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A Study of the Evolving Practices of *Reading First* Reading Coaches in Virginia

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Shelia Denise Sargent-Martin

May 2007

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Keywords: Reading Coach, Reading Specialist, Literacy Coach, *Reading First*

ABSTRACT

A Study of the Evolving Practices of *Reading First* Reading Coaches in Virginia

by

Shelia Denise Sargent-Martin

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the various roles of Virginia's *Reading First* reading coaches. The goal of *Reading First* is to ensure that all students learn to read at grade level or above by the end of third grade. Because of *No Child Left Behind* legislation and the mandates set forth by *Reading First*, reading coaches are in demand. In order to gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of reading coaches, this study was based on qualitative methodology. Specifically, the data collection consisted of a self-administered survey sent to Virginia's 95 *Reading First* reading coaches.

The data revealed that the majority of Virginia's *Reading First* reading coaches had K-3 teaching experience and reading specialist certification. Reading coaches perceived that they are impacting reading teachers' practices. Furthermore, reading coaches indicated they are supported by the principal, LEA, and state level *Reading First* reading specialists.

As a result of this study, it is recommended that additional studies involving the effect of reading coaches on school-wide reading achievement be conducted. Similarly, additional research concerning the best type of professional development to assist reading coaches in their positions is warranted. Additional research is needed to determine if there is a difference in reading coaches' effectiveness on teacher practice when they have support from state-level reading experts compared to those without such support.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family: My children, Abbi and Luke, who know more about the word *dissertation* than any children should know. To Dean, my husband--maybe the kitchen table can now be used for nothing but meals. To my sister, Tommie, who occupied my beautiful children for many hours so I could research and write. To my parents, Tom and Pearl, there are not enough words to express my sincere feelings of thanks. Mom, for all of the prodding and cheering, thanks. To my dad, the book report is finally finished. And, to my heavenly Father, through Whom all things are possible: Thanks!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in the history of the world, a civilization has said that we are going to educate every child. We will provide every boy and girl with a quality education, regardless of ethnicity, income, or background (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b, n. p.).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported in 2005 that 38% of America's fourth-grade students were not reading at grade level. According to Slack (2003), every community and school in the country is faced with this literacy situation. While Moats (1999) asserted it is a fundamental responsibility of schools to teach children to read, Fletcher and Lyon (as cited in Moats) reported that the knowledge does exist to teach 95% of all children to read at a level limited only by reasoning and listening comprehension abilities.

The United States government has mandated federal reading policy for the last 40 years in an attempt to improve students' reading achievement. The first policy was implemented through Title I in the 1960s. Title I was established to supplement instruction, specifically reading instruction, for low achieving, low-income children (McGill-Franzen, 2000). Current policy includes the *No Child Left Behind* Act signed by President George W. Bush in 2001 that revised and reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (Blakey & Moskowitz, 2002).

The *Reading First* initiative is a grant policy that is part of the Title I section of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. *Reading First* is a 6-year entitlement grant available to all states that stresses the importance of using scientifically-based reading research as the focus of classroom reading instruction. The goal of *Reading First* is to ensure that all students learn to read at grade level or above by the end of the third grade (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

States receiving *Reading First* funds will award competitive subgrants to local education agencies for eligible Title I schools to improve kindergarten- through third-grade reading

instruction and student achievement. In the commonwealth of Virginia, education agencies will also allocate funds for technical assistance to local education agencies and schools for providing professional development for all kindergarten- through third-grade teachers, kindergarten- through grade-12 special education teachers, and all administrators (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

The commonwealth of Virginia was awarded \$16,900,000 in federal funds in January 2003 for the *Reading First* Initiative (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003). The continuation of funding will be determined at mid-point of the grant and is dependent upon improved student achievement. Originally, 66 Virginia school divisions and 222 schools were eligible to apply for *Reading First* subgrants. The school has to be a Title I school with a poverty index of 40% or higher to be eligible. The final criterion for application was a pass rate of less than 60% on the spring 2002 third-grade English Standards of Learning assessment (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education). In the summer of 2006, 19 additional *Reading First* grants were awarded.

Every Minute Counts, Virginia's *Reading First* Grant (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003), required schools to select a comprehensive program that met the scientifically-based reading research requirements. School schedules had to allocate a protected, uninterrupted block of at least 90-minutes for daily reading instruction. Schools were required to use four types of assessments to drive instruction: (a) screening, (b) progress monitoring, (c) diagnostic, and (d) outcome. Each *Reading First* school also had to name a *Reading First* coordinator and hire a full-time reading coach. According to the International Reading Association (2004), there is a rapid proliferation of reading coaches responding to the increased attention to reading achievement.

In a *Reading First* program, coaches have a high-profile position and are key leaders along with the principal in the program's implementation (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004b). With heavy emphasis on reading achievement and mandates requiring

Reading First schools to hire a reading coach, the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of reading coaches warrant further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

The *No Child Left Behind* Act is not an exclusive reading initiative; however, it does include a \$900 million *Reading First* plan (*No Child Left Behind*, 2002). The *Reading First* initiative has placed reading coaches in classrooms across the nation. Virginia currently has 88 schools that receive *Reading First* funds. Each school is required to hire a reading coach. The purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of Virginia's *Reading First* coaches. In addition, the researcher explored coaches' self-perception of their effectiveness.

Significance of the Study

The study will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the roles and responsibilities of elementary school reading coaches and could provide the foundation for further research on the role of the elementary school reading coach in Virginia. The study focused on elementary school reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools; thus, the researcher has the potential of describing the roles of the *Reading First* reading coach in Virginia's public schools to current and future reading coaches, reading supervisors, administrators, and educators at all levels. Additional benefits might be the preservation of and expansion of the number of reading coach positions not only within the commonwealth of Virginia, but possibly throughout the nation.

Current literature is limited concerning the roles and responsibilities of the reading coach. Information obtained by the researcher has the potential of benefiting decision-makers by clarifying the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of the *Reading First* reading coaches. It was anticipated that school administrators and school districts would examine the roles and

responsibilities of their reading coaches and further enable decision-makers to establish appropriate and effective job descriptions and responsibilities for these reading coaches.

The present study should inform national professional organizations, state accreditation agencies, and university personnel regarding needs of future reading coaches. Documenting the common characteristics of reading coaches could assist in designing national standards for reading coaches. Furthermore, determining reading coaches' responsibilities that are separate from other reading specialist positions might assist university faculties in redesigning coursework included in educational programs thus meeting the professional learning needs of reading coaches.

This information also has the potential of adding to the *Reading First* administration's knowledge base concerning not only the diverse roles of the *Reading First* coaches but also their professional learning needs. This could fine-tune the professional development that *Reading First* provides to reading coaches.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study addressed the roles and responsibilities of Virginia's *Reading First* coaches as identified by those coaches and principals. The following research questions formed the basis of this study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools?
2. What roles and responsibilities do reading coaches in *Reading First* schools have?
3. What are reading coaches' perceptions of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support they receive?
4. What are reading coaches' perceptions of professional development to support implementation of quality reading instruction?
5. Are there differences between reading coaches who have administrative certification and those who do not and the extent to which they perform administrative tasks?

- Ho5₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they formally evaluate teachers frequently.
- Ho5₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they meet with central office personnel frequently to discuss the reading program.
- Ho5₃: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they work with administrators to develop reading blocks and additional time for strategic and intensive students.
- Ho5₄: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assist in writing the annual performance report and budget.
- Ho5₅: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assume administrative duties when the principal is out of the building.
6. Are there differences between reading coaches who have reading specialist certification and those who do not and the frequency with which they plan reading lessons with teachers and assist teachers in using data to plan reading instruction?
- Ho6₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they frequently plan reading lessons with teachers.
- Ho6₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they assist teachers in using data to plan appropriate reading instruction.

7. Are there differences between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices and the support that they receive from various sources?

Ho7₁: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices.

Ho7₂: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of the support they receive.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

1. *Reading First*: Part of the *No Child Left Behind* Act's regulation that requires schools funded by *Reading First* money to use "scientifically-based" reading instruction. Monies have been allocated to Title I Schools for scientifically-based reading research along with "coaches" who assist teachers in learning the newest scientifically-based reading research for use in classrooms. Coaches analyze data to drive the instruction for each child in every classroom. *Reading First* is limited to kindergarten- through third-grade classes, whereas *Early Reading First* money is allocated for prekindergarten materials and coaches (Wikipedia, 2006).
2. *Reading specialist*: Professionals with advanced degrees and experience in reading responsible for the literacy performance of readers especially struggling readers (International Reading Association, 2000).
3. *Reading coach*: For the purpose of this study, a reading coach is the person responsible for overseeing the implementation of the instructional reading program based on the five components of reading research. Reading coaches are defined by the International Reading Association (2004) as those who provide professional

development for teachers in schools. Reading coaches throughout the United States may be referred to as reading coach, literacy coach, reading teacher, and reading specialist (Dole, Liang, Watkins, & Wiggins, 2006).

4. *Local Education Agency: (LEA)* refers to the individual school receiving *Reading First* funds or the reading coordinator for each *Reading First* division.
5. *Reading First Coordinator:* Each school receiving *Reading First* funds in the commonwealth of Virginia had to name a *Reading First* coordinator who is referred to as the local education agency.
6. *Scientifically-based reading research (SBRR):* As defined in *No Child Left Behind*, this refers to research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties.
7. *No Child Left behind Act:* This is a federally mandated bill that requires all states to establish an accountability plan that holds all schools and districts accountable for students' performance (Executive Summary Accountability, 2003).
8. *Region VII:* The commonwealth of Virginia is divided into geographical groups. Region VII refers to the schools in southwest Virginia and contains the following school divisions: Bland County, Bristol City, Buchanan County, Carroll County, Dickenson County, Galax City, Giles County, Grayson County, Lee County, Norton City, Pulaski County, Radford City, Russell County, Scott County, Smyth County, Tazewell County, Washington County, Wise County, and Wythe County (Virginia Department of Education, 2006). See Appendix F for a complete list of Virginia Public Schools Division.

Limitations

Reading coaches and principals completed a survey during the month of September 2006. Surveys required reading coaches and principals to reflect on their perceptions of their individual

practices. A professional bias might have been present because survey responses required self-evaluation. Therefore, some inherent limitations were possible. Personal perceptions might have been inaccurate because of a sense of vocational necessity to produce expected results and misinterpretation of survey questions. The researcher's position as one of eight state reading specialists working with the *Reading First* grant and reading coaches in Virginia allows for possible inherent limitations such as a sense of necessity to produce expected results.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the commonwealth of Virginia. The choices of coaches and principals included only those Virginia schools receiving funding through the *Reading First* Initiative. To coincide with the initiative, only those coaches working with kindergarten-through third-grade classrooms were surveyed. The results of this study might not be generalized to states with similar demographics of size, location, and socioeconomic status.

Assumption

It was assumed that all surveys remained confidential and that none were altered as a way to skew the findings of the study.

Overview of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 included an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, definitions of terms, limitations, delimitations, and an assumption.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature as it relates to the history of literacy policies, the historical role of reading specialists, reading coaches, qualification of reading coaches, roles of reading coaches, reading coaches in Virginia, professional development, and professional development for coaches. Chapter 3 contains methods and procedures that were used in the

study. This includes information about the research design, population for the study, data collection strategies, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis results and findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides an analysis and interpretation of data to include a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“They call it coaching, but it is teaching. You do not just tell them it is so...you show them the reasons” (Official Site of Vince Lombardi, 2006, n. p.).

The literature review for this study, organized into five major sections, provides a framework for understanding the evolving, multifaceted role of the elementary-school reading coach. This chapter begins by providing information on the importance of reading, the impact of teacher quality on reading, professional development to improve teacher quality, and the reading coach’s role in professional development. The second section begins with a discussion of the history of reading and includes information pertaining to reading instruction and the debate between phonics and whole language. The third section provides an overview of the literature surrounding the history of key reading policies. The fourth section focuses on research revealing the historical role of reading specialists. The fifth section illuminates *Reading First* in Virginia, focuses on the qualifications and role of Virginia's elementary-school reading coaches, and presents challenges faced by reading coaches.

The Importance of Learning to Read

Learning to read is one of the most important skills taught in schools. The process begins before kindergarten and affects students throughout life (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Lyon & Chhabra, 2004; Moats, 1999; Shellard, 2001). Reading requires little effort for many students, whereas others find the task almost impossible (Shellard). According to the National Institute for Literacy (as cited in Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003), students who do not become capable readers by third grade will have problems in other academic areas. Wren (2001) found that children struggling in third grade would continue to struggle with reading for the rest of their lives. Moats (1999) considered teaching students to read as the most fundamental responsibility

of schools and states. Lyon and Chhabra agreed it is an obligation for schools to ensure that all students acquire proficient reading skills in order for them to be successful in school and fulfill their potential in life.

The Impact of Teacher Quality on Reading Success

Quality reading instruction is a primary factor in making a difference in student reading success (International Reading Association, 2000; Kaplan & Owens, 2002; O'Neil, 2003; Wren, 2001). Allington (2001) agreed that every student benefits from good instruction. Similarly, Morrow (2003) agreed that the likelihood of student learning is considerably improved by first-rate teachers. Dole (2004) stated that in order to teach reading, all teachers need to be highly qualified

Research consistently reports how important teacher training is in improving students' learning (Allington, 2001; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Sparks & Hirsch, 2000). Highly-qualified teachers are critical in students' success in learning to read; however, many teachers begin their teaching careers without having the skills and knowledge necessary to help all students become proficient readers (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, & Klinger, 2002). Olson (2001) pointed to a large number of teachers who admitted they had not had professional development to provide reading instruction that enables all students to meet established reading standards. Professional development remains noncollaborative, short term, and unrelated to teachers' needs.

Kaplan and Owens (2002) determined that a teacher's lack of knowledge makes a significant difference in student learning; also, best instructional practices in reading have a confirmed effect on student achievement and success. They agreed that better teaching is the key to higher student achievement. Improving the quality of both teachers and instruction is one of the more important challenges facing departments of education and schools throughout the nation.

Professional Development to Improve Teacher Quality

Burns, Griffin, and Snow (1999) maintained the quality of instruction children receive in the classroom is extremely important in preventing reading difficulties. They contended that teachers' education should continue throughout their teaching career. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about child development, how children learn, and fundamentals of reading. Teachers should also be capable of addressing students' strengths and weaknesses, providing quality lesson plans, and having an assortment of strategies to meet various needs of each student.

McLaughlin (1994) asserted that meaningful professional development does not take place during typical workshops and inservice day presentations. Typical professional development continues to consist of one-shot workshops offered to teachers, and, according to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), lacks the substantive, research-based content and systematic follow-up that is required for sustainability. Sweeney (2003) and Showers and Joyce (1996) claimed workshops typically did not impact instruction because the practices taught differed from teachers' current practices, provided little support to integrate the new strategies, and oftentimes affected teachers' ability for implementation because of isolation. Gaskins (1998) supported ongoing, collaborative, and indepth professional development that engages teachers and supports staff in understanding and exploring research-based principles and theories of instruction.

Allington (2002) maintained that if the goal of *No Child Left Behind* is to be attained, it becomes crucial to create effective, expert teachers. With the improvement of quality reading teachers in mind, intensive professional development in reading is needed (International Reading Association, 2000; Ivey, 2000). A recommended practice in providing this type of intensive professional development in elementary-school settings was the use of reading coaches (Dole, 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

The Reading Coach's Role in Professional Development

Although the position of literacy coaches is not yet clearly defined, their role of serving as a resource to teachers was constant throughout the literature (Bean, 2004; Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2000; National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005; Theodore, 2005; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2004; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999). Therefore, this section will focus on the literacy coach's role in providing professional development. No single element is more important to reading instruction and success for all students than instruction from well-trained teachers who are familiar with and apply current research to their classroom practices (Learning First Alliance, 2000). A strong need exists for teachers to experience sustained, high quality professional development in order to improve student learning and teacher instruction (Rock & Wilson, 2005).

Research is limited on the best ways to build teachers' expertise; there was, however, significant evidence that professional development in reading could have a positive influence on teaching to produce significantly improved student achievement. The best path to boost students' achievement and prevent reading problems was by improved teaching (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Moats, 1999). *Reading First* entails the implementation of scientifically-based reading instruction through systematic, strategic, professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2005b). The lack of ongoing support for implementation efforts was one of the criticisms of professional development (Bean, 2004). For this reason, literacy coaches are being employed in schools to assist with teachers' efforts at implementation of professional development programs. All states that implement *Reading First* have detailed professional processes to train principals and teachers (Bell, 2003).

According to Russo (2004), a convincing justification for school-based coaching was that many of the conventional forms of professional development such as mass teacher-institute days and conferences and lectures were unpopular with educators because they were often led by experts who told teachers what to do and were not heard from again. The National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance (2005) reported a strategic, systematic professional

development plan that (a) prepared classroom and special education teachers in the five essential components of reading instruction, (b) included information on scientifically-based research materials, (c) aligned programs and strategies with performance and academic standards, (d) enhanced teachers' ability to implement intervention and remediation programs, (e) facilitated use of assessment data to inform instruction, (f) met the needs of all students, and (g) provided teachers with guidance and support through ongoing coaching.

Willis (2002) reported that staff development should be incorporated into teacher's traditional responsibilities, maintained and supported over time, and be based on specific needs. According to Joyce and Showers (1996), coaching was part of a high-quality professional development plan. Professional development for teachers should include: (a) inclass support, (b) lesson demonstrations, (c) grade-level meetings, (d) formal training, and (e) study groups (National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005). Coaches can provide support, feedback, and recognition to assist teachers with integrating their learning into practice (Bean, 2004).

The responsibility of professional development planners is to ensure that goals and activities lead to observable changes in classroom teaching practices. Guskey (2002) theorized that knowledge transformation had the potential for changing teachers' outdated beliefs. An example of knowledge transformation professional development was a four-step coaching model consisting of: (a) understanding, (b) demonstration, (c) feedback, and (d) inclass coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1995). According to Joyce and Showers (1995), 95% of teachers who received ongoing support from coaching were likely to learn and implement new practices in the classroom. Joyce and Showers (1995) compared their finding to 10% of teachers who reported they learned and implemented new practices from theory alone, 30% from demonstration, and 60% from practice.

According to the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2004b), the primary responsibility of reading coaches was supporting professional development. The coach's professional development responsibilities included classroom support, assessment assistance,

ongoing development, and collaboration with leadership. Classroom support might come in the form of observation, responding to teachers' problems regarding reading materials and strategies, time management and student assessment, and mentoring teachers in need of extra support. Assessment assistance related to (a) administering, monitoring, and training teachers to use and interpret assessment tools; (b) providing hands-on assistance in diagnostic and screening activities; (c) analyzing data; (d) consulting with teachers on intervention strategies and monitoring outcomes; and (e) maintaining a database of assessment results to monitor students' progress. Ongoing professional development provided by the coach might include: (a) providing workshops on assessment tools, data interpretation, and intervention; (b) holding workshops on the comprehensive reading program of the school; (c) developing periodic workshops to train teachers in scientifically-based reading research strategies with a focus on the five essential components of reading as defined by the *Reading First* Initiative; and (d) holding grade-level meetings to discuss goals, instructional strategies and materials, assessment, common concerns, and interventions. Collaboration with leadership, according to the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2004d), consisted of planning professional development activities at the district and state levels and communicating progress to the principal, district, and state education personnel.

Coaches can provide professional development outside of the classroom with book clubs and study groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2005b; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). They differed in other staff development in that teachers had some type of work, usually reading, to do prior to each session. In this situation, the coach and teachers were learners helping to establish a collegial climate.

The *Reading First* coach should be respectful of the experience and knowledge participants bring to professional development sessions (National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005). They should also be skilled at interacting with educators to foster collaboration and a supportive environment. Without appearing authoritative, the coach should be able to answer questions and provide guidance to teachers.

The coach should tailor state or district level *Reading First* professional development to the school-level needs of the teachers (National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005). The message and information provided during onsite professional development by the *Reading First* coach should be aligned and consistent with *Reading First* goals. The *Reading First* coach should enhance knowledge and expertise for implementing and planning onsite professional development. A well-coordinated school level professional development plan should include: (a) information on the five essential components of SBRR instruction; (b) preparation for teachers to deliver core reading and intervention programs as well as supplemental materials; (c) training on assessment, data analysis, and use of data to inform instruction; and (d) follow-up and ongoing support and guidance and coordination with district and state-level trainings. The ultimate goal of *Reading First*, according to the National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, is sustainability of reading improvement. The *Reading First* coach can play a key role in sustainability with ongoing professional development.

The History of Reading Instruction

Reading instruction during the Colonial period involved teaching the alphabet and sounds in speech (Adams, 1990). There were few materials available for reading other than the Bible and patriotic material of the Revolutionary War. The first reading item for instruction originated in England and was referred to as the hornbook (Reutzel, 1981). The paddle-shaped hornbook was made from thick oak boards, measuring approximately 9 by 5 inches and was covered with a thin layer of cow's horn. As a rule, the hornbook was printed with the alphabet, numbers, and the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses (College of Education, 1999). In 1647, Massachusetts passed the *Old Deluder Satan* Act to promote religion and teach people to read the Bible; this was one of the first laws passed in America concerning education. It was at this point that formal schooling, as we know it, became desirable (Matzat, n.d.). In the 1700s, Noah Webster revised and authored the "Elementary Spelling Book" commonly known as the "Blue-Backed Speller" that was used by frontier families to teach children to read (Encyclopedia.com, 2006). In the

18th century, as education moved from home into schools, textbooks were developed for reading instruction (Reyhner, 2003). The *McGuffey Reader* was among the first of these and consisted of a graded series of books now called a basal series. McGuffey Readers emphasized values reflective of the times such as being kind to animals and the rich helping the poor. Basal readers sought to keep material on the same skill and achievement level so groups of students could be taught at the same time (Czubaj, 1997).

Phonics and Whole Language

Letter-sound association, termed phonics, was prevalent in the following years. This method of reading instruction was used until the mid 1800s, when Horace Mann, an influential politician, was appointed Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. He made a report to the board of education in which he described children's reading material as "skeleton-shaped, bloodless, ghostly apparitions" (Palmaffy, 1997, p. 5). Mann further proposed that instruction should not focus on sounds but on a whole-word method. Although Mann suggested a new focus for reading instruction, a phonics approach of sounding out speech sounds and their association to letter and letter groupings continued as the main type of instruction in American schools (Palmaffy).

By the 1920s, progressive educators at Columbia University and the University of Chicago rejected the code-emphasis as unnatural practice and reintroduced Mann's ideas (Palmaffy, 1997). According to Palmaffy, John Dewey, a highly respected educator and proponent of meaningful learning, recommended a holistic method that came to be known as the look-say method. Students no longer sounded out words but were expected to learn many words they should recognize on sight. A series of readers, developed by Gray known as the *Dick and Jane* readers was used based on controlled and repetitive vocabulary defined by pictures.

The theories behind whole language instruction were developed in the late 1960s by Goodman, a professor at University of Arizona, and Smith, a cognitive psychologist (Goodman, 1989). By studying adults and children as they read aloud, Goodman observed a use of context

clues to guess an upcoming word in addition to sounding it out. Goodman alleged reading would be more fluent if speech sounds were discouraged. Smith argued reading would be too cumbersome if readers translated everything they saw into sound (Goodman). According to Routeman (1991), whole language was a philosophy, not a method, that referred to teaching and learning that was appropriate, real, and meaningful. The philosophy of whole language came into being during the 1980s. Whole language allowed teachers to select reading sources to meet the individual skill level of every child whereas the basal reader fell short of this goal. The whole-language approach could be customized toward each student's reading potential (Czubaj, 1997). One method recommended by whole-language proponents was to have children follow as the teacher read a big book; after several readings by the teacher, the students would be able to remember the story's words (Czubaj).

In 1955, Flesch published *Why Johnny Can't Read: and What You Can Do about It* that questioned the look-say or whole-word approach to reading and supported phonics instruction (Adams, 1990; Flesch; Palmaffy, 1997). Chall was asked to evaluate the literature on this topic and the results of her major study were published in 1967 in the book *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. Based on the evidence found, Chall concluded that phonics was a more effective teaching method. Her argument was that children taught with only the holistic method did better in the early years but later fell behind because they lacked the skills needed for independent reading. She did acknowledge that the holistic approach helped readers with irregular words. Phonics nurtures logic and whole-language is based on discovery; therefore, students could benefit from both methods. Chall recognized the need for a combination of the two methods (Schugurensky, 2004).

Whole language versus phonics as the best method of reading instruction has been debated for years. Quick (1998) concluded that debates about reading instruction methods dated back as far as the 1920s. Mazzone and Gambrell (2003) pointed out that controversy over literacy practices has wasted much time and effort in teaching and learning. Today, educational

leaders understand that the two methods can be used together. Hancock and Wingent (1996) discovered that the most successful schools were those that blended whole language and phonics.

History of Key Literacy Policies

In order to explore the new and innovative reading policy, a review of previous literacy policy must be reported. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 was the first generation of federal educational formalities to assist economically disadvantaged students (Edmondson, 2004). Title I of this Act was the single largest federal education program. In its original format, Title I was established to supplement instruction, especially in reading, of low-achieving low-income students (McGill-Franzen, 2000) Through Title I funding, large resources were allocated to assist educationally deprived children especially through compensatory programs for the poor. President Johnson proclaimed it part of the “War on Poverty” with the objective to break the cycle of poverty through improved education (Grossen, 2001).

As a component of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, *Project Follow Through* ran from 1967 to 1995 with a cost estimated at over a billion dollars (Grossen, 2001). *Project Follow Through*, referred to as the world’s largest educational experiment, targeted the most disadvantaged American schools to study methods and philosophies of kindergarten- through third-grade instruction. These economically and academically challenged schools were to be brought up to the level of the average American school with the predictor of success being student achievement. As students’ progress was monitored during grades five, six and high school, direct instruction continued to emerge as one approach that resulted in higher student achievement (Adams, 1990; Grossen).

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, according to Spring (1993), had at least three major consequences for future legislative action. First, it signaled a switch from general federal aid to categorical aid by tying federal aid to national policy concerns such as economic growth, poverty, and defense. Second, religious conflict was addressed by directly linking federal aid to parochial school programs that benefited poor children and not just the institution

in which a child was enrolled. Finally, to avoid criticisms of federal control, the reliance on state education departments to administer federal funds resulted in an expansion of state bureaucracies and increased involvement by the state government in educational decision-making (Spring).

The U. S. Department of Education is a cabinet-level department of the government. It was created by the *Department of Education Organization Act* that was signed by President Jimmy Carter on October 17, 1979. It began operating on May 4, 1980. The primary purpose of the Department of Education was to formulate federal funding programs. The federal role in public education was rather symbolic from the 1980s through the 1990s with a dramatic increase in policy activity by the states. In the 1980s, *A Nation at Risk* and *Becoming a Nation of Readers: the Report of the Commission on Reading* were published. States reacted by establishing policies that addressed curriculum requirements, teacher education and certification, assessment of student achievement, and textbook adoption (McGill-Franzen, 2000; Valencia & Wixson, 2000).

In 1994, the U. S. government attempted to improve the educational system and passed the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. The goal, through educational reform, was to improve learning and teaching. An additional goal of the act was to ensure all children would enter school ready to learn by the year 2000. A definition of readiness, however, and a method to accomplish this goal was missing, although, *Goals 2000* marked a shift in focus to accountability and outcomes.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton introduced a \$260 million literacy initiative for children *America Reads* (1996). The emphasis was on having students reading by the end of third grade. *America Reads* was a response to the findings of the National Center for Educational Statistics that stated the critical period for children to learn to read was from birth to age eight. Through educators, parents, business owners, senior citizens, religious organizations, and volunteers across America, the goal was to ensure that children were involved in meaningful reading activities for 30-minutes per day (*America Reads*). Through the initiative, students were also

offered tutoring services through college and university work-study programs (Campus Compact, 2002).

President Clinton followed *America Reads* with the *Reading Excellence Act*. This Act was introduced in 1998 as part of the Title II *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of the 1965 legislative amendment. The act was designed to address limited reading proficiency in fourth-grade students (McCallion, 2001). The goals of the *Reading Excellence Act* were to ensure children developed appropriate readiness skills when they entered school and that all children read on grade level by the end of third grade (*Reading Excellence Act of 1998, 2002*).

To achieve this goal, there were five specific purposes of the *Reading Excellence Act*. First was to provide readiness skills so children were ready to read once they entered school. The next purpose was to teach all children to read as early as they were able and no later than third grade. Another purpose was to advance the reading skills of students and refine the instructional practices of teachers. An additional purpose was to expand opportunities for high-quality family literacy programs. The final purpose was to provide early literacy intervention to struggling readers in order to decrease the number of children inappropriately identified as learning disabled (*Reading Excellence Act of 1998, 2002*).

Through the *Reading Excellence Act*, states were given the opportunity to write competitive grants. The states awarded funding then held a competitive subgrant process among eligible schools within the individual state (McCallion, 2001). Schools eligible to apply for the REA grant had to meet at least one of the following criteria: (a) have the highest percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch within the system, (b) be in Title I school improvement, and/or (c) have the highest actual numbers of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch within the system (McCallion). Teacher instructional practices through professional development became a top priority under the REA program (Learning First Alliance, 2000).

From 1999 to 2001, 39 state grants targeted to improve reading skills and have all children reading on grade level by the end of third grade were awarded funding with a cost to the federal government of \$754,932,468 (*Reading Excellence Act of 1998, 2003*). The

commonwealth of Virginia was a recipient of \$15 million. According to Gail Barnes, REA grant manager for the commonwealth of Virginia, 75 Virginia schools received funding for 2 years (Email communication, December 12, 2005).

In 1998, a panel known as the National Reading Panel, was commissioned by the director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the United States Secretary of Education to examine a variety of reading instructional approaches and determine their effectiveness (National Reading Panel, 2000). The panel examined 100,000 quantitative research studies. The panel's findings were published in the *Report of the National Reading Panel, Teaching Children to Read*. The findings identified five reading components that should be taught: (a) phonemic awareness instruction, (b) phonics instruction, (c) vocabulary instruction, (d) fluency instruction, and (e) text comprehension instruction. In addition, the panel recommended using guided repeated oral reading, exploring computer technology, and providing teachers with appropriate and intense training in teaching reading strategies. The panel also recommended teachers use a combination of strategies incorporated in a plan with definite goals.

The National Reading Panel's (2000) report contributed to the *No Child Left Behind Act* and *Reading First Initiative*. President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 into law on January 8, 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001a). The Act became the most sweeping reform of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* since its 1965 enactment (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003). The *No Child Left Behind Act* is based upon four principles: (a) an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work, (b) stronger accountability for teachers, (c) increased flexibility and local control, and (d) expanded educational options for parents (*No Child Left Behind*, 2002). The objective was to improve reading skills of students in kindergarten through grade three with the ultimate goal being that all students will read on grade level by the end of third grade. Another goal of *No Child Left Behind* was to close the achievement gap between minority and disadvantaged students and their peers (Bloomfield & Cooper).

The *No Child Left Behind* Act authorized \$26.5 billion in 2002 for kindergarten- through twelfth-grade education programs (NEA Today Online, 2002). Although *No Child Left Behind* is not an exclusive reading initiative, it did include a \$900 million *Reading First* plan (*No Child Left Behind*, 2002). The federal government increased allocated *Reading First* funding for 2003 to \$993,500,000; the 2004 appropriation was \$1,023,923,000, and the 2005 funding was \$1,041,600,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005a). Through the *Reading First* Initiative, states were given the opportunity to write competitive grants. In 2002, 20 states were awarded \$412 million during the 1st year of the 6-year initiative to improve student achievement through classroom instruction.

Reading First is considered the academic cornerstone of *No Child Left Behind* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001e). According to Manzo (2002), *Reading First* was a reaction to the supposed failure of the *Reading Excellence* Act as well as an attempt to closely monitor schools receiving grant money without following the scientifically-based requirements of the *Reading Excellence* Act. *Reading First* does follow the *Reading Excellence* Act in that it provides assistance for states, districts, and schools to provide high-quality, scientifically-based reading research for kindergarten through third grade in low performing schools while ensuring all kindergarten- through third-grade teachers receive training necessary to identify and effectively serve the students at risk of reading failure (Kauerz, 2002; *No Child Left Behind*, 2002).

With the goal of having all children read at grade level by the end of third grade, the National Reading Panel concluded that instructional practices must be based upon scientifically-based research (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). *Reading First* was founded on these scientifically-based research practices. The essential components of reading instruction, according to *Reading First*, are explicit and systematic teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Officials warned that it is too early to look for signs of

progress in NAEP scores with *Reading First* only being in effect 3 years and with many states not receiving funds until 2003 (Wren & Reed, 2005).

In many *Reading First* schools, it was estimated that as many as 50% to 60% of the students might require three to four times more instruction than the average student just to maintain normal progress in the learning-to-read process (Torgeson, n.d.) *Reading First* identified exemplary teachers based on their performance at improving reading instruction. An exemplary teacher was identified as a highly-qualified teacher, had been teaching for at least 5 years, was recommended to be an exemplary teacher by administrators and other teachers, and was currently teaching. An exemplary teacher assists other teachers to improve their essential components of reading instruction practices, mentors these practices, develops curricula aligned with scientifically-based reading research, and offers professional development to others (U.S. Department of Education, 2001e).

Historical Roles of the Reading Specialist

Reading specialists have been operating in schools as early as the 1930s (Bean, 2004; Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001; Robinson, 1967). These early specialists functioned as supervisors who worked with teachers to improve reading programs (Bean, 2004; Robinson). After World War II and in response to criticism that reading teachers had become fixtures in schools, the reading specialist's role evolved into working with small groups or individuals who had difficulty learning to read (Bean, 2002, 2004). In the 1950s and 1960s, reading specialists were primarily remedial teachers who worked with children who had difficulties learning to read (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2000). Robinson and Rauch (1965) found that with federal Title I guidelines, reading specialists of the 1960s and 1970s were engaged in a variety of roles including investigator, diagnostician, instructor, evaluator, resource specialist, and advisor.

Throughout the 1970s, a reading specialist funded with Title I or state initiatives was responsible for one school and sometimes traveling from school to school (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). According to Bean (2004), the reading specialist funded by Title I worked with only

those students eligible for services. A diagnostic prescriptive approach was prevalent during this period (Tutolo, 1987). The specialist usually pulled students from the regular classroom to provide extended learning opportunities based upon the individual needs of the student (Vogt & Shearer). Research has shown these pullout programs had limited success (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Dole, 2004); although, many schools disregard the research and still use this type of intervention for at-risk students.

In the 1980s, reading specialists continued to work primarily in pullout programs. As Bean (2004) reported, these programs created many problems. These problems occurred mainly because reading specialists were not aware of what students were doing in the regular classroom. This created a separation between what the student learned in the regular classroom and what was expected to be learned in the pullout session.

In 1986, the International Reading Association outlined five distinct roles for the reading specialist: (a) diagnostic/remedial specialist, (b) reading consultant/reading resource teacher, (c) reading coordinator/supervisor, (d) reading professor, and (e) developmental reading/study skills specialist. During the late 1980s and 1990s, reading specialists' positions were downsized or eliminated in many schools across the United States (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). According to Bean et al. (2003), the primary focus of the reading specialists during the 1990s became instruction, serving as a resource, or as a program administrator. Instruction included using inclass and pullout models as well as supporting classroom assessment measures. The resource person's role involved providing materials, ideas, and support to teachers, special educators, and others. Documentation and monitoring the performance of students were part of the administrative role.

In 2000, the International Reading Association revised their position on the role of the reading specialist. Three responsibilities were given to define the position: (a) provide expert instruction, (b) exhibit knowledge of assessment and diagnosis, and (c) offer leadership for the reading program. The leadership role was described, but not limited to: (a) being a resource to other educators; (b) suggesting ideas, strategies, or materials to other teachers; (c) modeling the strategies; (d) conducting demonstrations or collaborative lessons; and (e) leading workshops.

As school leaders, reading specialists might be involved in teacher supervision, which necessitates skill in observing and conferring with teachers. Specialists serving in these roles became change agents who, by working with teachers, create total school reform (International Reading Association, 2000).

Bean et al. (2003) found that reading specialists in schools with exemplary reading programs were involved in five broad roles: resource teacher, school and community liaison, instructor, contributor to assessment, and coordinator of the reading program. Additionally, Bean et al. (2003) found little information concerning reading specialists in schools with less than exemplary reading programs. This successful paradigm might be worthy of reproduction and certainly sets the parameters for what should be expected of current reading specialists. Reading specialists need to be resource teachers who can work effectively with allied professionals and parents, work with students, have solid knowledge about best reading practices, be familiar with various assessments, and provide diagnostic teaching.

As a direct result of the 1998 report of the National Research Council, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, the International Reading Association's 2003 Standards for Reading Professionals included that graduate candidates preparing to be reading specialists must demonstrate ability to assist and support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals through preprofessional experiences in literacy (Shaw, Smith, Chesler, & Romeo, 2005). Vogt and Shearer (2003) reported that graduate programs in reading across several regions of the United States were now requiring that students have advanced study in the reading process, assessment and diagnosis, intervention, curriculum, instruction, theory, and research.

What is a Reading Coach?

Because of *No Child Left Behind* legislation and the mandates set forth by *Reading First*, reading specialists, now often called literacy specialists, literacy coaches, reading/language arts specialists, or reading coaches, are increasing in demand (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; Toll, 2005; Wren & Reed, 2005). A shift in the role of the reading specialist from a literacy

instructor to a mentor and coach who provides support and guidance to teachers to improve reading instruction can be a powerful step toward improving achievement at low-performing schools (Wren & Reed).

There is currently no common definition of reading coaches. Examples of definitions include:

A literacy coach is one who helps teachers to recognize what they know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more. (Toll, 2005, p. 4)

The term “literacy coach” is quite appropriate in many ways especially if we think of the definition of a coach as one with expertise who provides the guidance or feedback that enables someone else to become more proficient. (Bean, 2004, p. 96)

Coaching is a form of inquiry-based learning characterized by collaboration between individuals or groups of teachers and more accomplished peers. Coaching involves professional, ongoing classroom modeling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observation. (Poglinco & Bach, 2004, p. 9)

Coaching is a school-based professional development designed in light of the district’s reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools’ specific instructional learning needs. (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 12)

Coaching is a confidential arrangement between peers that includes a focused classroom observation and feedback on that observation. It is not evaluation; it does not certify a teacher’s effectiveness. Instead, coaching provides teachers a means of examining and reflecting on what to do in a psychologically safe environment where it is all right to experiment, fail, revise, and try again (Raney & Robbins, 1989, p. 35)

School-based coaching was pioneered in the United States primarily in large districts such as Boston and New York City’s Community School District 2 and has been spreading around the nation especially in urban schools (Russo, 2004). In efforts to change literacy instruction and student achievement, literacy coaches can play a significant role (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004b). In a *Reading First* program, the literacy coach has a high profile and along with the principal is a key leader in program implementation. The central role of the coach is to support classroom teachers in implementation of scientifically-based reading research instructional strategies.

Even the most capable coaches must have the support of principals and other external partners (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). Reading coach positions falls somewhere between teacher

and administrator. The coach observes and provides feedback to the teacher and must answer to the principal. The coaches' effectiveness in the multiple roles and responsibilities increases when school staff supports them.

Coaching is neither a school improvement initiative nor an end in itself (Showers & Joyce, 1996). It must be used in the context of implementation, training, and general school improvement. Evidence is currently lacking to support the idea that coaching by itself will affect students' learning environments (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003).

Qualifications for Literacy Coaches

Joyce and Showers (2002) first promoted peer coaching as an onsite, ongoing component of staff development. There are varieties of titles for this role such as literacy coach and reading coach as well as considerable variations in the job descriptions for coaches (International Reading Association, 2004). In part because there are no agreed upon definitions or standards for the role of coach, there is little consistency in the general competencies, training, skills, and backgrounds required for the role of coach.

Wren and Reed (2005) identified three competencies key to success as a literacy coach: reading, pedagogy, and coaching. Coaches should be familiar with reading research, standards, and assessments. They should also know what is to be taught at each grade level. Pedagogy is related with best practices in reading instruction, effective strategies, and managing the instructional needs of diverse learners. Understanding coaching involves helping other teachers learn, experiment, and apply new knowledge. The coach's abilities to facilitate meetings, use questioning strategies, and offer support to teachers are qualifications that have been found to impact his or her relationship with teachers and positively affect student achievement. Coaching is not simply sharing information but working collaboratively with teachers to learn new information and strategies together.

The International Reading Association (2004) released a revised list of standards for reading specialists in 2003 that was also intended as a guide for literacy coaches. The standards

stated that reading specialists and coaches should have the knowledge and skills necessary to: (a) provide specialized reading and writing instruction; (b) give assessment in cooperation with other professionals (special educators, speech and language teachers, school psychologists, etc.); (c) diagnose students at one or more levels including early childhood, elementary, middle, secondary, or adult; (d) provide activities including resources for paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, and community; (e) plan collaboratively and cooperatively with professionals to meet the needs of diverse learners; (f) provide opportunities at the local and state levels for professional development; and (g) provide leadership in student advocacy. The International Reading Association (2004) additionally recommended that reading specialists and coaches have previous teaching experience as well as a master's degree in reading that includes a minimum of 24-graduate hours in reading and related courses and a 6-hour supervised practicum experience. The International Reading Association (2004) stated that, ideally, coaches would meet the Standards for Reading Professionals and hold a reading specialist license. Because of the demand for coaches, it is acknowledged there might not be enough highly-qualified individuals to fill the positions. In this situation, the International Reading Association (2004) recommended that coaches should have five minimum qualifications. First, they must be excellent teachers of reading, preferably at the levels they are coaching. The teaching experience should include positive outcomes for student achievement. Next, in order for coaches to assist teachers, they must possess indepth knowledge of reading processes, instruction, acquisition, and assessment. This knowledge can be gained in a variety of ways including obtaining a master's degree in reading, participating in ongoing, intensive professional development and training for newly hired coaches, or completing a program for reading specialist certification. A third requirement is expertise in working with teachers to improve reading instruction. Coaches should also be excellent group leaders and presenters. The ability to lead groups of teachers to reflect upon their own instructional methods and make adjustments to improve student achievement is quintessential. Finally, coaches need experience with modeling sound instructional lessons and methods and observing and providing feedback to classroom teachers about instruction. These

skills as well as the ability to build relationships with teachers are necessary and must be developed (International Reading Association, 2004).

According to Bean (2004), it is a given that literacy coaches will know their stuff and have excellent, up-to-date knowledge and experience of assessment and instruction as well as the research behind such knowledge. Experience, in this sense, relates to two areas; teaching experience in the early elementary grades and experience in coaching. The coach must have experience that makes him or her credible with classroom teachers. Longevity of teaching, however, does not appear to be a factor (Bean, 2004). The ability to work with adults consists of excellent interpersonal and communication skills. The coach must be a good listener, be able to empathize with teachers, and be able to guide teachers toward improvement. The teacher-coach relationship must be nurtured with the goal that teachers will come and seek, value, and accept constructive feedback from the coach. This also includes building relationships with teachers so feedback is valued. Coaches must develop trust and a rapport with teachers (Joyce et al., 2000; National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005; Toll, 2005; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999).

Being a *Reading First* coach requires a wide range of personal characteristics and skills. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2004a) listed seven traits necessary to be an effective coach but acknowledged the list was not all-inclusive. The following characteristics were cited: (a) leadership, (b) listening skills, (c) persistence, (d) flexibility, (e) creativity, (f) strong communication skills, and (g) ability to enable others. Change takes time and coaches must have the persistence to allow time for teachers' acceptance. Flexibility relates to accepting that duties may be different for a coach each day. Successful coaches accept change and make progress (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004a). Coaches must be creative in ways they work with teachers. Coaches' strong communication skills are used with teachers, paraprofessionals, other support staff, and principals to strengthen the *Reading First* program. Enabling others to perform is part of being a strong, successful coach. Learning Point Associates (2004) described skills of a *Reading First* Coach as being able to: (a) look for the useful in each

interactive occasion; (b) display strong listening skills, questioning capabilities, and confidentiality; (c) exhibit a willingness to embrace the teacher/coach model as a way to address professional development needs; (d) acknowledge and support individual teachers' professional development needs; (e) coach groups and individuals to identify their strengths, areas of potential advancement, and steps to take in improving instruction; (f) provide instruction and coaching that recognizes the diversity of students and teachers and uses knowledge of that diversity to amplify effectiveness; and (g) communicate appropriately with the principal, *Reading First* coordinator, and others responsible for the success of the reading program.

Roles of Literacy Coaches

With new titles such as reading coach and literacy coach there is considerable variability in the job descriptions for these coaches (International Reading Association, 2004). A literacy coach is not a principal, assistant principal, reading specialist, or teacher. Literacy coaches are directing school improvement at the state, district, and local levels. The literacy coach, according to Walpole and McKenna (2004), serves in many roles including learner, grant writer, cheerleader, school-level planner, curriculum expert, researcher, and as a teacher of teachers. Literacy coaches as learners make a commitment to their own learning. In order to obtain funding for the position, the coach often finds himself or herself in the role of grant writer. The coach works in every classroom to assist with the implementation of a school-wide reading program. As a curriculum expert, the coach ensures that research-based curricula are matched to the needs of students. The coach, as a teacher of teachers, is assigned the task of providing professional development to teachers. As cheerleader, the coach must look for the positive aspects of assessment results and notice strong instructional practices, those worthy of replication, from teachers in his or her building. Joyce et al. (2000) stated a coach has three major functions: companionship, analysis of application, and adaptation to the students.

According to Bean (2004), coaches can use knowledge of teachers' strengths, experiences, and learning styles to work with teachers as mirror, collaborator, or expert. The

coach confirms and validates the teachers' self-reflective comments when acting as a mirror. During collaborative sessions, the coach and teacher work together to determine strengths and weaknesses of lessons. The coach may then provide expert guidance as he or she works with teachers who are attempting an approach for the first time. Providing information that helps the teacher effectively understand the approach or strategies may be necessary. Toll (2005) provided caution for coaches who serve as experts: If the coach acts as an expert in every situation, providing quick answers to every dilemma, he or she might lose credibility with teachers. Eventually the coach will encounter a situation in which he or she is not an expert.

For staffing a reading coach position, Wren and Reed (2005) made five recommendations to establish the position and ensure support. First, the literacy coach must act as a resource for the teachers always providing support in a nonjudgmental way. Although the coach will observe instruction and provide feedback, he or she is never placed in the position of evaluating job performance of teachers. Secondly, although most of the coach's time should be spent working with teachers, the coach's own professional development must be a priority. The professional development for coaches includes reading articles, learning new strategies for instruction and professional development, staying abreast of research, and communicating with other reading experts. Professional development for coaches should be scheduled and protected. Next, the coach should only work with students when demonstrating lessons to teachers. The coach should be in every classroom several times a week to provide training and support to teachers. Fourth, the literacy coach should focus on five areas of instructional support for teachers: theory of instruction, demonstration, observation of new lessons, feedback and reflection, and supporting collaboration among teachers. Finally, the coach is to facilitate frequent staff meetings that focus on data assessment, helping teachers interpret data information, and using the data to make instructional decisions based on students' needs. These meetings should be designed to encourage dialog, discussion, and questioning while building expertise and leadership within the staff.

Demonstration or modeling specific behaviors or strategies is one of the most important, effective means of coaching (Bean, 2004). Bean (2004) provided the following guidelines for demonstration lessons: plan with teachers; after lessons, debrief with teachers as soon as possible, and arrange for a time for the teacher to demonstrate the same type of lesson under observation. Teacher buy-in to coaching is more likely to occur when coaches come into the classroom and model instructional techniques (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). To provide inclass support, and to develop credibility with teachers, coaches need to be proficient in a variety of techniques including co-teaching, joint lesson planning, inclass instructional modeling, mentoring, informal one-on-one conversations, and formal observations and feedback. Coaches often include modeling as part of their professional support (Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Modeling can be done outside the classroom to introduce materials and techniques. One-on-one modeling is considered low risk because no students are watching.

The role of the *Reading First* reading coach is defined by clarifying expectations at the district and/or school (National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005). Principals and others responsible for the selection of *Reading First* coaches can look for pertinent information in their state's *Reading First* requirements and their *Reading First* program application (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004d). This information can provide information about the duties of the coach.

The newsletter, *Reading First Notebook* (2005), reported that the *Reading First* coach has three roles: instructional leader, assessment expert, and provider of professional development. As an instructional leader, the coach assists teachers in effective implementation of the reading program. The coach must have defined responsibilities and adequate time to accomplish the duties. It is stressed the coach's time should not be consumed with clerical duties, substitute teaching, fund raising, or tutorial or other responsibilities that are not related to the *Reading First* grant. As an assessment expert, the coach must (a) have knowledge of the four types of assessment--screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome; (b) ensure proper implementation of assessments; (c) analyze the data, (d) share with the principal, and (e) use the

data to plan professional development. The coach is primarily responsible for professional development related to the goals of *Reading First*. The coach should also realize when outside expertise is needed. The coach must also remain current on reading issues by attending professional development sessions. The reading coach must be able to work with teachers as a professional development resource (Bean, 2004; Bean et al., 2003; Diamond, 2003; Joyce et al., 2000; National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005; Toll, 2004, 2005).

Assessment is the first step in addressing students' needs. Walpole and McKenna (2004) reported that one of the most important tasks of the coach is to ensure school instruction is informed by data. Students' assessments document the instructional needs of children and measure the long-term success of a program. To establish a unified, building-level literacy assessment program, the literacy coach will select assessments to address key components of reading development, schedule assessments, train teachers to conduct assessment, analyze and summarize data to be used in instructional decision making, and share the results with all stakeholders. Coaches also monitor reading achievement, assist with examination of curriculum-wide assessment data, and help schools use the data to plan improvements in line with resources and the district's priorities (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Diamond (2003) asserted that coaches should have clear expectations and guidelines aligned to the reading program materials. The most important role of the coach according to Diamond, is modeling of lessons, side-by-side coaching, and collegial feedback to refine implementation. Coaching involves assisting teachers with planning and delivering lessons using new approaches.

Observations can provide job-embedded professional development for teachers that can greatly influence classroom practices (Bean, 2004). Once struggling teachers request modeling, the literacy coach can combine modeling, collaborating, and observing (Walpole & McKenna, 2004). According to Bean (2004), observing can be one of the most effective coaching approaches to professional development. It allows the coach to intercede, provide reinforcement, and/or alter observed behaviors if needed.

By demonstrating lessons and/or strategies, *Reading First* coaches can provide teachers with a model of effective reading instruction (Learning Point Associates, 2004). This enables teachers to see firsthand how program elements, instructional strategies, and/or lessons are implemented. Although there is not an established procedure for *Reading First* coaches to determine an effective coaching process, the U.S. Department of Education (2005b) recommended pre-conference, demonstration lessons, follow-up conferences, observations, and reflection/post conferences.

Bean's (2004) four-step coaching cycle for observations includes planning, observing, analyzing, and conferring. Planning is conducted prior to the observation to determine the goals for the lesson. Observation focuses on the predetermined goals established during the planning stage. Analyzing and reflecting allows the coach and teacher time to think about the lesson. The coach analyzes the observation and identifies topics for discussion while the teacher generates questions and ideas for the discussion.

Walpole and McKenna (2004) stressed that observation drives professional support. Literacy coaches who do not observe might make incorrect assumptions about instruction. Walpole and McKenna used a three-step model for observation. First, the coach must decide if the observation will be a documentation of the teacher's activity by time or domain. During an observation of time, the coach simply documents what is occurring during a certain period. The observation of domain refers to the content that is covered. The next step for the coach is to analyze and reflect. The coach thinks about what has been learned about the teacher or reading program to help with professional development. Sharing the information with the teacher is the final, critical step. The feedback can be written or oral and should include sincere positive comments along with suggestions for improving teaching and learning. To conclude, the coach should ask how he or she could help. The literacy coach in this model observes in order to learn how to help teachers.

Typically, the role of a reading coach is a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback rather than that of a formal evaluator (Perkins, 1998; Showers & Joyce, 1996;

Walpole & McKenna, 2004). One of the most challenging aspects of coaching can be in providing corrective feedback to teachers without sounding negative (National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005). Toll (2005) supported the use of one-on-one conferences on a regular basis with a minimum of once a month. She did not, however, support observation of teachers by coaches and based her beliefs on the work of Joyce and Showers (2002) who continued to claim that observation placed the coach in a position of judge, which clearly makes a power difference between the coach and teacher.

Reading First in Virginia

In 2003, the commonwealth of Virginia was awarded \$16,900,000 to provide school divisions assistance to improve reading ability. *Reading First* subgrants were competitively awarded to schools in Virginia (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Eligible schools in Virginia applied for state grants. Schools were deemed eligible if they had a poverty index of 40% or higher, were a Title I school, and had a pass rate of less than 60% on the spring 2002 third-grade English Standards of Learning test. There were 222 schools deemed eligible with 76 grants awarded (See Appendix A). Virginia had 76 elementary schools, approximately 1,200 teachers, and over 22,000 students involved in *Reading First* (Scrroth, Clemons, Miller, & Moon, 2004). In the summer of 2006, a second round of funding added an additional 19 schools. *Reading First* in Virginia began the 2006-07 school year with 90 *Reading First* schools.

Five reading specialists based in Richmond were hired at the state level in the summer of 2003 to provide technical assistance to the schools awarded grants through the *Reading First* initiative. An additional three reading specialists were hired in January 2004 to work in field offices in the southwest regions of Virginia. These eight reading specialists along with the *Reading First* director and grant coordinator made up the Virginia *Reading First* leadership team.

The commonwealth of Virginia's *Reading First* initiative had eight requirements for the local education agencies. First, schools had to select a comprehensive reading program including core, supplemental, and intervention materials that met the requirements for scientifically-based reading research. Second, four types of assessment--screening, outcome, progress monitoring, and diagnostic must be used. Schools had to have a protected block of time for reading with a minimum of 90 minutes. Next, each school division had to name a reading coordinator who is referred to as local education agency. The fifth requirement was that a reading coach be placed in each school. This had to be a new position for the school. Another requirement was that a minimum of \$1,000 be allotted for professional development for each teacher who worked with kindergarten- through third-grade students. Participants also had to agree to participate in the evaluation of *Reading First*. Finally, it was required that all kindergarten- through third-grade teachers, special education teachers, reading coaches, and principals attend a 4-day teacher reading academy provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education (2003).

Virginia's Reading First Reading Coaches

In October of 2003, the director of elementary education for the commonwealth of Virginia, Linda Poorbaugh, and *Reading First* grant coordinator, Gail Barnes, met with Virginia's *Reading First* local education agency's *Reading First* representative and coaches. They presented the following as a list of what the reading coach would do:

1. provide technical assistance in developing and refining a strong literacy plan based on classroom needs, teacher content knowledge, and assessments/profiles;
2. coordinate the use of assessments for kindergarten- through grade-three classrooms;
3. develop a schedule to analyze data with staff on a regular basis;
4. ensure student groupings based on use of data and instructional decisions based on scientifically-based reading research;

5. assist in selecting, implementing, and monitoring scientifically-based reading programs;
6. organize and inventory all reading materials including core, supplemental, intervention, classroom libraries, and bookrooms;
7. provide daily support to kindergarten- through grade-three teachers through demonstrating effective instructional reading strategies, facilitating study groups, assisting in screening, diagnostics, monitoring students' progress, and providing immediate intervention strategies;
8. monitor scientifically-based reading instruction such as classroom environments, informal assessment, and time and appropriate reading activities;
9. assist in identification of highly- knowledgeable professional development providers;
10. work with the local education agency and principal to update *Reading First* plans and budget;
11. schedule regular meetings at each grade level to discuss data, and as a result of these meetings, to make instructional decisions; and
12. provide assessment and monitoring data that support all *Reading First* activities to the SEA and the LEA.

The commonwealth of Virginia provided professional development for *Reading First* reading coaches in October of 2004. During this training, coaches were introduced to three phases of coaching: initiating and planning, executing and reflecting, and giving feedback (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 2004). During the initiating and planning stage, the coach meets with the teacher to find out those areas of instruction in which the teacher needs assistance. The teacher and coach then determine the focus for the coach's observation and/or modeling. The second phase, executing, involves the teacher presenting a lesson with the coach observing, the coach presenting the demonstration lesson, and/or the coach shadowing the teacher. The final phase of coaching in this model is reflecting and providing feedback. A short period is provided for the coach and teacher to reflect on the lesson. The coach will then prompt

the teacher with questions to encourage discussion and reflection about the effectiveness of the lesson. The coach will provide feedback including strengths and recommendations for goals. A time will be determined for the coach to see delivery of instruction and note if goals are progressing.

Showers and Joyce (1996) found that the use of verbal feedback in the peer coaching process weakened the collaboration process because of the similarities with evaluation. Wanzare and da Costa (2000) suggested peer coaching be used to evaluate teachers in the peer review process. The commonwealth of Virginia, according to Gail Barnes, *Reading First* Grant Coordinator, while encouraging feedback after observations, discourages the use of coaches as evaluators and has stressed this in several administrative and coaches' training sessions.

Virginia *Reading First* reading coaches are to conduct team meetings with the purpose to support collaboration as teachers plan and implement their reading program (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 2004). The general guidelines recommended to coaches are: (a) scheduling regular meetings to plan and analyze students' work and plan actions; (b) ensuring that the focus of all discussion and planning is data-driven, has a specific beginning and end, develops a regular format, and leads to an identified outcome (plan and an agreement); and (c) maintaining reporting out and following-up processes. Team meetings, according to Toll (2005), might consist of meetings with teachers of one grade level or a unit-level that consists of teachers who work with a group of students with the same interests or needs (example: ESL).

Virginia's reading specialists conduct monthly and/or bimonthly focus group meetings with coaches and have discussed topics such as: classroom management, data driven instruction, three tier model of intervention, and sustainability. According to Gail Barnes, *Reading First* grant coordinator for Virginia (email communication, December 12, 2005), the commonwealth of Virginia's *Reading First* leadership team has provided leadership training for administrators and coaches as well as conducted focus group meetings on a regional level by the eight state reading specialists. Barnes reported that researchers and authors in the reading field including

Margaret McKeown, Debbie Diller, Michael McKenna, and Dr. Maria Elena Arguelles have presented at state training sessions for coaches and principals.

Professional Development for Reading Coaches

According to Walpole and McKenna (2004), successful literacy coaches should make a permanent and substantial commitment to their own learning. Diamond (2003) suggested that as coaches grow into their roles, they need to be trained and mentored. Training for coaches implementing *Reading First* should go beyond that of teachers (*Reading First Notebook*, 2005).

Reading First reading coaches often attend intensive professional development sessions that deal with coaching skills and reading content (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004d). Coaches often receive training in six areas: mentoring strategies for adult learners, coaching methods, change-management techniques, administration of assessments and data analysis, intervention strategies for struggling readers, and strategies for instruction in the five essential components of reading. Coaches may also attend workshops offered by state or local facilitators as well as meet together periodically to discuss common concerns.

Toll (2005) pointed out that, typically, coaches will work with different groups of teachers: the ready-to-go group, the wait and see group, and the put-on-the brakes group. The ready-to-go group is eager to try new things; however, as Toll (2005) cautioned, these members can take up a great deal of the coaches' time and make others tentative. The wait-and-see group may be eager to change but the members are cautious and might approach the literacy coach to inquire what is different about a certain initiative. According to Toll (2005), the put-on-the brakes group usually wants nothing to do with the coach and will exert influence over others.

Debbie Diller, in speaking with Virginia's *Reading First* coaches on September 12, 2005, referred to teachers as rocks or scouts. The scouts will move forward while the coach will find it difficult to work and make progress with the rocks.

Challenges

Reading First is an attempt to make meaningful change. Meaningful change is a long-term investment. Significant change can be brought about by administrators and reading professionals who provide structure and support systems that enable teachers to become effective and efficient at turning on a dime (Cobb, 2005). Several challenges have been identified for literacy coaches. Toll (2005) found the number one concern of literacy coaches was the resistant teacher.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2004c) found three common challenges faced by literacy coaches: time conflicts, acceptance of instructional change, and acceptance of a new person in a role. Walpole and McKenna (2004) reported that literacy coaches must allocate time for instruction, intervention, planning, and professional development. They made the following recommendations in order for coaches to deal with the issue of time: (a) select a time for professional development; (b) develop a regrouping philosophy; (c) evaluate interruptions to time to determine their value in the school's mission; and (d) create a school-wide schedule for literacy blocks, specials, and content areas. Acceptance of instructional change includes a teacher's hesitation to give up methods and materials and teachers and administrators' concern about time away from the classroom for professional development. Acceptance from teachers usually takes time and is accomplished through building trust with teachers. Many coaches are in a new position and teachers do not know what to expect from the coach's role.

Other challenges included finding enough qualified coaches, quality professional development for coaches, and cost. Cultural issues relating to the fact that schools and teachers are not used to working with a coach can also be a challenge (Russo, 2004). Theodore (2005) found that inclass coaching had the greatest potential to impact classroom instruction. However, because of the coach's close involvement in the teacher's class, it might create anxiety, which can often translate to strong resistance to change. Teachers need to understand that the coach, although not evaluative, could enable them to do their job more effectively (Bean, 2004).

Being part of a leadership team is the ideal situation. In many schools, the coach is left to the instructional work while the principal manages (Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Coaches must attend to leadership issues at three levels: within the district, in the building, and with the faculty if they are to be successful (Walpole & McKenna). Each of these levels presents challenges and coaches must take time to address leadership issues at each level or find their efforts thwarted. The school leadership must unite the school in support of a shared vision of reading instruction (Diamond, 2003).

Walpole and McKenna (2004) counseled coaches who struggled with principals to approach with two questions: (a) How can I help you do the work you want? and (b) How will you help me do that more effectively? Literacy coaches must also find their place in relation to district level personnel (Walpole & McKenna). Toll (2005) encouraged coaches to nurture support systems of other coaches and if possible, to support those of other educators in leadership positions. Russo (2004) reported that although coaching appears promising, school leaders need to be clear about goals and expectations from coaching before investing in a coaching initiative.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Walpole and McKenna (2004) maintained:

School wide change is difficult--very difficult. If you take on the role of literacy coach, you will have many difficult days. But you are likely to learn more about teaching and learning in this role than in any other you may have had. (p. 228)

Introduction

This study addressed and documented the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of reading coaches as reported by participating reading coaches. Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that were used in this study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: research design, population of the study, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and summary.

Research Design

This quantitative study began with the construction of a researcher-designed survey. According to Creswell (2003), surveys provide a quantitative or numeric description of attitudes, trends, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population. The use of quantitative analysis according to Babbie (1998) makes the aggregation and summarization of data a more manageable task. The quantitative survey instrument for reading coaches provided information on the characteristics of *Reading First* reading coaches and perceived roles and responsibilities of these coaches.

Population

The population of this study consisted of 95 reading coaches serving in Virginia's *Reading First* schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Originally, 66 Virginia school

divisions and 222 schools were eligible to apply for *Reading First* subgrants. The original criteria were that the school had to be a Title I school with a poverty index of 40% or higher to be eligible. The final criterion for application was a pass rate of less than 60% on the spring 2002 third-grade English Standards of Learning assessment. Seventy-seven schools were awarded grants. In 2006, an additional 19 schools received funding. Each *Reading First* school had to hire a reading coach. Because of the number of kindergarten- through third-grade students in each of the schools, some schools hired up to three reading coaches resulting in 95 coaches hired in *Reading First* schools.

Instrumentation

I developed a survey instrument specifically for this study (see Appendix C). The survey consisted of five sections. The items in Section A related to the frequency with which core responsibilities and tasks of reading coaches are performed. The response categories for the items in Section A were coded: 0 = Never; 1 = Once a semester; 2 = Once a month or less; 3 = a few times a month; 4 = A few times a week; and 5 = Daily.

The items in Section B of the survey related to the frequency with which tasks involving data assessment were performed. The response categories for the items in Section B were coded: 0 = Never; 1 = Once a semester; 2 = Once a month or less; 3 = a few times a month; 4 = A few times a week; and 5 = Daily.

Section C included additional responsibilities reading coaches may have. The response categories for these items were: 0 if the item was not checked and 1 if the item was checked.

Section D included items that measure reading coaches' perceptions of their impact, the support they receive from various sources, and potential barriers to the implementation of *Reading First*. Each of the items in Section D was measured on a 6-point Likert scale where: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Somewhat disagree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Somewhat agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree.

Section E contained five demographic questions and three open-ended questions. Full responses to the open-ended questions are shown as Appendix E.

Procedures

Data collection began by the construction of a survey instrument developed by the researcher based on a thorough review of the literature related to *Reading First* and the evolving role of reading coaches. Validity of the content of the instrument was established through the literature. Each item on the survey was included after an exhaustive search and review of information found on the topic of reading coaches. Two *Reading First* state reading specialists reviewed the survey for content validity. They were selected because of their experience and knowledge of *Reading First* reading coaches, and each gave recommendations for the addition or deletion of variables as related to issues relevant to reading coaches.

A pilot test of the research instrument was conducted in September 2006. The survey was tested and peer reviewed by a group of three reading coaches involved in the *Reading First* initiative. This analysis contributed to the validity of the instrument. Following their review, comments, criticisms, and recommendations for improvement were used to make appropriate adjustments in an effort to ensure clarity of expected responses.

The survey provided a description of roles and responsibilities of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools. Superintendents, elementary supervisors, and administrators should be able to use the information gathered to make important decisions regarding the qualifications and training required, how time should be spent, staff development and resources provided to teachers, and the overall effectiveness of the reading coach.

After receiving IRB and graduate committee approval, a packet was mailed to the population of reading coaches in Virginia. The survey packet contained a cover letter (see Appendix B), the survey instrument (see Appendix C), and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The cover letter included a brief description of the study, justification for why the survey should be completed, and a brief explanation of how the results would be used. Each participant's

return envelope was uniquely numbered with a code for tracking and follow-up. The cover letter explained the purpose of the tracking code with the assurance that the code would be used only for the purpose of following up with those who had not responded and that it would not be used to identify any individual. Responses were kept strictly anonymous and findings from the data analyses were reported in summary form.

The survey packet was mailed via U.S. Postal Service. One week after the initial mailing, a follow-up letter was sent to those who had not responded. Participants were given an additional week to respond after the follow-up letter.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the research questions in this study. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 was used to analyze data. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question # 1: What are the demographic characteristics of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools?

To answer this research question, frequency counts and percentages were calculated for the demographic questions 1–5 in Section E of the survey instrument.

For research questions 2-6, survey questions in Sections A, B, and D were coded into categories.

Research Question # 2: What roles and responsibilities do reading coaches in *Reading First* schools have?

To answer this research question frequency counts and percentages were calculated for the items in Sections A, B and C of the survey instrument.

Research Question # 3: What are reading coaches' perceptions of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support they receive?

This research question was answered with frequency counts and percentage for survey items 1–6 in Section D (their impact on reading teachers’ practices) and items 7–11 in Section D (support they receive from various sources).

Research Question # 4: What are reading coaches’ perceptions of potential barriers in implementing *Reading First*?

To answer this research question, frequency counts and percentages were calculated for items 13-16 in Section D of the survey.

Research Question # 5: Are there differences between reading coaches who have administrative certification and those who do not and the extent to which they perform administrative tasks?

To answer this question, five crosstabulated tables were created, one for each of the following survey questions: Questions 14 and 15 in Section A and questions 1–3 in Section B. Five 2 x 2 cross tabulated tables were created and chi-square with a significance level of .05 was used to test the following null hypotheses:

- Ho5₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they formally evaluate teachers frequently.
- Ho5₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they meet with central office personnel frequently to discuss the reading program.
- Ho5₃: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they work with administrators to develop reading blocks and additional time for strategic and intensive students.
- Ho5₄: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assist in writing the annual performance report and budget.

Ho5₅: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assume administrative duties when the principal is out of the building.

Research Question # 6: Are there differences between reading coaches who have reading specialist certification and those who do not and the frequency with which they plan reading lessons with teachers and assist teachers in using data to plan reading instruction?

Item 7 in Section A and item 7 in Section B was used to answer this question. Two 2 x 2 crosstabulated tables were created and chi-square with a significance level of .05 was used to test the following null hypotheses:

Ho6₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they frequently plan reading lessons with teachers.

Ho6₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they assist teachers in using data to plan appropriate reading instruction.

Research Question # 7: Are there differences between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices and the support that they receive from various sources?

Survey items 11–15 in Section D were used to answer this research question. *t* tests for independent samples were used to test the following null hypotheses:

Ho7₁: There is no difference between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices.

Ho7₂: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of the support they receive.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the research design, population, and statistical procedures used to analyze seven research questions. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the analysis of the data, and chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The primary purpose of the study was to explore and document the various roles of *Reading First* reading coaches as reported by the participating coaches. In addition, the researcher explored the reading coaches' self-perception of their effectiveness. The research questions and associated hypotheses guiding this study were:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools?
2. What roles and responsibilities do reading coaches in *Reading First* schools have?
3. What are reading coaches' perceptions of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support they receive?
4. What are reading coaches' perceptions of professional development to support implementation of quality reading instruction?
5. Are there differences between reading coaches who have administrative certification and those who do not and the extent to which they perform administrative tasks?

Ho5₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they formally evaluate teachers frequently.

Ho5₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they meet with central office personnel frequently to discuss the reading program.

Ho5₃: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they work with administrators to develop reading blocks and additional time for strategic and intensive students.

- Ho5₄: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assist in writing the annual performance report and budget.
- Ho5₅: There is no difference between reading coaches with an administrative license and those without the license and whether or not they assume administrative duties when the principal is out of the building.
6. Are there differences between reading coaches who have reading specialist certification and those who do not and the frequency with which they plan reading lessons with teachers and assist teachers in using data to plan reading instruction?
- Ho6₁: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they frequently plan reading lessons with teachers.
- Ho6₂: There is no difference between reading coaches with reading specialist certification and those without certification and whether or not they assist teachers in using data to plan appropriate reading instruction.
7. Are there differences between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices and the support that they receive from various sources?
- Ho7₁: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices.
- Ho7₂: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of the support they receive.

Instrumentation

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, a panel of two reading specialists with the Virginia Department of Education who were familiar with the *Reading First* program and reading coaches in Virginia was selected to assess the instrument during and after development. The panel had knowledge of *Reading First*, coaching, and working with the target population. Each panel member was given a copy of the survey. The panel provided feedback on improving and revising the instrument. Revisions and improvement to the study were made accordingly. Questions 14-16 in section D were removed from the original document based on recommendations from the panel.

To ensure relevance of the survey to reading coaches' knowledge levels, five educators who had previously served as reading coaches were identified and asked to evaluate the survey instrument. The participants examined the items in the survey for clarity. Envelopes containing the proposed survey, a cover letter, and a structured form for feedback (see Appendix D) were mailed to the pilot study's participants.

The pilot study's participants were asked to complete all items on the survey. In addition, they were asked to complete the response form and indicate any questions or instructions that were unclear, incomplete, or needed revision or improvement. Five completed surveys and response forms were returned to the researcher resulting in a 100% return rate. All of the testers indicated that the instructions were clear, the format and contents of the survey were good, and the questions were appropriate for the purpose of the survey.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was administered by mail to the entire population of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools during the 2006-2007 school year. A copy of the survey instrument, cover letter, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope were mailed to the entire population of 95 reading coaches in September of 2006 (see Appendix B & C). Approximately 1

week later, a follow-up letter and survey were mailed to coaches who had not responded. A follow-up email was sent to subjects who did not respond to the follow-up letter. The return rate for each of the mailings is shown in Table 1. Of the reading coaches involved in the *Reading First* grant in Virginia, 95 coaches were contacted and 68 (71.58%) responded to the survey.

Table 1

Survey Instrument Return Rate

Mailing	<i>N</i>	%
First mailing- Initial survey	34	35.8
Second mailing- Follow-up letter and survey	27	28.4
Third mailing- Follow-up email	7	7.4
Total Returned	68	71.6

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1

What are the demographic characteristics of reading coaches in Virginia’s *Reading First* Schools?

Out of 68 respondents, 46 (67.6%) had previously served as coaches in *Reading First* schools whereas 22 (32.4%) were new to the coaching position.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the respondents’ types of classroom teaching experience.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Types of Classroom Teaching Experience

Type of Classroom Teaching Experience	<i>N</i>	%
K-3 Teaching Experience	62	91.2
4th - 5th Teaching Experience	44	64.7
6th - 8th Teaching Experience	23	33.8
9th-12th Teaching Experience	10	14.7
Other Teaching Experience	30	44.1

Table 2 shows that 62 or 91.2% of reading coaches had K-3 classroom teaching experience. The total does not equal 100% because some teachers taught in two or more reporting categories.

The survey elicited responses concerning the participants' reading specialist and administrative certifications. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Reading Specialist and Administrative Certification

	Yes		No	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Prior to becoming reading coach, did you have reading specialist certification?	52	76.5	16	23.5
Do you currently have reading certification?	61	89.7	7	10.3
If no, are you currently pursuing reading certification?	5	71.4	2	28.6
Prior to becoming a coach, did you have administrative certification?	4	5.9	64	94.1
Do you currently have administrative certification?	8	11.9	59	88.1
If no, are you pursuing administrative certification?	7	12.5	49	87.5

Table 3 shows that 76.5% of reading coaches possessed reading specialist certification prior to becoming a reading coach and 61 (89.7%) reported they now have reading specialist certification. Of the 7 respondents without reading specialist certification, 5 (71.4%) were pursuing reading specialist certification. Of the 68 respondents, 4 (5.9) % had administrative certification prior to becoming a reading coach. Another 4 reading coaches had obtained administrative certification since becoming a coach. Seven respondents replied they were currently pursuing administrative certification.

The commonwealth of Virginia is divided into eight geographical regions. Table 4 provides details concerning the region served by responding reading coaches.

Table 4

Regions Served by Reading Coaches

	Frequency	%
Region 1	6	8.8
Region 2	10	14.7
Region 3	1	1.5
Region 4	2	2.9
Region 5	8	11.8
Region 6	6	8.8
Region 7	25	36.8
Region 8	<u>10</u>	<u>14.7</u>
Total	68	100.0

Region seven, located in Southwest Virginia, had the most coaches responding. It was followed by regions two and eight with 10 each.

Research Question 2

What roles and responsibilities do reading coaches in *Reading First* schools have?

The second research question focused on the variety of roles performed by reading coaches. The researcher sought to determine what reading coaches are actually doing in everyday practice. The study's participants were asked how often they performed various activities associated with the reading coach's role. To answer this research question descriptive statistics were used. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were calculated for the items in Section A, B, and C of the survey.

Table 5 provides details about how often respondents performed various tasks.

Table 5

Frequency of Performance Related to Various Tasks

Various Tasks	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
Conduct grade group meetings with k-3 teachers	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	0	0.0
	Once a month or less	6	9.2
	A few times a month	46	70.8
	A few times a week	10	15.4
	Daily	<u>3</u>	<u>4.6</u>
	Total	65	100.0
Model Lessons with teacher observing	Never		
	Once a semester	1	1.5
	Once a month or less	3	4.5
	A few times a month	12	17.9
	A few times a week	38	56.7
	Daily	11	16.4
	Total	<u>2</u>	<u>3.0</u>
	67	100.0	
Team-teaching with classroom teacher	Never	6	8.8
	Once a semester	5	7.4
	Once a month or less	16	23.5
	A few times a month	22	32.4
	A few times a week	17	25.0
	Daily	<u>2</u>	<u>2.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Obtain teacher input before observation	Never	4	5.9
	Once a semester	1	1.5
	Once a month or less	11	16.2
	A few times a month	21	30.9
	A few times a week	23	33.8
	Daily	<u>8</u>	<u>11.8</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 5 (continued)

Various Tasks	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
Conduct planned observation of teachers			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	1	1.5
	Once a month or less	9	13.2
	A few times a month	22	32.4
	A few times a week	22	32.4
	Daily	<u>14</u>	<u>20.6</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Provide feedback to teachers after observation			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	0	0.0
	Once a month or less	4	5.9
	A few times a month	18	26.5
	A few times a week	30	44.1
	Daily	<u>16</u>	<u>23.5</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Plan reading lessons with teachers			
	Never	4	5.9
	Once a semester	4	5.9
	Once a month or less	11	16.2
	A few times a month	29	42.6
	A few times a week	17	25.0
	Daily	<u>3</u>	<u>4.0</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Create pacing guides with/for teachers			
	Never	7	10.4
	Once a semester	40	59.7
	Once a month or less	9	13.4
	A few times a month	6	9.0
	A few times a week	3	4.5
	Daily	<u>2</u>	<u>3.0</u>
	Total	67	100.0
Provide training on SBRR instruction strategies			
	Never	1	1.5
	Once a semester	3	4.4
	Once a month or less	31	45.6
	A few times a month	28	41.2
	A few times a week	1	1.5
	Daily	<u>4</u>	<u>5.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 5 (continued)

Various Tasks	Scale	N	%
Attend professional development related to teaching reading			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	5	7.4
	Once a month or less	53	77.9
	A few times a month	9	13.2
	A few times a week	1	1.5
	Daily	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Attend professional development for coaches			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	25	36.8
	Once a month or less	38	55.9
	A few times a month	5	7.4
	A few times a week	0	0.0
	Daily	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Share information with staff from professional development training you have attended			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	9	13.2
	Once a month or less	33	48.5
	A few times a month	19	27.9
	A few times a week	2	2.9
	Daily	<u>5</u>	<u>7.4</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Meet with principal to discuss school reading program			
	Never	0	0.0
	Once a semester	0	0.0
	Once a month or less	2	2.9
	A few times a month	27	39.7
	A few times a week	33	48.5
	Daily	<u>6</u>	<u>8.8</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 5 (continued)

Various Tasks	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
Conduct formal evaluation of teachers	Never	44	64.7
	Once a semester	7	10.3
	Once a month or less	4	5.9
	A few times a month	9	13.2
	A few times a week	2	2.9
	Daily	<u>2</u>	<u>2.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Meet with central office personnel to discuss school reading program	Never	7	10.3
	Once a semester	13	19.1
	Once a month or less	35	51.5
	A few times a month	12	17.6
	A few times a week	1	1.5
	Daily	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 5 shows that 6 respondents (9.2%) conducted grade group meetings with kindergarten- through third-grade teachers once a month or less, while the majority 46 (70.8%) conducted meetings a few times a month with 10 (15.4%) meeting a few times a week, and 3 (4.6%) meeting with teachers daily.

When asked how often coaches model lessons with the teacher observing, 1 respondent (1.5%) answered never, 3 respondents (4.5%) answered once a semester, and 12 respondents (17.9%) answered once a month or less. Thirty-eight respondents (56.7%) indicated they model lessons with the teacher observing a few times a month and 13 (19.4%) indicated a few times a week or daily. Eleven (16.2%) respondents indicated they never or once a semester team-teach with the classroom teacher while 16 (23.5%) team-teach once a month or less and 41 coaches (60.3%) indicated they team-teach a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily.

Five (7.4%) respondents acknowledged they never or only once a semester obtain teacher input before observations. Furthermore, 52 (76.5%) revealed they obtain teacher input before observations a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily.

When asked how often coaches conducted planned observations of teachers, 58 respondents (85.4%) indicated a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily. In addition, 64 of the coaches (94.1%) responded they provide feedback to teachers after observations a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily.

Eight respondents (11.8%) indicated they never or once a semester plan reading lessons with teachers whereas the majority 46 (67.6%) indicated they plan reading lessons with teachers a few times a month or a few times a week. Forty reading coaches (59.7%) indicated they create pacing guides with or for teachers once a semester.

Fifty-nine respondents (86.8%) provided training on scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) instructional strategies once a month or less or a few times a month. Five reading coaches indicated (7.4%) they attend professional development related to teaching reading once a semester, while 62 (91.1%) indicated they attend once a month or less or a few times a month.

Twenty-five respondents (36.8%) indicated they attend professional development training for coaches once a semester, 38 (55.9%) once a month or less, and 5 (7.4%) a few times a month. Nine reading coaches (13.2%) indicated they shared information with staff from professional development trainings they have attended once a semester, 33 (48.5%) indicated once a month or less, and 19 coaches (27.9%) indicated a few times a month.

All 68 respondents (100%) replied they meet with the principal at least once a month to discuss the school reading program. When asked how often they conduct formal evaluation of teachers, 44 of the reading coaches (64.7%) indicated never. Twenty coaches (29.4%) indicated they meet with central office personnel to discuss the school reading program never or once a semester, while 47 (69.1%) responded once a month or less or a few times a month, and 1 coach (1.5%) replied a few times a week.

Survey respondents were also asked when working with the classroom teacher how often they performed various activities associated with data analysis. Table 6 provides details about how often respondents were performing various tasks related to data analysis.

Table 6

Frequency of Performance Related to Data Analysis

Data Analysis Tasks	Scale	N	%
Provide training on the use of assessments	Once a semester	19	28.4
	Once a month or less	27	40.3
	Few times a month	16	23.9
	Few times a week	<u>5</u>	<u>7.5</u>
	Total	67	100.0
Model use of reading assessment	Never	1	1.5
	Once a semester	17	25.8
	Once a month or less	25	37.9
	Few times a month	18	27.3
	Few times a week	4	6.1
	Daily	<u>1</u>	<u>1.5</u>
	Total	66	100.0
Analyze assessment for classroom teachers	Never	9	13.4
	Once a semester	15	22.4
	Once a month or less	17	25.4
	Few times a month	19	28.4
	Few times a week	4	6.0
	Daily	<u>3</u>	<u>4.5</u>
	Total	67	100.0
Analyze assessment with classroom teachers	Once a semester	4	6.0
	Once a month or less	21	31.3
	Few times a month	30	44.8
	Few times a week	10	14.9
	Daily	<u>2</u>	<u>3.0</u>
	Total	67	100.0

Table 6 (continued)

Data Analysis Tasks	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
Analyze reading data (PALS, DIBELS, core reading series, etc)	Once a semester	7	10.3
	Once a month or less	22	32.4
	Few times a month	25	36.8
	Few times a week	10	14.7
	Daily	<u>4</u>	<u>5.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0
	Assist teachers with assessment and data management	Once a semester	3
Once a month or less		16	23.5
Few times a month		32	47.1
Few times a week		13	19.1
Daily		<u>4</u>	<u>5.9</u>
Total		68	100.0
Assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction		Once a semester	3
	Once a month or less	11	16.2
	Few times a month	37	54.4
	Few times a week	10	14.7
	Daily	<u>7</u>	<u>10.3</u>
	Total	68	100.0

As shown in Table 6, when asked how often coaches provide training on use of assessments, 19 (28.4%) responded once a semester, 45 (64.2%) once a month or less or a few times a month, and 5 (7.5%) a few times a week. Eighteen respondents (27.3%) indicated they model the use of reading assessments never or once a semester, 43 respondents (65.2%) indicated once a month or less or a few times a month, and 5 (7.6%) responded a few times a week or daily.

Twenty-four coaches (35.8%) responded they never or once a semester analyze assessments for classroom teachers, 36 (53.8%) once a month or less or a few times a month, and

7 (10.5%) a few times a week or daily. Reading coaches were asked how often they analyze assessment with classroom teachers and 61 respondents (91.0%) indicated once a month or less, a few times a month, or a few times a week.

Seven coaches (10.3%) indicated they analyze reading data once a semester, 22 (32.4%) once a month or less, 25 (36.8%) a few times a month, 10 (14.7%) a few times a week, and 4 (5.9%) daily. According to respondents, 3 (4.4%) assist teachers with assessment and data management once a semester, while 16 respondents (23.5%) indicated once a month

Respondents were also asked to mark all other tasks they perform. The Reading coaches' responses to the question pertaining to other tasks they perform are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Other Tasks Performed by Reading Coaches

Task	N	%
Work with administrators to develop schedule extra time for reading	64	94.1
Assist with writing the annual performance report / budget	45	66.2
Assume administrative duties when the principal is out of building	24	35.3
Manage book room/teacher resource room	44	64.7
Develop and organize literacy centers	45	66.2
Set goals for the reading program with faculty and staff	62	91.2
Conduct book studies	44	64.7
Assist with morning arrivals	42	61.8
Assist with afternoon dismissal	41	60.3
Serve on bus duty	35	51.5
Serve on cafeteria/lunch duty	22	32.4
Serve as substitute for teachers	11	16.2
Work with parents	40	58.8

Table 7 (continued)

Task	<i>N</i>	%
Work with students	40	58.8
Work with preschool, fourth or fifth grade students	25	36.8
Work with paraprofessionals (training, lesson planning)	52	76.5
Work with volunteers (training, planning)	30	44.1
Work with special education teachers	62	91.2
Work with Title I teachers	62	91.2
Attend school board meetings	18	26.5
Other duties	12	17.6

As shown in Table 7, 64 of the respondents (94.1%) work with administrators to develop a schedule to include additional time for strategic and intensive readers. Sixty-two respondents (91.2%) answered they set goals for the reading program with faculty and staff and work with special education teachers and Title I teachers. In addition, 52 coaches (76.5%) reported they work with paraprofessionals. Forty-five reading coaches (66.2%) reported they assist with writing the performance report and budget and assist teachers with developing and organizing literacy centers. According to the returned surveys, 44 reading coaches (64.7%) manage book room/teacher resource rooms and conduct book studies. Forty-two reading coaches (61.8) reported they assist with morning arrivals and 41 reading coaches (60.3%) assist with afternoon dismissal while 35 (51.5%) reported serving on bus duty. Forty reading coaches (58.8%) responded they work with parents and students.

Research Question 3

What are reading coaches' perceptions of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support they receive?

The reading coaches' responses to the question requesting their perception of the impact reading coaches have on teacher practices are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Reading Coaches' Perceptions of Their Impact on Teachers' Practices

Perceptions	Scale	N	%
Prepare teachers adequately to use core reading program	Somewhat agree	6	8.8
	Agree	26	38.2
	Strongly Agree	<u>36</u>	<u>52.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Prepare teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials	Somewhat disagree	1	1.5
	Somewhat agree	11	16.2
	Agree	31	45.6
	Strongly Agree	<u>25</u>	<u>36.8</u>
	Total	68	100.0
The most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each school	Disagree	1	1.5
	Somewhat agree	3	4.5
	Agree	10	14.9
	Strongly Agree	<u>53</u>	<u>79.1</u>
	Total	67	100.0
Reading coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment	Somewhat agree	1	1.5
	Agree	13	19.1
	Strongly Agree	<u>54</u>	<u>79.4</u>
	Total	68	100.0
I am comfortable modeling for teachers	Somewhat disagree	6	8.8
	Somewhat agree	12	17.6
	Agree	23	33.8
	Strongly Agree	<u>27</u>	<u>39.7</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 8 (continued)

Perceptions	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
My school (division) fully utilizes my professional expertise and skills	Strongly disagree	2	2.9
	Disagree	4	5.9
	Somewhat disagree	4	5.9
	Somewhat agree	20	29.4
	Agree	16	23.5
	Strongly Agree	<u>22</u>	<u>32.4</u>
	Total	68	100.0

As shown in Table 8, the reading coaches' perception of their ability to prepare teachers adequately to use the core program indicated that 6 of the reading coaches (8.8%) somewhat agree, 26 (38.2%) agree, and 36 (52.9%) strongly agree. Reading coaches' perception of their ability to adequately prepare teachers to use supplemental and intervention materials indicated 1 (1.5%) somewhat disagreeing while 11 (16.2%) somewhat agree, 31 (45.6%) agree, and 25 (36.8%) strongly agree.

Sixty-six of the reading coaches (98.5%) indicated they somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree that the most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each elementary school, while 1 coach (1.5%) responded disagree. Sixty-eight reading coaches (100.0%) indicated they somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree that coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment.

Six coaches (8.8%) reported they somewhat disagree they are comfortable modeling for teachers while 12 (17.6%) somewhat agree they are comfortable modeling for teachers, and 50 (73.5%) agree or strongly agree they are comfortable modeling for teachers. Ten coaches (13.8%) indicated they strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree that their school/division fully uses the professional expertise and skill of the reading coach, while 20

(29.4%) somewhat agree, 16 (23.5%) agree, and 22 (32.4%) strongly agree that the school/division fully uses the professional expertise and skill of the reading coach.

The reading coaches' responses to the questions requesting their perception of the support they receive are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Reading Coaches' Perceptions of the Support They Receive

Perceptions	Scale	N	%
Prepare teachers adequately to use core reading program	Somewhat agree	6	8.8
	Agree	26	38.2
	Strongly Agree	<u>36</u>	<u>52.9</u>
	Total	68	100.0
Prepare teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials	Somewhat disagree	1	1.5
	Somewhat agree	11	16.2
	Agree	31	45.6
	Strongly Agree	<u>25</u>	<u>36.8</u>
	Total	68	100.0
The most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each school	Disagree	1	1.5
	Somewhat agree	3	4.5
	Agree	10	14.9
	Strongly Agree	<u>53</u>	<u>79.1</u>
	Total	67	100.0
Reading coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment	Somewhat agree	1	1.5
	Agree	13	19.1
	Strongly Agree	<u>54</u>	<u>79.4</u>
	Total	68	100.0

Table 9 (continued)

Perceptions	Scale	N	%
I am comfortable modeling for teachers	Somewhat disagree	6	8.8
	Somewhat agree	12	17.6
	Agree	23	33.8
	Strongly Agree	<u>27</u>	<u>39.7</u>
	Total	68	100.0
My school (division) fully utilizes my professional expertise and skills	Strongly disagree	2	2.9
	Disagree	4	5.9
	Somewhat disagree	4	5.9
	Somewhat agree	20	29.4
	Agree	16	23.5
	Strongly Agree	<u>22</u>	<u>32.4</u>
	Total	68	100.0

As shown in Table 9, reading coaches' perception of principal support indicated 1 (1.5%) responded disagree 2 (2.9%) somewhat disagree, while 5 (7.4%) somewhat agree, 8 (11.8%) agree and 52 (76.5%) strongly agree. Reading coaches' perception of teacher support for the coach indicated that 2 coaches (2.9%) disagree, 15 (22.1%) somewhat disagree, 25 (36.8%) somewhat agree, 26 (38.2%) agree, and 26 (38.2) strongly agree. Sixty-seven of reporting reading coaches (100%) indicated they somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree they had the support of the division's *Reading First* coordinator (LEA). The reading coaches' perception of the support of the state reading specialist indicated 1 reading coach (1.5%) responded somewhat disagree while 67 (98.6%) responded agree or strongly agree. The reading coaches' perception of support from the school system's administration in implementing *Reading First* indicated that of 66 responding coaches, 100% somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree.

Research Question 4

What are reading coaches' perceptions of professional development to support implementation of quality reading instruction?

Table 10 provides the reading coaches' perceptions of professional development to support implementation of quality reading instruction.

Table 10

Reading Coaches' Perceptions of Professional Development to Support Implementation of Quality Reading Instruction

Perception	Scale	<i>N</i>	%
My division has a strong commitment for professional development to support reading instruction	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	2	2.9
	Somewhat agree	7	10.3
	Agree	20	29.4
	Strongly Agree	38	55.9
	Total		68

As shown in Table 10, 95.6% agreed to some extent with the statement, "My division has a strong commitment for professional development to support reading instruction."

Table 11 provides the reading coaches' perceptions of current staff development to support best practice.

Table 11

Reading Coaches' Perceptions of Current Staff Development to Support Best Practice

Perception	Scale	N	%
Current staff development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically-based reading research best practice	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Somewhat disagree	7	10.3
	Somewhat agree	21	30.9
	Agree	26	38.2
	Strongly Agree	13	19.1
	Total	68	100.0

As shown in Table 11, the participating reading coaches' perception of whether current staff development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically-based reading research best practice indicated that 8 (11.8) strongly disagree or somewhat disagree while 21 (30.9%) somewhat agree, 26 (38.2%) agree, and 13 (19.1%) strongly agree.

Research Question 5

Are there differences between reading coaches who have administrative certification and those who do not and the extent to which they perform administrative tasks?

To answer this question, five crosstabulated tables were created, one for each of the following survey questions: Questions 12 and 13 in Section A and questions 1–3 in Section C.

Five 2 x 2 crosstabulated tables were created to analyze this research question. Prior to the crosstab analysis, item A14 on the survey (conduct formal evaluations of teachers) was recoded into two categories: never versus once a semester or more. Item A15 on the survey was recoded into two categories: never or once a semester versus more than once a semester. Items C1 (work with administrators to develop schedules for intensive students), C2 (assist with

writing the annual performance report and budget), and C3 (assume administrative duties while the principal is out) were variables with two response categories: does not perform the task versus does perform the task.

Preliminary analysis of these five crosstabulated 2 x 2 tables showed that all five tables had violations of the assumptions of chi-square, either more than 20% of the cells in each table had an expected frequency of less than five and/or the minimum expected frequency was less than one. When there are violations of the assumptions of chi-square, chi-square should not be used to test for a significant difference in the categories of the independent variable (in this case, whether or not reading coaches have an administrative certification). Therefore, null hypotheses were not tested.

Table 12 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without administrative certification and how often they conduct formal evaluations of teachers. While conducting formal evaluations of teachers is not a task that reading coaches should perform, it is interesting to note that 24 (35.8%) of the reading coaches reported they performed this task at least once a semester. There was little difference between reading coaches with administrative certification who performed the task (37.5%) and reading coaches without administrative certification (35.6%).

Table 12

Crosstabulated Table for Reading Coaches With and Without Administrative Certification by How Often They Conduct Formal Evaluations of Teachers

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have administrative certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Conduct formal evaluation of teachers	Never	5	62.5	38	64.4	43	64.2
	Once a semester or more	<u>3</u>	<u>37.5</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>35.6</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>35.8</u>
	Total	8	100.0	59	100.0	67	100.0

Table 13 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without administrative certification and how often they meet with central office personnel to discuss the reading program. It is interesting to note 47 (70.1%) of the reading coaches indicated they met with the central office personnel more than once a semester. Among reading coaches with administrative certification 87.5% met with central office personnel more than once a semester while only 67.8% of coaches without administrative certification did so.

Table 13

Crosstabulated Table for Reading Coaches With and Without Administrative Certification by How Often They Meet With Central Office Personnel to Discuss Reading Program

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have administrative certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Meet with Central Office	Once a semester or never	1	12.5	19	32.2	20	29.9
	More than once a semester	<u>7</u>	<u>87.5</u>	40	<u>67.8</u>	47	<u>70.1</u>
	Total	8	100.0	59	100.0	67	100.0

Table 14 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without administrative certification and whether or not they work with administrators to develop schedules to include extra time for strategic and intensive learners. Of all reading coaches, 94% work with administrators to develop schedules for strategic and intensive students. All eight (100%) reading coaches with administrative certification met with administrators to develop schedules for strategic and intensive students while 93.2% of coaches without administrative certification did so.

Table 14

Crosstabulated Table for Reading Coaches With and Without Administrative Certification by Whether or Not They Work With Administrators to Develop Schedule for Intensive Students

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have administrative certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Work with administrators to develop a schedule for strategic and intensive students	No	0	0.0	4	6.8	4	6.0
	Yes	<u>8</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>93.2</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>94.0</u>
	Total	8	100.0	59	100.0	67	100.0

Table 15 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without administrative certification by whether or not they assist with writing the annual performance report and budget. Note that a higher percentage of coaches with administrative certification, 87.5%, assist with writing the annual performance report and budget while only 64.4% of those without administrative certification do so.

Table 15

Crosstabulated Table for Reading Coaches With and Without Administrative Certification by Whether or Not They Assist With Writing the Annual Performance Report and Budget

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have administrative certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Assist with Writing the Annual Performance Report and Budget	No	1	12.5	21	35.6	22	32.8
	Yes	<u>7</u>	<u>87.5</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>64.4</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>67.4</u>
	Total	8	100.0	59	100.0	67	100.0

Table 16 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without administrative certification and how often they meet with assume administrative duties when the principal is out. Note that a higher % of coaches with administrative certification assume administrative duties while the principal is out (50%), while only 33.9% of coaches without administrative certification do so.

Table 16

Crosstabulated Table for Reading Coaches With and Without Administrative Certification by Whether or Not They Assume Administrative Duties When Principal is Out

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have administrative certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Assume Administrative Duties When Principal Is Out	No	4	50.0	39	66.1	43	64.2
	Yes	<u>4</u>	<u>50.0</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>33.9</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>35.8</u>
	Total	8	100.0	59	100.0	67	100.0

Research Question 6

Are there differences between reading coaches who have reading specialist certification and those who do not and the frequency with which they plan reading lessons with teachers and assist teachers in using data to plan reading instruction?

Item 7 in Section A and item 7 in Section B will be used to answer this question.

Prior to the analysis of crosstabulated tables, item A7 (plan reading lessons with teachers) and B7 (assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction) were recoded into two categories: once a month or less versus a few times a month or more. Preliminary analysis of these 2 x 2 crosstabulated tables showed violations of the assumptions of chi-square. For both tables, more than 20% of the cells in the table had an expected frequency of less than five. When there is a violation of the assumption of chi-square, chi-square should not be used to test for a difference in the categories of the independent variable, in this case whether or not coaches have reading specialist certification. Therefore, null hypotheses were not tested.

Table 17 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without reading specialist certification and how often they plan reading lessons with teachers. Forty-nine (72.1%) of all reading coaches plan reading lessons with teachers a few times a month or more. It is interesting to note that 85.7% of reading coaches without reading specialist certification plan reading lessons with teachers while 70.5% of coaches with reading specialist certification do so.

Table 17

Crosstabulated Table for Whether or Not Reading Coaches Have Reading Specialist Certification by How Often They Plan Reading Lessons With Teachers

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have reading specialist certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Plan reading lessons with teachers	Once month or less	18	29.5	1	14.3	19	27.9
	Few times month or more	<u>43</u>	<u>70.5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>85.7</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>72.1</u>
	Total	61	100.0	7	100.0	68	100.0

Table 18 shows the crosstabulated table for reading coaches with and without reading specialist certification and how often they assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction. Over 85% of reading coaches without reading specialist certification assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction while 78.7% with reading specialist certification do so.

Table 18

Crosstabulated Table for Whether or Not Reading Coaches Have Reading Specialist Certification by How Often They Assist Teachers With Using Data to Plan Appropriate Reading Instruction

Task	Scale	Status					
		Do you currently have reading specialist certification?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Assist Teachers with Using Data to Plan Appropriate Reading Instruction	Once month or less	13	21.3	1	14.3	14	20.6
	Few times month or more	<u>48</u>	<u>78.7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>85.7</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>79.4</u>
	Total	61	100.0	7	100.0	68	100.0

Research Question 7

Are there differences between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices and the support that they receive from various sources? Reading coaches’ perceptions of their impact on teacher practices were measured as the sum of Survey items 1-6 in Section D and their perceptions of the support they receive was measured as the sum of Survey items 7–11 in Section D. Two *t* tests for independent samples were used to test the following null hypotheses:

Ho7₁: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices.

Ho7₂: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of the support they receive.

An independent samples t test was conducted to test the difference between the impact on teacher practices means of reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state. The grouping variable was region of the state (Southwest Virginia or other region), while the test variable was the impact on teacher practices measured as the sum of responses to items 1–6 in Section D of the questionnaire. The t test was not significant, $t(65) = 1.35, p = .18$. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.03). The mean on impact of teacher practices for reading coaches in Southwest Virginia ($M = 31.08, SD = 3.13$) was only slightly lower than the mean for reading coaches in other regions of the state ($M = 32.17, SD = 3.20$).

An independent samples t test was conducted to test the difference between the perceptions of the support received by reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the commonwealth. The grouping variable was region of the commonwealth (Southwest Virginia or other region), while the test variable was the support reading coaches receive, measured as the sum of responses to items 7-11 in Section D of the questionnaire. The t test was not significant, $t(63) = 1.78, p = .08$. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.05). The mean on the support reading coaches receive in Southwest Virginia ($M = 28.21, SD = 2.02$) was only slightly lower than the mean for reading coaches in other regions of the state ($M = 27.12, SD = 2.55$).

Summary

Chapter 4 included the analysis of data along with an overview of the instrumentation used in data collection. The chapter focused on the seven research questions. The various roles of the *Reading First* reading coach was detailed using data contained within the self-administered survey. In addition, coaches' self-perception of their effectiveness was reported. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study's findings along with recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the various roles of *Reading First* reading coaches. The study provided a description of roles and perceptions of elementary reading coaches as their roles developed within Virginia's *Reading First* schools. A summary of findings and recommendations for practice and further research are included.

Summary

The analysis focused on seven research questions. The study examined various roles of the reading coach as well as coaches' perception of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support they receive. The researcher collected data through the use of a 61-item survey that included personal demographic questions, core responsibilities, tasks involving data assessment, additional responsibilities, personal perceptions of their impact, and the support they receive from various sources (see Appendix C). In addition, three open-ended questions were included; full responses to the questions are shown as Appendix E. All 95 reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools during the 2006-2007 were invited to participate in this study. Sixty-eight reading coaches returned their surveys. The survey return rate for the study was acceptable at 71.6 %.

Summary of Findings

The analysis focused on seven research questions. The following addresses each research question and provides a summary of the findings related to it.

Research Question 1

What are the demographic characteristics of reading coaches in Virginia's *Reading First* schools?

Responses to surveys revealed that the majority (91.2%) of reading coaches responding had kindergarten- through third-grade teaching experience; in addition, 64.7% responding reading coaches had fourth- or fifth- grade teaching experience. This information should be encouraging to state and division officials. The International Reading Association (2004) stated coaches must be excellent teachers of reading, preferably at the levels they are coaching. Bean (2004) also expressed that teaching experience in the early elementary grades helps make the coach credible with classroom teachers.

Survey results also revealed that 52 (76.5%) reading coaches held reading specialist certification prior to becoming a reading coach while 61 (89.7%) now hold reading certification with an additional 5 (71.4%) working toward reading specialist certification. Survey results indicated that only 2 (28.6%) of the 7 coaches without reading specialist certification are not pursuing reading specialist certification. Again, educators in Virginia should be encouraged. The International Reading Association (2004) recommended that reading coaches should be knowledgeable about the reading processes, instruction, acquisition, and assessment. One way to gain this knowledge is to obtain reading specialist certification.

School divisions in the commonwealth of Virginia are divided into eight regions. Survey responses revealed 25 (36.8%) of the responding reading coaches were located in region seven, 10 (14.7%) in regions two and eight, 8 (11.8%) in region five, 6 (8.8%) in region one and six, 2 (2.9%) in region four, and 1 (1.5%) in region three.

Research Question 2

What roles and responsibilities do reading coaches in *Reading First* schools have?

The researcher sought to determine what reading coaches are doing with everyday practice. The literature review provided information pertaining to core responsibilities for reading coaches. This information was used to form questions for section A of the survey.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches performed a specific task. Reading coaches were asked how often they conduct grade group meeting with kindergarten-through third-grade teachers. A majority of responding reading coaches (70.8%) conduct meetings a few times a month, whereas 13 (20.0%) conduct meetings a few times a week or daily. Six (9.2%) reading coaches indicated they conduct grade group meeting once a month or less. This is aligned with the guideline provided to reading coaches from the Virginia Department of Education stating coaches should schedule regular meetings at each grade level to discuss data, and as a result of these meetings, make instructional decisions (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

Demonstration, or modeling specific behaviors or strategies, is one of the most important and effective means of coaching (Bean, 2004). According to Poglinco and Bach (2004), teacher buy-in to coaching is more likely to occur when coaches come into the classroom and model instructional techniques. Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches model lessons with the teacher observing. Frequency tables show 1 (1.5%) never model, 3 (4.5%) once a semester, 12 (17.9%) once a month or less, 38 (56.7%) a few times a month, and 2 (3.0%) responded they model daily. The commonwealth of Virginia asks that all coaches spend 80% of their time with teachers. Modeling has the potential to benefit teachers, students, and coaches. This information should encourage those educators responsible for reading coaches' professional development to look at the possibility of additional professional development that encourages modeling from reading coaches.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches are team-teaching with the classroom teacher. Eleven (16.2%) respondents indicated they never or once a semester team-teach with the classroom teacher while 16 (23.5%) team-teach once a month or less, and 41 (60.3%) coaches indicated they team-teach a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily.

One of the most important roles of coaching according to Diamond (2003) is side-by-side coaching.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches obtain teacher input before observations. Out of 68 respondents 52 (76.5%) revealed they obtain teacher input before observations a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily, whereas only a small percentage (7.4%) acknowledged they never or only once a semester obtain teacher input before observations.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches conduct planned observations of teachers. Frequency tables showed 58 (85.4%) coaches indicated they conduct planned observations of teachers a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily, whereas 10 (14.7%) responded once a semester or once a month or less. According to Bean (2004), observing can be one of the most effective coaching approaches to professional development. It allows the coaches to intercede, provide reinforcement, and/or alter observed behaviors if needed. Walpole and McKenna (2004) stressed that observation drives professional support. The study did not address how often or for what benefits reading coaches conduct unplanned observations. It would be interesting to find out if the percentages increased with all observations and of what advantage the unplanned observations held.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches provide feedback to teachers after observations. A majority (94.1%) of respondents replied they provide feedback to teachers after observations a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily. A small percentage (5.9%) of reading coaches provide feedback after observations once a month or less. These data are promising because the typical role of a reading coach is a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback rather than that of a formal evaluator (Perkins, 1998; Shower & Joyce, 1996; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This study did not address the type of feedback. It would be interesting to look at the type of feedback because The National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance (2005) reported that one of the most challenging aspects of coaching could be in providing corrective feedback to teachers without sounding negative.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches' plan reading lessons with teachers. Of the 68 respondents, 8 (11.8%) indicated they never or once a semester plan reading lesson with teachers whereas the majority 46 (67.6%) indicated they plan reading lessons with teachers a few times a month or a few times a week.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches create pacing guides with/for teachers. Forty reading coaches (59.7%) indicated they create pacing guides with or for teachers once a semester. Seven (10.4%) indicated they never create pacing guides with/for teachers and 20 (29.9%) indicated once a month or less, a few times a month, a few times a week or daily.

Frequency tables were used to determine how often reading coaches provide training on SBRR instructional strategies. A majority (86.8%) responded they provide training on SBRR instructional strategies once a month or less or a few times a month. Out of 68 respondents, only 4 (5.9%) indicated they provide training on SBRR instructional strategies once a semester or never.

Frequency tables were used to determine how often reading coaches attend professional development related to teaching reading. Five reading coaches (7.4%) indicated they attend professional development related to teaching reading once a semester, while a majority 62 (91.1%) indicated they attend once a month or less or a few times a month. Again, this is a positive indicator for coaching.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches attend professional development training for coaches. Twenty-five (36.8%) reading coaches indicated they attend professional development training for coaches once a semester, 38 (55.9%) once a month or less, and 5 (7.4%) a few times a month. Most of the coach's time should be spend working with teachers; however, the coach's own professional development must be a priority (Wren & Reed, 2005). The survey did not address the types of professional development the coach is receiving such as reading and communicating with other reading experts. It would be interesting to see

how often coaches are in communication with other reading coaches, state level *Reading First* specialists, and other reading authorities.

Frequency tables were used to determine how often reading coaches share information with staff from professional development training they have attended. Nine reading coaches (13.2%) indicated they share information with staff from professional development training they have attended once a semester, 33 (48.5%) indicated once a month or less, and 19 coaches (27.9%) indicated a few times a month. The study did not address a correlation between the number of professional development sessions the reading coach attended and how often the coach shared the information. It would be interesting to find out if coaches shared information from each professional development session attended with teachers as well as the relevancy to *Reading First*.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches meet with the principal to discuss the school reading program. Sixty (88.2%) of the responding reading coaches indicated they meet with the principal to discuss the school reading program a few times a month or a few times a week. Six respondents (8.8%) meet with the principal once a month or less whereas 2 (2.9%) meet daily. This is a positive indicator for Virginia because the Virginia Department of Education encourages regularly scheduled meetings with the principal and coach to discuss the reading program and data.

Frequency tables were used to determine how often reading coaches conduct formal evaluation of teachers. The majority (64.7%) indicated never, whereas 4(5.8%) responded they conduct formal evaluations of teachers a few times a week or daily. The Virginia Department of Education, however, asks that coaches not formally evaluate teachers. The reading coach must be able to work with teachers as a resource (Bean, 2004; Bean et al., 2003, Diamond, 2003; Joyce et al., 2000; National Center for *Reading First* Technical Assistance, 2005; Toll, 2004).

Frequency tables were used to determine how often reading coaches meet with central office personnel to discuss the school reading program. Frequency tables indicated 20 coaches (29.4%) meet with central office personnel to discuss the school reading program never or once a

semester, while 47 (69.1%) responded once a month or less or a few times a month, and 1 coach (1.5%) replied a few times a week.

Walpole and McKenna (2004) reported that one of the most important tasks of the coach is to ensure school instruction is informed by data. Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches provide training on the use of assessment. Nineteen (28.4%) responded once a semester, 45 (64.2%) once a month or less or a few times a month, and 5 (7.5%) a few times a week.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches model the use of reading assessment. Eighteen respondents (27.3%) indicated they model the use of reading assessments never or once a semester, 43 respondents (65.2%) indicated once a month or less or a few times a month, and 5 (7.6%) responded a few times a week or daily.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches analyze assessment for classroom teachers. Twenty-four (35.8%) reading coaches responded they never or once a semester analyze assessments for classroom teachers, 36 (53.8%) once a month or less or a few times a month, and 7 (10.5%) a few times a week or daily.

Virginia's *Reading First* coaches are asked to schedule and meet with staff to analyze data. Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches analyze assessment with classroom teachers. A majority (62.7%) of reading respondents indicated they analyze assessment with classroom teachers a few times a month, few times a week, or daily; 21 (31.3%) indicated once a month or less, while only 4 (6.0%) coaches indicated they analyze assessment with classroom teachers once a semester.

Walpole and McKenna (2004) reported the reading coach should analyze and summarize data to be used in instructional decision making. Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches analyze reading data. Seven (10.3%) coaches indicated they analyze reading data once a semester and 22 (32.4%) once a month or less. Thirty-nine (57.4%) respondents indicated they analyze reading data a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily.

Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches assist teachers with assessment and data management. According to respondents, 17 (25.0%) reading coaches indicated a few times a week or daily, 32 (47.1%) a few times a month, 3 (4.4%) once a semester, while 16 respondents (23.5%) indicated they assist teachers with assessment and data management once a month.

Reading coaches should assist with the examination of school-wide assessment data and help schools use the data to plan improvements and professional development (Neufeld & Rope, 2003; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2005). Frequency tables were used to show how often reading coaches assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction. Forty-seven (69.1%) responded a few times a month or a few times a week, 7 (10.3%) daily, and 14 (20.6%) once a semester or once a month or less.

Frequency tables were used to identify other tasks performed by reading coaches. The survey found that a majority of responding reading coaches are completing the reading-related tasks of working with administrators to develop a schedule to include reading blocks and additional time for strategic and intensive students (94.1%), setting goals for reading program with faculty and staff, working with special education teacher, and working with Title I teachers (91.2%). Forty-five (66.2%) reading coaches assist with writing the annual performance report and budget whereas 23 (33.8%) do not.

Wren and Reed (2005) recommend reading coaches only work with students when modeling for teachers. However, 40 (58.8%) reading coaches indicated they work with students whereas 28 (41.2%) indicated they do not work with students. The study did not address when and how coaches work with students. It would be interesting to investigate when and how reading coaches are working with students. In response to the open ended survey question, Section E question 8, “Is there additional information concerning your role as reading coach you would like to share with me?” a coach wrote, “I would love to use my reading specialist skills to work directly with intensive students.”

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2005) stressed the reading coach's time should not be consumed with clerical duties, substitute teaching, fund raising, tutorial, or other responsibilities that are not related to the *Reading First* grant. Frequency tables show 42 (64.7%) assist with morning arrivals, 41 (60.3%) assist with afternoon dismissal, 35 (51.5%) serve on bus duty, 22 (32.4%) serve on cafeteria/lunch duty, and 11 (16.2%) respondents indicated they serve as substitutes. In response to open ended question, E-6, "In your opinion, what would assist you in becoming a more effective reading coach?" one coach indicated, "I feel I would be a more effective reading coach if I had more defined job boundaries. I'm stretched to wear many different hats on a continuous basis."

Research Question 3

What are reading coaches' perceptions of their impact on reading teachers' practices and the support that they receive?

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, "Reading coaches are preparing teachers adequately to use core reading program." The majority of reading coaches (91.1%) indicated they agree or strongly agree and 6 (8.8%) somewhat agree.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, "Reading coaches are preparing teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials." One coach (1.5%) somewhat disagreed while 67 (98.5%) indicated they somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree. The study did not address how coaches are preparing teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials. It would be interesting to investigate how coaches are preparing teachers to use supplemental and intervention materials.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, "The most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each elementary school." A majority, 98.5%, responded they somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree. One (1.5%) coach responded disagree but made a comment that there may be a need for two or more coaches in larger schools.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, "Reading coaches

play an important role in enriching the learning environment.” All of the coaches (100%) responded somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that reading coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, “I am comfortable modeling for teachers.” Demonstration or modeling specific behaviors or strategies is one of the most important, effective means of coaching (Bean, 2004). Twenty-seven (39.7%) of coaches strongly agree they are comfortable modeling, 23 (33.8%) agree, 12 (17.6%) somewhat agree, with 6 (8.8%) coaches responding somewhat disagree. Additional research may be needed because 16 (23.5%) indicated they actually model once a month or less or once a semester or never.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the survey statement, “My school/division fully utilizes my professional expertise and skills as a reading coach.” Ten (13.8%) reading coaches strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree that the school/division fully uses their professional expertise and skills as a reading coach, whereas 58 (85.3%) somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “I have the support of the school principal.” Three (4.4%) disagree or somewhat disagree they have the support of the principal, whereas 65 (95.6%) somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree with the statement. Poglinco and Bach (2004) reported even the most capable coaches must have the support of the principal.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “I have the support of teachers.” Poglinco and Bach (2004) reported that coaches’ effectiveness increase when school staff supports them. Toll (2005) found the number one concern of literacy coaches was the resistant teacher. Fortunately for reading coaches in Virginia’s *Reading First* schools, the majority of reading coaches 66 (97.1%) somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree they have the support of teachers, whereas only 2 (2.9%) responded somewhat disagree.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “I have the support of the division’s *Reading First* Coordinator (LEA).” All respondents indicated they somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree they have the support of the division’s *Reading First* Coordinator (LEA). Poglinco and Bach (2004) reported the most capable of coaches must have the support of the principal and other external partners.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “I have the support of a state *Reading First* reading specialist.” The majority of respondents 67 (98.5%) indicated they agree or strongly agree with the statement with only 1 (1.5%) coach indicating he or she somewhat disagreed. The study did not investigate how the states' *Reading First* reading specialists support the teachers. Additional research should be conducted to determine how the state's *Reading First* specialists support reading coaches and the effectiveness of this support.

Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “I have the support of my school system’s administration in implementing *Reading First*.” All respondents indicated they somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree that they have the support of the school system’s administration in implementing *Reading First*.

Research Question 4

What are reading coaches’ perceptions of professional development to support reading instruction?

Research consistently reported how important teacher training is in improving learning (Allington, 2001; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Sparks & Hirsch, 2000). Frequency tables were used to show responses to the statement, “My division has a strong commitment for professional development to support reading instruction.” Three (4.4%) respondents indicated they strongly disagree or disagree, 7 (10.3%) somewhat agree, and 58 (85.3%) agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Intensive professional development in reading is needed to have quality reading teachers (International Reading Association, 2000). Frequency tables were used to show responses to the

statement, "Current staff development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically-based reading research best practice. One (1.5%) reading coach responded strongly disagree; 7 (10.3%) coaches responded somewhat disagree. Twenty-one (30.9%) coaches indicated they somewhat agree, and 39 (57.3%) indicated agree or strongly agree that current staff development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically-based reading research best practice.

Research Question 5

Are there differences between reading coaches who have administrative certification and those who do not and the extent to which they perform administrative tasks?

As shown in Chapter 4, a preliminary analysis of five crosstabulated 2 x 2 tables showed that all five tables had violations of the assumptions of chi-square, either more than 20% of the cells in each table had an expected frequency of less than five and/or the minimum expected frequency was less than one. When there are violations of the assumptions of chi-square, chi-square should not be used to test for a significant difference in the categories of the independent variable (in this case, whether or not reading coaches have an administrative certification). Therefore, null hypotheses were not tested.

Research Question 6

Are there differences between reading coaches who have reading specialist certification and those who do not and the frequency with which they plan reading lessons with teachers and assist teachers in using data to plan reading instruction?

As shown in Chapter 4, a preliminary analysis of 2 x 2 crosstabulated tables showed violations of the assumptions of chi-square. For both tables, more than 20% of the cells in the table had an expected frequency of less than five. When there is a violation of the assumption of chi-square, chi-square should not be used to test for a difference in the categories of the independent variable, in this case whether or not coaches have reading specialist certification.

Therefore, null hypotheses were not tested.

Research Question 7

Are there differences between reading coaches employed in Southwest Virginia and those employed in other parts of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices and the support they receive from various sources?

Two *t* tests for independent samples were used to test the following null hypotheses:

Ho7₁: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of their impact on teacher practices.

Ho7₂: There is no difference between reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state and their perceptions of the support they receive.

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to test the difference between the impact on teacher practices means of reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the state. The grouping variable was region of the state (Southwest Virginia or other region), while the test variable was the impact on teacher practices measured as the sum of responses to items 1–6 in Section D of the questionnaire. The *t* test was not significant, $t(65) = 1.35, p = .18$. The effect size, as measured by η^2 was small (.03). The mean on impact of teacher practices for reading coaches in Southwest Virginia ($M = 31.08, SD = 3.13$) was only slightly lower than the mean for reading coaches in other regions of the state ($M = 32.17, SD = 3.20$).

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to test the difference between the perceptions of the support received by reading coaches in Southwest Virginia and those in other regions of the commonwealth. The grouping variable was region of the commonwealth (Southwest Virginia or other region), while the test variable was the support reading coaches receive, measured as the sum of responses to items 7-11 in Section D of the questionnaire. The *t* test was not significant, $t(63) = 1.78, p = .08$. The effect size, as measured by η^2 was small (.05). The mean on the support reading coaches receive in Southwest Virginia ($M = 28.21, SD =$

2.02) was only slightly lower than the mean for reading coaches in other regions of the state ($M = 27.12, SD = 2.55$).

Conclusions

Findings in research question #1:

- 91.2% of reading coaches revealed they had kindergarten- through third-grade teaching experience. This is a positive outcome for Virginia because the International Reading Association (2004) recommended that coaches be excellent teachers of reading, preferably at the levels they are coaching. Bean (2004) also recommended reading coaches have teaching experience in the early elementary grades.
- The International Reading Association (2004) recommended that reading specialists and coaches have previous teaching experience as well as a master's degree in reading that includes a minimum of 24-graduate hours in reading and related courses and a 6-hour supervised practicum experience. The International Reading Association (2004) stated that, ideally, coaches would meet the Standards for Reading Professionals and hold a reading specialist license. While this was a strength for the commonwealth of Virginia, seven respondents revealed they do not have reading specialist certification. Five indicated they are working toward certification whereas two indicated they are not working toward certification. This is of interest because Virginia requires all *Reading First* reading coaches to have reading specialist certification (Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

Findings in research question #2:

- 90.8% of respondents conduct grade group meetings a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily. This is a positive result based on recommendations provided from the Virginia Department of Education (2006).
- 80.6% of respondents indicated they model reading lessons for teachers never, once a semester, once a month or less, or a few times a month. Bean (2004) indicated that

- modeling or demonstration was one of the most effective means of coaching. Those working with reading coaches might use this information to find professional development opportunities for coaches that encourage modeling.
- Bean (2004) indicated that observing could be one of the most effective coaching approaches to professional development. Walpole and McKenna (2004) stressed that observation drives professional support. Of the reading coaches, 57.1% indicated they planned observations of teachers once a semester, once a month or less, or a few times a month with 53.0% indicating they do so a few times a week or daily. The study did not address how often or for what benefits reading coaches conducted unplanned observations. It would be interesting to find out if percentages increased with all observations and what advantages these observations held.
 - 94.1% of respondents replied they provide feedback to teachers after observations a few times a month, a few times a week, or daily. These data are promising for Virginia because of the collaborative process of coaching. It would be interesting to look at the type of feedback coaches are providing to teachers.
 - 100% of reading coaches attend professional development for reading coaches once a semester, once a month or less, or a few times a month. The commonwealth of Virginia provides reading coach training once a month or less (Virginia Department of Education, 2006). The study did not address the types of professional development the coach is receiving. It would be interesting to evaluate types and frequency of professional development sessions for coaches.
 - 13.2% of responding coaches indicated they share information with staff from professional development training once a semester, 76.4% indicated once a month or less, or a few times a month, and 10.3% indicated a few times a week or daily. The study did not address a correlation between the number of professional development sessions the reading coach attended and how often the coach shared the information.

- All reading coaches indicated they are meeting with the principal to discuss their school's reading program at least once a month or less whereas 88.2% indicated they meet a few times a month or a few times a week. Again, the data are promising for Virginia because of the collaborative process of coaching.
- Wren and Reed (2004) reported that although the coach will observe instruction and provide feedback, he or she is never placed in the position of evaluating job performance of teachers. Typically, the role of a reading coach is a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback rather than that of a formal evaluator (Perkins, 1998; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Of the respondents, 35.2% indicated they conduct formal evaluation of teachers at least once a semester or more. This is of interest because the commonwealth of Virginia asked that reading coaches not evaluate teachers (Virginia Department of Education, 2006).
- 98.5% of coaches indicated they agree or strongly agree they have the support of a state *Reading First* reading specialist. Additional research should be conducted to determine how the state's *Reading First* specialists support reading coaches and the effectiveness of the support.
- 58.8% of reading coaches indicated they work with students. The commonwealth of Virginia indicated that reading coaches work with students only if it is for demonstration or modeling purposes (Virginia Department of Education, 2006). It would be interesting to investigate when and how reading coaches are working with students.
- Reading coaches are performing a variety of other duties such as: 64.7% assist with morning arrivals, 60.3% assist with afternoon dismissal, 51.5% serve on bus duty, 32.4% serve on cafeteria/lunch duty, and 16.2% of respondents indicated they serve as substitutes. One coach indicated in open ended question E-6, "I feel I would be a more effective reading coach if I had more defined job boundaries. I'm stretched to

wear many different hats on a continuous basis.” The study did not address whether a job description was provided prior to becoming a reading coach or if one was currently in place. The commonwealth of Virginia recommends that coaches spend 80% of their time working with teachers (Virginia Department of Education, 2006). The study did not address the amount of time coaches are spending performing these other tasks.

Findings in research question #3:

- 100.0% of the respondents somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that "Reading coaches prepare teachers adequately to use the core reading program."
- 98.5% somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that "Reading coaches prepare teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials."
- 94.0% agreed or strongly agreed that "The most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each school."
- 100.0% somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that "Reading coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment." Responses indicated that coaches believe they are effective
- 55.9% agreed or strongly agreed with "My school (division) fully utilizes my professional expertise and skills." This is of interest because researchers indicated that even the most capable of coaches must have the support of the teachers and administration (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

Findings in research question #4:

- No single element is more important to reading instruction and success for all students than instruction from well-trained teachers who are familiar with and apply current research to their classroom practices (Learning First Alliance, 2000). Of the reading coaches, 85% agreed or strongly agreed that "My division has a strong commitment for professional development to support reading instruction." In addition, 88.2% somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that "Current staff

development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically based reading research best practice." This is a positive indicator for Virginia because quality reading instruction is a primary factor in making a difference in students' reading success (International Reading Association, 2000; Kaplan & Owens, 2002; O'Neil, 2003; Wren, 2001).

Recommendations for Practice

A reading coach's own professional development must be a priority (Wren & Reed, 2005). Of the respondents, 36.8% indicated they attend professional development training for coaches once a semester and 55.9% responded once a month or less.

State- and Division-Specific Recommendations:

1. Because effective professional development appears to be limited, state and district personnel and reading experts need to seek additional ways to meet the learning needs of reading coaches.
2. State and district personnel and reading experts should work to provide professional development to meet the needs of both novice and experienced reading coaches.

Division-Specific Recommendations

1. Of the reading coaches, 23.9% reported they model never, once a semester, or once a month or less and 56.7% indicated a few times a month. Wren and Reed (2005) suggested coaches should be in every classroom several times a week to provide training and support to teachers. It is essential that reading coaches be in classrooms. Administrators need to examine how often coaches are getting into the classroom.
2. Reading coaches are performing a variety of duties such as bus and cafeteria duties that do not relate to improved reading instruction. Survey question E-6, "In your

opinion, what would assist you in becoming a more effective reading coach?"

included such responses as:

- “just having a “handle” on all I’m supposed to do as far as paperwork and the time lines involved”;
- “too much administrative tasks, difficult to get into the classroom”;
- “standard job description”;
- “I feel I would be a more effective reading coach if I had more defined job boundaries. I’m stretched to wear many different hats on a continuous basis”;
- “a job description”; and
- “a job description written in black and white so I would know what my role is.”

School divisions should work to ensure that a detailed job description is in place prior to hiring a reading coach. A detailed job description might prevent comments such as:

- “Post secondary education needs to include courses in the role of the reading coach. That should be a specific track that reading specialists should choose. I’d rather be a reading specialist, who works primarily with students”; and
- “I would love to use my reading specialist skills to work directly with intensive students.”

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Reading coaches should be interviewed to obtain qualitative data regarding why the coaches responded to the survey questions as they did; this would add greater depth to the analysis.
2. Additional research is needed to determine what reading coaches are doing in other states.
3. Additional research is needed to determine the effect of reading coaches on school-wide reading achievement.

4. Additional research is needed to determine the best opportunities for reading coaches in the development of their leadership skills.
5. Additional research is needed on the implementation of reading coaches and how they should be monitored by researchers to determine their effects on reading achievement.
6. Additional research in this field is needed to identify the best type of professional development to assist reading coaches in their positions.
7. Additional research is needed to determine if there is a difference in reading coaches' effectiveness on teacher practice when they have support from state-level reading experts compared to those without such support.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Virginia's *Reading First* Schools

Region	Division	School
II	*Accomack	Kegootank
II	*Accomack	Metompink
IV	Arlington City	Carlin Springs**
V	Bedford	Body Camp
V	*Bedford	Stewartsville
VII	Bristol City	Highland View
VIII	Brunswick	Meherrin-Powellton
VIII	Brunswick	Red Oak
VIII	Brunswick	Sturgeon
VIII	Brunswick	Totaro
VII	Buchanan	Twin Valley
VII	*Buckingham	Dillwyn Primary/Elementary
VIII	Buckingham	Gold Hill
VII	Carroll	Fancy Gap
VII	Carroll	Gladesboro
VII	Carroll	Hillsville
VII	Carroll	Oakland**
VII	Carroll	St Paul
VIII	Charlotte	Bacon District
V	*Charlottesville	Clark
III	Colonial Beach	Colonial Beach
VI	Covington City	Edgemont Primary
VIII	Cumberland	Cumberland
VII	*Dickenson	Clintwood
VII	*Dickenson	Ervinton
IV	Fairfax County	Bucknell
I	Franklin City	S.P. Morton
VI	*Franklin County	Callaway
VI	Franklin County	Sontag
VIII	*Grayson	Baywood
VIII	Grayson	Providence
VIII	Greensville	Greensville
VIII	Halifax	Halifax
VIII	Halifax	Meadville
VIII	Halifax	Sinai
V	Harrisonburg City	Keister

V	*Harrisonburg City	Spotswood
V	Harrisonburg City	Waterman
I	*Henrico	Adams
I	Henrico	Glen Lea
VI	Henry	Mt Olivet (K-2)
VI	Henry	Axton (3rd grade)
II	Isle of Wight	Hardy
VII	Lee County	Ewing
VII	Lee County	Rose Hill
VII	Lee County	St. Charles
V	Louisa	Thomas Jefferson**
VI	Martinsville	Albert Harris
VI	Martinsville	Clearview**
VI	Martinsville	Druid Hills**
V	*Nelson	Rockfish
V	Nelson	Tye River
II	Newport News	Carver
II	Newport News	Jenkins
II	*Newport News	Horace H. Espes
II	Newport News	Sedgefield
II	Newport News	South Morrison
II	Norfolk	Campostella
II	Norfolk	Coleman Place
II	Norfolk	Crossroads
II	Norfolk	Lindenwood
II	Norfolk	Oceanair
II	Northampton	Occohannock
VII	Norton City	Norton
II	Portsmouth	SH Clarke Academy*
VIII	Prince Edward	Prince Edward
IV	Prince William County	Belmont
IV	Prince William County	Dumfries
IV	Prince William County	Neabsco
IV	Prince William County	River Oaks
I	Richmond City	Ginter Park
I	*Richmond City	Southampton
I	Richmond City	Nottoway
I	Richmond City	A.V. Norrell
V	*Rockingham	Mountain View
VII	Russell	Castlewood
VII	Smyth	Atkins
VII	*Smyth	Chilhowie
II	*Southampton	Nottoway
II	Suffolk	Elephant's Fork
II	Suffolk	Robertson
II	Suffolk	Mack Benn Jr.

VII	*Tazewell	Abbs Valley Boissevain
VII	Tazewell	Raven
VII	Tazewell	Springville
VII	Washington	Rhea Valley
VII	Washington	Meadowview
V	Waynesboro City	William Perry
III	Westmoreland	Cople
VII	Wythe	Jackson
VII	Wythe	Max Meadows
VII	Wythe	Rural Retreat
VII	Wythe	Sheffey
VII	Wythe	Speedwell
VII	*Wythe	Spiller

*Reading First schools added in 2006-2007 school year

**Schools with discontinued funding

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter to Reading Coaches

Shelia Sargent-Martin
1234 Anytown Road
Any City, ST xxxxx
XXX-XXX-xxxx

September 25, 2006

Dear Reading First reading coach,

My name is Shelia Sargent-Martin and I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. As part of my degree requirements I must complete a dissertation research project and I have chosen to investigate the role of the elementary reading coach. Currently, there is limited information contained in the literature surrounding the multifaceted role of reading coach, specifically the literature is void concerning the effectiveness of reading coaches. This topic is of significant interest to me because I am currently employed by the Virginia Department of Education as a state Reading Specialist and I work directly with Reading First reading coaches on a daily basis. I believe strongly that the findings from this study will be beneficial to the field of reading education and, specifically, provide important information to Reading First coaches, principals and others in reading education.

As a Reading First reading coach your insight is extremely valuable. Therefore, I am writing to request your participation in this study. The survey is designed to collect information about the role of reading coaches in Virginia's Reading First schools and the position's impact in helping teachers integrate scientifically based reading research in the K-3 classroom. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Included in this packet you will find a survey and self-addressed envelope. Please answer all questions accurately from a Reading First reading coach's perspective. After completion please return the survey to me in the provided self-addressed envelope.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The code number on the survey will be used only to determine which surveys are returned. Be assured that your anonymity will be respected and your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Data analysis of the results will be available upon request. If you have any questions regarding the study or your participation, please feel free to contact me at, shelia.sargent-martin@doe.virginia.gov or call (XXX) XXX-xxxx—Home or (XXX) XXXX-xxxx—Work. I thank you for your consideration and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Shelia Sargent-Martin

APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument

DIRECTIONS: This survey is to be completed if you are currently serving as a reading coach in one of Virginia’s Reading First schools. Please complete each item as accurately and completely as possible. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Your completion of the survey instrument will mean that you have given your informed consent. If you have questions please contact Shelia Sargent-Martin at 276-963-6633 or Shelia.Sargent-Martin@doe.virginia.gov

A. Please circle the corresponding number which most closely corresponds to how often you perform the following tasks.	Never	Once a semester	Once a month or less	A few times a month	A few times a week	Daily
1. Conduct grade group meetings with K- 3 teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Model lessons in the classroom (teacher observing you)	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Team teaching with classroom teacher (co-teaching)	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Obtain teacher input before observation	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conduct planned observation of teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provide feedback to teachers after observation	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. Plan reading lessons with teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Create pacing guides with/for teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Provide training to staff on scientifically based reading research instructional strategies	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. Attend professional development related to teaching reading	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Attend professional development training for coaches	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. Share information with staff from professional development training you	0	1	2	3	4	5

have attended						
13. Meet with principal to discuss school reading program	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Conduct formal evaluation of teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. Meet with central office personnel to discuss school reading program	0	1	2	3	4	5

B. When working with the classroom teacher how often do you perform the following tasks? Please circle the number which most closely indicates how often you perform the following tasks.	Never	Once a semester	Once a month or less	A few times a month	A few times a week	Daily
1. Provide training on the use of assessments	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Model use of reading assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Analyze assessment <i>for</i> classroom teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Analyze assessment <i>with</i> classroom teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Analyze reading data (PALS, DIBELS, core reading series, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Assist teachers with assessment and data management	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. Assist teachers with using data to plan appropriate reading instruction	0	1	2	3	4	5

C. What other tasks do you perform? (Check all that apply.)

	1. Work with administrators to develop a schedule to include reading blocks and additional time for strategic and intensive students
	2. Assist with writing the annual performance report and budget
	3. Assume administrative duties when the principal is out of the building
	4. Manage book room/teacher resource room
	5. Develop and organize literacy centers
	6. Set goals for the reading program with faculty and staff
	7. Conduct book studies
	8. Assist with morning arrivals
	9. Assist with afternoon dismissal
	10. Serve on bus duty
	11. Serve on cafeteria/lunch duty
	12. Serve as substitute for teachers
	13. Work with parents
	14. Work with students
	15. Work with preschool, fourth or fifth grade teachers
	16. Work with paraprofessionals (i.e., training, lesson planning)
	17. Work with volunteers (i.e., training, planning)
	18. Work with special education teachers
	19. Work with Title I teachers
	20. Attend school board meetings
	21. Other (Please specify)

D. Please circle the number which most closely indicates the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Note: SD= Strongly disagree, D= Disagree, SWD= Somewhat disagree, SWA= Somewhat agree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly agree

	SD	D	SWD	SWA	A	SA
1. Reading coaches are preparing teachers adequately to use core reading program	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Reading coaches are preparing teachers adequately to use supplemental and intervention materials	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The most effective use of reading coaches is to have one in each elementary school	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Reading coaches play an important role in enriching the learning environment	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I am comfortable modeling for teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. My school/division fully utilizes my professional expertise and skills as a reading coach	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I have the support of school principal	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I have the support of teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I have the support of the division's Reading First Coordinator (LEA)	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I have the support of a state reading specialist	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I have the support of my school system's administration in implementing Reading First	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. My division has a strong commitment for professional development to support reading instruction	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Current staff development programs are sufficient to prepare teachers for scientifically based reading research best practice	1	2	3	4	5	6

E. Demographic Section

1. What classroom teaching experience do you have? (Check all that apply.)

1. K-3 3. 6th-8th 5. Other (please specify) _____
 2. 4th-5th 4. 9th-12th 6. No classroom teaching experience

2. Prior to becoming a reading coach did you have reading specialist certification? 1. Yes 2. No

3. Do you currently have a reading specialist certification? 1. Yes 2. No

3B. If no, are you pursuing a reading specialist certification? 1. Yes 2. No

4. Prior becoming a reading coach did you have administrative certification? 1. Yes 2. No

5. Do you currently have administrative certification? 1. Yes 2. No

5B. If no, are you pursuing administration certification? 1. Yes 2. No

6. In your opinion what would assist you in becoming a more effective reading coach?

7. Have professional development opportunities designed specifically for reading coaches in Virginia met your professional learning needs? Please explain.

8. Is there additional information concerning your role as reading coach you would like to share with me?

Questions or comments contact
Shelia Sargent-Martin
XXX-XXX-xxxx
Shelia.Sargent-Martin@doe.virginia.gov

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

APPENDIX D

Pilot Study Cover Letter and Response Form

Dear Educator,

Thank you for consenting to participate in this pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study is to improve the survey, which will serve as the primary source of data collection in this study. The title of my dissertation is “A Study of the Evolving Practices of Reading Coaches in Virginia.” With the implementation of reading coaches in Reading First schools, educators need knowledge and information about coaching. The purpose of this study is to determine the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of Virginia’s Reading First coaches. In addition, this study will look at coaches’ perception of the effectiveness of Reading First coaches. One benefit of this study includes an increased awareness of reading coaches and their responsibilities. An additional potential benefit will be both preserving and increasing the number of reading coach positions not only within the State of Virginia, but possibly throughout the nation.

I hope you will respond to each item on the enclosed pages and place them in the return envelope to me within 10 business days. The coaching Survey requires about 10 minutes to complete. Section A relates to the frequency with which core responsibilities and tasks of reading coaches are performed questions. Section B questions relate to the frequency with which tasks involving data assessment are performed. Section C includes additional responsibilities reading coaches may have. Section D includes items that measure reading coaches’ perceptions of their impact, the support they receive from various sources and potential barriers to the implementation of Reading First. Section E contains five demographic questions and three open ended questions.

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed postage paid envelope within 10 days. You will receive a summary of the overall findings when the study has been completed. Since your suggestions for the improvement of the instruments are needed to revise the instrument for use in the actual study, I have included a pilot response form survey. Please complete the Pilot Response Form and offer any additional comments, which you consider beneficial to the study. Your participation in this pilot study is voluntary and you may feel free to withdraw at any time.

Please feel free to reach me if you have any questions at (276) 963-6633 or email shelia.sargent-martin@doe.virginia.gov. Thank you in advance for your time and input.

Sincerely,

Shelia Sargent-Martin
Doctoral Candidate

PILOT STUDY - RESPONSE FORM

A. Approximately how many minutes did it take you to complete the Coaching Survey?

B. With regards to items 1-62 in the coaching survey circle the appropriate response:

Were the instructions clear? YES NO

If No, how could this be improved?

Coaching Survey

C. Was the format of the document acceptable? YES NO

If no, how could this be improved?

APPENDIX E

Open-Ended Survey Responses

6. In your opinion what would assist you in becoming a more effective reading coach?
- More Time!
 - Regular time and access to discussing SBRR/applications in the classroom
 - Spending more time with veteran coaches, watching and questioning. I think it would be beneficial to have something set-up like student teaching, but for coaches. (Shadowing a coach for a month).
 - I feel like I have the opportunity to become as effective as possible
 - Continue coordinating PD on a regular basis for literacy coaches
 - We need paraprofessionals in our primary classrooms- especially in kindergarten
 - More personnel (paraprofessionals in primary classrooms)
 - Having the confidence to advise teachers on ways to improve classroom instruction and deliver more effective techniques for instruction.
 - More sharing time with other coaches using my core program
 - A phone at my computer desk☺ (or laptop) I'm not familiar enough at this point to say
 - Continue the grant past the 6 year mark
 - More time to get planning/paperwork done.
 - More school/division control of spending and less by state/federal
 - More time- 12 month employees
 - To be honest, the position needs to carry the title of administrator with it. I have been a coach in 2 different divisions and in both the teachers still have a tendency to dismiss Reading First as a "passing fancy."
 - I need more time in analyzing data to be more effective

- Just having a “handle” on all I’m supposed to do as far as paperwork and the time lines involved. I could probably answer this question better in the spring since I am just beginning.
- Opportunities to speak with veteran coaches
- I’m so new, it’s hard to tell. I’m learning!
- At this time, I can not think of anything
- Observing an effective, experienced reading coach
- Observing an effective reading coach in action. List of obligations of reading coach
- More time to conduct PD with teachers
- It would be at the local level
- Too much administrative tasks, difficult to get in the classroom
- Continued training
- Having a part-time secretary to take care of clerical work so I have time to be a coach
- Standard job description
- Time, teachers are way overbooked.
- I feel I would be a more effective reading coach if I had more defined job boundaries. I’m stretched to wear many different hats on a continuous basis.
- Having more time to meet with and work with teachers. Also, more time to work more closely with the students.
- Too much documentation
- More training and/or modeling from more experienced coaches.
- There needs to be more accountability for the teachers to make the changes that are modeled and required by the school system
- Complete support of my school principal (staff development program, common language, fidelity to the core)
- I am effective

- More time for professional development
- More active support from the building principal in terms of a clear vision and organization; quicker response from our office manager in procuring needed materials; personally- a little less flexibility and empathy; more of a “this is what needs to be done and that’s that” attitude.
- Visiting other schools with reading coaches
- Knowledge of core due to fact I have not personally used it and this is my first full year as coach. I need time to get to know the manuals.
- Use of an administrative aide to do paperwork
- I could benefit from more observations of me (coaching) or more guided role-playing with feedback
- I feel that the training that the DOE specialist provide will assist me in becoming a more effective reading coach
- More practice in actual coaching and modeling
- Talking/meeting with other coaches that are using the same core program for success and weaknesses
- Observing other coaches, meeting with other coaches, feeling the support of the principal.
- Having more time to get things done
- As I am new, additional core training should assist me in becoming more effective. Time and familiarity with the TEs (teacher edition) and core components of each grade level will also be valuable. I think observing and modeling will have a huge impact in helping to learn the needs of all the students/teachers.
- A job description
- More training for principals who have never taught at Elementary level in the area of reading. They need more than TRA.
- A second reading coach for large schools. Purchasing power at the school level instead of CO
- A job description written in black and white so all would know what my role is.

- More help with special education
 - As a new coach, I would be most affected by spending time with other coaches to see them in action. Many of us learn by watching then doing, so this opportunity would be most beneficial
 - More support from the principal
 - Continued training – Reading First really covers everything I’ve needed A-Z. Everyone has been very supportive.
7. Have professional development opportunities designed specifically for reading coaches in Virginia met your professional learning needs? Please explain.
- Yes. Intensive, well organized, lots of opportunities to share with other coaches and to get answers to questions.
 - To some extent. There are still gaps. I would like to see more specific examples of classroom application/implementation at the trainings so we could discuss.
 - Yes. I found it? beneficial to have opportunities to meet with other coaches to share ideas and experiences.
 - Core training was excellent!
 - I can’t answer this due to the length of time I’ve been coaching (only a couple of months)
 - Yes. Each conference has afforded me opportunities to learn new things and what I need to be an effective reading coach
 - Yes. Reading academies and core trainings were great
 - Yes, Core training and Reading academies were terrific
 - Yes, I have learned a great deal about the expectations of a reading coach. I feel that I am better able to critically evaluate instruction being presented
 - Yes, most of all getting to talk to other coaches as well as meeting with the state reading specialist
 - Yes, each year the focus changers to reflect our needs i.e. workshop, fluency, vocabulary, etc.

- Yes, they have been excellent!
- Yes, but best have been by SRA/Open Court- CORE/State/UVA training less helpful
- Yes, great speakers such as Debbie Diller
- Somewhat, there has been some opportunities, however I feel we need more opportunities with successful programs.
- Yes, the Reading Academy I attended during the summer helped me as I prepared to take on this new job. I'm looking forward to the New Coaches training in Roanoke and the Reading Coach training in Abingdon I attended really helped me get a handle on what my job is.
- The opportunities have been instrumental in clarifying the duties of a coach
- Yes, I've only been to 1, but it was very good.
- I have learned things to share with teachers
- Yes, I have been able to attend professional development opportunities at various locations.
- So far.
- Yes, much of the research has been done and presented to us for our use. I have little time to research best practices and current issues in reading instruction.
- Yes, all PD has been in response to needs so it has been very useful.
- Some repetitive
- Absolutely!
- Absolutely- they have been excellent
- Yes, I feel the new coach trainings are helping me identify my role within the school.
- I have greatly benefited from the professional development opportunities provided by RFIV. I've gained knowledge regarding data analysis as well as best practices in reading instruction.
- Absolutely, I have learned and tried to share with my K-3 teachers what will help them in Reading First.

- Professional development opportunities have been relevant to my position as Reading coach
- Yes, there has been extensive training so far and month focus groups are planned statewide.
- Not sure yet. This is my first year as a RF coach. I still have training to go to. The initial 2 day training was way too much info. For 2 days!
- Not really- they just scratch the surface. Would also like more control in my own professional endeavors. The VA grant is all controlling!
- Yes, the latest on professional development was timely and good.
- Yes, I am a first year RF coach, however we have had RF for 3 years and the previous coach would share information with me also; I have been the reading specialist in the building for 2 years. I as also the literacy coordinator for the Reading Excellence Act grant.
- No, they have been very basic. I already knew the stuff.
- Yes, focus on the coach's role and program effectiveness
- Yes: new coach training from CORE was very helpful in my understanding of the coaching role; ESK strategies assisted with vocabulary instruction for all students; Debbie Duller (Literacy Work Stations) clarified what stations should do and ways to effectively manage them; and all professional development activities allowed me to network with other coaches.
- Yes, I was able to get an Ed.S. degree in reading from UVA
- Yes, more time to network with other coaches would be helpful
- Yes & no. New coach training was too much in a short time/monthly meetings attended last year were a waste except ESOL speaker Argüelles.
- Yes, especially the CORE training
- Yes- especially the CORE coach training
- Yes. The CORE training gave detailed guidelines on the job of the coach and how to implement it in phases.
- Yes, training has been great- details of how to model and conference teachers has really helped

- CORE and TRA Both are well organized with beneficial ideas and suggestions for improvement in instruction
- Yes, the focus group meetings and conferences are very informative
- I feel the CORE training probably should have been held prior to the beginning of the school year. Other than the summer reading academies I have not had any specific coach training- other than 2 days of new coach training (which was highly useful to my immediate beginning of the year concerns).
- Yes, but not enough- although the professional development we have had for our school has helped.
- Yes, but the professional development seems to come after the fact. Example, The CORE should have been at the start before reading coaches went into the classrooms and schools!
- Yes, but I would like more on teaching in classrooms for example teaching in a classroom that doesn't have work stations.
- The professional development opportunities have been helpful in meeting my professional learning needs. I feel however that this position is a type of middle-management position and I have not been trained to that type of role.
- CORE training with Jill- very good.
- Yes, they're great for getting started, but I believe that there is no substitute for spending time with other coaches and actually getting into the classrooms to observe/model.
- Somewhat, I feel that being in a community of coaches that closely support each other and challenge each other to learn more is much more supportive for being a reading coach
- Yes; however, we are in the fourth year now and it would be good to revisit some things.
- Yes, including the training I've received from Virginia Staff Development council. We have had coaching training through them last year, and we graduate the end of October.
- I am new- The new coach training was helpful.
- Yes, they have helped me to understand the role of coach.

8. Is there additional information concerning your role as reading coach you would like to share with me?

- In the beginning- very overwhelming.
- No, thank you.
- I love my job!
- Not at this time
- I firmly believe reading coaches and reading first (what they stand for) are the best things that has happened to education. I would like to see math coaches too!
- Time is a factor for me. I have a large school and I feel I can't get everything done as I need or would like to.
- Teachers need support leading to confidence, not negative criticism. They should be made to feel an important part of the process and free to experiment.
- It is a lot harder than people think!
- There isn't enough time in a day to get done all you need to do☺
- As a coach, one can get insightful into the practices and methods of master teachers. It provides an opportunity to really evaluate a core program, but most of all; it provides an opportunity for me to grow as a learner.
- Not at this time
- It would be helpful to have a mentor to help with schedules and expectations of the reading coach.
- A way to help teachers without "stepping on their toes."
- I think, from experience, that we have been reactive rather than proactive in training- everything has come after the program, grant, etc. has been in place.
- I am new to coaching.
- This is our third year in reading first and we feel good about our program. It is a "team" effort.
- I would love to use my reading specialist skills to work directly with intensive students.

- So far I have enjoyed my role. The teachers and staff have been very receptive!
 - It is a wonderful job. I enjoy watching the children grow as readers as their teachers continue to learn themselves.
 - Being able to share with my fellow coaches is invaluable. We help each other and it makes the job easier.
 - My principal had no understanding of what a Reading First coach's role was when we both entered our positions last year... Her impression was that I worked with groups of children, and she was very disappointed that it was not my role and actively resisted any effort on my part to carry out my job at first. It took my state specialist's assistance and our division's insistence to get her to learn my role and the purpose of the grant. Needless to say, much valuable time was lost for the improvement of our reading program and my development as an effective coach. I love my job now, but was the start ever rocky!
 - It's easy to have teachers see you as \$\$ and not a professional if you don't set up the position as a coach position.
 - More time is spent doing administrative "management" work that keeps me from helping in the classroom as much as I would like
 - Paperwork has taken a larger share of my time than I had anticipated! For example- in my district, coaches write the APR unassisted! Our LEA, principal, and VDOE specialist proofread them.
 - I love my job!
 - I would like to know if it is possible for the reading coach to do any of the intervention? (outside of the regularly scheduled reading block- assuming there is time in the schedule)
- I feel some of my answers would change (as to the amount of time) on some items. I haven't worked long enough to establish how often I will do them.
- What to do after the school is rolling along?
 - I feel I have not been able to let teachers attend conferences or have some requested professional development due to money control (at the local level). I really wanted to and the teachers wanted to visit other schools, there was always an excuse of substitutes.
- My number 1 suggestions would be that no 2 schools share the same grant because of budget concerns, professional development. No two schools have the same needs.
- *This coach wrote she would have liked to have had an interview
- Post secondary education needs to include courses in the role of the reading coach. But that should be a specific track that reading specialists should choose. I'd rather be a reading specialist, who works primarily with students.

- The support of other reading coaches in our county has been very helpful, wonderful!! We share and bounce ideas off each other. Laugh & cry together- appreciate each others talents. Job is very rewarding!
- Something important to note! Reading coaches are basically in purgatory we aren't classroom teachers, but we're not administrators either. Sometimes the lack of definition concerning our role(s) can be difficult.
- When I first took the job of a reading coach I wondered how I would fill up my day- now I worry I never have enough time to complete things I really want to accomplish.
- Because of my core program I am not allowed to evaluate and write action plans for students unless my plan grew with our outside consultant's opinion and they are not reading people. The idea the consultants have is just to re-teach the same lesson the same way- which works sometime.
- I am a new coach. I am working with staff that I have taught with for eight years. Most of them did not want RF so I'm still working my way into the classroom.

APPENDIX F

Virginia Public Schools Division

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4
Charles City County Chesterfield County Colonial Heights City Dinwiddie County Goochland County Hanover County Henrico County Hopewell City New Kent County Petersburg City Powhatan County Prince George County Richmond City Surry County Sussex County	Accomack County Chesapeake City Franklin City Hampton City Isle of Wight County Newport News City Norfolk City Northampton County Poquoson City Portsmouth City Southampton County Suffolk City Virginia Beach City Williamsburg City York County	Caroline County Colonial Beach Essex County Fredericksburg City Gloucester County King and Queen George King George County King William County Lancaster County Mathews County Middlesex County Northumberland County Richmond County Spotsylvania County Stafford County West Point Westmoreland County	Alexandria City Arlington County Clarke County Culpepper County Fairfax County Fairfax City Falls Church City Fauquier County Frederick County Loudoun County Madison County Manassas City Manassas Park City Orange County Page County Prince William County Rappahannock County Shenandoah County Warren County Winchester City
Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Albemarle County Amherst County Appomattox County Augusta County Bath County Bedford County Bedford City Buena Vista Clay Campbell County Charlottesville City Fluvanna County Greene County Harrisonburg City Highland County Lexington City Louisa County Lynchburg City Nelson County Rockbridge County Rockingham County Staunton City Waynesboro City	Alleghany County Botetourt County Covington City Craig County Danville City Floyd County Franklin County Henry County Martinsville City Montgomery County Patrick County Pittsylvania County Roanoke County Roanoke City Salem City	Bland County Bristol City Buchanan County Carroll County Dickenson County Galax City Giles County Grayson County Lee County Norton City Pulaski County Radford City Russell County Scott County Smyth County Tazewell County Washington County Wise County Wythe County	Amelia County Brunswick County Buckingham County Charlotte County Cumberland County Greensville County Halifax County Lunenburg County Mecklenburg County Nottoway County Prince Edward County

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/dbpubs/doedir/>

VITA

SHELIA DENISE SARGENT-MARTIN

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 1994

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