

Study Guide



BECOMING A
**LITERACY
LEADER**

SECOND EDITION

SUPPORTING LEARNING AND CHANGE

Jennifer Allen

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teachers provided by Stenhouse Publishers



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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
CHAPTER 1	6
CHAPTER 2	8
CHAPTER 3	9
CHAPTER 4	11
CHAPTER 5	13
CHAPTER 6	15
CHAPTER 7	17
CHAPTER 8	19
CHAPTER 9	20
CHAPTER 10	22
FINAL REFLECTION	23
COACHING LAYERS	24
TWO-COLUMN ORGANIZER	25



Summary

Becoming a Literacy Leader chronicles the work of Jennifer Allen, an elementary teacher who moved to a new school and a new job as a literacy specialist and found herself tackling everything from teacher study groups to state-mandated assessment plans. The book is rooted in Jennifer's belief that teachers know what they need when it comes to professional development in literacy, and that the best literacy leaders are those who listen to and respect the educators in their midst. In this grounded in research and thoroughly practical book, Jennifer shares advice on:

- organizing a literacy room with resources for classroom teachers, including book lists, bins of children's books tied to craft and strategy lessons, bulletin board ideas, and files with instructional materials;
- developing intervention classrooms for struggling readers and writers built on collaboration between teachers and literacy specialists;
- setting up assessment notebooks for teachers, and preparing new and veteran teachers for student assessments across grades;
- coaching new and veteran teachers in the latest literacy practices, without taking on the role of expert;
- analyzing and using books, videos, and journals in professional development programs;
- infusing routine staff meetings with discussions of new literacy curricula;
- leading teacher study groups using a variety of formats;
- finding and budgeting money for professional development programs in literacy; and
- protecting time and scheduling priorities, to ensure the literacy specialist position doesn't become a "catchall" for the random needs of teachers or administrators.

At a time when all administrators are urged to be literacy leaders, this insider's view defines what leadership looks like and shows how to create an environment that fosters professional development. Jennifer Allen understands the balance leaders struggle with as they strive to support and honor the fine practices of teachers while nudging these same colleagues to improve their literacy instruction. Ultimately, *Becoming a Literacy Leader* is a hopeful book,

an optimistic and realistic portrait of life in schools among teachers committed to doing their jobs well.

The new edition of *Becoming a Literacy Leader* provides an explicit framework for how one might implement the layers of coaching within a school. This text supports schools that are looking to add coaching positions. The book outlines how the position of literacy leader fits within a school and how the work of literacy leaders should be purposefully aligned to school and district goals.

This book provides a road map and a vision for how literacy leaders can approach their work with purpose and intention. Jennifer delivers a concrete framework—the coaching layers that can be implemented to support teachers, staff, and students within their schools:

- Being a Resource
- Designing Required Professional Development That Includes Voice and Choice
- Facilitating Study Groups
- Coaching in Classrooms
- Supporting Curriculum and Assessment
- Designing Structures to Support Kids on the Bubble
- Creating Unity Through Whole-School Experiences
- Cultivating Teacher Leadership
- Maintaining the Nuts and Bolts of Literacy Programming Within the School

The following are suggestions to help groups of educators read, discuss, and extend the ideas from *Becoming a Literacy Leader* into their schools. These ideas will come to life as literacy leaders are given opportunities to put them into practice with teachers. With that in mind, we have developed discussion questions, highlighted videos, and pulled provocative quotes and professional development ideas from each chapter that will enable participants to reflect on the text as well as think through their role within their schools. Toolbox activities have subtly worked their way into our study group agendas. These quick activities are an opportunity for the group to try out some of the ideas we are reading about before teachers take the plunge and try them with students. Often we will use an organizer or idea shared within the text.

The book is set up with QR codes embedded within the text so readers can view video clips as the text is read. While viewing videos, readers are encouraged to jot down their thinking on a two-column note (What I Notice/What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader).

The format of the guide is set up as a study group. It could be used as a study group with a group of literacy leaders or individually as a reflective structure for those reading the book alone. We encourage literacy leaders and coaches to think deeply about the purpose behind their role and try out some new practices. The suggestions offered in the guide are designed to foster collaboration and spark new thinking.



Chapter 1

Introduction : Layered Coaching

Discussion/Sharing

- What do you see as the essential layers of your work within the school?
- What is one of your strengths as a leader?
- What is an area of literacy leadership in which you would like to improve?

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section “Layered Leadership” (4–5).
- Respond to the concept of layered leadership. Is this similar to or different from how you view your role as a literacy leader?
- Spend some time discussing Figures 1.1 and 1.2 (4–5).

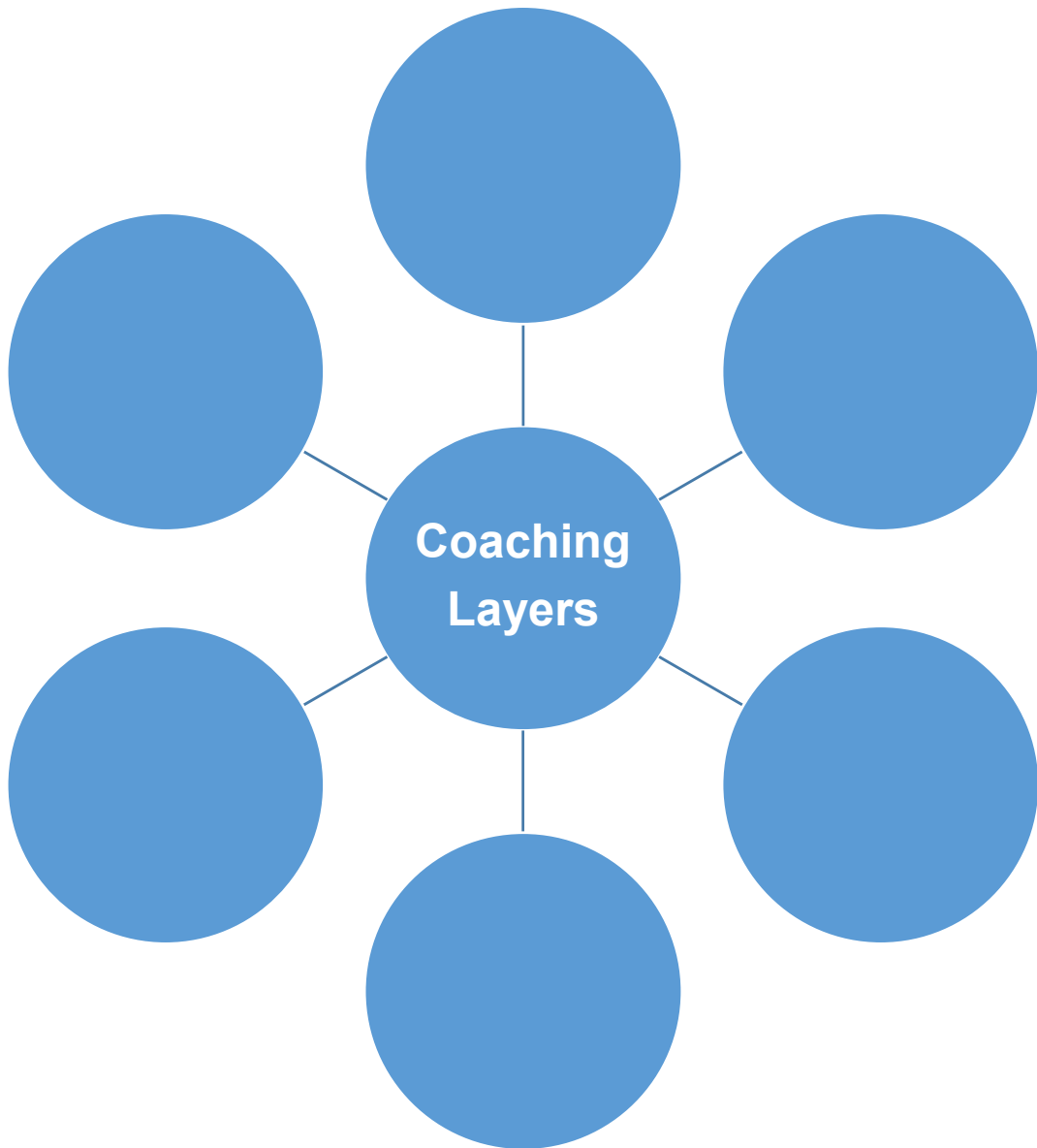
Quotes Worth Discussing

To make dreams apparent to others and to align people with them (requires not just) more explanations or clarification but the creation of meaning. — Warren Bennis (6)

If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time. — Peter Lencioni (6)

Putting Ideas into Practice: Getting Started

- Take a few moments and jot down the layers of your role.
- How do the layers work together to support teachers within the school?
- Are the layers aligned to current school and district initiatives?



Chapter 2

Being a Resource: A Room of One's Own for Literacy

Discussion/Sharing

- How are you a resource to teachers?
- How are resources organized for access and circulation?
- How might you involve staff in the creation of a literacy resource space?
- If you lack physical space, what other ways might you share resources with staff?

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section on wall space (12–16).
- Reflect on how this idea is similar to or different from how you use wall space in your literacy area.

Viewing Video

- View Video 2.1 (29). This video link provides a visual description of the Literacy Room bulletin board, where teachers make their learning public. Teachers post their responses and comments about books—both children's and professional—they have read.
- As you watch, jot down your thinking on a two-column note: What I Notice/What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader (organizer provided at end of guide).

Toolbox

- Reflect on Figure 2.1, "Blueprint of Literacy Room Design"(11).
- If you have a dream space for literacy resources, what does it look like? Map it out. If you don't already have a dream space, map out how you imagine one would look and share with others in the group.

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step you might try?

Chapter 3

A Model for Required Professional Development: “My Life in Seven Stories”

Discussion/Sharing

- How well is required professional development aligned to school/district goals?
- How do you differentiate for diverse adult learners?
- What do you see as the key components in designing effective professional development?
- How do you foster authentic engagement rather than simple compliance among participants?

Reading Excerpt

- Read the sections on “My Life in Seven Stories” (33–39).
- How is this format similar to or different from how you usually design required professional development?

Viewing Video

- View Video 3.1 (48). This video clip shows a group of new teachers generating and discussing a list of titles of their own stories that they may want to write about.
- As you watch, jot down your thinking on a two column note: What I Notice/What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader.

Quotes Worth Discussing

In her book Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution, Brené Brown writes about the fact that successful leaders “recognize the power of emotion and are not afraid to lean in to discomfort” (53).

Dan Shapiro, director of the Harvard International Negotiation Program, ...talks about the role emotion plays in negotiating. He speaks of confronting five core concerns when negotiating: appreciation, autonomy, affiliation, status, and role. (<http://bigthink.com/videos/the-five-core-concerns-of-negotiation>) (54).

Toolbox

- Refer to pages 52–55, “Today: Designing Required Professional Development.”
- Reflect on a required professional development session you recently attended. Name the theoretical framework that supports the agenda design. (See example in “My Life in Seven Stories” on pages 54–55.)

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step you might try?

Chapter 4

Study Groups: Voluntary Professional Development

Discussion/Sharing

- How well are study groups aligned to your school/district goals?
- How might you create a predictable structure for participants?
- How are the study groups that are described in this chapter similar to or different from how you design/facilitate groups?

Quotes Worth Discussing

The role of the leader is to enable, facilitate, and cause peers to interact in a focused manner. Peer interaction is the social glue of focus and cohesion. — Michael Fullan (61)

Being appreciated makes work meaningful. People feel what they do matters. Human connections seem to trigger that. — Ryan Buell (78)

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section “Establishing a Predictable Routine” (72–78). These pages provide the nuts and bolts behind study groups as well as a walkthrough of a typical study group.
- As you read, reflect on how your study groups are similar to or different from those described in the chapter.

Viewing Video

- As you view this series of clips it might be helpful to refer to Figure 4.6, Study Group Agenda: *Readers Front & Center* (74). The video clips highlighted are of a study group in action using the text [Readers Front & Center](#) by Dorothy Barnhouse. The video clips include the initial discussion, discussion of readings from the book, video viewing, and leaders putting ideas into practice by adding to their own toolbox.
 - View Video 4.1, “Getting Started and Discussion” (75).
 - View Video 4.2, “Study Group Discussing the Reading” (75).
 - View Video 4.3, “Using Video in the Study Group” (75).

- View Video 4.5, “Patrick Allen’s Conference with Paige” (76).
- View Video 4.4, “Adding to Our Toolbox: Putting Ideas into Practice” (75).
- As you view, jot down your thinking on a two-column note: What I Notice/What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader.

Toolbox

Here is a sample toolbox activity from a meeting where we tried Dorothy’s two-column note organizer “What I Know from the Text/How I Know It” (from *Readers Front & Center*) using a poem by Charles Webb:

- Read the poem “[Blind.](#)”
- Try the two-column note format “What I Know from the Text/How I Know It.”
- Talk as a group. How did the process feel? How might the ideas presented in study group materials be tried out by participants within the study group setting?

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?

Chapter 5

Coaching in Classrooms: Differentiating for New and Veteran Teachers

Discussion/Sharing

- How do you differentiate support for new versus veteran teachers?
- What strategies do you find most effective for debriefing in-class support?
- What is one idea that you will take away from this chapter?

Quotes Worth Discussing

Research by Joyce and Showers shows that it took twenty to twenty-five trials in the classroom before new instructional practices became part of a teacher's routine (91).

People are usually more convinced by reasons they discovered themselves than by those found by others. — Blaise Pascal (100)

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section “Coaching and Collaborating” (86–91). These pages share examples of coaching and collaborating with a veteran teacher.
- As you read, reflect on how your coaching of veteran teachers is similar to or different from the collaboration described in the chapter.

Viewing Video

- These clips show examples of coaching in a veteran teacher's classroom. Jen and veteran teacher Carolyn work on implementing student-led discussions as a new teacher, Jessica, observes. These clips also provide an example of how lessons don't always go as planned. As a result of the fall lesson, Carolyn and Jen worked all year on supporting students to lead their own discussions.
 - View Video 5.1, “Literature Groups All Year Long: Carolyn, Fall” (91).
 - View Video 5.2, “Literature Groups All Year Long: Carolyn, Spring” (92).
- As you view, jot down your thinking on a two-column note: What I Notice/

What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader.

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?



Chapter 6

Supporting Curriculum and Assessment

Discussion/Sharing

- How do you support teachers in using assessments to inform their instruction?
- How do you help teachers chunk out curriculum expectations over the year?
- How do you support teachers with local assessments and curriculum expectations?

Quotes Worth Discussing

Evaluation ought to be one of the greatest energy givers for the teacher in the classroom. The best teachers evaluate from the time the first child enters the classroom until she leaves. — Donald Graves (110)

Assessment to us however, is not only about a tool and the information it provides; it is about what we do with that tool and information. Assessment is about the pursuit of understanding our readers, and what we do in that act makes a difference in the life of a reader. — Clare Landrigan and Tammy Mulligan (111)

A guaranteed and viable curriculum is the school-level factor with the most impact on student achievement. — Robert Marzano (122)

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section titled “Supporting the Literacy Curriculum and Assessment Framework” (111–112).
- How do you support teachers in the assessment and curriculum planning process?

Toolbox

- Review Figure 6.3, “Tips for Making Sense of Individual Student Assessment Data” (117).
- How do you help teachers make sense of assessment data? Jot down the various ways you support new and veteran teachers in looking at assessment

data, and share with participants in the group.

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?



Chapter 7

Helping Kids on the Bubble: The Literacy Intervention Classroom

Discussion/Sharing

- How do you support students “on the bubble”?
- How do you ensure coordinated instruction for all students when multiple teachers are working with them?
- What is one idea that you find yourself thinking about as you finish the chapter?
- How often do you reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs? How often are programs removed when there is no longer a need?

Quotes Worth Discussing

[Richard] Allington and his colleagues demonstrate how students benefit from long, uninterrupted chunks of learning time as well as from consistent instruction from high-quality teachers (128).

The only way to address the needs of struggling readers successfully is by creating classroom structures that enable teachers to do ongoing assessments and provide students with frequent, intensive, explicit, and individualized support and direction as needed without adding to the already overwhelming demands of teachers. — Curt Dudley-Marling and Patricia Paugh (130)

James Gee suggests that unlike riding a bike, which once mastered is maintained, struggling readers never learn to read “once and for all” (130).

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section “A Snapshot of One Morning in the Literacy Intervention Classroom: Working with Students through the Research Process” (142–147).
- How is this similar to or different from your beliefs about working with struggling readers and writers? What did you notice? What did you wonder?

Toolbox

- Reflect on Figure 7.4, “Student Criteria for Literacy Room.”
- If you were to put together a classroom or an intervention to support students who may not be meeting grade-level expectations, what would your criteria be for student selection?
- What do you know about the students who are not meeting expectations in your schools? How might you creatively maximize resources while meeting the needs of students?

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?

Chapter 8

Creating Unity Through Whole-School Experiences

Discussion/Sharing

- How might you celebrate reading and writing as a school community?
- What are some ways students can take their reading and writing outside the walls of the classroom?
- What shared experience might you implement as a school to foster a sense of unity?

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section “Planning with Purpose for a School-Wide Read: *Paper Things* (160–164).
- What are your thoughts on implementing a school-wide read as a way to foster unity within the school? Share them with your group.

Viewing Video

- View Video Clip 8.1, “Mrs. Reed’s Fourth-Grade Students Discussing *Small as an Elephant*” (157).
- View Video Clip 8.2, “Teacher Study Group Responds to *Paper Things*” (157).
- As you watch, jot down your thinking on a two-column note: What I Notice/What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader.

Toolbox Strategy

Jimmy Fallon writes, “Nothing brings people together more than shared experiences.” Try a shared experience as a group. You could, for example, write a six-word memoir. Samples of six-word memoirs can be seen on page 158.

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?

Chapter 9

Cultivating Teacher Leadership

Discussion/Sharing

- How can you cultivate new teacher leadership to support the work that needs to get done within the district?
- What structures do you have in place to maintain forward momentum for initiatives?
- How can you grow new leaders so that teachers are not always dependent on you to move forward?

Quotes Worth Discussing

The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.
— Harvey S. Firestone (165)

[Leaders should exemplify] Fullan’s concept of “simplicity” (2010)—knowing one’s purpose, identifying a small number of high-leverage actions, and moving toward goals with a singular focus in order to achieve powerful consequences (167).

School improvement will fail if the work of coaches remains at the one-to-one level. Coaches are system leaders. They need to develop as change agents at both the instructional level and the level of organizational and system change. It’s time to recast their role as integral to whole-system reform. — Michael Fullan and Jim Knight (177)

Reading Excerpt

- Read the section titled “Snapshot of Grade 3 Team Making Meaning Together of Curriculum: Theme” (170–177). This is an example of the cultivation of leadership, since the grade-level team leader led the discussion.
- How is this practice similar to or different from your experience working with teachers through curriculum?

Toolbox

- Try out the “Reflecting on Student Work” template in Figure 9.2 (171).
- Ask participants to bring in copies of a piece of student work. Ask for a volunteer to talk through the piece of student work using the template as the guide.
- How might the template be adapted to work for the teachers in your school?

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step that you might try?

Chapter 10

Nuts and Bolts: Scheduling and Budget

Discussion/Sharing

- What do a typical day, week, and month look like for you?
- How do you prioritize the layers of your work?
- How does your work evolve over a year?

Reading Excerpt

- Read the sections “A Typical Day” (180) and “A Typical Week” (181). Jen does not schedule herself for classroom work on Fridays. She uses this day for professional development sessions, meetings, and prep time.
- How is this similar to or different from how you schedule your time as a literacy leader?

Quotes Worth Discussing

A schedule is a net for catching days.— Annie Dillard (178)

Toolbox

Plot out your schedule for a week. What does it look like? What works? What might you tweak?

Putting Ideas into Practice

What is one idea/next step you might try?

Final Reflection

Discussion/Sharing

- What do you see as the essential layers of your work within the school?
- What are your strengths as a leader?
- What new layers would you like to explore?

Reading Excerpt

- Reread the excerpt “Layered Leadership” (4–5).
- Revisit Figures 1.1 and 1.2 (4–5).
- Now that you have finished the book, do you have any new thinking around the concept of layered leadership?

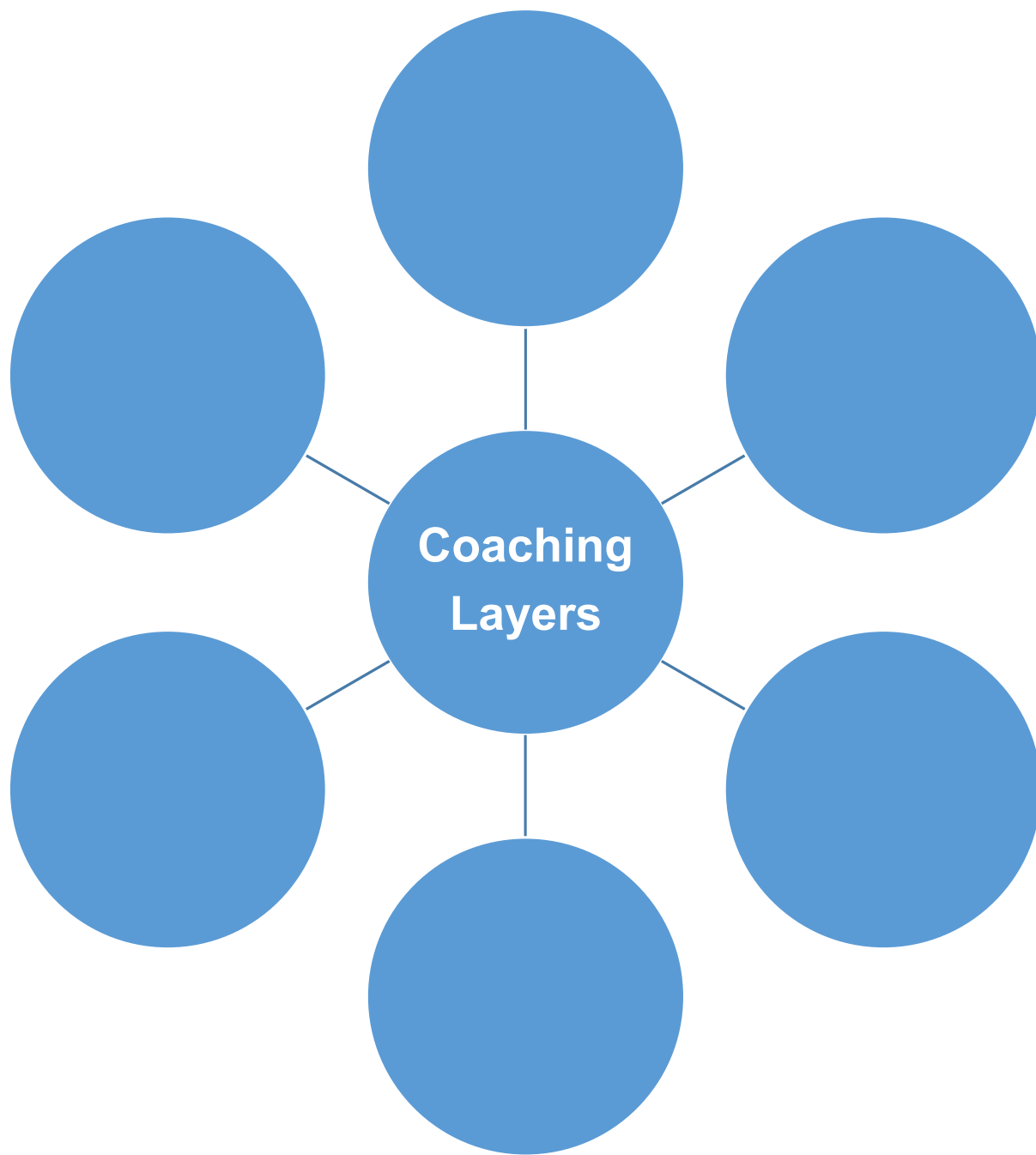
Quotes Worth Discussing Again

To make dreams apparent to others and to align people with them (requires not just) more explanations or clarification but the creation of meaning. — Warren Bennis (6)

If you could get all the people in an organization, rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time. — Peter Lencioni (6)

Putting Ideas into Practice: Next Steps

- Take a few moments and reflect on the layers of your role.
- How do the layers work together to support teachers within the school?
- Are the layers aligned to current school and district initiatives?
- What layers would you like to strengthen or add to so you can better support teachers?



Two-Column Note Organizer

What I Notice	What I Might Want to Try as a Literacy Leader

