

COACHING & REFLECTING

Pocketbook



A pocketful of practical
skills and strategies for
improving performance
and raising attainment at
every level in school

**Peter Hook, Ian McPhail
& Andy Vass**

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Foreword

Coaching is very much part of the language of education today. Strategies from the DfE and programmes from the National College for School Leadership reference and endorse coaching as a method of school improvement at all levels.

One of the reasons that coaching, as a development tool, fits so comfortably in schools is that it has a strong focus on individual learning. Also, because coaching is about holding high quality conversations it taps into the strong interpersonal skills that most teachers naturally demonstrate.

This book explores coaching as a specific set of skills that can be flexibly applied, whether you're doing the coaching or being coached, to help you:

- Connect to your strengths and feel valued as an individual
- Feel confident and supported
- Achieve goals which are relevant to you

Foreword

Schools today operate in a climate where continual improvement is an expectation. To achieve and be able to **sustain** improvements, they need to build increased personal capacity in teachers and children alike. In other words, they must **maximise potential**.

By definition coaching is about maximising potential. It seeks to develop people, helping them to become 'even better' and more 'consciously competent' in their roles.

Set within a relationship of trust and confidence, and having a focus on solutions and personal growth, coaching enables improvements in performance to be generated **internally** within the school and, therefore, to be easily shared with others. This is essentially what capacity building is.

Most schools would claim that people are our most important resource. Coaching offers one way of actually demonstrating that to be true.

Foreword

Because skilled coaching is largely about asking challenging and thought-provoking questions that lead towards positive outcomes, **coaching** and **reflecting** are **mutually supportive processes**.

Every teacher has examples from their own experience where the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their practice with colleagues has brought benefits, eg:

- Gaining a clearer perspective
- Resolving an issue of concern
- Exploring new ideas
- Feeling supported and affirmed in their practice
- Learning from other people's experience

In this book you will find several ground-breaking ideas to support you and your colleagues in reflective practice. You will also find that the coaching skills you gain from reading this book are equally effective in facilitating and adding value to the process of reflection.



Introduction



**A Solutions
Focus**



**Solution-
focused Tools**



Coaching Skills



Setting Goals



**Developing
Coaching in Your
Own School**



**Reflective
Practitioner
Groups**



**Further
Information**



Introduction

Begin with success in mind



We'd like to ask you a few questions because that's what coaches do. What happens when you imagine that this book is really useful to you? That it enhances your ability to hold influential and motivating conversations with colleagues, students and parents? That as a result of reading it now and dipping back in from time to time you become even more confident and even more effective in your work and maybe other areas of your life too?

*How will you recognise that this is happening?
What are you doing differently that pleases you? What else?
Who will notice that things are different and even better?
What are they noticing? What else?
What do these positive changes tell you about yourself?*

These are **solution-focused (SF)** coaching questions. They encourage you to think about future success. Our coaching approach in this book is solution focused.



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What is coaching?



A definition which fits with our approach is:

*'Unlocking a person's potential to maximise their performance.
It is about helping them learn rather than teaching them.'*

John Whitmore. (See reading recommendations, page 126.)

Coaching seeks to create change. The process of change begins with conversations. These conversations could be ones we have with ourselves (self-talk) or those with colleagues. Often they are a combination of the two. However, it is VERY difficult to ask yourself a question that you don't already know the answer to.

A skilled coach will ask you questions which respectfully challenge your thinking with the aim of helping you to set and achieve goals that help you become even better.

It is the skill of knowing how to ask the most useful question at the most appropriate time and in an empowering and thought-provoking way that distinguishes a really good coach.

What's in it for me?



Coaching, when skilfully and respectfully used, is a powerful learning experience. This is true whether you are coaching or being coached. Teachers who have been involved in coaching with us describe the benefits variously as:

- Thinking more clearly about things
- Feeling valued and listened to
- Recognising and appreciating their skills and resources
- Increasing their range of options
- Clarifying how they'd like things to be as they get even better
- Understanding what they need to do to get there
- Becoming more creative and optimistic
- Feeling more positive and confident about change

Importantly, high quality SF coaching will always place your agenda at the centre of the process making it empowering and motivational.