Master of Education Program Theses

5-2020

Peer Coaching at an Independent School

Lindsay Anderson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/med_theses

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Peer Coaching at an Independent School

Abstract

This action research study investigated the effects of peer coaching on an independent school's culture, professional development, and growth mindset. The participants were eight middle scholar teachers, including the researcher. Each participant volunteered to be a part of a peer coaching pilot team in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 school year. Throughout the course of the pilot program, the participants were surveyed and interviewed independently on the topics of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset. As a team, the participants engaged in pre-observation, observation, and post-observation meetings as well as a final interview to debrief the pilot peer coaching program experience. The results of the study suggested that peer coaching has positive effects on the culture of a school, can aid in professional development, and may encourage a growth mindset within participants.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

Master of Education (MEd)

Department

Graduate Education

First Advisor

Patricia C. Kornelis

Keywords

Master of Education, thesis, peer coaching, school culture, professional development

Subject Categories

Curriculum and Instruction | Education

Comments

Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree of Master Education

Peer Coaching at an Independent School

by

Lindsay Anderson

B.A. Dordt College, 2012

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master Education

Department of Education
Dordt College
Sioux Center, IA
May 2020

Peer Coaching at an Independent School

by

Lindsay Anderson

Approved:

Patricia Kornelis, Ed.D.
Faculty Advisor

April 27, 2020
Date

Approved:

Stephen Holtrop, Ph.D.
Director of Graduate Studies

April 27, 2020
Date

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Figure   Page

List of Tables

Abstract

This action research study investigated the effects of peer coaching on an independent school's culture, professional development, and growth mindset. The participants were eight middle scholar teachers, including the researcher. Each participant volunteered to be a part of a peer coaching pilot team in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 school year. Throughout the course of the pilot program, the participants were surveyed and interviewed independently on the topics of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset. As a team, the participants engaged in pre-observation, observation, and post-observation meetings as well as a final interview to debrief the pilot peer coaching program experience. The results of the study suggested that peer coaching has positive effects on the culture of a school, can aid in professional development, and may encourage a growth mindset within participants.

Keywords: Peer coaching, school culture, professional development, growth mindset

Teaching, although an act of being continuously in contact with students, can be isolating. Especially at a small independent school without a team of teachers in the same content or grade level, the ability to learn with and from colleagues can be more difficult. Through various efforts, like team meetings, curriculum teams, and all staff professional development programs as well as peer coaching observations, community culture and growth mindset are addressed; however, more structure and guidance are necessary. Team meetings, although beneficial, typically address the day to day and big picture needs of a grade band. Similarly, curriculum teams, address new curriculum and program initiatives in each content. Finally, all staff professional development programs, address wholistic school expectations, not personal goals. Despite the information acquired during meetings, more intentionality would be beneficial.

Purposeful teaching and learning improvement, initiated by teachers themselves, is often missing from team, curriculum, and professional development meetings. Skinner and Welch (1996) claimed that, "[peer] coaching encourages teachers to work together and to learn from one another as peers; they collaborate to become both learners and teachers" (p. 154). It is not definitive that other school day meetings overlook teachers as learners, but all too often those meetings are checklists to complete, not inquiry to grow. Therefore, by adding a clearly outlined and piloted peer coaching program in conjunction with professional development, improved school culture and growth mindset may be achieved. Not only can peer coaching address school culture, professional development, and growth mindset; peer coaching can also impact student achievement through increased teacher engagement with the school, the staff, and the self. Activating the trifecta that is combined in peer coaching allows for changed perspectives, new

relationships among staff, connection among school wide initiatives and individual classrooms, as well as intrinsic motivation to foster improvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of peer coaching on school culture, professional development, and growth mindset. To that end the following research questions were explored.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of peer coaching on school culture?

2. In what ways does peer coaching enhance professional development throughout the year?

3. Does peer coaching instill a growth mindset among teachers?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used. Unless otherwise indicated, the definitions are those of the author.

<u>Continued Professional Development (CDP)</u> - "[CDP is]…a learning process resulting from meaningful interactions with the context and eventually leading to changes in teachers' professional practice and in their thinking about that practice" (Tang & Choi, 2009, p. 1).

<u>Growth mindset</u> – The belief that learning and effort can increase understanding with hard work that comparatively impacts achievement.

<u>Joint work</u> – Working with others of the same profession to accomplish a common task.

Observation vs. Evaluation - "Observation involves viewing behavior in a careful and systematic fashion; evaluation. on the other hand, involved rating or judging that behavior" (Eisenbach & Curry, 1999, p. 418 as cited in Eison, 1988, p. 51).

<u>Peer coaching</u> - "Peer coaching is a structured, formative process by which trained faculty voluntarily assist each other in enhancing their teaching repertoires within an atmosphere of collegial trust and candor" (Eisenbach & Curry, 1999, p. 418 as cited in Kinsella, 1995, p. 111). Peer coaching could also be described as "…professionals work together to define target teaching skills for observation and feedback…" (Anderson, 1994, p. 3).

<u>Peer observation of teaching (POT)</u> – "POT typically involves a teacher having one of their teaching sessions observed by a colleague who subsequently provides them with feedback on their performance" (Chamberlain, D'Artrey, & Rowe, 2011, p. 189).

<u>Professional Development</u> – In an educational work setting, learning and instructing the staff on various issues, topics, and resources in education throughout the year.

Literature Review

Peer coaching as defined by Anderson (1994) occurs when "…teachers observe each other's classes with the objective of helping each other improve their instructional abilities, empowers teaching professionals by enabling them to develop their own criteria for evaluation of and responsibility for quality classroom performance" (p. 3). When peer coaching is implemented mindfully, research is clear that the benefits of peer coaching pertain not only to the impact on classroom instruction, but it also develops a sense of community and fosters a growth mindset through professional development (Anderson, 1994).

"Research on cooperative learning [peer coaching] is overwhelmingly positive, and the cooperative approaches are appropriate for all curriculum areas" (Joyce et al, 1983, p. 12). Referencing Joyce et al (1983), Vaugh (2016) recapped,

- 5% of [teacher] learners would use their new skill when only theory was used to teach the skill.

- When theory and demonstration were used it was found that 10% of the participants put the skill into practice.

- Practice in addition to theory and demonstration resulted in 20% implementation.

- Feedback in addition to all other components resulted in 25% implementation.

- When coaching was added to all other components, implementation rose to 90% (p. 156).

As a result, a case was made for peer coaching. Professional development topics only impact five percent of staff members, compared to ninety percent when peer coaching was implemented. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of peer coaching rallies the school community around the pursuit of growing together for the benefit of teachers and students.

Figure 1

A Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 2002)
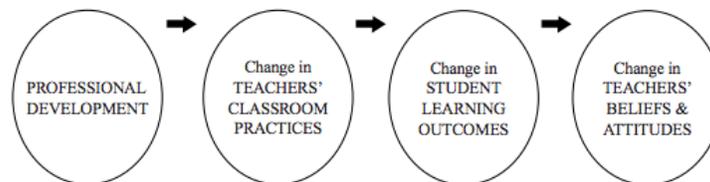
As Figure 1 indicates, the power of purposeful professional development changes a teachers' growth mindset, a school's professional development, and to the communities culture.

Peer coaching impacts culture by combating isolation. When peers engage in joint work, relationships are fostered as teachers step out of their classrooms and step into another's (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Hargreaves and Dawe (1990), further addressed teacher isolation by explaining the anxiety and stress that teachers experience within the four walls of the classroom. Relying purely on personal education, trial and error, and limited connections, a teacher's profession can be quite lonely. In light of that isolation, Showers (1985) addressed the need for administration to step in and encourage staff to "get out of the rut."

Furthermore, in order to effectively implement peer coaching, resources, time, training, and buy-in are critical. Eisenbach and Curry (1999) attest to the need for purpose, process, and product in training. Without a clear vision, peer coaching is void because the teacher buy-in will be nonexistent. Therefore, with administrative support, focus, and structured time, peer coaching can envelope the school culture, benefiting not just the staff but also the students (Showers, 1985).

Negating isolation is simply a natural byproduct of incorporating peer coaching; the specific benefits of peer coaching are generally connected to collaboration. However, teacher empowerment and self-directed commitment are also beneficial. A myriad of researchers (Anderson, 1994; Black, Molseed, & Sayler, 2003; Eisenbach, & Curry, 1999; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Little & Lieberman, 1990; Paulsen & Feldman., 1995; Showers, 1985; Sullivan, Buckle, Nicky, & Atkinson, 2012; Tang & Choi, 2009) concur with the following valuable outputs of collaboration:

- Activate teamwork

- Build community

- Broaden repertoire

- Collective talents

- Enhance quality

- Intellectually stimulating

- Outside perspective

- Promote reflection

- Refine strategies

- Shared understanding

- Transfer skills

- Valuable feedback

- Worthwhile professional development (Anderson, 1994; Black, Molseed, & Sayler, 2003; Eisenbach & Curry, 1999; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Little et al, 1990; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Showers, 1985; Sullivan et al, 2012; Tang & Choi, 2009)

In order to achieve the above outcomes, structure and planning are required. Although there are multiple avenues that could be implemented, each structure hinges on a staff that recognizes the need, a team that gathers to coach and study, and a school that desires to improve beyond the status quo (Mento, & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000).

Improved School Culture

Paulsen and Feldman (1995) wrote the following about school culture:

> Although culture can and should be thought of as a source of stability in organizations, in many ways it is important to remember that organizational cultures are constantly evolving, being constructed and reconstructed, both sharing human interaction as well as being shaped by it. (p. 34)

Describing culture as a living and breathing entity, intensifies the need to provide dedicated attention to a school's culture, not only for the staff, but the students too. Glazer and Hannafin's (2006) Collaborative Apprenticeships Model outlined five elements of reciprocal interactions that influence a school's culture: emotions and attitudes, beliefs, environment, cognition, and personality. Each element impacts culture, but it is up to the school staff whether each category will strengthen or weaken school culture.

The first element of reciprocal interaction that influences school culture is the effect of culture on emotions and attitudes. Perceptions towards fellow teachers impact engagement,

impacting working relationships. Peer coaching seeks to debunk perceptions by increasing the

amount of professional staff interactions, as well as the structure for those staff interactions. For

example, Eisenbach and Curry (1999) stated that inviting a peer to help can be uncomfortable

because it can be perceived as a sign of weakness or incompetence. However, if peer coaching is

structured in a way that ensures staff acknowledge the need for change, inviting a peer becomes

nonthreatening, comfortable, and supportive (Grierson & Gallagher, 2009). Because many

teachers perceive observations as "being under scrutiny" (Chamberlain et al, 2011, p. 190), fear

can keep them from engaging fully in peer coaching, and instead treat it as a checklist to cross

off. Unfortunately, such a viewpoint hinders peer coaching from developing into a lasting legacy

within the school, yet because peer coaching structures begin with pre-observation meetings,

peers can address their discomfort before observations begin (Eisenbach & Curry, 1999, p. 421-

423). Additionally, Black et al (2003) emphasized that when the guidelines are set for peer

coaching, terminology like critique and evaluate has no place (p. 62).

Grierson and Gallagher (2009) address four thematic reforms to the evaluation process.

Peer coaching should be a catalyst for change in beliefs in practices, demonstrate teacher's

mentoring and interpersonal skills, promote organization and cohesion, and provide ongoing

support (p. 567). If the reforms are implemented, emotions and attitudes can stabilize or

blossom, creating a lasting emotional investment that is embed into the heart of the school's

culture (Eisenbach & Curry, 1999; Showers, 1985).

The second element of reciprocal interaction that influences school culture is the effect of

beliefs on culture. Beliefs, depending on their nature and strength, impact peer coaching

relationships and the willingness to work with others. For example, a teacher with a behaviorist

point of view would naturally experience points of contention with a teacher with a constructivist

point of view on the simple point that their beliefs regarding education differ. Neither

perspective promotes one teaching perspective over another; however, the difference certainly

can inhibit close working relationships. Although not impossible, determining focused coaching

topics could be difficult without extensive dialogue and observation before coaching one

another. In summation, the beliefs of individual teachers impact school culture (Glazer &

Hannafin, 2006, p. 180-181).

The third element of reciprocal interaction that affects school culture is environmental

impact. Environmental factors include time (shared and individual), proximity, human

resources, and physical resources (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006). Limited time can return teachers

to isolation, hindering school culture; whereas, shared time can lessen turnover and promote

teamwork (Little et al, 1990). The concept of proximity physically brings peers together; they

are involved, invested, and integral to one another (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995). With proximity,

the ability to and frequency of teaming up is enhanced (Grierson & Gallagher, 2009). Not only

is teamwork enhanced, but professional relationships are also developed, lessening gossip and

"war stories" and increasing solidarity and solidity (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). An

observing teacher recounted in an interview, "'To me it [peer coaching] was the best PD

[professional development] I have done. It was actually in the class; in a community I knew."

(Grierson & Gallagher, 2009, p. 573). Another observing teacher stated in an interviewed on the

impact of peer coaching, "It was the most valuable experience I have ever had… it's valuable

whether you have been teaching one year or 20 years." (Grierson & Gallagher, 2009, p. 573).

The support system that develops when school culture is determined through environment is

expansive: working and growing together. One peer coaching participant explained the

supportive nature of peer coaching further,

It's interactive, an interactive process with people with credibility [working] toward a

mutually beneficial goal. I can interact with somebody that I think a lot of, and I can get

some ideas that are going to keep me fresh and help my students and help me. And, I can

do that in turn for them. That's got to be the best situation. (Lea, James, & Bill, 2004, p.

36)

In one study (Lea et al, 2004), when mutual trust spread through the school half of the peer

coaching participants noted an increased morale among the staff.

Teachers reported that they received meaningful feedback, affirmation of their skills, and

as a result, they were motivated internally and externally from the trust of the

administration for teachers to take control of their own learning. For these teachers,

morale soared because of receiving new ideas, observing respected peers teaching

classes, and talking with teachers in similar situations (p. 39).

It is clear, every staff member at school is important, so to deny anyone a voice, a word of

affirmation, or a new challenge can and does impact a school's culture.

The fourth effect of school culture is cognition. Shared understanding is an important

element of peer coaching; it provides an opportunity to talk about teaching (Glazer & Hannafin,

2006, p. 186-190, Little et al, 1990). Cognitive awareness within schools allots time for shared

practices and open dialogue, investing in peers who are "in the trenches" together (Kohut,

Burnap, & Yon, 2007, p. 19). Uniting with peers academically increases school culture while

building a professional community. Eisenbach and Curry (1999) stated in their research on the

emotional impact of peer coaching, "… the more comfortable we became with each other, the

more positive our feelings became. We now look forward to the day of a classroom visit because

we know that we will share the experience with a friend and loyal supporter" (p. 426).

The fifth effect of reciprocal interaction on school culture is personality. No two people are alike; in the same way, no two teachers are alike. As a result, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) emphasized that in order to generate a positive school culture, a common goal must be established; otherwise, all of the emotions, beliefs, environments, and cognitions will amount to nothing without a motivated personality, responsive and open to organizing structures. Reciprocal interactions among peers can lead to coaching structures that benefit the school, the classroom, and the teacher (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006, p. 191). Black et al (2003) noted, "The process itself led to a culture of collegiality, dialogue, and reflection among the participants that centered on real classroom issues and the classroom teachers' individual concerns" (p. 64).

Enhanced Professional Development

Professional development is enhanced when teachers engage in peer coaching because, "to keep abreast with the changing world, continuous learning is important" (Tang & Choi, 2009, p. 13). Too often professional development is viewed as a time stamp on the agenda instead of an opportunity to learn, apply, and grow. Therefore, linking peer coaching and professional development is logical. Joint work can be alternatively defined as collective talent, mentorship (Little et al, 1990), or collaborative apprenticeship (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006). For example, at an inclusive childcare center, two teachers engaged in peer coaching after attending a professional development workshop. After the workshop, additional coaching was provided by an early childhood special education consultant, and then the two teachers launched into peer coaching. "Every other day the teachers took turns collecting observational data as each tried targeted skills… discuss[ing] what took place, review[ing] the observational data, and identify[ing] what to work on next" (Mary, Michaelene, & Susan, 2000, p. 9). After collecting quantifiable results, one of the teachers began coaching another colleague who was not at the

initial professional development workshop. Simply put, joint work in professional development is implemented when teachers collectively work to improve the quality of education for the students (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018, p. 21-22).

Structuring joint work is as important as the act itself. Hargrieves (2018) recorded many teachers internal struggle, "it's hard to collaborate with yourself." (p. 22). Therefore, the cyclical process of peer coaching: pre-observation, observation, post-observation, and reflection is most widely used when establishing professional development extensions. According to Tang and Choi (2009), professional development is "a learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context (both in time and space) and eventually leading to changes in teachers' professional practice (actions) and in their thinking about that practice" (p. 1). In Bruce and Ross' research (2008), a participant interview attributed student achievement increasing due to the pairing of peer coaching and professional development,

I would say both primarily the peer coaching and the workshops at the board office: Those two kind of blended together there because we did get together, we saw each other there, we would chat even further about things that were doing in the classroom in math. We sort of did some of that when were together [at the live in-service sessions] and took it a few steps further. It was great. (p. 359)

Connecting professional development with peer coaching can heighten knowledge of content, pedagogy, and desired learner outcomes as well educational purpose, value, and philosophy. As a result, it is wise form to allow peer coaches to gather together after professional development to develop a plan for transferring the presented knowledge into classroom practice.

Applying knowledge in practice can occur in a myriad of ways; however, guidance is necessary. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) indicated that continued professional development

needs a design, protocol, structure, and process to guide (p. 21).   Paulsen and Feldman (1995)

noted that direction from administration, then, is necessary. Administration can assist with

presenting a design, setting protocol, providing structure, and endorsing the process. Research

presents multiple designs that lend themselves to specific schooling systems. Some studies lend

themselves to content coaching, some to strategy coaching, and some to supportive coaching.

No matter the design, setting protocols from the top down assists with setting smart goals

(Grierson & Gallagher, 2009).

Collaborative goals set the stage for peer coaching, previewing the purpose,

documentation, and communication structure which produces validity. Observations are

naturally subjective; however, with multiple observations, ethical guidelines, and open

communication paired with feedback and trust, observations can prove valid (Kohut et al, 2007,

p. 19). Finally, when endorsing the process, Tang and Choi's (2009) research mandates time and

support to ensure genuine engagement. A top down approach not only unifies staff, but it

models peer coaching.

Upon implementing peer coaching, groups need to be established. There are differing

opinions when considering how to group peer coaching. Eisenbach and Curry (1999) suggested

cross-content partnering to avoid critique of content and instead focus on pedagogy. Mento and

Giampetro-Meyer (2000) emphasized personal suggestion on the basis of "trust and respect to

provide us with feedback on… classroom performance" (p. 28). Then Black et al's (2003)

research suggested grade-level partnership. An interviewee in Black et al's research made the

case for grade-level teachers, "It was cool to sit and watch things and see things that I normally

wouldn't see and how the students interacted" (p. 62). Whichever method is implemented,

Paulsen and Feldman (1995), provide five different options for organizing the peer coaching

group. In a star and hierarchal teams, one teacher is in charge while others are involved in

implementation steps. In the case of mentorship, these two models would be ideal. Conversely,

specialist and generalist teams gather with a divide and conquer mentality. Each member of the

group is equal in specialty and/or background. Finally, an interactive team is comprised of only

two. Therefore, the two share all jobs (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995). Similar to the structure of

peer coaching, groupings are also contingent on the specific school and it's administrative and

communal goals (Grierson & Gallagher, 2009).

Obtaining Growth Mindsets

Peer coaching activates mentoring, collegiality, and teamwork. As a result, growth

mindset is instilled upon implementing coaching among peers. It is inevitable because peer

coaching "open[s] up conversation to focus on… students and curriculum…" (Black et al, 2003,

p. 65). Generally, when professional dialogue begins, learning occurs. Observations become a

measure of transferred skills as peer coaches walk alongside one another (Showers, 1985, p. 22).

Furthermore, the application of knowledge can be directly applied into daily teaching because a

support system of reflecting to validate current practices and learn new techniques has been

established (Black et al, 2003, p. 64).

Self-reflection, although it may be done in isolation, is a byproduct of peer coaching.

Researchers Bruce and Ross (2008) reported, "A less anticipated… finding was that participants

were led to self-reflect more frequently and explicitly because of the interaction with their

coaching peers" (p. 362). An interviewee shared, "'I find myself question things that I am doing

more… critically look at the way I'm teaching and evaluating" (Bruce et al, 2008, p. 362). As

Eisenbach and Curry (1999) urged in the conclusion of their research on the emotional impact of

peer coaching on teachers,

Most of all, we want to encourage all teachers who want to work on their pedagogy to do

it with a partner. It is so important to have a witness with whom to share the changes and

the setbacks, a witness in a reciprocal and nonjudgmental relationship with you. It is

important to work through the feelings, past the fears and the stresses, and on to the joy,

the courage, and the validation that working with a peer coach can bring to your work.

(p. 427)

A growth mindset is powerful because it acknowledges peer coaching models' influence on

professional development and initiates increased likelihood of positive school culture. Lea et al

(2004) discovered that growth mindset was encouraged through veteran teachers' motivation to

learn and apply meaningful feedback. One veteran teacher commented,

Last year, her feedback was that she thought everything was great. But I told her, this

year, I didn't want her to say that to me. I wanted her to find something that she thought

I did really well and to talk to me about that, to tell me something that she noticed that I

could work on because, to me, that was the purpose of this, giving you really specific

feedback. (p. 33)

Beyond motivation, Lea et al's (2004) research showed teachers grew because they found

meaning in the program. The common themes included: meaningful feedback, self-directed

learning, trust among peer coaches, increased morale among peer coaching, and worth from extra

work. Each of those themes in isolation is major; in combination, they have the power to change

not only the mindset of individual teachers, but the school's culture too (Lea et al, 2004, p. 32).

Structuring Peer Coaching

Sullivan et al (2012) and Kohut et al (2007) outlined peer coaching as a cyclical process.

The first step in the process is setting a precursory observation meeting. The meeting will

determine the rationale, establish the context, and outline the process. Key to the meeting is

honesty, clarity, and synergy. The rationale aligns with continual professional development, but

beyond that, a context or topic is chosen so a process for implementation and observation can be

created (Kohut et al, 2007, p. 20; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995;

Sullivan et al, 2012, p. 2).

       The second step in the cyclical process is observation. Observations note content, style,

and delivery as applicable to the topic of continued professional development (Showers, 1985).

Grierson and Gallagher's study (2009) recommended a three-day visit plan. The first day would

entail observing for the entire day to see not only the content, but the set-up, classroom

management, etc. Day two would focus explicitly on instruction, while the third day would

center in on assessment, evaluation, and planning notes. An observing teacher expressed in an

interview,

> I found it very hard to focus [during the initial visit] just because you are trying to absorb
>
> everything all at once. When we went the second time it was less stimulating, and we
>
> could look more at what she was doing. The first time was just trying to take everything
>
> in and really, I couldn't digest everything. The second time you could have a more
>
> focused look. (Grierson & Gallagher, 2009, p. 577)

Depending on the time allocated to peer observations, a shorter time span in one day may be the

only option. Regardless of the observation time, certain etiquette is common during

observations: record specifics and remain unobtrusive. Observing in such a manner will transfer

into a more productive post-observation feedback meeting (Mento Giampetro-Meyer, 2000;

Paulsen & Feldman, 1995, p. 88-90; Sullivan et al, 2012, p. 3).

During post-observation feedback meetings, multiple researchers point to the need for conversations to be a two-way street (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000, p. 30; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995, p. 90; Sullivan et al, 2012, p. 3). According to Mento and Giampetro-Meyer (2000), initially, as the observer is sharing, peer coaching encourages presenting descriptions of specifics, being cautious to give only as much feedback as the observee can handle: the focus is coaching, not overwhelming. On the other hand, the observee ought to refrain from being defensive (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000, p. 30-31). Sullivan et al (2012) quoted a teacher, "One very rarely gets feedback – positive or negative on teaching so it was an interesting and worthwhile experience" (p. 4). Overall, the purpose of a post-observation meeting is to share and respond to feedback, discussing changeable behavior and creating solutions, because the goal of peer coaching is to establish a lasting relationship for the betterment of the school, staff, and students.

Reflection is the final step when structing peer coaching. An interview from Bruce et al (2008) exposed the power of reflection, "I think [this PD was better] because this is more of a personal journey, a personal learning experience" (p. 362). Reflection, although the last step in the peer coaching cycle, is a key component to unlocking a growth mindset through peer coaching. Additionally, reflection can also serve as the precursor to the next round of pre-observation meetings. Therefore, reflection may entail problem-solving sessions, team planning, analysis, study, and hypothesis forming (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Sullivan et al, 2012, p. 3). Depending on the direction of the reflection, the second peer mentoring cycle may bring about a new strategy to explore, development of new lessons, proficiency or troubleshooting, and/or mastery (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006). The possibilities are

endless and tailorable with peer coaching. As a teacher from Sullivan et al's (2012) research

remarked,

> If we do not do this [peer coaching] we are at risk of doing the same old thing without
>
> variation. I am sure that there are some academics who give the same talk today as 20
>
> years ago – is this the way to look ahead? I think not. If you are not open to learning,
>
> then you should not teach. (p. 5)

Likewise, Bruce et al's (2008) peer coaching study concluded the following finding,

> Jill reported that she had been trying for some time to persuade her partner, Nancy, to
>
> adopt a specific strategy for mental mathematics that worked well in Jill's class… It was
>
> only when Nancy saw the method in action… during the peer coaching observation that
>
> she decided to use it in her own classroom… Nancy applied it herself and was met with
>
> success, culminating in a positive mastery experience. (p. 360)

The peer coaching process allowed for these two teachers to work together for the benefit of

themselves and their students. Clearly, embracing the cyclical nature of peer coaching is

pertinent because teaching students today for success tomorrow requires forward thinking and

cooperative learning.

Methodology

This study examined the effects of peer coaching on school culture, professional

development, and growth mindset. During the spring semester of the 2018-2019 school year, a

voluntary trial group participated in peer coaching.   As a result, a case study was developed in

which the participants' reflections were documented with open-ended, focused interview

questions. Additionally, as the researcher was a member of the peer coaching, pre-observation

meeting notes, observation notes, post-observation notes, as well as self-reflection notes were

collected to narrate the entire peer coaching process, allowing for personal voice to address the personal nature of teaching as it relates to the emotions within school culture, the value in professional development, and the individual growth mindset.

Once the voluntary trial group was formed, a nine-question survey (see Appendix A) was given to gain a quantified understanding of the staff perspective of school culture, professional development, and personal growth mindset. The survey asked participants to respond to each prompt with a leveled 1-5 rating. Afterwards, the mean was determined for each categorical response to determine how great the need for improved school culture, enhanced professional development, and encouraged growth mindset is to the volunteer peer coaching group. Once the surveys were completed, an interview was conducted with each participant to dive more into each topic (professional development, school culture, and growth mindset.) With the results from both the survey and the interview, a pre-observation meeting was set to determine the topic of peer coaching. Afterward, a schedule was created to observe in the classrooms. A post-observation meeting was set with the group to reflect holistically on the impact and effectiveness of the chosen topic, with the option to continue to foster the topic or, given success, to move onto another topic. Finally, an open-ended reflection was set with the peer coaching group to debrief the entire process.

Participants

Participants in this study were eight teachers in the middle scholar grade band at a state accredited and ISACS (Independent School Association for the Central States) accredited independent school. The independent school educates students grades kindergarten through eighth grade as well as a preschool and prekindergarten. The school is located in a populated

city in the Midwest while also having direct access to nature, being set in a park with trees, trails,

and a pond.

Table 1

Peer Coaching Participants

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Gender	M	F	M	F	F	F	F	F
Years Teaching	4	26	19	28	5	9	10	7
Schools Employed	1	2	4	4	3	1	3	2
Years at Peer Coaching School	5	20	4	16	2	9	8	4
Role 2018-2019	MS Science; Team Lead – Science	8th Grade General (Honors); Team Lead – Social Studies; MS Team Lead	6th Grade General; Science Committee Member	K-6 ELA Specialist; 8th Grade ELA; Team Lead – ELA	3-8 Technology; MS Math; Math Committee Member	6th Grade General; Team Lead – Math	K-6 Math Specialist; MS Math; Math Committee Member	7th Grade General; 8th Grade SS; ELA Committee Member

The participant, as described on Table 1, are diverse in regard to gender, years teaching, schools

employed, years at current independent school, and current role with the exception that each

participant teaches middle scholars. Because of the participants' diversity, the steps involved in

the peer coaching model outlined in this study include a variety of perspectives that balance and

add riches to the surveys, interviews, and discussions.

Procedure

During the first team meeting, the researcher shared the cyclical process of peer coaching

(See Figure 2). Each step was explained in more detail, through the icons on the righthand side

of the elements slide.

Figure 2

Peer Coaching Introduction Slides
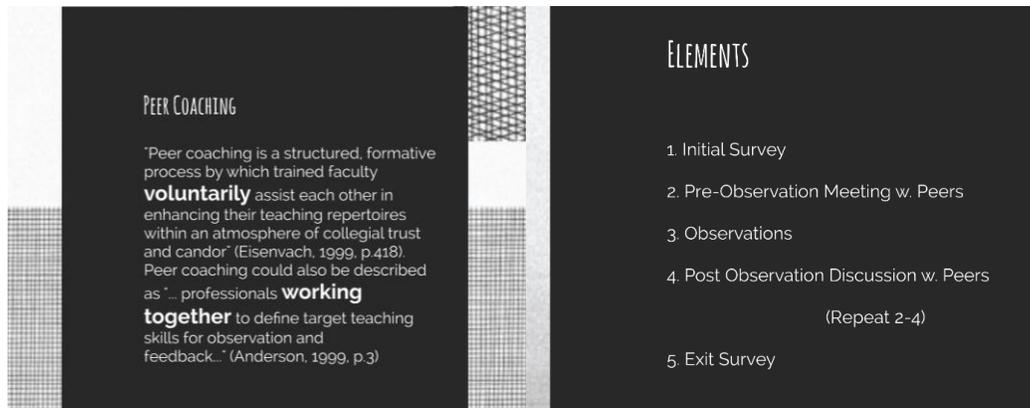
The slides outlined the goal, timetable, and requirements within each peer coaching step.

Anderson's (2009) description of peer coaching was used to provide a picture of peer coaching.

Voluntary and working together were bolded to highlight two of the fundamental elements of

peer coaching. Each of the participants embarked on the peer coaching experience voluntarily

and as a result they will have the opportunity to work together through the five elements outlined

on the second slide entitled, "elements." Each element went into more depth. Expected date(s),

specific expectations, and steps purpose were provided to ensure participants were aware of the

requirements for participating in this peer coaching study.

Surveys and Initial Interviews

Participants were sent links to the initial survey (See Appendix A) which asked them to

share their thoughts regarding school culture, professional development, and growth mindset.

Individually, once the surveys were received, the researcher followed up with each participant to

set a time to complete an interview (Appendix B), which dove deeper into each participant's

personal perspective on school culture, participation in professional development, and experience

with growth mindset. Each interview had a tone of comfortability and ease of exchange. After

the last initial interview was conducted, the study proceeded to move forward with the pre-

observation meeting.

Pre-observation Meeting

Figure 3

Peer Coaching Topics.

Coach	Be Coached
- Choice Theory - Creative Drama - Inquiry Based Learning - Incorporating Technology into the Classroom Meaningfully - Literacy Stations - Student Driven Lessons - Team Building - Technology Integration	- Discussion – Student Awareness in Participation - Discussion – Engage all Learners - Feedback – Timely and Meaningful - Notetaking - Student Motivation - Time Management – Time for Whole, Small, and Independent Grouping

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher scheduled a pre-observation meeting.

At that meeting, the researcher shared the Figure 4 peer coaching topics that were compiled

throughout the interviews. During the pre-observation meeting, participants were invited to take

notes on a pre-observation form (See Appendix C). Despite the option to break away into small

groups based on the topics shared in Figure 4, the pilot team was adamant about embarking on

the topic of discussion strategies together.

Observations

Teachers were given an observation form (See Appendix D) to complete when they observed a

fellow participants discussion strategy lesson. The observation form (Appendix D) asked peer

coaches to take notes on three topics: content, style, and delivery.

Post-Observation Discussion

Because spring months require teachers to be flexible and stretch in new ways each year,

the peer coaching plans were simply another element that needed to stretch and flex. As a result,

the post-observation discussion (Appendix E) was unable to take place on the scheduled date.

Therefore, to accommodate participants' time, both the post-observation discussion and

reflective interview (Appendix F) occurred simultaneously.

Results

Survey Results

The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of peer coaching on school culture,

professional development, and growth mindset. Table 2 illustrates a breakdown of the initial

survey (Appendix A) results by section.

School Culture

Table 2

School Culture Survey Results.

Circle the number that most closely represents your perception of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset at your school.	
1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = neutral 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree	
School Culture	***Mean***
I feel isolated in my current teaching schedule.	3.86
I fear (or have anxiety about) being observed.	4
I work jointly with staff members regularly.	2.43

Table 2 suggests that isolation was not a dominate factor for the participants. Four

participants answered 5, strongly disagree, with feeling isolated in their teaching practice;

however, one teacher selected 1, 2, and 4 respectively. The general mean, then, was 3.86 which

lies between neutral and disagree with isolation. Pertaining to anxiety about being observed, the responses were either neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, hence the mean of 4. Finally, regarding the regularity of working with staff members, the scores were more varied. Three participants reported that they (strongly) agreed that they worked with others; two were neutral; and one answered 5, strongly disagreeing with working jointly with staff members. The average for each question lends itself towards the trial peer coaching group having a generally positive view on school culture, despite the outliers for two of the three questions.

Survey comments were optional, yet 5 of the 8 participants shared that their team members were positive, supportive, and encouraging at the middle scholar level. However, it was clear that the participants viewed the entire school's culture as different than the middle scholar's team culture.

The culture among the middle school staff members is positive and productive. There seems to be more conflict among staff members in other areas of the school. The change in leadership and decisions made by the board have impacted the school culture (Participant 4 interview, 2019).

Moving forward, observation was not a factor that needed to be combated during the trial peer coaching, and was verified with this comment, "Our grade band culture is great - overall, we need some unifiers!" (Participant 2 interview, 2019). Generally speaking, the culture among the middle scholar trial participants was open and welcoming towards peer coaching, yet there were comments regarding the school culture at large, that need to be reported. "I would describe the culture of the entire school as "needy"; what I mean by this is that teachers in this school are often times more concerned with being heard rather that listening themselves" (Participant 3 interview, 2019). As well as,

There are small pockets of a group of people that are supportive and encouraging. Then

there are other pockets of people that tend to be more negative about things and less

understanding. Depending on which pocket you "belong" to depends on how people react

and interact towards you. (Participant 5 interview, 2019)

These comments represent the school at large, and the need for unification and support in the

realm of school culture.

Professional Development

Table 3

Professional Development Survey Results.

Circle the number that most closely represents your perception of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset at your school.	
1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = neutral 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree	
Professional Development	**Mean**
Professional development doesn't impact my teaching.	3.43
Professional development provides too much information to implement into my teaching.	2.29
Professional development is applicable to my teaching.	3.43

Table 3 data suggests that professional development is impactful and can be applied to

teaching, yet the administrative focus for professional development is not geared to the teachers

needs and/or desires. Statement one sought to determine whether the participants were seeking

out more professional development. Overall, responses to the first statement have a neutral mean

of 3.43 with two respondents agreeing that professional development does not impact their

teaching, one neutral respondent, and four respondents disagreeing that professional

development does not impact teaching. Table 3's second statement addressed the amount of

information provided in professional development, looking to determine whether peer coaching

can help breakdown the information provided. Four respondents were neutral towards the

content provided in professional development, and three respondents disagreed, there is not too

much information provided in professional development. The third statement in Table 3 inquired

about the application of professional development to teaching. As indicated on Table 3, the

mean indicated, again, neutrality towards professional development's impact. One participant

agreed that professional development was applicable; three were neutral, and three disagreed that

professional development was applicable to teaching.

These data points in Table 3 were explained further with teacher comments. Four

teachers commented on the lack of pedagogical focus during professional development. "This

year the professional development has not helped to make me a better teacher, it's focus has been

on administrative tasks rather than curriculum or pedagogical initiatives" (Participant 3

interview, 2019). The other two comments spoke of the school's history with professional

development, stating, "The recent [not current] professional development was extremely useful

for my teaching. Some previous topics have been less relevant." These comments were

insightful, sharing the deep need for professional development that is focused on the teacher's

work inside of their classrooms, not building wide logistics. Therefore, each member of the trial

peer coaching team, in some capacity, was seeking more professional growth within the school.

Growth Mindset

Table 4

Growth Mindset Survey Results.

Circle the number that most closely represents your perception of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset at your school. 1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = neutral 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree	
Growth Mindset	***Mean***
Time and/or energy are necessary to improve my teaching.	1.43
Resources and/or support are necessary to improve my practice.	2.14
I frequently improve my practice.	1.71

As indicated in Table 4, the surveyed teachers were almost unanimous in the survey; growth mindsets are necessary to teaching. Answering with either a 1 or a 2 with a mean then of 1.43, the participants are already actively seeking improvement within their classrooms, knowing that time and resources are needed to improve their practice. The second statement in Table 4 included two participants being neutral about needing resources and support to improve; while four agree, and one strongly agreed. Finally, the third statement in Table 4 yielded five participants who agreed and two who strongly agreed. The data in Table 4 proves that these participants are certainly teachers that are willing to put in the time and effort for peer coaching because they already put forth energy, seek support, and are self-motived.

Even with glowing survey results, the comments highlighted the murky mix of pushing yourself in your practice and experiencing burnout. The first comment is fully optimistic, "I have maintained a growth mindset and have worked toward increasing my knowledge and improving my practice" (Participant 4 interview, 2019). Then, a more situational comment, "I don't think I could have taught at this school without a growth mindset. :)" (Participant 2

interview, 2019). Finally, a byproduct of working without support is expressed, "I would

describe my growth mindset as slowly diminishing over this past year. Up to this point there was

encouragement to push the boundaries of my teaching practice, but this year I feel the support,

and interest, has fallen off" (Participant 3 interview, 2019). The story told through these three

comments in one of desire, surrounding, and need. Growth mindset is certainly a valuable

attribute in a team member, but it needs to be fostered and encouraged.

Initial Interview Results

After conducting all seven interviews, six themes presented. Figure 4 provides an

overview of each category of themes, phrased as motivations.

Figure 4

Common Interview Themes.

Common Themes	
Growth Mindset	
Motivated to improve student learning.	Motivated to seek out assistance setting helpful habits and designing supportive structures.
Professional Development	
Motivated to attend and engage in professional learning outside of work.	Motivated to prioritize student learning through professional development opportunities.
School Culture	
Motivated to unify skills professionally.	Motivated to build trusting relationships.

The tone of each interview was inspirational, despite the trials that each participant faced within

the category of growth mindset, professional development, and school culture. Each teacher

persisted personally, within the workplace, and ultimately through volunteering to pilot peer

coaching.

Theme: Growth Mindset

Establishing worthwhile habits is a factor that influences a teacher's ability to continually foster a growth mindset. Four of the seven teachers explained how their habits are continually followed through upon in order to improve student learning. Phrases like, "always change up what I do… always looking at… how students learn" (Participant 5 interview, 2019) and "…on most assignments I do item analysis… by type of error… I also will view percent of students who get mastery… also on questions to see if there is something that I failed at vs. something that just a few students need reinforcement…" (Participant 3 interview, 2019), and "…create, what I would call, engaging activities for students to learn. Having gone through my master's program, I feel like that was a habit of being more research based in my practice, and I can definitely tell in my approach to teaching" (Participant 4 interview, 2019). Each of these three teachers prioritized student learning as part of a habit (See Figure 4). However, when asked another question, all seven teachers expressed that students are the greatest motivator when making changes in their classroom and/or mindset as found on Figure 4. "…Seeing when students make that connection, it makes me want to continue to find ways [to foster learning]" (Participant 7 interview, 2019). Participant 7 went on to list the variety of ways that she seeks out pedagogical strategies. Elaborating on the value of student makeup when choosing to change lessons plans and strategies, Participant 6 expressed, "The make-up of my students. What their personalities are, what their interests are, and how they interact with other students [impacts my classroom instruction]." Teachers choose to grow for the benefit of the students in their classrooms.

Theme: Professional Development

Professional development is a crucial way in which teachers continue to grow. As a result, a teacher's professional development history impacts his or her continued engagement in professional development opportunities. Not only is it a motivator to continue learning personally, but even in spite of negative professional development experiences, teachers still engage in professional development opportunities for their students (See Figure 4). As Participant 4 explained,

> Making things fresh is engaging. Sometimes students don't recognize that change, but it does have long-term impact on them, especially with the older students. I, a lot of times, explain why I am doing what I'm doing. Here's what I have learned, for that reason, I am doing this. That creates a lot of buy-in, and that makes them feel important to know that I care enough to do what I believe to be best practice.

Four other teachers spoke similarly about addressing changes in pedagogy or content with middle scholar students. While one teacher, frankly, shared that, "If you do changes subtly, they [students] go along with what you're doing" (Participant 6 interview, 2019). Whichever approach to changes that the participants took, it was abundantly clear that they sought out professional development opportunities in order to change. Two teachers spoke to the positive professional development that occurred at the school. Participant 6 shared that,

> After multiple professional developments [on Standards Reference Grading], I understood it a lot better, plus I had the feeling that we were all on board as a staff which helped. If I had questions or felt lost, I knew I had someone to go to, and it really impacted my teaching tremendously.

Conversely, Participant 2 explained that, "Whole school buy-in for professional development is really hard… I didn't feel like it [Standards Reference Grading] really brought us together. It was purposeful, but it didn't really unify us as a staff." Regardless of the differing perspective, every staff member has sought professional development experiences outside of the building's four walls. Whether it be through the state education agency, local workshops, national conferences, online resources, or continued education, the participants all have experienced pedagogical changing practices and theories to implement in their classrooms for the betterment of the students (See Figure 4). From the daily professional development of article reading and online perusing, "On Twitter, every night there are great ideas that I see or conversations that are happening. That motives me to try [new ideas] as well" (Participant 7 interview, 2019). To the sign up and eagerly anticipate the learning that will occur, "I am the sort of person who says 'yes,' and figures out what happens later. I will immediately take something and apply it, so I have attended conferences and always come away with something that I can apply" (Participant 4 interview, 2019). Multi-year commitments are sought out as well. "I took at three-year class on inquiry-based learning, and that really changed my delivery of curriculum" (Participant 3 interview, 2019).   No matter the avenue taken, the participants spoke passionately about their top professional development experiences because the content was meaningful and applicable.

Theme: School Culture

Since all of the peer coaching participants were predominately middle scholar teachers; the interview perspective on school culture was slightly skewed. However, three of the participants had worked in lower grades at the school in past years, so they had the historical context of the lower school's culture. Either way, with a staff of under forty, the culture is

relatively easy to have a pulse on no matter which grades the participants teach. Participant 2

shared the strength and weakness of the school culture with an analogy as well as a paradox.

> Not one of us is just here to just follow this bigger plan be a sheep following the path.
>
> Every single one of us is a go-getter, dynamic, wanting to take it on, wanting to go into
>
> their classrooms and wanting to take charge. We all have these strengths that we bring to
>
> the table. That is across the board through our building, what comes down to it then, is
>
> that in the middle scholars, when we come together, we unify and build on each other's
>
> strengths… and work together. I think throughout the rest of the school, they step out of
>
> their classroom and still feel like they need to have that power instead of working
>
> together and finding that way to work together.

The remainder of the staff shared similar experiences to Participant 3, "I can speak to our team.

We all trust each other. We're all willing to share what works, what doesn't work. There's no

judgement. Whole school, there aren't many commonalities. Trust is the big one [weakness in

school culture]." The participants shared in the encouragement and comradery with their middle

scholar team, while also bemoaning the whole school culture's current status. For example,

"Within the middle school team everyone is committed to teaching and to the students, and that

shows in all of the decisions that are made. We also have people that are really willing to do

whatever it takes to make something happen" (Participant 4 interview, 2019). Other words like

pride were shared, "I think we have to do a lot as teachers that we might not have to otherwise,

but I think it results in a lot of pride in what we do… It's ours, and I'm proud of our team and

what we can do" (Participant 1 interview, 2019). Participant 5's response elaborated, "There's

always someone… to go to. We're all really good at jumping in when the need is there versus

having that person ask for help. We're really good at just seeing and understanding that person

needs help." As a result, Figure 4's common themes for professional development points to teamwork summing up the middle scholar dynamic perfectly.

Pre-Observation Meeting Results

After the initial survey and interview, the participants discussed shared areas that they could coach as well as areas in which they desired to be coached. Figure 4 illustrates those areas. The general vibe in the room was relaxed, not disinterested but simply willing to learn and/or enhance any of the areas listed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Peer Coaching Topics.

Coach	Be Coached
• Choice Theory • Creative Drama • Inquiry Based Learning • Incorporating Technology into the Classroom Meaningfully • Literacy Stations • Student Driven Lessons • Team Building • Technology Integration	• Discussion – Student Awareness in Participation • Discussion – Engage all Learners • Feedback – Timely and Meaningful • Notetaking • Student Motivation • Time Management – Time for Whole, Small, and Independent Grouping

Once all of the ideas were voiced, the consensus was to select "Discussions – Engage all Learners" as the peer coaching topic. Over the course of a couple of weeks, participants shared articles and websites that addressed discussion styles to consider planning for observation lessons.

Observations Results

Observations were scheduled (Table 5) to ensure that each participant was observed by at least two other participants. Additionally, each participant was scheduled to observe two participants. Table 5 includes more specifics about the classes, discussion styles, and observers.

Table 5

Observation Schedule. The table outlines the observations for the participants.

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Researcher
Class	Science	Social Studies	Language Arts	Language Arts	Technology	Social Studies	Math	Social Studies
Discussion Style	Post Experiment Discussion	Group Roles in Discussion	Novel Discussion	Group Roles in Discussion	Kinesthetic Discussion	Student Developed Questions	Student Led Inquiry	Student Led Conference
Observers	3 & 7	4 & 8	5 & 6	3, 6, & 8	1 & 3	2, 5, & 7	1 & 2	4 & 6

In the researcher's role as observer, she completed the Observation Note Form (See Appendix D) during both observations. Figure 6 is a typed form from one of the two observations as an example.

Figure 6

Completed Observation Note Form

Observation Note Form

Peer coach being observed: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Meeting date: 24 April 2019
Time: 10:40
Professional development topic: Discussion

Instruction - Present
Definition: presenting the content: style and delivery.

- *Content:*

Language Arts
Skill: Summarizing & Word Choice

- *Style:*

Whole Group Participation – Model & Guided Notes
Separate into Small Groups with a Task
  - Share Key Words
  - Share Rational for Word Selection
  - Limit to 10 as a Group
  - Write Summary
Circulated between Groups

- *Delivery:*

Clear Speech
Reference Text
Wrote Tasks on the Board (Reference)
Smooth
Professional
Engaging

Feedback - Perspective
Definition: seeking to coach and grow, not judge and scrutinize.

Provide more specific feedback vs. "good work" and "keep it up."
Consider less teacher aid in the small groups may show more student understanding.
  - Was it the first time conducting this discussion style? (If so appropriate…)
  - Students seemed competent to complete the tasks.

The Observation Note Form (Appendix D) encouraged all observers to focus specifically on

the topic, narrowing the observation's focus on the discussion strategy alone. Participants

shared that peer coaching did not provide fear or anxiety because there was a known focus,

any distraction or oversight that arose during the lesson would not be evaluated out of

context. The form also served as a reminder for how to replicate the discussion strategy later.

Figure 7 references both elements as benefits of peer coaching observations. Participant 6

elaborated,

> I think how we set it up, it's a non-judgmental way to get ideas. I viewed it as a way to
>
> go in… get some ideas. And that what I was hoping to do with the rest of you. And the
>
> same thing when I knew that others were coming in; I wasn't nervous, I was almost
>
> excited to see what was going to happen in my classroom. So, I think that non-judgement
>
> support is a strength.

Figure 7

Outcomes Derived from Peer Coaching Observations.

Observation Outcomes	
Growth Mindset	
Reflective planning	Reduced isolation
Professional Development	
Applicable learning	Narrow focus
School Culture	
Supportive colleagues	

For another example, the researcher had two participants attend a portion of her Model United

Nations (MUN) discussion. One observer shared, "I… really enjoyed watching the Model UN…

to see them come together in that formal way was really rewarding. They were serious and you

could tell that they felt important and they liked having those structures and guidelines…

(Participant 4 interview, 2019). Receiving acknowledgment and further feedback from

Participant 4 not only showed support, but it also reduced isolation. Moving forward, multiple

participants were thankful for the increased level of assistance that could be sought from the

other participants because they had been in one another's classroom. Participant 1 explained, "It

gave me more thoughts and ideas of what I could do in my classroom." Interjecting, Participant 3

added, "That's where I'm at. A strategy that I'm like, 'ah, I don't know,' but then you see

someone else model it, and you're like 'oh, I could totally create that in my own way.'" Through

observations, peer coaching dispelled self-doubt because modeling strategies inspired the

participants to step outside of their comfort zone and try new techniques together.

Post-Observation Interview Results

Time kept the peer coaching group from meeting to discuss the observations separate

from the closing interview, so the two steps happened synonymously. However, since the

participants all worked closely with one another, chatter happened in the hallways, while on

lunch duty, etc. Those moments encouraged the researcher.   Simply knowing that many of the

participants repeated discussion styles in their classrooms after observing was proof that

strengths outweighed the weaknesses. Plus, it supported the notion that voluntary participants

with a growth mindset would independently solve any perceived problems with an observed

discussion style in order to recreate the discussion method personally.

Reflection Interview Results

When the volunteer peer coaching trial group gathered together to debrief the experience,

several themes emerged addressing school culture, professional development, and growth

mindset with peer coaching in an independent school (See Figure 8).

Figure 8

Benefits of Peer Coaching Trial.

Benefits Derived from Peer Coaching	
Growth Mindset	
Engaged in conscientious planning.	Conducted intentional observations.
Encouraged by student engagement.	
Professional Development	
Grew in peer coaching topic.	Continued to seek out alternative strategies.
Engrossed in reflective thoughts.	
School Culture	
Aware of collegiate support.	Excited by the non-judgmental process of improving our craft.
Hopeful that increased contact with other colleagues will build a stronger culture.	

Benefits: Growth Mindset

Pertaining to growth mindset, the impact was minimal yet profitable. Each element of

peer coaching enhanced the peer trials group as a team. For example, Figure 8 shows that peer

coaching provided increased accountability, knowing that a colleague was going to be watching

and seeking to learn added an element of focus to the planning process. Participant 6 elaborated,

it influenced, or it affected… the idea of not being an island. I can go to [Participant 4's]

room and learn from her discussion technique a new way to do something that I maybe

had not thought of before. Additionally, when I was putting together my plan for the

week and thinking about the discussion we were going to have, I did put a little more

thought into what the observation would look like to somebody coming in. Was there

movement, was there authentic conversation, rather than just a review of the material.

Participant 4 quickly jumped in, "I agree. Knowing that someone is going to be watching makes

you more conscientious of doing those things that you learn by maybe don't think about on a

busy, daily basis." All in all, peer coaching enhanced each member's growth mindset as it inspired, focused, and guided independent planning time.

Benefits: Professional Development

Professionally, the team unanimously agreed that peer coaching elevated the quality of effort and research put into lesson planning as it pertained to discussion. Participant 1, recapped from previous questions, that the participants became more mindful of the level of questioning that the participants embedded into their discussion strategies (and lessons in general). Participant 1 added that "it has caused me to do a lot more reading about potential question and discussion strategies." The statement was quickly picked up by participant 6, "It [peer coaching discussion strategies] was in the back of my mind for almost every lesson. How can I turn this into some sort of meaningful discussion?"

Not only did participants change their thinking, but the students responded to changes as well. Participant 7 shared that students were initially apprehensive about her discussion strategy, but it soon became routine when the students became more familiar with moving in their discussions; "I think that made the kids participate more" (Participant 7 interview, 2019). As a result, over 60 students were challenged by various discussion strategies: self-created questions, rotations, formality, introductory, and leadership opportunities in discussions. Although not every student was eager at the onset of the discussion lesson, understanding was shown, new habits were formed, and growth was made in the classroom. Therefore, professional development not only impacted the peer coaching staff but also the students.

Benefits: School Culture

In regard to school culture, the unanimous positive was collegiate support in a non-judgmental environment (See Figure 8). To begin, participant 2 quickly chimed in on the

potential strength of, "definitely the support of one another; I feel like there is such a separation between us and the rest of the school sometimes, that I think it would be a nice way to be more consistent support of one another." Participant 4, then retorted, "The more interaction that you have with people and the more you understand of them, the less judgmental you are and can appreciate... so much better." Therefore, the desire of each participant was to see the school grow and change as a result of peer coaching.

Discussion

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to answer these questions: What is the effect of peer coaching on school culture? In what ways does peer coaching enhance professional development throughout the year? Does peer coaching instill a growth mindset among teachers? In order to answer these questions, the researcher implemented peer coaching at an independent school. According to research gathered in the literature review, the research recorded findings from a survey, conducted interviews, orchestrated a pre-observation discussion, facilitated an observation schedule, and reflected with the peer coaching team.

Summary of Findings

The peer coaching team experienced increased morale within the team's culture as a result of the trial, plus they also looked forward to the possible impact on the school at large in following years. The increased morale stemmed from a variety of factors: changed perceptions of fellow participants, increased dialogue about pedagogy, and utilized human resources to alleviate the extra time spend participating in peer coaching.

Professional development was created within the peer coaching team because administration allowed the researcher and her colleagues to take ownership of their learning.

That ownership allowed the team to design the peer coaching model that fit the needs of the group. Additionally, the peer coaching group collectively increased their knowledge of discussion pedagogy through shared resources, observations, and reflection.

An active growth mindset was developed through the peer coaching trial. First, participants selected a new skill to enhance their teaching, Second, participants were motivated to receive feedback. Third, self-reflection was an outcome from peer coaching. Finally, the experience was worth the extra work that the participants undertook during the trial.

Recommendations

In order to continue to effect school culture through peer coaching, the researcher would recommend sharing ideologies that arose from initial interviews. Sharing the unique teaching perspective could aid in creating peer coaching groups. Developing the groups off of the desire to work as a team was encouraging; however, the size of the group was limiting. It limited the meeting times and limited the ability to hear expertise and desire of each participant. Certainly, the team's comfortability with one another was powerful, yet more specific conversations could have occurred from the observations in a smaller group. A suggestion was made to consider rotating groups to still maximize on the human resources within the team, allowing for concentrated skills to be practiced and mastered in small peer coaching groups while also providing opportunities for participants to take on teaching and learning roles when rotating. The eb and flow within the peer coaching groups would allow the culture to blossom throughout the year.

Professional development opportunities are meant to be tailored to the needs of the teachers and shared with all who are interested. The pilot peer coaching team brainstormed using professional development day to share out learned lessons from peer coaching groups. In

sharing, the intent would be stake holders in professional development and celebrate successes to improve school culture. Also, in sharing peer coaching topics, new members could be added into peer coaching groups based on topic interest. Joint working would be amplified. Another consideration for professional development and peer coaching pertains to conferences, trainings, and courses. Once any teacher participates in learning outside of the school building, they should be encouraged to form a peer coaching group to share the learned knowledge, thus maximizing on the professional development experience.

Administration plays a crucial role in peer coaching. The recommendations listed above pertaining to professional development hinge on administration approval, and the time needed to effectively peer coach will be a response of administration through schedules. If time were made in teaching schedules for peer coaching, the burden could be lifted from teachers to piece together *just* enough time to "make it work." Completing peer coaching with validity is important to ensure that the outcomes on school culture, professional development, and growth mindset occur.

References

Anderson, D. M. (1994). *Professional collaboration: empowering school personnel through peer coaching.* The University of Georgia, CEC Annual Convention , Denver.

Black, R., Molseed, T., & Sayler, B. (2003). Fresh view from the back of the room. *Journal of Staff Development, 24*(2), 61-65.

Bruce, C., & Ross, J. (2008). A model for increasing reform implementation and teacher efficacy: Teacher peer coaching in grades 3 and 6 mathematics. *Canadian Journal of Education, 31*(2), 346-370.

Chamberlain , J. M., D'Artrey, M., & Rowe, D. A. (2011). Peer observation of teaching: A decoupled process. *Active Learning in Higher Education* , 189-201.

Eisenbach, R., & Curry, R. R. (1999). The emotional reaction to classroom visitation and peer coaching. *Journal of Management Education*, *23*(4), 416-427.

Glazer, E., & Hannafin, M. (2006). The collaborative apprenticeship model: Situated professional development within school settings. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(2), 179-193. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.004

Grierson, A., & Gallagher, T. (2009). Seeing is believing: Creating a catalyst for teacher change through a demonstration classroom professional development initiative. *Professional Development in Education, 35*(4), 567-584.

Guskey, T. R. (2002) Professional development and teacher change, Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 8(3/4), 381–391.

Hargreaves, A., & Dawe, R. (1990). Paths of professional development: Contrived collegiality, collaborative culture, and the case of peer coaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 6*(3), 227-241.

Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). Solidarity with solidity: The case for collaborative professionalism. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *100*(1), 20-24.

Joyce, B., Bruce, B., & Showers, B. (1983). *Power in staff development through research on training.* Alexandris, Va: Association for Curriculum and Staff Development.

Kohut, G., Burnap, C., & Yon, M (2007) Peer observation of teaching: Perceptions of the observer and the observed, *College Teaching*, 55(1) 19-25, DOI: 10.3200/CTCH.55.1.19-25

Lea, A., James, K., & Bill, K. (2004). Peer coaching: Veteran high school teachers take the lead on learning. *Nassp Bulletin, 88*(639), 26-41. doi:10.1177/019263650408863904

Little, J. W., & Lieberman, A. (1990). Teachers as colleagues. *REPORT NO PUB DATE*, 170.

Mary, M., Michaelene, M., & Susan, A. (2000). Peer coaching: Teachers supporting teachers. *Young Exceptional Children, 3*(3), 9-16. doi:10.1177/109625060000300302

Mento, A., & Giampetro-Meyer, A. (2000). Peer observation of teaching as a true developmental opportunity. *College Teaching, 48*(1), 28-31.

Paulsen, M. B., & Feldman, K. A. (1995). *Taking teaching seriously: Meeting the challenge of instructional improvement.* Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Showers, B. (1985). Teachers coaching teachers. *Educational leadership*, *42*(7), 43-48.

Skinner, M. E., & Welch, F. C. (1996). Peer coaching for better teaching. *College Teaching, 44*(4), 153-156.

Sullivan, P. B., Buckle, A., Nicky, G., & Atkinson, S. H. (2012). Peer observation of teaching as a faculty development tool . *BMC Medical Education* , 1-6.

Tang, S. Y., & Choi, P. L. (2009, February). Teachers' professional lives and continuing professional development in changing times. *Educational Review , 61*(1), 1-18.

Vaughn, M. K. (2016). *Effects of direct consultation-based training and peer coaching on the*

   fidelity of implementation of the teaching pyramid model (Order No. 10106997). Available

   from Publicly Available Content Database. (1791140057). Retrieved from https://search-

   proquest-com.ezproxy.dordt.edu:8085/docview/1791140057?accountid=27065

Vidmar, D. J. (2005). Reflective peer coaching: Crafting collaborative self-assessment in

   teaching. *Research Strategies, 20*(3), 135-148.

   doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.dordt.edu:8080/10.1016/j.resstr.2006.06.002

Appendix A: Initial Survey

Circle the number that most closely represents your perception of school culture, professional development, and growth mindset at your school.

1 = strongly agree   2 = agree   3 = neutral   4 = disagree   5 = strongly disagree

School Culture					
I feel isolated in my current teaching schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
I fear (or have anxiety about) being observed.	1	2	3	4	5
I work jointly with staff members regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Development					
Professional development doesn't impact my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development provides too much information to implement into my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development is applicable to my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Growth Mindset					
Time and/or energy are necessary to improve my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Resources and/or support are necessary to improve my practice.	1	2	3	4	5
I frequently improve my practice.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: Initial Interview

Growth Mindset

1. What habits have you established to grow you as a teacher?

2. What is the greatest motivator for change in your classroom and mindset?

3. Optional - What else would you like to share about growth mindset?

Professional Development

4. What professional development opportunities have resulted in change in your classroom?

5. What have you noticed about the student's response to changes?

6. What else would you like to share about professional development?

School Culture

7. What do you feel are the strengths of our school, pertaining to staff culture?

8. What do you feel are the weaknesses of our school, pertaining to staff culture?

9. What else would you like to share about school culture?

Pre-Observation

10. Are there any topics that would you like to consider working to improve (or learn more about)?

Appendix C: Pre-Observation Meeting Form

Peer coaches:
Meeting date:
Time:
Professional development topic:
Questions to Consider:
- What is the peer coaching session going to be about?
- What would you like students to take from the peer coaching session?
- What will you do to achieve your intended outcomes from the peer coaching session?
- What will you do at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the peer coaching session?
- How long will each section of the peer coaching session take?
- What will we do to indicate the peer coaching session is successful?
- Is there anything about the peer coaching session that you would like to address prior to the observations?

Personal areas of strength:

Personal areas of weakness:

Collaborative ways to help solve the problem:

Collaborative plan for observation:

(Vaughn, 2016, p. 160 & Vidmar, 2005, p. 143-144)

Appendix C: Revised

Pre-Observation Meeting Form

Peer coaches: _____

Meeting date: _____   Time: _____

Questions to Consider:
- What is the peer coaching session going to be about?
- What would you like students to gain from the peer coaching session?
- What will you do to achieve your intended outcomes from the peer coaching session?
- What will you do at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the peer coaching session?
- When will you meet with your peer coaching group?
- What will you do to indicate the peer coaching session is successful?
- Is there anything about the peer coaching session that you would like to address prior to the observations?

Topics to Consider:
- Setting objectives
- Providing feedback
- Cooperative learning
- Cues, questions, and graphic organizers
- Nonlinguistic representation
- Summarizing and notetaking, etc.

Brainstorm:

Personal Areas to Advise	Personal Areas to Improve
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Selected Peer Coaching Topic: _____

Suggested Resources:

Collaborative Plan for Observation:

Peer 1:	Peer 2:	Peer 3:	Peer 4:	Peer 5:
Observers:	Observers:	Observers:	Observers:	Observers:
Date: Time:	Date: Time:	Date: Time:	Date: Time:	Date: Time:

Appendix D: Observation Note Form

Peer coach being observed:
Meeting date:
Time:
Professional development topic:

Instruction - Present
Definition: presenting the content: style and delivery.

- *Content:*

- *Style:*

- *Delivery:*

Feedback - Perspective
Definition: seeking to coach and grow, not judge and scrutinize.

(Anderson, 1994, p. 9; Showers, 1985)

Appendix D: Revised

Observation Note Form

Peer coach being observed: _____

Observation date: _____ Time: _____

Professional development topic: _____

Observation – Notes Related to the PD Topic

Consider taking notes on content, style, delivery, and/or response.

Feedback – Notes Related to the PD Topic

| |
|---|
| Develop comments that seek to coach and grow, not judge and scrutinize |

Appendix E: Post-Observation Discussion

Peer coaches:
Meeting date:
Time:
Peer's observation notes being discussed:
Professional development topic:
Questions to Consider:
- How do you think the peer coaching session went?
- Was there any part of the peer coaching session that you changed?
    - Why did you make the change?
    - What were you aware of about the students that made you change?
- What did you do to produce the results you wanted from the peer coaching session?
- What new ideas or insights did you discover about your teaching through this peer coaching session?
- As you plan future peer coaching session, what ideas could be carried over and used?
- What has the peer coaching session done for you?
    - What would you have liked to see happen in the coaching process?
    - What could your coach do differently in future peer conferences?

Personal areas of strength:

Personal areas of weakness:

Collaborative ways to help solve the problem:

Collaborative plan for next observation:

(Vidmar, 2005, p. 145)

Appendix E: Revised

Post-Observation Meeting Form

Peer coaches: _____

Meeting date: _____   Time: _____

Professional development topic: _____

Questions to Consider:
- How do you think the peer coaching session went?
- Was there any part of the peer coaching session that you changed?
  - Why did you make the change?
  - What were you aware of about the students that made you change?
- What did you do to produce the results you wanted from the peer coaching session?
- What new ideas or insights did you discover about your teaching through this peer coaching session?
- As you plan future peer coaching session, what ideas could be carried over and used?
- What has the peer coaching session done for you?
  - What would you have liked to see happen in the coaching process?
  - What could your coach do differently in future peer conferences?

Personal Notes

Strengths	Weaknesses

Collaborative Steps to Solve the Problem(s) or Develop the Solution(s):

1.

2.

3.
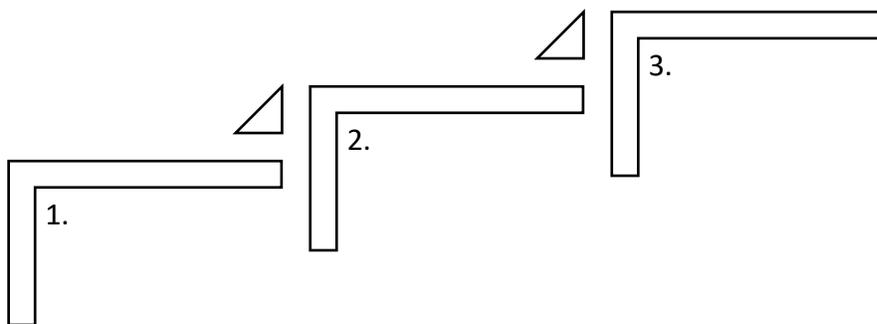
Collaborative Plan for Next Observation
- ☐ Repeat the same topic: _____
- ☐ Develop a new topic: _____

Appendix F: Exit Survey

Circle the number that most closely reflects your perception of being coached.

1 = strongly agree   2 = agree   3 = neutral   4 = disagree   5 = strongly disagree

School Culture					
I had a positive coaching experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I was provided emotion support from my coaches.	1	2	3	4	5
Coaching provided me with companionship while learning a new skill.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Development					
The post-observation meetings were a useful part of the peer coaching process.	1	2	3	4	5
Coaching was beneficial to my skill development.	1	2	3	4	5
The pre-observation meetings were a useful part of the peer coaching process.	1	2	3	4	5
Growth Mindset					
Observing peers and participating in discussions encouraged me to improve my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
My coaches offered helpful suggestions and support for growth and improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
I plan to continually implement elements discussed in peer coaching.	1	2	3	4	5

(Anderson, 1994, p. 8; Kohut et al, 2007, p. 23)

Appendix G: Initial Survey and Exit Survey: Resource Connect

School Culture	
I feel isolated in my current teaching schedule.	Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018 Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990 Showers, 1985
I fear being observed.	Grierson & Gallagher, 2009; Chamberlain et al, 2011; Eisenbach & Curry, 1999
I work jointly with staff members.	Tang & Choi, 2009 Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Hargrieves et al, 2018
Professional Development	
Professional development doesn't impact my teaching.	Anderson, 1994; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Grierson & Gallagher, 2009; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Guskey, 2002; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Joyce et al, 1983; Sullivan et al, 2012; Tang & Choi, 2009
Professional development provides too much information to implement into my teaching.	
Professional development is applicable to my teaching.	
Growth Mindset	
Time or energy are necessary to improve my teaching.	Black et al, 2003; Eisenbach & Curry, 1999; Showers, 1985
Resources or support are necessary to improve my practice.	
I frequently improve my practice.	