I promise you, I am not always thinking about coaching while on vacation. Nonetheless, I was playing tennis with Alan Dichter this past weekend and got it to turn my thinking to about partnering and facili-
tation. Probably if I kept my mind on the game, it would improve, but there is something about being on vacation that fires up thinking. 
Anyway, we decided to talk about our respective partnerships after the first elimination. We both agreed that this could only have happened because our partnership is greater than the sum of its parts. Alan is a very good player; I am, as in golf, an eternal beginner. I usually win a wicked net shot and Alan is great about running back and forth doing most of the work. I do contribute, but don’t necessarily work up the same sweat that he does. Together, we do well because we have developed this rather unhurried way of doing things, one which works for us—and we maintain good spirits throughout, and I don’t have to tell you how important (and rare for married partners) that is. As my thoughts stray to facilitating with a partner, especially one I haven’t worked with often—it is a case of OK, do this and I’ll do that—but feel free to butt in if you want to. I was thinking about how that wouldn’t be too useful in tennis. We do have our respective specialties, but if it were, I’d do this and you do that, then we would be like some partnerships we’ve overhear: Don’t you know you’re supposed to be up front; couldn’t you tell that that’s there? Those are usually the partner-
ships that start floundering. How often are facilitation partners dividing responsibility instead of sharing it? And then how often is there unspoken blame? And the need to be perfect?

Good sharing of facilitation would not look like each person running after each ball trying to hit it. It would not look like one person watch-
ing and the other taking a turn running around. And it would not look like one person taking the shaky shots and leaving the tough ones for the other. Why were we doing?

Warmth of a kitchen in motion,
**Playing Doubles—Moving Beyond Tag-Team Facilitation**

Nancy Mohr, New York

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tation. Probably if I kept my mind on the game, it would improve, but there is something about being on vacation that fires up thinking.

Anyway, I was looking back at the creation relati-

onships across what have been traditional boundaries I think we’ve been able to create a new sense of credibility by avoiding the blame game trap while simultaneously staying focused on the real problems. The understanding that “educating each child well means sup-

porting the families who care for them” is at the heart of the social justice plat-

form that is a guiding principle of this initiative. As long as we are all committed to that outcome, I think we will continue to trust each other enough to sometimes be uncomfortable in specific conversations. Are there any tools you’ve found especially helpful as a coach in this trust-building project?

Partnership is especially valuable when each person are working with a partner, especially one I haven’t worked with often—it is a case of OK, you do this and I’ll do that—but feel free to butt in if you want to. I was thinking about how that wouldn’t be too useful in tennis. We do have our respective specialties, but if it were, I’d do this and you do that, then we would be like some partnerships we’ve overheard: Don’t you know you’re supposed to be up front; couldn’t you tell that thing? Those are usually the partner-

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Good sharing of facilitation would not look like each person running after each ball trying to hit it. It would not look like one person watch-
ing the other look around while some partnerships have let’s look into our inquiry into effective teaching and learn-

ing. The use of CPG’s and protocols has spread in light of their effectiveness at the elementary school. We are actively using protocols to change the ways we get along, and a way to ask the facilitators in affinity groups of white colleagues for course corrections without fear of upstaging/being out of turn/being rude/embarrassing one another. So what does this all mean? I am thinking about how that partnership gains in the momentum department. Opponents start gnawing at each other, or themselves, getting into bad frames of mind. We wink and know that we can win even though they are better players.

To struggle with the unfair or unjust often, but not necessarily more productive—perhaps not much fun as well. Not that’s bad, but it is rather luxurious. The thought crosses my mind: What’s the matter with having fun? Maybe nothing except it’s not about fun. Participants do, enjoy partners, enjoy each other. And it does model collegiality—but it can and should do more than that. Partnering is especially valuable when each mem-

ber brings a decidedly different perspective to the mix. And this works when it is made clear that there are multiple points of view at play. If you pretend that we are always in sync with one another and don’t expose our differences, there is a valu-

able teaching opportunity lost.

So why do Alan and I play tennis well together? For starters, we know each other’s strengths, limitations and preferenc-

es well. But that isn’t enough. So what else? We try to reflect on our partner’s game while playing not at all a wise thing to do. Afterwards—one or two well-placed thoughts, maybe, but during? Never. Only compliments and encouragement. What we find then is that our partnerships gain in the momentum department. Opponents start gnawing at each other, or themselves, getting into bad frames of mind. We wink and know that we can win even though they are better players.

When facilitating, I find, to my dismay, that the all-important reflection time is what we tend to skip. Too busy, we assure one another that we did well and if we didn’t we even imagine how it would have been different if the participants.

and make sure things are comfort-

able?

We’re really trying to have a changed discourse where problems are named and hard truths are heard from all angles. We were playing mixed doubles well past the first elimination. We both agreed that this could only have happened because our partnership is greater than the sum of its parts. Alan is a pretty good player; I am, as in golf, an eternal beginner. I have a wicked net shot and Alan is great about running back and forth doing most of the work. I do contribute, but don’t necessarily work up the same sweat that he does. Together, we do well because we have developed this rather unorthodox way of doing things, one which works for us—and we maintain good spirits throughout, and I don’t have to tell you how important (and rare for married partners) that is. As my thought to stay with this partnership, especially one I haven’t worked with often—it is a case of OK, you do this and I’ll do that—but feel free to butt in if you want to. I was thinking about how that wouldn’t be too useful in tennis. We do have our respective specialties, but if it were, I’d do this and you do that, then we would be like some partnerships we’ve overheard: Don’t you know you’re supposed to be up front; couldn’t you tell that thing? Those are usually the partner-

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