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DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND DETERMINING THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF A PEER COACHING PROGRAM

By  
Catherine Russo

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
the Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
April 15, 2003

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved May 2004

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## ABSTRACT

CATHERINE RUSSO  
DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND DETERMINING THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF A PEER COACHING PROGRAM  
2003/2004  
DR. RONALD CAPASSO  
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Professional development is an important part of teaching, and there are a multitude of opportunities for teachers to attend workshops and seminars on a host of topics. The purpose of this project was to determine the effectiveness of peer coaching as a valuable professional development activity for teachers. A group of twelve volunteer participants visited their partners' classrooms and provided feedback on aspects of teaching pre-determined by the teachers themselves. Participants received guidelines for deciding on a focus area during a pre-conference, recording data, and providing feedback at a post conference. Each participant provided feedback concerning each visit and responded to a final summative reflection about the process in general. The post survey revealed that most participants feel that peer coaching is a valuable tool for refining teaching skills, especially because it connects directly with what happens in the classroom. Most participants believe that visits by peer coaches differ from administrative observations, in that they are non-threatening and are less subjective.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

CATHERINE RUSSO  
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This project determines the validity of peer coaching as a valuable authentic professional development activity. Participants conducted peer coaching visits and provided feedback on the experience. Their comments confirm that peer coaching is a valuable and enjoyable activity through which teachers can refine their skills in a non-threatening way.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to my family, particularly my husband Patrick and my children, Jason, Kimberly, and Nicole, for constantly supporting me in my effort to earn my Masters Degree and complete this project. They lived through many days of my being attached to the computer for this purpose.

I would also like to thank the administration and faculty of Chestnut Ridge Middle School, especially my volunteer peer coaches, for all their assistance and support. Special thanks to Jim Tarr, who worked closely with me on several projects during my internship.

Extra special thanks goes to Arleen Letki, my mentor, who gave up many hours of her valuable time to talk with me, guide me, and encourage me through this process.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was to develop and monitor the trial use of peer coaching for both non-tenured and tenured teachers at Chestnut Ridge Middle School in Washington Township, New Jersey. This project was a case study. The intern developed, implemented, and monitored a peer coaching program for voluntary participants. The intern evaluated the program for its effectiveness as a formative professional development experience for teachers. The expectation was that the process would help teachers rise to the level of “accomplished practice” as described by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, n.d., p. 3) as opposed to being merely “highly qualified” as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (ETS, 2002, p.38). National Board Certification is a rigorous year-long process in which teachers reflect systematically about all aspects of their practice. Candidates for National Board Certification are evaluated by their peers throughout the country. The teacher-evaluators award certification to those teachers who have provided “clear and convincing, evidence” (NBPTS) of high levels of performance in content area knowledge, knowledge of students and pedagogy, and community and professional outreach. *No Child Left Behind* requires that all teachers employed in public schools be “highly qualified” by the year 2005, meaning only that all teachers must have “full certification, a bachelor’s degree and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching” (NCLB, p. 1). The purpose

of peer coaching is to provide teachers the opportunity to share ideas and offer each other support as they seek to go beyond being merely “highly qualified.”

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project was to develop, implement, and monitor a peer coaching program at Chestnut Ridge Middle School using the ideas of Charlotte Danielson (1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000) as well as the five core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1999, pp. 6-8):

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The program culminated with a survey of participants to determine their perception of the effectiveness of peer coaching as a formative means of professional development. The ultimate goal of this project was that teachers at Chestnut Ridge Middle School would use peer coaching as a formative means of professional development.

### Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will apply:

*Classroom based assessment* is a system of gathering data about classroom experiences for further understanding the nuances of teaching and learning, encouraging quality teaching, and enhancing learning environments for both students and teachers.

*Collaboration* is a process in which teachers work together on an equal basis to develop ideas for instruction and create solutions for problems.

*Collaborative peer coaching* is a means through which one teacher collects data for another teacher and then together they interpret the data and draw conclusions about teaching strategies or classroom management issues.

*Coaching* is a process through which one teacher provides support to another teacher and encourages him or her to produce ideas, make decisions regarding instruction, and reflect on his or her own practice.

*Consulting* is a means through which teachers share information about the educational practices of the district as well as the science and art of teaching as a professional practice.

*Evaluation* is a formal assessment process, usually summative nature, through which a supervisor observes and assesses a teacher's performance for the purpose of making decisions about the teacher's practice and continued employment.

*Evaluator* is someone who makes recommendations and commendations about a teacher's practice and continued employment.

*Expert peer coaching* is a means through which a teacher with greater expertise serves as a consultant in either content area or teaching techniques to a teacher with less expertise.

*Formative evaluation* is an assessment process which provides constructive feedback and direction for professional development strategies to a teacher.

*Highly qualified*, as defined by *No Child Left Behind*, is the descriptive term for those teachers who have full certification and/or the equivalent of academic major coursework in each subject or discipline they teach.

*Inviting teacher* is a teacher who requests that a fellow teacher visit the classroom to focus on a particular aspect of classroom management or a lesson.

*Master teacher* is an educator who has demonstrated competence, moved to advanced certification, and serves as a resource for novice teachers.

A *mentee* is a teacher who receives assistance from a more experienced teacher in a non-threatening, non-evaluative way in order to reach his or her full potential.

A *mentor* is a teacher who assists a less experienced teacher in recognizing his or her full potential as an education in a non-threatening and non-judgmental way.

*Mirroring peer coaching* is a means through which a coach records what he or she saw during a classroom visit and relays that information to the inviting teacher without analysis or evaluation.

*Peer coaching* is an unofficial and confidential collaboration during which teachers observe and provide feedback to their peers for the purpose of improving instruction and classroom management strategies.

*Peer review* is a partnership between an experienced consulting teacher and either a new teacher or a veteran teacher, who may request and/or require direction and assistance in areas identified in previous evaluation(s).

*Pre-conference* is a meeting held prior to a classroom visit during which the inviting teacher specifies the focus of the observation, how the data will best be collected, and any other issue concerning the visit.

*Post conference* is a meeting that takes place after the classroom observation during which the teachers dialogue about the observation and brainstorm possible alternative strategies concerning any areas of concern.

*Professional development* is any activity a teacher undertakes to improve knowledge of teaching and student learning, expand understanding of effective instructional strategies, refine implementation of classroom management skills, or to enhance his or her practice as a professional.

*Summative evaluation* is an assessment which the administration uses in combination with other factors, as a basis for making decisions regarding a teacher's employment.

#### Limitations of the Study

One could not use the findings of this study for any other group than the one for which it was done. The intern designed this project around a particular group of teachers who are currently assessed by a specific set of procedures, which generally are not formative in essence. The fact that all participants were voluntary automatically skews the results. In addition, the sample size was a small one, based on the total number of teachers in the school and the number of participants.

#### Setting of the Study

The intern designed and implemented a voluntary program for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers of Chestnut Ridge Middle School in Washington Township Public Schools in New Jersey. The township is a suburban residential community with a strong residential basis and very little industry. The median age of residents in Sewell, where Chestnut Ridge Middle School is located was 35.2 years in the year 2000, and the

average adjusted gross income was \$58, 596 ([www.melissadata.com](http://www.melissadata.com)). The limited number of industries in the township places an increased strain on the large number of single family residences in terms of school taxes. For the school year ending June, 2002 Washington Township Public Schools received 43% of its funding from local taxes, 54.48% from the state, and only 2.43% from the federal government. The school tax rate for 2003-2004 was \$2.09769 per hundred dollars of assessed property value. An average home in the district valued at \$125,772 paid \$2638 in school tax alone (T. J. Flemming, personal communication, October 21, 2002).

With an enrollment of 9,948 students in 2001-2002, and approximately 950 professional staff and 700 full and part-time support staff, Washington Township Public Schools is the largest district in Gloucester County, New Jersey ([www.WTPS.org](http://www.WTPS.org)). The district has 11 schools: one preschool/kindergarten center, six elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school.

Washington Township Public Schools prides itself on its implementation of the state mandated plan for 100 hours of professional development. The district pledges to continue to develop and refine opportunities for staff development, including a mentoring program for new teachers (T. J. Flemming, personal communication, October 21, 2002).

Chestnut Ridge Middle School had an enrollment of 843 students for the 2003-4 school year, consisting of 275 sixth graders, 245 seventh graders, and 318 eighth graders. The ethnic distribution is 89.5% Caucasian, 4.65% African American, 3.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.67% Hispanic and 1.07% unclassified (Appendix A). According to the 2001-2002 State Report Card, 10% of all students had Individualized

Education Plans, a student mobility rate of 2.6%, and a student attendance rate of 95.8% (New Jersey School Report Card, 2003).

There were 89 full and part-time teachers, 15 support staff, six secretaries, and three administrators in 2003-2004 ([wtps.org/crms/home/schoolinfo/profile.html](http://wtps.org/crms/home/schoolinfo/profile.html)). The student faculty ratio in 2001-2002 was 10.8:1, and average class size was 23.5. The faculty attendance rate was 95.1%. (New Jersey School Report Card, 2003). In 2001-2, 73.1% of the certified teaching staff had bachelor degrees and 26.9% held master degrees. There were 20 (25.6%) male teachers and 58 (74.4%) female teachers. Average experience in the Washington Township Public School District was 10 years, with an average of 11 years in New Jersey. Average age of the faculty was 40 years old. (New Jersey Department of Education, 2002). The school had one National Board Certified Teacher on staff (the intern).

#### Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 will be comprised of a review of the literature. Chapter 3 will discuss the design of the study. Chapter 4 will be a presentation of the research findings, and Chapter 5 will include the conclusions, implication and further study.



## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In 1987, a group of educators established the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Harman, 2001) for the purpose of developing a system of nationally board certified teachers who have undergone a rigorous evaluation and are considered by their peers to be master teachers. Most recently, *No Child Left Behind* (ETS, 2002, p. 7) has called for assurance that by the 2005-2006 school year, all teachers will be “highly qualified.”

As a result of these and other reforms in education, educators today, more than ever, must provide professional development experiences for teachers which are authentic and practical in their ability to translate to the classroom experience. The very nature of education requires a lifelong process of refinement for teaching practices. “(N)o matter how skilled the educator ....learning a profession is a never-ending process. As experiences and/or research reveals new findings, effective educators must consistently add to those understandings and skills...for the benefit of the students (Hunter & Russell, 1990, p. 2). Charlotte Danielson (2000, p. 15) argues that formative evaluations are most effective in helping teachers refine their practice and grow as professionals. Peer coaching seems to be one means of providing worthwhile professional development through formative evaluation.

## Review of the Problem

In “The Quiet Revolution: Rethinking Teacher Development,” Linda Darling-Hammond (1996) cites different steps the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education are doing to change the standards in teacher education, licensing and assessment (p. 1). Darling-Hammond states that if education is going to improve, teachers must have the opportunity to interact with colleagues. Jean Becker (Teacher Network.org) says that the 1996 Report on National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future cited teacher quality as being the single most important factor in student learning, and that teachers must collaborate and be reflective in order to be effective. Kelley Arey says

The rhetoric of raising standards and making schools accountable, primarily through increased testing, is not in itself going to make the deep, systematic changes our schools need....The solution must (also) involve high quality professional development for teachers, and additional teacher supports, such as meaningful and sustained mentoring for new and veteran teachers (Arey, 2002, p. 4).

## Review of Major Concepts Related to the Problem

### Teacher Preparation and Development in the United States

Most teacher preparation programs in the United States are part of a four year bachelor’s degree program which includes only one full semester of student teaching. Once a teacher has passed the appropriate licensing test and received his or her certification, the school places the novice teacher in a classroom and usually assigns a

mentor to him or her. It is the mentor's responsibility to meet with the new teacher to answer questions and serve as an on-the-job advisor. The new teacher has little opportunity to observe or consult with other teachers as he or she attempts to master classroom management, learn the curriculum, and simply get acclimated to the school culture. Generally, once a teacher has completed his or her first year of teaching, the district allows that teacher to close the classroom door and proceed on his or her own, with only three formal observations/evaluations required by the district. Tenured teachers have only one observation/evaluation per year. These procedures are extremely different from teacher preparation and development programs in other countries.

According to Linda Darling-Hammond (1996), in the former West Germany, prospective teachers must complete two academic majors before proceeding to a two year teacher preparation program at the graduate level. Teacher preparation in Luxembourg is a seven year process, and in France, there is a two year graduate teacher education program followed by a year-long supervised internship. In most European and Asian countries, teachers spend 15-20 hours a week in the classroom and the rest of their time working with colleagues, doing research, participating in study groups, and counseling students. Japanese teachers have at least twenty days set aside for in-service and new teachers in China are given a reduced load, so they can work with peers to plan lessons and observe other teachers. By contrast, in the United States, teachers spend approximately three hours a week in teacher preparation. (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

#### Traditional Professional Development Activities

Washington Township Public Schools recognizes the need for teachers to collaborate and learn from each other. "Professional development engages each educator

in a collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners” (WPTS, 2002, p. 10). Unfortunately, for the most part, professional development in Washington Township Schools, as is typical in many other school districts, consists of attending workshops. In most districts, including Washington Township, there is little or no incentive for teachers to implement what they have learned, collaborate, or share strategies (Becker). Once a teacher attends a workshop there is little to no follow-up to see if the teacher has incorporated any of the new strategies into his or her practice (Becker). Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce (1996) report that ten percent of staff development participants actually implement what they learn in workshops, even among those teachers who volunteer for the staff development. However, Showers and Joyce (1996) say that a study on peer coaching done in 1984 indicates that peer coaching participants retained new strategies over time and applied new teaching models in their practice.

According to James Stronge and Laura P. Ostrander (1997), the reality is that teachers want information to improve their practice. The authors suggest that schools can no longer deny that teachers are capable of improving their own practice and helping each other, and that collaboration enriches professional growth. Stronge and Ostrander (1997, p.151) go on to say, “Given the collaborative nature of the contemporary teacher/educator, it would be unfair and ill-advised to ignore peers as a vital source of performance feedback.”

#### Reflection as Professional Development

There is general agreement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000); Harman, 2001; NBPTS; Showers & Joyce, 1996) that one of the most important tools for professional

development is reflection. "Reflection on action can be a powerful tool for identifying, anticipating, and making changes in cyclical processes and content areas" (Airasian & Gullickson, 19997, p. 222). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards devotes one of its five core propositions to reflection: "Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience" (NBPTS, 1999). The NBPTS places so much emphasis on reflection, that each portfolio entry for national board certification includes a reflective piece (NBPTS.org).

Workshops and other professional development activities do not always contain a conscious replay of the action for reflective purposes. A peer coach can help a teacher reflect by supplying feedback on what actually happened during a classroom visit. "Reflecting is at its most powerful when teachers collaborate in an active, honest search for answers. Perhaps the best way to reflect- the most productive- is out loud, talking with a mentor or peer" (Jonson, 2002, p. 115).

#### Peer Coaching and Assessment

There are many terms for a program in which one teacher observes another. The research is full of terms, including but not limited to, peer review, peer visitation, collaborative peer review, expert peer review, mirror peer review, peer assistance and peer coaching. While each revolves around one teacher making a classroom visit to another, each term has its own particular nuances. It is important to remember that true peer coaching, as used in this project, is not in any way an evaluation. The following definition will serve for the purposes of this study.

Peer coaching is a process in which two or more professional colleagues work together for a specific predetermined purpose in order that teaching performance

can be improved as well as validated. The purpose may be to reflect on current practices or to expand, to refine, and build new skills...Peer coaching is non judgmental and non evaluative. Peer coaching focuses on the collaborative development, refinement and sharing professional knowledge and skills (Becker, p. 2).

A peer coaching program, like a mentoring program, must have appropriate training and administrative support in order to be effective. A peer coach proceeds much like a mentor would, but there is no distinction between a mentor and mentee. All participants act as both mentors and mentees in peer coaching. If both components are not in place for either program, peer coaching become nothing more than “teacher watching” (Hunter & Russell, 1990, p. 73-75).

It is also important to distinguish between peer coaching and peer review. Peer review programs contain an evaluative component and are summative in nature. Peer coaching is a type of peer assistance approach, which is a formative process and contains no evaluative element (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

#### Benefits of Peer Coaching Programs

In “Opening Doors,” Sahakian and Stockton (1996) describe a program at Buchanan High School which began as an instructional analysis project and evolved into a peer assistance and review program. The focus at Buchanan was on collaboration for the initial purpose of changing the way teachers there taught grammar and punctuation. The authors cite several benefits from the program and state that process has now expanded to other departments at the school. Sahakian and Stockton say that teachers now have an easier time in reaching agreement regarding curriculum issues, and there is a

greater involvement of teachers in professional development programs. In addition, students have noticed the new collaboration among teachers and have made positive comments regarding it (Sahakian & Stockton, 1996).

Charlotte Danielson (1996) discusses the benefits of peer coaching as a means of focusing on particular aspects of teaching. Peer coaching techniques can be used to examine any of the elements of the four domains of teaching in her framework: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) also discuss the benefits of peer coaching, not only to beginning teachers, but also to what they call Track II and Track III teachers, tenured teachers who wish to improve professional growth, and tenured teachers with a need in already specified areas.

Michele Israel (2003) lists the many benefits not only to teachers, but to administrators and the schools themselves. Benefits to teachers include focused classroom support, reduced job stress, increased job satisfaction, improvement of classroom practices, and engaging in reflective dialogue. Perhaps the biggest benefit is having support from someone who truly understands the needs and pressures of everyday classroom life (Israel, 2003).

Benefits to administrators include increased dialogue with and among teachers, a greater focus by teachers on student achievement, more self-reliant and confident teachers willing to take risks on new strategies, and increased trust and collegiality (Israel, 2003).

The entire school benefits by having a more collaborative culture. The school becomes a true professional learning community with an enthusiasm for teaching (Israel, 2003).

Perhaps the biggest advantage of peer coaching is in terms of empowerment. The district decides who has the power to evaluate; however, in peer coaching, the teacher “allow(s) themselves to be coached because of the respect, helpfulness, and leadership qualities of the coach” (Deblieu, 2002, p. 17).

#### Opposition to Peer Coaching

While most of the research is positive concerning peer coaching programs, there are some concerns. Hal Portner (2001) feels that once a teacher comes into your room to talk about what he or she sees, they are no longer a peer. He questions the ability of peers to remain confidential and trustworthy, two necessary ingredients for a successful peer coaching program.

From my personal point of view, a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program is not mentoring, nor should it be considered mentoring; It is supervision and evaluation. Trust and confidentiality are vital components of mentoring. It is virtually impossible for anyone....to expose insecurities and inexperience of a coworker, and to leave him or herself vulnerable to possible ridicule and censure (Portner, 2001, p. 96).

Portnor also cites Myron Lieberman, a labor negotiator, who feels that teacher should not have to perform a job which clearly belongs to administrators (Portner, 2001).



## Conclusion

There is little doubt that education must find better ways for teachers to learn how to improve their practice. There is also general agreement in the research reviewed that collaboration is a key ingredient in that process, and that schools must incorporate change to allow more collaboration among their own teachers (Sahakian, Portner, Darling-Hammond, etc.). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, among other organizations, places high value on self-reflection. Almost all of the literature reviewed speaks of some version of a peer visitation program as part of the new trend in professional development and/or assessment.

Peer coaching, in its true sense, can be a viable solution to allow teachers to learn from one another in a practical, yet non-threatening way. Despite the drawbacks, including scheduling of and coverage for classroom visits, concerns about confidentiality, and fear of opening the classroom door, the benefits seem to be overwhelming.

Peer coaching is a professional development activity appropriate for teachers in all stages of their careers. It can benefit new, as well as more experienced teachers, and can prove to be extremely valuable to administrators who need to assist teachers in particular areas. Once the initial training and scheduling are in place, teachers can proceed at their own pace, as often as they feel the need or desire. A strong partnership can carry over from year to year, and a strong sense of collegiality may eventually permeate the school.

## Chapter 3

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### A General Description of the Research Design

The project took place at Chestnut Ridge Middle School in Washington Township, in southern New Jersey. Washington Township is a suburban bedroom community of Philadelphia and has a population of about 48,500 residents. Annual turnout for the school budget elections is only about 18%; and despite the notion that Washington Township prides itself on its educational facilities, the voters have approved only one budget in the last ten years.

Chestnut Ridge Middle School currently has a population of 910 students in grades six through eight. Guidance places students in teams for core subjects. For the 2003-2004 school year, there were two sixth grade teams, two seventh grade teams, and two eighth grades teams. There were eighty-nine teachers including seventeen special education teachers, five BSI teachers and seven allied arts instructors. Sixty-nine percent of the teachers had a Bachelor's Degree and thirty-one percent had a Masters Degree. The intern holds National Board Certification.

The sample population was six teams of teachers from grade levels six to eight in various disciplines, including the intern and her partner. Participating teachers selected their own partners for the project.

During the summer before the project began, the teachers' union began negotiations for a new contract. As the year progressed, and the negotiations began to fail, teachers were asked not to participate in any volunteer activities held after school. In

order to avoid a conflict of interest on the part of the participants, the researcher decided to forego the planned meetings throughout the year, and opted for written feedback forms after each visit.

Participants attended a introductory information meeting and were asked to perform a set process consisting of a pre-conference, classroom visit, post-conference, and completion of a feedback form once before the end of the first marking period, again before the winter break, and once more before the end of February. A post-survey was administered in March.

#### A Description of the Developmental Design of the Research Instrument

In the spring of the previous school year, an email (Appendix A) was sent to all faculty members outlining the project and asking for volunteers. Five teachers, in addition to the intern, responded that they would be willing to serve as peer coaches. An anonymous pre-survey (Appendix B) was distributed to the faculty in September to determine prior knowledge and any general perceptions of peer coaching. A number of teachers responded that the district had implemented a peer coaching program several years ago, and said that many teachers found the process to be much too time consuming and involved too much paperwork. In addition, they said teams were taped during post conferences; thus leading teachers to believe that confidentiality was not maintained and discussions concerning the visits were accessible to administration.

After researching these claims, the intern found them to be true and decided to take these comments into consideration when designing the requirements for this project. The intern made the decision to involve only those teachers genuinely interested in the process, and design a data gathering process that had minimal demands on the

participants, but which provided adequate data for determining the effectiveness of peer coaching. The result was a series of questionnaires which could be set up as templates on the computer, emailed to the participants, who could respond and email them back to the researcher. If participants preferred to remain anonymous, they could print out the completed form and return it to the intern. There were four separate questionnaires, one for each observation, and one final questionnaire on the process in general (See Appendix C). Each participant also completed a revised version of the pre-survey to determine specific educational background, prior knowledge and/or experience with peer coaching (Appendix D).

#### A Description of the Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample population was teams of teachers interested in peer coaching. The intern worked with a partner to model the process. Participating teachers selected their own partner for the project. The intern used this procedure to encourage teachers to participate and ease anxieties about the process.

After the initial five teachers volunteered, a follow-up memo outlining this particular project was distributed among the faculty members (Appendix D) and three more teachers volunteered, bringing the total number of participants, including the intern to nine.

The intern asked for someone to volunteer to serve as a partner for a teacher who needed one. Three teachers responded. The first respondent was paired with the teacher in question, and the intern asked if the other two teachers would like to work together. Although both agreed to participate, one teacher said she volunteered to work with the person for whom the request was made, and was not comfortable working with another

teacher. The intern was able to change the partnerships, so that all eleven teachers could now participate with a person with whom they felt most comfortable,

The final group of participants included six pairs of teachers involved in the project. Pairs were not necessarily in the same discipline, or even in the same grade level (Appendix E). The orchestra teacher was paired with the humanities/triad teacher, a sixth grade science teacher was paired with a Spanish teacher, the wood tech teacher was paired with the computer tech teacher, another Spanish teacher was paired with a seventh grade science teacher, a sixth grade reading teacher was paired with a physical education teacher and the intern, a French teacher, was paired with a Spanish teacher,

The intern conducted an information/training meeting September 25, 2003, and distributed an informational packet outlining information regarding possible areas of concerns, ideas for note-taking, and tips about conferencing (Appendix F).

#### A Description of the Data Collection Approach

Each team observed and conferenced with each other three times between October 2003 and March 2004. The project was a case study, and the intern monitored the progress of the participants as the project evolved. After each visit and conference, participants responded to an open-ended questionnaire regarding the experience. Participants also responded to an open ended post-project questionnaire in March. This allowed the researcher to gather information regarding the participants' reaction to and assessment of the peer coaching process in general.

The intern monitored responses concerning the visits as they were submitted and used them to assess if the findings from each visit led directly to a follow-up visit, or if the three visits were a random selection of focus topics.

Anonymity on the post questionnaire encouraged each teacher to be as honest as possible about the process.

#### A Description of the Analysis Plan

As with any qualitative research, data must be organized before it can be interpreted. In this study, responses for each question were put together so that the researcher could easily identify patterns in the responses. The researcher performed the process for the responses to the first and second observations. The researcher was able to see if there were any overall changes in the participants' responses as the process progressed. In addition, the intern compared post-program surveys to the pre-program surveys to identify perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the ability of teachers to evaluate and help each other grow professionally.

The intern analyzed responses to the final questionnaire and made conclusions about the procedure used for monitoring, the type of questionnaire used to gather data, and most importantly, the participants' perceptions about the process as a valid form of professional development. The intern also analyzed those areas that were of general concern to the participants, as well as to other teachers who felt the process was too time consuming, had too much paperwork, and/or felt the administration would become involved and chose not to participate. The researcher based all conclusions on the open ended responses provided by the participants throughout the entire project.

## Chapter 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Introduction

Twelve teachers began the peer coaching project; but not all teachers provided feedback. Eight participants responded to the questionnaire for the first visit (Appendix J), only three teachers responded to the questionnaire for the second visit (Appendix K), and only the intern and her partner completed a third visit; however, eight responded to the final survey (Appendix L). All but one teacher responded to at least one set of feedback questions. That teacher was out of school for two months on medical leave. Her partner did respond to the survey based on the one visit the pair had.

#### Effective Requirements of a Successful Peer Coaching Program

A number of participants said that clear goal setting is essential for a professional development activity to be productive. Respondents said that peer coaching fulfills this requirement in that the teachers themselves set the goals and the amount of involvement required. Several respondents mentioned staff support as an important requirement as well.

One teacher mentioned confidentiality as a concern since people sometimes make comments inadvertently. The teacher did go on to say “Since no one was visiting in an official capacity and since no positive or negative action was taken as a result of having someone visit my class, I would guess confidentiality is not an issue (Appendix L).

### Beginning a Peer Coaching Program in an Already Established Setting

The results of the pre-survey indicated a strong opposition to peer coaching. The only area that respondents seemed to feel comfortable with in the process was having a “peer in your room” (Appendix E). Although 17% of those who responded to the pre-survey felt that peer coaching could be “very beneficial,” and 33.3% felt it would benefit “a good amount,” only nine out of forty-two respondents volunteered to participate in the program, while another forty-even teachers did not even respond to the pre-survey (Appendix E).

### Encouraging Teachers to Participate

The pre-survey indicated that the largest objection (38.5%) teachers seemed to have for participating in peer coaching was time constraints (Appendix E). Post-survey comments regarding difficulty arranging visits confirm that this is a problem area. This concern remained the highest (2.875/4.0) at the end of the project as well (Appendix L). The pre-survey also indicated concerns about administrative involvement and choice of partners as reasons to prevent someone from participating.

### Scheduling Peer Visitations

As previously stated, participants also cited problems scheduling visits because of conflicting schedules. Some teachers used their prep period or lunch rather than ask for coverage (Appendices J, K, L). Several others mentioned the difficulty because of other obligations in school.



### Effective Monitoring of Peer Coaching

Most of the participants felt that the reflective questionnaires were valuable, although two respondents felt that they were repetitive (Appendix L). One participant seemed to feel that they should have been given a specific focus for each visit.

### The Role of Administration in a Peer Coaching System

None of the respondents felt any threat from administrative involvement in the process. Several respondents stated that administration should be openly supportive of the process and view it as a valuable professional development experience.

### Important Elements of an Effective Formative Teacher Evaluation System

Several teachers indicated that a valuable professional development experience must have clear goals and affect the teacher's performance and situations in his or her room. As one teacher stated,

For a professional development activity to be productive, it has to connect to what the teacher does in the classroom on a daily basis. Peer coaching obviously fulfills that requirement since it takes place in classrooms and gives the teacher feedback on how to make necessary or wanted changes (Appendix L).

One respondent emphasized the need for "clear goals and an activity outline... for the activity to be productive" (Appendix L), while others mentioned commitment and staff support. Another said that involvement and goal setting "allow(s) a professional to decide what they want to come away with" (Appendix L).

### What Participants in the Program Make of the Experience

All of the participants who responded to the post survey expressed the opinion that peer coaching is a valuable form of professional development. Several said that peer

coaching was tied directly to the classroom experience and the individual teacher's needs. Almost all said they would participate in a peer coaching program again, although almost several said that they would need improvements in scheduling and arranging visits.

Several teachers had interesting comments about the process, explaining what makes it different from administrative observations.

I liked having her (the peer coach) there .... Also knowing that the feedback would be positive and the observation would not go down on your permanent record was a relief. Sometimes when the administrator comes to observe, if something goes wrong or if the class is noisy that particular day- you get written up as a teacher who has no class control- when in fact the class just came from a party and the students are sugared up or something (Appendix J).

#### Effectiveness of Peer Coaching on Teachers and Student Learning According to Participants

The participants cited a number of ways in which their teaching has already been affected because of the peer visits. Several teachers cited a focus on questioning techniques, using more random methods and moving around the classroom more often (Appendix J, K). Another focused on whether her students mirrored her mood or if she mirrored theirs (Appendix J). Other teachers mentioned help with identifying students who are off-task and other classroom management strategies (Appendix L).

In at least one instance, a participant said that the peer coach provided reassurance about what the teacher was doing in the classroom (Appendix J). Another said that she hopes to become more aware of her students' learning styles and needs because of peer coaching (Appendix L).

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FURTHER STUDY

#### Introduction

Despite the fact that 75% of the original volunteers actually responded to the post-survey, it is clearly evident that peer coaching has enormous potential as a valuable formative form of professional development for teachers. While the details of the process need refinement, the effect on insight, collegiality, and growth in teaching as a profession is strong.

#### Effective Requirements of a Successful Peer Coaching Program

Based on the information gathered in this study, a successful peer coaching program must be openly supported by the administration, which should make it easy and productive for teachers to participate. The administration needs to provide coverage for the visits themselves, as well as for the conferences.

In addition, teachers should earn professional development hours for the process. Teachers currently receive credit for sitting in a workshop listening to so-called “experts” on particular topics; they should be given the same opportunity for working with the “experts” in their own school.

Teachers must also feel comfortable with their partners. Allowing them to select their partners would ease that concern.

#### Beginning a Peer Coaching Program in an Already Established Setting

In order to begin a peer coaching program in an already established school environment requires tremendous support from the administration, who must assure

participants that peer coaching is a valid and worthwhile activity. The administration can do this in several ways. One way is to provide coverage for teachers so that they may visit each other. This administration was willing to provide coverage, but did not openly inform teachers of that, and many teachers did not feel comfortable approaching the administration for the required coverage. The result is that not all participants completed even two peer visits.

Another way to support peer coaching would be to establish guidelines that would give teachers credit towards the one hundred hour requirement for professional development in New Jersey. The guidelines would need to be carefully delineated so that it preserves confidentiality, while at the same time, has teachers submit some kind of feedback to document the activity and corresponding reflection.

#### Encouraging Teachers to Participate

In planning a peer coaching program, it is essential that the school not only provide coverage for participants, but that it establishes a system for requesting coverage. To encourage participation, teachers should be allowed to select their partners without administrative input. In order to assure peer coaching participants that administration has no part of the process, the program should be facilitated by a teacher. In addition, all participants should be required to turn over all notes to the person they visited, and no teacher should be required to write any type of post-visit summary or complete any type of post-visit evaluation form.

One important incentive for teachers to participate would be to award professional development hours to peer coaches. Teachers would be required to submit evidence of

the visits, perhaps through the scheduling of coverage for classes and a self-reflection on the entire process.

### Scheduling Peer Visitations

As previously stated, participants cited problems scheduling visits because of conflicting schedules. Having a system of scheduling coverage would ease this problem. In addition, teachers participating in a program should be required to schedule the visits within a particular timeline. This type of scheduling would also facilitate the availability of coverage for teachers needing it. In a school where many teachers participate, floating substitutes could easily be brought in to cover several teachers throughout the day.

### Effective Monitoring of Peer Coaching

In order to assure that true peer coaching is taking place, some form of monitoring must take place. The facilitator of the program should keep a master list of visits completed. In addition, teachers could be required to submit reflections concerning their visits, not elaborating on details, but perhaps setting personal goals based on outcomes of the visits. These reflections could then be used to set specific goals for the teacher's professional improvement plan.

Based on the responses of the participants, it might not be a good idea to have teachers reflect after each visit, as this can become repetitive. The reflection might then be longer and more detailed if it was limited to one final paper at the end of the year.

### The Role of Administration in a Peer Coaching System

As previously stated, administration should have no part in arranging, reviewing, or assessing peer coaching visits. Peer coaching must be a teacher driven form of professional development.

### Important Elements of an Effective Formative Teacher Evaluation System

In order for the process to be formative, teachers should be able to make several visits each year. This would allow the pair an opportunity to discuss and evaluate changes as they occur and make any necessary adjustments. The word formative implies change over time, a work in progress, not a finished product.

Teachers would need to reflect on the process and explain how they have changed, and provide evidence of the changes in their philosophy or pedagogy because of peer coaching. Summative evaluations would then indicate improvement in different areas, rather than a static performance.

### What Participants in the Program Make of the Experience

Almost every teacher who participated in the project and provided feedback on the project as a whole felt that peer coaching was more valuable than many other professional development activities.

Teachers said with peer coaching they get feedback related directly to what happened in the class from a colleague without judgment or a permanent record of what occurred. They feel feedback allows them to try necessary adjustments or strategy changes without having the activity used as a formal evaluation of their teaching ability. The results of the post surveys (Appendix L) confirmed what the research said regarding peer coaching as a valuable tool for formative evaluation. All participants said that they would recommend peer coaching as a professional development activity, and almost all said they would participate in peer coaching again.

## Effectiveness of Peer Coaching on Teachers and Student Learning According to Participants

Because of the time limitations of this project, it is difficult to identify any real effect that the peer coaching experience has on teachers or student learning at this time. Peer coaching affects student learning over time, through the creation of a more reflective, “accomplished” teacher (NBPTS), rather than just a teacher who is “highly qualified.” (NCLB).

## Conclusions and Implications of Peer Coaching as a Formative Form of Professional

Teachers who participated in the project gave strong support to peer coaching as a rewarding experience. “The visit reminded me that I should always be monitoring myself. Sometimes we tend to forget how valuable this self-monitoring tool can be” (Appendix L). As the research says, self reflection is an integral part of a true formative evaluation (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Harman, 2001; NBPTS, 1999; Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Peer coaching encourages collegiality and opening the door to not only let others in, but find out what others are doing. “It has given me more respect for other teaching areas and to value the expertise and different styles of other teachers” (Appendix L). “It enabled me to see how others approach the same situations that I do within the classroom on a daily basis” (Appendix L).

The present system of observation in this district is to provide written feedback on official observations, yet often little is done to actually assist the teacher make adjustments and improvements. As one teacher mentioned, she wanted her peer coach to help her with areas noted as “needs improvement” on her evaluations; obviously, she was

not getting assistance from administration to this end (Appendix J). Her peer coach did not see evidence of the area that needed improvement, so that perceived weakness will probably remain unaddressed, except for the official evaluations which are put in the teacher's permanent file. A on-going peer coaching process would clearly change this.

### Leadership Development

The peer coaching project had a profound effect on the intern's development as a leader. It clearly showed that administration must openly support change if it is to occur. In this instance, the administration was supportive, but did not make it known to the school community, resulting in a small sample population, and hesitancy on the part of the participants to ask for assistance in conducting the visits.

The project also underscored the need for formative strategies in observations, and the value of using in-house resources (fellow teachers) to improve teaching and learning. The intern gained insight into what teachers want and expect from observations, and what is lacking in them.

Of course, the project also highlighted the obvious need for provision of structure, goal setting, and monitoring in order for any project or change to at least have a chance at succeeding.

### Implications of Study on Leadership Skills (ISLLC Standards)

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium has identified six standards for administrators (Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2001). Peer coaching relates to every ISLLC standard in some way.

Peer coaching is strongly related to Standard One which states: "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by



facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community” (Appendix M). This standard calls for a vision for high expectations and the idea that the vision guides all aspects of the school. This includes working with teachers to assure that they convey the vision of the district and school in their teaching. Peer coaching can have teachers assist each other in this endeavor.

Perhaps the strongest tie is to ISLLC Standard Two: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (Appendix M). The primary emphasis of this standard is to assure that administrators provide professional development experiences for their staff in order to model life-long learning, set high expectations, and serve as a viable means of school improvement.

ISLLC Standard Three states: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment” (Appendix M). Part of this goal focuses on the use of human resources and the fact that administrators must be committed to trusting people and their judgments. This ideal includes sharing responsibility to maximize accountability and ownership. Peer coaching clearly falls into this category.

At first glance it may not seem that standard five, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” has anything to do with peer coaching, but closer

examination of the standard reveals that the administrator must understand the role of leadership in modern society. Today, this means using teachers as leaders whenever possible. Serving as a peer coach is definitely a leadership role.

ISLLC Standard Six says “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context talks about the administrator as someone who recognizes the value in many different ideas and opinions.” This applies to accepting the value of having teachers help each other to improve the profession.

#### Implications of Study on Organizational Change

It is clear that some form of peer coaching should be in place at every school. It can actually be used to help teachers who need improvement in certain areas according to their official administrative observations, or simply as a growth process for others. The requirements for administrators conducting observations are extremely time consuming. If some form of peer review was introduced as part of the process, perhaps some of the load could be taken off of administrators, allowing them to spend more time on other important aspects of their positions.

One participant summed up how many teachers feel about evaluations performed by administrators.

Many administrators are not familiar with peer coaching or choose to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of teachers using a different format. How they do it remains a mystery, and most would choose to have it remain that way. The least information given to teachers about how they are observed means the administrator has more power to be subjective in evaluating the teacher. If

teachers are given too much information about the evaluation process and what the observer is looking for, the administrator would be in a position of having to provide more objective data. Many administrators would rather use “gut instinct” rather than objective criteria to evaluate (Appendix L).

The addition of a peer coaching component to the evaluation process might change this attitude.

#### Further Study

The intern would very much like to continue to work with peer coaching and the observation process; however, in order to continue with the project, the intern would need the open and active support of the administration and the district. To continue the project as something extra that teachers do, not as a recognized form of professional development would not produce the desired results.

Perhaps when the district re-evaluates its policies and procedures regarding professional development and evaluation, it will recognize the value of the process and aggressively incorporate some form of peer coaching into its professional development plan for teachers.

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APPENDIX A  
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS –CHESTNUT RIDGE MIIDDLE SCHOOL



School: Chestnut Ridge Middle School

Term: 03-04 Cycle 1

Logout ?

Start Page &gt; Reports &gt; Run Reports &gt; Enrollment Summary

RUSSO, CATHY

## Functions

Absentee Report  
Daily Bulletin  
Enrollment Summary  
Master Schedule  
PowerLunch  
Reports  
Special Functions  
Teacher Schedules

## Setup

Personalize  
School  
Staff  
System

## Training

VirtualUniversity

## Enrollment Summary

as of 8/31/2003 ()  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School

Grade Level	TOTAL IN GRADE	Asian	Black	White-Caucasian	Hispanic	American Indian	Other	Pacific Islander	Unclassified
6	275 130 / 145	9 5 / 4	14 7 / 7	239 115 / 124	7 0 / 7	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	6 3 / 3
7	245 126 / 119	9 4 / 5	10 5 / 5	221 114 / 107	4 2 / 2	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	1 1 / 0
8	318 169 / 149	8 5 / 3	15 12 / 3	290 149 / 141	3 1 / 2	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	2 2 / 0
TOTAL	838 425 / 413	26 14 / 12	39 24 / 15	750 378 / 372	14 3 / 11	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	9 6 / 3

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**Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Student Demographics  
August 31, 2003**

	<i>All</i>		<i>Asian</i>		<i>Black</i>		<i>White</i>		<i>Hispanic</i>		<i>Unclassified</i>		
<b>Grade</b>													
<b>6</b>	275	32.8%	9	3.3%	14	5.1%	239	86.9%	7	2.5%	6	2.2%	100%
boys	130	47.3%	5	1.8%	7	2.5%	115	41.8%	0	0.0%	3	1.1%	
girls	145	52.7%	4	1.5%	7	2.5%	124	45.1%	7	2.5%	3	1.1%	
<b>Grade</b>													
<b>7</b>	245	29.2%	9	3.7%	10	4.1%	221	90.2%	4	1.6%	1	0.4%	100%
boys	126	51.4%	4	1.6%	5	2.0%	114	46.5%	2	0.8%	1	0.8%	
girls	119	48.6%	5	2.0%	5	2.0%	107	43.7%	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	
<b>Grade</b>													
<b>8</b>	318	37.9%	8	2.5%	15	4.7%	290	91.2%	3	0.9%	2	0.6%	100%
boys	169	53.1%	5	1.6%	12	3.8%	149	46.9%	1	0.3%	2	1.2%	
girls	149	46.9%	3	0.9%	3	0.9%	141	44.3%	2	0.6%	0	0.0%	
<b>All</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3.10%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4.65%</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>89.50%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1.67%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1.07%</b>	100%
boys	425	50.7%	14	1.7%	24	2.9%	378	45.1%	3	0.4%	6	0.7%	
girls	413	49.3%	12	1.4%	15	1.8%	372	44.4%	11	1.3%	3	0.4%	

**APPENDIX B**  
**REPORT OF CERTIFIED STAFF AS OF OCTOBER 15, 2003**

New Jersey Department of Education  
Report of Certificated Staff as of October 15, 2002  
Statistical Report

GLOUCESTER - WASHINGTON TWP  
School: 026-CHESTNUT RIDGE MIDDLE

Certificated Staff by Demographic Factors in Headcounts \*\*  
Major Assignment Categories

Demographic Factors	Administrators/ Supervisors (JC 0102-0599)	Classroom Teachers (JC 1000-2691)	Educational Support Services (JC 2701-4001)	Total
<b>Status</b>				
Full-Time *	3 100.0%	77 98.7%	5 100.0%	85 98.8%
Part-Time	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	0 0.0%	1 1.2%
Total	3	78	5	86
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	1 33.3%	20 25.6%	2 40.0%	23 26.7%
Female	2 66.7%	58 74.4%	3 60.0%	63 73.3%
<b>Race</b>				
White	3 100.0%	73 93.6%	5 100.0%	81 94.2%
Black	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	0 0.0%	1 1.2%
Puerto Rican	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Cuban	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Other Hispan.	0 0.0%	3 3.8%	0 0.0%	3 3.5%
Am Ind/Alas Nat	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Asian/ Pacific Isl	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	0 0.0%	1 1.2%
<b>Degree</b>				
No Degree	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Bachelors	0 0.0%	57 73.1%	1 20.0%	58 67.4%
Masters	3 100.0%	21 26.9%	4 80.0%	28 32.6%
Doctorate	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Other	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Average Experience</b>				
District	7	10	14	10
New Jersey	17	11	18	12
Total	17	11	19	12
<b>Average Age</b>	39	40	49	40
<b>Salaries</b>				
Total	258,984	3,727,592	294,427	4,281,003
% of Total ***	6.0%	87.1%	6.9%	100.0%
Average	86,328	47,790	58,885	49,779

\* Full-time count of classroom teachers includes permanent substitutes.

\*\* Staff figures in FTE and headcount may differ. While FTE counts include the proportion of time expended by staff who are employed in more than one major assignment category for each category, headcounts require that these staff members be counted only in the one category with the greatest FTE.

\*\*\* Percentages are of the total for the three major assignment categories.

APPENDIX C  
MAKEUP OF PEER COACHING TEAMS

Team 1		heard of term- no details	heard of term- no details	assessment of lesson can apply knowledge to critical thinking situations	assessment of lesson can apply knowledge to critical thinking situations				
Humanities-6/7, SS; Reading 8	6-8	Elementary Ed	15	3	N	1	1	1	1
Orchestra	6-8	Music	15+	9	N	1	1	3	2

Team	Subject area	Grade level	Certifications	Years Teaching	Years at CRMS	Masters	Masters Area	Prior Knowledge	Confidentiality	Peer in room	Time Constraints	Administration	Partner Choice	Averages:	assessment of lessons can apply knowledge to critical thinking situations during class being distributed; attention of all students
Team 1	Humanities-6/7, SS; Reading 8	6-8	Elementary Ed	15	3	N		heard of term- no details	1	1	1	1	1		
	Orchestra	6-8	Music	15+	9	N		heard of term- no details	1	1	3	2	1		
	Reading	6	Education/ endorsement in special ed	27	7	N		prior experience in 1993 in the district and another school	1	1	4	1	1		No
Team 2	Health/ PE	6-8	K-12 Health & PE	15	15	Y	Student Personnel /Guidance	none	3	3	3	2	3		No
	Technology Education	6 & 8	Industrial Arts	26	19	N		heard of term- no details	2	1	1	1	1		No
Team 3	Control tech Communications Tech	7/8	Technology Arts	9	7	N	15 credits- Instructional Tech	heard of term- no details	2	1	1	2	1		No
	General Science-	6	Secondary Biology Elementary Ed	7	7	N		heard of term- no details	1	1	1	1	1		lessons are understandable/ equitable treatment of boys and girls
Team 4	Spanish	6-8	Spanish	3	3	N		no prior knowledge	1	1	2	2	1		no
	Spanish	6-8	Spanish	2	2	N		none	1	1	3	1	1		No
	Science	7	Science	15+	15+	N		heard of term- no details	1	1	3	1	4		No
Team 5	French	6-8	French Elementary Ed Early Adolescence English Lang Arts	13	2	N	Administration and Supervision	prior knowledge from research	2	2	3	2	3		use of cooperative learning techniques; gender equity
	French 6 Spanish 7-8	6-8	French Spanish	15	4	N		Prior experience- Archdiocese Phil 1996-2000	3	3	2	2	2		No
Team 6									1.60	1.25	2.25	1.50	1.70		Ideas for topics

**APPENDIX D**  
**COMMUNICATION TO STAFF REGARDING PROJECT**

TO: All CRMS faculty

FROM: Cathy Russo

RE: Masters Thesis

Date: June 1, 2003

At long last, I am in the final stages of my master's thesis at Rowan University. My thesis project is on peer coaching, and Jim Barnes has graciously agreed to allow me to implement a peer coaching program at CRMS. It is not a monitoring program for new teachers, but is a formative process for all teachers. The project involves teachers working together throughout the year to help improve each other's practice. There is not formal observation or evaluation in this process; it is strictly to help teachers in their own teaching and student learning. Participants will be sitting in on partners; classes and providing feedback in an informal way.

The program will be based on the work of Charlotte Danielson and the five core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. I will train participants in the process, monitor the process, and examine feedback to determine the perceived effectiveness of peer coaching. Obviously, I need some volunteers.

This is your chance to help your neighbor and yourself (not to mention me)! What better way to build collegiality than to work together to improve your teaching, management skills, or just your own sanity? If you would be interested in working with me during the 2003-2004 school year, please reply to this memo. Let me know if there is someone with whom you would like to work. I want to make this as painless, but as truthful as possible.

Thanks.

Cathy Russo

APPENDIX E  
STAFF PRE-SURVEY ABOUT PEER COACHING



September 4, 2003

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, I am doing my internship in administration and am required to undertake five projects this school year. One of these topics will also be my thesis. I have selected peer coaching as my thesis topic.

In order to accurately report the demographics of the school community, I need some general information about the teaching staff. I would really appreciate it if you could take a moment, complete the attached questionnaire and return it to my box. Please do not include your name.

Chapters one and two of my thesis are due September 18<sup>th</sup>, so it would be extremely helpful if you could return this questionnaire by the end of this week.

The peer coaching project will NOT be used for any type of evaluative purpose, and all information will remain confidential between partners.

I will be personally contacting those teachers who have expressed an interest in participating in the peer coaching projects in the next week or so. If anyone else would like to join us, please contact me at [crusso@wtps.org](mailto:crusso@wtps.org).

Merci Beacoup!  
Cathy Russo

## Pre-Survey about Peer Coaching

Number of years teaching                      0-1      2-3      4-9      10-15      15+

Number of years at Chestnut Ridge                      0-1      2-3      4-9      10-15  
15+

Do you currently hold New Jersey certification?                      Yes              No\*

If no, please indicate if you are currently getting certified through one of the following methods:

\_\_\_\_\_alternate route              \_\_\_\_\_conditional certification              \_\_\_\_\_provisional certification

Do you have a Master's Degree?    Y    N

If yes, in which discipline? \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to your participation, what did you know about Peer Coaching? Please elaborate.

A. *I had no prior knowledge*

B. *I had heard of the term, but didn't know the details*

C. *I attended a workshop or training*

D. *I have had prior experience as a peer coach.*

Please rate the concerns you have about participating in such a process, with 1 meaning little or no concern and 4 meaning too much concern to consider the process.

confidentiality	1	2	3	4
allowing a peer into my room	1	2	3	4
time constraints	1	2	3	4
administration's involvement	1	2	3	4
choice of partner	1	2	3	4

<p align="center"><b>Results of Pre-Survey at Chestnut Ridge Middle School</b>  <b>About Peer Coaching</b>  <b>September 2003</b></p>
---

<b>Years Teaching</b>	0-1 years 2.5%	2-3 years 2.5%	4-9 years 42.5%	10-15 years 12.5%	15+ years 40%
<b>Years at CRMS</b>	0-1 years 7.5%	2-3 years 10%	4-9 years 50%	10-15 years 12.5%	15+ years 20%
<b>NJ Certification</b>	Yes 97.5%	No 2.5%			
<b>Masters</b>	Yes 30%	No 70%			
<b>Knowledge</b>	None 18.9%	know term- no details 70.2%	workshop 10.8%	prior experience	
<b>Benefits of peer coaching</b>	none	some 11%	a good amount 33.3%	a lot 4.1%	extremely beneficial 17%
<b>Opportunity to peer coach</b>	yes 80%	no 20%			
<b>Served as a peer coach</b>	yes 66.7%	no 33.3%			
<b><u>Concerns:</u></b>	1 = little	2	3	4 = too much	
<b>Confidentiality</b>	26.30%	28.9%	28.9%	15.9%	
<b>Having a peer in your room</b>	59.50%	16.2%	24.3%		
<b>Time constraints</b>	12.80%	12.8%	35.9%	38.5%	
<b>Administration involvement</b>	18.90%	35.2%	21.6%	24.3%	
<b>Partner selection</b>	18.40%	15.80%	42.10%	23.70%	

\* Data reflects 42  
respondents out of 89  
teachers.

**APPENDIX F**  
**PEER COACHING FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRES**

**Peer Coaching Thesis Project for Catherine Russo  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Final Questionnaire**

Dear Participants,

First of all, I would like to thank you once again for helping me with my project. I hope that it was an interesting experience for you.

Now that you have completed three visits with your partners, please take a few moments to reflect on the entire experience in general and answer the following questions. You may download the file and fill in your answers directly on the form. When you are finished, you can email me the file as an attachment. If you prefer to remain anonymous, you can print the file and place it in my box. Your answers will not be revealed to anyone. If you would like a copy of the final thesis, please let me know, and I will give you one after April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Please be very honest in your responses, since the purpose of this project is to determine the effectiveness of peer coaching as a professional development activity. Please have all responses to me no later than March 1st.

Thank you,

Cathy Russo

**Peer Coaching Thesis Project for Catherine Russo  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Feedback Questionnaire for First Peer Visit – October 2003**

*Please provide feedback regarding your first peer coaching experience this year.  
Please pay special attention to the following questions:*

Did you meet with your partner prior to the visit to determine the focus of the visit and data gathering technique?

How difficult was it to discuss your class with your partner, decide on a focus area and data gathering technique, and arrange the visit?

Were there any difficulties in arranging the visit in terms of getting coverage for your class?

How valuable was the pre-conference?

How did you feel while your partner was in your classroom? Were you nervous, cautious, or did it have no real effect on you?

Did you meet to discuss the findings of the visit? If so, was the appropriate data collected?

How comfortable were you in discussing the visit with your partner?

Did the visit give you a new insight into your teaching, or make you aware of something you or the students were doing in the classroom?

Will you make any changes based on what you found out during the post conference?

Have you thought about a focus for the next visit?

**Peer Coaching Thesis Project for Catherine Russo  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Feedback Questionnaire for Second Peer Visit – December 2003**

*Please provide feedback regarding your second peer coaching experience this year.  
Please pay special attention to the following questions:*

Did you meet with your partner prior to the visit to determine the focus of the visit and data gathering technique?

How difficult was it to discuss your class with your partner, decide on a focus area and data gathering technique, and arrange the visit?

Were there any difficulties in arranging the visit in terms of getting coverage for your class?

How did this pre-conference differ, if at all, from the first pre-conference?

How did you feel while your partner was in your classroom?

Did you meet to discuss the findings of this visit? If so, was the appropriate data collected?

How comfortable were you during the second post conference in discussing the visit with your partner?

Did this visit give you a new insight into your teaching, or make you aware of something you or the students were doing in the classroom?

Will you make any changes based on what you found out during the post conference?

Have you thought about a focus for the next visit?

Other comments....

**Peer Coaching Thesis Project for Catherine Russo  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Feedback Questionnaire for Third Peer Visit – February 2004**

*Please provide feedback regarding your third peer coaching experience this year.  
Please pay special attention to the following questions:*

Did you meet with your partner prior to the visit to determine the focus of the visit and data gathering technique?

How difficult was it to discuss your class with your partner, decide on a focus area and data gathering technique, and arrange the visit?

Were there any difficulties in arranging the visit in terms of getting coverage for your class?

How did this pre-conference differ, if at all, from the previous pre-conferences?

How comfortable are you now with your partner visiting your classroom?

Did you meet to discuss the findings of the visit? If so, was the appropriate data collected?

How did this final post conference differ from the previous ones?

Did this visit give you a new insight into your teaching, or make you aware of something you or the students were doing in the classroom?

Will you make any changes based on what you found out during the post conference?

Other comments.



**Peer Coaching Thesis Project for Catherine Russo**  
**Chestnut Ridge Middle School**  
**Final Questionnaire**

1. Why did you volunteer to participate in the peer coaching project?
2. Do you feel you were adequately prepared to undertake peer coaching as defined in this project? How would you suggest the preparation be improved?
3. How valuable was any of the material given you concerning suggestions for visit focus, data collections, conducting a conference, etc?
4. Was the time commitment appropriate for this type of activity?
5. What difficulties in terms of arranging visits, administrative support and/or interference, etc. did you encounter in this project?
6. How concerned were you with the confidentiality of the experience?
7. How effective were the visit reflection questions?
8. In what way, if any, did the peer coaching experience change the way you feel about administrative observations?
9. What do you feel is the most important requirement for a professional development activity to be productive? To what degree do you think peer coaching meets these requirements?
10. How does this peer coaching experience compare to other professional development activities in which you have participated?
11. How, if at all, has this experience changed you as a professional, a teacher, and a colleague?
12. How, if at all, has this experience changed the student learning in your classroom?  
How do you know it has?
13. Would you continue this activity, if coverage was available for your classes?
14. Would you recommend this activity to other teachers?
15. What suggestions for changes to this process do you have?

16. Now that you have completed the project, please rate the following concerns about the process with 1 meaning little or no concern and 4 meaning too much concern to participate in peer coaching again.

- a. confidentiality \_\_\_\_\_
- b. allowing a peer into my room \_\_\_\_\_
- c. time constraints \_\_\_\_\_
- d. administration's involvement \_\_\_\_\_
- e. choice of partner \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G**  
**PEER COACHING PARTICIPANTS PRE-SURVEY**

## Pre Survey for Peer Coaching Partners

DATE: October 7, 2003

TO:

FROM: Cathy Russo

RE: Peer Coaching Project

*Dear colleagues,*

*I hope you are all anxious to conduct your first peer visit this month. I realize you have previously answered these questions, but it would be extremely helpful if you would answer them again, this time identifying yourself.*

Subject area/discipline/grade level currently teaching:

Please indicate the certification(s) you hold:

Total number of years teaching:

Number of years at Chestnut Ridge:

Do you have a Master's Degree? Y N

If yes, in which discipline? \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to your participation, what did you know about Peer Coaching?

*A. I had no prior knowledge*

*B. I had heard of the term, but didn't know the details*

*C. I attended a workshop or training. Please indicate where and when.*

D. *I have had prior experience as a peer coach. Please indicate where and when.*

Please rate the concerns you have about participating in such a process, with 1 meaning little or no concern and 4 meaning too much concern to consider the process.

confidentiality	1	2	3	4
allowing a peer into my room	1	2	3	4
time constraints	1	2	3	4
administration's involvement	1	2	3	4
choice of partner	1	2	3	4

Do you have something specific in mind to work on with your partner?    Yes    No

APPENDIX H  
SECOND MEMO TO STAFF REQUESTING PARTICIPANTS

Dear Colleagues,

I have received peer coaching surveys from approximately one third of the staff, and I give you a gigantic thank you. I would truly appreciate hearing from the rest of the staff. It is important that I have accurate data on the staff for my thesis.

I am including an outline of my peer coaching project since many who have responded have indicated that their knowledge of the process is limited.

***Peer coaching*** is an ongoing process between two or more individuals.

- Each participant has a pre-determined purpose for having someone visit his or her class.
- The primary purpose is to validate and improve teaching through collaboration.
- The process is non-judgmental and non-evaluative.
- The goal is sharing and the refinement of professional knowledge and skills.

***Evaluation*** is done by an administrator to a teacher.

- The district sets policies and deadlines and decides on focus of the observation.
- The district provides a standard assessment instrument which must be used.
- All findings are placed in teacher's file and the district uses this information for employment decisions.

***Peer Coaching*** is done by a colleague (selected by the teachers themselves)

- The teacher sets number and times of visits, and focus of each visit
- The teacher decides on what information will be gathered, and how it will be gathered.
- All notes and all information remain between the partners.
- Administration gets NO feedback on classroom visits.

***Steps of the peer coaching process:***

1. Pick a partner
2. Build trust through discussion.
3. Hold a pre-conference to decide on the focus of the visit and the data gathering procedure
4. Visit the classroom.
5. Report on facts only at post-conference!
6. Return the favor!

***Some of the many possible areas of focus are:***

- ★ Gender Equity
- ★ Verbal feedback- positive/negative
- ★ Movement around room

- ★ Response behaviors
- ★ Wait time for responses
- ★ Body language
- ★ Pacing
- ★ Gestures and mannerisms

*The benefits of the process include:*

- ❖ Opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue about teaching
- ❖ Support from a peer who understands the classroom scenario
- ❖ Personal and meaningful professional development
- ❖ Improvement of classroom practices
- ❖ Reduced job stress
- ❖ Sense of being a professional

For my project, I am asking that participants visit their partner's classrooms **three times** between October and the end of February. Participants will not tell me any details concerning the visits. I will only ask for feedback concerning the value of the process, not the results of the visits.

Teachers may select a partner to work with; they need not be from the same subject area, or grade level. We will try to cover classes for visits, so the time constraints will be minimal.

I would like to meet once after school in September to go over conference and data gathering procedures. I anticipate a total of two more meetings between October and February so we can discuss the process, problems, and anything else that comes up. These will have to be after school and will be brief, just long enough to get a feel for how everyone is doing. Finally, there will be a short pre and post survey for participants.

If anyone would like to participate, please email me (crusso) and let me know with whom you would like to be paired. I'd like to meet the last week of September so we can have our first visitations in October.

Thanks



**APPENDIX I**  
**INFORMATION PACKET FOR PEER COACHES**

# *Peer Coaching*

Cathy Russo  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
September 2003

# *What is Peer Coaching ?*

An ongoing process

Two or more individuals

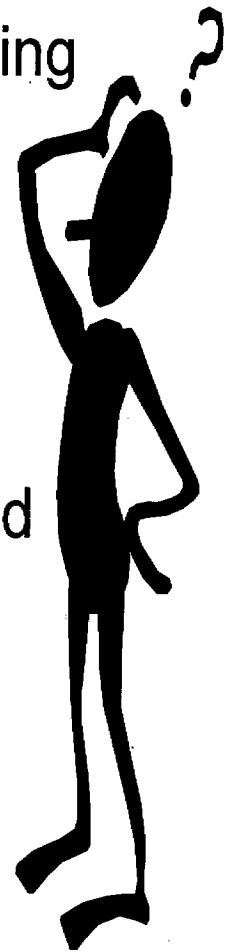
Pre-determined purpose

To validate and improve teaching

Non judgmental and non  
evaluative

Collaborative development

Sharing and refinement of  
professional knowledge and  
skills



# *What makes peer coaching different?*

## ***Evaluation***

Administrator  
District sets policies and deadlines  
District decides on focus  
District provides assessment instrument  
Findings are placed in teacher's file  
Administration uses information for employment decisions

## ***Peer Coaching***

Colleague  
Teacher sets number and times of visits  
Teacher decides on focus  
Teacher decides on data gathering technique  
All notes are turned over to teacher  
Administration gets NO feedback on classroom visit

## *What are the steps of peer coaching?*

- ✓ Pick a partner
- ✓ Build trust
- ✓ Hold a pre-conference to decide on focus and data gathering procedure
- ✓ Visit classroom
- ✓ Report on facts only at post-conference!
- ✓ Return the favor



## *Possible Focus Areas*

Gender Equity

Verbal feedback- positive/negative

Movement around room

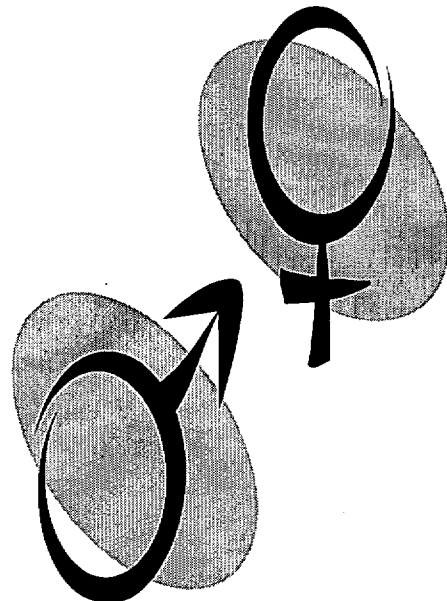
Response behaviors

Wait time for responses

Body language

Pacing

Gestures and mannerisms



# The Pre-Conference

- Build trust and rapport
- Promote rehearsal and reflection
- Gather information about the lesson objective(s)
- Elicit information about the purpose of the lesson
- Collect information about teacher and student behaviors
- Review the lesson context
- Anticipate teacher concerns
- Determine the role of the observer
- Decide how the data will be collected
- Summarize their understanding of the lesson and data collection process
- Identify the time of the observation and post-conference

# The Post Conference

1. Promote teacher reflection on the lesson by:
  - Recalling teacher and student behavior
  - Comparing actual and desired behaviors
  - Analyzing why behaviors were or were not performed
  - Making inferences about achievement of lesson purpose and objective
2. Generate future plans
3. Provide feedback about practices for both teacher and coach
4. Build motivation to participate in future peer coaching sessions

\*\*\*The coach gives the written data to the inviting teacher.

\*\*\*The inviting teacher ultimately decides what to do with the data



APPENDIX J  
FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST VISIT – OCTOBER 2003

Peer Coaching Thesis Project  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Feedback Questionnaire for First Visit – October 2003

**1. Did you meet with your partner prior to the visit to determine the focus of the visit and data gathering technique?**

- *Yes, we met to discuss the focus of the visit.*
- *Yes, briefly*
- *T and myself were partners in this program. Yes we did meet and talked but via email.*
- *Yes*
- *My partner and I met prior to the visit and I explained what improvement I needed according to my evaluations.*
- *Yes we spoke at lunch and I had A visit a 7<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra class. I had her sit in the middle of the viola section. I wanted her to tell me if she understood my directions to the class.*
- *Yes we met twice and spoke via email.*

**2. How difficult was it to discuss your class with your partner, decide on a focus area and data gathering technique, and arrange the visit?**

- *It took a little work, but we were able to work it out within our schedules.*
- *A is very easy going. It was easy to work with her- However, we have close to identical schedules so we have only one class during the day where we don't need coverage.*
- *There was no difficulty discussing my class or arranging the visit.*
- *Very easy*
- *We saw each other at lunch and planned what we could. We have the same schedule. I found T very supportive and caring and was not judgmental. Therefore talking to her was very easy.*
- *Very easy. D and I discuss these things all the time.*
- *It really wasn't that difficult since we both have a similar focus. We both wanted to know about ways of interacting with the students at various times.*

**3. Were there any difficulties in arranging the visit in terms of getting coverage for your class?**

- *Did not need coverage.*
- *No D observed my class during a period when he was not teaching.*
- *Because our schedules are similar, we were able to visit without worrying about coverage.*
- *No, we visited during non-teaching periods.*
- *Our visits were scheduled around our prep periods.*
- *We did not need coverage at this time.*
- *It was a little difficult because we both either used planning time or lunch time.*

**4. How valuable was the pre-conference?**

- *It helped to develop a focus for the observation. I thought it was important.*
- *The pre-conference gave me an idea of what to look for.*
- *Very, we determined needs and areas of concentration.*
- *Our pre-conference just helped us get some direction.*
- *Somewhat valuable, but it's probably because of our relationship. If we didn't know each other so well, it would have been very valuable.*
- *It was great. It was terrific to talk to another adult who is as excited about teaching as I am. Although we teach different disciplines- we found there to be so many similarities.*
- *It gave a focus to me. As a teacher of Reading...I had little idea about the Physical Education department. So I needed this.*

**5. How did you feel while your partner was in your classroom? Were you nervous, cautious, or did it have no real effect on you?**

- *I felt that it was a good experience. J is certainly a positive and non-threatening person and it is nice to have another adult to talk to.*
- *I was not nervous- In fact, I liked having her there. .... Also knowing that the feedback would be positive and the observation would not go down on your permanent record was a relief. Sometimes when the administrator comes to observe, if something goes wrong or if the class is noisy that particular day- you get written up as a teacher who has no class control- when in fact the class just came from a party and the students are sugared up or something.*
- *No real effect*
- *I had no problem with T being in my classroom.*
- *I was aware of her presence, but I was not nervous. The class itself required enough of my attention that another adult in the room makes no difference in how the class operates.*
- *Having my partner in my room had no effect on me.*
- *It really didn't have a real effect.*

**6. Did you meet to discuss the findings of the visit? If so, was the appropriate data collected?**

- *Yes, we met and discussed the data. I was able to get some ideas from J about how to manage my room.*
- *We met to discuss findings. However, neither found any problems that needed to be addressed at the time.*
- *We met and exchanged data.*
- *We got together immediately after the visits and talked.*
- *Yes, we had a post-conference and really enjoyed each other's class.*
- *Yes- yes*
- *We collected the data, but haven't had time to meet as of this writing.*

**7. How comfortable were you in discussing the visit with your partner?**

- *I felt very comfortable with J.*
- *Very- the feedback was very helpful.*
- *Very*
- *As for discussing my input regarding the visit to T's class, I felt comfortable as I thought T did.*
- *I was very comfortable discussing the visit with my partner.*
- *Very comfortable*
- *I was very comfortable.*

**8. Did the visit give you a new insight into your teaching, or make you aware of something you or the students are doing in the classroom?**

- *It made me focus on equitably calling on students for answers.*
- *Yes, I am trying to figure out if the students mirror my mood, or if I mirror their mood.*
- *This visit gave me no insight because my partner had nothing to report. She didn't see anything that referred to the "needs improvement" on my evaluation.*
- *It reinforced what I already thought was happening. It made me understand that what I perceived was also what an outsider perceived.*
- *After sitting in T's orchestra class, I realized how differently my class is taught in comparison to T's. Because of this, I was overwhelmed and could not take in everything that was going on around me. However, we did talk and suggestions were made.*
- *Yes, some*
- *Yes, the visit reminded me that I should always be monitoring myself. Sometimes we tend to forget how valuable this self-monitoring tool can be.*

**9. Will you make any changes based on what you found out during the post conference?**

- *I gained a little insight into the way I distributed my questioning in the classroom. I also reinforced some of the ideas I am already using.*
- *Some*
- *If possible. There are many challenging students in this class, and I already have tried numerous ways of addressing some of their needs. I will continue to make attempts at creating an environment more conducive for learning for the entire class.*
- *So far, I'm unable to make changes.*
- *Yes, I am going to concentrate on displaying a more calm demeanor. I would like to see if the students mirror my calmness. Sometimes one has to meet the energy of the students for them to think that what you are doing and saying is important enough for them to pay attention to. I am going to try the opposite and see what happens.*
- *Yes, if I am not interacting with all the students equally, I will take steps to improve in that area.*

**10. Have you thought about a focus for the next visit?**

- *No, we will plan before the meeting.*
- *Yes, how to take care of all the paperwork during class time when all the students want to do is play their instruments.*
- *I have not yet thought about a focus for our next meeting, however, we did agree to meet in December.*
- *No, not yet.*
- *No, it depends on which class we are able to visit, time of year, etc.*
- *No, not really. I will do it after the GEPA classes have ended....TODAY!*

APPENDIX K  
FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECOND VISIT – DECEMBER 2003

Peer Coaching Thesis Project  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Feedback Questionnaire for Second Visit – December 2003

1. **Did you meet with your partner prior to the visit to determine the focus of the visit and data gathering technique?**
  - *Yes, we discussed both*
  - *Yes*
  - *Yes, we spoke briefly and informally*
2. **How difficult was it to discuss your class with your partner, decide on a focus area and data gathering technique, and arrange the visit?**
  - *It was difficult to come up with a good day; we had block scheduling and assemblies, etc. to work around. The focus area was enough, but we didn't really discuss our gathering technique. I used an observation and description style and I used a map of the classroom and tick marks. This was a better technique. It provided information that was very useful to me.*
  - *Not at all, as I was approached by my partner.*
  - *Not at all difficult. I had a few things in mind.*
3. **Were there any difficulties in arranging the visit in terms of getting coverage for your class?**
  - *No, we were able to work around our schedules with some juggling.*
  - *No, we both have 8th period free.*
  - *Not really.*
4. **How did this pre-conference differ, if at all, from the first pre-conference?**
  - *No real difference.*
  - *There was more focus on problems behind the scenes rather than in the classroom.*
  - *We didn't need as much time to discuss what we were looking for,*
5. **How did you feel while your partner was in your classroom?**
  - *I felt very comfortable.*
  - *Very comfortable.*

**6. Did you meet to discuss the findings of the visit? If so, was the appropriate data collected?**

- *Yes, we met and discussed the data. The findings were helpful to me. I also pointed out the students that were off task. This will be helpful so that I can keep a closer eye on those students.*
- *Yes, we talked about the problems and came up with practical solutions.*
- *We talked that same afternoon. My partner got information that I was looking for and actually reassured me that I was using a good variety of strategies to make the lesson understandable.*

**7. How comfortable were you during the second post conference in discussing the visit with your partner?**

- *I enjoyed having the discussions with J. It is nice to meet with teachers that you wouldn't ordinarily see on a day to day basis.*
- *No problem*
- *We talk often, so it was easy to discuss the class with him.*

**8. Did the visit give you a new insight into your teaching, or make you aware of something you or the students are doing in the classroom?**

- *Yes, see above.*
- *It actually gave me reassurance.*

**9. Will you make any changes based on what you found out during the post conference?**

- *Yes, I will try to elicit more answers from girls in my 6<sup>th</sup> period and to watch the distribution of boy to girl response/discussion in other periods as well.*
- *No, I will continue to use a number of approaches for each new lesson.*

**10. Have you thought about a focus for the next visit?**

- *No.*
- *We ran out of time.*
- *Yes.*

**11. Other comments...**

- *I'm glad I was able to participate in this project.*
- *When my partner approached me with her problem, I felt very honored that she was able to feel free and secure enough to confide in me. The meeting went well and I really think she appreciated my input and hopefully, she will use my suggestions. However, even if she doesn't use them, it may have opened up other doors or avenues by which she could seek other solutions.*



APPENDIX L  
FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE – MARCH 2004

Peer Coaching Thesis Project  
Chestnut Ridge Middle School  
Final Questionnaire – March 2004

**1. Why did you volunteer to participate in the peer coaching project?**

- *I thought it would be interesting to work with other teachers in the building and I thought the feedback might help me become a better teacher.*
- *To help you out and to try something different.*
- *I have participated in similar projects in other schools, and I found the experience to be worthwhile.*
- *Because I wanted to help out another staff member*
- *I wanted to help out a colleague.*
- *I thought it would be an interesting thing to do.*
- *Because it is my thesis topic, I thought I should also participate to form my own opinions, since I have never done peer coaching before.*
- *I thought it would invigorate me. I had done it before, and found value in it so I thought it wouldn't hurt to do it again.*

**2. Do you feel you were adequately prepared to undertake peer coaching as defined in this project? How would you suggest the preparation be improved?**

- *I'm not sure I was completely clear on the focus of the project.*
- *Yes. Although selection of a partner is fine, I should have worked with someone whose schedule was a little different than mine.*
- *I felt prepared because I had been trained in another district for this type of activity. I cannot, therefore, judge the extent of additional preparation needed.*
- *Yes, it was fine.*
- *Yes*
- *I need more structure.*
- *The preparation was good; it was not too formal and allowed for the participants to structure the process around their needs.*
- *It would have been more beneficial to have some who actually had done the process explain it.*
- *There were so many other activities sandwiched into the time period...perhaps it would be better if we had an additional period per month set aside to do just this activity...it just seemed that we were so pressed for time. (Perhaps there is no fix for this???)*

3. **How valuable was any of the material given you concerning suggestions for visit focus, data collections, conducting a conference, etc?**
- *To be honest I didn't really use the material too much.*
  - *The guidelines were fine along with the follow-up forms.*
  - *I probably did not focus enough on the materials since I was familiar with the approach, the types of data to be collected and the conference format.*
  - *Very helpful*
  - *Helped a lot.*
  - *I didn't read the material.*
  - *It was helpful.*
  - *It was very valuable...it gave me some direction/or focus in tackling the project.*
4. **Was the time commitment appropriate for this type of activity?**
- *Yes*
  - *Yes it was. However, because I had the same time off as my partner, it was difficult scheduling observations in the classroom.*
  - *I did not personally make an appropriate time commitment to this activity.*
  - *Yes*
  - *yes*
  - *ok*
  - *yes, for time that I participated*
  - *It was a bit difficult to get visits completed by certain dates due to other things going on in school.*
  - *It is difficult to say. Based on the numerous other mandatory commitments that permeate the educational environment I guess it would have been if we didn't have all the other stuff.*
5. **What difficulties in terms of arranging visits, administrative support and/or interference, etc. did you encounter in this project? If you did not visit your partner three times during the time allotted, what prevented you from doing so?**
- *We had some difficulty scheduling times with different personal and school schedules.*
  - *I did not get to visit 3 times. Each of us has so many extra-curricular activities that it became too busy esp. after Christmas.*
  - *The fact that I teach six periods a day made visiting a variety of classes more difficult. I would have had to have left one of my classes to do the activity, and I hesitate to do so unless absolutely necessary.*
  - *No problems, didn't make three visits because we ran out of time.*
  - *I had a busy schedule, so that was hard to arrange visitations.*

- *Our schedules were a conflict because my partner is very involved in school activities.*
- *Unfortunately my partner was out of school for medical reasons for an extended period so we really did not get to complete the process. We only met once.*
- *There really was no open administrative support. There was no opposition, but the administration never talked about the project.*
- *Other commitments: primarily planning for my Reading classes and a lack of time beyond this planning. Also, a few unforeseen personal commitments.*

**6. How concerned were you with the confidentiality of the experience?**

- *I was never really concerned about confidentiality. I am confident that my colleagues are professional and would not share inappropriate information.*
- *I was not.*
- *Confidentiality is always an issue because sometimes people can make inadvertent comments about what they saw in a class without malicious intent. Since no one was visiting in an official capacity and since no positive or negative action was taken as a result of having someone visit my class, I would guess confidentiality is not an issue.*
- *Not very concerned*
- *Not concerned at all.*
- *Not at all*
- *Not really*
- *Not really very concerned.*

**7. How effective were the visit reflection questions?**

- *They were repetitive, but I'm not sure that I can think of a way to change that. I think it might be better if the focus of the observations were laid out ahead of time. We should have had a specific topic or two to focus on in each observation.*
- *They gave me guidelines as to what I needed to focus upon.*
- *If I had taken the time to consider them more deeply, they would have been effective.*
- *Somewhat effective – I already discuss concerns with my peers.*
- *Very effective*
- *They were detailed.*
- *The first set was very good.*
- *The questions were repetitive.*
- *The questioning was insightful for both of us. It sparked many relevant conversations between us.*

**8. In what way, if any, did the peer coaching experience change the way you feel about administrative observations?**

- *I would be more comfortable and less threatened when someone comes into my classroom. No more instant underarm sweats!*
- *Having a peer observe is still different. However, by having any type of observation, it enabled me to become more understanding of the observation process.*
- *This didn't change the way I feel about administrative observations at all. Many administrators are not familiar with peer coaching or choose to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of teachers using a different format. How they do it remains a mystery, and most would choose to have it remain that way. The least information given to teachers about how they are observed means the administrator has more power to be subjective in evaluating the teacher. If teachers are given too much information about the evaluation process and what the observer is looking for, the administrator would be in a position of having to provide more objective data. Many administrators would rather use "gut instinct" rather than objective criteria to evaluate.*
- *Did not really change my feelings about administrative observations. My peers wouldn't hurt me or my job, and they are less threatening.*
- *It was interesting looking at things from a different view point.*
- *It doesn't compare.*
- *As a new teacher, I got much more out of this process. There was no real stress about having my job on the line. It was more about help from another teacher.*
- *I already had opinions about peer coaching being more valuable than administrative observations, and this only strengthened that belief.*
- *I don't think I feel a change in that area.*

**9. What do you feel is the most important requirement for a professional development activity to be productive? To what degree do you think peer coaching meets these requirements?**

- *I think clear goals and an activity outline are important for the activity to be productive.*
- *Involvement and goal setting. By doing both it allows the professional to decide what they want to come away with.*
- *For a professional development activity to be productive, it has to connect to what the teacher does in the classroom on a daily basis. Peer coaching obviously fulfills that requirement since it takes place in classrooms and gives the teacher feedback on how to make necessary or wanted changes.*
- *Staff support- it depends on the staff. I don't know how we did.*
- *Commitment.*

- *It should directly affect a teacher's performance in the classroom and relate the particular situations and problems in that room. It should not be theoretical as most professional development experiences are.*
- *I think that it needs to be accomplished in a less haphazard atmosphere to be more effective. However, I think the learn by doing aspect of the process allows you to come away with a decent degree of knowledge about your capabilities*

**10. How does this peer coaching experience compare to other professional development activities in which you have participated?**

- *I think it is a valid activity.*
- *I think it was more valuable than a lot of activities. I actually got some ideas to work on.*
- *I haven't really participated in anything like this.*
- *Same*
- *It's more hands on; however, I would have liked more one-on-one with my partner.*
- *Much more valid and useful*
- *The idea is a very good one. Again, any learn by doing program is always profitable for the participants.*

**11. How, if at all, has this experience changed you as a professional, a teacher, and a colleague?**

- *I'm not really sure. I hope it will help me to be a better teacher.*
- *Different in that I along with a partner, established goals, scheduling and meetings.*
- *It doesn't compare at all since most other activities are abstract and disconnected from what teachers do in the classroom.*
- *It has given me some helpful tips.*
- *I am PE, so it was nice going into a class setting and observing an academic class.*
- *None*
- *It has given me more respect for other teaching areas and to value the expertise and different styles of other teachers.*
- *It really hasn't made a lot of difference in my professional career. But I have a tendency now to pay attention to the pattern through which I call on students, boy/girl, front of classroom/back of classroom and etc... I really think this is due to the nature of the environment-which is very busy.*

**12. How, if at all, has this experience changed the student learning in your classroom? How do you know it has?**

- *It enabled me to see how others approach the same situations that I do within the classroom on a daily basis.*
- *Since I am not currently in the position to make a strong commitment to changing what I do in the classroom at the moment, it didn't change me as a professional, a teacher or a colleague. It has the potential to do those things, but given a variety of reasons, I did not allow that to happen.*
- *It has helped me with classroom management, and therefore reflected on the kids.*
- *Not sure*
- *I choose students more at random. I move around the classroom more often.*
- *I'm not sure it has because we only met once.*
- *I hope that my students will say that I have become more aware of their learning styles and needs.*
- *I really haven't had a lot of time to note changes.*

**13. Would you continue this activity, if coverage was available for your classes?**

- *I hate coverage. I will continue if I could do it on a prep period and not miss a teaching period.*
- *This hasn't changed student learning in my classroom only because I was not fully committed to using the data and information I received. Had I done that, I could have made positive changes to the learning environment.*
- *I don't think so. As I mentioned, my peers and I already discuss classroom concerns on a casual basis.*
- *No, for time purposes*
- *Yes, I was hesitant about asking for coverage. I didn't want to inconvenience anyone.*
- *Yes, if I felt sure that administration felt this was a valid activity and made it easier to arrange visits.*
- *No, I think I just don't have the time right now...*

**14. Would you recommend this activity to other teachers?**

- *Yes*
- *Yes*
- *Not at this time --- out of need for time for other activities.*
- *Yes, it is good to be observed by friends every so often. You tend to get in a rut after a few years, and this may help you change some problem areas.*
- *No*
- *Yes*
- *Absolutely*
- *Yes, definitely..it has its value.*

**15. What suggestions for changes to this process do you have?**

- *See above.*
- *Longer period of time to do the observations; choosing a partner with a different schedule.*
- *None.*
- *I felt that 2 observations were necessary for me, but other people may have done better with more.*
- *Observe the same class in the beginning of the year, and the end.*
- *Making it a school-wide program where administration openly shows support and encourages teachers to participate.*

**16. Now that you have completed the project, please rate the following concerns about the process with 1 meaning little or no concern and 4 meaning too much concern to participate in peer coaching again.**

	<i>Average</i>							
a. <i>allowing a peer into my room</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
b. <i>confidentiality</i>	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1.375
c. <i>administration's involvement</i>	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1.375
d. <i>choice of partner</i>	2	1	1	1	3	1	2	1.5
e. <i>time constraints</i>	2	4	1	4	5	1	3	2.875



### Biographical Data

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