Peer Coaching:
A Viable Form of
Professional Development

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on the experiences of three teachers in a Vancouver elementary school who volunteered to participate with me in peer coaching cycles (Showers, 1982). The purpose of the study was to gain insight into peer coaching as a viable form of professional development It was hoped, that as each participant progressed through two cycles of peer coaching, he/she would experience professional growth. Data consisted of transcripts of pre- and post-observation conferences as well as my personal journal. This data was collected over a two year period, with each participant involved in two reciprocating cycles with myself. These reciprocating cycles consisted of a teacher observing a colleague and then being observed by that colleague. Prior to the observation the pair of teachers would meet for the pre-observation conference to determine the focus for the observation. Subsequent to the observation, the pair would meet again for the post-observation conference where the actual coaching would take place. The data was organized into individual stories and then analyzed for themes consistent with at least three of the individuals. Seven themes were indicated: forced reflection, building on ideas, physical presence, assistance with difficulties, validation, pride and the value of collaboration. The data was further compared to Showers' (1984) five major functions of peer coaching and the Vancouver School Board's goals for professional development. The findings of this study led to the general conclusion that peer coaching is indeed a viable form of professional development. It can stand alone as a method of professional growth.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

*When districts provide supporting conditions, teachers can work
together in small teams, using a variety of collaborative methods,
for their professional growth.*
Allan A. Glatthorn

The purpose of this study is to examine peer coaching as a method of individual teacher's professional development. This study will look at a brief history of professional development in the Vancouver School District as well as how it is currently supported by the Vancouver School Board. It will examine each of the various methods of professional development closely to discover why some of these practices have become part of the largely accepted methods of professional development and why others, such as peer coaching, have been largely ignored by the teaching profession. Peer coaching, initially introduced as a method of working through the "Elements of Instruction", will then become the focal point of this paper. It will be presented as carried out within a specific school setting in the Vancouver School District.

Peer coaching consists of cycles of reciprocal observations between two peers: Each cycle is made up of a pre-observation conference, the actual observation and a post-observation conference. The coaching cycles will be carried out between myself and three other teachers from my school. Each teacher will be involved in two complete reciprocating cycles as described later.

Professional development is a must for every teacher to continue to grow in his/her chosen career. The district mandates seven days each year to support this development, indicating that institutional support is there. Due to cutbacks in education, the choices for teachers' professional development are shrinking. It is hoped that the suggestions offered in this study will provide teachers with a viable, inexpensive method of continuing their professional development.

Background for the Study

"... as much as I had avoided it, I really was meant to teach!"

Bonnie Kent

My teaching career began 15 years ago as a secondary science teacher. As both my parents were teachers and my uncle an administrator, I was naturally pointed in the direction of teaching - a direction I fought as hard as I could! I pursued the fields of forestry, biochemistry and finally marine biology, before I realized that, as much as I had avoided it, I really was meant to teach. I loved science and, as it turned out, I also loved children. Putting these two together eventually made sense, and so began my teaching career. My first year was not easy; I taught 10 different subjects [P.E. 4/5, P.E. 10, Math 8/9, Science 10, Biology 11, Introductory Foods and Nutrition 11, Socials 11 and Geography 12]. Although this was a private school and class sizes were smaller, it was still a very challenging experience. The next few years were better with a narrowing of my subject fields [P.E. 8 - 12, Chemistry 11 and 12, and some Junior Sciences], and I was finally able to examine my own teaching. What were my goals? How could I meet them over the next few years?

As I thought about these questions and reflected on my instruction, I became aware of a definite area of weakness; many of the students I was working with had special learning difficulties, but I had no knowledge of what to do to help them. I decided then to return to U.B.C. , in the evenings, to work through a diploma program in Special Education. As I proceeded through the program, I realized that the field of teaching was much larger than the small circle of which I was a part. It was now time to make a move from the private system to the public.

The only position available to me at the time was in primary physical education. What an interesting year! Fortunately, the following year, a grade five posting emerged at the same school and I was able to secure it for myself. I quickly established myself as the grade five science teacher and found myself in a unique situation. Science has

always been my love, but it seemed to be the fear of many elementary school teachers. As soon as it became known that my background was science, other teachers began talking of subject trades immediately - not all, but many. As I tried to locate science material and resources, I was shocked. There was very little in the school, and this was one of the largest elementary schools in the province. Were all of them like this? This aroused my curiosity, but I was still working on my diploma program, so I tucked it away for further investigation later.

Finally, five years ago, I began working on my masters degree and searching for a topic for my thesis. I applied through curriculum and instruction, mentioning science education as my main area of interest. Having taught both elementary and secondary science courses, I was initially interested in how the two went together - was there any communication between the two levels to ensure natural growth and mutually supported learning? Then I thought about designing a K - 7 unit dealing with marine biology, my undergraduate area of specialization. Eventually, I was sure I had arrived at a great topic for my thesis when I became the Curriculum Initiatives Teacher Associate (C.I.T.A.) at my school in 1996.

The year 2000 Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) were arriving at schools with expectations that they would be implemented. The C.I.T.A. was assigned the task of helping implement these IRPs. As luck would have it, the year I became C.I.T.A. was the year the new Science IRP was to be implemented. Perfect! Unfortunately, two chapters into the paper, the school district canceled the program and it became increasingly difficult to continue. I was only allowed to complete one year of a two year appointment. What to do now?

As I reflected on all the courses and assignments I had completed throughout my graduate work, one really stood out as having been the most useful, not only for myself, but for the colleague-partner who had participated with me. The assignment, peer coaching, required that we work together to monitor her teaching and keep records of

how our discussions went. This was a little intimidating for me as my colleague had been teaching many more years than had I. Who was I to take on this role? Much to my surprise, the whole set of three cycles was very successful and we both learned a lot. She even returned to me during the next few years hoping we could again do something similar. This reaffirmed how valuable collaboration is as we move closer to our ideals as teachers and I began plans to use this model during my second year as a C.I.T.A. to help implement the new IRPs. Unfortunately, as I have already mentioned, the C.I.T.A. program was eliminated prior to my second year. Through my journal entries, I was able to see the progression of both of our experiences. It reinforced to me the power of keeping a journal as well as the power of collaborating with our peers in a non-threatening environment. The professional growth that we both enjoyed in this very short period of time was amazing. It also strengthened our friendship. What better topic to explore than one that could help encourage other teachers to explore and examine their teaching. I had finally found my topic!

Personal Ground

"...becoming a teacher is a life-long affair"
Eliot Eisner

I believe that professional development, growth and change, in teaching should be a major part of each school year. As I grew up in a family of teachers I have been exposed to at least thirty years of educational flux; new curricula, new methods of teaching, new technology and resources available to assist with that teaching. Throughout that time, I was made aware of how much or how little support teachers were given to deal with this onslaught. Various forms of professional development have been successful while others have failed miserably. Within the teaching ranks, however, we have the expertise of many combined years of teaching experience and education. With time to work together and collaborate, we would be able to assist each other as we try to keep pace with our changing society.

Our society has already embraced the technological era, with the widespread use of computers and other forms of technologically mediated instruction. Our classrooms must keep pace with these advances to provide a productive learning environment for our students and to ensure they will thrive in the workplace. Increased use of technology in the classroom can lead to improved learning conditions in the present and enable our students to continue learning in the future.

> The speed of change and the explosion of knowledge are requiring people to learn afresh at intervals throughout their lives. This has important implications for the role of the school, which is no longer that of providing a package of knowledge and skills to serve a person for life. (Dean, 1991)

Many of our 'old methods' of teaching and reporting to parents have become obsolete. The speed at which a computer can collect, organize and analyze data is amazing! Computers are very useful for individualized instruction and on-line research as well as communication via e-mail with parents. Increased access to the internet offers many more opportunities. The question is do we therefore continue to teach traditional skills or do we attempt to keep abreast of technology and prepare our students for life in this rapidly changing world? It's like the calculator debate that still rages: every student has access to a calculator - should we still teach math as we always did? I don't think so. Some basic knowledge is essential, but we can move students to new, higher levels of understanding through the use of technology.

I also believe that taking on this challenge would make many teachers apprehensive as they are not computer literate. Others would be resistant because they dislike change. I don't think that we have a choice. We need to find ways of bringing about this change in a manageable fashion.

As teaching can be a very solitary endeavor, change is often difficult to achieve. Peer coaching and working collaboratively with someone else, makes change less intimidating. Having the support of someone, who may also be learning a new strategy,

teaching technique or teaching style, greatly improves the willingness of an individual teacher's to grow professionally.

In summary, change is a slow process, but we must keep our goals in mind. With continued professional development, we will be able to embrace change and help our students prepare for life in a transitional world. This task is made easier with the support of our colleagues. Through peer coaching, each teacher would receive the support of at least one of their associates as each of them addresses change in their own way.

Professional Development

Opportunities for the professional growth of individual teachers, historically called professional development, are a key ingredient in the ongoing development of the school and the instructional program...
Vancouver School Board handbook

School based professional development, the growth of teachers which occurs at the school level, is an integral part of the whole education process. Teachers need to be kept up-to-date with current issues and advances in education. They also need to be aware of their own teaching practices and how these can be constantly refined and developed. The Vancouver School Board, in their handbook for teachers, recognizes that staff development consists of several stages: readiness to develop, planning that development, education, implementation of the new-found knowledge or skills, reflection, and maintenance of these practices. It is essential that each of these stages be carefully thought out, planned for and supported.

Each member of a school can play an important role in each of these stages. The school administration, in consultation with the staff, ensures that a process is established to plan collegially for school-based staff development. He/she needs to recognize the complex and long term nature of the change process and provide the time and resources required to make the desired change(s). Active participation on the part of the principal, along with the assumption of the responsibility for the plan, provides good leadership during the whole process.

To stay current and effective, individual teachers are involved in professional and staff development throughout their careers. They need not only to attend to their own professional growth, but also to assist in the development of fellow staff members. Teachers who are aware of the complexity and potential difficulty of the change process need the opportunity to seek and provide peer support.

To maintain commitment and leadership in professional development, the school district engages in long range planning to provide programs which support instructional improvement, school development and curriculum implementation. This is done through collaboration with administrators and teachers, recruitment and training of individuals to act as change agents, and the provision of exemplary staff development programs presented by qualified, dynamic presenters. In order to sustain the innovations presented by these programs and individuals, the district invests in the development of local facilitators whenever possible.

Many options are available as methods of professional development. These include, but are not limited to, facilitated self-directed learning (Caffarella, 1993), workshops (both school based and district based), conferences, assistance from long-term consultants, and study groups (Murphy, 1995). The most common methods of professional development, conferences and workshops, (which are probably the easiest to organize and evaluate) may not be the most effective for teacher growth. A study done by the National Education Association in 1985 and analyzed in 1989 discovered the following about the effectiveness of each strategy used to learn about teaching and schooling in general (Ponticell, 1995): Ranked according to their effectiveness were i) Direct experiences as a teacher, ii) Consultation with other teachers, iii) study and research pursued on one's own, and iv) observation of other teachers. In contrast, workshops and/or conferences were ranked eighth of the 15 possibilities. In light of this research we should look at alternate methods of professional development.

One method, peer coaching, combines consultation with and observation of teachers with our own direct teaching experiences. In other words, it combines three of the top four effective methods of learning about teaching.

Peer Coaching Defined

Professional weight lifters have mirrors to aid in proper style and form as they strive for perfection. Who are the mirror for our profession? How can we 'see' ourselves as we strive towards perfection for our students?

Unknown

Peer coaching can be described as the interaction among people with the same or similar job descriptions with the purpose of reflecting the teaching strategies to the extent that the effects on students can be determined (Elements of Instruction workshop 1983). It can also be described as 'the process where teams of teachers regularly observe one another and provide support, companionship, feedback and assistance (Valencia and Killion, 1988). It consists of cycles, similar to peer supervision (Glatthorn, 1987) and clinical supervision (Acheson and Gall 1987), with three different segments: i) the pre-observation discussion, ii) the actual observation and iii) the post-observation discussion. As discussed by Bay, Bryan and O'Connor (1994), the cycles would consist of the following: During the pre-observation discussion, both parties involved select the item to be the focal point of the observation, choose the tools to be utilized to record the observation and/or design the tools to be used, and set the dates for the observation and the post-observation conference. The actual observation segment consists of the observer taking notes, recording data or otherwise making a record of the agreed upon focus of the observation. These records are to be non-judgmental, 'mirror-recordings' and are to be discussed at the post-observation conference. At the post-observation conference, both individuals study the records and discuss what they have learned in relation to the focal point for the observations. This will be discussed more intensely in the next chapter.

Goals of This Study

"Students of coached teachers had greater achievement on a model-relevant test than did students of uncoached teachers."

Beverly Showers

The major goal of this study was to examine peer coaching as a viable form of professional development within the Vancouver School District context. It is hoped that the participants of this study will have benefited in their professional growth and development as they have further gained a sense of collegiality among their co-workers.

Peer coaching can provide ample opportunity for co-operation and collaboration between teaching peers. During the study, I acted as the peer partner for each of the three other teachers who participated. This not only allowed professional growth, but also opened the doors to other classrooms. Each participant had the opportunity to visit another room, grade level, and different students. This was a rare privilege as teachers usually spend their days in their own rooms, with their own students, day in and day out. Teachers usually remain at the same grade level throughout their teaching careers, and interact with the same colleagues. There is often very little cross-over between grade levels. When cross-over does occur, it can be very enlightening. It creates the opportunity to see where your current students have been or where they may be going.

Schon (1988) discusses the value of being exposed to different situations and reflecting on them, or discussing them with our colleagues. Those teachers who were most successful were those who were able to transform what they had observed and then constructed a new program specific to their own settings from their exposure to other classrooms, other students, and other methods of teaching. This study on peer coaching provided these kinds of situations and opportunities.

Showers (1984) identifies five major functions of peer coaching: i) provision of companionship, ii) provision of technical feedback, iii) analysis of the application of new teaching models, iv) help with adapting a new teaching model or strategy, and v) earlier

application of a new teaching model because of the support of a peer coach. I offer an extension of these, in that peer coaching is valuable for everyday instruction, not just new models of teaching. The development of new units, teaching and learning strategies, classroom management as well as introducing new IRPs (Integrated Resource Packages), can all be facilitated through peer coaching.

Significance of This Study

"Collaborative research ... can close the gap between 'doing research' and implementing 'research findings'."

Allan Glatthorn

The education system is in a constant state of flux. There always seems to be new curricula, or better teaching methods every year of a teacher's career. Many of these tend to be ignored or left for next year because of a general lack of support felt by teachers and schools. With the availability of peer coaching for professional development, teachers may feel less alone and more willing to risk change.

Teaching could become a less solitary occupation and this study shows how valuable collaboration and companionship could be in the Vancouver School District context. As teachers become more aware of others on staff who are experiencing the same difficulties they are, everyone will benefit from shared experiences and ideas. Each person will avoid re-inventing the wheel.

Finally, this study of peer coaching has the potential for illustrating the value of a community of practitioners working together to support and advance their own professional development.

Method of This Study

"Specifically, the peer coaching cycle included a pre-observation conference ... the observation ... and a conference to discuss what had taken place in the classroom ..."

Bay, Bryan & O'Connor

This study consisted of two sets of reciprocating cycles between myself and each of three colleagues. The first set involved the teacher being observed by myself using a

wide-lens technique (Acheson and Gall, 1987) such as a video camera and then during the reciprocal visit I was observed - also with a wide-lens technique. The second cycle involved another set of reciprocal visits with different focal points for each participant, using either the wide-lens technique or some other agreed upon method of collecting data.

For example: During the pre-observation conference it was determined that Teacher 1 had decided to learn a new teaching technique. She tried this new technique during the first cycle while being video taped by myself. Upon examination of the video during the post-observation conference she found that she would like to try to focus specifically on a certain aspect of this new technique. During the second cycle, at the pre-observation conference, it was determined exactly how this could be implemented and observed. The observation then took place using the data collection device and the post-observation conference was held to discuss the new data collected.

While this is occurring, a concurrent set of cycles was happening when Teacher 1 was observing me as I attempted to improve some aspect of my teaching in my own classroom.

These steps were repeated with each of the three teachers who had agreed to participate in this study. Each of our conferences were audio-taped, transcribed, and used later in the analysis once all of the data had been collected. I also be kept my journal as another record of what had transpired throughout this study. It was anticipated that each teacher would be video taped once and have a written record of the second observation. This was the case in two of the three situations. The third teacher decided that she preferred the video recording and so we video taped both of her observations. I was also video taped twice by one of the participants.

After carefully studying the data, I briefly outline each of our stories. From these stories, I searched for consistency in feeling or event. These consistencies became the themes of the study.

Using Showers' (1985) five major functions for peer coaching, as outlined earlier, I analyzed my findings as to the effectiveness of peer coaching within the context of the Vancouver School District setting. I also transformed the data using the stages of professional development as outlined in the Vancouver School Board's teacher handbook to illustrate the effectiveness of peer coaching as a viable form of professional development.

Overview of the Study

This study has six chapters. Chapter one has introduced and briefly outlined the study in terms of its purpose, goals and significance along with providing some historical background and personal information about myself. Chapter two reviews relevant literature on professional development and peer coaching, expanding on those articles used to transform and analyze the data. It also looks at relevant literature produced by the Vancouver School Board to begin setting the context for the study. Chapter three describes the context, the research design, and the method of analysis. In Chapter four the participants are introduced along with their 'stories', the results of the reciprocating sets of cycles. These stories are further reduced to seven themes. In Chapter five, the data is then presented, transformed and analyzed in terms of Showers' (1985) five major functions and the Vancouver School Board's views on professional development. The final chapter is a discussion of the conclusions and limitations of the study along with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional Development can take on many forms and be perceived in a wide variety of ways. This chapter provides a workable definition of professional development, the background on professional development within the Vancouver School District, a brief history of professional development in the literature and in the Vancouver School Board, and then focuses specifically on Peer Coaching in terms of the criteria of professional development in our school district.

Professional Development: A Working Definition

What is professional development? To find a strict 'dictionary definition' we need to split professional development into its two components: professional and development. According to the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1979), professional can be defined as "of, relating to, or characteristic of a profession". If we look further, we discover that a profession is "a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation or a principal calling, vocation, or employment". Development is likewise defined as "the act, process, or result of developing" and developing is further delineated as "going through a process of natural growth, differentiation, or evolution by successive changes". Thus, when we put the pieces back together we discover that, according to Webster, professional development is the process of natural growth, differentiation, or evolution by successive changes of a principal calling, vocation, or employment. This would then mean, for teachers, that professional development is the natural process of growth and change in our teaching practice.

The National Staff Development Council (2000), a non-profit professional association devoted to staff development and school improvement, offers the following as their definition of professional development:

At one time staff development was synonymous with "sit and get" sessions in which relatively passive participants were "made aware" of the latest ideas regarding teaching and learning from so-called "experts". Today, staff development not only includes high-quality training programs with intensive follow-up and support, but also other growth-promoting processes such as study groups, action research, and peer coaching, to name a few. NSDC, as an organization, believes that staff development is fundamentally people improvement.

The terms staff development, professional development and in-service appear to be used interchangeably. Dean (1991) suggests several possible definitions through her research. Staff development is the process by which individuals, groups and organizations learn to be more effective and efficient. Staff development is an experiential involvement by a teacher in the process of growing. This process is not short term. It is a continuous, never ending developmental activity. In-service education is the education intended to support and assist the professional development that teachers ought to experience through their working lives.

Joyce (1984) suggest that there are three needs for professional development to fulfill:

1. the social need for an efficient and humane educational system capable of adaptation to evolving social needs.
2. the need to find ways of helping educational staff to improve the wider personal, social and academic potential of the young people in the neighbourhood
3. the need to develop and encourage the teacher's desire to live a satisfying and stimulating personal life, which by example as well as by precept will help his students to develop and fulfill each his own potential.

Therefore, he determines that professional development not only aides the teacher, but the students and society as a whole.

Dean (1991) quotes the TRIST Guidelines for successful in-service in England. These look remarkably familiar when compared to the BCTF, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, guidelines which follow.

successful in-service education should:
1. have clear objectives

2. be based on careful identification of teachers' needs and institutional needs
3. start from teachers' current levels of knowledge and skills
4. be carefully monitored and evaluated
5. be clearly costed and ensure value for money
6. have the support of the head/principal for follow-up practice after training
7. be part of a continuing process of professional development.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) state that effective professional development should involve teachers as both learners and teachers and allow them to struggle with the uncertainty that accompany each role. They claim that professional development should have the following characteristics:

It must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection that illuminate the processes of learning and development.
It must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant driven.
It must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
It must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.
It must be connected to other aspects of school change.

This represents a slight shift from the older models of professional development towards a more teacher-centered approach. Peer coaching, although often thought of as a support mechanism for professional growth and change, could be seen to fit this new model as a method of professional development on its own.

Professional Development within the Vancouver School District Defined

The Vancouver School Board, in its Professional Development Handbook - 1999 edition, believes that this

professional growth and development of staff is a continuous process requiring positive encouragement and support for staff members to extend and upgrade their training, and that the improvement of professional skills will benefit both the school system and the individual staff member.

They further state that their policy to encourage this professional development takes many forms. Teachers may attend in-service training sponsored by our own school

board, attend conferences, workshops and/or seminars sponsored by other organizations outside the Vancouver School Board, or attend university to take advantage of salary incentives for approved courses in accordance with the negotiated agreement in force. Their goals are as follows:

> - to support the professional growth of teachers through the provision of high quality activities, programs and services.

> -to assist teachers in the identification and further development of their instructional strengths.

> -to foster and support the exchange of ideas, strategies and materials amongst teachers.

> -to promote activities which foster creativity, enthusiasm and self-confidence in teachers.

> -to disseminate current research-based information in the areas of teaching, learning and curriculum development.

> - to provide consultative support to staff groups engaged in school-based planning and/or school improvement initiatives.

These goals are based on the BCTF's declaration of continuing education principles which includes, among others, the following statements:

> It is the responsibility of the individual teacher to make a continuing effort to develop professionally.

> Participation by teachers in professional development should be on a voluntary basis.

> Professional Development activities should include growth of competence, collegiality, influence, social and personal development and health.

> Effective professional development requires a commitment of adequate resources, time and organizational support.

> The individual teacher should be given the opportunity and the time to pursue his/her professional development objectives.

The organization and delivery of PD programs are most effectively achieved at the school staff level or with other intact groups.

Effective professional development activities incorporate presentation and discussion, demonstration or modeling, practice and subsequent practice with feedback.

Collegial support, on-site coaching and ongoing support should be available to the individual teachers to allow for adequate internalization or behaviour change.

The idea of teachers teaching teachers should be promoted in the provision of professional development programs.

Professional development programs should incorporate a wide repertoire of teaching approaches, and no one professional development program should be viewed as a universal panacea for the improvement of instruction.

In a pamphlet published by the BCTF they note that, as change is affecting all of us, in our families, our work, and our communities, teachers need professional development days to keep them on top of those changes which most affect the students. - new technology, new ideas about teaching and learning, and different community needs. They further state that skilled, enthusiastic teachers are key to maintaining the quality of education.

Professional development in the Vancouver School District is aided and/or lead by a complex structure of committees. The District Educational and Curriculum Change Committee is comprised of four Vancouver teachers and four Vancouver School Board members. The District Professional Development Committee is also comprised of four teachers and four school board members. The School Professional Development Committee is comprised of the professional development representative from the staff, at least one administrative officer and any staff members who wish to be part of the committee.

The District Educational and Curriculum Change Committee is relatively new having only been established during our current contract. It makes recommendations to the Superintendent and the Board regarding educational and curriculum change issues.

The committee may make recommendations about time for curriculum implementation, collaboration, assessment and evaluation, appropriate and adequate in-service and retraining, program support materials, space, facilities and equipment as well as the pilot testing of new programs.

The District Professional Development Committee is more involved with money and leadership issues as they pertain to professional development. This committee may: advise the board about district plans, priorities, and budgets in professional and staff development, act as a forum for sharing information regarding the needs of teachers, schools and the district, provide advice to schools regarding funding issues, provide leadership and support for school-based professional development representatives, and provide leadership and assistance to school based professional development committees.

The school based professional development committee works within its own school to establish professional development plans for the school staff. The committee may facilitate planning of school-based professional development , keep staff members apprised of professional development options outside their own school, administer joint funds and reports to the staff committee. This committee holds meetings throughout the year and is chaired by the professional development representative. This representative is also the contact person for any information arriving at the school related to professional development. He/She shares a leadership role in the planning and development of professional and staff development programs and initiatives in their school.

History of Professional Development

Beverly Showers, Bruce Joyce and Barrie Bennett (1987) have prepared a compilation of over 200 studies on professional development. They spent time researching, compiling and synthesizing these studies in an attempt to discover key elements of successful professional development. They found that almost all teachers can take useful information back to their classrooms after receiving training which

contained four important parts: presentation of theory, demonstration of the new strategy, initial practice during the workshop and prompt feedback about their efforts. They also noted that teachers are more likely to keep and use the new strategies and concepts if they receive coaching (either expert or peer) while they are trying the new ideas back in their classrooms.

While participatory governance and social context, the site of the training, when the training is held, the role assignments of the trainers and the voluntariness of the participants have been studied in some detail, Showers et al (1987) found that none had a significant effect on the lasting effects of professional development. What they did discover to be of some importance was that commitment followed competence. Once an individual became competent with a new skill or strategy, and discovered it to be effective through increased student growth, he/she was more likely to become committed to its use.

> The situation may be analogous to skiing. Until you are good at it, how can you possibly like it? When you are good at it, you may very well find that, against all odds, you do like it. But, at that point, you can elect to participate or not, as you compare it to other options, from a strong position.

For competence to be achieved, it was found that sustained practice in the classroom was required. Showers et al (1987) estimate that about 25 teaching episodes during which the new strategy is used are necessary before all the conditions of transfer are achieved. The skills developed in training, although appearing to be transferred, do not appear sufficient to sustain the practice back in the classroom. Support of some kind is required for that final step. Coaching, either expert or peer would help finalize the process.

Unfortunately, in the traditional view of staff development, workshops and conferences conducted outside the school count, but authentic opportunities to learn from and with colleagues inside the school do not (Lieberman, 1995). How many times have teachers gotten excited about new in-service programs or training and have had no

support for it when they get back into the school? Gottesman and Jennings (1994) record several assumptions educators have historically made regarding professional development. One is that if people liked the training, they would use it in their classrooms. This is shown to be true if we examine the evaluation sheets handed out at the conclusion of any workshop. Typical questions included: did you enjoy the speaker? Was the topic relevant? Were the objectives met? Was it relevant to your work in schools? Workshop leaders and professional development committees look at the results of this questionnaire and, if they are favourable, decide the workshop was a success. Very seldom do the professional development leaders ever venture into the classrooms to observe the teacher in action to determine whether the professional development was truly successful. Rarely are questionnaires sent out a month or more after the workshop to determine the effectiveness. How many of the attendees are still using the new skill or method?

The second assumption is that if we liked the training and got an understanding of it, we would use it in the classroom. Workshop leaders have assumed that knowledge of the skill automatically means that those skills will automatically be transferred to the classroom. Unfortunately, according to Gottesman and Jennings, this is not the case.

The third assumption is that if we could actually demonstrate the skill (perhaps in training conditions), then we would actually use it in the classroom. As Joyce and Showers (1982) also note the conditions in the classroom are far different from a practice session with peers.

These assumptions have certainly been noticeable in the Vancouver School District where several innovative programs have been largely ineffective due to a lack of follow-up once teachers have returned to their own schools.

A Brief History of Professional Development in the VSB

As early as the 1960's professional development looked largely like information disseminating devices. Teachers would attend workshops to receive information about educational topics. The leader would simply give information. There was very little activity at these sessions and teachers were on their own once they left. The topics were usually pre-set and teachers simply chose ones that interested them most. Often the choices had little to do with what teachers actually wanted.

This falls in line with what McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) discovered as they made their way through the Rand Change Agent Study. The Rand study was a four year, two phase study of federally funded programs designed to introduce and spread innovative practices in public schools in the United States. They found that the only consensus that appeared to exist about staff development was that it was ineffective and a waste of time. The general feeling was that most staff development programs have benefited neither teachers nor students.

Like Showers (1987), McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) had discovered, through the Rand Change Agent Study that teacher commitment had the most consistently positive relationship to all project outcomes. This also appears to be true in the Vancouver School System. Initiatives like Project Build (1976) never were embraced by the general teaching population. It was created and designed from the top down. Only a few select teachers were involved in the creation so the feeling of the majority was one of lethargy. With no staff commitment, the project never took hold, even though many of the concepts and ideas it contained were very sound educationally.

Even as recent as the Year 2000 documents from the Provincial Government, professional development was met with resistance. Teachers need to feel they have input into decision making. Wildman and Niles (1987) postulate three conditions essential to growth: autonomy, collaboration, and time. Complex learning demands that learners

have substantial freedom to direct their own learning. They found that autonomous learners displayed a strong disposition toward exploring and weighing alternatives.

However, even if teachers have some commitment to a project, they still require proper professional development to be fully able to implement the changes necessary to support the program. Lieberman (1995) reports that learning theorists and organizational theorists are teaching us that people learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned. Strategies for change have often not considered the importance of support mechanisms and the necessity of learning over time.

Continued support and follow-up are necessary after initial training. (Gusky, 1985) Brandt (1987) in an interview with Bruce Joyce asked how much time it takes for a teacher to learn a model. Joyce responded with the following:

> Okay, let's design a little program for a year. Let's take just a single model of medium complexity, the inductive one would be a suitable example. You'd probably want a three-day workshop or the equivalent to get started. It wouldn't have to be three solid days; it could be some other configuration. But then there should be a couple of days a few weeks later to spice it up, see how people are doing, and add a little more. Then another day a few weeks later for polishing and sharing, plus a day of advanced training later. So now you have a picture of the amount of input it takes.
> Beyond that, it's going to take teachers maybe 30 trials to get reasonably good at a model, in the sense that they can use it as easily as they use their existing repertoire. To be able to look at a unit or a body of material or section of a text, see how to handle it inductively, and plan it quickly and efficiently, it's going to take them a good 30 trials.

The Elements of Instruction, introduced in Vancouver in 1983 was a program that came close to meeting these requirements. Teachers attended workshops dealing with teaching to an objective, selecting objectives at the correct level of difficulty, monitoring and adjusting and the principals of learning. During each of these workshops teachers were presented with information, given time for practice and provided minimal feedback. One of the workshops focused on peer coaching as a method of reinforcing the Elements

of Instruction back at home schools. Unfortunately, although this attempted to provide adequate support, there was no real follow through to ensure the peer coaching aspect was ever internalized allowing its use as a follow-up to another form of professional development.

Second Step, a violence prevention program, (1989) was also similarly introduced. This time, however, the in-service was conducted at home schools. Our staff had determined that violence prevention was our focal point for staff development during the 1994/95 school year. Most of our professional development days were allocated to workshops around the Second Step program. These consisted largely of information sessions relating to violence and its increase in our city, an introduction to the program and its goals as well as some psychological background on anger management and empathy. Other time was spent in grade group meetings working through the age specific kit and its particular format. Some time was set aside for practice with the kits (large picture cards with scripts were provided for teacher use) and possible feedback from colleagues. Unfortunately, this was not presented as important and was largely ignored by the staff. The program was initially widely supported and used by the staff, but as the year progressed, fewer and fewer staff were actually using the kit. Several years later, our school began a new program of professional development on bully proofing, and almost no-one was still using the Second Step Program.

What should have been the best opportunity for professional growth, in support of the Year 2000 documents, the CITA program, was very short lived due to budget cuts. The most recent educational reform to come from the provincial government, the Year 2000 Program, included Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) for each teacher in the province with minimal numbers of workshops as added support. A separate IRP was produced for each area of the curriculum from K-12. There was an implementation plan determined by the government and imposed upon teachers. This plan had different subjects revised and implemented during different years.

The process began in 1990 with the Primary Program. In 1995 recommended time allotments were established in percentages and the personal planning curriculum was implemented. It was determined that all existing curricula would be revised prior to 1997 and these would be accompanied by the IRPs for each subject area. The accreditation process in the province was also begun. As each new IRP was released, there were workshops available if teachers chose to attend. Unfortunately, most teachers did not take advantage of these and the IRPs went directly to a shelf in the back room somewhere.

Some schools chose to apply to have a Curriculum Initiative Teacher Associate (CITA) which enabled them to work through the changes in a much more effective manner. Our school had two rounds of the CITA position. Initially, during the implementation of the Primary Program, we enjoyed the collaborative abilities of a CITA at the primary level. This person was able to work closely with any staff member wishing her attention during the one day each week she was wearing her CITA hat. It was very effective as many of the concepts and strategies included in that program are still in effect today.

Later, in 1997, when the Science and Personal Planning IRPs were to be implemented, I was the CITA. My first year was spent mostly working with materials and supplies so that during my second year I would be able to work within classrooms assisting, coaching, and/or demonstrating science. Unfortunately, the budget was cut and we did not get the benefits of this second year. As a result, most of the teachers still teach science the old way, if they teach it at all. Gottesman and Jennings (1994) have examined the history of professional development in South Carolina and found themselves asking the same questions I was asking here. Why did some professional development efforts succeed and others fail? They found that an essential step was missing. This step was one of pairs of peers helping each other implement and refine the effective schools research and practice at the school level. In other words, peer coaching.

They believe this is true teacher empowerment: when professionals participate in the decisions and take the power to coach peers to make sure those decisions are carried out in classroom practice.

This is also supported by the McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) study when they noted that skill-specific training had only a small and not significant effect on teacher change and on the continuation of project methods and materials. Staff-support activities are necessary to sustain the gains of how-to-do-it training. As seen in Table 1 presented by Joyce at a conference in Columbia, the number of people that can learn or acquire a skill goes from low to high with each added element possibly found in professional development.

% transferred	Staff development training method
5	straight theory
10	theory and demonstration
20	theory, demonstration and practice
25	theory, demonstration, practice and feedback
90	theory, demonstration, practice, feedback and coaching

Table 1: The Transfer Percentage of Staff Development Training to Actual Practice

As I searched through the professional development opportunities available during the 1996-1997 school year in the Vancouver School System, I noticed some interesting trends. Laurie Anderson, the director of staff development, states in his opening letter that

> Building the school's capacity for continuous improvement and meaningful collaboration in ways that enhance student learning is the central purpose of staff development.

Unfortunately, this was not usually the case with the in-service offered. The majority of the workshops ranged from one to three days, and focused mainly on the dissemination of information, theory. There were some which also provided demonstrations and/or time for practice of a skill or method and others which focused on collaboration, but these were very few in number. There were none offering follow-up at the school level with either expert advice or peer support giving feedback or coaching, once the workshop was over and teachers tried to implement their newly acquired knowledge.

Well-conducted staff-support activities not only reinforce the contribution of staff training, but they also make their own important contribution to promoting teacher change and to supporting staff assimilation of project practices. McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) suggest that in terms of knowledge about practice of teaching, teachers often represent the best clinical expertise available. Peer coaching draws on staff knowledge, as well as offering support of colleagues. According to Joyce and Showers (1982) there are four elements that virtually guarantee successful implementation of almost any new strategy or teaching method. These are:

- study the theoretical basis or rationale of the teaching method
- observe demonstrations by persons who are relatively expert in the model
- practice and feedback in protected conditions (such as trying out the strategy on each other and then on children who are relatively easy to teach)
- coach one another as you work the new model into your repertoire, provide companionship, help each other learn to teach the appropriate responses to your students, figure out the optimal uses of the model in your courses, and provide one another with ideas and feedback.

The conditions of a training session are far different from those in the real classroom. What was practiced with a group of professionals and appeared easy, may not be quite as straightforward in a class of difficult children. Who do we turn to when we meet these challenges? According to Joyce and Showers (1982) a peer coach would be an ideal person to assist with this transfer. A coach provides companionship, gives technical feedback, analyzes the application of the new skill, aids with the adaptation for

students and is a personal facilitator. This could be the answer to the professional development dilemma in the Vancouver School System. With the support of a peer coach perhaps many of the programs that have come and gone may have survived. Perhaps, some of these programs would not even have been necessary, if teachers were able to pursue their own perceived areas of weakness and simply use peer coaching as a method of growth in those areas.

Peer Coaching

Peer coaching (Brandt, 1987; Clarke, 1997; Gant, 2000; Glatthorn, 1987; Gottesman 1994; Hannay, 1990; Hauserman, 1993; Hertling, 1999; Phillips & Glickman, 1991; Servatius & Young, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1982; Showers, 1985) has been researched extensively. Usually it is utilized as a follow-up to the teaching of some new skill or strategy, but it is often listed as a method of professional development on its own. Very little study has been conducted about this aspect of peer coaching - Can it stand alone as a method of professional development, or does it need to be part of a larger context?

Extensive studies have been written and workshops designed specifically to teach peer coaching. Servatius and Young (1985) wrote about their experiences with the implementation of the coaching of teaching in Santa Clara County, California. This was a pilot study where coaching was provided to teachers who had completed one of two training programs. Logistical problems that had to be dealt with included:

- who would be eligible to serve as teacher advisors?
- how many days could they request these advisors to spend outside their own classrooms?
- how could they enlist enough school and district support for the program so that advisors could be released from classroom duty several days each month?
- what would be appropriate compensation for the advisors?
- how would requests for advisor services be handled?
- what relationship would advisors have to the formal evaluation of the teachers they observed?

After solving the above mentioned difficulties, they found that teachers who had received both training and coaching were implementing the trained skills correctly and consistently.

Gottesman and Jennings (1994) in their book, Peer Coaching for Educators, emphasized the value of peer coaching for teachers. They claim that peer coaching promotes the culture of collegiality among teachers in their schools and their professional development, which will do much to improve the quality of school and contribute to the success of their students. They feel that the problems associated with new reforms, strategies, and curricula has not been with the concept, content or method: it has been with how they were implemented, sustained, adapted and revised. Too often it was forgotten that the desired change was intended for the classroom.

According to Gottesman and Jennings, peer coaching is a simple, five-step framework. They refer to the pre-observation conference as the teacher's request for a visit, and the observation stage as 'the visit'. They next add an intermediary step where the coach reviews the notes from the visit and lists some ideas for discussion. Next is the post-observation conference which they simply refer to as the talk after the visit. Finally, they find a review of the entire process an essential element. It is designed for one professional educator to ask another professional to observe classroom performance in a non-judgmental, non evaluative way so that performance can be improved. It is time and cost effective. It is different from clinical supervision in that it makes use of peers, professionals of equal status, not highly skilled supervisors. It allows the teacher the choices of time, what he/she wishes to improve, and the coaching situation.

In these days of budget cuts and restraint, school boards are all looking for inexpensive methods of providing service. By using the talent and resources present in local school, the administrators can increase the number of persons involved in the improvement of instruction without an increase in budget (Gottesman & Jennings, 1994). It provides teachers a chance to think and talk about their lessons, to examine their

lessons in detail, and to bring to a conscious level what many teachers do instinctively. This can be done in support of new training, but I also believe that these qualities make peer coaching a viable form of professional development on its own. This study will demonstrate that teachers coaching teachers, without any extra in-service, provides great opportunity for professional growth.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide descriptions of the study and the context in which it was conducted. Through these descriptions, a fuller understanding of peer coaching as a form of professional development will emerge.

The Context of the Study

The Vancouver School Board is one of the largest education districts within the province of British Columbia. The elementary school where I teach is one of the largest in Canada with an overall population of over 750 students ranging from kindergarten to grade seven. It is a highly multi-cultural school with an ethnic mix of Punjabi, Hindi, Chinese, Vietnamese, Central American, Fijian, Filipino, First Nations and Central European students. Most of the students speak at least two languages, their first language and English, although some are still experiencing difficulty with English. The diversity in student population as well as staffing population make it an extremely interesting place to work. Along with this multi-culturalism there exists a wide range of student needs, including children with low incidence special needs and those diagnosed as gifted.

The neighbourhood surrounding our school could be classified as middle income, with some outer areas bordering on low income. Most of our students come from homes where at least one of the parents is working, although we do have some refugees and a few families on income assistance. The majority of the students live with both parents, while some live only with their mother or father. Some students have extended families sharing the same house. There are also a few cases where children have left their own immediate family and come to Canada to live with an extended family member.

Our teaching staff is also very multi-cultural, although it does not reflect the same ratios as the student population. We have teachers of Punjabi, Hindi, Chinese, Central American, European, Japanese, Jewish, American and Canadian heritage. The

experience of our staff varies greatly; from novice teachers to many that are near retirement. Their qualification vary from Bachelor degrees through to Doctorates. Some have experienced only elementary school, while others have taught in a secondary school or even a university.

Our administration consists of a full time principal and a vice principal who functions as an English Language Center teacher for 40 % of his time. Our principal has the distinction of having been a teacher, vice principal and finally principal at our school - all at varying times in his career. He has taught at many different schools in the district, but always seems to make his way back to our school. Our vice principal is Indo-Canadian and was placed in our school for his ability to work with our predominant ethnic mix of Punjabi and Hindi families.

During the course of this study, for almost two years, the school underwent major renovations. What started out as a simple addition, with some minor building modifications, quickly escalated to a major disruption when it was discovered that the inside mortar of the main building no longer supported the exterior walls. One day we were all inside and the next we were all, with the exception of the school library and three classes, relocated to portables on the school playground.

This caused some major problems with scheduling, the location of resources and resource teams as well as general discomfort of all involved. Communication systems were needed to try to maintain some sense of community with the school now so spread out. This created some added difficulty with this study as the individuals involved did their best to cope in the middle of chaos. However, two years and two moves later, we all emerged having a better sense of ourselves and our abilities to survive and triumph.

The Participants

During one of our monthly staff meetings my principal agreed to allow me to present my thesis topic to the staff and ask for volunteers. In the Vancouver School District, professional development is a voluntary process. For this reason I decided to

allow volunteers to be participants in this study. I briefly presented the premise that peer coaching, working collaboratively with another teacher involving observing and discussing, would be a viable form of professional development. I discussed the approximate time commitments and asked for volunteers to see me after the meeting. I was hoping to have at least one representative from primary and one from intermediate. It would also have been advantageous to include an early primary teacher as I was currently a grade seven teacher, representing upper intermediate. I had decided that if more than three people stepped forward to volunteer, I would select individual names from a hat. This was not necessary.

The following three people came forward to become part of the study.

Donald: Donald has been teaching for 25 years. He earned a BA from UBC, majoring in psychology, and then went to SFU for the Professional Development Program [PDP]. He then began teaching elementary school in Vancouver where he has predominantly worked with grade four and five students, although he has some experience working with upper intermediate and with teaching science to kindergarten and grade one students. He currently teaches in an open area classroom with one other colleague.

Amongst many other qualification, Donald has expertise with technical equipment. He has always been available to deal with technical problems that may arise as well as orchestrating audio-visual set up for any assemblies and/or performances at the school. He has been an instigator behind the school's new anti-bullying program as he put together the booklet and policies we now all follow. Donald has always enjoyed working collaboratively and his big dream for the school is to have a full-time facilitator who would work on a large scale collaborating with staff to facilitate new programs.

Donald's reason for taking part in this study is to have someone else to bounce ideas off of. "Whether it's about a kit, a unit, a lesson, no matter what... It's just that I like the idea of being able to reflect back and have someone monitor what you're doing." He is hoping to see this kind of teaming happen more and more at the school. "I'd like to see

more people teaming, working together, because I think that's a great way to teach and out of that will grow more of the peer coaching, and so I think it will work."

Tammy: Tammy has been teaching for eleven years. She has only ever taught at the one school and always at the kindergarten and grade one level. She currently teaches a K - 1 split with the kindergarten students leaving at noon and the grade ones remaining for the duration of the school day.

Tammy is greatly appreciated for her sense of humour and her flexibility. She is committed to providing the best learning opportunities for her students and has been active in our academic standards committee. One of her goals for our school is to have a school wide reading program

Tammy's reason for taking part in this study is to get out of her rut. "I think that it helps you grow professionally ... you're forced to grow and I always think that's good." She is trying something new, Guided Reading, and feels like she needs a catalyst to get going. She feels that working with her colleagues is very exciting and noted that when she has worked with another colleague in the past, she learned so much from her. "Also I think just visiting other classrooms and having somebody watch you, you can pick up new things and share ideas - I think it's great."

Debbie: Debbie, originally from the United States, completed her degree with a major in mathematics at Sarah Lawrence College. After just six weeks of teacher training at Danbury State College, she began her teaching career in Connecticut where she taught grade four. She continued her education by completing the MAT, Masters of Art in Teaching at the University of Chicago where she designed a unit in geometry for grade two.

Eventually, Debbie found her way to Vancouver where she taught at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University in teacher education for a

number of years before going back to the elementary system. She has now taught at our school for the past 10 years with her focus on grades two and three.

Debbie has a strong interest in the anti-violence programs offered and valued the efforts taken to promote a violence-free school. She has been active in the Second Step Program, a violence prevention program as well as a participant at the Queen's Harbour Institute, a week long series of workshops and discussions dealing with current issues in education and the SEED Project. Her love of the arts has been very apparent in her displays from her class. As well, she has pulled students and staff together while creating two school-wide quilts and a group of four stained glass windows.

Debbie decided to take part in this study because of her interest in gender equity and her unending desire to continue to develop professionally. She was concerned about the amount of time the boys within her classroom appeared to be taking away from the girls. She was also concerned that the girls were not "standing up to the boys". Debbie was looking forward to having some good collegial discussions and seeing how other classrooms were organized.

Me: I have been teaching for 15 years. I have a BSc from UBC and my fifth year in Education, also from UBC. A few years after I began teaching, I returned to UBC, part time, to earn my diploma in Special Education. I have taught both elementary (the past ten years) and secondary (the first five years). I am currently teaching grade seven, but have also had experience with all upper intermediate grades five to seven.

I have been very active in the coaching of girls sports teams at our school and have watched the program grow very successfully over the years. We had four senior girls soccer teams this past year. I have also been involved with the Second Step Program and the Queen's Harbour Institute. I was the Curriculum Implementation Teacher Associate for a year and have subsequently been the "science person": looking

after and storing all science equipment. I was also the professional development chairperson for two years.

My reason for taking part in this study is to show how valuable peer coaching could be for professional growth and development for teachers of all levels. I have always enjoyed the companionship of my colleagues and valued their opinions regarding my teaching practices. It was with this in mind that I decided on my thesis topic and approached my administrator for his approval.

The Design

The study took place from the spring of 1999 through to and including the spring of 2000. It consisted of three pairs of teachers working through two sets of peer-coaching cycles each. Each of the first three participants was paired with myself which allowed each of them to experience two sets of reciprocating cycles as described below. Each cycle would consist of three parts, repeated for each teacher in the pair, as described by Gottesman (1994): the pre-observation conference, the actual observation and the post-observation conference. For example: to complete a cycle, Tammy and I would need to have her pre-observation conference, followed by the observation and post-observation conference and then I would have my pre-observation conference, Tammy would then observe me and we would have my post observation conference.

As further discussed in Gottesman (1994) the cycles would consist of the following: during the pre-observation discussion, both parties involved would select the item to be the focal point of the observation, choose the tools to be utilized to record the observation and or design the tools to be used, and to set the dates of the observation and the post-observation conference. The actual observation segment consists of the observer taking notes, recording the data or otherwise making a record of the agreed upon focus of the observation. These records are by definition non-judgmental, 'mirror-recordings' and are to be discussed at the post-observation conference. At the post-observation

conference, both individuals study the records and discuss what they have learned in relation to the focal point for the observations.

Pre-Observation Conferences: These meetings usually took place before school or at recess because they were generally only about 5 to 10 minutes in duration. The goal of these meetings was to establish why the observation should take place. Was the purpose to focus on a particular area of instruction, to try something new, or to focus on a persistent behaviour and what might be influencing that behaviour? The focus of observations was different for each of the participants. In some cases the focal point even varied for the same participant from one cycle to the next.

Once the objective was determined, we set about deciding how best to record the data. For example, Debbie decided to examine her follow-up to classroom management so we decided to record all of the commands she issued during class time and her follow through afterwards. This was done using a two column chart with column A being the commands and column B being the follow through. Finally, before leaving the pre-conference, a date for the post-conference was determined.

Observation: Prior to observing anyone, the observer needed to prepare any material required for the observation. During the observation, the observer recorded only data pertinent to the agreed upon focus for the session. Each of our observations lasted for an entire period which was forty minutes in length. This does not need to be the case, but we found it worked very well.

The first observation for everyone took the form of a video taping, where the observer simply recorded a video of the observee teaching. The second observation for each of us took on different forms. Some found the video worked best and requested it again. Others decided to focus on specific aspects of their teaching and had the observer record some form of behaviour or other evidence. Still others decided to track their or their students movement during a lesson.

The key to remember about the observation stage is that it is simply a method of gathering information as it actually happened. It is non-judgmental and no anecdotal comments are recorded.

Post-Observation Conference: These conferences were usually scheduled for a lunch hour or during our modified day because they generally took between 40 minutes and one hour to complete. These were open discussions where both participants were free to make observations and comments upon the collected data. This was where mutual trust became very important. It was obvious, at the beginning, that some participants were less comfortable with the process than others. It was important, although each individual needed to participate in the discussion, that the discussion was done in such a way as to be non-threatening to the observee, the person who was observed. As the study progressed, we each became much better at this and the level of trust improved accordingly.

The goal of the post-observation discussion was to look closely at the objectives set for the observation during the pre-observation conference and then examine the data collected accordingly. Was the objective met? Do we need to look more closely at this area in a future cycle? How could things have been done differently? What next? At the conclusion of this conference, plans were usually then put in place to begin the reciprocal visit to the observer's classroom.

We managed to complete half of the first cycles during the spring of 1999 with the second half being completed during the winter of 1999 - 2000 school year. The second set of reciprocating cycles was completed during the spring of 2000. The following chapter will give the details of each of the cycles along with the themes that emerged through the use of peer coaching at our school.

Data Collection and Transformations

Connelly and Clandinin (1991) emphasize the importance of narrative as a context for making meaning of school situations. For this reason I decided to use a

narrative format for this thesis, both as a method of recording data and as the method of presenting the findings of this study.

The conclusions and insights I gleaned through this study were based on the interviews I conducted with each participant and from my own personal journal which I kept during the term of this study. Every day that I was involved with the coaching cycles, I recorded my thoughts in this journal. Each interview was recorded on audio tape which was then transcribed. Later, I re-read and analyzed this data. Some of it was incorporated into the final draft of the thesis. Some entries were used in their original form as the story of each participant was re-told, to emphasize an important point or illustrate some anecdote to help shed light on an interesting idea. Other entries were grouped together, in essence, to allow me to make generalizations of how effective this form of professional development was found to be by the members involved. Still other entries never became part of the final copy - they were just important memories, too personal to share beyond the pages of my journal. Whatever happened to each thought, I know that the reflection process of wrestling with the data, has greatly affected my own professional and personal growth. I am also convinced that each participant grew in his/her own professional life simply from the benefit of collaboration with another teacher.

For Connelly and Clandinin (1991)

> "... the concern with voice has come to have special relevance for the place
> teachers occupy and the role they play in school restructuring and reform; and in
> how research knowledge about teachers and their work is generated."

This study, written in narrative, as it dealt with one method of professional development, peer coaching, echoes four teachers' experiences as we walked through the process of the peer coaching cycles. It hopefully provides valuable insight into teacher learning and professional growth. Although the voices are few, I am convinced that our experiences

would be very similar to other teachers in elementary settings as each of our voices was from a different level within the elementary school.

In summary, I kept a written record of all that occurred during the study of peer coaching at my school. This not only included my thoughts and feelings, but the pre and post-observation conferences with each of the participants which I transcribed from the audio tapes. I analyzed these records, searching for themes, to discover how effective we felt peer coaching was in achieving our professional development goals. I paid close attention to the aforementioned stages of professional development from the Vancouver School Board's teacher handbook   Finally, I also used this information to make recommendations about using this method of professional development in future years.

Using all of the data collected I then presented my findings in the form of a personal narrative. This narrative takes the readers through our study in a logical progression through each of the participants stories and then summarizes them through the use of any discovered themes which link all, or some, of our experiences. It is interspersed with appropriate quotes from the participants as support for each part of the data analysis. These quotes also offer support for peer coaching as a viable form of professional development.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our Stories

Tammy: Tammy decided to use this study as a catalyst to help her begin using Guided Reading as an additional aspect of her reading program. She was already working closely with two other staff members, but they seemed to need an outside force to push them along. "...actually, it's good because I think when we did it, we just wanted to jump in and do it and see what it looked like. This was sort of a catalyst to say, you know, we're just going to do it and go for it."

After being video taped in the spring of 1999, Tammy did not get a chance to see herself until the winter of the '99-00 school year. This did not seem to have any adverse effect on her since the main objective she had for the first cycle was to simply get going. The important discussions about the Guided Reading program itself had already occurred between herself and her two other colleagues who were also involved in the program.

> B: "It's too bad that we've watched this video so long after you've started because there probably wasn't much in here that you would say you were learning that you didn't already learn talking to R and K."
> T: "No. We just wanted to get going. If I don't do it properly, it's okay. At least I've done it. It's very intimidating to try new things."
> B: "Your purpose of the video was to just get going?"
> T: "Well, yeah. And then now that we've started we've changed it..."

My return visit to Tammy occurred a little less than one year after she had begun the Guided Reading program. It was very interesting to see the changes that had been made. She decided that the video gave her the overall picture she needed in order to fully grasp what was happening in her room during the Guided Reading program. So again I set up the video, but had to leave it running after the first forty minutes because her lesson ran longer than my allotted time. This was fine as there was not much movement from the students involved in her small group.

> T: "I just wanted to say that I think this is an excellent idea, videotaping. Teachers videotaping each other, rather than a professional development day, because you learn so much by watching yourself and other teachers. I really enjoyed it."
> B: "...because you're using this to look at the whole Guided reading thing, the video works really well for that and so there's no problem in doing it twice."

Tammy was very nervous during our first cycle as it was her first time being video taped. There was a lot of self-conscious laughter as we watched the first tape. She noticed little physical things about herself, such as the colour of her nail polish. "Do you know what's weird? I've got the same nail polish on..." and was almost over critical - "Just, I look so, like saccharin sweet or something like that ... blah!" Her attention was not totally focused on the Guided Reading program. She was reluctant to stop the video at any point to hold a discussion, but rather, made short one-line comments as the tape continued. The main discussions only occurred when I turned off the tape.

During our second cycle, Tammy was much more relaxed. There were almost no bouts of nervous laughter and very few comments about herself, other than those related to the actual Guided Reading program itself. She was very excited about the changes they had made and was very happy to see that they were more successful this time than in the previous year.

> B: "Feel free, if you want to fast forward through anything. Do you want to see any of the pocket chart? [her warm up to the Guided Reading lesson]
> T: "Sure we can see a little bit, but I want to get to the Guided Reading part."

> T: "See this is better! It's smaller and I've got the blackboard..."

Throughout both cycles, it is worth noting that student-related issues arose in our conferences. These discussions usually began as certain students appeared on the video. What to do about certain behaviours or learning difficulties naturally flowed into our conversations as we watched these students exhibiting these behaviours or difficulties on the video.

> T: "See K's racing."
> B: "Yeah. So how can you get them all to read in unison?"

T: "So he wants to race. But it's throwing the other kids off."

Comparisons between grade levels created several fascinating discussions. The largest age difference was between Tammy's class and mine. We both found the abilities of the other class quite surprising. I discovered that the kindergartens and grade ones could do much more than I had imagined and Tammy was surprised to discover some students in my grade seven class who were academically lower than students in her room.

B: "...because I was quite impressed with some of their answers."

T: "...coming into your room - it was wonderful to see. Well one thing that surprised me that there's still kids in grade seven who are sort of at the level of the kids in my room."

Overall Tammy was very happy with the study. She felt that she was improving in the Guided Reading program, but still had more to learn and was grateful for the start it had given her.

"You think you need to teach better today because someone else is in the room. Just to have somebody come in and watch it puts a little more validity to it. I liked having the video because you can see how you come across."

Donald: Donald decided to use the first cycle as a window into a very ambitious lesson. He was doing an art project involving center work where the students listened to the overall instructions first and then split into groups depending on their interest area. He was curious about their ability to remember and his ability to convey the information. The video tape was perfect for this as it was able to record all of his instructions along with the overhead and charts he had previously prepared.

"I've made this a really ambitious lesson, because if it bombs, which it possibly will, then in the fall I can teach it to a totally new group and revise it. I'm looking at whether or not I have too many groups or whether I should cook the groups or whether I should give the kids the choice as to what type of card they do."

In viewing the video at the post-conference, Donald was able to see areas he would change. He was used to being in front of a video camera so there was no real self-

conscious behaviour as noticed in the other participants' first cycles, but he did feel a little shy about turning off the tape for discussions. He was particularly struck by how long it took him to get to the real point of the lesson.

> "I know what I'd change. I wouldn't talk quite as much. I wouldn't do as much preamble. ... I needed to get to the point. ... It's five minutes of bird walk. ... So it's ten minutes before I get to the first thing. That's too long."

A discussion then followed about how things could be changed for his repeat lesson in the fall. It was fun. Donald would have an idea and then I would add to it. He would further revise it and add a little more. I would wonder about something and he would clarify. Ideas just seemed to pour out in this kind of a session. It even began to segue into other lessons of similar type.

> B: "What would you do differently?"
> D: "Well, instead of doing all that bird walk about doing the party and ... I'd probably say today we're going to make pop up cards for Mr. W. There are four different kinds. I wouldn't walk and direct their attention over away from the center. I would point them out. I might even have a student standing at each station and say..."
> B: "What about as you finish each one just saying, and that's over there in that corner. Instead of pointing out all four before you begin. Just say this is the simple one and we're going to be working on those over there. And then the next one ..."
> D: "That's a good idea."

Donald also noted how much extra time he had spent preparing this lesson because it was going to be observed. "And I thought with all the notes that I'd written and the detail I'd put in that I wouldn't, but I did." He became more aware of his reactions to students as time went on as well. "Stop and look at him. That's better. Look at him!" Discussions about individual students occurred as they had with Tammy. Donald expressed a frustration with trying to figure out how to reach the lower end of his class.

> "I'd like to have a camera one day and just play it on a kid like M. You hope that when you teach you teach to the majority of students, but then that little clique, that little group at the bottom who doesn't get it, won't get it, refuses to get

it, or can't settle down long enough to get it. ... And I don't know how to get around that. I guess part of it's training."

During our second cycle Donald decided to look more closely at his teaching, particularly his instructions, and how the students responded to them. It took quite a discussion to determine exactly what Donald was trying to look at. He had some difficulty distinguishing between looking at the student's outcomes and his teaching practice. In the end, we decided to make a combination of both.

> B: "So, would you like me to record the types of questions you're asking or would you like me to record your questions and their responses or ... what would you like to see come out of this lesson for you as opposed to for them?"
> D: "I'd like to know the percentage. I'd like to give a re-teaching test."
> B: "So you're going to try and judge the effectiveness of your teaching on whether they get it?"
> D: "I could give a pop quiz."
> B: "I need something that I can actually - "
> D: "- observe."
> B: "That can be observed for us to know how you could change if it shows that it's not effective or what worked, if it shows that it is effective."
> ...
> B: "So you want me to try and do a double then. You want me to write down everything that you do and then have a seating plan in front of me so that I can say this kid's doing it, this kid's not."

This technique was quite effective for Donald. He was able to see, at a glance, which of his students was working well and which were not. He was also able to look at all of his instructions and discovered that most of his questions were from the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy. He wasn't really asking for much higher level thinking.

Donald and I both found the second cycle to be much more specific, which made the post-conference much shorter. We were able to focus on two particular areas of concern and ignore all the other parts of teaching.

> D: "This is great. Just a few pages of notes to look at. I can see immediately where I can make some changes."
> B: "Your instructions were really clear. The students appeared to follow exactly what you were getting at. Is there another level your questions could have reached?"
> D: "Yeah. That's the area I would work on for next time."

Donald's second request for the observation phase was much more general than the first. The first request was quite lesson specific, but the second was more a teaching technique which would be transferable to most subject areas. However, we learned from both experiences.

Debbie: Debbie decided to look at gender equity during our first cycle. She was worried that the boys in her class were taking much more of her time than the girls. The wide angle approach of the video camera would show us all aspects of her teaching, facial expressions, gestures, intonation, body language. We would observe if these were used differently with boys and girls.

> "Because one of the things I discovered with respect to the boy/girl thing is that I actually, for the sake of control, I suddenly caught myself spending most of my time making eye contact with the boys. I just died when I realized what I was doing! So sometimes I actively seek those girl faces - like only the girl faces to give the boys the ah, you know..."

Unfortunately, we did not get a chance to watch the video until much later - the following year. Debbie did however make some interesting discoveries, although not necessarily related to her original focus. Debbie was going through a difficult time of soul searching trying to decide whether to retire or continue to teach. Daily she would alternate between thinking she was a good teacher and thinking she just wasn't making much of a difference. The experience of watching herself on video again was a very validating one and one that happened at just the right time.

> D: "I was at the University of Chicago lab school and I was doing some math lessons or something. I don't know why I was being videoed and I remember being absolutely flabbergasted at the time at how good-looking I was. And I don't mean just physically, pretty face or whatever. It was the whole grace and the presence. ... So when I see myself now and its 32 years later or 40 years later... and I'm thinking, there she is again! I see myself as being an elegant articulate, and there's this self appreciation that I have when I see it and it's really very interesting because this is always validating."

It was a very emotional experience to watch the tape and witness what she experienced. I found it brought the two of us closer together and increased the level of trust between us. Unfortunately, the video did not allow us to see what we had hoped - some of Debbie's interactions with gender equity. The way the class was conducted and the position of myself as I videotaped, made it impossible to tell who was responding and who Debbie was interacting with during most of the lesson.

> B: "... you don't use names. Very seldom did I actually hear a name. ... even when you're generating a discussion ... you sort of point or ..."
> D: "It's very unconscious"
> B: "I guess if I had been positioned in a different spot ... I couldn't tell if it was boys or girls. I couldn't even tell from the voice at that level whether it was a boy or a girl answering you."
> D: "yeah."
> B: "...but I couldn't. Not without names."

This then lead to an extremely interesting discussion of teaching styles and our own awareness, or lack thereof, of how we teach. Debbie had never given the use of names much thought, while I found names extremely useful for control in the upper intermediate classes. We discussed why that might be so and spent about 20 minutes unpacking the pros and cons of using a child's name in a lesson. Debbie brought out some points I had never considered and I'm sure I did the same for her. I'm not sure either one of us radically changed our teaching practices as a result, but it sure made us more aware of our habits relating to the use of names during the following weeks.

> B: "You don't ask for names at all so I was just curious as to your reasoning as to why ..."
> D: "I don't know. It's very unconscious. Oh no! Now I'm going to start noticing. Bonnie, I never noticed it before."
> B: "Well, that's good though. That's what this is for - to make us aware of what we do. ... Because I use names all the time."
> D: "So you refer every time to the child who's making the contribution?"
> B: "Pretty much. I use the name. But there's no right or wrong. I was just curious as to ..."
> D: "I guess my question would be back to you. Does assigning the name give more power to the child and detract from the ongoing discussion?"

From here, Debbie decided to take a closer look at her follow-through after giving instructions and commands. This was similar to what I had done with Donald, but Debbie's class was a little more active so the use of a seating plan would not have been appropriate. We then decided that the use of names would help a lot. This served two purposes in that it helped with record keeping and gave Debbie a reason for trying the use of names. Debbie had a particularly trying class during the second year of the study and she was wanting to know whether there was anything else she could have been doing to make a difference.

> D: "So, they're very, very immature so it's easy to fall into this trap. There's all kinds of ... could they do it differently? I can hardly imagine it. They're so raggedy ass all the time! I'm wondering if I'm having trouble with these little guys because I'm not doing enough on follow through."
> B: "So what you would need to do for me then is if you were talking to a specific child ..."
> D: "try to use their name."

I used a two column chart to track Debbie's commands on the left and her follow through on the right. From this it was fairly easy to see that Debbie's technique was all in place. She gave the instructions and the appropriate follow through. It was simply that the children were not mature enough to be learning via the techniques that Debbie enjoyed using. She then had to decide whether it was worth the continual frustration or whether she should change teaching strategies to match the level of calm she was wanting in her room.

> D: "Okay. So one of the things that comes out through for me here is the fact that some of my problem is not me really. It's residing in them. It's residing in their immaturity. It's residing in their own personal problems. I can see here I'm trying my best... I see that I'm following through here. Yet it's just like batting my head against a wall or something."
> B: "Definitely. You can see that you say something and then you follow through."
>
> ...
>
> D: "Yeah, I could have done that. Although there was a little rascal part of me that wanted them to wrestle with that issue..."

B: "Part of what I'm discovering in my own class this year is that the way I really like to teach ..."
D: " ...doesn't always match what they are ..."
B: "And I'm really struggling with that.
D: "Okay. So there's a stylistic preference. And so if I can think of them more like being grade ones. I'd be happier."

Debbie and I then went on to discuss many more issues related to working with difficult classes. Our post-conference discussion became quite long, but proved to be very beneficial for both of us as we probed different methods of survival. It was very good to have that kind of companionship when we had both felt quite alone dealing with our individual classes.

My Own Experiences: I had the distinct advantage during the study of visiting three very different classes with three very different teachers at three very different age levels. It was fascinating finally having the chance to see what my students had come through in the years before reaching grade seven. It was also a rare privilege to be able to observe so many different teaching styles in action and to have them observe me teach so they could offer advice from their varied perspectives.

I found the videotaped sessions more difficult because I had a very hard time seeing beyond my personal appearance. I knew that I was not happy with my image during the past few years, but I was very surprised at how deeply this had affected me. I could not get past my appearance to see my actual teaching practice no matter how often I was videotaped. Although my concentration on my appearance diminished as we progressed through the study, the following excerpt from my journal indicates, it was distracting right to the end.

Finally watched the last video today. It was the salmon dissection that D. had taped. He was great, but I still can't get over how large I am. It was still very difficult to see myself and what has happened to me over the past couple of years. I really must do something about it as soon as I'm finished with this. It's amazing to me how an educated person, like myself, has such difficulty with self esteem.

It blew me away that even after seeing a total of four video tapes that I still had trouble seeing the great teaching that was happening.

I had made a decision to try something new for each of the tapes so that I would be able to see how the techniques or lessons had come across in all aspects of classroom life. With Tammy, I was doing an art lesson, working through an introduction to stained glass windows. With Debbie, I was really nervous doing a regular math lesson because of her background, so I decided to try some codes and ciphers. With Donald, I decided to try something old with something new. I used a brainstorming technique I usually used with Marsville[1], during our Salmonid introductions to see how the groups I had created would work together. When I was able to see beyond myself, I found each of these experiences very worthwhile.

> "I've never done anything like this before..." [excerpt from first pre-observation conference with Tammy.]
> "So during math time today, we're going to look at codes and ciphers which they've never done before." [excerpt from first pre-observation conference with Debbie]
> "Today, I'm going to try something that I've done before, but I haven't done it for a few years. It's sort of like a research brainstorming. It's something we do for Marsville. I'm doing it on salmon first as a dry run for these kids and then having video taped them we'll see if we can figure out how to deal with these children. So the two things I want to key in on today are: Am I doing the best that I can with these kids? and I want to see if these groups are going to work." [excerpt from first pre-observation conference with Donald]

I found that simply having someone come to my classroom, as with Tammy, made me prepare more for the lessons and probably made the lessons more effective as a result. During the second sets of cycles I continued to focus on new ideas as well as specific teaching strategies. By the middle of the '99-'00 teaching year I had already decided to return to secondary school and was looking specifically at how my teaching needed to shift for this change. I decided to focus on three major areas: the distribution

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[1]Marsville is a program developed in the United States (Cahllenger Center) but offered through the Canadian Space Agency to elementary schools to enhance their science programs. It involves a simulation of a trip to Mars where the students are responsible to create models of all life-support systems necessary to establish life on Mars.

of materials during a lesson, the distribution of my time during a lesson and the performance of a demonstration. As a science teacher I need to be efficient at distributing science equipment, keeping my lessons rolling along at a reasonable pace and monitoring my students' work appropriately as well as performing demonstrations which are meaningful and informative for the students.

Tammy came equipped with a stopwatch and a map of my classroom, which included a seating plan. She kept a running record of how long I spent in any one location. This allowed me to see how much time I spent at the blackboard as well as how much time each student received during the lesson. This was very interesting because it did not meet my expectations. I thought certain students were taking up much more of my time than was indicated on the videotape and others were taking more than I thought.

> "What I found interesting with this was G. [pointing out how much time she took up] That surprised me. I know she talks a lot, but I didn't think she occupied nearly as much time as... This surprised me that I didn't have to spend as much time with him. Telling him to be quiet and what not. ... And I didn't spend as much time with J as I thought I would need to either."

Debbie was to record on task and off task behaviour of the students so that we could monitor their reactions to a laboratory situation. She came equipped with a map of the room which included a seating plan and the layout of the microscopes. We were doing our first lesson on microscopes. The students were to make their own slides and observe them at one of the microscope stations around the room. Unfortunately, this turned into a double lesson and Debbie was not able to stay for the second half which was the part I really wanted observed. As I started the lesson, I discovered that the students did not know how to make a slide and so we had to take a step back to teach that first.

> B: "It had been a while since we had done any kind of lab situation and getting the kids movement around the class and keeping them on task. In a loose situation they weren't exactly the best kids ... in even structured situations, let

alone unstructured situations. So I wanted to see how well they were doing and how well I was monitoring the situation while disbursing equipment..."

...

B: "I think that there was unfortunately ... you needed to see the second half of that lesson..."

D: "I know. The way in which you prepared them for what was going to happen was magnificent, but they weren't doing anything except listening..."

It was very unfortunate that Debbie was not able to be present for the second part of the lesson, but again, we were able to engage in a lengthy discussion about teaching styles and dealing with the classes we taught that year. These discussions, to me anyway, were even more valuable than the actual observations. I was very happy to have someone to compare notes with and commiserate with. As the following excerpt from my journal indicates, this was more important and helpful than most other areas of the study.

> D and I had another great discussion today. It was even longer than last time, but I was able to see some things I hadn't noticed before. She shared some insights her friend had given when he came to work in her classroom. The boys, he figures, are afraid to concentrate, to focus, because when they do they have to shut all the others out. They have to be alone with themselves. D determined that the boys don't want to be alone with themselves because it's too frightening. They don't have any self-confidence. They don't like themselves. They don't think they can meet the assignment and it's too terrifying to be alone and so they stay in that silly space. I think this might be the case with A. in my room. It certainly bears looking more closely at his behaviours. I'm sure glad we had these opportunities to chat. It would be great if this could continue after the study is over. I'll have to talk with her about that.

Donald's final visit to my room was with a video camera again. I was going to be doing a salmon dissection as a demonstration and preparation for the students doing their own group dissections. I had never performed a salmon dissection before, but I felt fairly confident because of my science background and the number of dissections I had done at university. I was curious to see how the students would react to a looser environment and whether I was able to track all that was happening around me during the discussions and the dissection.

Watching the video afterwards, I was quite proud of my students. They really surprised me with the amount of information they had learned during the preceding

weeks. They also surprised me with their behaviour. The only thing I was dismayed about was the few students who appeared to be missing the correct information and what I could have done to prevent this. Donald supplied the missing element during our post-observation conference.

> D: "Yep. Well they were incredible. You were doing an excellent job obviously because there you started with the slime and worked right through to how it's a form of protection and then what would it protect it from, what predators. The whole list just came out beautifully. It just rolled."
> B: "It's nice. You always wonder when you're doing this kind of an open-ended discussion where they're just allowed to call out. Whether it's actually gonna work or not. So I think, from what I've seen so far, I'm catching most kids, I'm hearing most of what's being said..."

> D: "You see, it's just a matter of where the camera's picking up too. I think you were continuing because you heard the right answers. I don't think you heard a lot of wrong answers..."
> B: "I mean, I was repeating the correct answer, but from the video tape, I can hardly hear my voice so I'm wondering if the kids who were giving the wrong answers ever heard the correct answer."
> D: "If you felt uncomfortable about that, the other thing you could do is either have a chart or have an overhead projector with it charted. With the information or facts..."

Even with all this great feedback and data collection, I think the thing that helped me the most during this study was the validation that I was doing all I could with the worst class I had ever had. The fact that three different teachers came into my room and all responded the same way - "How did these students ever all end up in the same room?" made me feel much better about what was happening in my room that year. The following excerpt from my journal sums it up nicely.

> I'm just pulling my hair out this year. I've never met a group of students with more needs than this one. I haven't been able to take them on many trips, do many special things with them or even teach the way I love to teach. I feel so badly for the top kids in the class. They're the ones losing out. I can't believe I'm getting nowhere with the school based team. I was there again yesterday. "We've had our testing time for the year," is all they can say. I remember when all of their mouths dropped open during the school-wide screening, but did it do any good? Not! I'm so glad I've had D, D and T to talk to this year. They at least

recognize what I'm facing and are doing their best to try to make the year bearable.

As I studied all of the transcripts that make up this study and as I went through each of our stories, I was amazed at how similar they were. I then decided to report the themes that emerged as they would prove to be very important in our development as professionals.

The Themes

Forced Reflection: Perhaps the most prevalent theme throughout the study was the fact that simply taking part in the peer coaching cycles forced each of us to examine our teaching practices more thoroughly than most of us had done since doing our student teaching. We all spent much more time preparing the lessons marked for observation than those we normally teach when our students are our only observers. It was a good experience to have repeated. It was also good to have some of our practices called into question. It wasn't that any of us thought anyone else was doing something incorrectly, but rather that it was a new idea for us and we wanted to know more.

Donald really brought this to light for me as he voiced a simple question about evaluation - an area I really hadn't given much thought to prior to our discussion.

> D: "What testing did you do afterwards to find out what they know and what they have to do?
> B: "You know, I didn't do much in the way of testing. I collected in what they were supposed to do during the dissection and they were supposed to have drawn and labeled the external and internal parts as each came out..."
> D: "I meant follow-up and that would be appropriate follow-up."

His question had been adequately answered, but my thought processes continued on long after our discussion. One area I really needed to focus more time and attention on was the whole evaluation thing. Did I really know how well students were doing in group projects? I filed this away for further deliberations at a later date.

Donald's lesson on pop-up cards provided some interesting techniques I had never witnessed and I was happy to try to incorporate those into my teaching practice. He was

thrilled to be able to witness a dissection, because he did not do enough hands on science. This was enough of a push to get him thinking about his next year and how to incorporate more science into his curriculum and how his teaching techniques might be challenged during the process. Tammy was already addressing this in her quest to try the Guided Reading Program, but in her words ...

> "I think that it helps you grow professionally, because otherwise you get into a kind of rut and I think the more you push yourself and try to expand yourself you are a better teacher. And you're forced to grow and I always think that's good and also I'm trying something that I've never tried before and I wanted to do that because I'm really keen on the Guided Reading. But it's like when you want to do something, you think that's great but it's like being pushed into the water - you gotta do it quick."

Building on Each Others Ideas: The next most valuable theme, for me, was the fact that two brains work much better than one. Several of our post-observation conferences turned into brainstorming sessions to help one or the other of us problem-solve. Sometimes we were both able to take the ideas back to our separate classes. Each participant was already sold on the value of collaboration, which is, in part, why each decided to become a member of this study. I think I was probably more surprised than they were with how valuable each other's input became.

An example of this building came during a post conference with Donald.

> B: "It was good that you had the one there, but it might have been good to have each stage to show. Like you started with the blank piece of paper. You had the next one where you'd already cut it out and had the final one where it was glued. You didn't have a final thing where the kids could actually see ..."
> D: "...what the final thing looked like. ... I could have actually taken, just not used the overheads from the book, and just made my own overheads from the charts that I'd made."
> D: "you know what I might do? The next time I do this I might do four little mini-lessons and then over the course of a couple of days or a couple of weeks have them do two per week.
> B: "...or do the mini lessons and do a sort of rotating stations thing."
> D: "Maybe what I should do next time is teach each one separately. Each on a separate day. Have them make examples of each one, then on the fifth week

have them do an example of each or have them pick their favorite. And mark them on the level of complexity, or level of..."

B: "... or have them, when you do the sample, just have them do a small sample, like you did so that it would be a simple version of each of them and then have them make a real card..."

D: "maybe have them try and incorporate as many different ones into their card as they can."

Physical Presence: An interesting and unexpected theme that appeared during the first cycles was the idea that we were all affected by seeing ourselves in front of the camera. For some of us, this was a positive experience, while for others it was not quite so positive. Debbie had her spirits lifted by the experience. Tammy was simply self-conscious, but did not dwell on the issue for any length of time. Donald was slightly self-conscious, but was already self-aware. I seem to have been the only one who was adversely affected by the experience. I did get better towards the end, but I had at least double the exposure.

It was interesting to "see" all of our habitual gestures and experience our teaching as our students must "see" us. Tammy and I had some good discussions around this issue.

T: "That was like on TV. You know, they always have..."
B: "...they have nice nails, yes. We'll just call you Vanna."
T: "I'm tired. Maybe I was, you know ..."
B: "Yeah, I think you were. You were trying to get them to say it the right way."
T: "Our students can be our best critics can't they?"

Assistance With Difficulties: Each of us had certain children we were having difficulty with. As an indirect result of our collaborative sessions, we all gained a better understanding or a better feeling of how to work through the year with these students. It was very helpful, particularly with the video sessions, to see the behaviours recorded and then discuss ways of eliminating or working out those problems. It was also beneficial to have a new perspective on the difficulties as we were all running low on fresh ideas in our own classrooms.

In particular, I had about five or six students who required special attention this year. Just being able to talk about them made it easier to go back to class for the afternoon. Sometimes all I needed was a place to vent my frustrations. Debbie and I found the same solace in our post-observation conferences. It wasn't so much that we were looking for answers, we just wanted to let off some steam.

> D: "So frustrations! This is the period of frustrations. and I have the mid-winter blues. Yesterday at noon I went "I want to go home now!' I didn't think I could make it through the afternoon okay, but then I did. I don't know how."
> B: "This morning I tried to start the day with what we do at 1:00, but it was just wishful thinking on my part."

Validation: Related to the above theme, these experiences provided validation that we were all doing the best we could in some very difficult situations. In particular, Debbie and I found great solace as we visited each others classes and saw through the eyes of a newcomer that we were, in fact, accomplishing some good teaching and the students were learning. It may have felt a bit like chaos to us, but, as we were able to remove ourselves and observe videotapes or see on paper that our goals were being met with most of our students.

> B: And I think that if your kids are used to working in stations and they're independent that it's a really good thing, but if you have a class like mine ...
> D: ... where it doesn't take much for it to disintegrate ...
> B: It doesn't take much to go ...
> D: I had a class like that this year.
> B: Yes you did. You and I both had ... see there were three classes in the school - yours, mine and D's that were the subject of many discussions.
> D: Oh yeah. M came to me one day to pick the kids up and he said, "I don't know how you do this all day! How do you do it?" And I said, "well I don't know either, I just sort of do." You know?
> B: I know

Pride: This theme came through subtly in each of the sessions. Teaching is such a solitary process that when we have someone to share ideas with, we take advantage. Tammy was able to expound at length about all the activities she had prepared for her students to work on while she was busy with the other half of her class and the Guided

Reading Program. Donald was able to explain several projects related to the art lesson he had prepared. Debbie exhibited pride in knowing that others knew how difficult her class was and were somewhat in awe of her daily survival with them. I took pride in being able to share my background in science with others who acknowledged this area of expertise.

> Donald: You know, it was actually educational for me. I've never done anything like that, dissecting anything and being able to do that, and the care you were able to show. You have to be very gentle and delicate with these animals because of course you're dissecting them and you have to respect the salmon because of course it's a dead animal and you were able to make that clear to the kids before hand. I wish I did more hands-on science.

Value of Collaboration: This theme came through the loudest, especially as the study was coming to a close.

> Debbie: "Well, I think, if you did it once a month - that would be awesome! If you gave up one prep time a month. I think it's doable. My god, I mean one prep a month is probably wasted anyway."
> Tammy: "Do we want to still do this once in a while even though it's not for your paper?
> Donald: "I think working the time into the whole equation is a skill in itself. To be able to sit down and take the time to do the videos and interviews, no I wouldn't impose any changes. Having someone observe and mirror back what I've said is so often ... when we're teaching we don't take the time to sit back and say well what did I say, why did they answer that way because we don't make the time."
> Myself: "I'd love to!" (in response to Tammy's' question.)

The next section will take these themes and compare them to the Vancouver School Boards definition of Professional Development to show that Peer Coaching is in fact a viable form of Professional Development.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS THROUGH THE LITERATURE

Shower's Five Functions of Peer Coaching

Showers (1982) is one of the first individuals to use the term peer coaching. As she refined this strategy, she identifies five major functions of peer coaching. (Showers, 1984) I will use these five functions to show that our study of peer coaching met the established criteria even though we were not using it as a follow-up for any particular in-service. We were using peer coaching as a method of professional development on its own.

1. *Provision of Companionship*: Each member of our study felt a sense of camaraderie as a result of their participation. Being able to meet with other educators on a regular basis to discuss areas of individual concern and having these concerns addressed in a caring manner was very appreciated by all of us. The following excerpts, taken from post-observation discussions, illustrate the feeling each of us had regarding the companionship we felt throughout the study.

> Donald: I always appreciate talking to my colleagues about lessons I've done, lessons they've done. Learning from their lessons, learning from their methodology. That was very valuable.
> If we could develop some kind of a mentoring system or a buddy system or a ... monitoring, a group, a grade group monitoring system, it would be really helpful. Because I think what's happening these days, instead of us broadening our scope of professional development, or collegiality or whatever, we're pulling in tighter and tighter.

> Tammy: Yeah. It's great because when you teach for, I think 13 years, you tend... you need a little, I don't know. It's just refreshing to be able to talk with other teachers. You sort of look at things, not, you don't take teaching more seriously but you get in a rut. And so when somebody comes and you try something new and you can see - like yeah. I didn't know I did that.

> Debbie: The following discussion occurred with Debbie which definitely gave

both of us a feeling of solidarity.

> B: but if you have a class like mine...
> D: Where it doesn't take much for it to disintegrate
> B: It doesn't take much to go
> D: I had a class like that this year
> B: Yes you did. You and I both had ... see there were three classes in the school - yours mine and D's, that were the subjects of many discussions.
> D: Oh yeah. M came to me one day to pick the kids up and he said "I don't' know how you do this all day!"

Debbie also expressed a desire to have more contact with her colleagues as the following excerpt indicates.

> Well, I think it's neat to have colleagues to have an ongoing discussion with. I think I would have liked it a little more often. to really feel that there was a development, a kind of impact on teaching practice.

Myself: The following discussion with Donald was able to occur because of the general feeling of camaraderie we felt. It bore little bearing on the discussion of my lesson, but we regularly found ourselves having similar breaks in the theme because of our familiarity and comfort with each other.

> B: You know, it's amazing how much these kids don't know. By the time I was their age, I was like an Andrew. You know, I'd been fishing with my folks. I'd touched fish. I'd see all the parts of a fish. This wouldn't have been big news. Whereas with these kids, it really is.
> D: This whole community needs so much front end loading - with everything. With language, with experience, with just the hands-on approach - cause they don't get it. Like you say that at Andrew's age you'd done it all, but they don't. They're more - It's a totally different culture. It's a totally different mind-set with the families. You see the odd family that does a lot of things. Takes day trips and goes to the hatchery or does whatever. Goes fishing, goes camping, but not much because both adult members so often have to work.

2. *Provision of Technical Feedback*: Throughout the two years of this study, all of the participants felt they had grown in their teaching practice. Many of the observation sessions through the second cycles focused specifically on the technical aspects of teaching. Watching the videotapes from the first cycles also provided many opportunities to comment on the technical aspects of teaching. Without attending any workshops aimed specifically at the technical side of teaching, this aspect of peer coaching naturally

emerged out of the process itself. The following excerpts, taken from pre-observation conferences and post-observation conferences, highlight the various technical aspects of teaching that the participants either consciously chose to focus on or became aware of during their participation in the study.

Donald: Deciding what to focus on during his second cycle

B: I can record all your directions. Like, if it's a direction giving thing. What do you do?
D: Actually that might help.
B: Yeah?
D: Yeah
B: So then what I will do is I will focus simply on the instructions that you give them and write down all the directions that you give them.
D: Sounds good.

Tammy: While watching Tammy's second videotape, we discussed the following.

B: The only thing that I noticed was that you did choose, I think it's that little girl, a lot more than any of the others.
T: V?
B: And actually, the kids started to pick up on that as well.
T: Did they?

Debbie: Two discussions from the second post-conference.

1. B: We're going over D's second lesson where she was looking for follow through after instruction and command and so I tried to divide the page into half
D: Yes
B: And so I give the instruction and commands one side and what did or didn't happen, like it there's blanks then it means that nothing happened.

2. B: No. Definitely you can see here that you say something and then you say a step and ...
D: ... and then I follow through. And I'm pressing the point and sometimes I'm doing the work for them to make it go faster.

Myself: A conversation with Donald during my final post-observation conference.

B: It's okay to be saying no if they're wrong, right?
D: Oh yeah

B: Yeah?

D: I think so. If you're asking for a specific answer.

B: Yeah. "Cause they're all still trying, right?

D: Yeah. That's right. No, you're not shutting them down at all.

B: Yeah. I think they're pretty into it.

D; Oh, right on. They're all guessing on topic. They're not, there's none of this -
no. They're not guessing off topic.

3. *Analysis of the application of new teaching models*: Although only Tammy had attended workshops recently to add a new teaching strategy, Guided Reading, to her repertoire, each of us did work on specific teaching strategies that we felt we would like to further develop. Some of us decided to try something we had not used in recent years. Others of us felt we needed to adapt a familiar strategy that just was not effective with the particular group of students we had at the time. The following excerpts from post-observation conferences indicate that each of us benefited through the peer coaching cycles because we had help analyzing the application of the various strategies that were the subject of our peer coaching sessions.

Donald: During the first cycle, Donald decided to use overhead transparencies, modeling and key-visual posters as teaching tools during his art lesson. This excerpt illustrates how he reflected on his choices.

B: What is the purpose of each of the overheads that you're putting up?

D: Just to show, in the book it had, some really simple steps. It didn't explain it well enough.

B: Right. I didn't see, I guess I didn't see the need for the overhead because you actually did each step for them and you never really referred back to the overhead. Was the overhead repeated on the charts?

D: They were more detailed. I could have actually taken, just not used the overheads from the book and just made my own overheads from the charts that I'd made.

B: It might have been more straight forward for the kids.

Tammy: During Tammy's second cycle, the group of the students were seated at a table with individual copies of the book they were studying. The following excerpt provides an example of the analysis of her use of the Guided Reading strategy.

B: Do you have a big book of this?

T: No

B: Are they all supposed to be looking at the small ones?

T: Yeah. They all have ...

B: 'Cause they all seem to like ... when you ask them a question, they all seem to gather around your little tiny book.

T: No. They should each have a book

B: Yeah. But you see how they're all trying to see yours?

Debbie: Debbie focused on instruction and follow-up during her second cycle. The excerpt below offers a suggestion that may have made the assignment easier by giving additional instructions.

B: Would it have been worth stopping the whole class at one point, when you found out that they were all going for locker blocks and they weren't working.

D: And just say no.

B: And just say, you know, locker blocks aren't working.

D: Don't use them.

Myself: During my first cycle with Tammy, I was attempting an art lesson that I had not done previously. Our discussion at the post-observation conference allowed Tammy to help me analyze what should have occurred.

B: But see, I should, I was going to go down and get D's book because a lot of kids said 'what are stained glass windows?' Right?

T: mm hmm

B: They didn't know. Which surprised me. So that's something I would have done differently. I would have had some examples of what stained glass windows look like.

T: Yeah. That's what I was going to say.

B: Yeah? Good.

T: I was going to say you should have had stained glass windows, but, I would have probably had them look at books first. But then I was wondering if you could have had them, like I wondered if it was too easy ripping up paper for them. Shouldn't they have been concentrating on a design instead?

4. *Help with adapting a new teaching model or strategy*: One of the best functions of working collaboratively is having at least one other person to brainstorm with. Peer coaching cycles enables this brainstorming to occur at least twice in each cycle - during the pre-observation conference as well as during the post-observation conference. Although adaptation of the strategies we chose to focus on usually occurred during the

post-observation conference, the opportunity did exist to re-visit the same strategy during both cycles, as Tammy did, which would then allow further discussions to occur at the pre-observation stage. The following excerpts provide insight into how each of us was able to assist in the adaptation of teaching strategies.

Donald: During Donald's first cycle, he decided to model the process for making pop-up cards. As the following excerpt indicates, he decided to adapt this strategy so that he would break the process down even further and have examples ready for each stage.

D: I could have made it. I could have reduced it almost to more of a ... simpler process.
B: Yes.
D: Next time.
B: It was good that you had the one there, but it might have been good to have each stage to show. Like you started with the blank piece of paper. You had the next one where you'd already cut it out and had the final one where it was glued. You didn't have a final thing where the kids could actually see what the final thing looked like.
D: Right.
B: And for someone like me who'd never seen pop-ups made. I couldn't envision how you actually glued it and then it would pop up.
D: Okay. That's something I could add in next time the. Okay good. So we need to simplify the process and have examples at each step.

Tammy: Tammy and I had an interesting discussion about an aspect of the Guided Reading program she was learning. The students all read aloud at one point in the period and I had difficulty with the fact they weren't in unison. Our discussion may not have lead Tammy to adapt the program, but it did force her to give it some serious thought.

T: So now they just read. As we read it's too fast for him.
B: The guy in the white there?
T: Yeah. See K's racing.
B: Yeah. So how can you get them all to read in unison?
T: Well, actually it doesn't matter. They can all read by themselves.
B: It doesn't matter?
T: So he wants to race. But it's throwing the other kids off ...
B: Yeah. Can you hear all their voices when they're reading?
T: Yeah.

B: So that's how you know they're all reading?

Debbie: After Debbie worked through her lesson on measurement where we were focusing on directions and follow-up, she wrestled with the idea of adapting the strategy she used to deliver the actual concepts she was attempting to teach.

> D: You know. There wasn't enough sit back for me in that lesson
> B: Yeah.
> D: So I probably gave, I should have probably had them do another lesson with a finite length.
> B: Or have done an easier lesson - a more concrete lesson with the things. Like have already pre-measured some objects that they could then come and choose from ... or something.
> D: Oh yeah, yeah. I see, but I don't like to do it that way.
> B: But for using rulers the first time.

Myself: During my dissection of the salmon as part of my second cycle with Donald, I was relying totally on discussion and demonstration. As the following excerpt indicates, this could have been more effective if I had adapted my strategy to include a key visual.

> B: So, if I don't get the right answer, I'm telling them the answer.
> D: Sometimes you need to. There's a certain amount of fact that you want to give them.
> B: Yeah.
> D: I think ... If you felt uncomfortable about that, the other thing you could do is either have a chart or have an overhead projector with it charted. With the information or facts.
> B: Right.
> D: You know, the salmon charted and then have somebody pull off blocks or ...
> B: Right.
> D: You're basically giving it to them and then there's instruction afterwards so you're covering it.

5. *Earlier application of a new teaching model because of the support of a peer coach*: Although Tammy was the only participant to be attempting a brand new teaching strategy, the rest of us felt ourselves pushed to attempt "better teaching". In other words, we were forced out of our comfort zones into an area where real growth would occur. In Tammy's case she used the study as a catalyst for trying the Guided Reading, while the

remainder of the participants used the study to push themselves towards professional growth. In all cases, we felt that the support of a peer coach created the opportunity to improve our teaching faster than it would have occurred through the usual methods of professional development.

Donald: Donald has probably had the most experience with collaborative forms of professional development, but he still values peer coaching as perhaps the best. His comments at the end of his first cycle indicate his commitment to his personal growth as a teacher.

> B: Right, so it was just the specific to the Elements of Instruction that you were using peer coaching for. Whereas it's so much broader than that. Like it can be so much broader than that. I mean one of the best things, it is useful though, and if you want to try something new.
> D: Yeah.
> B: And then you've got that mirror.
> D: Yeah. You could set up your own video camera in your own room and tape yourself but...
> B: ... you're still all by yourself again and you miss some of the things that could have been brought up.
> D: That's right. 'Cause you are so familiar with your own nuances and the things that you do. Yeah. I think this is great professional development!

Donald also added, after the study was over, that "peer coaching, in the Elements of Instruction, was the best professional development he had ever been involved in prior to his involvement in this study."

Tammy: The following excerpt from Tammy's first pre-conference indicates her excitement at the opportunity peer coaching would afford her to attempt the Guided Reading Program.

> B: Why would you like to be a part of this study?
> T: I think it helps you grow professionally, because otherwise you get into a kind of a rut and I think the more you push yourself and try to expand yourself you just are a better teacher. And you're forced to grow and I always think that's good and also I'm really keen on this Guided Reading, but it's like when you want to do

something, you think, oh that'd be so great, but it's like being pushed into the water. You gotta do it quick.

B: So, if I'm hearing you right, you're wanting to get out of this study some growth ...

T: ... insight.

B: ... into this Guided Reading thing and how it might work.

Debbie: During our first pre-observation conference, Debbie expressed an urgent need work through an issue she was facing. This issue, gender equity within her classroom, was really an area of concern for Debbie. As the following excerpt indicates, she really hoped that the use of a peer coach would enable her to work through the issue much more quickly.

D: I thought about what I wanted to focus on. If this at all evolved this year, I definitely would have had you monitor something about ... maybe we will do this in the next ... no, we can't. But maybe I'll work on it next year. Because one of the things I've discovered with respect to the girl/boy thing is that I actually, for the sake of control, I suddenly caught myself spending most of my time making eye contact with ...

B: ... the boys. I know. It's so hard.

D: I just about died when I realized what I was doing! It's true. I feel a lot of resentment.

B: Well, we'll see ... I mean, I don't know how feasible it is to get a return visit in before the end of the year, but, if it works out that we can do it that would be great.

D: That'd be great!

Myself: During my cycles with Debbie, I forced myself to try new math that I probably never would have attempted. The fact that Debbie had done so much work in the field of mathematics pushed me to grow in this area. Her insight into my lessons also greatly helped as I struggled with a new method of teaching math. The following excerpt from my journal provides insight into my feelings at the time.

What am I going to do when D comes to observe me? I'm a little intimidated by her expertise in math. It's really too bad that her prep periods occur during my math time. Of course, I could try something new and gain valuable feedback from an expert. What if I bomb? D's pretty good. She'd be kind. Maybe I'll try those codes and ciphers they suggest as enrichment in the next chapter.

From the above excerpts, it can be seen that, in fact, peer coaching did occur at our school during the past two years. The data support peer coaching as a method of professional development without the added workshops. Peer coaching can stand alone and provide growth for teachers, but does it meet the goals for professional development in the Vancouver School District?

Peer Coaching and the Vancouver School Board's
Goals for Professional Development

The Vancouver School Board has six goals for professional development. As each is discussed, results of this study will be given in support of peer coaching.

1. ***To support the professional growth of teachers through the provision of high quality activities, programs and services***. Peer coaching is a high quality activity that has been shown to be of value to each of the participants in this study.

As Donald stated, "this is great professional development."

> It's just that I like the idea of being able to reflect back and have someone monitor what you're doing. It's always been a part of my philosophy ... I'd like to see more people teaming, working together, because I think that's a great way to teach and out of that will grow more of the peer coaching, and so I think it will work ... If we could develop some kind of mentoring system or a buddy system or a grade group monitoring system, it would be really helpful. Because I think what's happening these days, instead of us broadening our scope of professional development, or collegiality or whatever, we're pulling in tighter and tighter. Because we've got that much more to deal with in our classrooms and that much less help.

Tammy made these comments about her professional growth and the provision of peer coaching.

> I think it helps you grow professionally, because otherwise you get into a kind of a rut and I think the more you push yourself and try to expand yourself you just are a better teacher. And you're forced to grow and I always think that's good ... I think it's exciting and I think that when you work with colleagues in your school, you learn so much ... And I just wanted to say that I think this is an excellent idea: video taping. Teachers video taping each other rather than a professional day,

because I think you learn so much by watching other teachers and watching yourself. I really enjoyed it.

Debbie added to her colleagues' insights by commenting on the number of times something needs to be repeated to internalize it and make it easier. Peer coaching provides this kind of practice with active feedback.

> And actually sometimes by the time you've done something three times ... As I said at the beginning of the lesson, the first time it's hard. The second time it's not so hard and by the third time you think why did I ever have problems with this? And that's the way it should go.

An excerpt from my journal, dated June 1999, illustrates how I felt about my own chances to grow professionally as provided through peer coaching.

> I'm so excited about the prospect of visiting all three grade levels! To see where the students have been before they get to me is going to be so enlightening. I'm also really looking forward to seeing D, D, and T teach. Their styles are so different from my own. I wonder if my teaching patterns will change as a result? I wonder if the way I look at my students will be different. This study is going to provide so much opportunity for growth.

2. *To assist teachers in the identification and further development of their instructional strengths:* Peer coaching puts another opportunity for professional growth right in the classroom with a teacher, which is where you would need to be in order to fulfill this goal. Each participant in the study developed a better sense of his/her areas of strength as well as areas requiring further growth.

> Donald again became aware of his "bird walking"[2] and was self-aware enough to be able to make his own corrections.

> Well, I think, first of all, instead of doing the bird walk about the party and ... I'd probably say, 'today we're going to make pop-up cards for Mr. W. There are four different kinds.' I wouldn't walk and direct their attention over away from the center.

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[2]"bird walking": a term coined in the Elements of Instruction workshops for people who wonder all over in their thoughts and verbalizations rather than just giving the essentials required for the lesson.

As Tammy noted:

> ... because I don't know the pacing and I don't know exactly how to do it. I've seen a workshop leader do one lesson and she made it look so easy...
> No, it's actually been interesting and I'm still, I've got this book on Guided Reading. Now that I've sort of been doing it more frequently, I'd like to sit down and read that book again. Because you know how you learn things and later - it's like peeling an onion ... So I still need to go back and read that book. Now that I've had more experience doing it, because I'm sure there's other things I could do. I just think I'm not doing it totally 100 %. There's things I can work on. I think the video really helped though. Just to have someone come in and watch it puts a little more validity to it.

Debbie, through our discussions, decided that, even though it made life a little more difficult, she enjoyed her looser style of instruction.

> And sometimes I look at those tight ship people and I'm yearning, you know, for a little bit more order. But actually, I really, really prefer to work that way [raggedy assed]. Even though it's exhausting on me sometimes. It causes me a lot of extra wear and tear in some ways because it isn't tightly structured. I mean there is just so much but yet we ground through an enormous body of thinking lately...

I found that I learned more about my own teaching in the few short months of this study than I had during the past 15 years of my teaching career. My strengths and weaknesses became very apparent through the "eyes" of my observer and the discussions we had during our post-observation conferences.

> B: Then I found it interesting that there were some kids I didn't even talk to at all.
> T: Yeah, S, A and V.
> B: Yeah, so, that surprised me. I thought I'd kinda hit everybody. But that's not bad though, only three. No four - I didn't talk to K either. Four out of the class.
> T: You looked at their work, but you never said anything.
> B: I never said anything ...

> B: I was pleased to see that I spent less than a third of the time at the board, which was nice. That was kind of my goal. Because you tend to sometimes, in intermediate,
> T: sit and talk?
> B: stand there forever. You don't get out and around and so that was nice. And what this forces me to do is be a bit more active.

3. ***To foster and support the exchange of ideas, strategies, and materials amongst teachers.*** Perhaps the greatest strength of peer coaching, in this study, was the collaboration amongst colleagues which stimulated a wonderful exchange of ideas, strategies and materials. We eagerly shared our knowledge and skills with each other. This was illustrated through the *pride* theme as previously outlined in chapter four. I think this was the part of the study we enjoyed the most. It was a unique opportunity to visit a variety of classrooms and observe teachers with very different teaching styles and talents.

Donald and I regularly built on each other's ideas in a brainstorming way. He would offer a suggestion which would trigger an idea that I would venture. He would then add to this and elaborate further. We produced some good lessons during our pre-observation conferences as well as during our post-observation conferences.

Tammy offered materials on several occasions for a student in my room who was struggling to read.

> B: I started him on a level one something. But no, he doesn't read much at all. He can't read the instructions to anything, so he can't work independently on anything.
> T: Okay, I was just wondering if I had anything in grade one ...

She also took great pride in showing me all of the materials she had produced to support the Guided Reading program in her classroom. Everything from pocket charts to wall displays was carefully explained. Tammy even offered ideas related to my art lesson on stained glass windows.

> Well, I was just trying to think 'cause it goes into a window and windows are cut up into sections. Are they going to be actual window shaped, or are they going to just put any kind of frame around it?
> Well, I'm kind of ahead. I was thinking, the whole idea with stained glass is you take those pieces and you make a picture. So, I was just thinking if you did that like a window with more squares in it, each square could tell something. And it wouldn't have to be, like you could do a fruit theme ... like an apple, a pear, a banana.

Debbie's knowledge of mathematics was very much appreciated as she observed my lessons. During our post-observation conferences she was able to provide many alternate ways of teaching codes and ciphers. Her insights were always welcome and she continued to be a valuable resource during the remainder of the year.

4. *To promote activities which foster creativity, enthusiasm and self-confidence in teachers*. Peer coaching enabled us to move out of our complacency into a more exciting environment. It may have been a little intimidating at times, but because we had a colleague supporting us in the role of a peer coach, it became a very uplifting experience.

Donald decided to be somewhat creative in his approach to teaching art during his first cycle when he chose to attempt an "overly ambitious lesson" on pop-up cards. I became more creative in my math lessons thanks to the input from Debbie. We all felt freer to attempt more creative teaching as we were supported in our efforts through the presence of a colleague.

It helped to rekindle some of the enthusiasm Tammy had lost over time.

Yeah. It's great because when you teach for, I think 13 years, you tend ... you need a little ... it's refreshing! You sort of look at things, not, you don't take teaching more seriously, but you get into a rut. And so when somebody comes and you try something new and you can see, it's great. And you need somebody to shake you up a bit.

I think just visiting other classrooms and having somebody watch you and you can pick up new things and share and I think it's great! I'm so excited!

The experience was also validating for us, as noted in the validation theme in chapter four, increasing our self-confidence in our teaching, as we were able to see our abilities more clearly through the data that was collected and then presented during post-observation conferences. As Debbie explained, once the study was complete, "It was a very validating encounter. It made my year all that more bearable." The following quotes provide proof of the validation we all felt.

Donald: I can see that they did remember enough of the lessons from last week to allow me to build on them today - they must be learning.

Debbie: You know? I mean, there are things about it. I know that when people look at my teaching, they see it looks loose. But then I can see that there are all these intellectual things that are being put into play in spite of all the chaos and give and take and ebb and flow and making people stand up and move around and all the things that are messy about my teaching - I can still see that in between all those layers is getting, you know, the message is getting delivered. There's real meat there!

Tammy: Actually, I kind of look like I know what I'm doing. I'm thinking all the time.

Me: You know? The movement around the room seemed to be pretty even. So I was pleased to see that I did spend time with just about everybody. Yeah. It was a good introductory lesson though.

5. *To disseminate current research-based information in the areas of teaching, learning and curriculum development.* Because each of the participants in the study had a different area of expertise, we all learned a great deal from each other.

Tammy was working on an up-to-date method for teaching reading. "I went to a workshop - It was really neat." I didn't have to attend the workshop - Tammy provided me with all the knowledge I needed. It was very interesting to listen to Tammy as she explained the various aspects of Guided Reading. Some of the information was quite transferable to my struggling students in grade seven. Many of our sessions became discussions related to reading and the difficulties I was experiencing in grade seven with students who could not yet read. I didn't have the time to do the research myself, but Tammy was a wealth of information.

Debbie was always actively seeking information relating to gender issues which she always shared during our discussions. She also relayed a message from a radio talk show which shed light on how badly I was feeling about some of my lower students. "It's learning to read in grade one and two and reading to learn from then on." No wonder I was worried. These students were in grade seven and still not able to read. Even after the study was concluded Debbie still passed along interesting information from recent

research related to learning and gender differences: Boys hear differently than girls which may be why she had such difficulty with her young boys and was forever telling them to "pay attention" or admonished them, "Don't you listen?"

Donald was very experienced with collaboration, which helped in our discussions and taught me much about learning. His openness and genuine love of collaboration was very infectious.

> I have always team taught ... I always have someone to bounce ideas off of. Whether its about a kit, a unit, a lesson, no matter what. I guess I'm one of the proponents of your theory.

How Donald interacted during our conferences taught me how to make the meeting with the other participants run much smoother and more effectively. This study's success was dependent on these conferences and so I am grateful for his expertise in this area of collaboration.

I had a knowledge of science which increased Tammy's and Donald's general knowledge as they observed my lessons during our cycles. They both expressed their appreciation for the chance to observe hands-on science. My second post conference with Donald, as we discussed the salmon dissection, was interspersed with factual question by Donald related to the science of the lesson. Tammy was amazed at the knowledge the grade seven students exhibited during her second observation. She learned about graphing and how a salmon's life cycle is related to the accumulated thermal units (ATUs). I also was involved in a reading encouragement program sponsored by Pizza Hut restaurant[3] which became evident during one of Tammy's visits.

> B: And we're doing that stained glass thing down the arched hallway ...
> T: Okay, so that'd tie into that.

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[3]The "Read-It" program encouraged children to read books related to monthly themes. The themes were historically based and came with teacher support material in the form of timelines and activites. If children read their goal number of books in a month they would receive an individual pizza from Pizza Hut for their efforts. If the entire class met their goals for four of the months then the entire class earned a pizza party.

B: It'll tie into that. And it fits into, I don't know if you're doing the "Read-It " program with Pizza Hut? The "Read-It" thing?
T: No, what is it?
B: It's from the November Time Zone thing ... it helps encourage kids to read.

Tammy also noted that "there's a wealth of knowledge in our own group that we don't even tap into and it's a very, like you said in your article, inexpensive way to learn and get excited.

6. *To provide consultative support to staff groups engaged in school-based planning and/or school based initiatives.* Peer coaching is a built-in school based consultative method. If a school developed a peer coaching format, any new initiatives they decided to attempt would automatically be supported. Staff would be able to support one another as they began to internalize new teaching methods or strategies. Everyone involved in this study was eager to see that peer coaching continue to further their professional growth.

> Donald: Having someone observe and mirror back what I've said is so often ... when we're teaching we don't take the time to sit back and say well 'what did I say, why did they answer that way?' because we don't have the time. But another colleague sitting there and saying, you said ... and you can get ah ha's. That's why it happened. That [peer coaching] was very valuable. It would be nice to see this continue.

> Tammy: Do we want to still do this once in a while even though it's not for your paper?

> Me: Sure. I would be into it.

> Debbie: I would be willing to give up one prep time each month to continue this.

In summary, peer coaching has been shown to meet all the goals for professional development set out by the Vancouver School Board.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Conclusions

From this study it can be concluded that peer coaching is a viable form of professional development. Through comparisons with both Showers' (1984) five major functions of peer coaching: the provision of companionship, the provision of technical feedback, the analysis of the application of new teaching models, help with adapting a new teaching model or strategy and the earlier application of a new teaching model because of the support of a peer coach, and the Vancouver School Board's professional development goals, this study indicates that peer coaching works. The participants of this study all felt they had grown professionally through their participation and were sad to see the study end.

Peer coaching, whether in three stages (Showers, 1982), a pre-observation conference, the observation and a post-observation conference, or five stages (Gottesman and Jennings, 1995), a teacher's request for a visit, the actual visit, the coach reviewing the notes from the visit, the talk after the visit and a review of the whole process, can be used to promote teacher professional growth. With voluntary participation, as in this study, it was very successful. Would this hold true if it was mandated? Many teachers are still very cautious about allowing a colleague access to their private domain. They are happy in their own rooms, and don't necessarily wish to be observed by anyone. The teachers who took part in this study, although initially a little intimidated, were all grateful for the input from their colleagues. Would this be true for those more reluctant to be observed? Perhaps we need to look more closely at this area in future studies.

Limitations of this study

There is still much room for research to fully understand the implications of peer coaching as a productive form of professional development. This study was very limited in size, and because the study used volunteers one needs to be very circumspect in

making claims about the generalizability of the results. Using volunteers, although acceptable for this study in light of the fact that professional development in Vancouver is supposed to be voluntary, definitely influences the results. Teachers who would volunteer for such a study would already be pre-disposed to this type of professional development. The generalizability of the claim that peer coaching is a viable form of professional development is slightly compromised in that I have only shown it to be viable for teachers who wish to make use of it. More research would be needed to determine if peer coaching could be useful for the general population of teachers.

The findings of this study have implications for theory, for professional development and for further research into peer coaching. This study adds to the research on peer coaching as it demonstrates that peer coaching can be used as a method of professional development which can stand alone. It adds another dimension to professional development in that peer coaching truly allows for individual autonomy. By deciding to use peer coaching, teachers may choose what it is they wish to develop, when they would like to develop and how they would like to develop. Further research is still required to explore non-voluntary participation in peer coaching.

Time became an issue at various points in this study. All the participants gave up time before school, on their lunch hours, after school and during their prep time. They have all affirmed that they would continue to give this amount of time to peer coaching because it has proven so valuable a method of professional development, but this is another area needing further research. I found it difficult, at times, to arrange the post-observation conferences soon after the observations. Even when they were scheduled close, they were often postponed. This lead to certain difficulties with memory lose and/or valuable insight being wasted as too much time had elapsed. For peer coaching to become a true method of professional development, the issue of time would need to be addressed. Donald and I wrestled with this whole time concept during one of our conferences:

B: You know, I think that's wonderful. We need to figure out some way of springing time for people though - I think that would be the biggest drawback to this. Is that people have to do it during their prep time and on their lunch hours. I haven't been able to figure it out yet. You know, if we devoted a professional day to pre-observation conferences and the people had to do their observing on their prep times and then do a professional day of post conferences. Then you would have done, both you and your partner, on the professional day, you would have done your pre-conferences and then both done the observing part. Then come back and both of you watch or go through each other's lessons on the next professional day. I don't know if that would work. Even half a day.

D: I think that might work - if we did it twice each year. The first time, you've learned something from it, hopefully and then you want to try it again for the second time.

B: To implement what you've learned, but it doesn't have to be. Once a year would even be better than nothing.

Areas for Further Study

It would be interesting to run a pilot study within a school, or a grade group, to determine the effectiveness of peer coaching in a non-voluntary setting. How will teachers react to the perceived threat of another individual in their classrooms? Perhaps an area to begin would even be exploring teacher readiness to this idea. Perhaps insight could be gained through a simple questionnaire to determine whether teachers are prepared for this level of professional development.

I would suggest that the Vancouver School Board may wish to conduct a questionnaire dealing with professional development in general. They need to go beyond the end-of-workshop evaluation currently done to realistically address the truth about professional development. Is it really meeting the needs of teachers? How can they best address those needs?

The VSB should also look closely at how professional development days are currently used in the system to see if a creative solution can be found to enable peer coaching to make use of some of this time allotment. I feel that teachers would be more

apt to get involved if they did not need to use their own time to meet for the post-observation conferences as these usually lasted 40 minutes at least.

Peer coaching is an inexpensive method of professional development which needs more attention and promotion as an aid to teacher growth or as a method of staff development on its own. It eliminates the necessity of outside 'experts' arriving at a school and allows a staff to draw on its own areas of expertise while focusing on issues particular to its individual situation. Peer coaching is flexible. This flexibility makes it a great form of professional development.

In summary, this study indicates that peer coaching is a flexible, inexpensive and effective method of professional development. It also raises areas of concern about time and the use of volunteers.

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Appendix A: Uses of Peer Coaching
(from Gottesman and Jennings, 1995)

Peer Coaching will:

1) Help establish a line of communication between faculty members

2) Provide teachers a chance to think and talk about their lessons

3) Help bring techniques teachers use instinctively to the conscious level, thus improving the chance they will be repeated

4) Expand teaching skills by expanding coaching skills

5) Increase the amount of time teachers spend on discussing instructional matters

6) Provide adult companionship for teachers

7) Provide technical feedback from respected peers

8) Improve teaching skills of coaches since they often learn as much or more by observing than by being observed

9) Offer administrators a way of getting more people involved in the improvement of instruction

10) Help professionalize teaching since it offers teachers a chance to be involved in decisions that impact on them and their students (shared decision making)

Appendix B:

Some Possibilities for Peer Coaching Requests

(from Gottesman and Jennings, 1995)

Italicized requests indicate those covered directly in this study.

1) Teacher questions, student responses, *teacher follow-up*

2) Handedness

3) *Proximity - teacher movement by arrow on seating chart*

4) Wait-time

5) *Boy-girl responses*

6) Rapid-slow learner responses

7) Black-white responses

8) Positive/negative statements by recording all statements

9) Praise/praise of learning

10) Kinds of reinforcement of correct or incorrect responses

11) Questions on upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy

12) *Interaction with one student or group*

13) *Time spent on materials or directions*

14) *Material management*

15) *Student movement*

16) List of teacher's non content statements

17) Teacher's disciplinary statements

18) Opening set or focus

19) Closure or closing statement

20) Statement of objective

21) Question first or name first

22) *Explanation - list all the steps or points*

23) Student-to-student responses

24) Ending ten minutes: teacher summary, student summary

25) Homework directions