were you hoping would happen when (specific example from observed lesson)?

Final interview

After the final observation, a longer interview was held outside of school hours. The interview was flexibly based on the following interview questions, some of which are based on questions asked the previous year immediately after the clinical experience. Such questions provided a means of comparison. Follow-up questions varied based on participants' responses:

Tell me about the approach to reading instruction in your classroom. How was it designed?
What factors do you take into consideration as you plan instruction?
What supports at school may help you put what you know into practice in your classroom?
What role does collaboration play in your instructional design?
What are some of the challenges of classroom instruction?
How are you addressing these challenges?
What are some of the benefits of instructing in a whole group setting?
Why do you sometimes choose to instruct the class as a whole?
What are some of the benefits of instructing in a small group setting?
Why do you sometimes choose to instruct in small groups?
What are some of the benefits of instructing one-on-one?
Why do you sometimes choose to instruct individually?

Concluding questions:
What factors have helped you to become the teacher you are today?
Can you tell a story about a time when you made a connection between school and the clinic?
In what ways has tutoring in the clinic influenced your beliefs or understandings about reading instruction – if at all?
In what ways has your experience in the UB reading clinic influenced your classroom practice – if at all?
(If so, follow up with: How has tutoring has influenced your beliefs or instruction?)
If a teacher you knew was frustrated with her ability to teach struggling readers and she asked you if you thought working with a literacy coach

Appendix 2. Initial coding categories

Table AI.
Initial categories, data analysis Stage 1, Phase 2

Goals	Efficiency and elaboration (technology)
Background knowledge	Collaboration
Multimodality	Student attitudes
Reflection – enlarging circles, multiple opportunities	Probing questions

Table A2.
Initial categories, data analysis Stage 2, Phase 2:

Ongoing evaluation	Situated (meaning-based) instruction
Understanding learner needs	Identity
Flexible instructional routines (scaffolding and differentiation)	Collaboration/coaching
Goal: independence or interdependence	Resources
	Reflection

Corresponding author
Dr Vicki S. Collet can be contacted at: collet@uark.edu