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ABSTRACT
          This article, intended for Reading Recovery teacher leaders,
site coordinators, and trainers, discusses the issue of field visits by
teacher leaders to teachers. The article argues that it is helpful, in
considering field visits to teachers, to understand the various means of
assisting performance described by Tharp and Gallimore in 1988. The first
part of the article discusses the applicability of the following categories
to the interactions between teacher leaders and teachers on visits: modeling;
contingency management; feeding back; instruction; questioning; and cognitive
structuring. The second part of the article offers suggestions on how teacher
leaders might adjust their interactions on visits as teachers develop in
their new roles, considering how learning changes over time as teachers work
toward the goal of self-actualization. It discusses focus, intervention,
post-lesson discussion, and expectations for teacher independence for early
visits, visits at the mid-point of learning, and visits late in the learning
cycle. (SR)

Putting Teacher Visits Into Perspective.

by Noel Jones

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Putting Teacher Visits Into Perspective

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Reading Recovery, an intervention program to "recover" at-risk children, is strongly dependent for its effectiveness upon the professional development provided for teachers. But Reading Recovery is not "teacher recovery." There are many parallels between the program to "recover" children and the teacher development strand, but there are also some important differences. The program for children serves the lowest achievers, those at risk of failure; but adults recruited into Reading Recovery are successful teachers who desire to increase their skill and understanding. The program for children is a one-on-one intervention; but group instruction, collaboration, and interaction are essential elements in teacher training. The program for teachers is not intended to be dependent primarily on one-on-one intervention.

Field visits to individual teachers are included in the Reading Recovery training course because instruction for learning complex skills must include some one-on-one interactions. But it is important to understand that these visits to individual teachers should not carry the main thrust of instruction. Not only is one-on-one instruction time-consuming and expensive, it is also not consistent with the theories of teacher learning upon which Reading Recovery is based. The group training class should be the center piece of the professional development program for teachers. Accordingly, trainers and teacher leaders should work to see that training class time is productive and effective, and that teachers understand that it is their responsibility to learn from collaborative discussions of lessons and in-class activities.

Teacher visits need to be understood within the framework and philosophy of Reading Recovery professional development. The relationship between teacher leader and teacher is in many ways comparable to that between the Reading Recovery teacher and the child. During a lesson, the child focuses on the meaning of texts, while the teacher focuses on the child's problem-solving and offers various kinds of assistance. On field visits the teacher leader encourages the teacher to keep his or her focus on the child's learning progress and performance. Meanwhile, the leader offers various kinds of assistance which is intended, in the long run, to empower the teacher to become more strategic both in teaching and in learning.

Thus, in considering field visits to teachers it is helpful to understand the various means of assisting performance described by Tharp and Gallimore — modeling, contingency management, feeding back, instructing, questioning, and cognitive structuring (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The first part of this article will discuss the applicability of these categories to the interactions between teacher leaders and teachers on visits. But it is also necessary to consider how learning changes over time as teachers work toward the goal of independence and self-actualization described by Tharp and Gallimore and others, and to reflect upon the role of the teacher leader in this process. The second part of this article offers suggestions on how teacher leaders might adjust their interactions on visits as teachers develop in their new roles.

Means of Assisting Performance

Modeling, a primary means of initiating new learning, plays an integral role in Reading Recovery training. Clay urges teachers to, "Teach by demonstration. Use a questioning approach only for established responses." (Clay, 1993b, p. 14.) Modeling occurs during Reading Recovery training classes through behind-the-glass lessons, through demonstrations of procedures by the teacher leader, and through role play among class participants. But modeling (demonstra-

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tion) also occurs on teacher visits where there is opportunity to revisit instruction offered in training classes. There will often be some need for such revisiting; however, if individual teachers continually need modeling on visits, the teacher leader may need to be concerned about learning progress. Perhaps a teacher is having difficulty learning from class sessions because of limited commitment to his or her new role and new learning, or processes ideas more slowly and has greater need to talk over new learning with others. If several teachers need extensive modeling on visits, the teacher leader may want to examine his or her own teaching: perhaps the discussions in front of the glass require more depth; perhaps there is need for more demonstrations or role play; or perhaps the leader is not making things clear enough or covering enough material each class session.

Contingency management involves positive and/or negative consequences of behavior, but it is not to be confused with conditioning, a means of "shaping" behaviors advocated by Skinner (1938). Tharp and Gallimore explain that contingency management does not initiate learning; rather it plays an important role in shoring up or securing new learning. Contingency management, such as the use of encouragement and praise, keeps learning going consistently in appropriate directions and helps avoid the inconsistencies and frustrations that accompany learning without assistance. It helps teachers become clear about what is expected, establishes the emotional climate for learning, and renews energy and commitment. Teacher leaders who take time in class to praise specific accomplishments, write encouraging notes on book progress charts, follow-up consistently and positively on tasks they assign, and accept and recognize teachers' contributions are creating positive training class environments for learning through contingency management. Teacher visits also provide valuable opportunities for contingency management that may not be available in class. By offering specific praise and by recognizing teachers' reflective thinking and expression of ideas, teacher leaders make clear what is expected and valued, and keep teacher learning moving in the right direction.

Feeding back information on performance is critical to skill and/or performance learning. Feedback must be both specific and explicit. Opportunities for providing feedback occur in the training classes through post-lesson discussions, and during role play or other performance activities. However, field visits provide perhaps the best opportunity for feedback to individuals; this is a major reason they are included in the program. Feedback could be something as simple as correcting a procedure; however, in a constructivist view of learning, feedback is less directive and more complex. Perhaps it might be likened to a mirror – through such means as questions,

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suggestions, and discussion, the teacher leader helps the teacher-learner see himself or herself in a new or clearer light.

Instruction is giving information to learners or telling them what to do. As Tharp and Gallimore point out, ". . . The instructing voice of the teacher becomes the self-instructing voice of the learner in the transition from apprentice to self-regulated performer" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 57). Both in the class and on visits, instruction should be used in combination with other means of assistance to be effective. Instruction as the presentation of new information should occur primarily in the training classes, but teacher leaders may need to present or re-present information during teacher visits. Instruction in the form of coaching during a lesson occurs frequently on visits, when the leader might suggest, for example, "Why don't you take that word to boxes?" Of course these coaching suggestions need to be discussed after the lesson, when other means of assisting learning come into play.

"Questioning," according to Tharp and Gallimore, "calls for an active linguistic and cognitive response; it provokes creations by the pupil" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 59). By requiring verbal response, questions encourage learners to call up relevant knowledge and explore new relationships. Tharp and Gallimore differentiate two kinds of questions: questions that assist, and questions that assess. Questions are helpful if they call attention to information or ideas that have not yet been considered or help the learner organize ideas. Teacher leaders may wish to avoid questions that put learners on the defensive; for example, asking teachers to justify actions or decisions. Questioning is an important means of assisting learning at all levels and stages within the Reading Recovery program.

Cognitive structuring provides belief structures or explanatory structures for thinking and acting. Cognitive structures may be tacit (unspoken) or explicit. They may be told to the learner, or the learner may be put in a position to create or revise a cognitive structure. In Reading Recovery, beliefs about the reading process are one example of an important cognitive structure. Obviously we spend considerable time in class developing and exploring cognitive structures, but teacher visits also supply important opportunities for such development. On teacher visits the teacher leaders can observe performance and make inferences about teachers' belief structures. If they perceive that teachers hold misconceptions about reading or learning, the leaders can then call attention to evidence from the lesson that may challenge or confront these beliefs and engage the teachers in discussion to foster reformulation of the concepts.

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Changes Over Time

Tharp and Gallimore's categories are useful in thinking about how new learning is initiated and supported in the training class and on teacher visits. However, these categories do not explain the changes over time in teacher learning or in teacher leader support. Actions like "providing feedback" and "contingency management" suggest that the leader is the person responsible for teachers' learning. In actuality, the views of Tharp and Gallimore are consistent with a construc- tivist view of learning in which the learner must accept responsibility for and take initiative for learning (Reading Recovery readers will recognize the similarity to Clay's ideas). Tharp and Gallimore's "means of assisting performance" are applicable to an early phase in learning when the help of a more capable other is necessary; these authors assume that the learner will progress to a later stage in which the learning is self-initiated and self-directed (though this cycle may be repeated as new areas of learning are encountered).

For most teachers shifting to self-initiated learning is a difficult, often painful and anxiety-laden process, even when strongly supported by the teacher leader and through peer collaboration. However, this shift eventually leads to empowerment and satisfaction. The role of the leader will always depend upon the degree to which the teacher-learner has made the shift to reflective, self-initiated learning. The "means of assistance" come into play, not only for learning how to teach Reading Recovery lessons, but also in fostering change in learning styles and expectations. This suggests that the leader's approach on teacher visits should change over time and in response to the progress of the learner, just as the Reading Recovery teacher's support for children changes over time.

The question addressed here, then, is: How do teacher visits change over time from the beginnings of learning within the program, to some hypothetical mid-point of development, to an 'advanced' stage? Stated another way: How should teacher visits be carried out so that teachers begin and then continue to progress towards independence and self-actualization in their own learning? The suggestions that follow are tentative. They are based upon my own observations and experiences, and they also draw upon ideas from Tharp and Gallimore (1988) and Clay (1991, 1993a, 1993b) in addition to other theorists and many practitioners. Visits at each stage of teachers' learning progress are discussed in terms of: (a) the suggested focus of the visit, (b) decisions on intervention into the child's lesson, (c) the agenda for the post-lesson discussion, and (d) expectations for teacher independence and responsi- bility.

Although the following discussion of change in visits may

imply that time is the critical factor, it is important to note that "early," "mid-point," and "advanced" do not refer to calendar time; they refer rather to the evolution of learning processes and relationships. Some learners will continue in an "early" phase much longer than others, and some will be independent, self-actualized learners almost from the beginning. And, of course, teachers' status as learners should be considered even beyond the training year.

Early Visits

Focus. At the beginning of the training program, teaching procedures receive emphasis both in class and on teacher visits. Procedures should be accompanied by explanation of rationales, even though many teachers will continue to main- tain some misconceptions and competing theories for some time. Another important early focus is systematic observation of children, a skill that will continue to develop indefinitely.

Intervention. Although teachers likely will be learning from observation and discussion of demonstrations in the training class, teacher leaders may wish to intervene during visits in order to demonstrate procedures when teachers are confused or unclear. Teacher leaders should be cautious about decisions to intervene, since intervention may signal to teachers that the leader's role is "expert" and the teacher's role is "novice." On the other hand, interventions may be useful in establishing relationships of collaboration if teacher leaders communicate an attitude of helpfulness and openness to learning, focusing on what might work to help the child learn, rather than correctness of procedure. Teacher leaders need to respect teachers' preferences concerning intervention. For example, some teachers may prefer that the leader demonstrate something during the first lesson and observe during the second; others may prefer the other way round; and still others may prefer that the leader not intervene at all. Role play following the lesson is an effective alternative for providing demonstration if intervention is problematic.

Intervention requires preparation if it is going to occur. Before the lesson, teacher leaders might ask teachers what they feel most comfortable with in their lessons and what they feel is most difficult. This fosters independent monitoring (a type of metacognition) and allows for cooperative decisions about teacher leader intervention and topics of discussion. Mary Fried (personal communication) has recommended that teacher leaders ask permission both of the child and of the teacher before intervening to assume the role of teacher during a lesson. Fried also suggests that leaders may need to be explicit in asking teachers to observe the teaching and in providing guidance about what to observe. The need for explicitness will vary, of course, with teachers' awareness and understanding.

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Post-lesson discussions. Post-lesson discussions of early lessons may follow the "agenda" of the lesson components, praising and confirming good performance (contingency management), and giving specific feedback on one or two correct and one or two of the most important deviations from correct procedure. Interventions or demonstrations that do occur should probably be included as topics of discussion. Teacher leaders may find it effective to encourage teachers to talk about what they observed and understood about the differences between their teaching and that of the teacher leader, giving particular attention to the effects on the child's learning. This helps place learning responsibility on the teachers, and it also helps teacher leaders assess teachers' understandings.

Expectations for teacher independence. It is helpful if ground rules for the visits are established during class and on early visits, including the expectation that teachers must take initiative and responsibility for learning, (for example, take responsibility for making and reviewing notes of the visit). It is best if teacher leaders avoid an authoritarian stance, even in the beginning of the program. By giving teachers opportunity: (a) to ask questions, (b) to talk about what they observed, (c) to comment on how they felt about the visit and its value to them, and (d) to summarize what they have learned, teacher leaders set both conditions and expectations that foster independence in learning. Respecting teachers' ideas does not mean, of course, that teacher leaders should refrain from working actively to change teachers' beliefs and understandings when appropriate.

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Visits at the Mid-Point of Learning

Focus. Sometime after the first visit as teachers develop in their understandings, the focus should shift from procedural aspects of teaching and recording to decision-making processes and how decisions are related to the strengths and needs of the child. For example, when considering teachers' choices during writing (e.g., which words to take to fluency, which words to take to boxes, what kinds of boxes to use, what to do for the child) teacher leaders should avoid notions of 'correctness' while focusing on teachers' thinking processes in arriving at decisions. Just as with children, approximations and moves in the right direction should be recognized and accepted.

Decisions on intervention. At this point in teacher development, teacher leader decisions on intervention (modeling or demonstration) are based upon their analysis of the most important issues in lessons — key issues in terms of children's learning or teachers' beliefs and understandings. For example, teacher expectations about: student independence, instructional level, lesson productivity, and/or acceleration

may be challenged and revised through an intervention, such as the leader taking over the writing component or moving the child to a higher level text.

Post-lesson discussions. The agenda of the post-lesson discussion probably should shift from the lesson format to something like the following: (a) reinforcement for what is going well; (b) exploration of a key issue in the child's learning and its implications, with reference to Clay's ideas followed by collaborative discussion; (c) tidying up one or two procedural confusions if necessary, and (d) summarization. Teacher leaders may begin with genuine praise for teaching strengths (contingency management), then pose a question or bring focus to an incident or pattern within the lesson (perhaps an intervention by the leader) that raises an issue they perceive to be critical. This issue, e.g., independent monitoring, may then be discussed in terms of its meaning as a concept and in terms of its importance and rationale, referring where appropriate to *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* (Clay, 1993b) or other sources. Then leaders may help teachers to analyze children's performance and their own performance in terms of this issue, perhaps by asking teachers to consider such questions as: To what extent is the child independent as a learner? In what ways did you encourage or foster dependence? What will be your focus for this child during the next few lessons? What goals will you set for your own teaching?

Expectations for independence. Teachers are in the process of developing an approach to instruction that parallels the decision-making of research. They must learn to observe closely, analyze patterns of performance, and form hypotheses about the child's needs and what might be effective in shifting the child's understanding and performance. They must then be able to translate this analysis into effective interactions during the lesson, observe closely, and reflect upon these observations to revise hypotheses and plans for the next lessons, etc.

This analytic approach is best developed during class sessions, using all of the means of assisting performance discussed above. Such thinking should form the basis of discussions of demonstration lessons in front of the glass and of follow-up discussions of those lessons with the teachers present. It should also be practiced during class activities with teachers working in pairs or small groups to analyze decisions made, for example, during the writing portions of their last five lessons by examining children's writing books and teachers' lesson notes. Teacher leaders might instruct teachers to evaluate on criteria such as: fostering independence, making learning easy for the child, or developing strategies, while they

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circulate and pose questions to assist, give feedback to the analysis, and praise performance.

Accordingly, teacher leaders can begin to expect teachers to think analytically <u>with assistance</u> on teacher visits, the amount and means of assistance varying with the individual teacher. Before the lesson, teacher leaders may ask the teachers to discuss the children's strengths and progress; but they might also examine records, looking for patterns. Discussions following lessons might resume the earlier discussion of children's strengths and patterns of performance, but leaders may need to structure and guide that discussion. The teachers could be expected to summarize the analysis and the conclusions that have been jointly developed. Opportunity should always be provided for questions and concerns, but leaders should begin to expect the discussion to become more focused and analytical over time.

Visits Late in the Learning Cycle

It is expected that gradually Reading Recovery teachers will become independent in the analytical process described above. For most teachers the process will be largely independent by the end of the training year, but many will continue to need support into the second or third year. In the training class late in the year (and during continuing contact sessions in succeeding years), teachers might be asked to identify and justify issues during lessons behind the glass; and they could work in pairs to analyze audio or video tapes of lessons or lesson records. These class activities should re-establish the repetitive cycle of close observation, analysis, hypothesis-formation, planning, justification of analyses and plans, collection of new evidence, observation, etc.

Visits to teachers who have begun to internalize a reflective, analytic approach should reinforce these expectations and foster further teacher independence. At this point, teacher leaders take a more consultative stance, encouraging teachers to analyze their own lessons, while offering enough assistance to make this process productive and satisfying. Interventions may occur in special cases in which the leader and the teacher are trying together to solve problems of children who are making poor progress, but these interventions would be joint decisions. The "agenda" for the entire visit might now be: (a) pre-lesson discussion of the child's progress and of the teacher's hypotheses and plans, (b) observation of the child and the lesson, and (c) discussion of results and joint problem-solving for difficult issues. Means of assistance now become almost exclusively verbal, through questions, suggestions, alternative hypotheses, encouragement, reading and interpreting together relevant text resources, etc.

In the ideal case then, after several effective training-year visits, teacher leaders would consider the teachers not only capable of productive, independent analysis of children's learning and their own lessons, but also committed to doing so on a regular basis. Visits to teachers who have reached this level of independence in their thinking become <u>colleague</u> visits. The teachers would be engaged in the same reflective thinking processes they would now be using independently, but those processes would be enhanced by collaborative discussion, through which both parties might confirm and/or extend their understandings.

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