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Mentoring ‘inside’ the action of teaching: induction coaches’ perspectives and practices

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To provide a shared vision of effective mentoring and language for practice, Schwille developed a temporal framework depicting mentoring practices referred to as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the action of teaching. ‘Inside’ mentoring occurs when teachers are working with students (e.g. co-teaching and demonstration teaching), whereas ‘outside’ mentoring occurs before or after instruction (e.g. co-planning and debriefing sessions). ‘Inside/outside’ practices are complementary, yet a majority of mentoring occurs ‘outside’ the action of teaching, suggesting an underutilized range of practices. This qualitative study examined the ‘inside’ practices of six experienced, full-release induction coaches in 10 high-need elementary schools in the United States. Results indicate that coaches employed ‘inside’ practices to provide concrete, in-context modeling. While coaches stated that ‘inside’ practices can accelerate new teachers’ development and increase images of students’ potential, they also stated they were reticent to implement ‘inside’ practices, particularly co-teaching and demonstration teaching. To this end, coaches described a complex decision-making process that goes into when, how, why and why not to implement ‘inside’ practices, that included issues of authority and credibility, as well as a range of context, content and relational factors. Recommendations are provided for induction and coaching programs to facilitate mentors’ use of ‘inside’ practices.

\textbf{Keywords:} mentoring in education; coaching; teacher development; co-teaching; demonstration teaching; ‘inside’ mentoring

\section*{Introduction}

To make a difference in new teacher learning and practice, mentored induction must be predicated on and informed by a vision of strong teaching and mentoring. Mentors must therefore have a repertoire of strategies to enact their vision in ways that improve teacher practice (Feiman-Nemser 2001b, Schwille 2008). However, meta-analyses on mentored induction indicate large variations in quality, particularly in high-need settings (Kardos and Moore-Johnson 2008, Wei \textit{et al.} 2010, Bullough 2012) and when emotional support and professional socialization, as opposed to professional learning, often typify mentoring experiences (Kardos and Moore-Johnson 2010, Bullough 2012). When this is the case, mentoring falls short in its promise and potential as a lever for improving teacher practice. For this reason, research calls...
for more nuanced conceptualizations of mentoring to increase the potential to accelerate professional learning (Norman and Feiman-Nemser 2005, Wang et al. 2008, Carver and Feiman-Nemser 2009).

To provide a shared vision and language, Schwille (2008) developed a temporal framework categorizing effective mentoring practices as occurring ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the action of teaching. ‘Inside’ mentoring occurs when teachers are working with students (e.g. demonstration teaching), whereas ‘outside’ mentoring occurs before or after instruction (e.g. debriefing sessions). ‘Inside/outside’ practices are complementary, yet a majority of mentoring occurs ‘outside’ the action of teaching (Schwille 2008, Gardiner in press), suggesting an underutilized range of practices (Gardiner in press). This study examines the ‘inside’ mentoring practices employed by six experienced, full-release induction mentors (referred to as ‘coaches’) working across 10 high-need, urban K–8 schools in a Midwestern city in the United States. Research questions include: which, if any, ‘inside’ practices did coaches employ; what facilitates and inhibits coaches use of ‘inside’ practices; and what do coaches perceive are the benefits and limitations of employing ‘inside’ practices?

Conceptual framework

‘Educative mentoring’ describes a conceptual stance aimed at instructional improvement, and suggests a range of ways of engaging with new teachers to accelerate their professional learning and practice (Feiman-Nemser 1998, 2001a, Norman and Feiman-Nemser 2005, Schwille 2008, Carver and Feiman-Nemser 2009, Gardiner 2011, 2012). Educative mentoring draws upon social learning theories that frame learning as situated, collaborative, active and scaffolded (Vygotsky 1978, Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). In an educative framework, vision and enactment are coupled. Conceptually, mentors need a vision of strong professional teaching practices and view mentoring as assisted performance. To enact their vision in ways that improve new teacher learning and practice, mentors must have the skill, knowledge and capacity to flexibly enact a range of roles and practices.

To illustrate, mentoring from an educative stance includes understanding and drawing upon new teachers’ context as a salient space for learning; fostering trust, collaboration and reflection; balancing support and challenge; attending to new teachers questions, concerns and goals; and intentionally shaping opportunities for new teachers to learn in and from their practice (see Feiman-Nemser 2001b, Norman and Feiman-Nemser 2005, Schwille 2008, Gardiner 2011, 2012). As such, effective educative mentoring entails developing a conceptual stance towards mentoring; building a distinct skillset that goes beyond those needed for successful classroom teaching; ongoing professional development (PD); and sanctioned and substantive time to work with new teachers (Feiman-Nemser 2001a, Norman and Feiman-Nemser 2005, Schwille 2008, Wang et al. 2008, Bullough 2012).

In response to the complexity of educative mentoring, Schwille (2008) developed a temporal framework, classifying mentoring practices as occurring ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the action of teaching. The framework was intended to provide a comprehensive image and shared language of mentoring from which mentors judiciously select from a range of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ practices to provide the individualized, assisted performance needed to help accelerate new teachers’ PD. ‘Inside’ the action mentoring practices include: stepping-in, when a mentor ‘steps in’ during instruction to provide cues or feedback; collaborative teaching (co-teaching), which involves
teaching together in a predetermined fashion; and demonstration teaching, which is planned mentor modeling of a particular practice or strategy that includes an observational focus for the new teacher. ‘Inside’ practices are predicated on a belief that some learning is better attained in ‘real time’ via intentional scaffolding. ‘Outside’ the action mentoring includes: brief interactions, which are quick conversations; debriefing sessions, which are longer, regularly scheduled sessions for guided in-depth reflection and analysis; co-planning lessons; analyzing videotapes; journal writing to record and respond to questions and insights; and demonstration teaching which entails modeling a practice when children are not present. ‘Outside’ practices provide time for problem-solving, and guided analysis and reflection into teaching and learning.

The framework was later applied in high-need elementary schools (Gardiner in press). In both studies (Schwille 2008, Gardiner in press) ‘outside’ practices occurred in greater frequency, and some mentors implemented some, but not all, ‘inside’ practices. Gardiner (in press) explicated that ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are complementary practices enacted within a larger mentoring cycle to scaffold new teachers’ learning. In this cycle, mentors: set professional goals with new teachers; regularly observed in the new teacher’s classroom and collected observational data relating to the specified goal; and facilitated subsequent debriefing sessions. During the debriefing sessions, the mentor and new teacher analyzed the observational data, brainstormed and problem-solved, set subsequent goals and developed an actionable plan to help the new teacher attain his/her goal. This cycle is consistent with strong mentoring programs (Ingersoll and Strong 2011, Bullough 2012). Yet the prevalence of ‘outside’ practices may represent missed opportunities to support new teachers’ PD (Gardiner in press). Gardiner (in press) noted that mentors in the study were in their first and second years of mentoring, and suggested that more experienced mentors may accumulate and employ a broader repertoire of strategies.

Importantly, the ‘inside/outside’ framework is not intended to be used as a checklist or to reduce mentoring to an isolated set of practices, both of which violate the core principles upon which the framework was predicated (Schwille 2008, Gardiner in press). Mentoring from an educative framework is necessarily sensitive to and informed by context, individual goals, relational needs and dynamics, images of strong teaching and learning and professional learning as an ongoing process.

Methods

Context

Coaches in this study worked in 10 K–8 schools in a large, urban Midwestern public school system in the United States. The schools were part of a network of high-need, high-poverty schools. The coaching model was informed by educative mentoring principles. Prior to working with new teachers, coaches received three weeks of PD in ‘educative mentoring’ and adult learning principles, and in mentoring strategies, tools (e.g. observation templates) and expectations. Coaches also read and discussed research on ‘educative mentoring,’ including Schwille’s (2008) ‘inside/outside’ framework.

Throughout the academic year, coaches received a minimum of 40 hours of PD and met bimonthly for program updates, and to identify and problem-solve challenges. Program directors, who had a minimum of three years of coaching experience, provided ongoing PD sessions and individualized support. Coaches were ‘full
release,’ meaning they were released from their teaching responsibilities in order to work exclusively with new teachers. Coaches implemented a ‘coaching cycle’ in which they worked collaboratively with new teachers to identify problems of practice, set goals for improvement, determine actionable plans to attain these goals (Bean 2009) and scaffold new teachers’ learning and development using ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ practices (Schwille 2008). Coaches conducted weekly classroom observations focused on the established goals. Observations were scheduled in advance and lasted 45–60 minutes. During this time coaches collected data pertaining to the goal and, at times, implemented ‘inside’ practices. Throughout the week, coaches also conducted brief interactions (virtual and face-to-face) to check in with new teachers, engage in quick problem-solving and maintain continuity.

Within 24 hours of an observation, coaches facilitated debriefing sessions. Debriefing sessions started with coaches recapping classroom events pertaining to the goal, without judgment. Coaches then solicited new teachers’ analyses and reflections, and engaged in problem-posing and problem-solving. Each session ended with new teachers determining ‘next steps’ for themselves (what they would do to ‘fine tune’ or ‘strengthen’ their practice) and for their coaches (e.g. gathering resources; co-planning; video analysis; co-teaching or demonstration teaching a practice; and/or observing a specific student, lesson or strategy), and confirming the next classroom observation date and time.

Participants
A team of 23 coaches worked with new teachers across 17 schools: 12 first-year coaches and 11 coaches with one to six years of coaching experience. All coaches previously taught in high-need, high-poverty schools; had taught a minimum of five years; and had at least one master’s degree in an education-related field.

Gardiner’s (in press) study of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ practices speculated that the limited use of ‘inside’ practices may be linked to mentors’ newness to the role, and that with more experience they may employ a broader repertoire of strategies. As such, we recruited coaches with at least one full year of coaching experience. Of the 11 experienced coaches, six volunteered.

Participating coaches were female between 28 and 36 years old. Table 1 presents the demographics for each participant. Each coach traveled between two and four schools and supported 12–14 first-year and second-year teachers.

Data collection and analysis
Data collection spanned the 2013/14 academic year and included interviews, observations and coaching documents. We conducted three individual, structured interviews (Seidman 2013) each lasting 45–60 minutes with each coach during fall, winter and spring. Interview questions sought to understand: factors that pertain to when and why coaches do/do not step-in, co-teach and demonstration teach; what stepping-in, co-teaching and demonstration teaching looks and sounds like in practice; how/if stepping-in, co-teaching and demonstration teaching relate to other ‘inside’ and/or ‘outside’ coaching practices; benefits/limitations of each ‘inside’ practice; and what preparation and/or follow-up facilitates effective implementation of each ‘inside’ practice. Interviews were transcribed and returned to participants
prior to subsequent interviews. After each interview cycle (fall, winter and spring), we analyzed transcripts in order to identify relevant concepts (including counter-examples) to inform and revise interview questions for the next round of interviews (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Member checks were conducted to increase credibility (Glesne 2005).

We also conducted observations and document analysis to gain a more comprehensive picture of coaches’ practices. Ninety-minute observations with each coach in the fall helped us understand the context and see coaches’ interactions with new teachers during classroom visits and debriefing sessions. In addition, we wanted to see whether interview responses were representative of what coaches did in practice (Corbin and Strauss 2008). We also reviewed coaching documents to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how coaches were prepared for and supported in their work, and what their work entailed. Documents included PD materials and agendas, and coaching logs (documents detailing coaches’ work).

Data analysis was ongoing and inductive. After each interview cycle, we created a matrix (Miles and Huberman 1994) for each coach to represent the data in accordance with the following categories: ‘stepping-in,’ ‘co-teaching’ and ‘demonstration teaching.’ Individually, we continued our constant comparison of data to identify open codes (Corbin and Strauss 2008) pertaining to each ‘inside practice.’ For example, codes included: ‘teacher authority,’ ‘other options first,’ ‘buy-in’ and ‘transfer.’ After individually coding, we met to discuss codes, and come to consensus on terms and their meaning. We also reviewed documents such as coaching logs and agendas, adding notes as needed. We repeated this process for each interview.

We then reduced the data and each created a ‘meta-matrix’ (Miles and Huberman 1994) to represent relevant data pertaining to ‘inside’ practices as enacted by each coach across the three interview cycles (see Table 2). We met again to analyze the

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<th>Table 1. Mentor demographics.</th>
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<td>Mentor (pseudonym)</td>
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Note: PK, pre kindergarten.

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<th>Table 2. Meta-matrix.</th>
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Note: Int., interview.
meta-matrix. First, we reviewed the reduced data for each ‘inside’ practice across the three interview cycles. Then, we looked at each coach as an individual case to: understand individual practices across fall, winter and spring interviews; and confirm or revise the codes representing patterns of meaning. Following an individual analysis, we completed a cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences, and further refine codes (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Results
Stepping-in

Interview data and coaching logs indicate that each coach stepped-in in every classroom. Each coach indicated that stepping-in was a form of in-the-moment assistance that helped new teachers respond to classroom complexity. All coaches identified multiple ways in which they stepped-in, which included using non-verbal gestures, whispering, holding up messages on whiteboards, quickly interjecting questions/suggestions, intervening with student(s) and approaching the teacher to offer assistance. Coaches explained that a subtle approach to stepping-in was employed in a conscious effort to direct attention and authority to the teacher, except when there was an imminent concern for student safety such as a physical or verbal altercation. While each coach stepped-in and described a range of ways and reasons for doing so, five of six coaches indicated a reticence to step-in because they did not want to usurp new teachers’ authority or undermine their expertise.

Coaches indicated that new teachers, particularly at the beginning of the year, could become frustrated, overwhelmed and unsure of what steps to take in response to student misbehavior, inattention and/or confusion. At this point, coaches explained that stepping-in pertained to supporting new teachers’ implementation of routines, procedures and clarifying directions. By November, stepping-in shifted to instructional interventions such as lesson implementation and increasing student engagement. For the remainder of the year, stepping-in primarily maintained an instructional focus. To this end, coaches whispered quick recommendations addressing content errors and alternative instructional approaches, provided ad hoc modeling to demonstrate an instructional strategy or specific language use, raised their hands to ask a question that may draw attention to student confusion, whispered alternative phrasing to help clarify student understanding and/or suggested additional questions to deepen students’ thinking when it appeared the new teacher was unsure of how to elicit student thinking or was asking too many surface-level questions. Additionally, coaches Kim and Brenda explained that new teachers were working so hard to implement their instructional and relational goals that they often did not recognize when they were attaining aspects of their goals. These coaches stated that they also stepped-in to provide positive reinforcement and identify and celebrate successes.

Each coach stated that stepping-in provided new teachers with alternative strategies when they appeared to have exhausted their repertoire and simultaneously let them see students’ responses. Jenny explained: ‘So much is happening in a classroom and new teachers don’t always know how to respond or select from a range of strategies. So stepping-in lets them see the effect on students.’ Coaches noted that
stepping-in was a quick way to help change practice. The ad hoc nature did not require pre-planning, although coaches indicated stepping-in was more effective when it aligned with new teachers’ goals. In this manner, coaches stated that stepping-in had the potential to improve teaching and learning by providing concrete, in-context modeling; raising expectations by changing new teachers’ image of what students can do; and expanding new teachers’ pedagogical repertoires. For benefits to be realized, coaches stated that they needed to: develop buy-in; help new teachers’ process the stepping-in experience and generalize that experience to future contexts; and maintain teacher authority before, during and/or after stepping-in – all of which occurred primarily during debriefing sessions and check-ins.

To support new teacher buy-in, each coach initiated conversations with new teachers to establish which forms of stepping-in were most comfortable (e.g. whisper, non-verbal cues, raising their hand to ask a question or holding up notes on whiteboards). For example, Louise relayed a conversation during a debriefing session:

“I can also come by and just give you reminders to [give positive reinforcement (PR)]. I can whisper it in your ear if you like. I can give you a little signal. I can hold up a sign that says [PR]. Which of those sound the best to you?”… I try to get their buy in and make sure it’s something they can see themselves being comfortable with.

In terms of processing the experience, each coach stated she followed up by asking new teachers how the experience felt, whether they were comfortable with the process and/or whether there was anything the coach could do similarly or differently in the future. Coaches indicated that as the year progressed, trust, communication and collaboration increased. As a result, coaches were less likely to process the experience with teachers. Instead, coaches focused on helping new teachers extrapolate from the experience and identify future applications (i.e. transfer).

Coaches noted that establishing and maintaining credibility and authority were both necessary and extremely challenging for new teachers. As such, each coach repeatedly discussed the salience of teacher authority and the challenge of not undermining students’ perceptions of that authority when stepping-in. Coaches therefore stated that they applied subtle approaches to stepping-in and sought to utilize other, less visible ‘outside’ approaches, such as collecting data and debriefing where possible. Indeed, five of six coaches indicated stepping-in should be, as Jenny stated, ‘the last resort’ or, as Sharon indicated, teachers learn to teach by ‘trial and error.’ Cognizant that stepping-in drew attention to her presence and potential power, Brenda explained that after stepping-in ‘I make myself scarce for a little while, so she can get that [authority] back and practice without me being in her space.’ By the middle of the year, when stepping-in was instructionally oriented, coaches concern shifted from teacher as authority to teacher as instructional or content expert.

**Co-teaching**

Interviews and coaching logs indicate that co-teaching occurred, but infrequently. In the fall, two of six coaches reported co-teaching; by winter the number increased to four; and by late spring all but one co-taught. Coaches stated that co-teaching was
unlikely to occur early in the year owing to a range of factors: new teachers were focused more on routines and procedures; and coaches were still building relationships with new teachers and getting to know context and curricula for each classroom. Additionally, each coach explained that she co-taught infrequently, preferring an inconspicuous classroom presence. For this reason, before attempting to co-teach, coaches stated they first employed other strategies such as co-planning, collecting data during observations and analyzing data during debriefing sessions, viewing and analyzing videos and facilitating peer observations. These strategies were seen as effectively working to improve instruction, while simultaneously maintaining teacher autonomy and authority. Coaches said they co-taught only if and when multiple other strategies proved ineffective in helping new teachers realize their goals.

Coaches identified some clear tensions that informed their decision-making of if and when to co-teach. While they articulated ways in which co-teaching can scaffold new teachers’ development, they also raised concerns that it could inhibit new teachers’ independent implementation. On one hand, coaches noted that co-teaching encouraged new teachers to undertake more complex teaching and/or continue implementing a challenging practice, as a coach was present to share the risk and responsibility. Co-teaching made instructional concepts concrete and situated the instructional experience within the new teachers’ context. Along with providing a scaffolded instructional experience that clarified enactment, coaches stated that co-teaching could also help new teachers develop a more robust image of their own and their students’ capabilities. Kellie explained that teachers might see ‘that there is a lot more that they and their students are capable of, and … hopefully be inspired to up their game.’ On the other hand, five coaches were concerned that transfer to independent implementation could be inhibited. Brenda indicated that co-teaching could be ‘a crutch.’ Louise stated she no longer co-teaches or demonstration teaches because she wants her new teachers ‘to do the heavy lifting’ and not ‘become reliant on me.’

Interview data also indicated a tension pertaining to the potential for co-teaching to increase and/or undermine coach credibility. For example, Brenda, Kim, Kellie, Sharon and Jenny indicated that a successful lesson can secure the coaches’ position as a trustworthy, credible source of skills and knowledge that can contribute to a teacher’s growth and development. They also stated that co-teaching can strengthen collaborative relationships. Sharon highlights this potential: ‘I’m in the class with you, I’m in the work with you.’ Despite the benefits associated with co-teaching, four of the five coaches who co-taught were conflicted about implementing this ‘inside’ practice. These coaches stated that there is a very real risk that a co-taught lesson will not go well, and that when a lesson ‘backfires’ it can undermine their credibility as resource for professional learning. At the same time, these coaches indicated that a ‘failed lesson’ could be an opportunity to model reflective and analytical teaching and enhance relationships. Kim found that the ‘urgency’ to improve new teachers’ practice in high-need settings was such that it was necessary to ‘to push past comfort and honest imperfections on everyone’s part … because “inside” practices speed up [new teachers’] learning.’

Louise, who no longer co-taaches, also explained how a lesson in which the coach is more effective than the teacher can erode the coach–teacher relationship, diminish new teachers’ self-confidence and lead to a loss of the teacher’s credibility in the eyes of students. Three other coaches also voiced this concern.
An additional factor contributing to coaches’ reticence to co-teach was its time-intensive nature, which was viewed in accordance to three related factors: relationships, contextual knowledge and situating co-teaching in a larger coaching cycle. With regards to relationships, coaches explained that effective co-teaching was predicated upon knowing teachers’ personalities, preferences and class culture and expectations; knowledge of and relationship with students; and being seen as a credible partner. These relational factors took significant time to cultivate and care to maintain.

Coaches also stated that in order to effectively co-teach they needed time to develop context and content knowledge. Coaches worked in multiple grade levels and content areas, some of which they had never taught, across two to four schools with varying policies with which they must become familiarized. They also coached in the context of the recently implemented Common Core State Standards and the resultant instructional shifts. Kellie explained:

You have [to] look at this basal that you have never had before. That can take hours trying to figure out … Now we have Common Core State Standards. I look at that website … My level or lack of experience with these curricular resources, new standards and all the instructional shifts that come for us, for teachers for admins and for kids or … when you start really co-planning all this comes up. Even if you’re co-planning one lesson.

A third factor to emerge from coaches’ concerns was how co-teaching fit in the larger coaching cycle and the significance of transfer. Coaches believed that, in order for co-teaching to be effective, they needed to: co-plan the lesson, a lesson that connected to the current coaching goal; prepare to implement the lesson with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; jointly enact the lesson; and debrief post implementation, including setting goals to support new teachers’ transfer of knowledge and skill. Coaches explained that a necessary process occurred during debriefing sessions as coaches guided teachers’ reflection on and application of the co-teaching experience. Brenda illustrated her transfer-supporting conversations: ‘What worked? What were the challenges? How can they apply that to their own teaching on their own the next time?’

**Demonstration teaching**

By the end of the year, five of the six coaches reported doing some amount of demonstration teaching in whole or small group settings. Demonstration teaching, like co-teaching, increased in prevalence as the year progressed and occurred only after coaches attempted other, ‘outside’ practices first.

Coaches identified many of the same benefits, caveats and considerations between co-teaching and demonstration teaching. Both provided a clear image of a practice, enacted with new teachers’ students that could address implementation challenges. Both practices scaffolded new teachers’ learning and developing, and shared/reduced the risk of implementing new and/or challenging instruction. Both practices could elevate teachers’ expectations of their students. Still, coaches were judicious in their decisions of if and when to implement co-teaching and demonstration teaching. Coaches explained that transfer was a deciding factor, meaning they would only co-teach or demonstration teach if new teachers’ independent implementation of the instructional focus would be fostered. Coaches also noted that
credibility and relationships with new teachers could be potentially enhanced or diminished by co-teaching and demonstration teaching.

Demonstration teaching differed from co-teaching in that it provided new teachers with a context to observe an instructional practice without the complexity of teaching at the same time. Coaches indicated that they either planned the demonstration lesson with the new teacher or planned individually and met with new teachers to go over the lesson prior to teaching. Coaches also indicated that they either recommended or jointly determined an observational focus to increase new teachers’ active engagement with the lesson and direct attention to salient aspects that foster effective implementation. Four coaches stated that a concern pertaining to demonstration teaching was that the new teacher might view the experience as a break, rather than a means to improve practice. These coaches indicated their concern was mitigated when there was a clear the purpose for the demonstration lesson, an observational focus that would be discussed during the next debriefing session and an expectation for establishing next steps to scaffold new teachers’ implementation of the instructional focus.

Louise stated that she no longer demonstration teaches because the coach is doing ‘so much of the heavy lifting and it’s harder to make a serious impact on teacher practice.’ Conversely, the other five coaches believed demonstration teaching could make a serious and sustained impact on practice if integrated into a larger coaching cycle. Sharon described how demonstration teaching could foster successful transfer: ‘It helps it sink in right away. It also provides less ambiguity, there is less of a place for misunderstanding … by me modeling I give them visual. You see it, okay. Then, ultimately, ask them to do it.’ Kim opted to demonstration teach ‘to make the load reasonable,’ and because she found it to lead to changes in practice ‘faster than co-teaching … I can show the teacher what I am looking for and then have them replicate the process the next time.’ Without exception, each coach who demonstration taught indicated that the event needed to be processed during the debriefing session. At that time, coaches and new teachers would analyze the event and determine a series of next steps and supports needed to foster new teachers’ independent implementation.

Coaches indicated that they analyzed a range of factors when deciding whether they would demonstration teach, and that the quality of relationships with students was a critical factor. Coaches explained that when they demonstration taught, they had sole responsibility for promoting a productive learning environment, although while co-teaching that responsibility was shared with the classroom teacher, who had deeper knowledge of and relationships with students. While coaches indicated that relationships with students facilitated effective co-teaching, they stated these relationships were necessary for effective demonstration teaching. Each coach spoke of the time it takes to develop relationships with students given the subtle stance coaches took while present in the classroom. These relationships, according to Kim, ‘Happen on a slower scale.’ Also, according to Kellie, ‘It can bomb, [if] you don’t have relationships with kids.’ Sharon went so far as to say, ‘If I don’t have a relationship with the majority of them then I probably will not model.’

Each coach also raised concerns associated with being the sole instructional model. For example, each coach noted that an unintended consequence of demonstration teaching was the risk to new teacher authority and credibility. Jenny explained: ‘You are the only one in front of the class. I feel like it can undermine the teacher more [than other strategies].’ Relatedly, Louise and Sharon worried that
teacher competence could come into question. Sharon stated: ‘The whole balance of who’s in charge … [I don’t] want the kids thinking, “Oh, now she needs help. She can’t do it by herself”.’ Additionally, Kim and Brenda noted that new teachers sometimes take a too literal interpretation of a modeled practice and needed support to maintain core principles but adapt aspects to fit their style, needs and context.

With demonstration teaching, coaches bear full instructional responsibility and each coach who demonstration taught indicated that the risks to coach credibility associated with demonstration teaching are greatest of any of the ‘inside’ practices. Kellie summed up the concerns of each coach who demonstration taught:

I have a really big fear or anxiety around doing demonstration teaching and not having it go well, to me that’s a really big risk … fear of not executing well or losing relationships or following expertise or any of that, fear of undermining the teachers authority, fear of just not knowing the content or the grade level or the instructional strategies or the school context well enough to execute.

Sharon offered a unique solution. When she was in doubt of her ability to productively manage the learning environment and provide an effective instructional model, she asked the teacher to intervene if students were off task. In that way, Sharon explained, she could focus on instruction and, by distributing the responsibility for management, lessen the risk of a lesson going poorly.

Brenda, Jenny, Kim, Kellie and Sharon also talked about the specific affordances that can stem from demonstration teaching. It was a potential way for former teachers who have been released full-time to coach to try new practices, and build their own confidence and credibility. Kellie stated that demonstration teaching ‘builds their confidence in my expertise because I think the longer I’m out of the classroom the less faith they may have.’ For these benefits to be realized, coaches reiterated that strong, trusting relationships with teachers and students were necessary.

**Discussion**

This study sought to understand which, if any, ‘inside’ practices coaches employed, coaches’ perceptions of the benefits and limitations of employing ‘inside’ practices and factors that facilitated and inhibited coaches’ use of ‘inside’ practices. The following discussion will address each research question; discuss the complex decision-making coaches employed regarding if, when or when not to implement ‘inside’ practices; and offer suggestions for induction programs.

To begin, all coaches employed stepping-in in each classroom throughout the year in a variety of, primarily, subtle ways. Between winter and spring, five of six coaches co-taught and demonstration taught in some, but not all, classrooms.

Coaches identified both benefits and limitations to ‘inside’ practices that informed their decision-making. One benefit of ‘inside’ practices included providing concrete, in-context modeling of a practice or strategy that new teachers were struggling to implement. ‘Inside’ practices could also clarify enactment challenges, raise expectations of students’ and new teachers’ capacity, encourage new teachers to take instructional risks and undertake more complex teaching and/or continue to implement a more challenging practice. However, coaches were quick to explain that utilizing any ‘inside’ practice without debriefing the experience was insufficient because the coaches’ aim was to support changes in new teachers’ practice. For this reason, coaches explicated the necessity of following up with new teachers. At the
beginning of the year, follow-up had a dual purpose: ensuring teachers’ comfort and buy-in with ‘inside’ practices; and constructing shared meaning around and expectations for future application of the focus skill or practice.

On the other hand, coaches indicated that ‘inside’ mentoring, particularly co-teaching and demonstration teaching, had potential limitations that could have a significant, negative impact on the coaching relationship, and therefore on teacher practice. Each coach repeatedly stated that co-teaching and demonstration teaching could undermine coach and/or new teacher credibility, authority and/or confidence. Coaches also stated that co-teaching and demonstration teaching were time-intensive practices.

Along with considerations of the benefits and limitations, a range of additional factors influenced coaches’ decisions regarding if and when to implement ‘inside’ practices: knowledge of content (curricular, subject matter, grade level, Common Core State Standards), context (school policies, grade level, teacher expectations), students (prior learning, as individuals) and the quality of relationships. The time to develop this knowledge was not insignificant considering each coach worked with 12–14 teachers across two to four schools. Consistent with previous research (John-Steiner 2000, Gardiner 2012), relationships with new teachers facilitated the mentoring process by creating a context of shared responsibility, joint investment and risk-taking. While research often suggests that risk-taking occurs mostly on the part of the new teacher via trying new practices and instructional approaches, this study reveals how trust is a factor in coaches’ willingness to implement the more highly visible mentoring practices of co-teaching and demonstration teaching. For example, coaches indicated that trusting relationships with new teachers facilitated their willingness to take the potential risk to credibility by co-teaching or demonstration teaching. Furthermore, coaches stated that relationships with students were a significant factor in determining when or when not to demonstration teach.

From coaches’ responses, it is clear they applied an ‘educative’ framework in their induction vision and enactment (Feiman-Nemser 2001b, Norman and Feiman-Nemser 2005, Schwille 2008, Gardiner 2011, 2012). Specifically, coaches had a vision of coaching as assisted performance to intentionally support new teachers’ development in active, collaborative and situated ways. Coaches purposefully selected from and applied a repertoire of ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ practices. As a general rule, coaches appeared to defer to ‘outside’ practices where possible (e.g. collecting observational data and analyzing that data during debriefing sessions), as they strove to direct students’ attention toward the teacher as the source of authority and learning in the classroom, while simultaneously maintaining an unobtrusive classroom presence. However, when ‘outside’ practices were insufficient, coaches turned toward more visible ‘inside’ practices.

Data indicate that deciding if, when and how to implement ‘inside’ practices was a complex decision-making process, made on a case-by-case basis. These decisions were informed by content and context knowledge, the quality of teacher and/or student relationships and how likely the concrete, in-context modeling would lead to changes in teachers’ practice. In particular, concerns relating to credibility and authority – for both coach and teacher – appeared to heavily influence coaches’ decision-making across all three ‘inside’ practices, but were especially prevalent when considering co-teaching and demonstration teaching. As such, it appears that coaches engaged in a risk-reward analysis when deciding if, how and when to implement ‘inside’ practices.
Stepping-in occurred most frequently, enacted by each coach in each classroom. The subtle nature (and giving deference to new teachers) that typified most stepping-in interactions appeared to be low risk to coach and new teacher credibility, and to new teacher authority. When suggestions are offered as a whisper, quick interjection and/or non-verbal cue or message, the new teacher holds the power to determine whether or not to implement said suggestions and students are relatively unaware of the exchange. In these scenarios, coaches appear to be on the periphery, allowing authority to rest with the new teacher. Despite this, coaches still described weighing several considerations before (and after) stepping-in. Each mentor stated they co-constructed preferences for how to step-in with new teachers to increase buy-in, and then followed up when stepping-in occurred to process the experience. In this manner, coaches sought to reduce risk to developing and ongoing relationships. Stepping-in was also *ad hoc* and of short duration, requiring minimal time commitment on the part of the coach or new teacher. Follow-up included processing the experience and how the content of the stepping-in act will inform new teacher’s practice. This follow-up was integrated into the regularly occurring check-ins and debriefing sessions. As such, stepping-in appeared to be relatively low risk and require little time.

Alternatively, co-teaching and demonstration teaching are more overt practices that increase coaches’ visibility and associated risks/rewards to credibility. While coaches indicated a range of benefits (discussed previously), each coach expressed real concern that co-teaching and/or demonstration teaching might undermine their own or new teachers’ credibility, which could destabilize the coaching relationship. For example, if a coach is ineffective with regards to instructional implementation, she could lose credibility and buy-in from the teacher for future collaborative efforts. At the same time, coaches noted that successful co-teaching and demonstration teaching could build their credibility with the teacher and students. If there appeared to be an obvious disparity between coach and new teacher capacity, the results could be that students consider the teacher less able (a loss of credibility and authority) and/or the teacher could consider herself less able – and hence unlikely to continue to take instructional risks. Furthermore, as previously discussed, co-teaching and demonstration teaching involve additional time commitments, and require broad and deep knowledge for effective implementation.

Given the frequency with which coaches expressed concerns over the many ways in which ‘inside’ practices, particularly co-teaching and demonstration teaching, exposed them to coaching sessions that could ‘backfire,’ it seems that these practices could be deemed high risk. As such, coaches used ‘outside’ practices such as data collection during observations, co-planning, peer observations and video analysis prior to or as an alternative to ‘inside’ practices. However, with the high risk that emerged from coaches’ reflections also came a sense of high potential reward from each practice. Coaches suggested that these concrete and contextualized experiences offered high potential to accelerate and change practice.

Furthermore, coaches’ reticence to implement ‘inside’ practices may be further exacerbated by prevailing educational norms. In this regard, ‘inside’ practices run counter to beliefs pertaining to autonomy, individuality, expertise and learning through trial and error (Britzman 2003, City *et al.* 2009) – beliefs, research indicates, that mentors often share (Feiman-Nemser 2001a, Wang and Odell 2002, Schwille 2008). It is clear that concepts of ‘teacher authority’ and fear of losing credibility also drove coaches’ decision-making.
While each coach employed ‘inside’ practices, results indicate that, as Gardiner (in press) posited, ‘inside’ practices may be underutilized. This study further reveals that coaches intentionally underutilized ‘inside’ practices because they were frequently employed after other options had been attempted. In contrast to Gardiner’s (in press) hypothesis, years of experience did not appear to influence coaches’ likelihood of implementing ‘inside’ practices.

Coaches in this study provided insights into the complex decision-making that goes into when, how, why and why not to implement ‘inside’ practices. Such an understanding can be applied to mentored induction (and other coaching) programs, and to identifying specific supports to build coaches’ capacity to judiciously select from and enact a broader range of practices.

First, programs need to help coaches identify the benefits and potential limitations of ‘inside’ practices. Such discussions can provide an expanded vision of mentoring as assisted performance, and clarify enactment possibilities. Frank conversations also need to be held about prevailing norms that inhibit implementing ‘inside’ practices. To facilitate a more seamless integration of ‘inside’ practices, coaches need to be prepared to have productive conversations with new teachers explicating the rationale for and ways of implementing ‘inside’ practices. Additionally, coaches need to understand and be able to convey how ‘inside’/‘outside’ practices are implemented in integrated ways to help new teachers attain their instructional goals. Coaches also need to understand how relationships are bi-directional; solid relationships not only help new teachers take instructional risks but also help coaches implement what they identify as the more risky ‘inside’ practices.

To effectively implement ‘inside’ practices, coaches will need ongoing PD and support. PD sessions can be used to discuss and problem-solve challenges of ‘inside’ practice implementation, and to critically reflect upon and analyze the use and possible avoidance of ‘inside’ practices. Given new initiatives such as Common Core State Standards and related practices (e.g. close reading), coaches require dedicated time during PD session to update and/or expand knowledge and be prepared to support new teachers’ enactment of these concepts. Additionally, the deep content and context knowledge required to implement ‘inside’ practices reinforces research (Smith and Ingersoll 2004, Youngs 2007, Bay and Parker-Katz 2009) recommending that coaches share grade level and content areas.

Furthermore, coaches indicated a clear concern about losing credibility if a lesson ‘backfired.’ This concern suggests a need to help coaches reconsider notions of expertise and model their reflective process. It is not feasible for each lesson to be a success. Rather than shying away from co-teaching and demonstration teaching for fear of losing credibility, coaches can be encouraged to model the reflective process of thinking carefully about what goes well (or not), why and what next steps might be most salient. By modeling the reflective process, coaches may forge stronger relationships with new teachers from less effective lessons.

The complexity of teaching and learning, in a time when the expectations for robust student learning is increasing, may necessitate a more comprehensive and inclusive enactment of ‘inside’ practices, not to replace but to complement ‘outside’ practices. For this to happen, induction programs would be advised to provide robust PD that offers a comprehensive vision of effective coaching and support to overcome challenges of enactment that make coaches less likely to implement a set of practices that could help scaffold and accelerate new teachers’ learning.
Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

