Coaching Preservice Teachers in a Virtual Setting

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Abstract

The purpose of this self-study was to examine my coaching conversation skills in the context of individual coaching sessions held with undergraduate student tutors enrolled in my Reading Assessment and Intervention course in Fall 2020. Each tutor met with their tutee once per week for 30 minutes while their partner observed the lesson. Prior to coaching each tutor by videoconference, I viewed the guided reading portion of their lesson and used a note-taking guide to record observations and wonderings. I scripted their book introductions, prompts, and teaching points and wrote down suggestions for subsequent lessons. Each virtual coaching session was recorded and later transcribed for an initial coding based on the literature related to coaching conversations. The codes were then collapsed into the themes related to building rapport, reflection, consulting, and questioning. Analyzing my coaching language has given me the opportunity to grow my skills as a coach and will help me to encourage preservice teachers to be reflective and self-directed learners.

Keywords: Preservice Teachers, Virtual Teaching, Coaching, Teacher Preparation, Literacy

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Instructor: What are you thinking about for your next lesson with [your student]?

Tutor: I want to study the prompts so I have something to say instead of just making it up in the moment.

Instructor: That's ok. You waited until she was done and did say something. You weren't afraid to try something.

Tutor: Finding one thing to teach about and not being nervous about it – I have been nervous during the lesson, but I have my lesson right next to me so I don't get lost.

Instructor: And that is obvious. I can tell that you do for sure. I could not tell you were nervous, and you kept the guided reading lesson going, and the level is spot on. She might be ready to move into something a little more difficult.

Tutor: Yeah, I might try that.

In the exchange above, I, the instructor, began the last part of a coaching conversation with an undergraduate student tutor by asking an open-ended question in order to elicit reflection. The tutor responded with a statement related to something we had been studying in our class sessions, prompting children during their reading of a text. I then eased the student's fears by affirming that she did something positive by

trying a prompt even when she was nervous. This conversation was unique because not only were the tutor and I meeting in a virtual space (Zoom); but also, we were discussing her experience as a tutor working with an early reader in a virtual setting.

In this article, I share the results of a self-study on the virtual coaching of preservice teacher tutors I conducted during the Fall 2020 semester, in the middle of a pandemic that forced me to move our undergraduate reading clinic to a virtual setting. This situation, however, allowed me to utilize my training as a literacy coach, which is how I spent several years during my elementary school teaching career. I had the luxury to view recorded virtual tutoring sessions in full and meet with my students, also referred to as preservice teachers (PSTs) in this article, individually to discuss their instruction. The recordings and transcripts of these individual coaching sessions serve as the data sources for this study.

Preservice teachers need many integrated field experiences before they enter the last year of their educator preparation programs (AACTE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Koubek et al., 2021; Piro et al., 2015; Richards, 2006; Worthy & Patterson, 2001), which usually includes a field-based semester and a clinical teaching semester. These experiences, however, are not sufficient unless they are paired with coaching by an expert other, such as a university course instructor, field-based supervisor, or cooperating mentor teacher (AACTE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Land, 2018; Mosely Wetzel et al., 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). The move to emergency remote instruction had a detrimental effect on field-based experiences (Bacevich, 2021; Kidd & Murray, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020), as PSTs were not able to enter the schools physically to observe instruction and work with children. This created the need for virtual teaching opportunities, thus forcing instructors to provide virtual coaching.

The purpose of this self-study was to examine my coaching conversation skills in the context of individual coaching sessions held with

undergraduate students enrolled in my Reading Assessment and Intervention course. The question that guided this study was: In what ways did I utilize coaching and consulting to navigate coaching conversations with preservice teacher tutors?

Review of the Literature

In a national survey exploring the roles of specialized literacy professionals, one of the key findings of Bean and colleagues (2015) was that those who identified as literacy coaches had received little training in the area of coaching teachers. This is also an area where university instructors who work with PSTs may need more professional development (Wetzel et al., 2020). Adults learn differently from children (Knowles et al., 2005), and those who coach teachers, whether practicing or preservice, should respect these differences (i.e., adults have previous experiences and need a problem-centered focus). Topics central to this learning include acquiring a repertoire of questioning strategies, eliciting deep reflection from teachers by utilizing conversational strategies such as paraphrasing and wait time, finding a balance between consulting and collaboration, and, most relevant given the past year, engaging teachers in virtual coaching.

Questioning, Coaching Language, and Reflection

There must be space in coaching conversations for teachers to reflect and think out loud about the literacy instruction occurring in their classrooms. The regular school day does not leave much time for this process, so scheduling time for it is imperative (Armstrong, 2012). Literacy coaches can sometimes enter coaching conversations with their own plans; however, if they take time to listen to teachers, an organic, teacher-focused agenda might emerge. Research in this area has shown that when teachers are given the chance to reflect alongside a coach, they tend to adjust their instruction to better serve their students (Peterson et al., 2009). Preservice teachers should be afforded similar opportunities. Even though they are new

teachers, they have concerns and questions that should be heard and addressed by teacher educators.

During coaching conversations with teachers, coaches may utilize questions to begin and guide the conversation, gain clarification, dig deeper into the teacher's responses, and invite the teacher to reflect on instruction. These questions help the coach keep the conversation focused on the teacher, the classroom, and the students, rather than on the coach's agenda (Armstrong, 2012; Collet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wall & Palmer, 2015). The coach uses questioning strategies to invite the teacher to share theories and practices related to teaching and learning (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Wall and Palmer (2015) asserted that coaches should build a repertoire of possible questions to use during these conversations and that this takes time, planning, and a familiarity with the teachers with whom the coach is working.

Using Costa and Garmston's (1994) types of questions as a framework to analyze coaches' questions during coaching conversations, Hudson and Pletcher (2020) discovered that coaches typically begin conversations with open-ended questions in order to allow teachers to share their ideas and concerns. Some of the open-ended questions used in the spring, however, after considering the transcripts of their fall conversations, were more direct in order to elicit a focused response while still keeping possibilities open for the teacher. After reflecting on their conversations (Hudson & Pletcher, 2020), the coaches asked more questions that contained positive presuppositions (i.e., phrasing questions in a way that assumed the teacher was indeed engaging in a certain practice) and purposefully altered questions to include tentative key words (e.g., might, may, perhaps).

Videorecording and then viewing and transcribing coaching conversations can be a powerful strategy for coaches who want to analyze how they structure their questions. Roleplaying with other coaches is also beneficial as it allows coaches to enact on-the-run question

practice (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Hudson and Pletcher (2020) and others (see Engin, 2013; Mosley-Wetzel et al., 2017; Wall & Palmer, 2015) have included lists of possible questions and question-starters with which to experiment.

Consulting, Collaboration, and Balance

Armstrong (2012) used the term "coach-expert" to describe the role that a coach shifts into when giving advice or consulting. Researchers (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Hasbrouck, 2017; Lofthouse & Hall, 2014; Wall & Palmer, 2015) view consulting as when coaches position themselves as the keepers of knowledge and make decisions for the teacher, therefore taking power away from the teacher. In a study of literacy coaches who had not received much training in coaching, Pletcher and colleagues (2019) found that the consulting strategies came easier to the coaches than did coaching strategies such as asking questions, paraphrasing, and utilizing wait time. These coaches reported that they saw this as part of their role – to help teachers solve classroom problems by giving specific advice. This is not to say that coaches should never take a consulting stance. In fact, Ippolito (2010), Mangin & Dunsmore (2013), and Schachter and colleagues (2018) encourage it to some extent, as there are instances when it may be helpful and necessary.

Collaboration between the coach and the teacher occurs when the coach shifts from a role of consulting into a facilitative role. In this space, the coach and teacher can work together to find and solve problems and make plans to take action (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Wall & Palmer, 2015). In this situation, coaches use questioning strategies, discussed above, in order to elicit a more organic conversation (Collet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wall & Palmer, 2015; Wetzel et al., 2017). Armstrong (2012) posited that teachers can then be in control of making meaning, rather than solely listening to a coach give advice. Hudson and Pletcher (2019) found that one coach set the goal of working as a collaborator during coaching conversations with teachers and was able to help teachers form their own ideas and

come to their own conclusions, rather than follow the coach's agenda.

There is value in both coaching and consulting, depending on when each strategy is utilized during a coaching conversation. Through thoughtful reflection on coaching practices, coaches can begin to find this balance. Pletcher et al. (2019) reported that one of the coaches they worked with commented that reflecting upon her recorded coaching conversations was powerful because she realized how heavily she relied on consulting; thus, analyzing her recordings aided her in strengthening her coaching skills. In this same study, some coaches tended to exercise consulting strategies when working with newer teachers and coaching strategies when meeting with more experienced teachers. They discussed wanting to make a shift and having coaching conversations with teachers be as "natural" as possible. They also strove to create a healthy balance of coach-to-teacher talk, thereby enabling the teacher to engage as a full participant in the conversation in order to facilitate their own growth.

Coaching Preservice Teachers

Providing opportunities for PSTs to practice strategies they are studying in their courses is valuable; however, an instructor's feedback and coaching can have positive effects on novice teachers' skills (Cohen et al., 2020). Mosely Wetzel et al. (2017) advocate for a "more practice-based apprenticeship model of teacher preparation" (p. 535) as well. Education preparation faculty need not wait until the last year of students' certification programs to expose PSTs to authentic teaching platforms. Simulations and tutorial settings can be effective contexts for novice teachers to develop pedagogical skills and offer plenty of opportunities for coaching.

Utilizing video recordings of teaching and accompanying in-person or virtual coaching have been effective ways to implement practicums into educator preparation programs. Cohen et al. (2020) used "immersive virtual environments" (p. 225), while Husbye et al.

(2018) relied on recordings of PST lessons as impetuses for instructor feedback. Retrospective Video Analysis (RVA), developed by Mosely and colleagues (2017) has also been widely implemented as a means to produce "concrete data to utilize" (Land, 2018, p. 504). According to Mosely (2017), teacher educators use RVA to help PSTs fully grasp literacy instruction and reading processes through the components of the model, which are recording, viewing, and identifying strategies.

Coaching cycles are frequently reported in the literature regarding PSTs, as this is an effective coaching structure in the schools and one where each step in the cycle can occur virtually (Keefe, 2020). During a coaching cycle (Mosely Wetzel, 2019; Stahl et al., 2016), a more experienced other and the PST plan and discuss a lesson in a pre-conference. The coach observes the lesson; the PST reflects on the lesson. The coach then provides feedback during a post-conference.

The Coaching with CARE model (Mosely Wetzel et al., 2020) utilizes a coaching cycle that is Collaborative, Critical, Content-focused, Appreciative, Reflective, and Experiential. Similar to other coaching models, the discourse during coaching conversations is "grounded in day-to-day teaching" (Land, 2018, p. 504). The coach also intentionally plans an open-ended question with which to open the conversation and has a tentative plan for how the conversation might unfold (Mosely Wetzel, 2020). Cohen et al. (2020) asserted that these coaching sessions can be very effective in growing PSTs' skills, more so than solely requiring that PSTs engage in some kind of reflective practice.

Virtual Coaching

Viewing lessons and coaching teachers at a distance provides a high level of convenience that in-person observation and coaching might not. Coaches are not tied to a certain time to view lessons and can provide feedback at their convenience (McLeod et al., 2019). They can leave either voice-recorded or written feedback, or they can schedule coaching conferences with teachers at a time that works for both (Israel et

al., 2013), rather than being constrained to limited time slots and feeling rushed. Coaches are able to work with teachers at almost any location, which means less travel (Israel et al., 2013; McLeod et al., 2019) and the ability to work with teachers who perhaps teach in rural areas (Husbye et al., 2018).

Video-recording lessons, in either face-to-face or virtual settings, opens up possibilities for teachers and coaches to analyze lessons at a deeper level (Keefe, 2020) since they are able to concentrate on what both the teacher and the students are doing (Christ et al., 2012). Wetzel et al. (2017) calls this "slow[ing] down the moment" (p. 533). Being able to pause the lesson while viewing it helps the teacher and coach focus in on specific situations and more richly describe the teaching and learning that are occurring. This method makes it easier to give detailed, specific, and even time-stamped feedback. After reviewing the feedback, teachers can produce more specific goals related to pieces of the lesson that were analyzed (Christ et al., 2012).

Recording, viewing, and analyzing lessons allows teachers and coaches to utilize technology in perhaps different ways than they have before, especially when teaching virtually. By providing preservice teachers (PSTs) with opportunities to record their teaching, we are preparing them for what they will most likely be expected to do as inservice teachers (Christ et al., 2012). Many preservice teachers are required to participate in testing related to certification, such as the EdTPA (Education Teacher Performance Assessment), so being comfortable in front of a video camera is important (Wetzel et al., 2017). Keefe (2020) also asserted that PSTs should be supported to practice virtual teaching, even post-pandemic.

Methods

This qualitative self-study allowed me to take a closer look at the ways in which I navigated individual coaching sessions with teacher candidate tutors during a course I teach each fall, Reading Assessment and Intervention (until

recently known as Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Problems). Self-study has a "focus on practice," and "the action of self in relation to other(s) reveals the professional identity and knowledge of the researcher" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 21). Fall 2020 was the fifth time I have taught this course at my present institution; however, this was the first semester I was able to implement individual coaching sessions with tutors. I did not utilize a particular coaching model.

Setting

This study occurred at a regional midsized university in south Texas. Pre-pandemic, the tutorial sessions were held after a one-hour traditional class session in the library of the elementary school located on the university campus. Two graduate teaching assistants and I would circulate the room, observe parts of lessons, leave written feedback for tutors, and hold whole-group debriefing sessions afterwards.

Even though we were not able to host our usual face-to-face reading clinic during the fall of 2020, we still needed to provide PSTs with teaching experiences. We recruited second-grade children from a local Title I elementary school by requesting teachers to select children who needed supplemental reading support based on assessments (e.g., Star Renaissance, running records) and classroom observations. The school had already provided devices to all children for remote instruction purposes. We met with parents virtually to describe the logistics of the virtual tutoring at the beginning of the semester.

The undergraduate teacher candidate tutors were partnered with a classmate and randomly assigned a child tutee. Each tutor met with their tutee once per week for 30 minutes while their partner observed the lesson. The lessons were scheduled according to tutor and family availability. All lessons were recorded via Zoom™ so that the instructors and two graduate teaching assistants could view parts of the lesson and provide feedback and coaching. The tutors used a structured lesson plan. During each

lesson, they engaged students in a high frequency word review, reading of a familiar text and a new book, and word study. Tutors who worked with emergent readers also planned lessons that included working with letters and phonemic awareness. We provided digital leveled texts for the tutors to use during lessons and word study kits containing magnetic letters, dry-erase boards, and journals for the children to use at home during their lessons.

Participants

I am an associate professor in my seventh year at my university. I teach reading courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Prior to this position, I served as an elementary classroom teacher, reading specialist, Reading Recovery® teacher, and literacy coach. This self-study joins two of my primary research interests, literacy coaching and the ways in which preservice teachers work with children who find literacy learning difficult.

Students enrolled in several certification programs (Early Childhood [EC]-Grade 6 Reading, Special Education, Early Childhood STEM, Bilingual Education, Grades 4-8 Math, Grades 7-12 English, all secondary content areas) take this course. Most of these students have taken foundational reading courses prior to enrolling in the reading assessment and intervention course. For this study, 11 of the 21 student tutors (eight Latina females, 3 White females) provided consent to record our coaching sessions. Nine of these students were seeking EC-6 Reading certification and two were seeking certification in Special Education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to meeting with each undergraduate student tutor, I viewed their recorded lesson and used a note-taking guide (see Appendix A for blank note-taking guide and Appendix B for a completed note-taking form) to record observations and wonderings related to their teaching and to their tutees' reading behaviors during the guided reading component of the lesson. I scripted their book introductions,

prompts, and teaching points and wrote down suggestions for subsequent lessons. Each 30-minute coaching session was recorded via Zoom and later transcribed for coding. I read through each transcript to get a sense of the data as a whole. I then conducted an initial a priori coding based on the literature related to coaching conversations (Saldaña, 2021). The codes were then collapsed into the following themes: building rapport with tutors in a virtual environment, promoting tutor reflection, providing specific feedback to elevate instruction, placing an emphasis on consulting, and using questioning strategies.

Trustworthiness

In order to establish trustworthiness for this self-study, I analyzed two types of data for triangulation purposes: the transcripts of the individual coaching session recordings and the observation notes I wrote as I viewed each tutorial session. I also practiced disciplined subjectivity as I read through and coded transcripts. This process helped me to analyze the data using only what the literature says in regard to literacy coaching and to view the recordings with a critical eye (Guba, 1981).

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented as themes derived from coding the coaching conversation transcripts with 11 teacher candidate tutors and the notes I completed during my observations of their video-recorded guided reading lessons.

Building Rapport with Tutors in a Virtual Environment

Because this course took place during the first full semester of the pandemic, I had mostly met virtually with my students for the first five weeks of the semester. These first few weeks were crucial to building rapport with students because I wanted them to be comfortable with me since I would be observing their teaching and providing them with feedback. It can be challenging to build rapport virtually; however, it is something I paid close attention to during

virtual class sessions. I played music before class and during breaks and engaged my students in games, fun quizzes and surveys, and breakout room discussions and activities. This rapport helped when it came time to begin working with them individually. I also believe that I demonstrated for them ways in which they could work with their tutees during virtual lessons.

During each individual meeting with the tutors, there was at least one instance noted in the transcripts where I attempted to build rapport by responding to their concerns about lessons. Several students shared how they were uncomfortable prompting their tutee during the guided reading portion of the lesson and lamented that they were unsure of exactly what to say when the child needed support. My responses to this included: "We all struggle with prompting" and "It will get more comfortable as you go along" and were meant to quell their fears and help them feel like they were not the only ones experiencing these feelings. Tutors also worried about their book introductions and how they may have sounded too scripted. To address these concerns, I responded, "It will come with practice. It will get easier where you can just glance at what you have written down and continue with the lesson."

Promoting Tutor Reflection

I tried to allow for as much dialogue as possible in order for the tutors to have time to reflect on their lessons. It seemed many of them did not need prompting to reflect; they had questions ready and things they wanted to know. One student was worried she had given her tutee too much information about the book during her book introduction and asked, "Did I do too much on the introduction…should I have not been so up front with that [information] during the book introduction?" Others were curious about prompting and spent time during our conversation reflecting on what they had seen in their recorded lesson videos:

- I noticed a lot of blends and diphthongs she does not understand and she gets

frustrated and says, "I don't know this word - I can't do it." I kind of get stuck because I try the things that I know to help her, but I don't want to make her too frustrated where she does not want to keep going.
- If she is reading a paragraph and she gets a word wrong should I stop her then or wait until she gets to the end of the page? I was questioning myself because I did not feel like interrupting her.
- All those things will help and what you said about prompting and trying to think on the fly - there are things that I need to work on.
- I want to study the prompts so I have something to say instead of just making it up in the moment.

Two students wondered about the teaching point and expressed that they were confused about what to attend to during this final part of the guided reading lesson. "The hardest part was teaching something at the end, I did not know what to choose" was one student's confession, and "I think that my problem was that I thought that I needed to stick to the lesson plan and I forgot that you said that we could choose the teaching point" was another's.

Providing Specific Feedback to Elevate Instruction

During the beginning of each coaching session, I focused my attention on providing positive and specific feedback. I did not provide as much as I would have liked, as I devoted more time to consulting (see the next theme). Examples of positive feedback included: "You are very positive with her, you work really well with her. I can tell you work with children. You are so calm and teacher-like. That was enjoyable to watch" and "You are very friendly. You have a great disposition, and you seem patient, even over virtual, and you were able to bring out her personality."

My goal with these statements was to help the tutors see something in themselves that perhaps they did not see when they viewed their videos,

as many of them commented on problems they had with the lesson, rather than the strengths of their teaching.

Examples of specific feedback I provided included:

- You took her beyond the literal interpretation of the book and asked her what lessons she could learn.
- Even though you have your notes you made it like a conversation over what the book was going to be about.
- You told her the genre which is important. You said, "We are going to see some interesting facts," and you gave her a brief book introduction with meaning which I think she understood what the gist of the book was. You said, "This book is going to talk about animals that live in underground homes," and you said why some of the animals live underground and gave her some examples.

In these examples, I utilized tactics that are similar to those I use with children during guided reading lessons. By noticing and naming what the tutors did during their lessons, I was trying to ensure that these statements would be strong enough for them to remember to implement these same strategies during subsequent lessons.

I doled out some praise, which I try to do in a measured manner so that it is worthwhile and meaningful. There were times, listening to the transcripts, where I noticed that some of my praise was generic or used the same qualifier. For example, I said the following to two tutors about their general lesson plan: "So, you had all the pieces which is great" and "You stuck to your lesson plan which is great." In another instance, I said, "Your book introduction was really natural, which I appreciated." This particular statement bothered me somewhat because I made what the tutor did (and did well) more about my critique of the lesson than about the instruction and learning that was occurring.

Placing an Emphasis on Consulting

Consulting played a dominant role in my conversations with students. After viewing each guided reading lesson, I noted key points that I needed to reinforce with the tutors. Much of this existed in the form of advice that I hoped would resonate with them as they reflected on their lessons. I noticed patterns across their lessons, and the patterns that arose most often were related to keeping the book introduction natural and organic, presenting the illustrations and possibilities in the book to the child during the book introduction, presenting visual information during the book introduction, providing prompting during the reading, and engaging the child in a teaching point after the reading.

The success of the guided reading lesson hinges on the teacher's introduction of the book. The introduction should be tailored to the children as well as to the text. It should include the gist of the text and might include genre, story elements, text features, vocabulary, high frequency words, or complex language structures, among other information (see Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). It should also be a time for conversational exchange between the teacher and the children. While viewing the tutors' recorded guided reading lessons, I noticed patterns in their book introductions that were important to address during our individual conference sessions. Because book introductions were somewhat unfamiliar to them, they relied on the scripts of the book introduction they had written prior to the lesson, which caused the introductions to sound robotic and scripted rather than natural and organic. I provided the following advice: "Have fun; be enthusiastic," "Your introduction was speedy. Make it sound a little more natural even when you have a script," and "At first, we tend to read the script we've written word-for-word because we don't want to miss anything, but that is something that will come with practice."

Some tutors neglected to involve the child in noticing and discussing the illustrations and the possibilities that the book had to offer. I suggested to one tutor that she "talk about what the book is about and let her make predictions." To another, my advice was, "Invite her to make

some predictions and connections. Ask her what she sees on the front cover and what she thinks this book will be about." I wanted to get across to them that what we are teaching them to do is what readers do when they select a new book to read, in other words, to introduce a book to themselves.

Several tutors looked through the book with the child and provided the gist of the text but failed to include any feeding forward of visual information to help the child negotiate potentially tricky portions of the text. In order to mitigate this, I told a tutor, "While you're looking through pictures, have her locate a word she knows by saying, 'Here is a word you know: ___. Find it.'" During another conversation, I suggested to the tutor, "You might say, 'On this page Max Monkey is helping by scratching elephant's back. I wonder what three letters scratch begins with. Say it. Find it.' Embed this visual work in the natural book introduction." At the same time, I wanted to caution them against overusing this strategy by suggesting that they not feel like they have to find words on each page, thus leaving the child with some work to do.

Prompting during the child's reading of a text was another facet of the guided reading lesson where the teacher candidate tutors required a great amount of support. Some tutors needed specific guidance on what to say when a child came to a point of difficulty and required a call to action. In one instance, I said, "At a point of difficulty, you might say, 'So what might the elephant say that begins with /f/?' Give her a prompt to entice strategy use. You know that you want her to say the first part by getting her mouth ready, so prompt her toward that." On the other hand, some tutors provided too much prompting, usually in the form of just telling the child the word or giving them more of what might be considered "hints" that did not steer the child toward independent problem solving. In one of these cases I recommended, "We want to get out of their way when they're problem-solving. Prompt them when their miscue interferes with meaning."

There were several times during the coaching conversations when I provided advice in the form of prompts the tutors could have used during specific moments in the text, such as:

- Batteries would be a good word to break apart if he's stuck on that word.
- A higher-level prompt would be 'Something wasn't right here – go back and check.' If that doesn't call the child to action, try, 'Here's what you read – that didn't look right or make sense.'
- Instead of saying, let's try this word again, be more specific. Try, 'Go back and read that sentence – something didn't make sense.' This sends the message that you want her to listen to herself and go back and check on herself.

I also suggested to almost every tutor that they get to know the prompts as well as they can by stating, "Check out the prompting guide and write down some of those prompts so that you have something to say when she comes to tricky parts;" and "Study one or two prompts a week until you take them on board." I also reassured them that it is "okay to look at your notes where you have written potential prompts."

Finally, the teaching point that is supposed to occur after the child reads the text was an area where I offered a large amount of consulting. I mentioned to several tutors that the purpose of the teaching point is to teach the child something that came up during the reading of the text. The teaching point is powerful and immediate, and the goal is to teach the child something by example that they can use always. Several tutors neglected to include a teaching point, and to one tutor I said, "You missed an opportunity by not including a teaching point." I also provided specific examples of teaching points that they might have tried:

- How about the figurative language on pages 14 and 15?
- Look for a pattern in her miscues during what she just read.

- Pull out a difficult word and write it on a whiteboard. Show him how to break the word. Then take it back into the text.
- Celebrate the work they did (even if you prompted them) on a certain page. Say, "When you came to this tricky part, here's what you did to help yourself. Keep trying that."

Using Questioning Strategies

The use of specific and carefully worded questions was rare during these conferences. I posed generic questions, such as "How are you doing?," "Do you have any questions?," and "Does that make sense?" With several students, I honed in on some of the lesson components by asking if they had questions that were specific to those (e.g., "Any questions about the book introduction?" "…prompting?" "…decoding?"). As I reviewed the transcripts, I realized that I should have utilized my coaching skills and asked more specific questions that were geared toward patterns I noticed during observations of their lessons. I also realize that my lack of specific questioning may be tied directly to the amount of consulting (vs. feedback and coaching) that I did. It might have also had something to do with the limited amount of time I had to coach each of the 21 undergraduate student tutors.

Implications for Practice

The semester during which this self-study occurred had meaningful opportunities to coach my students who were serving as tutors. During previous semesters' pre-pandemic tutoring sessions, I was only able to observe five to eight minutes of seven tutors' lessons each week. Therefore, over the course of the semester, I may have only observed part of one guided reading lesson per tutor. Time dedicated to coaching was also limited, as I left written feedback for them and provided small or whole group coaching after the tutoring sessions concluded. During the semester under study, however, I was able to view every lesson taught by every tutor because they were taught virtually and recorded. Thus, I provided more specific

coaching directly related to the reading process and reading strategies than I would have in previous semesters. Anecdotally, my students shared how valuable the individual conferences were and how much they appreciated the teaching opportunity and the feedback, especially since they were missing out on other field-based experiences.

I have always considered the use of "wait time" to be one of my strengths when working with children in schools, preservice teachers in courses, and practicing teachers in coaching contexts. During this semester, though, I found it was more difficult to use wait time in a virtual setting. Perhaps it was just the staring at another face over the computer screen that seemed awkward, or maybe I was focusing on helping the tutors to be as comfortable as possible by omitting any stretches of silence. Whatever the reason, this is something I need to work on in order to give the PSTs time to process so that they can reflect and respond to my questions and feedback (Cazden, 2001; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Johnston, 2004). Teachers need time not just to problem-solve, but to problem-find as well. During these conference sessions, when I afforded them time to reflect, they usually brought up some of the same points that I had already intended to discuss with them and had the same wonderings as I did about the children with whom they were working.

Realizing that some tutors might find it intimidating to meet with their professor individually, especially in a virtual setting, I made sure to begin each coaching session with a brief chat about how they were doing and how their tutoring sessions and other classes were going. This rapport-building is crucial to setting the stage for productive coaching sessions where PSTs feel comfortable reflecting on their teaching and asking questions that will move them forward as teachers (Heineke, 2013; Lowenhaupt et al., 2014; Pletcher et al., 2019; Wall & Palmer, 2015). Adjusting body language in a virtual setting is challenging; however, I made sure my facial expressions during these meetings were relaxed and that I smiled at certain points during the conversation.

I relied on consulting strategies significantly more than coaching strategies. A question I asked myself after reviewing the videos and transcripts was, "Why do I assume my students can't respond to coaching strategies such as questioning, paraphrasing, and wait time?" I knew they were learning about the reading process in my course and in other courses, but I was not facilitating opportunities for them to reflect upon and discuss that knowledge during these conversations. Also, I noticed many patterns in consulting as related to certain topics, especially providing effective book introductions, prompting the child during the reading of the text, and delivering strong teaching points. While individual coaching is indeed beneficial, I may also try some small group coaching as well with students who have similar strengths and growth areas. It would also be advantageous for a group of colleagues to form a study group around coaching tutors in the reading clinic, as has previously been suggested for school literacy coaches (Mosley Wetzel et al., 2020; Rainville & Jones, 2008). This study grouping could be a venue for videorecording coaching sessions and role-playing.

Related to my lack of coaching was my lack of questioning. I did not offer these teacher candidate tutors the same kinds of questions that I might normally pose to practicing teachers. Before giving away my thoughts about a specific part of the lesson, I should have asked an open-ended question that would provoke reflective behavior and lead them to connect to previous learning in this course and other courses and discover strategies they might have used. Throughout these coaching sessions, I was explicit in telling them that they needed to study the prompts with which they might scaffold children's reading. It turns out that I need to follow my own advice and have some potential questions and prompts prepared prior to each conference.

Facilitating self-analysis, student tutors recorded their lessons so that their videos were available to view and review. I assumed they had viewed their videos prior to our individual conference sessions, but some of them had not. Next semester, I will require that they view a segment of their video (most likely the guided reading portion) and complete a note-taking form, with time-stamps included, along with their reflections and questions. They can then send this document to me a few days prior to our conversation so I may consider it while I am viewing their videos and taking notes. This way, I will be prepared with possible coaching questions and statements that will encourage them to reflect on their lessons in meaningful ways.

Limitations

As this was a self-study, the data was collected for a small number of student participants enrolled in one course at one university. By analyzing data collected in small studies such as this one, "we can learn about specific conditions for learning that support preservice teachers in developing a reflective practice" (Mosely Wetzel et al., 2019, p. 52). The course instructor provided the coaching in an individualized setting, which may have caused the undergraduate student tutors to be intimidated and nervous. As the course instructor and coach, I, the first author, relied on my own analysis of the data collected and did not invite peer reviews.

Conclusion

While the pandemic deterred me from offering students crucial face-to-face tutoring experiences, it had an effect I had not anticipated. I made time to meet individually with preservice teacher tutors, thus providing more coaching and consulting than I had been able to provide in previous years. I learned some things about myself as a coach of soon-to-be teachers that I will carry with me this coming fall. Analyzing my own coaching language has given me the opportunity to grow my skills as a coach and will help me to encourage preservice teachers to be reflective and self-directed learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Coaching Note-Taking Guide

Instructor Observations:	Instructor Wonderings:
Book Introduction:	Book Introduction:
Book Reading:	Book Reading:
Discussion:	Discussion:
Teaching Point:	Teaching Point:

Appendix B
Sample Coaching Note-Taking Form

Coaching Notes

Instructor Observations:	Instructor Wonderings:
You're so friendly and sweet with her! Great disposition.	
Book Introduction: You asked good questions to get her thinking about the text.	**Book Introduction:** Try a little more enthusiasm! Also, engage the child by asking her to tell you about the cover and make connections. You asked her to tell you about the pictures, but then you told her about the pictures and started pointing out words. Instead of saying, "Do you know what this word is," have her identify one or two high frequency words as you're looking through the book and have her predict and locate one or two words that you think she may not be able to get to on her own. After the book introduction, you might say, "Now let's read to find out…"
Book Reading: *Souter/sweater* – great part to stop and do some prompting! Same with *swom/swam*	**Book Reading:** *souter/sweater* – prompts – Try: "Say the first part and think what would make sense." *"was looked after"* – that might be a good place to introduce in book introduction – structure *swom/swam* – prompt – Try: "You said *swom*. Does that sound right?"
Discussion: "Tell me about what you just read. What happened in the story?" Good prompting to get her to tell you more.	**Discussion:** Child gave very short answers. You might also say, "Tell me more." It's ok to go back into the book when referring to certain parts.
Teaching Point: Succinct	**Teaching Point:** *Sweater* – connect back to prompt. So you might say "You checked the first two letters, checked the picture, and thought what would look right and make sense."