In *Literacy Coaching*, Marilyn Duncan writes about a specific technique—instructional dialogue—that could be used to support teacher development. Her approach to introducing the concept through use of a coaching scenario is engaging. She defines instructional dialogue as:

*a structured conversation about teaching and learning with a goal of providing feedback to the teacher ... An instructional dialogue is neither an interrogation nor a therapy session. It is a dialogue between colleagues learning from each other to do their jobs better. Instructional dialogue is an opportunity for teachers through the mentorship and facilitation of a coach to think about their practice and ways to improve it. Instructional dialogue is also a process of professional development.*

Duncan briefly describes five elements of the process:

- A teacher’s action plan, setting out a current challenge with instruction;
- The coach [or principal] working with the teacher—enabling the coach to see the teacher in action and provide feedback;
- An instructional dialogue that follows their work together;
- A commitment to instructional change by the teacher, and a clear understanding about how this change will affect student learning; and
- A plan to follow up on the commitment to confirm successes or clarify confusions.

Principals as well as coaches would likely find chapters such as “Developing a Process for Instructional Dialogue” and “Conducting Instructional Dialogue” helpful. For example, brief sections in the latter chapter discuss “Listening and Questioning Effectively” and “When to Listen; When to Question; When to Tell.” Each of these sections uses brief examples that help make the suggestions concrete. Duncan’s questions for a coach—or a principal—to use when reviewing a teacher’s action plan also provide a useful structure:

- What does this information tell me about what the teacher knows?
- What is the teacher trying to do in instruction?
- What do I know about the teacher’s challenge to improving student learning?
- What might the teacher need to learn next?

A DVD demonstrating use of the instructional dialogue approach between a coach and Jan, a classroom teacher, is included with this short book. The vignette includes five brief sections—“Getting Started,” “Identifying Jan’s Strengths,” “Helping Jan Dig Deeper,” “Helping Jan Make Links,” and “Drawing Closure”—and could be used to jump-start discussion during a teacher study group.