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Literacy Coaching: Roles and Responsibilities

Pa Thao

Gardner-Webb University

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Literacy Coaching: Roles and Responsibilities

By
Pa Thao

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Pa Thao under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

F. Dennis Triplett, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

Date

James N. Epps, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Ronald I. Nanney, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

John S. Reynolds, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Jeffrey Rogers, Ph.D.
Dean of the Gayle Bolt Price School
of Graduate Studies

Date

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Abstract

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Literacy coaching has emerged as a popular strategy for school reform to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement in reading. Unfortunately, districts are hiring literacy coaches without a clear job description for the position. This is resulting in a broad focus for coaching and minimizing the impact of the work to support teachers in the classroom. A plethora of research (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolten, & Zigmond, 2010; Collet, 2012; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Lucas, 2011; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2011; Steckel, 2009; Stephens, Morgan, Deford, Donnelly, Hamel, & Crowder, 2011; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) exists that illuminates a clear analysis of the factors which can be used to determine the effectiveness of a literacy coach. However, a similar amount of research (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Bean & Zigmond, 2007; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008; Scott, Cortina, & Carlisle, 2012) also exists presenting the inconsistent roles and responsibilities of literacy coaching in school districts.

The purpose of this sequential mixed-method study was to determine and define the elementary literacy coaching roles and responsibilities that classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and principals valued the most to positively impact teacher practice and student achievement in an urban southeastern school district. Knowing these precepts might help literacy coaches become more efficient and be valuable resources for both classroom teachers and principals. Data from cross-sectional surveys, focus groups, and sample weekly literacy coaching schedules determined literacy coaching roles and responsibilities within the district. Perceptions of classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and principals about literacy coaching examined both desirable and undesirable practices and techniques to ensure an effective literacy coaching model based on all stakeholders' needs.

The findings of this study indicated an inconsistent agreement between the roles and responsibilities of elementary literacy coaches as perceived by principals, literacy coaches, and teachers. Current quantitative data suggested that coaches are perceived as coordinators of the reading program; however, qualitative data reported coaches were exhausting their time as contributors to student testing. Another inconsistency in the survey results were the teachers' desires for literacy coaches to instruct students, but the focus groups' discussions clarified a need for coaches as the experts to spend more time coaching teachers on specific strategies to instruct students. All participants expressed a need for coaches to be resources to classroom teachers, which would align with the quantitative data. However, the qualitative results extended this desire to follow an ongoing coaching model rather than leading a one-time professional development, providing resources and lessons during the planning sessions, or facilitating book studies.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Historical Background	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	10
Methodology	10
Definitions of Terms	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
Adult Learning Theory	12
Social Constructivism	13
Types of Coaches and Coaching Models	14
Shift to Literacy Coaching	17
Literacy Coach Roles and Responsibilities	19
Preparing Literacy Coaches	23
Effective Literacy Coaching	26
Impact of Literacy Coaching	31
Summary	35
Chapter 3: Methodology	38
Participants	38
Instruments	39
Procedures	40
Research Question 1	42
Research Question 2	43
Research Question 3	43
Limitations	44
Chapter 4: Results	45
Demographic Descriptions	45
Research Question 1	49
Research Question 2	60
Research Question 3	61
Summary	63
Chapter 5: Discussion	65
Introduction	65
Summary	66
Findings of the Study	67
Recommendations	73
Recommendations for Future Research	80
References	82
Appendices	
A Permission to Use Literacy Coaching Survey	90
B Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Survey	92
C Demographic Questionnaire	95
D Information Letter	99
E Focus Group Consent Form	100

F	Focus Group Script	102
Tables		
1	Sequential Mixed-Method Research Phase	42
2	Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample	46
3	Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Sample	47
4	Literacy Coaching Weekly Schedules	50
5	Resource to Classroom Teachers	51
6	Resource to Allied Professionals and Parents	53
7	Coordinator of the Reading Program	55
8	Contributor to Assessment	57
9	Instructor to Students	59
10	Overall Rating Means for Coaching Perceptions	60
Figures		
1	Three Levels of Coaching	25
2	Researched Based Model of Literacy Coaching	35

Chapter 1: Introduction

Historical Background

In the past decade, interest in the form of job-embedded professional learning loosely described as *coaching* has exploded (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2002) has challenged educational leaders to search for proven ways to improve Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). According to NCLB, every student will achieve 100% proficiency by 2014. This urgency from NCLB has led many school leaders to discover that traditional professional development methods simply do not get the job done (Knight, 2007b). The literature suggested that only 10% of the teachers will implement new learning after attending a traditional no follow-up workshop, whereas above 90% of the teachers will implement and retain information from an ongoing coaching framework (Bush, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 1982). As a result, a variety of approaches were developed to improve teacher effectiveness, but one of the most promising approaches appeared to be job-embedded coaching (Knight, 2007b).

Neufield and Roper (2003) organized coaches into two groups: (1) change coaches, who work closely with principals on broader school-wide change, and (2) content coaches, who are often specialists in literacy or math and work directly with teachers in the classroom. Four common types of coaching models are used in schools across the nation: peer coaching, cognitive coaching, literacy coaching, and instructional coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Although these four models share a common goal to improve instruction, each differs in practice and methodology. In the area of reading and literacy, the terms most often used are reading specialist, reading coach, literacy facilitator, lead teacher, or literacy coach. In this study, the term *literacy coach* will be

used for clarity.

The literacy coach role has evolved drastically due to the source of funding for the position and research that contributed to new ideas about reading instruction and assessment (Bean, 2009). Under the 2002 NCLB legislation, reading specialists were expected to work with students in groups that were in a supplemental program separate from the classroom program. However, as new ideas were added to the body of research in reading instruction, a new role, known as literacy coaching, emerged that focused on working with teachers (Bean, 2011). The International Reading Association (IRA, 2004), a professional organization that supports quality reading instruction and research, adopted the literacy coach position statement where these professionals are expected to focus on supporting teachers to provide quality differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. In addition, literacy coaches were required to have a reading specialist certificate. Consequently, due to the difficulty of finding qualified individuals for the literacy coach position, reading specialists took on dual roles to work with students and teachers (IRA, 2010). Recently, the IRA Standards 2010 Committee decided to combine the two roles for the next several years until new research evidence emerges about how to revise the combined reading specialist/literacy coach role. According to the IRA (2010), the dual roles may be further defined by their duties to serve as a teacher for struggling readers, literacy coach for providing teacher professional development, coordinator for the language arts program in their school or district, or in several combinations of these roles.

Statement of the Problem

Although the International Reading Association has set forth guidelines for literacy coaches, a coach's role and responsibilities may differ in any given situation

based on the needs of the district and the broad job description of combining both reading specialist and literacy coaching roles. The growing trend to employ literacy coaches as instructional leaders in schools across the nation is resulting in classroom teachers being placed in this role with minimal training and without a well-defined job description. In many situations, the literacy coach's role is being misunderstood by schools and districts because there are no nationally agreed upon definitions or standards for the roles (IRA, 2004). With such a varying degree of roles and responsibilities, it is with no surprise that many have their own perceptions of what the literacy coach's responsibilities and duties are in schools or districts.

North Carolina supported two coaching initiatives to improve reading achievement in the past few years. Unfortunately, these two initiatives were discontinued along with other initiatives due to a cut in funding. In 2003, the state received the federally funded Reading First grant for 5 years to provide professional development for teachers with a goal to improve reading achievement in the lowest performing elementary schools. The Reading First grant was successful in the state, but the initiative is no longer available due to a cut in federal funds (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2009). The state also implemented another coaching initiative, 21st Century Middle School Literacy Coach, which was funded by the General Assembly to place literacy coaches in the lowest-performing middle schools across the state. The state provided training for these literacy coaches to be certified instructional coaches with a goal to increase the graduation rate by preparing proficient middle school readers for high school. Similarly, the funding for this initiative was eliminated in July 2009 (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2010). Literacy coaches are no longer funded or initiated by the state. It is completely a local decision in districts and schools to continue the

implementation of literacy coaching as a strategy to improve reading achievement (C. Guthrie, personal communication, October 2, 2012). Presently, coaching known as transformation coaching is resurfacing as a strategy to improve student achievement through the Race to the Top (RttT) grant funded by the federal government.

The district in this study continues to employ one literacy coach in each elementary school through funds from the district, Title I, or RttT. Additional literacy coaches placed in elementary schools are based on the principal's decision to trade in a teaching position for a literacy coaching position since both positions are on a teacher salary (J. Goins, personal communication, October 2, 2012). Literacy coaches are often exemplary classroom teachers within the campus organization. This district is categorized into zones, with a superintendent assigned to each zone due to the large number of schools and staff members. The North Carolina Department of Instruction (NCDPI) 2010-2011 School Progress Report includes a range of experiences for the district: 0-3 years (24%), 4-10 years (36%), and 10+ years (39%). Over 20% of the principals in the district have advanced degrees with 80 of the principals having less than 10 years of experience. The district, since the 1990s, has followed the coaching model presented by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in conjunction with the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse (LCC) (B. Darla, personal communication, October 5, 2012). According to the LCC, literacy coaches provide job-embedded professional development in the form of co-teaching, modeling lessons, observing lessons, and providing feedback and resources. However, principals determine the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches based on the needs of their school. The variability of needs in each school has resulted in the broad focus of literacy coaching in the district to impact teacher effectiveness.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the researcher sent out a survey to collect data on three types of needs: felt, expressed, and anticipated. This initiative was a result of a role transition from supporting at-risk students on a full-time basis to supporting teachers as a literacy coach. The Coaching Clearinghouse Self-Assessment for Elementary Literacy Coaches (Coaching Clearinghouse, 2009), along with two open-ended questions were selected as primary methods for data collection. The final report from 30 literacy coaches in an urban school district indicated that they often engaged in non-instructional duties such as clerical, administrative, or district-related work which hindered their time allotted for coaching to impact teacher practice. Contrasting the results, the district included a list of qualifications for literacy coaches that are organized into three domains (Researched School District, 2012).

Leadership Domain

- Work closely with the principal to ensure successful and effective implementation of current reading/writing programs by demonstrating leadership, knowledge and support while creating high expectations
- Communicate effectively with teachers and administrators in your school and the central office literacy team

Functional Knowledge Domain

- Provide and facilitate ongoing, on site professional development to implement the NCSCOS through the CMS Comprehensive Reading Model and other scientifically-based reading research initiatives
- Model/demonstrate lessons using best practices for reading/writing
- Coach and support teachers as they plan and implement best practices for reading/writing

- Collect and analyze data and assist teachers in prescribed methods of data collection
- Assist administrators in the assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of the adopted program(s)
- Assist teachers in correlating and integrating successful reading/writing strategies learned into all content areas
- Provide support and education to parents on effective reading/writing strategies for their children
- Attend system-wide meetings and training for literacy facilitators
- Facilitate implementation of A+ initiative where applicable

Management Domain

- Organize, disseminate and monitor the reading/writing programs for quality assurance
- Hold follow-up conferences with teachers to clarify and discuss problems or questions about the correct implementation of literacy instruction
- Assist in planning and differentiating instruction according to data collected

Consistent with this result, other studies (Al Otaiba, Hops, Smartl, & Dole, 2008; Lucas, 2011; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Mraz et al., 2008) also noted a great variability between perceptions of teachers, literacy coaches, and principals about literacy coaching. In Al Otaiba et al.'s (2008) study, teachers reported a different service model (reading specialist) rather than a coaching model. The majority of teachers in the primary grades appreciated the support and training from the coach. In contrast, teachers in the upper grades were dissatisfied with the literacy coach's support. They expected the coach to

provide low-achieving students with one-to-one instruction, but instead received more coach and teacher interaction. According to the anecdote collected by the researcher, the teachers were unclear of the coach's roles and questioned the coach's time spent in the building since she was considered the *expert* who did not serve their low-achieving students.

In Lucas's (2011) study, surveys and interviews were conducted to identify perceptions about literacy coaching from principals, literacy coaches, and teachers. Literacy coaches perceived themselves as often unable to interact with teachers due to the expectation to provide direct reading support for students. They concurred that their position as a literacy coach was not received well from principals and teachers due to the evolving role of the coach from direct student support to teacher support. The majority of principals and teachers were positive about the role of coaches as staff developers. However, principals and teachers indicated that the role of the literacy coach was unnecessary as the reading specialists would make more impact with direct reading instruction to students. They indicated a need to have the coach return to his or her former role as support personnel who worked directly with students. Overall, all participants agreed that there was a role confusion.

Literacy coaches in another study (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) reported barriers that limited their ability to implement the coaching framework. One barrier that hindered literacy coaching was role uncertainty that led to teacher resistance and limited principal involvement. Teachers in the study were reluctant to listen or interact with literacy coaches. They utilized the coaches as a substitute teacher to release them to grade papers and leave the room to do clerical work. In addition, the teachers expected the literacy coaches to provide instruction and resources without discussion. In contrast, the coaches

expected the teachers to observe the modeled lesson for later discussions about future teacher implementation of the instructional practices. Literacy coaches also considered the principal's decisions to allocate time on the schedule and funding for literacy coaching as a way to articulate the importance of coaching. In the study, there was little to no time set for coaching opportunities and limited resources to support coaching.

Similar results from another study (Mraz et al., 2008) with an unclear role for literacy coaches explored the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and teachers on literacy coaching. Principals from this district determined the role of literacy coaches. Literacy coaches were seen as members of the administrative team by working directly with teachers, sharing their coaching observations of teachers with the administrative team, and ensuring fidelity of district initiatives. However, teachers preferred for literacy coaches to work directly with students. Literacy coaches reported spending the majority of their time involved in clerical work with assessment and accountability issues.

The inconsistent perception of all stakeholders can influence the amount of time literacy coaches spend working directly with teachers in the classroom. There is consistent evidence from studies that found schools in which the literacy coach's time spent in the classroom positively correlated to gains in student reading achievement. Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, and Zigmond (2010) reported that coaches allocating approximately 35.7% of their time supporting teachers in groups or individually saw a difference in the percentage of students at proficiency and at risk across the primary grades when compared to schools with limited teacher interaction with coaches. Although these coaches worked directly with teachers, their focus was on instructional planning for at-risk students to improve student learning and achievement. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2011), who found that literacy

coaches spending at least one-third of their time working directly with teachers, on average, resulted in students at every grade level making statistically significant gains in reading.

Another impact of inconsistent perception about literacy coaching may influence the literacy coach's relationship with teachers. Literacy coaches can affect the knowledge base and practices of teachers when there is a consistent method for literacy coaches to engage teachers in reflective conversations (Lucas, 2011). Teachers in Collet's (2012) study demonstrated a high degree of instructional transformation through reflections led by literacy coaches. The coaching conversations consisted of the literacy coach making recommendations, asking probing questions, affirming teachers' appropriate decisions, and praise to change teacher practices and beliefs. In a smaller setting, two literacy coaches also utilized social interactions to change teacher practices by empowering teachers to develop collaboration among peers and enabling teachers to rely on each other to problem solve (Stekel, 2009). They focused on coaching teachers to become independent and reflective problem solvers by training teachers to challenge their instructional practices: Is what I am doing working? Is my teaching driven by the textbook, or is it driven by my authentic assessment?

While the responsibilities and expectations for literacy coaches tend to be unclearly articulated (Deussen et al., 2007; Mraz et al., 2008; Smith, 2007; Toll 2007), given the newness of the position and budget factors (Steinbacher-Reed & Powers, 2012), the result has been literacy coaches with varied professional responsibilities and broad focuses for coaching. The problem that is addressed in this study is that without a clear framework for their day, the potential exists for literacy coaches will take on too many roles and, as a result, dilute the impact of their work. This premise is supported by

Knight (2007a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine and define clear roles and responsibilities for literacy coaching by examining the perceptions of elementary principals, teachers, and school-based literacy coaches on how coaching can be effectively used. The elementary setting was selected due to the assignment of a literacy coach at each site, whereas middle schools and high schools may not have a literacy coach for each site. For the purpose of this study, elementary school principals were utilized because they are responsible for hiring and supervising onsite literacy coaches. Classroom teachers were utilized since the purpose of the literacy coaching initiative is to improve the quality of teaching. Furthermore, literacy coaches were utilized since they carry out the expectations of literacy coaching. Examining these perceptions using surveys and interviews will allow principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers to better evaluate and improve future coaching efforts to impact teacher practices.

Methodology

This study involved elementary school principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers from an urban school district in North Carolina. All elementary schools have at least one literacy coach in their building in which the principal of the school supervises the literacy coach's work. The data collected used quantitative methodology, a cross-sectional survey. In addition, qualitative methodology, focus groups, were used to confirm, clarify, and extend the results from the surveys.

The cross-sectional surveys were used to determine perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers about literacy coaching, as well as determine if literacy coaching was viewed as a necessary initiative to improve reading achievement.

The cross-sectional survey was designed by Mraz et al. (2008) with a Likert 5-point scale to provide an understanding of the current realities and future expectations of literacy coaching from the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers. The focus groups consisted of participants from the survey who indicated an interest in further discussing the survey results.

Definitions of Terms

At-risk students. Students identified as reading and writing below grade level as measured by formative assessments and teacher observation.

Job-embedded professional development. On-site professional development is ongoing and addresses the needs of teachers in the form of one-on-one or group coaching that offers immediate feedback to the teacher.

International Reading Association (IRA). The IRA was founded in 1956 as an international professional organization to impact reading through quality research and literacy instruction.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A 2002 landmark law that mandated education reform designed to improve student achievement. Its main purpose is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education.

Reading specialists/literacy coach. The International Reading Association (2010) combined the two roles and defined a reading specialist/literacy coach as someone who works with struggling readers to provide intensive instruction within the classroom or outside the classroom, and supports teacher learning by providing coaching and professional development to improve instructional practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers, literacy coaches, and principals to define clear roles and responsibilities for literacy coaching in elementary schools to positively impact teacher practices and student achievement. Data were collected from principals, classroom teachers, and literacy coaches to determine which factors related to effective literacy coaching.

The review of the literature for this study was organized into the following sections: (1) adult learning theory, (2) types of coaches and coaching models, (3) shift to literacy coaching, (4) literacy coaching roles and responsibilities, (5) preparing literacy coaches, (6) effective literacy coaching, and (7) impact of literacy coaching.

Adult Learning Theory

According to Leary-Joyce and Wildflower (2011), four theories are applicable to the coaching engagement: the concept of adult learning theory or andragogy pioneered by Malcolm Knowles, Jack Mezirow's transformational learning, David Kolb's Learning Cycle and his Learning Styles Inventory, and Gillie Bolton's concept of reflective learning.

Knowles (1984) developed five assumptions about adult learning: adults are self-directed learners, adult learners bring a wealth of experience to the educational setting, adults enter educational settings ready to learn, adults are problem-centered in their learning, and adults are best motivated by internal factors. Following andragogy is Mezirow's (2006) transformational learning, which is a process of discovering new perspectives by interacting with information. The process begins with a personal crisis or *disorienting dilemma* resulting in critical reflection and reevaluation of assumptions to discover a new perspective. The new perspective is then validated through *reflective*

discourse, and action is taken to apply the new perspective.

The third applicable theory explains how adults learn from experience and process their experience in different ways. Similar to transformational learning, Kolb (1984) attested that adults follow four elements in a cyclical process at any four points as experiential learners: concrete experience (CE)—direct experience or action; reflective observation (RO)—reflecting on the effects of the action; abstract conceptualization (AC)—understanding the principles that affect the action; and active experimentation (AE)—testing, adjusting, and planning a new course of action. Pairing the four elements from the experiential learning cycle, Kolb developed the Learning Styles Inventory as a model of learning preference. The combination of two preferred styles create the following learner preferences: diverger/reflector (CE/RO)—is interested in people and has broad cultural interests; assimilator/theorist (AC/RO)—has a strong ability to create theoretical models, excels in inductive reasoning, and is concerned with abstract concept rather than people; converger/pragmist (AC/AE)—is likely to be unemotional, with limited but often very focused interests; and accommodator/activist (CE/AE)—is a risk taker and performs well when required to react to immediate circumstances, solving problems intuitively.

The fourth applicable theory to coaching is reflective learning. Bolton (2010) argued that reflective learning, by constantly self-examining actions, thoughts, feelings, motives, and assumptions is vital to increase capacity for learning and change.

Social Constructivism

The concepts of these four coaching engagement theories coincide with Vygotsky's (1978) Theory of Social Constructivism. Vygotsky's four stages of zone of proximal development are essential phases: (1) assistance provided by others more capable; (2) assistance provided by self; (3) automatization through practice; and (4)

deautomatization: a recursiveness through the previous three stages) of teacher work in altering school culture, student learning, and teacher practices (Tharpe & Gailmore, 1988). Teachers and more capable others, literacy coaches, collaborate through social interactions and activities focused on teacher practice within teachers' own zones of proximal development. The zone of proximal teacher development (ZPTD) "denotes the distance between what teaching candidates can do on their own without assistance and a proximal level they might attain through strategically mediated assistance from more capable others" (Warford, 2011, p. 253). The zone of proximal teacher development deviates from the traditional sequence (assistance by self, internalization, automatization, and deautomatization to recursiveness through prior states) and requires teachers' self-reflections on prior experiences and assumptions (Warford, 2011) to promote choice in the course of their development. Following this self-reflection, literacy coaches scaffold and support teachers' current levels of performance to change their practices. Literacy coaches have the potential to change teachers' practices by modeling, offering teachers behavior for imitation (Bandura, 1977), and providing feedback or guidance for teachers to try next (Tharpe & Gailmore, 1988). The level of support shifts and changes as teachers are able to work independently in what Bruner (1990) termed the "handover principle".

Types of Coaches and Coaching Models

Neufield and Roper (2003) organized coaches into two groups: (1) change coaches, who work closely with principals on broader school-wide change; and (2) content coaches, who are often specialists in literacy or math, and work directly with teachers in the classroom. Four common types of coaching models are used in schools across the country: peer coaching, cognitive coaching, instructional coaching, and

literacy coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Models of coaching are frameworks that a coach might take to provide high-quality, job-embedded professional development. Although these four models share a common goal to improve instruction, each differs in practice and methodology.

The first is peer coaching, the oldest form of educational coaching, a model developed by Showers and Joyce (1996) in the 1980s where teachers offer each other mutual support within a school (Swafford, 1998). Peer coaching is non-evaluative, based on observation in the classroom followed by constructive feedback, centered on the importance of improving instructional strategies (Fillman, 2005). Three different models exist within the peer coaching models: technical coaching, which helps teachers learn what to do and how to transfer their training to the classroom; collegial coaching, which helps refine teaching practices collaboratively; and challenge coaching, which has a group of teachers working together to resolve problems (Ackland, 1991). Joyce and Showers (1982) reported that adding peer coaching to a traditional workshop resulted in an 80% gain over traditional workshop delivery on rate of transfer into classroom practice.

Another commonly used model is cognitive coaching, developed by Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston (2002). The cognitive coach is a mentor, full-time district-level coach, who supports teachers through conversation, including planning, reflecting, and problem solving (Carroll, 2007). The coaches do not give direction and advice as much as they ask questions that prompt the teacher to think and come up with their own answers. Cognitive coaching is designed to increase student achievement and teacher efficacy, produce higher order teacher thinking, and provide teacher support (Edwards, 2008). Seven coaching methods are necessary in order to produce the goals noted by

Edwards (2008): modeling, explanation, coaching, scaffolding, reflection, articulation, and exploration (Dennen, 2004). There are insufficient data to support the impact of cognitive coaching on student achievement; however, Dennen's (2004) study found positive results on teacher efficacy.

The instructional coaching model is broadly defined. Taylor (2008) defined an instructional coach as a non-supervisory role—that is, instructional coaches do not typically have positional authority to evaluate other adults; thus, they do not work from a position of supervisory power and must use expertise and relationships to exert influence. Knight (2004) defined the instructional coach as “an on-site professional developer working in one school offering . . . on the spot, everyday professional development” (p. 33). Knight (2011) classified three aspects of instructional coaching: (1) technical (helping with training application), (2) challenge (group problem solving), and (3) collegial (support for reflection and cognition). To increase student achievement, Knight (2009) recommended coaching all teachers and not limiting coaching to only struggling teachers. According to Knight (2007b), an effective coaching strategy is modeling lessons and strategies to classroom teachers, which can increase teacher practice by 70%.

Shankilin (2007) described this fourth commonly used model of coaching, literacy coaching, as a full-time coaching initiative to increase literacy within a school and across a district, often providing all subject area teachers support in literacy based instruction. Literacy coaches are not connected to a specific theory, set of responsibilities, or methodology, and thus their role is often defined in broader terms than the other models (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Literacy coaching consists of three major roles: expert instruction, guidance with assessment, and leadership for a school's reading program (IRA, 2000). Bean, Swan, and Knaub (2003) identified five roles of reading

specialists in schools with exemplary reading programs: (1) resource to classroom teachers; (2) resource to allied professionals, parents, other community members, volunteers, and tutors; (3) coordinator of the reading program; (4) contributor to assessment; (5) instructor to students (p. 451). Literacy coaching does improve classroom instruction, and research findings indicate teachers are receptive to literacy coach support (Elish-Piper, & L'Allier, 2010; Mraz et al., 2008).

Shift to Literacy Coaching

A reading specialist is a teacher for students experiencing reading difficulties by providing literacy instruction designed to meet the specific needs of these students and support them to meet the requirements of the classroom reading program (IRA, 2000). The shift from a reading specialist to a literacy coach is a trend common in many districts due to the policy developed by the federal government that ties teacher performance to student performance (Bean, 2011). Therefore, efforts to improve student learning by finding the right materials or programs have moved into an emphasis on quality teaching. The literacy coach role emerged from the Reading First grant, which was a federally funded initiative from the NCLB Act (2002) to enable students to become successful early readers in the lowest performing elementary schools (Manzo, 2005). Districts receiving the Reading First grant utilized the funds to provide ongoing professional development for classroom teachers. Districts that did not receive the Reading First grant hired their own literacy coaches, and they had more freedom in determining roles for literacy coaching (Bean & Dagen, 2012).

Bean and Dagen (2012) reported from their work with three non-Reading First districts that the time allocated for literacy coaching varied considerably. Coaches in these schools spent their time as either a full-time literacy coach working with only

teachers or in a dual-role working with students and teachers. One district's initiative to strengthen the core instruction shifted what they called the *reading specialists'* role from working with students to providing ongoing professional development for teachers.

Coaches in another district expanded the reading specialists' role to a dual role that provided instruction for struggling students and coaching classroom teachers. Similarly, the third district developed their literacy coaching program by expecting reading specialists to allocate at least 3 hours per week to work with classroom teachers.

The challenge of converting reading specialists to literacy coaches was discussed in Mangin's (2009) study. Most of the districts in the study were resistant to the shift and preferred to retain the familiar role of the reading specialists. The districts varied in their implementation of literacy coach roles but reported to have three common categories that influenced literacy coach role implementation. Financing and the existing reading specialist role were two factors that negatively impacted the implementation of literacy coaching. District administrators reported that the reading specialists in their districts are well-respected members of their community and experts in meeting the needs of low-performing students in contrast to classroom teachers, and the administrators have invested funds for training the reading specialists to produce plausible progress with low-performing students. Student data were used in districts to determine that the problem was student learning, and the districts reallocated their funds to shift into implementing literacy coaching roles to provide job-embedded professional development.

The IRA (2010) revised the expectation of a reading specialist to include similar qualities of a literacy coach, such as providing assessment and instruction, conducting professional development, helping to set reading program goals, helping other staff members achieve those goals, interpreting the reading program to parents and the

community, demonstrating appropriate reading practices, and keeping staff members aware of current research (IRA, 2000). Regardless of the role as a reading specialist or literacy coach, the focus is placed on the interactions between coaches and teachers (IRA, 2004).

Literacy Coaching Roles and Responsibilities

According to Shanklin (2007), reading coaches take on the role of a collaborator, working with classroom teachers in order to improve reading instructional practices. They act as facilitators in the teaching and learning process. Rather than being an evaluator, reading coaches must be a supporter if they are to produce desirable changes in practice.

To prepare a reading specialist for the literacy coaching role, the IRA position statement identifies three levels of coaching activities (Shaw, 2009) that vary in intensity for both teachers and coaches (IRA, 2004). The first level of coaching is the least formal in which the primary goal involves providing support through activities that build a relationship between the coach and teachers. These activities may involve having conversation with teachers, developing and providing resources for teachers, developing literacy curriculum, participating in various professional development, assisting with student assessment, and teaching students. Level 2 activities allow coaches to identify coaching goals and areas of strength in instructional practices with individual teachers and grade levels. These activities may consist of co-planning lessons, analyzing student work, interpreting assessment data, or providing formal professional development presentations. The most formal and intense coaching activities are categorized into Level 3 which builds on teacher expertise through reflective practices. These activities may include in-class support (such as modeling and co-teaching), observing teacher

instruction and providing feedback for teachers, and analyzing videos lessons.

While the literature describing the responsibilities of literacy coaches focuses on teacher-related activities, research indicates that coaches often have additional responsibilities (Bean et al., 2003; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). In Bean and Dagens's (2012) work, two groups of literacy coaches individually listed more than 25 activities in which they frequently engaged including several that did not involve working directly with teachers. Another similar report from Deussen, et al. (2007) classified the majority of the time spent as Reading First literacy coaches in five western states was on activities that were managerial or administrative tasks.

Scott et al. (2012) work with Reading First coaches in Michigan reported a variation in coaching roles based on 3,000 coaching logs. Coaches indicated that one-third of their day involved direct contact with teachers and classroom instruction, approximately one-third of their time was spent planning and engaging in assessment related work, and the rest of their day was involved working with students and meeting with the principal or other school-based specialists. Similarly, two studies of Reading First literacy coaches in Pennsylvania (Bean & Zigmond, 2007) also indicated that literacy coaches, on average, spent about a third of their time working directly with teachers. Coaches in the Deussen et al. (2007) study who were expected to spend between 60% to 80% of their time engaged in coaching teachers reported that they spent an average of only 29% of their time actually working with teachers. In another study by Roller (2006), nearly 45% of the coaches spent only 2-4 hours per week interacting with teachers in the classroom. Recently, Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2011) found that literacy coaches spent an average of 53% of their time working with teachers, whereas coaches in another Reading First district spent an average of 49%.

A 4-year mixed-method study conducted by Kissell et al. (2011) sought to define coaching roles and revise coaching roles to increase coaching effectiveness. The study consisted of 20 literacy coaches in an urban school district serving in prekindergarten classrooms and preschool centers with students from birth to age 5. The participants (n=20) completed a 16-item survey to share the current realities of coaching in their setting, along with confirmed and extended outcomes from the survey through interviews (n=4) to provide ways to improve coaching effectiveness. The literacy coaches indicated that they spend the majority of their time supporting teachers' content knowledge and self-reflection and facilitating teacher professional development. However, they did not view collaborating and communicating with administrators and parents as essential components to their roles and responsibilities. This oversight from the coaches resulted in a lack of the administrators' understanding for the coaching purpose, role, and expectations. Moreover, a varied understanding of literacy coaching may contribute to the decrease in coaching positions when administrators develop school budgets (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu, & Dailey, 2010; Steinbacher-Reed & Powers, 2012).

In another study with 13 elementary literacy coaches (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010), an inconsistent description of coaching roles and responsibilities were reported as a result of the limited resources provided for coaching teachers and the lack of support from principals and teachers. Other studies (Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, & Garnier, 2009; Norton, 2007) reported that principals were the driving forces in engaging teachers in the literacy coaching process. The principals publicly endorsed the coach as a professional and expert in literacy, and actively participated in weekly grade-level conferences, professional developments, and observing coaching in the classrooms. These active principals in the coaching process were able to identify the coaching role as someone

who helps teachers improve the teaching quality, in contrast to the principals in low-implementing school.

Similar perceptions about literacy coaching from all stakeholders are imperative in preventing a fragmented job description for literacy coaches and in defining or refining their roles and responsibilities. Lucas (2011) examined perceptions of teachers, literacy coaches, and principals about literacy coaching in a suburban school district with 15 schools. The study found differing views of the literacy coach role and disclosed a need to clearly communicate and articulate to all stakeholders the purpose, role, and responsibilities of the literacy coach. Other studies (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2008) confirmed these findings, noting great variability between perceptions of teachers, literacy coaches, and principals about literacy coaching.

Another factor that may influence the amount of time coaches spend coaching teachers is years of experience. An examination of the first- and third-year logs of literacy coaches working in Pennsylvania (Bean & Zigmond, 2007) revealed that literacy coaches in their third year engaged in significantly more conferencing, observing, and co-teaching than they had during their first year. This study indicated that as coaches became more experienced, they provided individual teachers with more intensive support. Scott et al.'s (2012) study suggested that structured coaching interactions with teachers, rather than coaching experiences and credentials, contributed to higher teacher satisfaction.

Attebury and Bryk (2011) studied 17 mature Literacy Coaching programs across the United States for 23 months. The Literacy Coaching program had been implemented for 10 years prior to the study. The researchers found wide variations in exposure to one-to-one coaching over time both between teachers within each school and between

schools. Some teachers received less than 13 hours of coaching, while others in the same school received as many as 39 hours of coaching over the same 3-year period. Most teachers in a school received practically no coaching in a month, while teachers in some schools received approximately two coaching sessions per month.

An important finding from Scott et al. (2012) indicated that teachers preferred to interact with the literacy coach in a group, rather than one-to-one settings, as an effective professional development framework. Furthermore, structured coaching interactions with teachers, rather than coaching credentials and coaching experiences, contributed to higher teacher satisfaction.

Preparing Literacy Coaches

As districts are recognizing the importance of coaches, funding cuts are causing districts to eliminate coaching positions. Districts that are not required by state law to include job-embedded professionals in their organization are facing this situation more prominently than Reading First districts. Steinbacher-Reed and Powers (2012) explored ways to provide job-embedded professional learning and collaborative opportunities for teachers in districts that were experiencing financial hardships causing them to eliminate coaching positions. They included suggestions for all stakeholders (former coaches, teachers, reading specialists, principals, and district personnel), such as maximize common planning time to disseminate analysis of student learning and develop instruction from reviewing student data or peer coaching experiences; advocate for coaching support by reallocating funds for renewing materials; and networking with universities and retired teachers to provide professional development.

Blachowicz et al. (2010) trained 18 teachers to work as coaches-in-training with a total of 500 to 800 teachers in an urban school setting. The researchers collected yearly

data that included interviewing participating school principals, coaches-in-training, district leaders, and teachers about the changes they observed in their schools and the impact of the work of a trained coach-in-training. All interviewees reported that these literacy coaches-in-training positively impacted instruction with low-performing schools by doubling the state gains in reading and exceeding the average gains of the system. From the researchers' efforts to prepare literacy coaches for urban schools, 10 ideas emerged to effectively prepare and support new coaches: (1) build a strong communal knowledge base; (2) collaborate to make the curriculum visible in new ways; (3) emphasize culturally relevant instruction and resources; (4) help coaches-in-training define their roles over time; (5) support coaches in developing a model for goal setting and coaching cycles; (6) build understanding that development as a coach has recursive phases; (7) provide facilitation that differentiates for coaches-in-training; (8) design methods for coaches to build teams around student data and shared inquiry; (9) help coaches balance fidelity of treatment with formative treatment; and (10) connect coaches with the wider professional community.

In response to the IRA (2004) Standards for Reading Specialists, Shaw (2009) reported how his organization prepared graduate students as effective literacy coaches by utilizing the three levels of coaching (IRA, 2004) as phases for the program and to build the curriculum (Figure 1). The participants completed a 5-point Likert scale program completion survey to share their level of preparation to support teachers and paraprofessionals in literacy instruction. A total of 96% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were fully prepared to serve as literacy leaders after completing the program. The open-ended responses from the participants confirmed their confidence to support literacy instruction. In addition to the results from this study, the

researchers have added two other assignments that were suggestions from practicing literacy coaches: writing grant proposals and curriculum mapping with benchmark performances.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Informal: Includes conversations with colleagues to identify issues or needs, setting goals, and problem solving; developing and providing materials for colleagues; developing curriculum with colleagues; participating in professional development activities with colleagues; leading or participating with assessing students; and instructing students to learn about their strengths and needs.	More Formal: Includes co-planning lessons; holding grade level or reading teacher meetings; analyzing student work; interpreting assessment data to help teachers plan instruction; holding individual discussions with colleagues to support teaching and learning; and making professional development presentations for teachers.	This includes modeling and discussing lessons; co-teaching lessons; observing classroom instruction and providing feedback; analyzing videotaped lessons and providing feedback; doing lesson study with teachers to identify important learning goals and methods for achieving goals.

Figure 1. Three Levels of Coaching (Shaw, 2009).

Another program that prepares literacy coaches is the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI). Norton (2007) described how the ARI prepares and supports literacy coaches. Initially, literacy coaches attend a 3-day training with their school leadership team about instructional planning, scheduling procedures, and leading a school-wide book study. A coach trainer is also assigned to each literacy coach to provide regular support throughout the coaching career. Following the summer training, literacy coaches attend monthly trainings with two selected teachers from their school to address particular issues and build content knowledge. The initiative also requires building a relationship between the

principal and coach by observing schools together that were demonstration sites for literacy coaching. After the first year, literacy coaches are expected to complete a 2-week summer internship by observing how new literacy coaches are trained in the 3-day initial training. In the fall, they enter into an advanced relationship with their coach trainers and focus on how to use the coaching cycle.

Effective Literacy Coaching

The most important first step for coaches is building trust and confidence by communicating with teachers on a one-to-one basis, valuing the instruction that teachers are already providing, and modeling exemplary literacy instruction (Shaw, 2006). Building a collegial relationship between a literacy coach and classroom teacher is essential for effective literacy. Furthermore, literacy coaches must follow three guidelines to support and establish a literacy coach-teacher relationship: clarifying roles, identifying trust, and communicating effectively (Bean & Dagan, 2012). Literacy coaches can clarify their roles and responsibilities at an initial staff meeting and team meeting by describing their position in relation to the administrative staff. Another successful avenue suggested to clarify the literacy coach's role is to distribute a needs assessment where teachers can specify ways the literacy coach can support teachers. The second guideline and foundation for building a collegial relationship is trust, which literacy coaches can build by valuing a teacher's professional expertise and experiences. Literacy coaches should also reassure teachers that literacy coaching conversations are confidential and not reported to school administrators. The final guideline is adjusting coaching stances and language to allow for effective communication with the teacher. The most common stances utilized by literacy coaches to communicate effectively with teachers are facilitating, collaborating, and consulting.

Coaches find themselves daily with a new problem, an unexpected request, or unanticipated responses to coaching (Bean, 2009; Toll, 2005). Literacy coaches are required to engage themselves in particular ways that are most appropriate to the time, place, people, and practices that set the stage (Rainville & Jones, 2008). L'Allier, Elish-Piper, and Bean (2010) synthesized findings from their previous studies to provide seven guiding principles as a framework for reflective thinking to improve literacy teaching and student learning: (1) acquire advanced preparation; (2) devote at least half of coaching time to working directly with teachers; (3) establish trust with the teacher through confidentiality and effective communication; (4) prioritize a set of core activities (administer and discuss student assessment with teachers, model and observe lessons, and conference with teachers); (5) create road maps for flexible coaching to include intentional and opportunistic coaching; (6) invest in literacy leadership by setting literacy goals for the school, facilitating professional learning, and collaborating with the principal to allot time for literacy instruction and teacher collaboration; and (7) modify time spent with teachers as coaching evolves over time. These principles will help reduce the stress and pressure that may derive from ineffective coaching practices.

Literacy coaches can be perplexed with the amount of literacy coaching activities mentioned in the model and lose sight of the process to effectively plan professional development for teachers. Literacy coaches can support teachers' professional development by following a planning approach that focuses on topic selection, grouping option, and choice (Bean & Dagen, 2012). According to Bean and Dagen (2012), the first proactive strategy for literacy coaches is to establish support from mentors and other professionals to brainstorm solutions for coaching situations and build professional learning by considering school goals, student assessment data, and teacher needs.

Furthermore, literacy coaches should quickly take on the literacy leader role by communicating with the principal about the literacy coaching program. In addition, literacy coaches should maximize professional learning time by working with the principal to carve time out for common grade-level planning and staff meeting. Lucas' (2011) study illuminated three factors that enhanced the role of coaches as staff developers: (1) administrative support, (2) cohesive communication, and (3) data-driven instruction and strategies. Another model conducted at United States Department of Defense (DOD) schools involves assisting both faculty and administration in instructional improvement in order to raise student achievement. The study indicated that teachers must be provided adequate feedback and want to be mentored and taught by someone in a nonevaluative position in order to be effective (Makibbin & Sprague, 1993).

The collaboration between administrators and coaches is critical for effective teacher support. Steiner and Kowal (2007) stressed collaborating on targeted interventions for teachers and evaluating yearly success in terms of teacher and coach interactions. One of the first steps in Steiner and Kowal's approach in the partnership between administrator and coach is determining goals for student learning, then deciding what skills teachers need in order to meet those learning goals. Afterwards, the principal and coach collaborate on what coaching methodology best supports those needs. Neufield and Roper (2003) stated that school-level administrators must ensure that teachers feel safe to collaborate with literacy coaches by supporting coaching roles in the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007), meeting with the coach to discuss progress (Knight, 2007a), and encouraging continued coach professional development in order to ensure the coach is successful at the school (Killion, 2007).

After collaborating with a committee of leaders from the school to identify a

focus for professional development, literacy coaches should ensure balanced ongoing literacy coaching support by providing various formats and options for professional development that matches learning preferences and professional goals of teachers. Dole and Donaldson (2006) developed three professional development phases that include: (1) whole-group sessions to create an awareness of the topic; (2) small-group sessions to build understanding of the topic that can be accomplished through classroom observation, model lessons, or teaching with teachers in the classroom; and (3) one-on-one coaching to support individual application. Throughout the planning process for professional development, choice is the central consideration to motivate and create ownership of teachers' professional learning.

Another challenge for literacy coaches is balancing coaching stances to meet the needs of teachers and district initiatives. According to Ippolito (2010b), expectations from administrators for literacy coaches to deliver directive activities are being neglected and producing anxiety for teachers and literacy coaches since the majority of literacy coaches believe they are expected to increase teachers' self-reflection or practice *cognitive coaching*. Ippolito (2010a) examined 57 literacy coaches' attempts to balance coaching with responsive and directive behaviors. The coaches determined that supporting teachers who are receptive to coaching or offering support as an opener for coaching conversations was responsive coaching. Directive behaviors included asking the teacher to analyze data or change practices significantly. Ippolito suggested three ways that literacy coaches can strike a balance between providing support for teachers (responsive) and pursuing school and district initiatives (directive): (1) shift relational stances within single coaching sessions, (2) use individual planning and group discussion protocols, and (3) share leadership roles with both teachers and administrators. Ippolito's

(2010b) work with 78 literacy coaches confirms these three strategies effectively balance coaching.

In Rainville and Jones's (2008) study, they observed how one literacy coach shifts her language practices when interacting with teachers to build a relationship and facilitate teacher learning. Three potential lessons were learned from the data: (1) an informal relationship with the teacher prevented power shifts and struggles, (2) reciprocal learning from the work of the coach and teacher provides teachers ownership of their learning, and (3) miscommunication in the literacy coach's role and responsibilities will lead to a counterproductive standoff. In another study, Rose (2009) presented a variety of professional development approaches to meet the needs of novice and experienced teachers. A light approach in the coach's time commitment included lesson study, intra/inter-classroom visits, and book study. Coaches commit moderate time to literacy content mini-lessons, video-based reflection, and videotaped student observations. Demonstration lesson required the most time from coaches. The more a district or school can plan time for teachers and coaches to meet and reflect on best practices, the more likely they are to see positive results (Kostin & Haeger, 2006).

Literacy coaching involves attempting to change current instructional practices in the classroom. Fullan's (2007) work on educational improvement suggested managing complex change by utilizing data to establish the purpose for change and create a common vision. Effective change is both top down and bottom up, which indicates that while the decision to include literacy coaches may begin at the district level, classroom teachers must decide to what degree and in what method to make use of the resource (Knight, 2009). Consistent with Fullan's essential qualities to the change process, Knight (2007a) stated that choice and voice are critical components in any endeavor to elicit

change in adults, and encouraging dialogue during that change along with reflection afterwards draws value and importance to the change. An effective coaching program is described as having certain structural conditions that support coaching, a clear focus on adult learning, and strong instructional leadership (King et al., 2006).

Impact of Literacy Coaching

Impact on teachers. While specific research findings addressing the impact of coaching on teaching and student learning are lacking (Bean et al., 2012; IRA, 2004), initial evidence does indicate that literacy coaching holds great promise as an intervention (IRA, 2004a). Some of the benefits of coaching, according to this research, can include that literacy coaching impacts school culture in a positive way, supports change in practice, promotes teacher reflection and incorporates teachers' input and decisions making, honors the characteristics of adult learners, and has been shown to lead to student achievement (Toll, 2005). In Lucas's (2011) study, all stakeholders interacting with literacy coaches indicated that coaching made an impact in reconciling and improving communication and collaboration among schools, the fidelity of implementing literacy initiatives, and quality of instruction in the classrooms. Walker-Dalhouse, Risko, Lathrop, and Porter (2010) examined the dialogue between literacy coaches and teachers in a reciprocal relationship to address problems with teaching culturally diverse students. The conversations led to modifying instructional practices and implementing personally meaningful and culturally relevant curriculum for students. Likewise, literacy coaching conversations and interactions observed in Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) facilitated teachers to set improvement goals and promote reflection.

In a larger scale and time frame, the impact of literacy coaches on teachers' beliefs and practices (Stephens et al., 2011) in the state of South Carolina suggested that

large-scale staff development can affect teachers' beliefs and practices when the providers are site-based, site-selected literacy coaches. The coaches in this study underwent four implementation phases that yield positive changes in teacher quality. Coaches were expected to teach and implement best practices in a classroom for the first year with a partner as their professional learning. Following the first phase, coaches moved outside of their professional learning classroom into full-time coaching for their second year. Their professional development focus also moved from learning how to implement best practices to teaching teachers how to implement these best practices. The third phase was providing sufficient teacher support by increasing the teacher support from eight to 10 teachers in different schools to fewer than 25 teachers in one school. The last implementation phase included meeting four times for professional development with the School Leadership Team to address curriculum and instructional needs of the school.

Stephens et al. (2011) studied the South Carolina Reading Initiative (SCRI), a statewide professional development model, to determine 73 literacy coaches' impact on teachers' beliefs and practices. The study found that coaches were able to affect the knowledge base and practices of larger numbers of teachers over a 3-year period. Another study (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) that analyzed 35 teacher interviews in the SCRI found that teachers valued how coaches helped them shift their focus on curriculum driven by student needs rather than on curriculum covering content.

Teachers participating in another literacy coaching program, Content-Focused Coaching (CFC), presented in interviews that literacy coaching activities improved their reading instruction (Matsumura et al., 2010). Matsumura, Garnier, and Resnick (2010) investigated the influence of a school's preexisting social resources on the

implementation of a coaching program. Survey results indicated that teachers in the coaching schools participated more frequently in the coaching activities that emphasized planning and reflecting on instruction, enacting instruction, and building knowledge of the theories underlying effective reading comprehension instruction compared to teachers in the comparison schools. After a year, teachers strongly believed that coaching helped improve their instructional practice.

Collet (2012) examined coaching and teacher change with four literacy coaches who applied the Gradual Increase of Responsibility (GIR) model for coaching. The application of how the GIR model was used in coaching varied depending on the experiences and needs of the teachers. The teachers demonstrated deeper understanding for literacy instruction by appropriately applying strategies in their own classrooms. This study suggests that coaches can change teacher practice by using the GIR model by modeling, making recommendations, asking probing questions, affirming teachers' appropriate decisions, and praising them within their Zone of Proximal Development. Similar to this study, Steckel (2009) found that literacy coaches faded back as teachers became more adept at matching instruction and instructional resources to the diverse needs of their students. The teachers in this study saw positive outcomes with the new instructional strategies that motivated them to collaborate with peers to critically analyze the success.

Impact on students. There is increasing evidence to suggest that the amount of time literacy coaches spend working directly (conferencing, administering assessments, modeling lessons, and observing) with teachers is positively related to student gains in reading (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). This finding is consistent with Elish-Piper and L'Allier's (2010) study exploring the amount of time literacy coaches spent observing in

classrooms. In addition, this finding is also consistent with Bean et al. (2010), who found that schools in which coaches spent more time directly working with teachers had a higher percentage of first and second graders scoring at the proficient level than schools in which coaches spent less time directly working with teachers.

Shidler (2009) examined the linkage between hours spent coaching teachers in the classroom for efficacy in content instruction and child achievements/outcomes. A significant correlation was seen in year 1 between the time coaches spent in the classroom and students' alphabet recognition scores. The coaching model for year 1 was one that focused coaching for instructional efficacy in specific content and teaching methods and saw the coaches directly facilitate and support theory to practice. In years 2 and 3, no significant correlation was found. Years 2 and 3 used a coaching model that was less specific in focus and increased time spent on site with teachers. The implications for coaching practice includes balancing time between four components to effective coaching: (1) instructing for specific content, (2) modeling techniques and instructional practices, (3) observing teacher practices, and (4) consulting for reflection.

Literacy coaching work can be prioritized by following Bean and Dugan's (2012) research-based model of literacy coaching focused on promoting student reading and writing gains (Figure 2). The model was based on findings (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010, 2011) from Reading First districts and non-Reading First districts. The foundational ring from the model for effective literacy coaching is the literacy coach certification. A literacy coach holding a reading endorsement or certificate fosters greater gains in reading and writing. The second ring indicates that the amount of time is imperative. Literacy coaches spending a third of their time with teachers saw significant gains in reading and writing. The inner ring of the model identifies five coaching activities that

are significant predictors of reading and writing gains: conferencing with teachers about observed lessons or modeled lessons, administering and discussing assessment, modeling instructional strategies for teachers, observing teachers implement instructional strategies, co-planning with teachers, and other coaching activities. Conferencing and other literacy coaching activities were strong predictors at multiple grade levels to influence students' reading and writing gains.

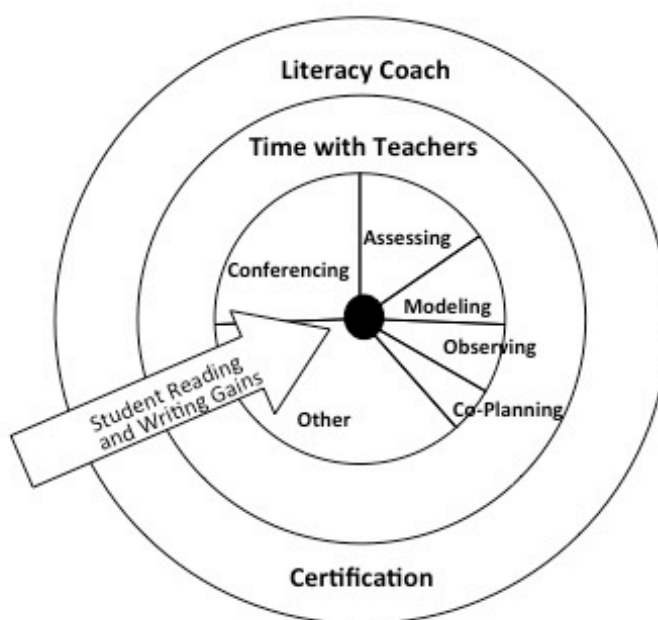


Figure 2. Research-based model of literacy coaching focused on promoting student reading and writing gains (Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011).

Summary

Adult learning theory can be related to the work of coaching as the coach assists teachers in understanding, learning, and using new teaching strategies in the classroom. Numerous coaching models for implementation are revealed in the literature that differ in practice and methodology (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2004; Neufield & Roper, 2003; Shankilin, 2007). A common coaching model that

utilizes coaches as change agents and content experts is literacy coaching. Literacy coaching emerged from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) to improve student reading achievement by working with underperforming students. However, the current focus on improving teacher effectiveness has resulted in a shift from working with students to coaching teachers in the classroom. This shift has resulted in varied coaching roles and responsibilities. The literature indicated numerous studies with an inconsistent use of literacy coaches (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Bean & Zigmond, 2007; Deussen et al., 2007; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Kissel et al., 2011; Mraz et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2012). Moreover, the inconsistent understanding of literacy coaching is also reflected in a decrease in coaching positions when administrators develop school budgets (McLean et al., 2010; Steinbacher-Reed & Powers, 2012).

According to the IRA (2004), literacy coaches work with teachers based on three levels of coaching intensity: building relationships with teachers, identifying coaching goals, and building teacher expertise through reflective practices. Institutions and districts wishing to prepare literacy coaches are directed to utilize the IRA's (2004) three levels of literacy coaching as their foundation to building professional learning content for future literacy coaches (Shaw, 2009). In addition, Ippolito (2010b) shared the challenges of balancing coaching stances as a topic to consider when preparing literacy coaches to meet the needs of teachers and district initiatives.

Although coaching is a preferred method for professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1982), the literature is limited to support literacy coaching impacting teacher practice in a larger scale due to the coaching role being broadly defined with various models for implementation (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2004; Neufield & Roper, 2003; Shanklin, 2007). Bean and Dagen (2012) suggested that

a certified literacy coach allotting a third of their time in the classroom that followed these activities were strong predictors to influence student reading and writing gains: conferencing with teachers; administering and discussing assessment, modeling, observing, and co-planning. Literacy coaching does improve classroom instruction, and research findings indicate teachers are receptive to literacy coach support (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Mraz et al., 2008).

The following chapter includes an explanation of the methodology of the study, a description of participants, the instrument used to collect data, procedures that were used for survey distribution and focus group interviews, and a description of how data were analyzed are explained. The research questions examined were:

1. What are the perceptions of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches relative to the roles and expectations of literacy coaching?
2. How are the perceptions and expectations regarding literacy coaching similar across these different groups of professionals?
3. What are ways that principals, teachers, and literacy coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school's literacy program?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this explanatory mixed-methods study was to determine and define clear roles and responsibilities for elementary literacy coaching by examining the perceptions of principals, teachers, and school-based literacy coaches on how literacy coaching can be effectively used. In the quantitative data collection, principals, teachers, and instructional coaches were invited to complete a survey regarding their perceptions of literacy coaching. The quantitative findings were followed by qualitative explorations in which two kinds of data were collected and analyzed (literacy coaching schedules and interviews) to help explain and extend the findings from the study. While literacy coaching is one promising professional development strategy, there is a lack of peer-reviewed research that (1) defines the parameters of the role, (2) describes and contextualizes the work of instructional coaching, or (3) explains how individuals learn to be coaches and are supported to refine their practice over time (Gallucci, DeVogt Van Lare, Yon, & Boatright, 2010). The researcher answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches relative to the roles and expectations of literacy coaching?
2. How are the perceptions and expectations regarding literacy coaching similar across these different groups of professionals?
3. What are ways that principals, teachers, and literacy coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school's literacy program?

Participants

Quantitative. The sample consisted of seven principals from three elementary schools, 14 literacy coaches in 14 elementary schools, and 125 teachers from three elementary schools in the largest school zone within the school district. The North

Carolina Department of Instruction (NCDPI) 2010-2011 School Progress Report includes elementary teacher quality information for the district: fully licensed teachers (97%), teachers with advanced degrees (35%), teacher turnover rate (11%), and highly qualified teachers (100%). The district employs elementary teachers with a range of teaching experiences: 0-3 years (24%), 4-10 years (36%), and 10+ years (39%). Over 20% of the principals in the district have an advanced degree with 80% of the principals having less than 10 years of experience as a principal.

The elementary schools in the district are generally designed as kindergarten through fifth-grade campuses. There are literacy coaches serving at all elementary campuses. The literacy coaches in this district are selected by campus principals and often are exemplary classroom teachers within the campus organization. Literacy coaches provide job-embedded professional development in the form of co-teaching, modeling lessons, observing lessons, and providing feedback and resources.

Qualitative. The sample consisted of volunteers from the quantitative design of this study. Volunteers were grouped into six focus groups, two for each position (principal, literacy coach, and classroom teachers). Each group consisted of three to four principals, literacy coaches, or teachers. The principal focus groups consisted of six principals and one assistant principal. Furthermore, an assistant principal was unable to attend either principal focus group sessions and was invited to join one of the literacy coach focus groups. The literacy coach group included six literacy coaches and one assistant principal. The classroom teacher group had a total of six participants.

Instruments

Elementary school principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers were invited to complete the Mraz et al.'s (2008) Likert 5-point scale survey consisting of 27

items to ascertain their perception of literacy coaching. According to Mraz et al. (2008), this cross-sectional survey listed specific behaviors within each of the five roles identified as evident in exemplary schools by Bean et al. (2003). A rating of 5 indicated that the behavior was a high priority or highly desirable, and a rating of 1 indicated that the behavior was not needed or did not need to be part of the coaching roles and responsibilities. Mraz et al. (2008) found that reliability for the total scale (0.93 and 0.90) and individual subscales (range = 0.65-0.84) were moderate to high.

Procedures

An explanatory mixed-method design was used in this study to collect quantitative data and to explain the results in more depth with a qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). The researcher obtained permission (Appendix A) by the publisher of Mraz et al.'s (2008) survey for this study. Quantitative data were collected first by sending web-based surveys (Appendix B) and demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) to participants. This system ensured quick access to the data due to extensive use of the web by individuals today. The results were then followed with collecting qualitative data from focus group interviews that supported the initial findings from the surveys. Participants in the focus groups were selected based on their interest stated in the web-based survey. This sequential mixed-method design provided a big picture of the research problem with more analysis through qualitative data collection that refined, extended, and explained the big picture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010).

A cover letter (Appendix D) inviting participants to complete the web-based survey within a 2-week time period was sent to principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers. The survey was sent to 153 classroom teachers, 17 literacy coaches, and six principals in the district. Participants were reminded weekly after the first week

of sending the survey to ensure a high participation rate. All data was kept confidential and will be safely stored for a period of 5 years after the completion of the study. Since the survey was web-based, a statement on the survey explained that completing the survey gave implied consent to use the responses in the study.

Participants who indicated an interest in the focus group interview were invited to contribute to the discussion 2 weeks after the due date of the surveys. Participants in the focus group received consent forms (Appendix E) before beginning each discussion group. Two weeks allowed enough time to analyze the survey data and create questions to refine and extend the results. The interviews addressed participants' perspectives on how literacy coaches could best contribute to the success of their school's instructional program, the manner in which coaches were currently being used, and the type of support and resources needed to optimize the role of the literacy coach. In addition, samples of weekly schedules from each of the literacy coaches were requested. A total of three 45-minute focus groups (teacher, principal, literacy coach) were conducted to ensure a thorough explanation of the results. Each focus group consisted of three to four participants in which the interview was tape-recorded. A guide (Appendix F) that provided both an agenda and a list of questions was used to provide structure.

Data analysis procedures. Quantitative data analysis was completed using the frequency distribution method to organize and simplify the data. The data were analyzed to identify levels of agreement between effective literacy coaching factors from perceptions of classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and principals. The qualitative data, interview transcripts, were organized and manually coded by hand to identify patterns and themes. The procedures for developing codes included deductive reasoning (using influential contextual factors from the literature) as well as the constant-comparative

method of analysis (building on participant's responses) (Creswell, 2012).

Table 1

Sequential Mixed-Method Research Phase

Research Phase	Research Questions	Data Collection Method	Analysis Process
Phase 1: Quantitative	What are the perceptions of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches relative to the roles and expectations of literacy coaching?	Cross-sectional surveys sent to principals, teachers, and literacy coaches.	Frequency distribution method
	What are ways that principals, teachers, and instructional coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school's literacy program?	Weekly coaching schedules submitted by literacy coaches.	
Phase 2: Qualitative	How are the perceptions and expectations regarding literacy coaching similar across these different groups of professionals?	Focus groups conducted to interviews from classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and principals.	Deductive reasoning Constant-comparative method
	What are ways that principals, teachers, and instructional coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school's literacy program?		

Research Question 1

The first research question was, "What are the perceptions of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches relative to the roles and expectations of literacy coaching?" The answer to this question was determined by collecting surveys and weekly literacy coaching schedules. The results from surveys and weekly coaching schedules were organized using the frequency distribution method. The largest and smallest values for each category determined the current reality and future expectations for literacy coaching

roles in elementary schools. The cross-sectional survey consisted of two columns for responses: the current reality of literacy coaching roles and desired future literacy coaching roles. Two frequency tables were created to organize the results from the survey and literacy coaching schedules. The first frequency table was constructed to show categories for each survey question and the rating for each question. Similarly, the five roles for literacy coaches served as literacy coaching schedule categories for the second frequency table that included frequency number for each category. The tables explained the current reality of literacy coaching roles and expected future literacy coaching roles in the elementary setting from the perspective of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers.

Research Question 2

The second question was, “How are the perceptions and expectations regarding literacy coaching similar across these different groups of professionals?” The results from the two frequency tables as stated above were clarified by interviewing survey participants who volunteered to participate in focus groups. Participants were asked open-ended questions that were designed to refine the survey results and to gather additional information outside of the survey questions. The interviews from each focus group were analyzed using deductive reasoning and constant-comparative method.

Research Question 3

The third question was, “What are ways that principals, teachers, and literacy coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school’s literacy program?” Focus groups were utilized to clarify and extend the results from the cross-sectional survey regarding expected future literacy coaching roles. The interview data were organized and analyzed to identify common themes to summarize the results.

Limitations

The findings of this study were limited to the experience of participants from three elementary schools in an urban school district. Therefore, the generalizability of this study is limited. It is possible that the findings of this research only pertain to this district given other factors involved, such as the training literacy coaches obtain in the district or the expectations in the job descriptions of the coaches. This study was also limited by the fact that surveys included only classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and principals working in kindergarten to Grade 5 and omitted other grade levels. This study was also limited by the ratio of administrators and coaches to school. Schools that employ literacy coaches have only one or two principals and coaches, whereas the number of classroom teachers is larger.

Although the measurement instrument was demonstrated to have content validity, participants may not have responded honestly to the best of their knowledge or reflected their personal perceptions. The degree of honesty was unknown and, consequently, may be a weakness of this study, as are all studies based on self-reporting. This study was limited by the fact that the results did not yield a causation conclusion but simply assessed present attitudes of the participants.

Chapter 4: Results

Demographic Descriptions

This is a sequential mixed-method study based upon quantitative and qualitative methodology. The data were collected from a zone within the district by surveying principals and assistant principals (n=7) from three elementary schools, literacy coaches (n=14) from 14 elementary schools, and classroom teachers (n=125) from three elementary schools within the district. Participants (n=33) who did not complete the entire survey were removed from the sample, leaving 146 participants who were included in this study. Within these 146 participants, the researcher assessed the items in the survey that were used to compute the perception of current and desired coaching roles and responsibilities, such as question 9 (What are currently the literacy coaching roles in your building?) and question 10 (What should be the literacy coaching roles in your building?). There was a high predominance of White (80%) females (92%) who participated in the survey. The distribution of educational experiences was identical among teachers with 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11-15 years; however, the majority of principals (71.5%) and literacy coaches (85%) had 11 years or more of educational experiences. All principals had graduate degrees; in particular, a master's degree was listed as the most common degree obtained by principals and literacy coaches.

The survey participants were also invited to extend and refine the survey results by participating in one of the six focus groups. Due to schedule conflicts and availability, the researcher increased the focus groups from three groups, one for each position (principal, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers), to two sessions for each group, totaling six focus groups. The principal's focus groups consisted of six principals and one assistant principal. Furthermore, an assistant principal was unable to attend either

principal focus group sessions and was invited to join one of the literacy coach focus groups. The literacy coach groups included six literacy coaches and one assistant principal. All literacy coaches were White females, but the teacher and principal groups had a higher diversity of race and gender.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample According to Type of Position

Survey Characteristics	Principals (n = 7)	Literacy Coaches (n = 6)	Teachers (n = 6)	All (n = 19)
Gender				
Female	71.4%	100.0%	92.8%	91.8%
Male	28.6%		7.2%	7.5%
Race				
White	57.1%	76.9%	80.8%	79.5%
Black	42.9%	23.1%	12.8%	15.1%
Asian			2.4%	2.1%
American Indian			1.6%	1.4%
Other			2.4%	2.1%
Experiences				
1-5 years			22.4%	19.2%
6-10 years	14.3%	23.1%	22.4%	21.9%
11-15 years	14.3%	46.2%	22.4%	24.0%
16-20 years	28.6%		12.8%	12.3%
21+ years	42.9%	38.8%	20.0%	22.6%
Degree				
Bachelor		23.1%	59.2%	52.7%
Masters	83.3%	76.9%	40.8%	46.6%
Doctoral	16.7%			0.7%

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Sample According to Type of Position

Focus Group Characteristics	Principals (n = 7)	Literacy Coaches (n = 6)	Teachers (n = 6)	All (n = 19)
Gender				
Female	71.4%	100.0%	100.0%	89.5%
Male	28.6%			10.5%
Race				
White	42.9%	100.0%	100.0%	73.7%
Black	42.9%			15.8%
Asian				
American Indian				
Other	14.3%			5.3%
Experiences				
1-5 years				
6-10 years	28.6%		16.7%	15.8%
11-15 years	14.3%	50.0%	66.7%	42.1%
16-20 years	14.3%			5.3%
21+ years	42.9%	50.0%	16.7%	36.8%
Degree				
Bachelor			33.3%	10.5%
Masters	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	89.5%
Doctoral				

The purpose of this study emerged from the researcher's own pursuit to become a more effective literacy coach by defining and refining clear roles and responsibilities for the position. The researcher wanted to know the perception of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers about current and desired elementary literacy coaching roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to identify common trends leading to the conclusions of each professional group's perception about literacy coaching. These precepts could refine and define roles and responsibilities for elementary literacy coaches to become more efficient and valuable resources for both principals and classroom teachers.

In preparation for the research, permission was obtained from the Gardner-Webb University Institutional Review Board to distribute web-based surveys, conduct interviews, and utilize literacy coaches' weekly schedules to answer the research questions. Permission was also obtained from the district being researched with an agreement to reduce the size of the research due to the large number of surveys presently required by their staff to complete at the district, state, and national level. A memorandum of understanding that was drafted by the district clearly listed an agreement by their Board of Education to provide the researcher access to (1) a room within the learning zone to conduct the focus groups; (2) teachers from three elementary schools, principals from four elementary schools, and literacy coaches from the specified zone within the district; and (3) data identified by the specified staff familiar with the requested data. Additionally, the agreement requested the results, including recommendations for the district, to be shared with the Board of Education within 30 days of completion. The zone within the district was selected based on the researcher's previous experience with conducting a needs assessment of 30 literacy coaches. The results indicated a wide range of roles and responsibilities from clerical, administrative, or district-related work which hindered their time allotted for coaching to impact teacher practice.

Included in this chapter are the analyses of the data and the findings of the study. The data presented in this study were collected via a 27-item cross-sectional web-based survey; the survey link was e-mailed to participants. The data from the survey were analyzed using the frequency distribution method. As stated in Chapter 3, the 27 items on the instrument are aligned with Bean et al.'s (2003) five roles identified in exemplary schools. The mean ratings for each item were determined by dividing the sum of ratings

by the total number of surveys.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, “What are the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and teachers relative to the roles and expectations of literacy coaching?” The answer to this question was determined by collecting surveys and weekly literacy coaching schedules. The results from the survey were organized using the frequency distribution method, and then the rating mean was determined for each category. The largest and smallest values for each survey category determined the current reality and future expectations for literacy coaching roles in elementary schools.

The coaching schedule table was organized based on the number of hours indicated on six literacy coaches’ weekly schedules. All literacy coaches indicated that their schedules changed weekly depending on the needs from federal, state, or local initiatives. A category with no hours assigned indicated the coach did not engage in that specific role on a weekly basis. Many literacy coaching schedules were left unmarked due to the level of flexibility expected by principals for literacy coaches to meet the school’s needs, such as attend meetings, organize assessments, troubleshoot assessment devices, or maintain an acceptable level of compliance for instructional initiatives. Similar to the survey tables, categories from the survey results served as common themes for the activities listed on the weekly coaching schedules.

Table 4

Literacy Coaching Weekly Schedule (hours)

	Literacy Coach 1	Literacy Coach 2	Literacy Coach 3	Literacy Coach 4	Literacy Coach 5	Literacy Coach 6
Resource to Classroom Teachers	9.7	10.8	24.5	31.5	12.3	17.3
Resource to Allied Professionals and Parents	2.0		3.3	1.1	1.5	1.3
Coordinator of the Reading Program	3.0		1.5			11.3
Contributor to Assessment			5.3	4.5	9.3	3.8
Instructor to Students			1.5			
Non- Instructional Duties	5.0		7.0	3.3	6.3	

Table 5

Resource to Classroom Teachers

Resource to Classroom Teachers	What are CURRENTLY the literacy coaching roles in your building?			What SHOULD BE the literacy coaching roles in your building?		
	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers
Informally discuss/share strategies and ideas that enhance reading instruction.	4.3	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.9	4.4
Hold formal, collaborative planning sessions on a regular or as needed basis.	4.6	4.8	4.2	4.7	4.9	4.3
Serve as a mentor, especially to new teachers.	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.7	3.9	4.1
Demonstrate instructional strategies.	3.7	4.4	3.9	4.7	4.9	4.4
Participate in peer observations for professional growth.	3.3	3.8	3.5	4.6	4.1	4.0
Lead study groups (e.g., read and discuss a professional book or article).	3.3	4.0	3.8	4.4	4.3	4.0
Teach for-credit, in-service classes as part of staff development.	2.9	4.6	3.9	4.6	4.6	4.1
Mean	3.7	4.3	3.9	4.6	4.5	4.2
Standard Deviation	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2

All respondents expressed that literacy coaches are currently a resource to classroom teachers by leading group and individual planning sessions. Likewise, teachers reported that literacy coaches' informal discussions with them regarding ways to enhance reading instruction was another current role in their building. A responsibility that did not deem as a current responsibility of literacy coaches was participating in peer observation for professional growth. One concern that consistently emerged from literacy coaches and principals was the extent to which literacy coaches functioned in an evaluative capacity rather than in a coaching capacity. As one literacy coach explained, "My teachers fear that if they seek advice from me, that they will be reported to the principal and interpreted as, 'I don't know what I am doing.'" Four of the teachers considered literacy coaches as the administrative team. There was a significant difference between principals' and literacy coaches' perceptions about literacy coaches currently leading staff professional development. As shown in Table 5, principals agreed that professional development was inconsistent or nonexistent in current coaching roles.

Principals' responses from the survey and all participants in the focus groups indicated an expectation for literacy coaches to move into a coaching model that would allow them to lead planning sessions, model lessons, and support new teachers. In contrast, the value for leading book studies as a resource to teachers was the lowest for future coaching responsibilities. A high rating from literacy coaches specified a desire for coaching roles to include leading planning sessions through discussion of strategies and demonstrating strategies. Teachers agreed with literacy coaches that coaches should model and share strategies, not necessarily lead planning sessions.

Table 6

Resource to Allied Professionals and Parents

Resource to Allied Professionals and Parents	What are CURRENTLY the literacy coaching roles in your building?			What SHOULD BE the literacy coaching roles in your building?		
	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers
Work closely with the principal in setting a schedule and making decisions about staff professional development.	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.7	4.2
Work with special educators and serve on instructional support or pupil support teams.	3.3	3.9	3.8	4.1	4.3	4.1
Work with librarians, speech therapists, counselors, and psychologists.	3.3	3.8	3.6	4.0	3.9	3.8
Serve as a resource for families (e.g., provide information on how families can support a child's reading development at home.	3.6	3.8	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.1
Work with volunteers (e.g., provide training sessions, coordinate schedules, recruit).	3.1	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.8
Mean	3.5	3.9	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.0
Standard Deviation	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.2

There was a consistent level of agreement for current and desired coaching roles as resources to allied professionals and parents among the participants. The responsibilities of literacy coaches to work closely with the principal in setting a schedule

and making decisions about staff professional development received the highest rating between all three participants' perceptions of the current role of the literacy coach and their desired expectation for coaches to be a resource to allied professionals and parents. They did not view working with volunteers, such as providing training session, coordinating schedules, or recruiting as positive. However, two coaches shared their responsibilities for conducting workshops that taught parents how to help their children with reading and schoolwork at home along with maintaining a current schedule for college students to tutor students. Principals and teachers did not mention parental involvement at all when describing the current role of the literacy coach; however, one principal stated a desired expectation for that role.

Table 7

Coordinator of the Reading Program

Coordinator of the Reading Program	What are CURRENTLY the literacy coaching roles in your building?			What SHOULD BE the literacy coaching roles in your building?		
	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers
Assist in the writing of curriculum.	3.3	4.1	3.7	4.0	4.6	3.9
Look for and assist in the selection of new materials.	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.3
Serve as a leader on curriculum committees.	4.1	4.6	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.2
Coordinate schedules for reading specialists and classroom teachers.	3.4	4.3	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.0
Maintain a center as prime location for various literacy materials.	4.3	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.4
Mean	3.9	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.1
Standard Deviation	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2

Literacy coaches and teachers indicated that coordinating the reading program was currently maintaining a center as prime location for various literacy materials. In several instances during the discussions, all participating groups confirmed that coaches spent the majority of their time organizing the book room and troubleshooting testing devices. They expressed their belief that this responsibility is time consuming and minimizes the coaches' time to support teachers in the classroom. According to the quantitative results, principals currently perceived and expected coaching as a

coordinator of the reading program to research and determine new supplemental materials for their reading program. Conversely, principals in the focus groups prefer literacy coaches to encourage and coach teachers to research resources rather than provide teachers with the resources. The expected mean ratings for curriculum writing were not as high among principals and teachers. Principals stated in the discussion that they prefer literacy coaches to coach teachers to write quality lesson plans.

Maintaining a center for literacy resources was rated the highest as an expected coaching role to coordinate the reading program among principals and teachers, whereas literacy coaches would prefer to coordinate the reading program by researching and determining new materials. The discussions from the focus groups contradicted this perception. All participant groups expressed their concern for this role in that it diluted the coaches' time to support teachers in the classroom. Coordinating reading instructional schedules was perceived as a minor key part for future coaching roles by literacy coaches and principals.

Table 8

Contributor to Assessment

Contributor to Assessment	What are CURRENTLY the literacy coaching roles in your building?			What SHOULD BE the literacy coaching roles in your building?		
	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers
Assist in the development and/or selection of assessment instruments.	3.7	4.6	4.1	3.9	4.3	4.2
Conduct assessments for individual or groups of students (e.g., assess all entering first graders).	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.9
Assist in interpreting test results with teachers and parents.	4.1	4.6	4.1	3.9	4.4	4.1
Coordinate testing schedules.	3.3	3.9	3.7	3.1	2.4	3.4
Share results of assessments with parents and community.	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.0	3.1	3.5
Mean	3.6	4.1	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.8
Standard Deviation	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.4

A consistent agreement among all survey groups expressed the view that literacy coaches currently assist in interpreting test results with teachers and parents, yet lack in sharing assessment results with parents and the community. Principals continue to view this responsibility as unimportant compared to the other expected responsibilities of literacy coaches adding to assessment. Moreover, developing and selecting assessment instruments was also a contributor to assessment of the coaching role perceived by

literacy coaches and teachers. Qualitative data support this perception of literacy coaches and teachers to continue the expectation for coaches to create and select assessment instruments; however, principals expressed a need for literacy coaches to train teachers to adopt this responsibility. A large difference from current to desired roles for literacy coaches to coordinate testing schedules or prepare testing materials indicated a need to discontinue this responsibility. One teacher explained, “Literacy coaches spend 20% of their time supporting teachers on literacy issues and 80% of their time with testing.” All respondents discussed at length that with mandates for testing coming from the federal, state, and district levels, a significant portion of the literacy coach’s time is spent fulfilling assessment related tasks: scheduling accountability and testing meetings, working on data collection and analysis, and scheduling interventions for students. Literacy coaches expressed concerns about the volume of assessment tasks on their plate: “Our principals know the amount of work we have on our plate, but their plates are also full too. There is no one else in the building available to get it done.” Teachers also expressed similar perceptions for this coaching responsibility. One teacher shared, “When I ask my literacy coach to come into my classroom, her response is either she is preparing testing materials for a classroom or is testing a student.” All discussion groups stated their concerns about literacy coaches spending an extensive amount of their time on clerical duties due to testing initiatives rather than spending time on essential coaching tasks.

Table 9

Instructor to Students

Instructor to Students	What are CURRENTLY the literacy coaching roles in your building?			What SHOULD BE the literacy coaching roles in your building?		
	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers	Principals	Literacy Coaches	Teachers
Provide instruction for individual and small groups of students, especially those identified as struggling readers.	2.7	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.7	4.2
Work on a short-term basis with targeted students, and then provide a program for classroom teachers to follow.	3.0	3.7	3.5	3.9	4.0	4.2
Work with students in either pull-out or in-class setting, or both.	2.9	3.6	3.5	3.1	3.6	4.1
Provide instruction using research supported programs (e.g., Reading Recovery).	3.0	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.9	4.2
Mean	2.9	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.8	4.2
Standard Deviation	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0

While quantitative data indicate that some literacy coaches currently work with students and desire to maintain that role, all interview responses did not emphasize working with students as a key part of their role. Their comments focused instead on their desire to work more closely with teachers to model strategies.

Research Question 2

Table 10

Overall Rating Means for Coaching Perceptions

Roles	Current Coaching Roles and Responsibilities			Desired Coaching Roles and Responsibilities		
	Principal	Coach	Teacher	Principal	Coach	Teacher
Resource to Classroom Teachers						
M	3.7	4.3	3.9	4.6	4.5	4.2
SD	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2
Resource to Allied Professionals and Parents						
M	3.5	3.9	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.0
SD	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.2
Coordinator of the Reading Program						
M	3.9	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.1
SD	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2
Contributor to Assessment						
M	3.6	4.1	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.8
SD	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.4
Instructor to Students						
M	2.9	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.8	4.2
SD	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0

The second research question was, “How are the perceptions and expectations regarding literacy coaching similar across these different groups of professionals?” The overall mean rating was used to answer this question (see Table 9). Similar perceptions were evident across groups for the extent to which different tasks were rated as part of current and desired coaching roles. According to the highest and lowest mean rating for each category among the three groups, literacy coaches are currently seen as coordinators of the reading program and less likely as instructors to students. Similar across these

different groups of professionals is a desire for literacy coaches to be resources for classroom teachers. Analyses of qualitative data and survey subscales provided contrasting perspectives.

Research Question 3

The final research question was, “What are ways that principals, teachers, and literacy coaches feel that literacy coaching could best contribute to the success of their school’s literacy program?” Focus groups were utilized to clarify and extend the results from the cross-sectional survey regarding expected future literacy coaching roles. The qualitative data were organized into themes according to the roles listed on the survey: resource to classroom teachers, resources to allied professionals and parents, coordinator of the reading program, contributor to assessment, and instructor to students. Through the examination of the recorded focus groups, two categories emerged as desired roles for future coaching: resource to classroom teachers and coordinator of the reading program.

Resource to Classroom Teachers. All participant groups agreed that the coach’s role in serving as a resource should continue to receive significant emphasis. All three groups reported that they believed literacy coaches currently served in this capacity by engaging in activities such as facilitating planning sessions with grade teams or individual teachers, gathering resources for teachers, and leading staff professional development during staff meetings. This aspect of a literacy coach’s role should continue to receive significant emphasis. A concern in this category that consistently emerged from the participants was that literacy coaches are expected to engage in other duties that hindered their availability to support teachers. A solution to this concern was to release literacy coaches from other duties to follow a coaching model. The participants spoke of the importance of the coach’s role in observing teachers to find a coaching focus,

modeling strategies to improve reading achievement, and dialoguing with teachers in conferences to set the tone for the coaching relationship. As one teacher shared, “I need my literacy coach to help me decide which intervention I should implement and show me how it looks like in my classroom.” Another teacher concurred, stating, “We just switched our whole reading program, and I need my literacy coach to show me how this will look in my classroom too.” Four principals shared that the lack of coaching in schools may be a result of a neglected focus from the district to provide trainings for literacy coaches to utilize a coaching model or work with adult learners. They suggested a summer leadership training that would provide coaches opportunities to explore the coaching models and strategies to work with adults. Literacy coaches confirmed the need for training in a coaching model and adult learning theory; however, they prefer to have these trainings during their monthly meetings to ensure consistent follow-up and feedback. One principal shared the reaction of a literacy coach after returning from a monthly literacy meeting: “It was a waste of my time. I sat, listened, and received materials. I could have read an e-mail and receive the same amount of information.” Another literacy coach shared the same reaction regarding these monthly meetings and the support from the district for literacy coaches. The literacy coach groups were grateful for these monthly meetings and the focus to teaching reading, but they all preferred a differentiated meeting that would include exploring current reading trends and coaching teachers.

Coordinator of the Reading Program. All three participant groups expressed the view that coordinating the reading program was currently a key part of the literacy coach’s role. They shared how coaches spent a majority of their time coordinating the reading program by managing the book room, and they viewed this task as hindering

coaches from working with teachers. Another task that the participants perceived as preventing coaches from working with teachers was managing testing materials. The participants believed coaches as the coordinators of the reading program role was essential, but with a primary focus on facilitating planning sessions. They would like the literacy coach to assist teachers in writing curriculum and selecting resources rather than completing the tasks for teachers. Although literacy coaches supported the desire to be more of a facilitator in curriculum writing and selection of new materials, they were wary of expecting teachers to complete these tasks along with other initiatives. One literacy coach explained, “I write their common assessments for them because I know that it will be of quality. They have so much on their plate already, and this is one thing I can do to make their job less stressful.”

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings for this study. The results were based on the participants’ perceptions of the current and desired coaching roles and responsibilities. The quantitative and qualitative results show an inconsistent agreement between the roles and responsibilities of elementary literacy coaches perceived by principals, literacy coaches, and teachers. Current quantitative data suggest that coaches are perceived as coordinator or the reading program; however, qualitative data report coaches are exhausting their time as a contributor to assessment. Another inconsistency in the survey results were the teachers’ desires for literacy coaches to instruct students, but the focus groups discussions clarify a need for coaches as the experts to spend more time coaching teachers on specific strategies to instruct students. All participants expressed a need for coaches as a resource to classroom teachers in which this would align with the quantitative data. However, the qualitative results extended this desire to follow an

ongoing coaching model rather than leading a one-time professional development, providing resources and lessons during the planning sessions, or facilitating book studies. Two consistent suggestions to improve literacy coaching shared by all qualitative participants are more coaching time in the classroom and training for coaches to guide instructional change in teacher practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

A sense of urgency caused by the NCLB legislation (2002) has led many school leaders to create job-embedded coaching roles to improve teacher effectiveness (Knight, 2007b). Literacy coaching was among one of the coaching models that emerged as a full-time coaching initiative to increase literacy within schools and across a district, often providing all subject area teachers support in literacy-based instruction (Shanklin, 2007). The growing trend to employ literacy coaches as instructional leaders in schools across the nation is resulting in classroom teachers being placed in this role with minimal training and without a well-defined job description. In many situations, the literacy coach's position is being misunderstood by schools and districts because there are no nationally agreed upon definitions or standards for the roles (IRA, 2004). With such a varying degree of roles and responsibilities, many have their own perceptions of what the literacy coach's responsibilities and duties are in schools or districts.

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine principals', literacy coaches', and classroom teachers' perceptions of current and desired literacy coaching roles and responsibilities. Chapter 1 presented an overview that included the historical aspects of literacy coaching through the evolution of roles and responsibilities. The statement of the problem, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and definitions of key terms were also discussed. Chapter 2 included a review of the literature. The literature review presented information regarding social constructivist theory and adult learning theory. The review of literature also discussed the types of coaches, the shift to literacy coaching, the roles and responsibilities, preparing literacy coaches, the characteristics of effective literacy coaching, and the

impact of literacy coaching. Chapter 3 presented the methods involved in designing this study. The testing instrument, participant information, research design, data collection procedures, and analysis of the data were introduced. Chapter 4 presented the findings for this study. The findings examined demographic information of the participants and an analysis of their responses to the survey and focus group discussions. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the findings, conclusion, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Summary

The findings from this study emerged from three research questions related to literacy coaching roles and responsibilities. The findings addressed the following three areas based on the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers: current roles of literacy coaches, desired roles of literacy coaches, and the characteristics of effective literacy coaching to impact teacher effectiveness. This study has potential to provide valuable information that fills a gap in existing research on literacy coaching by contributing to the understanding of the work and role of literacy coaches. Additionally, this study may be useful for district personnel interested in beginning or expanding literacy coaching.

Literacy coaching emerged from the constructs of a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1986) approach. From a theoretical perspective, coaching involves those with more knowledge engaging with teachers to support their learning. Coaches engage in assisting teachers in understanding, learning, and using new teaching strategies in the classrooms to make instructional changes. Exploration in the literature revealed that engaging teachers in joint-productive activities requires understanding how adults learn, implementing the process of discovering new perspectives by interacting with

information, and reflecting on learning (Leary-Joyce & Wildflower, 2011).

The research methodology for this study combined quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative methodology was used to guide the first phase of the research, with surveys and literacy coaching weekly schedules. The testing instrument, a cross-sectional survey, consisted of a 5-item demographic section and 27 statements that featured a 5-point Likert scale with which to respond. A total of 146 participants completed the entire survey in the first phase of this study. Data were collected over a 1-month period with a return rate of 89%. Additionally, focus groups were used to support and extend quantitative results. The second phase of this study consisted of 19 participants extending the research results through six focus group sessions.

Following is a discussion of the major findings drawn from the study. The discussion is followed by recommendations, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study.

Findings of the Study

Question 1: Current and desired coaching roles. The research is rife with studies that focus on the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches, specifically the inconsistency of how coaches are utilized in the elementary setting (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Bean et al., 2007; Deussen et al., 2007; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Kissel et al., 2011; Mraz et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2012;). The first research question was designed to examine the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers in relation to the work and role of the literacy coach within the school. Question 1 was answered via the cross-sectional survey (Mraz et al., 2008) responses from seven principals and assistant principals in three elementary schools, 125 classroom teachers in three elementary schools, and 14 literacy coaches in a zone within the district. Focus

groups were conducted to support and extend the quantitative results. In addition to supporting the survey results, weekly coaching schedules were submitted by six literacy coaches who participated in the focus groups.

Resource to classroom teachers. This study found that all respondents perceive literacy coaches as current resources to classroom teachers by leading group and individual planning sessions. However, many time slots on the literacy coaching schedules were left unmarked due to the level of flexibility expected by principals for literacy coaches to meet the school's needs, such as attend meetings, organize assessments, troubleshoot assessment devices, or maintain an acceptable level of compliance for instructional initiatives. Table 4 in Chapter 4 summarizes the lack of time literacy coaches interact with teachers. While the use of literacy coaches to manage local and district initiatives may encourage greater fidelity in implementation, it is not considered best practices for coaches (Bean et al., 2003; Knight, 2004; Shanklin, 2007; Shaw, 2009). The amount of time spent on tasks unrelated to coaching teachers may indicate that the district needs to focus on how best to support coaching to improve overall teacher quality.

Furthermore, participants in the focus groups indicated an expectation for literacy coaches to move into a coaching model that would allow coaches more time to scaffold teacher learning. These responses are similar to best practices noted by Shanklin (2007) and Shaw (2009) for literacy coaching. If coaches are utilized to their fullest potential as working with teachers, it is essential that coaches and teachers have structured time together within the school day for discussion and reflection on student work and professional practice. Structured time allows coaches to focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and use of strategies in an ongoing professional development

framework (Bean et al., 2003). While the expectation may be that frequent lesson modeling and planning takes place between teachers and coaches, factors such as prior experience at the school and voluntary and compulsory use of the coach will alter the actual implementation of these practices (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Knight, 2004). In addition, the principal's expectations and presentations of the coach's role to the faculty can greatly influence how often, widespread, and varied coaches offer demonstration lessons to model instruction and best practices for teachers, classroom visits to make literacy practices public, and lab-site lessons with purposeful involvement.

Resource to allied professionals and parents. The responsibilities of literacy coaches to work closely with the principal in setting a schedule and making decisions about staff professional development received the highest rating between all three participants' perceptions of current and desired roles for coaches to be a resource to allied professionals and parents. This level of agreement among all perceptions from the quantitative and qualitative results may indicate that the participants are aware of the importance for the literacy coach to build a relationship with the principal. The principal is in a position to provide the coach with the help and resources needed to support teachers. Furthermore, the findings indicate that literacy coaches are perceived as a liaison between teachers and principals, communicating views of literacy goals in each direction. Coaches can help teachers design inquiries to answer their own questions, as individual teacher or teams. Principals can receive support from coaches to answer questions about quality literacy assessment and instruction (Toll, 2006). It is also possible that a lack of support from the district to support literacy coaching may result in the perception for a stronger coaching relationship to develop a sound vision about effective literacy instruction.

Coordinator of the reading program. Among principals and teachers, an expected role of the literacy coaches was to maintain a center for literacy resources as their primary duty as coordinator of the reading program. However, among the literacy coaches the desired primary duty in this area was to coordinate the reading program by researching and identifying new materials. Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative results about the desired responsibilities for coaches in this role were inconsistent. All participant groups expressed their concern for the coach as the coordinator of the reading program in that it diluted the coach's time to support teachers in the classroom. Coaches in this role were described by the focus groups as having to spend the majority of their time organizing the book room and troubleshooting testing instruments. The inconsistency of these results suggests that this role needs better definition, at least, and may indicate the district or school needs to refocus on the primary responsibility of the coach—working with teachers. The findings may also indicate that the district supports many literacy initiatives that require an overwhelming amount of time to maintain.

Contributor to assessment. Similarly, the amount of time expected of literacy coaches and classroom teachers to maintain compliance with local and federal assessment initiatives was indicated as a factor that prevented coaching sessions. These assessment initiatives continue to be placed in schools while principals with limited control continue to delegate responsibilities. Literacy coaches are expected to train and manage implementation fidelity, while teachers are expected to assess students and document the results. However, literacy coaches have taken on assessing and documenting in addition to their responsibilities to relieve teachers from another task that keeps them from teaching students.

Although the participants agreed that assessment initiatives limited coaching

opportunities, they varied in how coaches can contribute to assessment. Principals prefer for literacy coaches to train teachers to create and select assessments, whereas literacy coaches and classroom teachers would like for coaches to adopt this responsibility. Coaches and teachers believe this will provide more instructional time for teachers to teach students.

It is apparent that the district's implementation of new assessment initiatives continues to increase with no funds dedicated to employ additional professionals to manage and maintain these initiatives. In addition, there is unclear or limited communication between schools and the district in regards to how these assessment initiatives are limiting coaches from impacting teacher practices and classroom teachers from teaching.

Instructor to students. The desire for coaches to work more closely with teachers to model strategies was prevalent among all participants' perceptions of the literacy coach as instructor to students. This finding is substantial evidence that the participants understand the impact that literacy coaching can make on teacher practices.

Question 2: Levels of agreement. Research Question 2 was designed to examine the similarities among the perceptions of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers in coaching roles and responsibilities, as evidenced by the level of agreement from quantitative and qualitative results. This study found literacy coaches currently being coordinators of the reading program and less likely instructors to students. A consistent level of agreement among all participant groups desired literacy coaches to be resources for classroom teachers by following a coaching model to demonstrate instructional strategies. This finding confirms that all participants are aware of the coaching process and the impact of literacy coaches. Unfortunately, due to the

amount of literacy and assessment initiatives, coaching opportunities are nonexistent in this district.

Question 3: Effective literacy coaching. Emerging from the literature was a theme on effective literacy coaching activities (IRA, 2004; Shaw, 2009; Ippolito, 2010a). Through the examination of the focus group discussions, two categories emerged as desired coaching responsibilities for effective future coaching: implementing a coaching model and coaching teachers to implement best practices. All participants spoke of the importance of the coach's role to follow a coaching model and to be released from duties that are unrelated to working directly with teachers. In addition, they are aware of the coach's inability to work with adults and follow a coaching model to impact teacher practices. The participants suggested training for coaches to explore and apply coaching models and strategies as a priority for the district. The findings imply that literacy coaches are employed based on their positive relationship with the principal and their potential to develop relationships with the staff. In addition, the findings may support the notion that the district does not require literacy coaches to understand adult learning theory and implement cognitive coaching components.

All focus group participants also indicated that they would like the literacy coach to assist teachers in writing curriculum and selecting resources rather than completing the tasks for teachers. Furthermore, they specified current responsibilities of literacy coaches that hindered or prevented coaches from working with teachers: managing the book room and managing assessment materials. These findings indicate that participants understand the importance of coaching on teacher practice, but local and federal initiatives are preventing schools from implementing a coaching framework.

Recommendations

The researcher investigated the perspective of principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers on the current roles and desired roles of literacy coaching. While the researcher found few differences in responses among the professionals surveyed, outcomes from the interviews presented a different picture. Participants raised concerns about specific responsibilities of the literacy coach, time allocated for coaching in the school, and professional development for literacy coaches to influence teacher growth and change. The following recommendations are based on the findings previously discussed in this chapter.

Recommendation 1: Clear job description. Throughout the study, particularly from teachers and literacy coaches, coaches need a defined job description. “When a group has a collective sense of ownership in and commitment to the future they are working together to create, vision can exert a powerful influence on their organization” (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Coaches reported lacking a set schedule and consistency in the position. In fact, although samples of a weeklong schedule were requested from each participating literacy coach in the focus groups, none were able to provide a consistent schedule of any kind. “My job is different every day,” stated the literacy coaches participants. Given the breadth of responsibilities reported by literacy coaches, the literacy coaching weekly schedules indicated that they spent a range from 24% to 78% of their time working with teachers, such as leading team planning sessions and providing resources to support reading instruction. Although two coaches specified coaching times with teachers in the classroom, all coaches shared that maintaining federal or local initiatives resulted in schedule conflicts to cancel their support for teachers. Coaches are not spending the majority of their coaching time on what the literature

considers their most important task—working with teachers (Bean et al., 2003; IRA, 2004; Shanklin, 2007; Shaw 2009).

Consistent among all participants in the focus groups are the contentions that although a job description for the literacy coach is available from the district and not well publicized, it was the principal in individual schools who determined the role of the literacy coach in that school. “They are used differently based on the school’s needs,” stated one principal (Anonymous, personal communication, January 8, 2013). Certain that there is no universal description of literacy coaches who work in elementary schools, the ways in which coaches work and the amount of time that they allocate to coaching differs considerably (IRA, 2010). Teachers are aware of the degree to which literacy coaches are inadequately utilized to impact teacher effectiveness and student learning. As one teacher summarized, “Principals need to either decide to have a literacy coach as a resource for classroom teachers or a dean of students to organize and maintain all testing initiatives” (Anonymous, personal communication, January 8, 2013). All participants are aware of the numerous responsibilities piled on the plates of coaches. One coach stated, “Even if I was just cleared to coach teachers, I am only one coach responsible for the learning of teachers in six grade levels” (Anonymous, personal communication, January 10, 2013).

Although coaching initiatives may begin at the district level, schools must decide to what degree and in what method to make use of the resource (Fullan, 2007; Knight, 2009). Literacy coaching roles vary largely because districts have different goals, needs, and resources (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Nonetheless, these roles do consistently focus on one key need to improve teacher effectiveness. Lucas (2011) confirmed three factors in his study that enhanced the role of coaches: (1) administrative support, (2) cohesive

communication, and (3) data-driven instruction and strategies. The collaboration between the administrators and coaches is critical for effective teacher support. The first step in creating a partnership between administrator and coach is determining goals for student learning, and then deciding what skills teachers need in order to meet those learning goals (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Afterwards, the principal and coach collaborate on what coaching methodology best supports those needs. Another successful avenue suggested by Bean and Dagen (2012) is to clarify the literacy coach's role by distributing a needs assessment that teachers can specify ways the literacy coach can support teachers. Great value exists in frequent meetings between principals, teachers, and coaches to refine roles that will allow coaches to improve teacher effectiveness (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Ippolito, 2010b; Knight, 2007a; L'Allier et al., 2010; Lucas, 2011); however, caution is encouraged in districts to clarify coaching roles prior to inception of the program (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Recommendation 2: Clearly communicate job description. Changes in the role of a traditional reading specialist to that of a literacy coach do not appear to have been communicated, or were communicated too indirectly for teachers to understand the changes and the rationale behind them. Although they were aware the title of the job had changed, many were less aware that revisions had also occurred in the responsibilities as indicated by the survey results.

Communicating a defined job description early in the school year and then having the coach's general weekly schedule available for teachers throughout the year are examples of ways in which confusion about the role of the coach can be reduced (Bean & Dagen, 2012). Not necessarily needing specific details, but simply knowing that the coach is doing something can provide reassurance to teachers and documentation for the

coach and principal that can enable them to reflect on and refine the role of the coach as the needs of the school evolve. Principals play an important role in supporting a clear job description for coaching.

The findings in this study revealed that building principals determine and delegate responsibilities for coaches. Principals can play an active role to create an understanding of coaching by meeting with literacy coaches weekly to examine the progress of the school's improvement efforts and discuss plans for improving teacher practices. Within these meetings, there should be time allotted for principals to reflect and share their feedback with coaches. It is also important for principals to attend weekly collaborative meetings that the literacy coach organizes for the staff to communicate the importance of coaching and enhance their knowledge base of literacy practices.

Recommendation 3: Implement coaching models. Bean and Dagen (2012) suggested that certified literacy coaches allotting a third of their time in the classroom, with the following activities, were strong predictors to influence students' reading and writing gains: conferencing with teachers, administering and discussing assessment, modeling, observing, and co-planning. The findings expressed respondents desiring literacy coaches to coach teachers in the classrooms by following a coaching cycle that responds directly to teachers' burning issues.

The coaching cycle allows the coach to engage groups of teachers or individual teachers to reflect on prior experiences and assumptions in determining an area of interest. The core of the coaching cycle positions the literacy coach in teachers' classrooms for a sustained period of time (4-6 weeks) in order to focus on one specific area of instruction to facilitate the transfer of practice from the literacy coach to the classroom teacher (Knight, 2007b). Literacy coaches scaffold teachers' current levels of

performance to change their practices by modeling strategies for teachers, co-teaching with teachers, observing teachers, providing feedback or guidance after observing teachers, and conferencing with teachers to reflect on coaching experience. The coaching cycle can influence collaboration across classrooms and across grades through teacher sharing and observation of the student work (Knight, 2007b). The level of support shifts and changes as teachers are able to apply the desired teacher behavior independent of the coach's guidance or support. The coaching cycle continues with a new focus for learning.

Through the coaching cycles, communication can be increased between teachers, coaches, and building administrators leading to a school culture that consistently employs the habits of professional study and reflection, in turn resulting in teacher practice that is student-focused and as such, the teaching results in increased student achievement (Knight, 2007b).

Recommendation 4: Professional development for literacy coaches. An effective coaching program is described as having certain structural conditions that support coaches, a clear focus on adult learning, and strong instructional leadership (King et al., 2006). A coach-the-coach framework that would lend to preparing and supporting coaches may follow Norton's (2007) program. Literacy coaches attend a 3-day summer training with their school leadership team about instructional planning, scheduling procedures, and leading a school-wide book study. A coach trainer is assigned to each literacy coach to provide regular support throughout the coaching career. Following the summer training, literacy coaches attend monthly trainings with two selected teachers from their school to address particular issues and build content knowledge. Principals and coaches build a partnership by observing schools together that were demonstrating

sites for literacy coaching. After the first year, literacy coaches complete a 2-week summer internship by observing how new literacy coaches are trained in the 3-day initial training. In the fall, they enter into an advanced relationship with their coach trainers and focus on how to use the coaching cycle.

Literacy coaches can benefit from both formal and informal training and support that relate to both their coaching roles and to advances in the field of literacy education. Formal training may focus on building coaches as change agents and reading experts. Informal support can be encouraging literacy coaches to consistently meet with other literacy coaches to collaborate on ways to address the expectations and challenges of the role. In order for such peer collaboration to succeed, it is essential that these initiatives receive consistent support from administrators at the building and district levels (Kissel et al., 2011; Matsumura et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2003). According to literacy coaches in the study, the districts provide informal support by encouraging coaches to collaborate after monthly meetings; however, due to a switch in the district's reading framework, some coaches attend a second training to build content knowledge.

Formal training should focus on building coaches as change agents and reading experts. Shaw (2009) directed institutions and districts wishing to prepare literacy coaches to utilize the IRA's (2004) three levels of literacy coaching as a foundation to building professional learning content for literacy coaches. The three levels of coaching vary in intensity, in which literacy coaches build relationship with teachers, identify coaching goals, and build teacher expertise through reflective practices. Level one and two coaching is apparent within the schools participating in this study in which coaches converse with teachers, develop and provide materials, lead professional development, and analyze student work. However, they do not consistently engage in more formal

activities, such as supporting individual teachers by modeling, observing, and conferencing through reflective practices.

The first learning task for a formal professional development would include building an understanding to make educational changes by showing literacy coaches how to utilize data to establish the purpose for change and create a common vision (Fullan, 2007). Afterwards, literacy coaches should engage in cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002) scenarios to support reflective practices through seven coaching methods: modeling, explanation, coaching, scaffolding, reflection, articulation, and exploration (Dennen, 2004). The scenarios would consist of the coach asking questions that prompt the teachers to think and create their own answers instead of giving directions and advice (Carroll, 2007). Cognitive coaching is designed to increase student achievement and teacher efficacy, produce higher order thinking, and provide teacher support (Edwards, 2008).

Another challenge that will need to be addressed in formal training is balancing coaching stances to support the needs of teachers and district initiatives (Ippolito, 2010a). Most of the literacy coaches participating in the focus groups shared a need to balance coaching stances. As one coach stated, “I need help with getting my teachers on board with new initiatives.” Literacy coaches can strike a balance between providing support for teacher (responsive) and pursuing federal and local initiatives (directive) by following Ippolito’s (2010a) suggestions: (1) shift relational stances within single coaching sessions, (2) use individual planning and group discussion protocols, and (3) share leadership roles with both teachers and administrators.

Although all literacy coaches stated a need for more training to coach teachers to reflect on their practices, the district should consider these 10 ideas (Blachowicz et al.,

2010) to differentiate support for coaches: (1) build a strong communal knowledge base, (2) collaborate to make the curriculum visible in new ways, (3) emphasize culturally relevant instruction and resources, (4) help define roles over time, (5) support coaches in developing a model for goal setting and coaching cycles, (6) build understanding that development as a coach has recursive phases, (7) provide facilitation that differentiates for coaches, (8) design methods for coaches to build teams around student data and shared inquiry, (9) help coaches balance fidelity of treatment with formative treatment, and (10) connect coaches with the wider professional community.

All participants expressed a need to increase coaching opportunities in the classroom and formal training for literacy coaches to become change agents.

Administrators have the potential to play a pivotal role in actualizing the role of the literacy coach in ways that will support the advancement of teachers and, in turn, the quality of educational opportunities offered to students. The potential of the literacy coach to collaboratively influence teacher growth and change can positively impact student learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study were limited to the experience of principals, literacy coaches, and teachers in elementary schools within an urban school district. Therefore, the generalizability of this study is limited. It is possible that the findings of this research only pertain to this district given other factors involved, such as the training literacy coaches obtained in the district or the expectations in the job descriptions of the coaches. Further research should focus on a larger sampling of coaches, both participating within and outside of reading policy mandates, to extend the findings.

While the measurement instrument was demonstrated to have content validity,

participants may not respond honestly to the best of their knowledge or reflect their personal perceptions. The degree of honesty is unknown and, consequently, may be a weakness of this study, as are all studies based on self-reporting. Future research needs to move beyond self-reporting to observing literacy coaches in action.

The results for this study simply assess present attitudes of the participants rather than yield a causation conclusion. Experimental design studies and longitudinal studies with large data sets need to be designed and conducted to examine the roles and responsibilities of coaches who contribute to the effectiveness of literacy coaches on teacher practice. To build on the author's study of perceptions of current and desired literacy coaching roles by principals, literacy coaches, and teachers, further research needs to examine the impact coaches have on teacher practice, seeking interviews with all teachers participating in professional collaborations with literacy coaches and reviewing teacher evaluations to determine teacher change in specific teaching standards.

The literacy coaches participating in this study also represent a small sample of coaches in training. Future studies could focus more on the impact of training or support for coaches from the district that is needed to develop effective coaches. In addition, further studies should consider seeking interviews with principals, literacy coaches, and teachers on the effectiveness of coaches along with reviewing coaching evaluations to determine coaching change in specific coaching roles.

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Appendix A

Permission to Use Literacy Coaching Roles and Responsibility Survey

From: Paige, David D. [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
Sent: Monday, June 18, 2012 9:21 AM
To: Ms Pa Thao
Subject: RE: Permission Request

Yes, you may use the below referenced survey for your dissertation.

David Paige, ALER Treasurer and Business Manager

David D. Paige, EdD
 Assistant Professor, Program Chair, Ph.D. in Education and Social Change
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

From: Ms Pa Thao <XXXXXXXXXX>
To: <XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX >
Sent: Sat, Jun 16, 2012 15:27:46 EDT
Subject: Permission Request
 Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers,

I am a doctoral student from Gardner-Webb University writing my dissertation tentatively titled, The Perception and Expectations of Principals, Instructional Coaches, and Teachers on Coaching Roles and Responsibilities under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Denise Triplett.

I would like your permission to reproduce to use your survey from: Mraz, M., Algozzine, B., & Watson, P. (2008). Perception and expectations of roles and responsibilities of literacy coaching. Literacy Research and Instruction, 47, 141-157.

I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:

- * I will use this survey only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- * I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- * I will send my research study and one copy of reports, articles, and the like that make use of these survey data promptly to your attention.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by responding to this e-mail. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
 Pa Thao Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B

Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Survey

PERCEPTIONS OF LITERACY COACHING SURVEY
(Mraz et al., 2008)

Directions: Please circle the response that best reflect your perception of your literacy coach for each statement. Respond using the following rating scale with the corresponding response choices:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

* Completing this survey will imply that you give consent to use your responses in the study.

	Statement	(1) Currently Part of Role?					(2) Should be Part of Role?				
1.	Informally discuss/share strategies and ideas that enhance reading instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Hold formal, collaborative planning sessions on a regular or as needed basis.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Serve as a mentor, especially to new teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Demonstrate instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Participate in peer observations for professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Lead study groups (e.g., read and discuss a professional book or article).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Teach for-credit, in-service classes as part of staff development.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work closely with the principal in setting a schedule and making decisions about staff professional development.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Work with special educators and serve on instructional support or pupil support teams.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Work with librarians, speech therapists, counselors, and psychologist.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Serve as a resource for families (e.g., provide information on how families can support a child's reading development at home).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Work with volunteers (e.g., provide training sessions, coordinate schedules, recruit).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

13.	Assist in the writing of curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Look for and assist in the selection of new materials.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Serve as a leader on curriculum committees.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Coordinate schedules for reading specialists and classroom teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Maintain a center as prime location for various literacy materials.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Assist in the development and/or selection of assessment instruments.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Conduct assessments for individual or groups of students (e.g., assess all entering first graders).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Assist in interpreting test results with teachers and parents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Coordinate testing schedules.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Share results of assessments with parents and community.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Provide instruction for individual and small groups of students, especially those identified as struggling readers.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Work on a short-term basis with targeted students, and then provide a program for classroom teachers to follow.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Work with students in either pull-out or in-class setting, or both.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Provide instruction using research supported programs (e.g., Reading Recovery).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Others (please list)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C
Demographic Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Gender
2. Race/Ethnicity
3. How many years of educational experience (including this year) do you have?
4. How many years of coaching experience with a literacy coach (including this year) do you have?
5. What grade levels do you work with?
6. Degrees completed:
7. Areas of Certification Listed on Teaching Certificate:
8. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group?
9. If yes, what are the best days and time to reach you?

Literacy Coach Questionnaire

1. Gender
2. Race/Ethnicity
3. How many years of educational experience (including this year) do you have?
4. How many years of coaching experience with teachers (including this year) do you have?
5. What grade levels do you work with?
6. Degrees completed:
7. Areas of Certification Listed on Teaching Certificate:
8. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group?
9. If yes, the focus group will meet directly after a zone literacy coach meeting?

Principal Questionnaire

1. Gender
2. Race/Ethnicity
3. How many years of educational experience (including this year) do you have?
4. How many years of coaching experience with a literacy coach (including this year) do you have?
5. What grade levels do you work with?
6. Degrees completed:
7. Areas of Certification Listed on Teaching Certificate:
8. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group?
9. If yes, the focus group will meet directly after a zone principal meeting?

Appendix D
Information Letter

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to examine the views of elementary school teachers, literacy coaches, and principals in regards to literacy coaching. This study is being conducted by Pa Thao, under the supervision of Dr. Dennis Triplett, professor at Gardner-Webb University. I am interested in examining and defining elementary literacy coaching roles and responsibilities.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are an elementary school teacher, literacy coach, or principal who has a literacy coach on site at your school. As the primary researcher, I have chosen to survey all 17 elementary schools in the zone within the school district as the total population of my study.

If you decide to participate, you are asked to complete a demographic/general information questionnaire and a 27-item survey. It should take about 20-25 minutes to complete the questionnaire and survey. In addition, you may also be invited to clarify the overall survey results in focus group interviews. Once completed, please select the submit button.

I have received permission from the school district to send the questionnaire and survey to each elementary school and conduct focus group interviews; however, your participation in completing the questionnaire, survey, and focus group interviews is strictly voluntary. The results will be shared with the school district, but I assure you that all of the data collected from you for my study will remain anonymous.

The results of the study may provide valuable insights to the school district. Participants may be contributing to the improvement of the effectiveness of literacy coaches. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all benefits described. As the primary investigator, I can assure you that there will be no personal expenses incurred from this study.

Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill the educational requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership: Curriculum and Instruction, and the publication in professional journals, and/or presented at professional meetings, etc. You may withdraw from participation in this study at any time without penalty; however, after you have provided anonymous information, you will be unable to withdraw your data after participation since there will be no way to identify individual information.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Pa Thao XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. I would like to take the time to generously thank you for helping me with my study.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Gardner-Webb University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (704) 406-4724 or email at XXXXXXXX

HAVING READ THIS INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. This LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Thank you in advance,
Pa Thao

Appendix E

Focus Group Consent Form

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Focus Group Purpose: To extend and refine the results from the Literacy Coach survey.

I agree to take part in the PROJECT NAME research project specified above. I have read and understand the study purpose as described. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

1. I agree to be involved in a focus group
2. I agree to allow the focus group to be audio-taped

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the focus group for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix F
Focus Group Script

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Opening (10 Minutes):

“Hello. My name is Pa Thao. Today I would like to have a conversation with you about Literacy Coaching. What we are trying to accomplish before we leave here today is to get a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. Are there any questions?”

Respond to participant questions.

“Let’s go over some rules. First, let’s all turn off our cell phones so we are not interrupted. So we can keep track of what people are saying, remember that we have one person talking at a time. Please do not interrupt someone when they are talking. Also, everything you tell us today will be kept completely confidential. I will summarize the things you tell us and combine it with other focus groups I am giving. One of my jobs today as the moderator is to make sure we discuss all of the issues we planned to discuss. If I ask you questions while you are talking, I’m not being rude; I’m just making sure everyone has a chance to talk and that we discuss all of the issues.

“Just to get us started, let’s have everyone tell us your name, and number of years working with a literacy coach (Point to someone to start; randomly select people to demonstrate that people do not talk in sequence).

“Let’s begin.”

For Teachers

Talk about the literacy program at your school.

Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.

Talk about literacy coaching at your school.

Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how your coach would engage with you.

Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend time with your coach.

Talk about your sense of how the administrators perceive coaching.

Talk about how the coaching role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Literacy Coaches

Talk about the literacy program at your school.

Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.

Talk about literacy coaching at your school.

Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how you would spend your time as coach.

Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend time as coach.

Now, list those areas in order of how you spend your time.

Talk about your experience with teachers at your school. How was coaching introduced to them? How are they responding?

Talk about your sense of how the administrators perceive coaching.

Talk about how the coaching role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?

Name a celebration in relation to your coaching. What is a work in progress? In retrospect, what might you change?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Principals

Talk about the literacy program at your school.

Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.

Talk about literacy coaching at your school.

Let's pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how your coach would engage with you.

Now let's talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend time with your coach.

Talk about your sense of how the classroom teachers perceive coaching.

Talk about how the coaching role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?