

University of New England  
**DUNE: DigitalUNE**

---

All Theses And Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

---

11-1-2018

# How Coaching Changes Teaching Practices In Elementary Literacy Instruction

Terrilyn D. L. Cheney  
*University of New England*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dune.une.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

© 2018 Terrilyn D. L. Cheney

---

## Preferred Citation

Cheney, Terrilyn D. L., "How Coaching Changes Teaching Practices In Elementary Literacy Instruction" (2018). *All Theses And Dissertations*. 190.  
<https://dune.une.edu/theses/190>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses And Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact [bkenyon@une.edu](mailto:bkenyon@une.edu).

HOW COACHING CHANGES TEACHING PRACTICES  
IN ELEMENTARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

By

Terrilyn D. L. Cheney

B.S. Ed. (University of Maine) 2002

M.S. Ed. (University of Maine) 2008

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Education

Portland and Biddeford, Maine

July, 2018

Copyright by  
Terrilyn D. L. Cheney  
2018

Terrilyn D. L. Cheney  
July 2018  
Educational Leadership

HOW COACHING CHANGES TEACHING PRACTICES  
IN ELEMENTARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

ABSTRACT

Professional development is a major initiative in many school districts in an effort to help teachers improve teaching and learning. Literacy coaches are becoming increasingly prevalent in many elementary school buildings. This study examined the effects literacy coaches have on teaching practices. More specifically, it examined to what degree literacy coaches affect teaching.

Utilizing an electronic survey, 18 elementary classroom teachers participated in providing feedback relative to their enjoyment, new learning, changes in practice, and subsequent changes in student learning that occurred as a result of literacy coaching. Teachers indicated new learning was occurring despite how many years they had been teaching. Teachers who were newer to the profession, fewer than 10 years' experience, indicated high levels of enjoyment and changes to their practice and noted positive changes in student learning. Teachers with more experience indicated lower levels of enjoyment, but some still reported they noticed a change in their teaching practices for the short term at least.

This study has substantial implications for the value of literacy instructional coaches and identifies particular coaching moves that teachers identified as useful. This study supports the work being done in schools and the investment being made in literacy coaching. The argument for providing job-embedded professional development is strong in this study.

University of New England

Doctor of Education  
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented  
by

Terrilyn D. L. Cheney

It was presented on  
July 25, 2018  
and approved by:

Grania Holman, Ed.D., Lead Advisor  
University of New England

Corinna Crafton, Ed.D., Secondary Advisor,  
University of New England

Peter Harrison, Ed.D., Affiliate Committee Member  
University of New England

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.

—Pele

While Pele is right, I would argue success is also a result of the support of those around a person. I owe a debt of gratitude to those who helped me get where I am today. I could not have climbed this mountain on my own. Dr. Holman, my committee chair, was a guide, mentor, and voice of reason when I needed it. Dr. Crafton's feedback was valuable in helping me get to the essence of what I wanted to study. Dr. Harrison has been a mentor through the entire doctoral program process. His poignant questions helped push my thinking deeper and ultimately supported me in producing this dissertation. I am grateful for the support of the UNE faculty and my research cohort who have been part of my journey as well.

In addition to the faculty and staff of the University of New England, I would not be here without the support of my family. They have been incredibly patient as I endeavored to finish this. My husband, Tom, has been a source of support and my rock through this. My children; Gabriella, Cameron, and Hunter; have shown patience through the process and have accepted additional responsibilities when asked. Finally, my parents were always willing to pitch in and help with the kids when I needed just a few more hours to write. They are the ones who instilled in me a love of learning and a work ethic that just will not quit. Thank you all for your love and support over these last few years.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF PROBLEM .....	1
Background and Context .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Assumptions Limitations, and Scope .....	5
Rationale and Significance .....	6
Conclusion .....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Definition of Terms .....	9
Professional Development Matters .....	10
Teaching and Learning Link.....	11
Impact of Quality Teaching .....	12
Effective Professional Development .....	13
Adult Learning Standards .....	14
Attitudes About Professional Development .....	14
Coaching and Adult Learning Theory .....	15
Coaching .....	16
Directive Coaching .....	16
Facilitative Coaching .....	17
Transformational Coaching .....	17

Coaching in Prior Studies .....	18
Conceptual Framework.....	23
Adult Learning Theory .....	24
Kirkpatrick’s Levels of Evaluation .....	25
Conclusion.....	26
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	28
Setting .....	29
Participants/Sample .....	30
Method Selection .....	30
Data.....	31
Analysis .....	31
Participant Rights.....	32
Potential Limitations.....	32
Conclusion .....	34
Chapter 4 RESULTS.....	35
Research Questions.....	36
Analysis .....	36
Presentation of Results .....	37
Themes .....	37
Coaching Versus Other PD Options.....	43
Conclusion .....	44
Chapter 5 CONCLUSIONS.....	46
Interpretation of Findings .....	46



Effective Coaching .....	47
Barriers to Effective Coaching .....	48
Rationale for Mixed Results .....	49
Other Professional Development Opportunities .....	50
Implications .....	50
Local District Implications .....	51
Implications for Teaching and Learning .....	51
Implications for the Literature .....	52
Implications for Transformative Leadership .....	53
Recommendations for Further Study .....	53
Conclusion .....	54
References .....	56
Appendices .....	61

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Enjoyment Likert Scale Responses .....	38
Figure 2. Word Cloud of Effective Coaching Moves .....	40
Figure 3. Professional Development that Affected Practice more and less than coaching.....	44

## CHAPTER 1

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Today, professional development and information about how to improve teaching are widely available. School leaders can be taken in by passing fads, programs, and development that promise to be common core aligned or guaranteed to raise test scores. With the myriad options available, district leadership needs to provide support and direction for their teachers, whose quality is the most important factor in student achievement (Stronge & Tucker, 2000).

Schools are adding new curricula in an attempt to achieve the best student outcomes. Districts utilize consultants, coaches, college courses, staff developers, workshops, and conferences to boost teacher effectiveness and outperform other schools. The multiple approaches lead to fractured professional development and lack of long-term goal setting for teachers. This also leads to uneven curriculum implementation, which impedes student learning.

Stronge and Tucker (2000) posited teachers are the primary factor in student success. As Stronge and Tucker express, well-educated, invested teachers are the key to successful student outcomes. Having high-quality teachers is a goal of every school system; developing teachers to reach their maximum potential is vital. Districts use professional development strategies such as workshops, conferences, consultants, and instructional coaches to increase teacher effectiveness.

However, school budgets are increasingly sparse. Prioritizing high-quality resources, including professional development, is a task for leadership. Districts bring in high-quality experts in their field to talk with staff, motivate them, and then send them back to the classroom, often in a single initiative that is borne from what administrators think teachers need. Markers of high-quality professional development include teachers being involved in creating their own

goals, learning they can put into practice, and opportunities for leadership are present (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Knowing that teachers are the most significant influencers of student achievement (Stronge & Tucker, 2000), professional development is of utmost importance. Teachers who are invested in the learning are more apt to put it into practice. A measure of teacher attitudes and perceptions around professional development experiences is an important place to begin the investigation surrounding professional development funding targets.

The goal of professional development is not only to improve teaching but to increase student achievement. Linking student achievement and professional development is challenging as the What Works Clearinghouse organization determined. Researchers representing the What Works Clearinghouse (2007) examined 1300 studies attempting to link student achievement and professional development; yet, only nine were found to meet the level of rigor and control necessary to show a link between professional development and student achievement.

Teachers need to engage in high-quality professional development experiences designed to change teacher practice. If nothing is changing because of professional development, then it is ineffective. To increase teacher quality, there is a need for high-quality professional development that teachers use to change their practices and positively impact student achievement.

### **Background and Context**

Due to shrinking fiscal budgets, sending teachers to conferences has become a luxury. Building internal expertise and capacity is where many districts have focused their resources. Over the last five years, schools have begun to shift from having content area consultants with presentations to instructional coaches providing job-embedded professional development for staff. While the role is similar, and a coach is still expected to be an expert in his or her content

area, the services provided are more hands-on and result in individualized job-embedded professional development, which is a change from large group sessions used previously.

The school systems this study were in the southern part of the state of Maine. They were both in suburban areas. The school districts had five primary-level (K-second grade) schools, two elementary-level (third to fifth grade) schools, one middle (sixth to eighth grade) school, and one high school. They have maintained consistency in instructional coaches for three years. In these districts, the researcher examined collaborative coaching in an attempt to determine which of the first three levels of Kirkpatrick's model that coaching affected and what makes coaching effective as a means of changing teacher practice.

### **Purpose of the Study**

If engagement leads to learning, then the ideal scenario is to provide professional development in which teachers are engaged and invested. It is logical that engaging professional development would lead to greater changes in practice, which is what this study intended to uncover. In 2005, Torff, Sessions, and Byrnes developed the Teacher Attitudes About Professional Development assessment. They theorized teacher attitudes about professional development would change based on the experience of the teacher. They found length of experience to be a leading factor in teacher satisfaction with professional development opportunities. "These attitudes were meaningfully different in the first 10 years compared to later years in the teaching profession. The mean factor scores appeared to level out at about the 10-year mark. Thus, the data were split between participants with teaching experience of fewer than 10 years and participants with ten or more years" (Torff & Sessions, 2008, p. 128). Teachers in all years of experience need to have meaningful professional development opportunities that affect positive changes in practice.

In 2005, Torff, Sessions, and Byrnes developed a Teacher Attitude About Professional Development (TAP) survey. The scale is intended to “assess the extent to which teachers are amenable to professional development initiatives” (Torff & Sessions, 2008, p. 125). Through a series of studies, they validated the scale. They have determined teachers go through three phases in regard to satisfaction with professional development: increasing, decreasing, then leveling out with more experience. Torff, Sessions, and Byrne (2008) studied professional development as an umbrella opportunity. This researcher examined teacher attitudes about coaching and how a positive attitude in regard to coaching may affect the amount of change in practice it creates and sustains.

### **Research Questions**

This research study examined more deeply coaching as a form of professional development. The primary research question studied was: To what degree does coaching affect teaching practice? A secondary question was: Why does coaching affect change in practice for some teachers and not others?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Kirkpatrick (1959, 2009) developed a framework to help evaluate the levels of impact learning had on students. His work was conducted to determine the effectiveness of professional development on participants. Looking at four levels (i.e., reaction, learning, behavior, and results), one can determine the effectiveness of an experience (Rouse, 2011). Due to the subjective nature of assessing teacher attitudes and professional development experiences through survey and interviews, this researcher examined teachers’ perceptions of changes in learning, behavior, and results.

Adult learning theory is vital to consider when planning professional development opportunities for teachers. Drago-Severson (2009) quoted Hargreaves by saying “He uses the words *integrity, equity, innovation, and interdependence* to describe staff development at its best” (pp. 21-22). She went on to state, “Hargreaves maintains that students will not be able to learn and develop unless teachers are learning and developing” (p. 22). Drago-Severson with support from Hargreaves, and supporting the research Dunne and Villani (2007), was clear that high-quality, responsive, professional development that is mindful of the way adult learning differs is an integral part of school success.

Adult learning theory was used to guide the understanding of “effective” models of professional development. Guided by Kirkpatrick’s evaluation framework, the researcher queried teachers and staff to indicate at which levels of effectiveness coaching reached: surface level enjoyment, change in learning or understanding, change in practice, or change in the organization (potentially measured by student achievement). Using qualitative methods including surveys and interviews, coaching was explored and examined to determine how it is changing teachers’ instructional practice.

### **Assumptions Limitations, and Scope**

Founded on Stronge and Tucker’s (2000) determination that teacher quality is the most significant predictor of student success, this researcher sought to initiate a study that examined teacher attitudes and their perspective on the effects coaching as professional development had on student achievement. One would assume higher quality professional development such as coaching, as determined by a high correlation with adult learning theory, would have a more significant effect on student achievement. Another assumption was that well-thought out, individualized, systematic, professional development that established learning goals would lead

to well-thought out, individualized, systematic teaching and learning.

Through this study, the researcher expected the collaborative coaching model to be followed with fidelity in the schools. The collaborative coaching model includes goal setting, observing, gradual release of responsibility, and in some cases, having participants read professional literature. Through a survey and interviews, the researcher determined the fidelity with which collaborative coaching was occurring.

The most significant limitation of this type of study is there is no definitive link between coaching and student achievement. Due to the subjective nature of the surveys, the researcher relied upon teachers' perceptions of the effects of coaching on student learning. Should the researcher find there is a strong link between literacy coaching and teacher perception of impact upon student learning, the next step may be working toward isolating variables and determining with more certainty the impact on student achievement.

As in any survey, a final limitation of this study is that participants may have an investment in various forms of professional development they may have contributed to depending upon the scope of teacher involvement, thus, want to show that coaching is effective or ineffective depending on their bias. Knowing the findings could be shared with district leadership, the temptation to skew feedback is present.

### **Rationale and Significance**

Linking professional development to student learning is no easy task. The What Works Clearinghouse (2007) has identified 9 studies of 1,300 as directly studying the link between professional development and student achievement. One of the reasons why linking the two is so challenging is that isolating variables and controlling for additional conditions is challenging under the best circumstances. Many factors contribute to student achievement including home,



life circumstances, available resources, motivation and more, but none stands out so prominently as the quality of the teacher (Stronge & Tucker, 2000). One could argue that, while measuring the relationship between professional development and student achievement is challenging, one could measure the relationship between professional development and change in practice.

Through the data collection, teacher perceptions about how literacy coaching leads to change in practice were identified. Examining coaching in regard to adult learning theory helped the researcher understand if coaching opportunities planned with adult learning theory in mind were indeed more effective. Finally, gauging teacher perceptions of Kirkpatrick's (1959) four levels of evaluation of learning experiences strengthened this study.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers in the district must participate but have little to no input in the types of professional development or the outcome of the experience (for example, goals set). This study gathered teacher perceptions about coaching as a form of professional development on Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation and in correlation with adult learning theory. If district leaders can provide professional development opportunities such as literacy coaching that staff members tend to be more engaged in, the degree of engagement is assumed to be greater.

The site was selected due to staff commitment to a collaborative coaching model. The literature was reviewed to understand the current findings on coaching, professional development, and evaluation models. After examining the literature available, the researcher conducted a survey with the site examining literacy coaching experiences in relation to adult learning theory and Kirkpatrick's four levels of effectiveness. Finally, data were examined, and conclusions about the effectiveness of the coaching and teacher perceptions about the ability of coaching to affect teacher practice and student learning were made.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review was conducted to examine recent research published regarding elementary school teachers' perceptions about professional development models including coaching and the change in teaching practices each model affects. The focus narrowed the scope of the literature review further to coaching as an important model of professional development and studies that have examined this modality of professional development were highlighted.

Change in instructional practice is challenging at best. Fisher, Frye, and Hattie (2016) studied teaching that leads to deeper learning so students (or in this case, teachers) could transfer knowledge and skills to a new situation. Kirkpatrick's (1959) levels of training evaluation identified four levels of engagement in learning along a scale from surface level enjoyment to changes in organizational outcomes, which in education, equates to changes in student learning (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009). Examining which professional development opportunities go beyond the surface level to change teacher thoughts, practices, and eventually, student learning was the goal of this study. Due to its alignment with adult learning theory, the research suggested literacy coaching was a professional development modality that could lead to deeper levels of engagement and changes in practice.

Silva and Contreras (2011) stated, "coaching is the newest leadership skill" (p. 54). Dunne and Villani (2007) said, "to coach is to meet colleagues where they are and explicitly support them in achieving the goals they set for themselves" (p. 61). Assuming both are true, an exploration to deepen the understanding of what impacts coaching, as a means of professional

development and leadership, has on teacher attitudes and practices in contrast to other professional development models is necessary.

Coaching has grown from the research that both formal and informal learning opportunities are effective in supporting teacher learning. Formal opportunities include formal professional development opportunities and coursework whereas informal opportunities include collegial conversations, professional learning communities (PLCs), and peer observations (Parise & Spillane, 2010). Coaching has elements of both formal and informal learning. There is a goal in mind, and the coach is typically an expert either in content or practice, but the relationship is collegial and includes peer observation, a feedback loop, and conversations. Stephens et al. (2011) noted little had been reported on the “impact of coaches on teachers’ beliefs and practices” (p. 217).

This review explored adult learning theory and models of professional development. The review examined studies involving public schools, and how they leverage internal and external expertise to provide professional development to staff. Through examining adult learning theory, coaching models, and studies of professional development, the literature was analyzed to define this study further relative to attitudes around models of professional development and which models would be more effective at creating changes in teacher practice.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Professional development:* experiences teachers engage in to increase the effectiveness of their teaching may be district-selected or teacher-selected.

*Coaching:* Job-embedded professional development, for this purpose, was one on one coaching with goal development, action steps, and gradual release of responsibility as defined by Aguilar (2013).

*Collaborative coaching:* Coaching when the coach supports the teachers where they are and helps to build upon their current level of understanding through reflection, analysis, and observation (Aguilar, 2013)

*TAP scale:* Measures teacher attitudes regarding professional development developed and validated by Torff et al. in 2005.

### **Professional Development Matters**

According to Stronge and Tucker (2000), the factor having the greatest influence on student success was the teacher. The quality of the teacher was more of a factor than socioeconomic status, the curriculum used, and parental involvement (Stronge & Tucker, 2000). Studies conducted in Tennessee posited a student with the misfortune of having an ineffective teacher could take three years to make up the adverse effects on achievement (Eberle, 2011; Stronge & Hindman 2003). With ever-increasing standards and pressure to leave no child behind, schools need to ensure all their teachers are highly effective and they are doing so through in-service professional development.

Teachers need to keep up with current best practices, but their current practices and beliefs need to change if sustained change is to occur. Borko (2004) stated, “we have evidence that professional development can lead to improvements in instructional practices and student learning” (p. 3). One challenge Borko (2004) identified as leading to poor outcomes for teachers was money is spent on “forms of professional development that are fragmented, intellectually superficial, and do not take into account what we know about how teachers learn” (p. 3). Professional development was all but mandated by the federal government in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, but the standards for how that professional development should be conducted and what should be included were absent.

Nunokawa's (2012) research concluded with six characteristics regarding effective professional development:

- Effective professional development is sustained and intensive rather than short-term (Garret et al., 2001).
- Workshops that focused on the implementation of research-based instructional practices, involved active-learning experiences for participants, and provided teachers with opportunities to adapt the practices to their own classroom settings worked (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).
- Outside experts who constituted program authors or researchers who presented ideas directly to teachers and then helped to facilitate implementation were also effective (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).
- Effective professional development requires extensive time that is well organized, structured, purposefully directed and focused on content, pedagogy, or both (Quick, Holtzman & Chaney, 2009; Shulman, 1986).
- Teachers need time to practice their new skills or strategies with structured and sustained follow-up for support and guidance (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009).
- The most effective professional development comes from the careful adaptation of practices to specific content, processes, and context elements (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Nunokawa 2012, pp. 50-51).

### **Teaching and Learning Link**

The National Writing Project organization has a saying; the best teachers of writers, are writers themselves (O'Donnell-Allen, 2012). If the National Writing Project is correct, then it would make sense that the best teachers of learners, are learners themselves. The goal of

professional development is not only to improve teaching but to improve teaching to increase student achievement. Linking student achievement and professional development is challenging as the What Works Clearinghouse organization determined. Yoon, Duncan, Wen-Yu Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) reviewed 1300 studies attempting to link the two. Only nine were found to meet the level of rigor and control necessary to show a link between professional development and student achievement.

In the analysis of studies, the researchers found 14 or more hours of professional development equated to a positive and significant effect on student achievement. Studies that involved less professional development showed no statistically significant effects on student achievement. In the studies conducted, professional development was provided by authors and researchers rather than coaches or in-house personnel through train the trainer models such as coaching (Yoon et al., 2007). Harris and Sass (2011) found similar results noting the amount of time spent engaged in professional development was a factor in success. In the Harris and Sass study, the professional development cited was coursework.

### **Impact of Quality Teaching**

It has been widely accepted that high-quality teaching matters. Harris and Sass (2011) studied data from Florida to determine the effects teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, have on student achievement. Their study focused on professional development opportunities such as advanced degrees and informal training through experience. They found greater teacher experience largely increased student growth during the first few years for elementary teachers but less so with high school teachers.

One concern that surfaced from the Harris and Sass (2011) study was professional development was often less effective than anticipated. They speculated the lack of effectiveness

was due to teachers being away during instructional time to participate in professional development. While teachers are away from the classroom, substitute teachers often cannot deliver the same level of instruction that an experienced teacher can. Therefore, professional development tended to be less effective when considering the impact on student learning outcomes.

Other studies found instructional coaching did affect teaching practices. The studies noted teachers who engaged in coaching were more likely to utilize what they had learned in other professional development opportunities than those who had not. Thomas et al. (2015) posited, “without instructional coaching, all too often, no significant change occurs in teacher practices” (Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015, p. 1). Knight (2009) agreed with this statement, observing that teachers who were not coached were much less likely to use new teaching practices learned in professional development than teachers who were coached (Knight, 2009, p. 193).

### **Effective Professional Development**

Although the federal government has mandated high-quality teachers in every classroom, and it is widely accepted that professional development is the way to achieve that goal, little direction has been given about what effective professional development looks like. Eleanor Drago-Severson (2011) stated, “We know that not all professional learning initiatives—for example, strict content delivery, or what is often known as sit-and-get—have the same effect on student achievement” (p. 1). Providing teachers with high-quality professional development is a priority for schools. Identifying what high-quality professional development is and which professional development experiences affect change in beliefs and practices is a priority for researchers and those who support teachers.

## **Adult Learning Standards**

Learning Forward, an organization concerned with professional development, has worked with researchers, and using adult learning theories has created adult learning standards that align with what is known about how adults learn. With the help of researcher Eleanor Drago-Severson (2011), Learning Forward has developed a learning design standard the goal of which is to “increase personal and organizational capacities and resources” (p. 1). The premise of successful learning is that learning is a collaborative process and teachers can learn from, with, and by each other.

Ellie Drago-Severson’s (2004) research identified four pillar practices of adult learning: teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring. Drago-Severson talked about how teachers needed opportunities to work in teams. Working together in collaboration strengthens practices and moves teaching forward. Providing leadership roles is another essential pillar of adult learning. When adults feel empowered and serve as leaders, it improves their own practice in addition to those around them. Mentoring and collegial inquiry, the final two pillars, are similar in that collaboration and opportunities to work with a mentor or coach tap into how adults learn most effectively. Her work is based on Robert Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory. Kegan’s theory stated (a) people actively make sense of their experiences (constructivism) and (b) the ways one makes meaning of experience can grow more complex over time (developmentalism) (Drago-Severson, 2011, p. 2).

## **Attitudes About Professional Development**

Attitudes concerning professional development are important. Engagement leads to deeper learning and understanding. In 2005, Sessions, Torff and Byrnes from Hofstra University developed and refined a rating scale for teachers to indicate their attitudes about professional



development. After several iterations, they refined the survey into five questions, two of which were worded for reverse scoring to assuage response bias. After three validation studies, they verified that their five-question questionnaire was reliable in indicating teacher attitudes. They noted more research needs to be conducted in regard to how attitudes are affected by particular professional development interventions.

Other studies, such as Kao, Tsai, and Shih (2014), have been conducted that examined attitudes toward Internet-based professional development specifically with elementary teachers. Their study utilized their own questionnaire. They posited teachers' attitudes about Internet-based professional development are directly correlated with their self-efficacy toward technology. This relates to Drago-Severson's (2007) work around adult learning theory where she stated self-efficacy is one of the four pillars of how adults learn.

Continuing the track of investigating elementary level teachers, Gissy (2010) wrote about attitudes around professional development, comparing schools that have a strong university partnership for professional development against schools that do not. In her findings, schools that engaged in long-term professional development had higher success rates of implementation of new practices in contrast with counterparts that focused on once and done opportunities. Creating ongoing opportunities for teachers to learn, such as coaching, align with adult learning theory and effective practices for staff.

### **Coaching and Adult Learning Theory**

Coaching is a powerful professional development tool due to its alignment with adult learning theory. Three of the four pillars of adult learning Drago-Severson (2011) identifies (i.e., teaming, collegial inquiry, and mentoring) are characteristics of collaborative coaching.

Coaching is a form of professional development that aligns with adult learning theory and the learning design standard.

### **Coaching**

The term *coaching* is used to describe types of mentor/mentee, expert/apprentice relationships in education. There are many forms that coaching can take. Harris and Sass (2011) noted they saw positive gains in reading in their study on professional development because “elementary teachers are more likely to work to develop their skills by seeking out help from colleagues and other sources for reading” (p. 806), which could be a form of collegial coaching.

Elena Aguilar (2013) is a leading expert on coaching in education. In her book, *The Art of Coaching*, she talked about three types of coaching: directive, facilitative, and transformational.

#### **Directive Coaching**

Directive or instructional coaching is the expert coach modeling lessons, providing ideas, and teaching how to do something. This is a traditional view of coaching in many school systems and is effective when beginning a new curriculum and/or provided by content area specialists. Directive coaching focuses on changes in behavior (Aguilar, 2013). In a directive coaching model, the coach often teaches a new skill, and he or she is the master while the coachee is the disciple. In this form of coaching Aguilar noted, “the coaching did not expand the teacher’s internal capacity to reflect, make decisions, or explore her ways of being” (p. 22). Changes in behavior are often short-lived or only displayed when the coach is present. Mioara (2013) spoke of directive coaching being a tool that managers utilize with subordinates. Mioara echoed Aguilar in the belief that directive coaching leaves little time for reflection and internalization. When looking at Kirkpatrick’s four levels of engagement, this type of coaching typically leads to learning at levels one and two, reaction and learning.

### **Facilitative Coaching**

Facilitative coaching is more abstract. Rather than sharing new knowledge, the coach supports teachers where they are and helps to build upon their current level of understanding through reflection, analysis, and observation (Aguilar, 2013). Facilitative coaching, as Aguilar explains it, is coordinated with the research concerning differentiated and individualized professional development we examined earlier. Facilitative coaching is the type of coaching Hargreaves discussed when quoted by Drago-Severson (2009).

Reflective or facilitative coaching intends to take learning a step further toward behavior changes long-term. The goal, as Aguilar (2013) defined it, is to support “new ways of thinking and being through reflection, analysis, observation, and experimentation; this awareness influences their behaviors” (p. 23). Mioara wrote about changes in behavior as a result of reflective coaching but also to a “transformation of the quality of work” (p. 88). The emphasis on reflective or facilitative coaching is on communication and reflection. The relationship between coach and coachee takes on increasing importance. In reflective coaching, the coach is a mirror for the coachee’s beliefs and current practices, reflecting back to help advance learning. Looking at Kirkpatrick’s levels, reflective coaching attempts to take the coachee to the third level of learning, to lasting changes in behavior.

### **Transformational Coaching**

The final coaching model Aguilar referred to was transformational coaching. Thus far, it has not been used in schools extensively but comes from the work of Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatley, and their thinking about a systems approach to change (Aguilar, 2009, p. 25). While transformational coaching incorporates aspects of facilitative and directive coaching, Aguilar

asserted the scope is different—the coach is focused on the individual, institution, and the broader social systems in which educators live and work.

Collaborative or transformational coaching is a model where the teacher and coach construct goals and work together to resolve them. Relationship is at the heart of collaborative coaching. The goal of collaborative coaching is to reach all four of Kirkpatrick's levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Collaborative coaching is “deeply grounded in systems thinking” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25), which was developed by Peter Senge (1990). Collaborative coaching is co-constructed learning and involves Fisher and Frye's (2008) gradual release of the responsibility model between the coach and coachee. Collaborative coaching explores beliefs, the organization, and behaviors. It is a comprehensive model designed to create lasting change. For the purpose of this study, facilitative and directive coaching are the focus.

### **Coaching in Prior Studies**

Successful coaches, in both facilitative and directive coaching, have specific characteristics identified by Killion, Harrison, Bryan, and Clifton (2012) including strong beliefs, coaching skills, teaching expertise, relationship skills, content expertise, and leadership skills. Killion et al. cited coaching skills as key to supporting teachers to make decisions, solve problems, and adapt to meet learning needs (p. 30). They supported Aguilar's point that coaching is most effective if it moves toward building teacher capacity to solve problems and meets student learning needs, thus, supporting a facilitative model of coaching for highest effectiveness.

With the cost of providing coaching, the idea of Internet-based coaching is a topic of research. Academics from the University of Pittsburg wanted to study the effects of Internet-based coaching and to compare it to more traditional coaching models. Matsumura et al. (2016)

examined virtual or cloud-based coaching where the teacher and coach do not sit face to face but rather interact via videos, phone calls, and emails. Matsumusa et al. mentioned early on they were unsure teachers would be open to this model and were surprised to receive positive feedback. Teachers involved in the small-scale study reported they were as comfortable (or more) with an Internet-based coach as compared to their own building literacy coach. Drago-Severson's (2009) work discusses the importance of relationship building in effective coaching relationships, and this study indicates that is important, but perhaps not the panacea it was once believed to be. The encouraging outcome of this research is that schools or districts that cannot afford content area coaches can utilize remote coaches just as effectively. Using technology to reach out to specialists and collaborating, even over great distances, is effective according to this case study. The difference between Internet-based coaching and more traditional structures of coaching is the emphasis on the importance of relationship building. Researchers from the University of Pittsburg were unable to draw any conclusions specific to the value of relationship building. To explain this phenomenon, Wise (2016) propounded the focused time and attention provided by the coach was what made the model so effective. While the sample is still too small to draw broader conclusions, it does shine a light on another way of thinking about "traditional" coaching and/or PLCs.

While still operating with a facilitative and/or directive coaching model, Kise (2014) suggested when evaluation and support, through coaching and effective professional development, work in tandem, the result is better teaching. Kise referenced work around the polarity of evaluation and support, saying one is not the answer to the other, but instead, they work together to solve a problem. She posited that, when taken in isolation, coaching alone leads to a lack of real understanding of strengths and opportunities for a teacher; similarly, when the

evaluation is conducted without alignment with support, many teachers want to leave the profession. Kise gave a unique perspective on the opportunity for an intersection between coaching and teacher evaluation. This is an evolution in thinking about coaching, as it puts it into the context of a broader systems approach perhaps beginning to knock on the door of the ideas around transformative coaching in schools.

**What works in coaching.** Coaching is widely accepted as an effective model for professional development, and many school leaders are putting coaches into classrooms to support teaching and learning. Coaching and the role of teacher leadership have begun to be studied as a form of professional development in the last decade. The studies have been overwhelmingly positive. Moving from one-size-fits-all professional development opportunities to thinking about job-embedded professional learning is the ideal. Hudson, Childs, and Carver (2016) cited a school that had implemented job-embedded professional learning through teacher leadership. They noted teacher leadership had increased the ownership of student data and accountability for teaching. After discussing the supporting research, they presented a case study about Teacher Lab and the successes it has brought forth including increases in student performance and with 85% and higher positive teacher feedback and new learning. The combination of the case study approach and a strong research foundation make this study especially impressive.

Akert and Martin (2012) conducted a qualitative study of the perceptions of teacher leaders, the willingness of teachers to take on leadership roles, and the belief that teacher leaders influence school improvement. The researchers cited a guru in the field of teacher leadership and evaluation, Charlotte Danielson. In a peer-reviewed article, the information and study affirmed teacher leadership is a valuable part of successful school transformation. While teacher

leadership was a key to successful school transformation, Akert and Martin also noted the need for quality communication between teacher leaders and administrators. Teacher leaders and administrators need to communicate so professional growth and evaluation plans and the coaching that in which teachers engage work in tandem. The study provided qualitative data that is useful in examining the effects of teacher leadership on school improvement.

Determining which professional development opportunities increase student learning is necessary. One case study was documented by Brua and Moreland (2016). They worked in a district in Illinois where more than 58% of families spoke English as a foreign language, and there were 46 languages spoken (p. 52). They were tasked with implementing standards-based education while supporting teachers in helping students with such diverse backgrounds learn to read. By providing collaborative professional development opportunities, they found teaching and learning improved, creating clear growth targets for each student, allowing teachers to see modeled lessons, ask questions, and collaborate. Through sustainable professional development, including support from a literacy coach, they saw improved student achievement. Brua and Moreland's study is a strong example of how one school staff was able to support teacher learning, improve student reading achievement, and improve collaboration.

The study by Rhodes and Beneicke (2006) was primarily theoretical because it examined findings by the Department for Education in the United Kingdom advocating for increased coaching, mentoring, and peer-networking rather than its own data collection. The article included a great deal of research from both within the United Kingdom and globally that supported an increase in professional development where teachers learned with and from each other and were substantially invested in the outcomes. They found there was no precise definition at the time of what coaching was, but concluded it involved "complex activities deeply

associated with the support of individual learning” (p. 301). Many of their findings echoed the research by Aguilar (2013), Hargreaves (2007), and Drago-Severson (2009).

Case studies are an important part of the literature on coaching effectiveness. Silva and Contreras (2011) presented a case study from a school in Mexico that examined their experience with coaching and critical friends’ groups. On the precipice of implementing a new curriculum, they knew teachers needed ongoing professional development to teach the new curriculum effectively. The administrators set up the structures to support coaching. Coaches prepared themselves and began modeling lessons alongside a protocol to debrief the lesson similar to what Aguilar (2013) called directive coaching. The opportunity resulted in greater trust among faculty members and a report of 96% of teachers agreeing their teaching practice was positively influenced by participating in coaching and demonstration lessons.

**Literacy Collaborative coaching.** Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) conducted a study on the effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. The professional development examined in this study was facilitative coaching. Neufeld and Roper (2003) noted, “No one, as yet, has proven that coaching contributes significantly to increased student achievement. Indeed, there are scant studies of this form of PD and how it influences teachers’ practice and students’ learning” (p. 1). Biancarosa et al. (2010) set out to find empirical evidence of the effects of coaching on literacy growth. They noted two other studies attempted to do the same thing, but the coaches involved in the study were not adequately trained in how to coach despite being experts in their field.

With Literacy Collaborative, a program based on the research of Marie Clay and Fountas and Pinnell, coaches had high levels of support and structures were in place for an initial 40-hour professional development experience for teachers as well as 10-12 hours of ongoing professional



development each subsequent year (pp. 9-10). The results of the study were astounding. After the first year, the treatment group who had teachers participate in coaching sessions were 16% more successful than their counterparts in the control groups. In years two and three, the students had 28% and 36% larger learning gains respectively. Lockwood, McCombs, and Marsh (2010) attempted a similar study trying to link reading coaches to student achievement, and their results were not as consistent. Biancarosa et al. (2010) explained the contrast of their results with prior studies indicating the coaching models and coaches were more purposeful and thought out. This is also a potential reason for the lack of consistency between the Biancarosa and Lockwood studies. Biancarosa et al. (2010) and Lockwood et al. (2010) indicated coaching effectiveness could be measured through student achievement and lent a model for a new way of examining coaching models.

One implication of the findings of Biancarosa et al. (2010) was the understanding that professionalism for the coaches themselves makes a significant difference in effectiveness. A next step for studying coaching would be to look more deeply at the Literacy Collaborative study and the Lockwood study and determine if other content areas or coaching structures would also have a positive effect on student achievement.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Schools are required to meet growth and achievement targets under many state regulations in response to the Every Student Succeeds Act. School staffs seek professional development to help teachers adopt effective practices to meet that requirement. Not all learning experiences are created equal. Some professional development experiences are mandatory, lack engagement, and are not practical to bring back to the classroom. These experiences create little change (Mornane & Willett, 2011). Some professional development experiences change teacher

practices and beliefs. This study examined the relationship between professional development experiences and their alignment with adult learning theory and the level of change or impact they had on teaching.

### **Adult Learning Theory**

Knowles (1980) defined adult learning theory (i.e., andragogy) as different from child learning or pedagogy. He defined five characteristics:

- Self-concept: As a person matures self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
- Adult learner experience: As a person matures he or she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
- Readiness to learn: As a person matures the readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of one's social roles.
- Orientation to learning: As a person matures the time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly the orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

In 1984, he added the fifth characteristic of adult learning:

- Intrinsic motivation: As a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005)

Current research reinforces that adults learn differently from children. When considering planning for adult learning, one should consider fostering four instrumental practices: teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring (Drago-Severson, 2008, pp. 62-63).

Drago-Severson (2011) reported on how Learning Forward examined the way adults learn

differently by bringing adult learning theory to the forefront with their learning designs standard. Learning Forward's newest standard focuses on "underlying beliefs and values that drive professional learning and the common features of robust learning environments that are informed by theories, research, and models" (p. 11). There is also a strong emphasis on active engagement and the importance of choice for adult professional development (p. 12).

Adult learning theory is vital to consider when planning professional development opportunities for teachers. Drago-Severson (2009) affirmed Hargreaves research "He [Hargreaves] uses the words *integrity, equity, innovation, and interdependence* to describe staff development at its best" (pp. 21-22). Drago-Severson also stated, "Hargreaves maintains that students will not be able to learn and develop unless teachers are learning and developing" (p. 22). Supporting the research of Dunne and Villani (2007), Drago-Severson and Hargreaves were clear that high-quality, responsive, professional development that is mindful of the way adult learning differs is an integral part of school success. A professional development model that takes all this research into account is collaborative coaching.

### **Kirkpatrick's Levels of Evaluation**

The purpose of a professional development experience is to improve learning for teachers and students (Mizell, 2010). While that is the goal, most professional development opportunities are one-time events or short-term and are conducted outside of the classroom, away from the day to day teaching and learning that occurs. To learn something in isolation has been shown to be ineffective, and one exposure in a contrived situation is less likely to create lasting change. What is more, often when evaluating experiences, questions focus on participant enjoyment, if they know basic information, and feedback on how the program can be improved (Kirkpatrick, 2009).

In 1959, Donald Kirkpatrick developed the four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, results (Kirkpatrick, 2009) to support business training programs, but they are effective when examining training opportunities in education as well. Moving beyond simple reaction and basic learning to get to sustained change is the goal of meaningful professional development in education. The Kirkpatrick model lends a way to evaluate professional development opportunities to determine which ones stay at levels one and two (i.e., reaction and learning) and move beyond to levels three and four (i.e., behaviors and results).

### **Conclusion**

Professional development is a resource upon which schools spend a significant portion of their budget. Some forms of professional development are more effective than others, going beyond the simple enjoyment of the experience all the way to changing beliefs, practices, and maybe even student achievement.

Professional development has been widely studied, and while some studies have attempted to link student learning/achievement with professional development, that is a challenging link to make. There are many extraneous variables when attempting to link student achievement to specific professional development experiences (Yoon et al., 2007). Examining professional development opportunities, the alignment between the professional development opportunity and adult learning theory while looking at Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation will determine which professional development opportunities are most effective.

Coaching is a professional development experience that encompasses three of the four pillars of adult learning (Drago-Severson 2012), focuses on the tenets of adult learning theory (Knowles 2005), and is a resource available within many schools. Coaching has been found to be an effective means of professional development when the coach and coachee interact,

collaborate, and set goals together. Coaching, as reflected in the literature, seems to be a form of high-quality professional development that aligns with adult learning theory and has the potential to affect change at more profound levels such as a change in practice, belief, and maybe even organization.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Originally designed as a case study, this study evolved a phenomenological analysis due to changes in the participant landscape. At the outset of this endeavor, one school district was participating, and a case study was to be conducted on this one system. Due to unforeseen circumstances, there was a need for a second site to participate and the study evolved into a phenomenological analysis examining the experiences teachers had with the shared phenomenon of instructional literacy coaching.

This phenomenological study was conducted through the use of a survey, as defined by Creswell (2012). Data related to the relationship between coaching experiences and the subsequent change in teacher practice in this study were gathered. Surveys with both closed and open-ended questions were used. Data were gathered relative to teacher satisfaction, learning, and change in practice as a result of literacy coaching as professional development, teachers' perspectives on changes in student learning also were elicited.

Kirkpatrick's (1959, 2009) levels of evaluation of professional development rely upon participant feedback to evaluate the first three levels of impact: reaction/enjoyment, learning, and behavior. Because participant feedback is necessary, feedback was gathered in the form of a survey. Adult learning theory, andragogy, suggests two characteristics of professional development, goal setting, and being in control of their own learning, are important for learning to occur; thus, using surveys where participants have the opportunity to offer open-ended feedback is honoring the process and theory of how adults learn best. Finally, a survey is useful

to “learn about individual attitudes, options, beliefs, and practices; evaluate the success or effectiveness of a program” (Creswell, p. 403), which is the goals of this research study.

The primary research question studied was: To what degree does literacy coaching affect teaching practices? A secondary question was: How does coaching affect change in practice for some teachers?

### **Setting**

This study took place in two districts in the Northeast that are inclusive of approximately 4000 students and 400 staff. The communities surveyed were mid-sized coastal communities with an economic divide between the neighborhood schools, with free and reduced meal percentages varying between buildings; yet, the demographics of the respective communities are comparable. Because it examined elementary teachers’ change in practice as a result of literacy coaching, this study focused on the elementary-level buildings, which were the home to kindergarten through fifth grade only. The elementary schools had approximately 110 classroom teachers.

One challenge and benefit of working in these districts was the researcher did not have direct involvement with staff. The benefit to this status was the participants did not have any collegial pressure to participate from the researcher. They did not need to worry about damaging their relationship should they provide negative feedback. A challenge to the researcher’s limited involvement with the district was lack of familiarity about daily procedures and culture of the schools. To address the lack of familiarity, the researcher met with coaches and administrators. However, she only reported on the picture painted by the teacher participants.

### **Participants/Sample**

The sample was comprised of classroom teachers in grades K-5 in two school districts. All classroom teachers and professionals who work directly with students in literacy at grades K-5 in the participating schools were invited to participate in the survey via an electronic participant invitation letter.

This study focused on professional development opportunities specific to literacy. Teachers who were responsible for less than 50% of their students' literacy development were excluded. Potential participants included classroom teachers, interventionists who provide literacy support, and literacy specialists. The pool of participants was further limited to those who participated in at least one collaborative coaching cycle with the building literacy coach during the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, or 2017-2018 school year. Administrators and coaches themselves did not respond to the content of the survey; however, they were a valuable resource for the researcher to gather additional background information.

### **Method Selection**

Originally designed as a case study, the addition of a second participating district drove the need to change the methodology to phenomenology. In an attempt to uncover teacher perceptions and views, the researcher conducted a phenomenological study utilizing surveys to uncover the experiences teachers had with instructional coaching. Open-ended survey questions allowed participants to respond most effectively to the research questions posed, allowing the researcher to gather data about perceptions regarding enjoyment, learning, change in practice, and student learning because of literacy coaching, and to look deeper if the need arises. Creswell (2012) stated, "predetermined closed-ended responses can net useful information to support



theories and concepts in the literature. The open-ended responses, however, permit you to explore reasons for the closed-ended responses” (p. 220).

### **Data**

Data were collected through an electronic survey with both closed- and open-ended questions. Demographic data were collected for coding purposes. The researcher intended to determine if there was a difference between feedback from new teachers versus experienced teachers or teachers in various districts even though the theory and structure of coaching were consistent. Data were only collected on professional development experiences that teachers have engaged in within the last three school years (2015-2016, 2016-2017, or 2017-2018). Therefore, all participants from whom data were collected were engaged in at least one literacy coaching cycle in the previous three school years.

### **Analysis**

Data were initially sorted by grade level cohorts. Years of teaching experience were also sorted and considered. As defined by Saldana (2016), descriptive coding was utilized. To identify topics, keywords that align with Kirkpatrick’s levels of engagement were used and organized into categories such as, enjoyment, change in practice, new learning, and perceived change in student learning, among others. The researcher was also vigilant in determining keywords that surfaced through data collection, so she could check to ensure what was important to the participant was captured in the findings. Trends surfaced, and the second round of pattern coding occurred narrowing 14 codes to 6. Pattern coding is “a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts” (p. 236). Reducing the number of themes and categories supported the conclusions about literacy coaching and its impact on teaching practices and student learning/achievement.

### **Participant Rights**

The survey was completely anonymous, and participants could choose to answer all, some, or none of the included questions. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point. There was no anticipated physical or emotional harm, “the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests” (Protection of Human Subjects, 2009, p. 4).

Data were collected via a survey website. While the researcher could not ensure complete confidentiality with an online survey platform, every effort was made to secure the data. The email address associated with data collection was the researcher’s university email address. Minimal personal data were collected limited to school site and years of teaching experience. Only the researcher had access to the data on the website. The researcher downloaded the data every 48 hours to a computer hard drive secured by password protection. Data were only shared with members of the researcher’s dissertation team who had a need to know.

A potential unintended consequence could be a change in relationship with the building coach. While the researcher did not have a direct relationship with the participants, they did have a collegial relationship with the building coaches and administrators. While every effort was made to minimize opportunities for administrators and coaches to find out who participated in the study, should the participants mention their involvement or lack thereof, it could possibly lead to unintended consequences.

### **Potential Limitations**

This study relied upon teacher perceptions of the impact of literacy coaching on their practices and student learning. While it is valuable to understand how teachers perceive

professional development impacts student learning, no direct correlation or causation was uncovered. Due to the size of the participant population, generalizability was challenging. Despite the small population, this study examined the potential effects coaching could have in other similar districts. However, it was a good starting place for future studies to build as there is a strong connection between specific modalities of professional development and teacher perception of the impact on learning.

This study focused on a specific form of coaching, that of collaborative coaching cycles. Many districts have the coaching position, but the work they engage in may be different, thereby limiting the generalizability of this study. However, this study informed other professionals about collaborative coaching as a method of professional development and the potential it has, or does not have, for affecting student learning and achievement.

Limitations included the researcher's relationship with subjects. At one of the two sites, the researcher had little to no contact with the participants but did have a relationship with the coaches and administrators. That is to say, the researcher was not working directly with any of the potential teacher participants. In the second participating district, the researcher did have a relationship with most of the participants. The researcher was a former literacy coach in that district, and some of the data collected may have been a reflection upon the researcher's coaching. A possible challenge could be the coaches' impact on the study. The coaches are potentially invested in the outcome of the research and may encourage teachers who are more willing to engage in coaching cycles to participate rather than all subjects being invited. The data could possibly be limited in this way.

## **Conclusion**

Through surveys, qualitative data were collected from a sample to answer research questions about teacher perceptions of which forms of professional development most affect student learning. After data collection, the researcher used coding strategies identified by Saldana (2016) to uncover trends and determine patterns related to the effects of coaching as a professional development experience on teacher practices. Once the initial demographic coding from the data was complete, the researcher analyzed the additional feedback provided by the open-ended questions again looking for trends and keywords to further gather data relative to Kirkpatrick's four levels of engagement.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This phenomenological study examined teachers' feedback about the effects of literacy coaching on their practices. Through questions using Likert scales and open-ended questions, teachers shared how literacy coaching affected them. Teachers reported literacy coaching in relation to the levels of enjoyment, new learning, change in practice, and impact on student learning. The survey research data were collected relative to teachers' experiences with literacy instructional coaching. Teachers rated their experience online over a period of two weeks with three reminders emailed to staff during that time. All participants were responsible for at least 50% of students' literacy instruction and had participated in a literacy coaching cycle with a building-based literacy coach within the last three school years.

Eighteen staff members participated in this study of approximately 45 eligible staff members. Eleven of the 18 participants were from Kindergarten through second grade while 7 participants were from grades 3 through 5. Teacher experience ranged from first-year teachers to teachers who had been in the profession for more than 21 years.

As a former literacy coach in one of the districts, the researcher had some contact with participants, but it was minimal, and there was no contact during the time the survey was available to teachers. In the second district, the researcher had no relationship with the participants before, during, or after the survey research occurred.

Staff who participated were teachers and educational technicians or paraprofessionals in grades K-5. Staff members had varying levels of experience with some participants being first-year teachers while others had been in the profession for over 20 years.

Data were presented illustrating common themes that emerged from the survey feedback as well as details of how these data were organized, coded, and analyzed. Findings highlighted the state of affairs in instructional coaching within this sample population at the time of this study. In addition, data regarding professional development practices that teachers believed changed their practices more or less than coaching are shared. A presentation of the findings and how they related to research questions, current research, and the conceptual framework are displayed.

### **Research Questions**

This research study examined instructional coaching as a form of professional development. The primary research question studied was: To what degree does coaching affect teaching practice? A secondary question was: Why does coaching affect change in practice for some teachers?

### **Analysis**

Data were collected through SurveyMonkey online over a period of two weeks. Likert scales and open-ended questions were utilized to discover the degree to which coaching affected teacher attitudes, learning, practices, and student learning. The design was a cross-sectional survey intended to examine a representative portion of the elementary teaching population to understand teacher perceptions at one point in time. The survey was designed to “examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices” (Creswell 2012, p. 377).

Upon completion of data collection, the data were reviewed, organized, coded, and analyzed for common themes and sorted to indicate years of teaching experience. As defined by Saldana (2016), descriptive coding was utilized. To identify topics, keywords that align with Kirkpatrick’s (1959) levels of engagement were used and organized into categories such as

enjoyment, change in practice, new learning, and perceived change in student learning, among others. The researcher was vigilant in finding keywords that surfaced through data collection, to monitor whether what was relevant to the participant had emerged. Trends surfaced, and a second round of pattern coding then occurred. Pattern coding is “a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts” (p. 236). Reducing the number of themes and categories supported a conclusion about literacy coaching and its effects on teaching practices and student learning/achievement.

### **Presentation of Results**

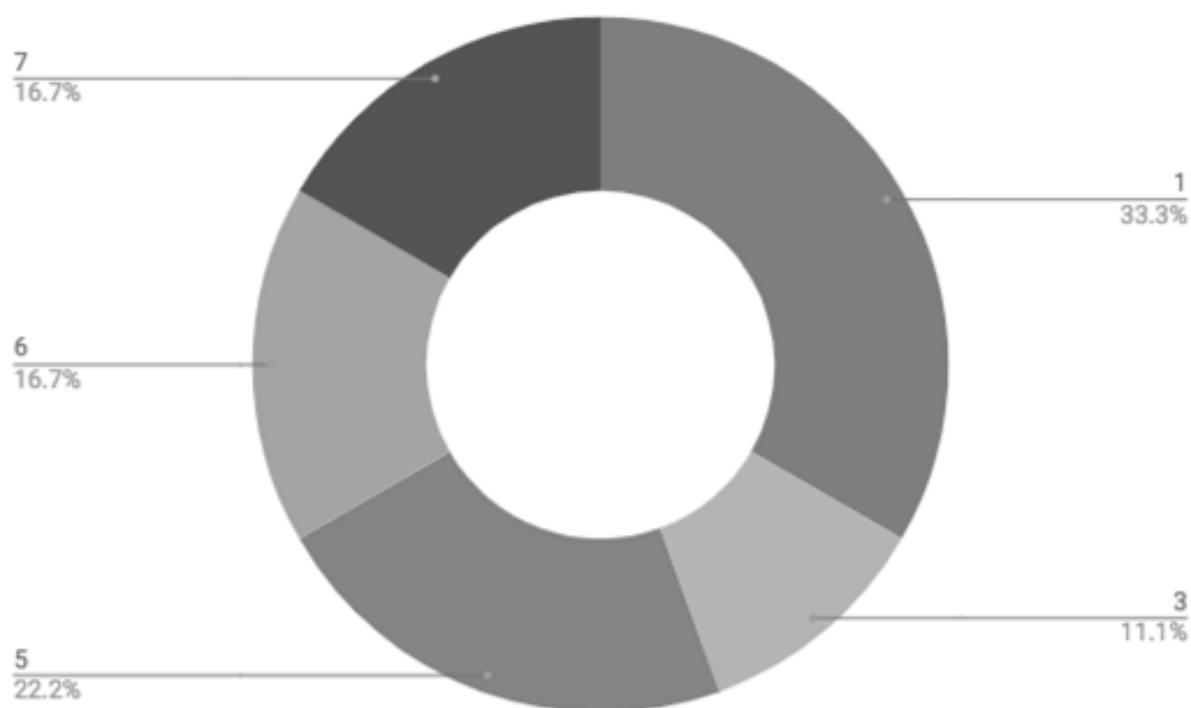
While using Saldana’s (2016) coding method, initially 14 themes emerged. The second round of pattern coding helped reduce the original 14 themes to 6: enjoyment, learning, change in teacher practice, change in student learning, coaching moves, and climate characteristics. In addition to the themes that surfaced, the teachers also rated their experiences using a Likert scale to indicate agreement with a statement. While teachers only used a Likert scale for agreement or disagreement with the first four themes, the data relative to the final two themes include strictly narrative data.

### **Themes**

**Theme 1: Enjoyment.** Teachers, regardless of grade level, reported enjoyment in the experience of collaborative literacy coaching save for one teacher who reported negatively. Words such as “enjoy,” “like,” and “easy” coupled with statements such as “I enjoyed working with the literacy coach” and “liked having someone to collaborate with” indicated the teachers in this study enjoyed the practice of collaborative coaching. Words including “enjoy,” “easy,” and “liked” were indicators of enjoyment. Some veteran staff members indicated they had

participated in collaborative coaching multiple times and the researcher interpreted those comments as meaning the teacher enjoyed the experience.

Beyond narrative data, the researcher also collected Likert scale data, and the average enjoyment rating was the highest of any of the Likert scales at four of seven, which indicated above average enjoyment from participants. The raw scores from participants ranged from a low of zero to a high of seven with the majority of indicators being above average while those few very low indicators brought the overall average down. Figure 1 indicates the percentage of staff who rate enjoyment within each Likert scale band.



*Figure 1.* Likert scale enjoyment ratings.

Staff experience had a significant effect on teacher enjoyment of literacy coaching. Teachers who had been in the field for more than 16 years indicated less enjoyment with coaching than teachers who had been in the profession for fewer than 12 years. Teachers who



had been in the field zero to three years all indicated high levels of enjoyment rating the experience between six and seven on the Likert scale.

Ten teachers with 21 or more years of experience completed the survey making up more than half of the collected data pool. Five of those 10 teachers rated their enjoyment of coaching below a 1 on a Likert scale of 7. Of the remaining 5 teachers with 21 or more years of experience, 2 of them rated the experience below average and 3 rated it just above average between 5.5 and 6.5. No teachers with 21 or more years of experience rated the experience a 7 of 7.

New teachers with zero to three years' experience consistently rated the experience highly enjoyable. Comments included, "enjoy making a goal and getting the support I need to reach it" (Respondent 1) and "the literacy coach provided valuable feedback that I was effectively able to implement and noticed an increase in student learning and engagement as a result" (Respondent 34). Teachers with between four and seven years' experience also indicated enjoyment with the coaching model noting "[coach] was easy to work with and supported me with the needs of my students" (Respondent 2).

**Theme 2: Learning.** The most significant theme noted in the data was the increase in teacher learning. Teachers noted they learned new practices, ways of analyzing data, and curriculum material. Teachers indicated new learning on all parts of the survey positing they learned new things, got new ideas about how to meet the needs of students, how to perfect mini-lessons and other lesson components as well as learning "how to pick out the important teacher points from the lesson" (Respondent 3).

New teachers with zero to three years' experience indicated the learning about the curriculum was valuable. In addition to teachers with zero to three years' experience, teachers

who were new to the district posited the opportunity to work with a coach to learn a new literacy curriculum was valuable. Even experienced teachers who indicated new learning occurred rated new learning higher on the Likert scale than enjoyment by almost one and one-half points.

Experienced teachers shared that new ideas and practices such as book clubs, and new processes for conferring and modeling new material were what they learned the most. Experienced teachers also indicated barriers to new learning including time and familiarity with the material being shared. Some teachers viewed already knowing the material as redundant while others perceived it more positively as a review.

**Theme 3: Coaching moves.** Survey respondents shared information about how the new learning occurred as well. Not only did they indicate they learned certain things, but also, they reported coaching strategies that were helpful in their learning. The ideas that emerged were effective at helping teachers gain new knowledge. Several teachers mentioned the effectiveness of modeling lessons, assessments, and data mining. When teachers noted new learning, it was often accompanied by a note concerning how the coach shared that knowledge. See Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Word cloud of effective coaching moves.

**Theme 4: Change in practice.** Data collected around the third level of Kirkpatrick's model were less reliable. Teachers who had been in practice for fewer than eight years did not always have the perspective to say whether coaching experiences had made lasting changes in their practice. Teachers with zero to three years' experience indicated there was less change in practice than new learning, which makes sense because they were learning the practices and content together. The most significant change in practice indicated by newer teachers was that coaching helped them "pick out the important teacher points from the lessons" (Respondent 3), which was echoed in the other less experienced teachers' feedback.

The more experienced teachers (16 or more years of experience) were split. About half reported challenges and they often credited simple experience with the curriculum and grade-level colleagues for their changes in teaching practice as opposed to the coaching cycle (Respondent 8). Two teachers also indicated lack of time and reflection prevented them from genuinely changing their practices (Respondents 4 and 10). One teacher noted learning a practice that could be implemented the next day would change his or her practice temporarily, but he or she struggled with integrating new practices into already established routines (Respondent 12). The other half of the more experienced teachers noted they had maintained new practices over a two- to three-year span based on previous coaching cycles.

**Theme 5: Change in student learning.** This study, as conducted, could not directly link coaching and changes in student learning, but it could measure teacher perceptions of changes in student learning. When teachers reported student learning had changed, it was changed for the better. Many teachers noted there was an increase in student engagement and it is known from Finn and Rock's (1997) research that students who were engaged as measured through participation in class, being prepared, and on time, as well as students who completed

homework, were more likely to be successful than peers who were less engaged. In other research studies such as Lahaderne (1968), Samuels and Turnure (1974), and Skinner, Welborn, and Connell (1990), positive relationships between engagement indicators and achievement were found.

Beyond increased engagement, teachers reported students responded well to the coach and teacher working together (Respondent 7). They noted students increased reading levels and accomplished increasingly rigorous tasks (Respondent 1, 8, 9, and 6). A few teachers noted no change in student learning, but that was attributed to the group of students they had, not the coaching cycles themselves (Respondent 3). One teacher stated he or she noticed no change in student achievement relative to years with no coach (Respondent 10).

As noted previously, this study was not intended to link student achievement with coaching; yet, it was informative to discover what teachers' perceptions were of the link between coaching as a professional development experience and the effect on this fourth level of impact.

**Theme 6: Climate characteristics.** One theme that surfaced through the coding process was the importance of the culture and climate of the school for coaching success or demise. Words such as collaboration, support, consistency, communication, and reflection came up for many teachers. These words spoke to the culture or climate of the school and relationships built between coach and coachee. These were brought up both positively and negatively in the responses to the survey.

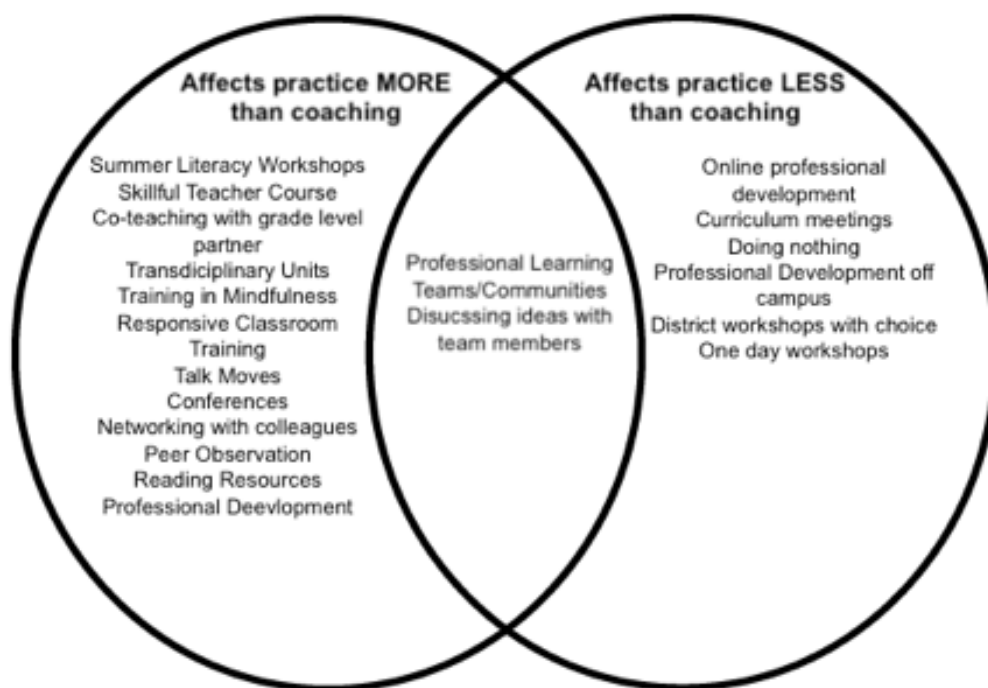
All teachers who commented on characteristics of climate were either praising the components aiding in the effectiveness of coaching or mentioning the lack thereof as a barrier to coaching. One teacher talked about the structure of meeting once per week. The consistency of those meetings helped to go “over where I am at and what I need help in” (Respondent 1). In

opposition, another respondent mentioned the coaching cycle structure was not reliable, thus, was less effective. He or she mentioned his or her experience was more with pop-ins versus regularly-scheduled coaching sessions, which was a barrier to enjoyment, learning, change, and success.

Collaboration surfaced as a positive characteristic of the culture. Teachers repeatedly mentioned collaboration was helpful; they enjoyed collaboration and talking, and exchanging ideas was helpful. The idea of collaboration in implementing new practices was strong. Teachers who reported negatively about their coaching experiences and the results of them also mentioned that collaboration was missing from their experiences. Teachers did talk about true collaboration and co-teaching. One teacher said she appreciated “developing ideas together . . . and having some of my own ideas challenged” (Respondent 15). The data collected show coaches moved beyond modeling lessons into a more collaborative working environment, which takes a strong culture to accomplish.

### **Coaching Versus Other PD Options**

The final data collected concerned teacher feedback about the coaching experience versus other professional development opportunities. Teachers responded:



*Figure 3.* Professional development opportunities in relation to their effect on teacher practice.

The variety of professional development opportunities teachers had is evident in Figure 3. While coaching has been widely accepted as a form of professional development, the data suggest some teachers did not view coaching as a professional development opportunity since they rated “professional development” as changing their practice both more and less than coaching. In the category of “professional development that changes my practices more than coaching,” teachers named specific books and programs as well as ongoing professional development opportunities such as PLC work and co-teaching. In the category of “professional development that changes practices less than coaching,” the responses were vague, and a lot of meetings were mentioned.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers provided survey data relative to their perceptions about collaborative coaching and to what level it affected their practice. Utilizing Kirkpatrick’s levels of evaluation, teachers

shared Likert scale ratings and narrative data relative to enjoyment, new learning, changes in practice, and perspectives on the effects of coaching on student learning. The researcher requested minimal professional data that included years of teaching experience and grade level. While there were no consistent grade level trends, patterns emerged when examining years' experience and perceptions of coaching.

Teachers who were newer to the profession and had between zero and three years' experience tended to rate coaching more favorably than teachers who had more experience; as the years of experience went up, the favorable feedback tended to go down. Approximately half of the respondents who had been in the profession for many years found value in coaching as a form of professional development.

The data showed coaching was a form of professional development teachers were experiencing among many other opportunities. Teachers reported some professional development opportunities changed their practice more than coaching while others changed their practices less. Some teachers were uncertain whether coaching was a form of professional development. Based on the data collected, it was evident coaching did affect teaching practices and could do so positively or negatively.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This phenomenological qualitative survey study examined the degree to which instructional literacy coaching changed teacher practices. Utilizing a survey with Likert scales and narrative responses, data were collected relative to teacher perspective on the effects of literacy coaching on their enjoyment, new learning, change in practice, and student learning. The survey was intended for teachers who were responsible for at least half of their students' literacy development and who had experienced a collaborative coaching cycle over the last three school years. Online surveys were distributed via email, and two follow-up reminders were sent to the staff.

This study was grounded in Kirkpatrick's (1959) model of levels of evaluation, which encompass reaction, learning, behavior, and results. In this study, Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation were coded as enjoyment, learning, change in practice, and change in student learning. In tandem with Kirkpatrick's model, adult learning theory was also part of the theoretical framework founded in acknowledging collaborative coaching, the primary professional development opportunity studied.

#### **Interpretation of Findings**

The research question studied was: To what degree does coaching change teacher practice? This study found, for many teachers, coaching reached Kirkpatrick's third level of change in practice consistently. For more experienced teachers involved in this study, the results were mixed with approximately half of the experienced teachers with 21 or more years' experience reporting they changed their practices due to collaborative coaching and reporting



they saw increased performance in their students due to the coaching experience or the new practices that resulted from coaching.

### **Effective Coaching**

Many teachers reported coaching was effective to the third level of Kirkpatrick's model—change. When teachers spoke of the effectiveness of coaching, many of these characteristics were present. In addition, the conceptual framework was based upon adult learning theory, which posits adults need experiences where they are self-directed, experiences are used as a resource for new learning, readiness to learn is dependent upon the person's social roles, immediacy of application is crucial and the motivation to learn is increasingly internal (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson 2005). All of those characteristics were evident in the collaborative coaching teachers reported as effective.

Teachers mentioned coaching moves that were valuable to their enjoyment and learning such as modeling, co-teaching, collaboration, consistency, brainstorming, and data mining. This study suggests there are specific moves a coach can use to deepen the impact a coaching session holds. If some coaching moves are more effective than others, coaches can utilize those to maximize their time with staff. The data were clear that collaboration and a partnership needed to be in place for coaching to be effective. Anyone who stated collaboration was occurring also rated coaching better than average in effectiveness on the Likert scales.

For sustained change in practice, teachers who mentioned change had lasted over time also reported having worked with the literacy coach multiple times, and over a period of time rather than just a one-time experience. It has been found that sustained professional development is more effective than one-time experiences and that was also evident in the data collected in this

study. Teachers reported coaching created change in their practice when it met the characteristics of adult learning theory.

### **Barriers to Effective Coaching**

Just as collaboration, consistency, co-teaching, modeling, and other indicators were evident in the data that supported coaching as an effective professional development model, so too were those elements absent for staff who did not rate collaborative literacy coaching as effective.

Teacher perception was also a barrier to effective coaching. Staff who reported poor experiences with the coaching model commented, “I already knew the material” (Respondent 8) versus “it is always great to review materials because there is always something new to learn” (Respondent 12). Those two responses differ in describing the ability of a teacher to accept responsibility for their own learning. Respondent 8 seems to view coaching as a professional development model that is done to them, and they are passive, whereas Respondent 12 was taking responsibility for the learning and trying to find something new even though much of the experience was a review.

Respondent 8 also lamented there was “not enough time with the coach.” This comment, which was repeated in multiple sections on the survey, leads the researcher to believe the teacher did not perceive his or her needs were being met through the coaching process. This feeling of needs not being met makes sense that the teacher would rate coaching as ineffective for them. This teacher also spoke of the challenges of additional assessments and paperwork and how they cause stress and anxiety. Any success the teacher had was attributed to the new curriculum. There are many layers here of stress, anxiety, lack of needs being met, and the inability to articulate what is needed. From this study, the data suggest coaches need to meet with staff on a

regular, at least weekly, basis. Some staff reported there was not enough time with the coach but further study would need to be conducted to determine how much time was already being spent and if that time was being spent effectively or if there were coaching moves a coach could utilize to maximize the time and provide the teacher what he or she needed. Perhaps it is not only a question of quantity but a question of quality as well.

### **Rationale for Mixed Results**

Overall, the results were consistent with just two outliers who were not getting their needs met or whose attitudes around coaching were a barrier to their success. Within this study, there were also multiple sites involved. Although specific site data were not collected as part of this research, the researcher wonders if there are various levels of implementation and fidelity of coaching occurring. One reason for differences in implementation and fidelity to the coaching model is the various experiences coaches in the buildings have. In district A, there is a single coach between three primary school buildings, kindergarten through second grade, and one at the third- through fifth-grade level. In district B, there were building-based literacy coaches at each of the three K-2 and 3-5 schools. While district A would have similar consistency in coaching between buildings, the ability of the coach to spend extended time at the primary level was diminished. In district B, there was less consistency between buildings. However, the time the coaches had to invest in the staff was greater.

In addition to varying coach-to-teacher ratios, some coaches have more experience than others. In previous coaching studies such as Biancarosa et al. (2010), the coach's own professional development and knowledge were factors in effectiveness. There is evidence that the reason for mixed results in this study is due, in part, to coaching experience. Two of the coaches have been literacy coaches for four years in the same buildings, one has been in the

coaching position for three years, two were new to the position, and one was new to the district as well. The varying levels of experience would undoubtedly affect teacher feedback about their experiences with coaching.

### **Other Professional Development Opportunities**

Data collected in this study show the variety of professional development experiences to which teachers have access. Table 1 shows the professional development opportunities teachers identified. For opportunities that changed practice more than instructional coaching, teachers tended to name specific programs in which they were trained. For the opportunities that supported their teacher less than coaching, teachers were increasingly vague. This reflects the literature in that, effective professional development requires extensive time that is well organized, structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content, pedagogy, or both (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009; Shulman, 1986). Teachers consistently cited specific examples of well-organized, structured, and purposeful professional development when naming experiences more impactful than coaching.

One may wonder if the coaches were all able to deliver coaching sessions that were well-organized, structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy. If not, that may be the reason behind some professional development opportunities being more successful than instructional literacy coaching. This circumstance may have also led to some of the mixed results mentioned above. The impact that competing professional development opportunities had on the effectiveness of coaching was not explored in this study.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study are robust. They are helpful to the districts being studied, and potentially other public schools. This study supports the literature that literacy coaching is an

effective model of professional development. As a term in this study, *effective* was defined as a professional development experience that changes teacher practices.

### **Local District Implications**

Most teachers involved in the study reported instructional coaching was an effective professional development tool and it changed their practices. More importantly, at least half of teachers reported they saw positive changes in student learning that they attributed to their experience with instructional coaching. As the researcher examined the strategic plans of these districts, it was evident that student achievement, particularly in reading, was an important goal. With evidence suggesting teachers' practices are changing due to instructional coaching, and they are seeing students making increased progress, there is support for the continuation of instructional coaches for these districts.

Personnel form the most significant part of any school budget, and instructional coaches can be faced with uncertainty about their positions around budget time. The districts studied here had leaders that asked difficult questions about personnel and budget cuts. The findings in this study can answer some of the questions about the added value of instructional coaches. The reporting of teachers changing their practices and noticing student gains as a result of their involvement with literacy coaching shows instructional coaching is an excellent place to budget personnel.

### **Implications for Teaching and Learning**

School leaders are always looking to improve teaching and learning. Schools invest a considerable amount of money each year in professional development experiences to support teachers in implementing evidence-based practices and innovative teaching methods. The data collected here demonstrate coaching does have an effect on teacher practices. With instructional

coaches, schools can maximize professional development opportunities and provide on the job, responsive, practical professional development, which aligns with adult learning theory. Not only do teachers change their practice as a result of instructional coaching but this study implies teachers have observed a positive change in student learning due to their professional development experiences with coaching.

There is evidence here to suggest, particularly for those in their first 10 years of teaching, instructional coaches provide valuable professional development to staff. Staff who are more experienced also benefit from instructional coaching, although with those teachers, consulting adult learning theory and allowing coaching sessions to be more teacher-led and personalized based on their experience and needs would be beneficial. This study shows there is a positive relationship between coaching and teacher practices.

### **Implications for the Literature**

This study supports the ever-growing body of literature on instructional coaching with an examination of the degree to which instructional coaching affects teacher practice. The literature encompasses research about the markers of effective coaches, the roles coaches play, effective professional development, and the outcomes of long-term sustained professional development opportunities in literacy such as Reading Recovery. The literature had yet to examine to what degree coaching affects teacher practice. Utilizing Kirkpatrick's model with a survey similar to Torff, Sessions, and Byrnes (2005), *Teacher Attitudes About Professional Development* examined coaching and teacher perceptions differently than before. This survey type could be utilized to measure the effects of other forms of professional development on teacher practices as well and could open up a conversation about how the effectiveness of professional development is measured.

## **Implications for Transformative Leadership**

Burns' (1978) definition of transformative leadership was "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4). Burns talked about how transformative leadership "raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20). Transformative leadership goes beyond the give and take of transactional leadership that is often short-lived and focuses on long-term goals and higher moral purposes.

Instructional coaching is an essential part of a successful transformative leadership model in a school. Coaches can motivate and support teachers to move the school organization forward. Instructional coaching focuses on long-term goals and moving the organization forward as a whole instead of short-term and short-sighted vision. A clear example of this stance is an instructional coach working with a teacher on effective practices instead of test preparation. Effective practices will improve test scores in the long term as opposed to working with one group of children for one moment in time on one test-taking skill. Instructional coaching has transformative leadership built into its very nature. The data repeatedly mentioned how teachers could do more after working with an instructional coach, how they felt more confident, how they were making changes in their classrooms, and their professional learning teams.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study uncovered an opportunity to examine the levels at which instructional coaching and other forms of professional development affect teacher practice. Through Likert scales and a survey, teachers provided feedback on their experiences with an instructional coaching model. Using the Kirkpatrick (1959) model that has primarily been used in business,

and adapting it to the school setting, can structure valuable feedback to administrators, coaching, professional developers, and teachers.

It is recommended that future studies of this nature also examine the fidelity to which instructional coaching is happening. Some of the discrepancies in the data may be due to the uneven implementation or various styles of coaching that are occurring. Due to the small sample population, this study lacked strong transferability and would become stronger if it were replicated in more districts with increasingly diverse student and teacher populations. The challenge to other districts or other researchers looking to replicate this study would be to find schools and districts where instructional coaching is happening in practice and in a collaborative manner. The type of coaching occurring; collaborative, transformative, or directive; would be valuable to note.

While this study was not intended to correlate instructional coaching with student achievement, some of the data collected indicate teachers have seen gains in student learning, which they attribute to the practices they have learned through instructional coaching. A further study isolating the variables and looking at the correlation between various forms of professional development and student achievement would be fascinating.

### **Conclusion**

Literacy instructional coaching is an effective form of professional development, as it has an impact on changing teacher practices. The knowledge of the coach and the degree to which the coach understands and implements the coaching model is vital to the success of this form of professional development. Coaching has the potential to aid in transformative leadership by empowering teachers and coaches to motivate each other and move the organization forward by being able to identify and respond to challenges at the classroom level. Coaching aligns with



adult learning theory, which in theory, means it is an effective form of professional development, but the data collected here support that theory and show coaching is also effective in practice.

## References

- Aguilar, E. (2013). *The art of coaching; Effective strategies for school transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Akert, N., & Martin, B. N. (2012). The role of teacher leaders in school improvement through the perceptions of principals and teachers. *International Journal of Education*, 4(4), 284-299.
- Biancarosa, G., Bryk, A. S., & Dexter, E. R. (2010). Assessing the value-added effects of literacy collaborative professional development on student learning. *The Elementary School Journal* 111(1), 8-34.
- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *E-journal of American Educational Research Association*, 33(8), 3-15. Retrieved from <http://jstor.org/stable/3699979>
- Drago-Severson, E. (2011). How adults learn forms the foundation of the learning designs standard. *Journal of Staff Development*, 32(5), 10-12.
- Drago-Severson, E. (2009). *Leading adult learning: Supporting adult development in our schools*. New York, NY: Corwin.
- Drago-Severson, E. (2008) 4 practices serve as pillars for adult learning; Learning-oriented leadership offers a promising way to support growth. *Journal of Staff Development*, 29(4) 60-63.
- Dunne, K., & Villani, S. (2007). Preparing mentor teachers as collaborative coaches. In *Mentoring new teachers through collaborative coaching: Linking teacher and student learning* (pp. 55-79). San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from [http://www.wested.org/online\\_pubs/LI-06-04\\_chap4sampleall.pdf](http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/LI-06-04_chap4sampleall.pdf)

- Eberle, W. M. (2011). Teacher self-efficacy and student achievement as measured by North Carolina reading and math end-of-grade tests. *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1242. Retrieved from <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1242>
- Finn, J. D., & Rock, D. A. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(2), 221-234. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.2.221>
- Fisher, D., Frye, N., & Hattie, J. (2016). *Visible learning for literacy, grades K-12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Gissy, C. L. (2010). *Elementary teachers' attitudes about professional development: Professional development schools versus non-professional development schools*. Morgantown, WV: Dissertation for West Virginia University.
- Guskey, T. R., & Yoon, K. S. (2009). What works in professional development? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(7), 495. Retrieved from ProQuest (UMI no. 218482624)
- Hargreaves, A. (2007a). The long and short of educational change. *Education Canada*, 47(3), 16.
- Hargreaves, A. (2007b). Sustainable professional learning communities. In L. Stoll & K.S. Louis(Eds.), *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas* (pp. 181-195). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- Harris, D. N., & Sass, T. R. (2011). Teacher training, quality, and student achievement. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95, 798-812.
- Hudson, M., Childs, L., & Carver, C. L. (2016). Open doors, open minds; Empowered teachers work and learn shoulder to shoulder. *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(4), 18-23.

- Kao, C., Tsai, C., & Shih, M. (2014). Development of a survey to measure self-efficacy and attitudes towards Internet-based professional development among elementary school teachers. *Education, Technology, & Society, 17*(4).
- Killion, J., Harrison, C., Bryan, C., & Clifton, H. (2012). Characteristics of effective coaches. In V. vonFrank (Ed.), *Coaching matters* (27-39). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- Kirkpatrick, J., & Kirkpatrick, W. K. (2009). *The Kirkpatrick four levels: A fresh look after 50 years 1959-2009*. Retrieved November 21, 2017 from Kirkpatrick Partners, LLC website: <http://kirkpatrickpartners.com/Portals/0/Resources/Kirkpatrick%20Four%20Levels%20white%20paper.pdf>
- Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1959). Techniques for evaluation training programs. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors, 13*, 21-26.
- Kise, J. (2014). Two sides of the coin: Evaluation and support work together to strengthen teaching. *Journal of Staff Development, 35*(6), 24-28.
- Lahaderne, H. M. (1968). Attitudinal and intellectual correlates of attention: A study of four sixth-grade classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 59*(5), 320-324.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0026223>
- Lockwood, J. R., McCombs, J. S., & Marsh, J. (2010). Linking reading coaches and student achievement; Evidence from Florida middle schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 32*, 372-388.
- Mizell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- Nunokawa, K. M. L. (2012). *Teacher perception on coaching and effective professional development implementation* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://digitalibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll127/id/676377>

- O'Donnell-Allen, C. (2012). The best writing teachers are writers themselves. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from [https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/09/the-best-writing-teachers-are-writers-themselves/262858/?utm\\_content=bufferd4b0f&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/09/the-best-writing-teachers-are-writers-themselves/262858/?utm_content=bufferd4b0f&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)
- Parise, L. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2010). Teacher learning and instructional change: How formal on-the-job learning opportunities predict change in elementary school teachers' practice. *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(3), 323-346.
- Quick, H. E., Holtzman, D. J., & Chaney, K. R. (2009). Professional development and instructional practice: Conceptions and evidence of effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Students at Risk*, 14(1), 45-71.
- Rhodes, C., & Beneicke, S. (2006). Coaching, mentoring and peer networking: Challenges for the management of teacher professional development in schools. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 28(2), 297-309.
- Rouse, D. (2011). *Employing Kirkpatrick's evaluation framework to determine the effectiveness of health information management courses and programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3070232/>
- Samuels, S. J., & Turnure, J. E. (1974). Attention and reading achievement in first-grade boys and girls. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 66(1), 29-32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0035812>
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1175860>

- Silva, J., & Contreras, K. (2011). The year we learned to collaborate. *Educational Leadership*, 69(2), Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct11/vol69/num02/The-Year-We-Learned-to-Collaborate.asp>
- Skinner, E. A., Wellborn, J. G., & Connell, J. P. (1990). What it takes to do well in school and whether I've got it: A process model of perceived control and children's engagement and achievement in school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(1), 22-32.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.82.1.22>
- Stronge, J. H., & Hindman, J. L. (2003). Hiring the best teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 48-52. Retrieved from <http://www.esc4.net/Assets/hiring-the-best-teachers.pdf>
- Stronge, J. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2000). *Linking teacher evaluation and student learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Thomas, E. E., Bell, D. L., Spelman, M., & Briody, J. (2015). The growth of instructional coaching partner conversations in a pre-K-3rd grade teacher professional development experience. *Journal of Adult Education*, 44(2), 1-6. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083974.pdf>
- Torff, B., Sessions, J., & Byrnes K. (2005) Assessment of teachers' attitudes about professional development. New York, NY: Hofstra University.
- Torff, B., & Sessions D. (2008). Factors associated with teachers' attitudes about professional development. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(2),123-133.
- Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Wen-Yu Lee, S., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. L. (2007). *Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement*. Retrieved from [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL\\_2007033.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL_2007033.pdf)

## Appendices

## APPENDIX A.

## A LETTER OF REQUEST FOR CONSENT

January 2018

Dear Potential Participant,

It is as a doctoral candidate with the University of New England and former literacy instructional coaching, that I approach you to ask for your participation in a qualitative research study. Through use of survey and optional interviews, I am studying to what degree literacy instructional coaching, as professional development, impacts teacher practices.

You are a candidate to participate in this research because you have participated in literacy coaching and you are in current practice teaching literacy to students in grades K-5. The research questions to be answered are; what is the impact of literacy coaching on teacher practices and why.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with either the University of New England or your School Department. If you choose to participate, you may also end your participation at any time. There are no risks associated with participation in this study, and the results will not have any effect on supervision or evaluation. This is a confidential study, and no identifying information will be shared with any but the primary researcher. The published data will contain no identifying information.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, you may contact Terrilyn Lebel Cheney, primary researcher, in person at (207)294-1418 or by email at [tlabel@une.edu](mailto:tlabel@une.edu). You may also contact the UNE Institutional Review Board at [irb@une.edu](mailto:irb@une.edu), 207-602-2244.

Sincerely,

Terrilyn Lebel Cheney



## APPENDIX B.

## UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

**Project Title: Professional Development that Changes Teacher Practice in Elementary Literacy Instruction****Principal Investigator(s):**

*Terrilyn Lebel Cheney,  
 Doctoral Candidate,  
 University of New England  
 2 Stone St.  
 Saco, ME 04072  
 (207)294-1418  
 TLebel@une.edu*

*Grania Holman EdD  
 Lead Advisor  
 University of New England  
 GHolman@une.edu*

**Introduction:**

- This study is intended to look at literacy professional development experiences to determine which have an effect on teaching practices.
- Please read this form. Your participation is voluntary.

**Why is this study being done?**

- This study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation to uncover elementary teacher feedback about professional development experiences and which opportunities teachers enjoy, which they learn from, and which help them change teaching practices.

**Who will be in this study?**

- You have been identified as a potential participant because you are an elementary teacher who has participated in literacy professional development over the last three years.
- Approximately 35 participants are involved in the study.

**What will I be asked to do?**

- You will be asked to complete a survey about your experiences with literacy professional development over the last three school years.
- The survey should take you approximately 30minutes to complete.
- Participants will be asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview with the researcher at the conclusion of the surveys.
- Surveys will be administered online, and interviews will be conducted in person.

**What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- There are no reasonably foreseeable risks and/or discomforts that may result from participation.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- There are no reasonably foreseeable benefits to taking part in this study beyond contribution to knowledge and education.

### **What will it cost me?**

Participants will not incur any costs associated with this study.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Participants have the option of maintaining anonymity. This survey is designed to be anonymous; please do not include any information anywhere on the survey that may individually identify you or anyone else. Participation in the survey does not require any identifiable information that could link the data back to participants. Upon completion of the survey, participants will have an option to indicate interest in a follow-up interview. In such a case, privacy will be maintained by use of pseudonyms.

Every effort will be made to keep data confidential. Any research records will be maintained on the principal investigator's hard drive. If data transfer is necessary, data will be encrypted using industry standards. Data from the survey website will be downloaded nightly and kept secure on the principal investigator's hard drive. Access to data will be limited to the principal investigator and advisors at the University of New England.

“Please note that the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.”

Results of the study will be shared with faculty at the University of New England. It will be published through their online dissertation warehouse, DUNE. There is no intent to publish beyond that.

### **What are my rights as a research participant?**

- **Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University of New England or with your school department.**
- **You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.**
- **You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.**
- **If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.**
- **The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of New England has reviewed the use of human subjects in this research. The IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of people involved in research.**

### **What other options do I have?**

- If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you are otherwise entitled to receive.

**Whom may I contact with questions?**

- Required language: “The researchers conducting this study are Terrilyn Lebel Cheney and faculty mentor, Grania Holman EdD. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her/him/them at (207)294-1418 and tlebel@une.edu or gholman@une.edu
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.
- *Student researchers are **required** to have the faculty mentor(s) listed. The faculty mentor is expected to take an active role in students’ research activities and provide supervision throughout the duration of their research study. The faculty mentor is legally responsible for all research activities.*

**Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

**I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey, I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s signature or  
Legally authorized representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher’s Statement

**The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Literacy Coaching and Teaching Practices

Which grade(s) do you teach?

Kindergarten

First Grade

Second Grade

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Grade

Fourth Grade

Fifth Grade

Current role in your building: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been teaching?

0-3

12-15

4-7

16-20

8-11

21+

Approximately what were the dates of your last literacy coaching cycle?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about your last literacy coaching cycle, how would you rate your ENJOYMENT of the experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Average			Very much

Tell me about your enjoyment rating. What are some of the reasons you either did, or did not enjoy the experience?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about your last literacy coaching cycle, how would you rate the amount of new LEARNING you got from the experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Average			Very much

Tell me about your learning rating. What are some of the supports or barriers for new learning?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about your last literacy coaching cycle, how would you rate the changes in your practice that occurred as a result of the experience?

\_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX C.  
SURVEY DRAFT