BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SELF-DIRECTEDNESS

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Presenter:
Jane Ellison, Ed.D.
ccsjane@gmail.com
ABOUT YOUR PRESENTER

Jane Ellison, Ed.D. lives in Denver, Colorado and is Executive Co-Director of Thinking Collaborative, Co-Director of Kaleidoscope Associates and the former Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Coaching. Jane provides consultation to school districts and other organizations in the areas of Cognitive Coaching℠, Adaptive Schools, change and transition, learning-focused leadership, and facilitation She is the co-author with Carolee Hayes of *Cognitive Coaching: Weaving Threads of Learning and Change into the Culture of an Organization* and *Effective School Leadership: Developing Principals with Cognitive Coaching.*

Jane was the Director of Elementary Education for Douglas County School District Re.1 from 1988-1998. In that position, Jane was responsible for the development of elementary standards and curriculum, the monitoring of instruction, and the supervision of principals. Jane was a principal for 15 years -- 4 in Douglas County, Colorado and 11 in Tinley Park, Illinois. Her teaching experience is in the primary grades and the graduate college level. She holds a B.A. in Elementary Education and Social Sciences from SMU, an M.Ed. in Elementary Supervision from the University of North Texas, and an Ed.D. in Administration from VPI&SU, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Jane’s experiences include: teaching graduate classes in South America; presenting at International Schools’ Conferences; attending the Principals’ Institutes at Columbia Teachers’ College and Harvard University; and chairing the Board of Directors of the Principal’s Center at the University of Colorado, Denver.
OUTCOMES
• Understanding of the concept and importance of self-directed learning
• Awareness of the internal resources for self-directedness
• Understanding of four ways to lead for self-directedness

Essential Questions:
• What does it mean to be self-directed and why is it important?
• How can I interact with others to support them in being more self-directed?
• Who do I need to be in order to support self-directedness?

AGENDA
Defining Self-Directedness
Support Functions
States of Mind
Mediating Thinking

RESOURCES
QUOTATIONS ABOUT SELF-DIRECTION

Like metaphors, pithy quotations can deepen meanings with a few, well chosen words. This collection of quotations by authors, artists, philosophers, psychologists, businesspeople, athletes, scientists, statespeople, and historians is intended to accompany and illuminate the meaning of and necessity for self-directed learning.

The purpose of this collection is to support anyone working on self-directed learning as an additional resource. Selected quotations may be:

• made into banners or posters to mount in conspicuous places as reminders,
• studied to find what hidden meanings and relationships might be disclosed,
• highlighted in monthly calendars focusing on Cognitive Coaching
• chosen as a topic to stimulate further writing and reflection,
• the focus of “words to live by” for an extended period of time,
• related to a topic of study in one or more content areas,
• used in other ways that you will create.

This is only the beginning. You will want to find other ways to use them as well as add to the collection.
1. "No power on earth can impede your progress as surely and implacably as you can."
   Colin Turner, Author

2. "It is of practical value to learn to like yourself. Since you must spend so much time
   with yourself you might as well get some satisfaction out of the relationship."
   Norman Vincent Peale

3. "We distinguish the excellent man from the common man by saying that the former is
   the one who makes great demands upon himself,
   and the latter who makes no demands on himself."
   -Jose Ortega Y Gasset

4. "The relationships we have with the world are largely determined by the relationships
   we have with ourselves."
   Greg Anderson

5. "You are your own raw material. When you know what you consist of and what you want
   to make of it, then you can invent yourself."
   Warren B. Bennis

6. "Spoon feeding, in the long run, teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon."
   E. M. Forester

7. "He who knows others is wise; he knows himself is enlightened."
   Lao-Tzu

8. “Self-assurance is two-thirds of success.”
   Gaelic Proverb

9. “Self-production: the characteristic of living systems to continuously
   renew themselves and to regulate this process in such a way that the integrity of
   their structure is maintained. It is a natural process which supports the quest for
   structure, process renewal and integrity.”
   Margaret Wheatley
10. “If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.”
   Abigail Van Buren

11. "Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself."
    Chinese Proverb

12. "It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere."
    --Agnes Repplier

13. “Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control. These three alone lead to sovereign power.”
    --Lord Tennyson

14. “Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.”
    --Benjamin Spock

15. "Only the human brain can deliberately change perceptions, change patterns, invent concepts and tolerate ambiguity."
    Edward de Bono

16. A goal of education, therefore, is to assist growth toward greater complexity and integration and to assist in the process of self-organization -- to modify individuals’ capacity to modify themselves.
    Reuven Feuerstein

17. “Change your thoughts and you change your world.”
    Norman Vincent Peale

18. “The way in which we think of ourselves has everything to do with how our world sees us.”
    Arlene Raven

19. “Nobody can give you wiser advice than yourself.”
    Cicero
“The foundational element in effective work systems is self-correcting, self-managing, self-accountable, self-governing behavior. Energy spent on monitoring and attempting to affect the behavior of team members or other entities from the outside is energy wasted and energy that could be better expended on improving the business and the capability of people. The critical element is to increasingly create self-governing capability.”
DEVELOPING SELF-DIRECTEDNESS

Three capabilities of self-directedness that transcend all subject matter commonly taught in school and characterize peak performers in all walks of life:

**Self-managing persons**
- Control first impulse for action
- Delay premature conclusions
- Clarify outcomes and gather relevant data
- Think flexibly, develop alternative strategies
- Draw on past knowledge and apply to new situations

**Self-monitoring persons**
- Think about their own thinking, behaviors, biases, beliefs
- Have sufficient self-knowledge to know what works for them
- Establish conscious metacognitive strategies to monitor effectiveness of own plans
- Persevere in generating alternative action plans
- Know how and where to turn when perplexed
- Listen to others with understanding and empathy

**Self-modifying persons**
- Can change self
- Reflect on experience and evaluate, analyze, and construct meaning
- Readily admit they have more to learn
- Apply what’s learned to future activities, tasks, and challenges
- Communicate their conclusions with clarity, precision, and prudence
- Are curious, motivated, and open to continuous learning

These capabilities make for successful relationships, continuous learning, productive workplaces, and enduring democracies.

Think about making self-directed learning an explicit outcome for educators.

*From “Launching Self-Directed Learners,” by Art Costa and Bena Kallick, Educational Leadership, September 2004.*
### SELF-DIRECTEDNESS INVENTORY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/initials</th>
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FOUR SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Cognitive Coaching℠ is the most effective way to support a person in becoming self-directed. We use the term “coaching” to designate how we interact in a non-judgmental, neutral way to support the thinking of another person. The Cognitive Coach uses maps and tools to mediate thinking, that is to intervene between the person and his/her thinking. This supports a person in becoming self-directed, allowing the person to make choices about the direction s/he wants to go.

It is important to make Cognitive Coaching℠ the default support function. When beginning with coaching, the coach learns what other support function might be necessary and gains information about what s/he might say when navigating to a different support function. For example, when someone asks for ideas about how to do something, if the coach goes into consulting by saying, “Well, how about . . .” s/he misses the opportunity to determine how resourceful the person might be. If the coach instead responds by saying, “So you’re not sure how you want to . . .; what might be some of the things you’ve considered?” it allows the person being coached to think for him/herself first. If the person being coached has no ideas, then the coach can move into consulting, knowing that the “well is dry.” If, however, the person being coached responds with some ideas, the coach will have more information to inform choices about how best to support the person.

When a Cognitive Coach chooses another support function, s/he does so because the person being coached needs another type of support. It is important that the Cognitive Coach signals his/her intention to change support functions and makes it clear to the person being coached which support function the coach is using. It is also key that the support focuses on self-directedness, even when the support function is not Cognitive Coaching℠; however, Cognitive Coaching℠ is not always the most appropriate support to offer another person. There are three other ways in which one might provide support:
collaborating, consulting, and evaluating. They are referred to as support functions, because regardless of one’s title (e.g., mentor, consultant, peer assistant, teacher, instructional coach, supervisor, evaluator), support can be offered to another person in any of these four ways.

**Collaborating**

Collaborating is the support function one chooses when two people interact in a balanced way, a sort of co-coaching. The word *collaborate* comes from co-labor, meaning working together. Collaboration occurs when all those involved are working as equals, regardless of title or position, to achieve a common goal. Collaborating might be used when co-planning a project or meeting, co-brainstorming ideas, and working together on a case study. When collaborating, the Cognitive Coach needs to be sure that the interaction is balanced and each person is contributing ideas.

**Consulting**

The support function of consulting is used when a person needs expertise that the Cognitive Coach has. The Cognitive Coach signals his/her intention to consult both verbally and nonverbally, and chooses a strategy that will allow him/her to step out of coaching, engage in consulting, then return to coaching. The Cognitive Coach offers expertise to “prime the pump” with the intention to return to the support function of Cognitive Coaching℠.

**Evaluating**

The support function of evaluating is used when the Cognitive Coach is both coach and evaluator. The evaluator uses a set of standards to assess performance because that is part of his/her job responsibilities. In most cases, the evaluation process is dictated by the organization. Research indicates that certain conditions need to be in place for the same person to both coach and evaluate. Glickman (1985) found that three conditions need to be present: trust, differentiated behaviors, and knowledge of which one is happening when.
Why Coaching before Consulting

Many publications describe “coaching” as what Cognitive Coaches would call “consulting” (i.e., providing a person with expertise and strategies as opposed to mediating thinking to increase resourcefulness and self-directedness). Interestingly, the word “answer” is derived from the French for swearing to something as true. When we give answers, it as if we are providing a truth of which we are certain. What might be some possible reasons for a preference for consulting over coaching? Here are a few:

• it is fast and allows us both to move on and provides closure.
• It makes the consultant feel like s/he is being helpful.
• It satisfies the person’s request.
• It builds the consultant’s credibility.
• My title causes people to expect me to offer suggestions.

What might be some advantages of using Cognitive Coaching℠ as a default support function?

• The person feels rewarded by finding his/her own way.
• The person develops more self-directedness in his/her life.
• The person develops capacity in all of the States of Mind.
• The person internalizes the identity of a thoughtful, reflective practitioner.
• The person learns how questions and inquiry serve the processes of planning, reflecting, and problem-resolving.
• The person becomes less dependent on the coach for assistance.
• The person experiences an insight.

A conscious leader invites thinking rather than reacting with quick actions and answers; otherwise, today’s solutions become tomorrow’s problems.
SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Cognitive Coaching\textsuperscript{SM} is \textit{transforming} one’s thoughts in order to change behavior.

\textbf{Collaborating} is \textit{forming and reforming}.
\textbf{Consulting} is \textit{informing}.
\textbf{Evaluating} is the process of \textit{conforming}.

Think of three people you are currently supporting on a regular basis. Write notes about what support functions you are using with each person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING SELF-DIRECTEDNESS IN CONVERSATIONS


**Think Aloud**
One way to offer advice is to let the coachee hear the thinking of the coach, on a topic with which the coachee is struggling. In this way, the coachee hears the metacognition of an experienced person who has dealt with the same or similar issue. Included in the thinking aloud should be the *what* and *why* of the coach’s reasoning. This allows the coachee to learn at a deeper level of understanding and draw on the principles involved, as well as the specific idea.

**Offer a Menu of Options**
Our intention in coaching is to increase a colleague’s capacity for decision-making and self-directedness, so we want to provide opportunities for the coachee to choose or decide. In a situation when the coachee has little experience or knowledge on which to draw, the coach may offer a menu of ideas. Three is a good number to offer, as it provides choice and the support of the coach without being overwhelming. Once a choice is made, the coach may want to ask the coachee to elaborate on his or her decision-making process.

**Reference Current Research**
Referring to professional books, journals, or learning from professional development is a way, not only to support a coachee’s knowledge, but also, to model a lifelong learning process of used by self-directed learners.
FIVE STATES OF MIND


“In brain terms, a state is composed of a cluster of neural firing patterns that embed within them certain behaviors, a feeling tone, and access to particular memories. A state of mind makes the brain work more efficiently, tying together relevant (and sometimes widely separate) functions with a ‘neural glue’ that links them in the moment. If you play tennis, for example, each time you put on your shorts and shoes, pick up your racket, and head for the court, your brain is actively creating a ‘tennis-playing state of mind.’ In this state, you are primed to access your motor skills, your competitive strategies, and even your memories of prior games.”

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<td><strong>GATEWAY</strong></td>
<td>1. Consciousness: Teachers exercising consciousness monitor their own values, intentions, thoughts, and behaviors as well as their effects on others and the environment. They are aware of their own and others’ progress toward goals; have well defined value systems that they can articulate; and generate, hold, and apply internal criteria for decisions they make. They practice mental rehearsal, and edit their mental pictures in the process of seeking improved strategies.</td>
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Consciousness means knowing what and how we are thinking about our work in the moment, and being willing to be aware of our actions and their effects on others and on the environment. Consciousness has particular catalytic properties for the other States of Mind. It is the State of Mind prerequisite to self-control and self-direction. Consciousness means that we are metacognitively aware that certain events are occurring, and we are able to direct their course.

The mark of a person who is in control of consciousness is the ability to focus attention at will, to be oblivious to distractions, and to concentrate for as long as it takes to achieve a goal. Developing effective thinking therefore, requires the development of this priceless resource, consciousness.
2. **Craftsmanship:** Craftsmanship involves striving for and achieving mastery, grace, and economy of energy to produce exceptional results. It means knowing that we can continually perfect our craft, being willing to work to attain our own high standards, and pursuing ongoing learning. Craftspersons pride themselves in their artistry. They seek precision, mastery, refinement and specificity in their communications. They generate and hold clear visions and goals, and strive for exact, critical-thought processes. They use precise language for describing their work and make thorough and rational decisions about actions to take. They test and revise, constantly honing strategies to reach their goals. In short they persist in service to their craft.

3. **Efficacy:** Efficacious people have an internal locus of control. They produce new knowledge; engage in causal thinking; pose problems and search for problems to solve; and are optimistic and resourceful, self-actualizing and self-modifying. They are able to operationalize concepts and translate them into deliberate actions, while establishing feedback spirals and continuing to learn how to learn. Efficacy is a particularly catalytic State of Mind because our sense of efficacy is a determining factor in helping us resolve complex problems.

   One value of efficacy and its by-product, self-confidence, helps us follow through on counter-intuitive hunches. The more efficacious we feel, the more flexibly we can engage in critical and creative work. Developing effective thinking, therefore, requires becoming increasingly self-referencing, self-evaluating, self-initiating and self-modifying.

4. **Flexibility:** Flexible thinkers are empathic. They are able to see through the diverse perspectives of others; are open and comfortable with ambiguity; create and seek novel approaches; have a well-developed sense of humor; envision a range of alternative consequences; and have the capacity to change their minds as they receive additional data. They engage in multiple and simultaneous outcomes and activities, draw upon a repertoire of problem solving strategies, and can practice style flexibility. They know when it is appropriate to be broad and global in their thinking, and when a situation requires detailed precision. Flexible thinkers think through cause and effect. This understanding of the means-ends relationships allows them to work within a rule-bound structure and to find ways to use the rules to help rather than hinder their work. They understand not only the immediate reactions but are also able to perceive the bigger purposes that such constraints serve. Developing effective thinking requires them to continually expand their repertoire. Thus, flexibility is essential for working with diversity, capacitating an individual to recognize the wholeness and distinctness of other people’s ways of experiencing and making meaning.
5. **Interdependence**: Interdependent teachers have a sense of community--"we-ness" as much as "me-ness." Interdependent teachers envision the expanding capacities of the group and its members, and they value and draw upon the resources of others.

Interdependent people are altruistic. They value consensus, and they are able to hold their own ideas and actions in abeyance in order to lend their energies and resources to the achievement of group goals. They contribute to a common good, seek collegiality, and draw on the resources of others. They regard conflict as valuable, trusting their abilities to manage group differences in productive ways. They continue to learn based upon the feedback from others and from their consciousness of their own actions and their effects on others. They seek collaborative engagement, knowing that all of us are more efficient than any one of us.

Interdependence means knowing that we will benefit from participating in, contributing to, and receiving feedback from professional relationships and being willing to create and change relationships to benefit our work. Increases in collaborative efforts in schools make this quality more essential than ever.

Just as interdependent persons contribute to a common good, they also draw on the resources of others. Interdependence facilitates systems thinking in which many variables are continually interacting. Each variable affects another, which affects another, and so on. Families, weather systems, and national economies are also examples of systems. In these adaptive systems, tiny inputs can reverberate throughout the system, producing dramatically large consequences. Because of this, interdependent thinkers realize their potential to significantly influence the direction of the community of which they are a part.
STATES OF MIND IN GROUPS (ENERGY SOURCES)
Sample Questions from a Survey

**CONSCIOUSNESS**

1. We pay attention to our development as a team.

13. We are aware of where we are and where we want to be as a team.

**CRAFTSMANSHIP**

2. We are good at predicting and managing time.

3. We gather complete information when doing our work.

**EFFICACY**

8. Our meetings are effective.

14. We learn from both our successful and unsuccessful experiences.

**FLEXIBILITY**

9. We are comfortable with ambiguity.

20. As we think about issues, we expand our thinking to encompass a larger view.

**INTERDEPENDENCE**

35. We each feel valued as members of our team.

40. We utilize the diversity within our team.
IDENTITY AND CAPACITY AS
A MEDIATOR OF THINKING

Identity

Our identity, who we believe we are, drives our perceptions of our world, our interactions with others, our construction of meaning, our choices and behaviors, and the way we fulfill the responsibilities of our many roles. At different times, we are husband or wife, grandchild or sibling, boss or employee, expert or student, depending on both the context in which we find ourselves and the other persons with whom we interact. How we carry out each role is influenced by the identity we have developed for ourselves.

In our professional roles as teacher, administrator, or support staff member, the psychological messages we send to others derive from the identity we hold for ourselves. These messages are manifested by our entire being: our language, nonverbal communication, and points of view. They signal our intention and our belief about the roles each of us plays.

Furthermore, our beliefs, values, capacities, and behaviors are always congruent with our sense of identity. As our sense of identity changes, so do our beliefs, values, capacities, and behaviors. Most often, this sense of identity is held unconsciously, without calculation or deliberation. An identity carries with it goals and presuppositions that influence the setting of personal standards and criteria for interactions with others.

Capacity

Capacity refers to volume, maximum productivity, and mental or physical ability. When a container is full, it cannot hold more. Building capacity means increasing the size of the container so it can hold more. A member of the Cognitive Coaching℠ community, who is a harpist, explains it by saying, “As a harpist, I create capacity largely by building my technical skills through practice. The more ‘tricks’ I have up my sleeve, the more access I have to increasingly complex and challenging repertoire. When we think about children learning to play an instrument, they do not have a lot of ‘capacity’ in the beginning. They are limited to a small repertoire as a function of their beginner skills; as their skills improve, they continually expand this capacity and have access to more complex and interesting material. Their ‘musical container’ expands through practice.”

Mediator of Thinking

The word mediate is derived from the word middle. Mediators interpose themselves between a person and some event, problem, conflict, challenge, or other perplexing situation. Based on the work of Reuven Feuerstein’s “Mediated Learning Experience” the mediator intervenes in such a way as to enhance another person’s self-directed learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002).
A MEDIATOR OF THINKING

“The success of an intervention depends on the inner condition of the intervener. That's far more important than techniques or strategies for change.”


Feuerstein (2000) suggests that human learning is a matter of strengthening internal knowledge structures. Planning for and reflecting on experience activates these knowledge structures. With mediation, existing knowledge structures can be made more complex through more connections. The structures also can be altered to accommodate new understandings, or they can be made obsolete because some new experience has caused the creation of a new knowledge structure. This sifting and winnowing of prior knowledge structures constitutes learning. Feuerstein states:

Mediated learning is an experience that the learner has that entails not just seeing something, not just doing something, not just understanding something, but also experiencing that thing at deeper levels of cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, energetic, and affective impact through the interposition of the mediator between the learner and the experienced object or event (stimuli). In such a context, learning becomes a deeply structured and often a pervasive and generalizable change. (p. 275)

Mediators influence the intensity, flow, directionality, importance, excitement, and impact of information coming to the awareness of the person being coached. One way they do that is by posing questions that bring consciousness to the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic systems in which experiences are held. This activates the neural pathways of the original experience; as they look back, they are able to recover omitted and sometimes valuable information. For example, a teacher might be asked to recall events of a lesson. Should the teacher report only what he/she remembered seeing, the coach might ask the teacher to elaborate about what he/she also heard. Such a mediated learning experience enhances the

Rather than give advice to or solve problems for another person, a mediator helps the colleague analyze a problem and develop his/her own problem-solving strategies. A mediator helps a colleague set up strategies for self-monitoring during the problem-solving process. Acting as a sounding board, a skilled mediator also helps the colleague become more self-directed with learning. A mediator:

- is alert to the mediational moment;
- facilitates mental processes toward self-directed learning;
- maintains faith in the human capacity for continuing intellectual, social, and emotional growth.
- possesses a belief in his or her own capacity to serve as an empowering catalyst for others’ growth.
- extends invitations, not mandates;
- is not the solver of another person’s problems;
- shines a spotlight of awareness on data in the environment.

Recent findings about the brain indicate that the brain is continually changing, a concept referred to as neuroplasticity. The human brain has 100 billion neurons, each with 100,000 dendrites. Feuerstein (2000) believes that mediation produces new connections in the brain. Each experience and interaction changes the wiring, making new connections and developing new pathways and new ways of thinking. A mediator understands the neuroplasticity of the brain, and assumes that with effective mediation, new insights and mental maps and, ultimately, new behaviors will emerge. He states:

One of the most interesting and exciting aspects of mediated learning . . . is that the quality of interaction not only changes the structure of behavior of the individual, not only changes the amount and quality of his repertoire, but—according to increasingly powerful sources of evidence from fields of neurophysiology and biochemistry—changes the structure and functioning of the brain itself in very meaningful ways. (p. 275)
“Change that is structural will affect learning and behavior in deep, sustaining and self-perpetuating ways” (Feuerstein, 2010, p. 13). A mediator recognizes that all behavior is produced by thought and perception and therefore strives to enhance behavior by impacting the quality of the thinking processes. Without mediation, behavioral change is unlikely to be sustained or result in restructuring of neural pathways.

References


