

# A Thank You and Some Questions for Madeline Hunter

Madeline Hunter has contributed greatly to American education, but she allows trainers to misuse her work and she rejects the central tenet of clinical supervision.

BARBARA N. PAVAN

Many of us have seen the results of Madeline Hunter's work—teachers who talk about teaching in a professional, analytical manner and whose interest in teaching has been rejuvenated. For that the profession owes her a debt of gratitude.

We have also seen the district teacher evaluation forms with lists of Hunter's Seven Essential Elements of Teaching to be checked off as excellent, good, or needs improvement. Hunter indicates (*Educational Leadership*, February 1985) that administrators who received sufficient training to understand the clinical teaching model would not do such a thing. She laments the inadequate preservice training given to school administrators in the supervision of instruction. There is much agreement on this point, and instructional analysis skills have been added to supervision courses. Could Hunter do more for her trainers? Would it be possible to require that they have sufficient training with coaching and feedback and periodic updates to keep from getting rusty or off-track? Since the model is so heavily associated with her, mightn't she have a certification process so that districts employing her trainees would know that they were getting the actual model that she advocates?

Hunter has noted that there is research to support her instructional model as developed and that the propositions used were based on research on effective teaching conducted by others. However, most of this research was conducted in the primary grades

of inner-city schools with the effectiveness measure being standardized reading and math achievement test scores. The application of this effective teaching research to gifted students, secondary students, inquiry topics, and problem solving is less clear and, at times, contradictory.

I also have strong reservations about the Hunter model of clinical supervision that she does not mention in her article, but which is mentioned by her trainers and in doctoral dissertations testing the Hunter model of clinical supervision and clinical instruction. Careful analysis of the research on clinical supervision reveals two distinct models. One model, as described by Cogan (1973) and Gold-

hammer (1980), uses five stages: preobservation conference, observation, analysis and strategy, postobservation conference, and postconference analysis. This collaborative model uses the preconference to refine a teacher-initiated focus for the observation. The Hunter model eliminates or reduces the preobservation conference because the focus for the observation has been predetermined as the Hunter clinical instructional model. The observer script tapes the lesson and then determines if all seven elements of effective instruction are used in each lesson. While Hunter indicates this is *not* the way to use the model, it is what is happening in practice and reported in the research.

It is just possible that if Hunter incorporated the preobservation conference into her clinical supervision model, she would be providing a format that would enable the observer to know the teacher's reasons for decisions and would eliminate one of the problems she lists as "misunderstandings that lead to abuse." This planning conference also may be used as a coaching device assisting teachers in translating the principles of learning into appropriate classroom usage. By rejecting the central tenet of clinical supervision, that of true collaboration, she confuses others as to the meaning of clinical supervision. If Hunter doesn't wish to incorporate the collaborative aspect of clinical supervision into her supervision model, mightn't she find a different term to describe it?

I thank Madeline Hunter for her contributions and her willingness to

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share with *Educational Leadership* readers the problems associated with changing teaching practice: time needed, flexibility in usage, mandating before understanding, and the importance of coaching and feedback during inservice. Will she also consider these questions? □

#### References

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## Madeline Hunter replies: Develop Collaboration; Build Trust

MADELINE HUNTER

I thank Barbara Pavan for the stimulation of her letter. I regret being unable to respond in person but appreciate the opportunity to do so here.

In response to districts being disappointed in "her" trainers, "my" trainers receive continuing training, coaching, and feedback. Unfortunately, many people "listen" or "read" and then begin to "preach." I am horrified by what some people are doing with our teacher *decision-making* model. Unfortunately, I have no control over the person a district hires. If districts don't inquire as to the trainer's credentials, and check that they are valid, misrepresentation occurs. If I certified everyone who wishes it, I would do nothing else.

Concerning the research supporting the model, it is based on what has been validated by a hundred years of research in human learning. It was not validated solely in primary grades in inner-city schools, however. Because those students were of such concern, they have received the greatest publicity. Much of the model's foundation has been researched from early childhood through doctoral students. I know of no research contradictory to the basic propositions of our program. For example, massed practice at initial learning works with shoe-tying and fighter jet piloting, with gifted and slow learners. The examples *look* dif-

ferent, but the supporting research is the same regardless of students, content, or organizational techniques. In the same way, research in nutrition applies to all meals.

I agree that it is lamentable that people look for those (adjective deleted) seven elements in a lesson. The original article published in *The Instructor* a decade ago stated that it was the teacher's decision whether to include or exclude each element. The problem results from looking for a simple solution to one of the world's

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most complex problems, and from lack of knowledge of the supporting research.

The only use I see for the preobservation conference is when it becomes the joint venture of *planning* a lesson. Otherwise, I believe it is not only useless, but builds bias and wastes time. Collaboration and trust are not achieved in most preobservation conferences, but in the postobservation conferences if they increase the teacher's excellence. Preobservation conferences are vestigial organs of the days when the only way observers knew what was going on was if the teachers told them.

With our current sophistication in instructional analysis (granted not all observers have achieved it—but a preobservation conference won't help them), we look at teaching holistically as a synthesis of art and science. We should not be looking for the presence or absence of particular techniques, but for the appropriateness of teaching decisions in planning and during teaching. In my very biased opinion, but based on work with thousands of teachers, our current model is much more collaborative and effective than a 20-year-old one. □

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