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Teacher Perceptions of the Efficacy of Literacy Coaching as a Valuable Professional Development Practice

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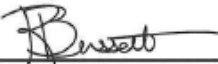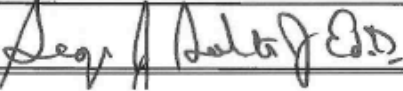Seton Hall University

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Erin J. Stinson-Dioguardi has successfully defended and made the required

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Semester 2020.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
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and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this
form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and
submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

Dedication

This achievement was not made alone. I am forever grateful to my family and my husband, Rocco, for supporting me through the pain and the victory.

To my parents, Edward and Marie Stinson, for their unwavering support and belief in me. Thank you for reminding me that 'I belong.' I am fortunate enough to have two parents as role models who are the embodiment of hard work and sacrifice. You have taught me at a very young age that some of life's best lessons are learned through hard work — specifically perseverance, preparation, resilience, and dedication. Thank you for setting the bar high. If not for you both, this degree doesn't happen. I hope I've made you proud. This is for you!

To my sisters, Stacy, Marie, and Kristen, thank you for leading the path.

To my niece, Ava, and my nephews, Nicholas, Logan, and Gabriel, I hope this achievement inspires you to be relentless in pursuit of your goals and dreams.

By no stretch of the imagination was this an easy road, but I am so proud of myself for taking a leap of faith and forcing myself out of my comfort zone. I pushed myself through limits I did not know I was capable of. Through it all, I discovered a new level of mental toughness, resilience, and self-belief.

The following quote sums up this journey: "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

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived effectiveness of literacy coaching as a

valuable professional development practice for teachers in New Jersey provided with literacy

coaching support from a school-based literacy coach. This study also explored instructional

coaching and the potential impact this support has on teacher practice. The study was designed

to identify the successful professional development strategies that instructional coaches in New

Jersey utilized to influence teacher practice. This study may be valuable to researchers, school

districts, and educators currently or seeking to implement an instructional coaching program as

part of high-quality professional development. The lived experiences of practicing teachers and

literacy coaches yielded a substantial amount of specific strategies employed to ensure the

successful utilization of literacy coaching as a professional development practice. This

investigation may also bring awareness to educational professionals seeking to understand the

link between instructional coaching support and professional development practices.

For this study, a narrative research design was best suited to examine and understand

teachers' perceptions of coaching-related experiences and the meaning derived from their

interactions with literacy coaches. Themes were developed and focused on specific motifs,

carefully weaving out central elements within the narrative. As evidenced by the research, it is

well-advised to investigate the progression of professional development practices to identify and

develop future instructional coaches, programs, and adequate professional development

opportunities.

Key words: instructional coaching, literacy coaching, professional development, job-

embedded professional development

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Chapter I

Introduction

Context of the Study

Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) define effective professional development as "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes." To be as effective as possible, teachers and school district administrators need to regularly extend their knowledge base and skillset to deliver the best instructional practices to their classrooms (Mizell, 2010). As districts make and enforce policies aiming to improve teacher practices and student outcomes, professional development opportunities continue to be proliferating. Professional development is designed to assist teachers and administrators with the improvement of their professional knowledge, competence, skills, and effectiveness. Professional development is a practice used by school districts to ensure that teachers continue to improve their skills throughout their careers (Mizell, 2010).

In practice, professional development for educators includes a range of topics and styles; professional development experiences may be financed by the district, school, or state budgets and programs, or sponsored by a foundation grant or other individual funding source (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). Professional development sessions may vary from a one-day conference to a two-week workshop to a multiyear advanced-degree program. Professional development may be provided in person or web-based, during school hours or outside of the school day, and through one-on-one exchanges or in group settings, or they may be facilitated by school-based educators or provided by external consultants or organizations contracted by a school or district (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

One trending type of professional development is instructional coaching. Instructional

coaching is an approach to professional development that many schools have embraced as a way to alter specific teacher behaviors and improve classroom instruction (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007). Schools are embracing the concept of coaching as an on-site instructional support for teachers and administrators versus the traditional one- or two-day workshop-style formats in which the 'experts' are brought from outside of the school organization (Gomez-Johnson, 2016). Instructional coaching has become a widespread lever to catalyze instructional improvement efforts (Woulfin, 2018).

After the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 became law on January 8, 2002, educational leaders' questions about the effectiveness of traditional professional development became more frequent, and many came to see that moving schools forward requires a variety of approaches to professional learning (Knight, 2009, p.1). One of the most hopeful approaches seemed to be coaching (Knight, 2009, p.1). "The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 entrusted states to make certain that professional development for all educators was 'high quality'; however, it did not explain 'high quality' or clarify how it was to be measured" (Gomez-Johnson, 2016). While the law stressed that activities were not to be limited to workshops or short-term conferences, there was sparse evidence that these recommendations were executed (Gomez-Johnson, 2016). With the enactment of The Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, 2015, NCLB's stand-in, there have been modifications made, including the removal of the 'high quality' terminology (Gomez-Johnson, 2016). Every educational reform proposal and every school improvement plan underscores the need for high-quality professional development (Guskey, 2000, p. 3; Sixel, 2013).

Professional development expectations have been updated to establish tailored, ongoing, job-embedded activities that are accessible to all staff (including paraprofessionals). "These

activities involve comprehensive school improvement plans that are collaborative and data-driven, developed, educator directed, and frequently evaluated" (Civic Impulse, 2016, n. p.). Along with providing a more detailed definition of professional development (now United States policy), ESSA also transformed the professional development language from scientifically-based to evidence-based (Civic Impulse, 2016). Research-based professional learning practices will allow for greater emphasis on increasing student outcomes through the quality of teaching (Guskey, 2002). Nevertheless, regardless of the federal legislation, effective professional development is vital to school improvement when administered appropriately (Guskey, 2002).

Local education agencies have responded to these policy initiatives by integrating coaches as a critical element of "school-based professional development designed in light of the district's reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools' specific instructional needs" (Neufeld & Roper, [55], p. 4; Desimone & Pak, 2016). The investment in instructional coaches continues today with the most recent authorization of ESSA 2015 (Desimone & Pak, 2016). According to ESSA, in eleven instances throughout the bill, state and local agencies are encouraged to develop, train, and appropriately compensate coaches for working with teachers in the development of assessments, interpreting student data, designing and differentiating instruction, providing feedback, or evaluating performance (Desimone & Pak, 2016).

Because of the complexity of this endeavor, federal, state, and district-level governments have mandated instructional coaching as a strategy for developing teacher practice (Coburn & Woulfin, [16]; Desimone & Pak, 2016). As cited in Desimone & Pak, 2016, "instructional coaching has been an especially salient choice for policymakers seeking to enhance reading and literacy pedagogy through site-based, individualized, and sustained professional development" (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio,

2007), especially after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000 emphasized the need for highly qualified reading teachers and the use of scientific-based practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, [20]; Desimone & Pak, 2016).

For school administrators to effectively implement an instructional coaching program and hire instructional coaches, they must first have a solid understanding of instructional coaching, their support in the role, and the appointment of instructional leaders to support and uphold their vision for success (Gomez-Johnson, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Existing research has shown a connection between effective instructional leadership as a key factor in improving student achievement. As cited in Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, (2010, p. 317), research suggests that increasing pressure is falling on school leaders to provide and support best instructional practices and that continuous and knowledgeable support from school leaders makes an impact on practice (Hallinger, 2005; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004). However, the role of a school leader is arguably one of the most challenging jobs in education because of the time, energy, and number of duties required of them (Colagross-Schneider, 2018). The daily roles and responsibilities of the school leader seem to be increasing as the state and federal government demands forced on school districts have steadily increased. School leaders are tasked with managing staff, increasing student achievement, improving the overall quality of instruction, responding to the diverse needs of staff and students, building relationships with the community, handling funding and resources, and so much more. The demands of this role often hinder principals from focusing solely on instructional improvement. Therefore, many school leaders rely heavily on the assistance of an instructional coach to provide teachers with professional development

(Colagross-Schneider, 2018). As cited in Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, (2010, p. 317), the growing influence of teacher leadership roles in schools can have substantial positive effects on the improvement of instruction.

Attention to teacher accountability has generated greater scrutiny of professional learning and instructional practices amongst educators (Sixel, 2013). Policymakers, community leaders, and parents must ensure that their staff partake in continuous professional learning opportunities and apply that learning into practice to raise student achievement (Mizell, 2010). As demands for more intense and rigorous student learning have heightened, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers are encouraged to consider systematic approaches designed to enhance teachers' professional learning from recruitment, preparation, and support, to mentoring and other leadership opportunities (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Instructional coaching is one prospective way to significantly impact instructional practices and student learning in schools. With coaching as a support model of professional development, teachers are better prepared with the dispositions, skills, and knowledge needed to implement new evidence-based practices into their classrooms (Dziczkowski, 2013).

Coaching, while not a new phenomenon, is designed to be an authentic learning opportunity based on teachers' daily experiences. Coaches facilitate learning over continuous interactions, reflection, dialogue, and analysis are the foundation of problem-solving through the teaching craft (Lieberman, 1995; Gomez-Johnson, 2016). Despite the demand for instructional coaches, there is little empirical evidence that coaching improves teacher practice. More empirical investigations need to be conducted to firmly establish coaching as a valuable PD opportunity for teachers (Desimone & Pak, 2016).

Although instructional coaching holds promise as a method to improve teacher practice,

conversely, there is little research, given these optimistic beliefs and promising research findings (Reid, 2019). A study conducted by Reid (2019), examined the tasks that instructional coaches engage in and how instructional coaches are empowered to carry out their daily work. Existing research suggests that the roles of instructional coaches are rarely defined and vary widely (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017; Woulfin, 2018; Reid, 2019). Furthermore, despite the proliferation of coaching throughout education systems, there are still many questions about the value of coaching as a professional development tool (Schachter, Weber-Mayrer, Piasta, & O'Connell, 2018). In addition, Toll (2018) contends that "despite a significant body of research and practical suggestions for coaches and coaching programs, the field looks fairly stagnant."

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the influence instructional coaching has on the efficacy of professional development practice of teachers provided with instructional coaching support from a school-based literacy coach in the area of English Language Arts. This study aimed to examine this specific population of coaches since the literacy coaching program is the longest-running instructional coaching program within this particular district. The coaching program within this specific district began in 2011, servicing teachers of Grades 3-5. One year later, in 2012, the program expanded to service Grades K-8. Within the last several years, support has increased among the lower elementary grades with the addition of various English Language Arts initiatives and new reading series. Therefore, this study investigated the lived experiences of English Language Arts teachers and literacy coaches servicing Grades 1-4. Participants involved in the study have received at least one year of literacy coaching support. Additionally, this study also explored instructional coaching and the potential impact this support has on

professional development practice.

Currently, there is limited existing research pertaining to teacher perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a valuable professional development practice. In their recommendations for future research, Desimone and Pak (2016) stated that more empirical investigations need to be conducted to firmly establish coaching as a valuable PD opportunity for teachers. This research study aims to close that gap and provide insight into the effective and valuable aspects of literacy coaching and its place in professional development. Additionally, this research will add to the existing literature on instructional coaching since few empirical studies examine factors related to teacher perceptions of instructional coaching as a professional development practice.

The study was conducted with nine teachers and seven literacy coaches from a New Jersey public school district that has been utilizing a literacy coaching model for the last nine years. This study adds to the existing research regarding the influence of instructional coaching and professional development.

Significance of the Study

In the past decade, attention to professional learning loosely described as coaching has heightened (Knight, 2009). Such increased interest in coaching is likely due to educators' opinions that "traditional one-shot approaches to professional development — where teachers hear about practices but do not receive follow-up support — are ineffective at improving teaching practices" (Knight, 2009). Further, in-depth support is necessary to assist teachers in translating research into practice. For many districts, that support is coaching (Knight, 2009); therefore, this study may be valuable to researchers, school districts, and educators currently or seeking to implement an instructional coaching program as part of a high-quality professional

development.

The lived experiences of practicing teachers and instructional coaches yielded a substantial amount of specific strategies for the successful utilization of instructional coaching as a professional development practice. This investigation may also bring awareness to the existing issues surrounding educational professionals seeking to understand the linkage between teacher efficacy, instructional coaching support, and professional development. This awareness will hopefully afford educators with greater insight into how to best utilize an instructional coach as part of daily professional development practices.

Additionally, this study may contribute to remedying the factors related to the unsuccessful implementation of professional development or instructional coaching programs for teachers or educational leaders who may struggle with successful implementation.

Research Questions

RQ(1): What are *teachers'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?

a. What are *coaches'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?

RQ(2): How do *teachers* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

b. How do *coaches* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

RQ(3): What are specific strategies *teachers* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

c. What are specific strategies *coaches* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

Research Design

Through a qualitative research design, the study utilized narrative research methods to investigate a social phenomenon. The use of a narrative study gives the ability to investigate the lived experiences of practicing teachers and instructional coaches to identify significant patterns and common themes. For this study, a narrative approach was appropriate in investigating the lived experiences of practicing teachers and instructional coaches in New Jersey. This approach was intended to illustrate the participants' personal perceptions of specific strategies for successfully utilizing instructional coaching support as part of professional development practice, and as derived from their personal experiences, help determine which factors they attributed to developing the successful implementation of an instructional coaching program.

Key Terms

This section defines key terms for the study. Some terms are defined as they were used for the purposes of this study, and other terms are defined as they have appeared in the literature.

Professional Development: Professional Development is structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond and Gardner, 2017). In the field of education, the term **professional development** may be used when referencing a larger scope of specific training or advanced professional learning structured to assist administrators, teachers, and other educators to enhance their professional knowledge, capacity, skill, dispositions, and effectiveness.

Instructional Coaching: The instructional coaches' primary role is to work with educators to implement research-based practices and encourage reflective practice (Knight, 2007). They provide ongoing, embedded, non-evaluative, professional learning. Instructional coaching provides intensive, differentiated support to teachers so that they can implement proven

practices (Knight, 2009, p. 30).

Literacy Coaching: Literacy Coaching is a category of instructional coaching that focuses on literacy and related aspects of teaching and learning; various programs of literacy coaching implement a variety of coaching models (Knight, 2009, p. 57).

Instructional Coaching Model: There are four critical components to help teachers learn new strategies and skills: (1) presentation of theory, (2) demonstration of the strategy or skill, (3) initial practice in the workshop, and (4) prompt feedback about their teaching (Cooper, 2002).

Reflective Practices: Teachers engage in contemplative practices when they take the time to look back at the lessons taught, can be present while teaching, and look forward by planning lessons for future learning. Reflective teachers collaborate to gain feedback and understanding of instructional practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2003; Knight, 2011).

Teacher Efficacy: Teacher efficacy as defined by Hoy (2000) is the concept of "teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning."

Chapter II

Review Of The Literature

This section examines the recent research and current body of literature on teacher professional development, specifically job-embedded professional development through the form of literacy coaching. The literature reviewed supports the problem statement and research questions outlined in Chapter I of this research study. The literature review begins with an overview of the various forms of teacher professional development: high quality, traditional workshop, and job-embedded. It is important to understand the types of professional development opportunities that are offered to teachers. Next, the literature review discusses instructional coaching as a form of professional development practice, a variety of existing instructional coaching models and processes, and the impact that instructional coaching generally has on teacher practice. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching (generally) and literacy coaching (specifically) are examined. Research involving both Adult Learning Theory (effective adult learning practices), and Self-Determination Theory (teachers' intrinsic motivation) is applied in connection with how teachers translate professional learning into practice. Finally, the existing gap in the literature in instructional coaching as an effective professional development practice is discussed.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review was to identify educational research that (a) provides an overview of professional development; (b) identifies instructional coaching as a form of professional development; (c) identifies types of instructional coaching models and processes; (d) examines the impact of instructional coaching generally and literacy coaching specifically; e) notes the relevance of teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching f) reviews research-based

theoretical literature relating to this topic, such as adult learning theory and self-determination theory; and g) discusses the current gap in the literature surrounding instructional coaching.

This study explored the influence literacy coaching has on teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the practice of literacy coaching. This study was conducted with teachers who were provided literacy coaching support from a school-based literacy coach. It also explored instructional coaching and the potential impact this support has on professional development practice. Participants in this study were provided support from a literacy coach for at least one year to implement the ELA curriculum along with the implementation of a new reading program and other English Language Arts initiatives.

Currently, there is limited existing research pertaining to teacher perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a professional development practice. Desimone and Pak (2016) stated that more empirical investigations need to be conducted to firmly establish coaching as a valuable professional development opportunity for teachers (Desimone & Pak, 2016). Schachter et al. (2018) explained that notwithstanding the rapid increase of coaching throughout education institutions, there are still many questions surrounding the value of coaching as a PD tool.

Additionally, Schachter et al. (2018) submitted that it is unclear how theoretically and empirically supported PD strategies are implemented by coaches and whether what coaches do with educators aligns with the intent of the PD. Second, without grasping the process of coaching, it is indistinct what it is about the coaching that results in changes in practice (Schachter et al., 2018). Some have proposed there is much that remains unknown to researchers as to which specific strategies coaches employ result in change in instructional practices (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014; Wasik & Hindman, 2011; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008; Schachter et al., 2018).

This research study aims to close that gap and provide insight into teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaching as a professional development practice. Additionally, this research adds to the existing literature on instructional coaching since few empirical studies examine factors related to teacher perceptions of literacy coaching as a professional development practice.

The study was conducted with nine teachers and seven instructional coaches from a New Jersey public school district, which has been utilizing a literacy coaching model for the last eight years. This study adds to the existing research pertaining to the influence of instructional coaching on teacher practice and professional development.

Teacher Professional Development

Professional development relates to many types of educational opportunities that are connected to the work of an individual. Physicians, attorneys, teachers, accountants, engineers, and individuals from a wide range of occupations and industries engage in professional development to acquire and apply new skills and knowledge that will strengthen their job performance (Mizell, 2010). In education, professional development is one solution that school districts employ to enhance the performance levels of educators. Professional development is one way in which educators can learn to improve their performance and increase student achievement (Mizell, 2010). An increasing number of robust studies indicate that if effectively implemented, well-designed professional development can lead to significant improvements in instructional practice and student performance (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017), these studies draw on a vast body of research that has previously described positive outcomes from professional learning using teacher and student self-reports or observational models.

High-Quality Professional Development

Effective instructional models have advanced in recent decades; however, gaps between them remain only partially resolved (Seashore, Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 316). The demand to improve instruction in schools may be higher today than at any other time in the history of American education (Knight, 2007). In the U.S. and elsewhere, school districts spend tens of billions of dollars yearly on professional development to support teachers in meeting daily challenges with limited results to show for these investments (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). Many major urban districts have committed significant investments to school-based professional development anchored in the work of literacy coaches (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011).

Elements of Effective Professional Development

In reviewing over thirty-five studies within the last three decades, which included various style study designs, Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) through a coded analysis of the studies developed what they believe identifies the elements of effective professional development models.

Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) found seven commonly shared elements of professional development. Features of effective professional development include:

1. Content focused

2. Involves active learning utilizing adult learning theory

3. Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts

4. Uses models and modeling of effective practice

5. Provides coaching and expert support

6. Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection

7. Is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

As Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) note, "Professional learning that is most effective in improving an educator's practice is intensive; ongoing; connected to practice; focused on student learning; and aligned with school improvement practices" (Vermont Agency for Education, 2016). According to Knight (2007), the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has shaped the nation's focus on the quality of teaching and student learning. Nationwide, schools are searching for strategies to increase student performance and to assist their schools with meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) (Knight, 2007). The need for further training only has increased recently as professional expectations for educators continue to grow, and states adopt new 'college- and career-ready' standards forcing teachers to integrate higher-order thinking and social-emotional learning into the curriculum (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). The extraordinary interest in instructional enhancement has also intensified decision-makers' interest in effective professional development practices (Knight, 2007).

Koh and Neuman (2006) developed the features of Exemplary Elements of Coaching. They define the exemplary elements of coaching to include (1) on-site coaching, (2) balanced and sustained coaching, (3) good coaches don't dictate, (4) student outcome benefits from strong interaction with coaches, (5) provide descriptive feedback, (6) match/ complement teachers' behavioral style, (7) promote professional reflection, (8) well-trained coaches, (9) collaborative coaching, and (10) prioritize (Koh and Neuman, 2006). The above-mentioned elements are important to consider in understanding the effective practices of a coach and coaching program.

Policymakers' choice for coaching as a 'lever for professional development,' specifically in the fields of reading and literacy, is evidenced by several decades of research detailing its benefits (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Coaching literature from the 1980s and '90s report positive

outcomes in lesson planning and organization, instruction for students with disabilities, classroom behavior management strategies, and helping students meet instructional objectives (Kohler, Ezell, & Paluselli, 1999; as cited in Desimone & Pak, 2017). Research from the early 2000s ties instructional coaching to positive changes in school culture and teacher partnerships (Guinney, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003) and improved teacher attitudes, skill application, feelings of efficacy, and student outcomes (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Desimone & Pak, 2017).

Recent research on instructional coaching positions this practice as a strategy for systemic reform in efforts such as Reading First, Success for All, and America's Choice (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). Studies on these significant initiatives draw correlations between coaching and increased student outcomes, as measured through standardized testing (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014; Desimone & Pak, 2017). One of instructional coaching's great strengths is that it reflects foundational ideas of what makes teacher-learning effective (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

Job-Embedded vs. Traditional Workshop

As research has indicated for decades, traditional forms of professional development are ineffective, usually getting no better than 10% implementation rate (Bush, 1984; Knight, 2007). Inadequately designed training can 'erode' teachers' willingness to adopt any new ideas. (Knight, 2007). Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, (2017) contend that in recent decades, a new paradigm for PD has materialized from research that distinguish powerful opportunities for teacher learning from the traditional, one-day, 'drive-by' workshop model (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). When educational leaders witness their one-shot program's shortcomings, they begin searching for the causes of that failure (Knight, 2007). The result of the failure of traditional PD programming in improving instructional practices and student achievement has generated a need for research that pinpoints specific conditions under which PD

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programs may yield more favorable outcomes (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). As cited in Kraft,

Blazar, & Hogan (2018), effective professional learning experiences encompass "several critical

features including job-embedded practice, intense and sustained durations, a focus on discrete

skill sets, and active-learning" (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos,

2009; Desimone, 2009; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon,

2001; Hill, 2007).

   In one major study, Bush (1984) conducted a five-year study of staff development in

California. Bush's research team studied the impact that various approaches to professional

development had on whether or not teachers used new teaching practices (Knight, 2007). The

results indicated that when teachers were given only a description of new instructional skills,

10% used the skill in the classroom (Knight, 2007). Training that included modeling, practice,

and feedback showed that the implementation of the teaching practices increased by two to three

percent each time (Knight, 2007). With the addition of coaching to the staff development

practice, however, approximately 95% of the teachers applied the new skills in their classrooms

(Knight, 2009).
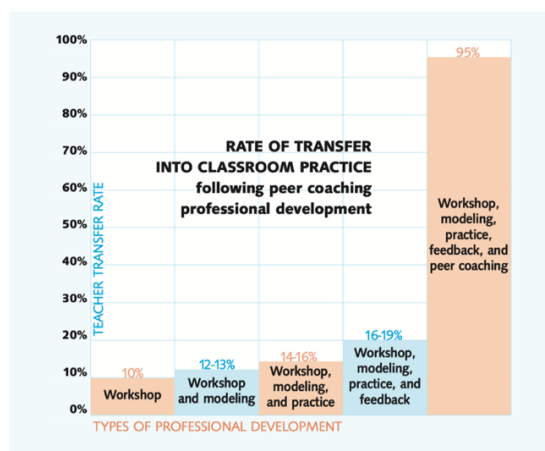
Source: "Effective staff development," by Robert N. Bush. In Far West Laboratory (Ed.), *Making Our Schools More Effective: Proceedings of Three State Conferences*. San Francisco: Author, 1984.

Figure 1. Rate of Transfer into Classroom Practice following peer coaching
and professional development (Knight, 2009)

In another study on instructional coaching (Knight & Cornett, 2008), 51 teachers participated in an after-school workshop focused on unit planning and teaching routine, based on *The Unit Organizer* (Lenz, Bulgren, Schumaker, Deshler, & Boudah,1994; as cited in Knight, 2009). Teachers at random were split into two groups, one that received coaching and one that did not (Knight, 2007). Research assistants observed the classes instructed by teachers in each group, looking for evidence of utilization of the newly acquired instructional practice. In the classes instructed by teachers who were coached, the on-lookers witnessed evidence of the utilization of the unit organizer during 90% of their observation. However, in classes instructed by teachers who were not coached, observers saw evidence of the use of the unit organizer in only 30% of the classes (Knight, 2009).

Knight found that in most of the studies reviewed, the best implementation rate one could hope for following a one-shot workshop was 15% (Knight, 2007). Second, coaching centers on supporting teachers to implement new practices result in implementation (Knight, 2007). Finally, the research on cognitive coaching suggests that this approach has a positive impact on teachers' beliefs about their efficacy as teachers (Knight, 2007).

Instructional coaching has come forth as a favorable alternative to traditional models of professional development (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). Coaching is a specialized form of professional development that is relationship-based, where coaches work individually or in small groups of educators with a goal of enhancing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Aikens & Akers, 2011; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2011; Schachter et al., 2018). Coaching is usually on-going, job-embedded, and site-based rather than a one-time workshop or training.

The Role of Instructional Coaching in Professional Development Practice

Desimone and Pak (2017) describe coaching as a "multifaceted endeavor that has taken hold in schools across the country as a mechanism for new teacher induction, ongoing teacher learning, assisting in implementation of new initiatives, and, most recently, in helping teachers understand and adapt their instruction to new state content standards." Sailors & Shanklin (2010) define coaches as those regarded as experts in their field who model research-based strategies and collaborate with teachers to incorporate these practices into their classroom instruction (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). As cited in Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette, (2009), Hargreaves & Dawe (1990) depict coaching as "a … method of transferring skills and expertise from more experienced and knowledgeable practitioners … to less experienced ones" (p. 230). This adult learning approach includes procedures for collaborative planning and goal setting, coach information exchanging, modeling instructional practices, collecting learner information and applying new knowledge, analysis, reflective practice on the learner's experiences with the coaching process, and gaining coach feedback (Leat et al., 2006; Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette, 2009).

Gallacher (1997) contends that coaching is a "learner-driven mechanism supported by promoting and using a coach's knowledge and skills to encourage the comprehension and use of newly acquired knowledge and skills by the learner" (as cited in Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette, 2009). Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette (2009) assert that coaching is "conceptualized as a cyclical process that increases knowledge and skills, self-confidence and collegial relationships as a result of ongoing coaching experiences."

The instructional coaches' chief role is to support educators with implementing research-based practices and encouraging them to participate in reflective practices (Knight, 2007) and

provide ongoing, job-embedded, non-evaluative, professional learning. Instructional coaches

partner with teachers to assist them with implementing research-based instructional practices into

their instruction to improve student outcomes (Knight, 2009).

The above-referenced literature suggests that the title 'coach' is a very ambiguous term

when applied to the field of education. Instructional coaching, therefore, is not a one-size-fits-all

approach. Aguilar (2013) explicitly stated:

> New teachers are sometimes appointed a coach who might be a mentor and confidant, or
>
> only someone who stops in every other week to fill out paperwork. Many mandated
>
> curricula initiatives deploy 'coaches' to enforce implementation. Some schools have
>
> 'data coaches' who gather and analyze data, prepare reports, meet with teachers to
>
> discuss the results and suggest actions to take. Some districts assign coaches to
>
> underperforming veteran teachers as a step in the complicated process of firing a teacher.
>
> Central office administrators have also appointed 'school improvement coaches' to
>
> schools that have failed to improve test scores. Finally, some teachers have experienced
>
> a coach who co-plans lessons, observes instruction and offers feedback, models
>
> instructional strategies, gathers resources, and provides support with new curricula.
>
> There have been enough coaches passing through schools in recent decades that most
>
> educators have some idea about what a coach does. Coaches have an obligation to
>
> understand this context and to provide a definition for what their work entails (p.18).

Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching "remains one of the hottest topics in reading education, and the

International Reading Association continues to promote the reading coach model as a

professional development approach with vast potential to improve student reading proficiency in

elementary, middle, and high schools" (IRA, 2006a, p. 1; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008).

The title 'literacy coach' is used widely to refer to educators who use a variety of tools and

methods to strengthen teachers' practices and student learning related to literacy instruction

(Knight, 2009). Sometimes, the role of the literacy coach is left open to interpretation.

Therefore, because of the ambiguous nature of the definition of an instructional coach, coaches

often tend to take on a variety of roles, including identifying proper interventions for teacher

learning, collecting data in classrooms, and spearheading whole-school reform efforts (Kraft,

Blazar, & Hogan, 2018).

A large portion of early research on literacy coaching concentrated on defining the roles

and duties that coaches performed (Deussen et al., 2007; Walpole and Blamey, 2008) and how

they utilized their coaching time (Scott, Cortina, and Carlisle 2012). The findings from these

early studies indicate that the duties for literacy coaches varied vastly and most of the time were

determined by the school principal (Hathaway and Risko, 2007; as cited in Mraz, Algozzine, and

Watson, 2008). "In an effort to bring clarity and consistency to the role, the International

Literacy Association, formerly the International Reading Association (IRA), outlines standards

for the purpose of the literacy coach across six areas: (1) foundational knowledge; (2) curriculum

and instruction; (3) assessment and evaluation; (4) diversity; (5) professional learning; and (6)

leadership (IRA, 2010, 2; Mraz, Maryann; Salas, Spencer; Mercado, Leonardo; Dikotla,

Masennya, 2016).

To aid literacy coaches with a description that defines their role, Toll (2005) developed

the following definition: "a literacy coach is one who helps teachers to recognize what they

know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of

what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more" (Toll, 2005, p. 4;

Toll, 2014). Because of the abstract nature of her original definition, Toll later developed a

second definition of a literacy coach. Toll affirms that "a literacy coach partners with teachers

for job-embedded professional learning that enhances teachers' reflection on students, the

curriculum, and pedagogy for more effective decision making." Toll stresses that coaching is a

partnership, job-embedded, about professional learning, supports reflection about practice, and

leads to better decisions (Toll, 2014).

Qualifications of the School-based Literacy Coach

According to the National Reading Technical Assistance Center (2010), outlined below

are the minimum qualifications and desired skills of a literacy coach. As the number of coaches

across the nation increase, many articles have made recommendations on the most essential

qualifications coaches should exhibit. The International Reading Association (IRA) (2004b)

released its guidelines on the role and minimum qualifications of the reading coach (IRA, 2004).

Minimum qualifications of a coach

A coach …

- should be an excellent teacher of reading, preferably at the levels at which

he/she is coaching;

- has in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and

instruction;

- has expertise in working with teachers to improve their practices;

- is an excellent presenter and group leader; and

- has the experience or preparation that enables her to model, observe, and

provide feedback about instruction for classroom teachers.

(International Reading Association, 2004)

Expected Qualities and Skills of School-based Literacy Coaches

In addition to the qualifications necessary for effective coaching, other skills appear necessary to coach teachers effectively in their teaching of reading skills. Many resources explicitly detail the 'desired skills' of literacy coaches (IRA, 2004). According to the IRA (2004), desired skills and actions of a coach include:

• look for the positive in each interactive opportunity;

• display strong listening skills, questioning abilities, and confidentiality;

• demonstrate a willingness to embrace the teacher/coach model as a way to address professional development needs;

• actively support the individual teacher's learning;

• coach individuals and groups to identify their strengths, areas of potential growth, and steps to take in improving instruction;

• provide instruction and coaching that honors the diversity of students and teachers; and

• communicate appropriately with all involved in the success of the program.

(Learning Point Associates, 2004, p. 5; IRA, 2004)

Instructional Coaching Processes and Models

The instructional coaching model is rooted in a partnership approach. The principles have been validated in a study of two approaches to professional development; i.e. the partnership approach and the traditional approach (Knight, 2009). The seven principles of 'partnership philosophy' as outlined by Jim Knight are:

- **Equality**: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners, each adding equal value to the coaching process

- **Choice**: teachers should have choice in deciding what and how they learn; coaching support is structured based on the needs of the teacher

- **Voice**: professional learning respects the voices of teachers; coaches empower teachers to express their opinions, perspectives, and views

- **Dialogue**: professional learning should promote authentic dialogue; coaches foster an environment that welcomes open dialogue, reflection, and educational conversations

- **Reflection**: reflection is an inherent part of professional learning; teachers are empowered to engage in reflective practice as they make decisions about instructional practices

- **Praxis**: coaching focuses on assisting teachers with application of learning into practice in circumstances that are relatable and relevant to them; teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice

- **Reciprocity**: all parties learn alongside one another and benefit from the coaching process

  (Knight, 2009; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013; Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013).

Principal and Coach Partnerships

The instructional coaching model is a partnership between teachers, coaches, and administrators. To be effective and function at its fullest potential, the instructional coaching model must be fully understood and embraced by all stakeholders. For instructional coaching to successfully implement a change initiative in a school, "a combined top-down and bottom-up approach" needs to be executed (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013). With support,

guidance, and leadership from the top, the partnership between principal, coach, and teacher can influence teaching practices and ensure that teachers who are most in need are supported (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013). Removing autonomy and forcing teachers into a coaching model can result in resistance and resentment, causing the coaching model to fail. Therefore, principal involvement is integral in encouraging teacher participation.

In the partnership developed between principal and coach, both coach and principal work together to carry out school improvement initiatives and plan and implement professional development for the teachers (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013). The principal should decide the coach's focus based on building needs and areas that will yield the greatest impact on student learning outcomes. Both coach and principal need to be accountable for follow-up to ensure that support is positively impacting teacher practices and student learning (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013).

The role of the principal in facilitating this understanding is vital to the success of the model (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013). Professional learning opportunities and support must exist for both administrators and coaches (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013). "No matter how much a coach knows, and no matter how effective a coach is, the principal's voice is ultimately the one most important to teachers" (Knight, 2006). "The principal is the instructional leader and must fully support coaching activities" (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013).

The principal is integral in promoting coaching relationships between educators. In a study conducted by Matsumara, Sartoris, Bickel, and Garnier (2009), the relationship between principal leadership and the success of coaching implementation was examined; the findings

recommend strong instructional leadership involvement:

1. Principals need to publicly state support for the role of the coach. "Teachers who reported being observed more frequently by their coach implemented new instructional strategies at a higher rate than colleagues; coaches observed teachers more frequently when principals explicitly stated that the coach was there to support improved instruction" (Matsumara et al., 2009; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013).

2. Principals must observe coaches in action. **"**Principals who reported more frequent observing of coaches in classrooms understood the coach's role better and as such, minimized requests for administrative tasks that infringed on the coach working with teachers" (Matsumara et al., 2009; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013). Mastsumara, Garnier, and Resnick (2010) findings suggest further insights into the essential role of the principal when actualizing coaching.

3. Schools that produced the most improvement in instructional practice credited principals who "actively participate in professional learning with the coach, endorse the coach to teachers, and respect the coach's professional judgment in determining their schedule" (Mastsumara, Garnier, and Resnick, 2010; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013).

The Coaching Model Adapted

The Cognitive Coaching Model

The district studied employs what is known as the Cognitive Coaching Model, which is a teacher-centered coaching approach. The cognitive coaching model is based on research

findings that indicated "Student achievement would be higher in the classrooms of teachers who interacted more extensively with their coaches … [and] positively correlated with the use of personnel resources which was represented by coaches" (Ross, 1992, in Shidler, 2009, p. 454; as cited in Wang, 2017). Based on Shidler's (2009) research, there is a close link between steady modeling practices and increased levels of efficacy as reported by teachers resulting in an impact on student learning (Wang, 2017). There are four components that coaches using the cognitive coaching model follow:

- coaching concentrated on specific instructional content

- modeling techniques and instructional practices

- observing teacher practices

- providing dedicated time for teachers to participate in reflective practice

(Shidler, 2009; Wang, 2017).

This coaching style takes an approach that connects adapting teacher practices through explicit instruction facilitated by coach to teacher application of the learning in real time in the classroom (Wang, 2017). This specific coaching model implemented in the district studied is adapted from Lyons & Pinnell (2001). See Figure 2.

(Adapted from Lyons & Pinnell, 2001)
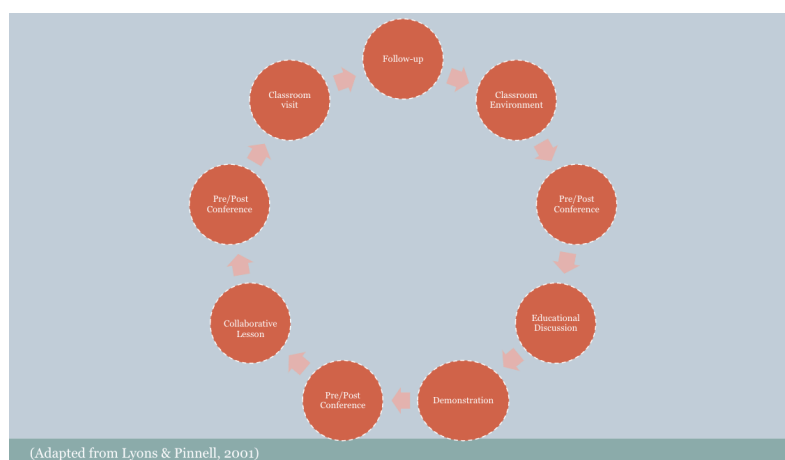
Figure 2. Instructional Coaching Model (Adapted from Lyons & Pinnell, 2001)

According to Lyons & Pinnell (2001), the literacy coach model follows a process of seven steps, often referred to in the literature as a coaching cycle. Outlined below is the process that teachers and literacy coaches follow in the district studied.

1. A group professional learning community and individual meeting are conducted to discuss teacher and school goals for the year.

2. All classrooms are visited by the literacy coach to gather information about the teacher and the students.

3. The coach meets with the teacher to give immediate feedback and discuss next steps.

4. The coach provides demonstration lessons with pre-and-post conferences.

5. The coach scaffolds the teacher with demonstration lessons that slowly become collaborative lessons.

6. The coach supports and provides reflection for the teacher as he/she begins to implement coach's techniques independently.

7. The coach continually provides knowledge-building sessions through workshops and professional learning communities.

(Lyons & Pinnell, 2001)

The purpose of an instructional coaching model aims to close the student achievement gap and advance learning for all students by strengthening teacher competencies through the implementation of effective instructional practices (Casey, 2006; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). As the utilization of instructional strategies expand through instructional coaching, "the social capital of schools increases" (Leana, 2011; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). In contexts with high positive human interactions, educator relationships are distinguished by

continual interaction, collaboration, and trust, leading to positive student outcomes (Leana, 2011; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016).

Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan (2018) identify the coaching process as "one where instructional specialists work with teachers to discuss instructional practice in a way that is (a) individualized — coaching sessions are one-on-one; (b) intensive — coaches and teachers interact at least every couple of weeks; (c) sustained — teachers receive coaching over an extended period of time; (d) context-specific — teachers are coached on their practices within the context of their own classroom; and (e) focused — coaches work with teachers to engage in deliberate practice of specific skills."

Coaching processes may follow a variety of models, including clinical monitoring, cognitive coaching, instructional counseling, student-focused coaching, peer mentoring, or mixed models (Bukowiecki, 2012; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; as cited in Galey, 2016). In the cognitive role, coaches concentrate on instructional development, working with individual and teacher groups to improve the practice in the classroom (Galey, 2016). "In their organizational role, instructional coaches center on instructional capacity-building to manage and diffuse knowledge between teacher classrooms" (Galey, 2016). Instructional coaches also play a reform role as part of a broader policy push by schools and communities to influence teachers and adjust policies to the local context (Galey, 2016).

Impact of the Coaching Model

Poglinco and Bach (2004) conducted a study that examined the coaching model of professional development. They explored coaching as a professional development tool in two capacities: an in-class support model for teachers and coach-facilitated group professional development sessions (Poglinco and Bach, 2004). Their findings suggested that teachers are

more likely to alter their instructional practices when coaches model best instructional practices for them (Galey, 2016). "Research by Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) also document the effectiveness of this 'show and tell' strategy for improving and changing teacher practice" (Galey, 2016).

Nine overarching themes emerged from Poglinco and Bach's (2004) research.

1) In-class support provided by coaches proved to be well received by teachers; therefore, coaches need to be skilled in various practices for providing in-class coaching support.

2) Despite the fact that teachers met routinely in the form of a professional learning community, the group meetings did not lead to changes in instructional practices.

3) Teachers' understanding of the use of instructional guidelines for improving practice did not translate into how to alter their instructional methods.

4) Although the coaching model was put into practice in several schools, there was a lack of emphasis on the connection to performance standards by the coaches in both individual and group components of coaching.

5) Even though the coaching model highlights the capabilities of coaches, they need the support of teachers and administration in order to be effective.

6) Undefined coaching roles and vagueness of coach relationships with teachers and administration can negatively impact coaches' ability to be effective.

7) The significance of the function of coaches as agents of instructional change cannot be stressed enough.

8) An effective teacher does not necessarily equate to an effective coach.

9) The utilization of coaching strategies should not be limited to teacher-coach

partnerships only, and they are beneficial to other instructional staff and

administrators.

(Poglinco and Bach, 2004).

Contrary to what Poglinco and Bach (2004) found relating to coaching support with

performance standards, Marsh et al. (2010) noted that teacher-coach collaborations include the

use and analysis of data also seem to have an influence on teaching practice by supporting

teachers target specific learning needs of students and meet these needs with effective

instructional resources (Galey, 2016). When given the opportunity to collaborate and analyze

performance data, coaching proved to have an impact on practice.

Impact of Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaches often experience a sense of urgency when it comes to promoting

change within their coaching population; therefore, they often determine their effectiveness by

the results yielded relating to student learning (Knight, 2019, p 14).

Empowering Coaches. Reid (2019) conducted a study on principal-coach interactions

that aimed to analyze how a principal of a public high school interacted with and enabled

instructional coaches for the duration (and post) of the Achievement Coaches Program. An

analysis of data from interviews, observations, and records conducted by Reid (2019) indicated

that the instructional coaches were enabled in three key ways. First, by specifying coaching

roles, functions, and the responsibilities of everyone involved in the instructional coaching

program. Second, by providing sufficient time for teachers and coaches to meet within the

school day, typically, but not exclusively. Lastly, by supporting the coaches, the principal

enabled them to build trusting relationships amongst all involved in the coaching process

(administration, the coaches, and the teachers).

Reid (2019) suggested that the results from this case study are consistent with Fullan's (2008) concept of linking peers with purpose. Reid (2019) further stated that the principal encouraged collaboration between coaches and teachers, but did not make these interactions compulsory, but rather the main direction provided, and conditions created for purposeful interactions (Fullan, 2008; Reid, 2019). Therefore, for a coaching program to have an impact, it is crucial to ensure that all parties have a shared understanding of coaching goals and that goals set are purposeful.

Furthermore, relationship and trust-building, as cited earlier, are key attributes of impactful coaching and professional learning. The findings from Reid's study support the notion that effective organizations develop trust-based systems (Reid, 2019).

Structuring Time. Scott et al. (2012) discovered that literacy coaches structured their time in a variety of ways but in general, observed that time spent interacting with educators was sparse; instead, most of their time was spent on administrative tasks (Schachter et al., 2018). Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) noted that coaches spent about 50% of their time interacting with educators. Other studies confirm this broad range both in how coaches spend their time (Bean et al., 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015; Schachter et al., 2018) and in the amount of coaching received by educators (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Schachter et al., 2018). Overall, this research suggests that coaches may not always be spending their time as initially intended, which is a critical problem, as some researchers have found that more time spent in coaching is related to more positive changes in practice (Bean et al., 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015; Schachter et al., 2018). Besides coaching jobs that spread coaches thin between supporting too many teachers or too many schools, there are coaching positions that suppose coaches fulfill several non-coaching duties resulting in coaches seldom getting to actual coaching (Bean et al., 2015; Toll, 2018).

Schachter et al. (2018) study found that coaches reported spending a large proportion of their interactions with educators completing administrative tasks. Schachter et al. (2018) investigated coaches' interactions with educators in the context of a large-scale, state implemented literacy professional development. They reviewed log data reports to grasp what coaches found most noticeable about their exchanges with educators and how the data examined aligned with the initial design of the PD (Schachter et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Schachter et al. (2018) found that "coaches disproportionately targeted instructional content from the professional development while also adding unrelated instructional content to their coaching. Although coaches reported focusing on relationship building, they reported using less efficacious coaching strategies (e.g., observation and discussion) more frequently than coaching strategies demonstrated to be more efficacious (e.g., modeling and co-teaching). Their findings suggest an explanation for the mixed evidence around coaching, as coaches in the study seemed to move beyond the specifications of the PD in their coaching interactions" (Schachter et al., 2018).

Additionally, in their research, Schachter et al. (2018) found that a large proportion of coaches' interactions with educators were not related to any instructional content. Schachter et al. (2018) found this pattern in the literature (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Scott et al., 2012), confirmed here in a large-scale study, is vital in many ways. First, as the amount of time coaches spend with educators seems to influence the outcome of the coaching (Bean et al., 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015), this could lead to decreased effectiveness of coaching and thus might help explain some of the mixed findings about the efficacy of coaching (Schachter et al., 2018). A second important implication is that the administrative work involved in coaching should be accounted for in the design and evaluation of PD (Schachter et al., 2018).

This might be particularly true for coaching within large-scale, state-implemented PD, in which there is more administrative work in general (Jackson et al., 2011, 2007; as cited in Schachter et al., 2018), which may result in less time being available for focusing on improving instruction. Those developing and studying coaching models may need to anticipate this use of time through either reducing the number of administrative tasks for coaches or building extra time for administrative work into the design of PD (Schachter et al., 2018).

Coaching for change. A study conducted by Mangin & Dunsmore (2014) examined instructional coaching as one strategy for supporting systemic change. Mangin and Dunsmore's (2014) investigation posed the following question: "How does the framing of coaching as a lever for systemic and individual reform influence the enactment of literacy coaching?" (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

According to Mangin and Dunsmore (2014), coaching is alternately framed as a means for both systemic and individual reforms. Futhermore, Mangin and Dunsmore (2014) stated that these competing ideas of coaching as a means for change have not been systematically analyzed. Consequently, we know little about how framing instructional coaching programs impacts coaching implementation and performance (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). In response to this gap in the literature, Mangin and Dunsmore examined one district's efforts to use literacy coaching, one kind of instructional coach role, as a means to facilitate system-wide changes in literacy practice.

Data were analyzed from interviews, coach discussions, and written documentation in the form of time allocation logs, email, and written reflections (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). The study examined four literacy coaches who were a part of the Ferraro School District, which implements coaching roles at all levels: elementary, middle, and high school. All coaches were

described as seasoned classroom teachers with high levels of literacy expertise and advanced degrees. All four had 1.5 years of experience working as coaches at the start of data collection. All had attended the Literacy Coaches Network since becoming coaches, and they sometimes acted as activity leaders, facilitating small group sessions, and sharing information about their work as literacy coaches. Semi-structured interviews were conducted weekly over seven consecutive weeks and included a final interview at the end of the school year.

According to Mangin and Dunsmore (2014), although the coaches in this study intended to support system-wide changes in literacy practice, the coaches were provided with framed coaching as a means of supporting individual learning. The strategies employed by the coaches, in effect, mirrored this philosophy of transition and concentrated on adapting to the particular needs of individual teachers, often at the detriment of school and district goals (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). Thus, the results of this research indicate that the representation of coach positions can have a profound impact on implementation and raise questions about how coaching can be presented to support individual and institutional change (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

Mangin and Dunsmore convincingly conveyed how the findings from this study aid the reader in understanding the strategies that coaches employed in the enactment of their work and their rationale for those strategies. They sought to understand how the training that coaches received through the regional district influenced the enactment of their role. The following key findings were discussed:

1. The coaches' efforts to build teachers' knowledge correspond to the training program's focus on the development of a common language as a strategy for facilitating change.

2. The coaches' focus on individual teachers corresponds to the training program's

emphasis on communication strategies for facilitating individual teachers' reflective thinking.

3. Not only did the training program promote particular approaches to coaching, our findings suggest it also limited the range of possible change strategies available to coaches.

4. Evidence from the study indicates that the coaches were limited in how they worked with groups of teachers because the communication strategies available to the coaches focused exclusively on coaching individuals.

5. Coaches were underutilizing their opportunities to engage groups of teachers in collaborative conversations about teaching and learning (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

Mangin & Dunsmore (2014) claim that their research findings have implications for coaches roles, the skills and dispositions necessary for coaching, along with the types of professional learning opportunities accessible to coaches. The researchers posit that while this study does not speak to the efficacy of particular coaching models, it does provide insight into how a lack of congruence between district goals, coach training, and coaching practices can challenge coaches' efforts to enact a role that they themselves view as effective (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

Impact of Literacy Coaching

The success of coaching depends primarily on the relationships that coaches have formed with the teachers they support (Toll, 2017, p.14). Coaches must have a personal connection with their teacher colleagues so that coaching can take a positive step forward (Toll, 2017, p.14). The direct impact of literacy coaches can largely depend on the amount of time allocated to working

directly with teachers and the amount of preparation received for their job supporting teachers (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010; Bambrick, 2019).

A study conducted by Scott, Cortina, and Carlisle (2012) examined the implementation of coaching early on during Michigan's Reading First Program and concentrated on literacy coaching found that teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching varied based on the support provided. Scott, Cortina, and Carlisle (2012) found that teachers' view of coach-led meetings were positive. Teachers valued regular grade-level meetings that the coach often coordinated and directed if the meetings happened at least weekly (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012).

Additionally, the study revealed that teachers appreciated coach input on their literacy instruction, given the connection with satisfaction of coaching support (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012). Coaches who indicated that teachers regarded them as a guide for feedback and ideas on how to improve instruction in teaching literacy appeared to have teachers content with their performance and classroom conditions (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012). In the particular district studied, there was a heavy focus of the DIBELS assessments, and the use of the data DIBELS provides to assist in driving literacy instruction. Therefore, teachers were more inclined to be satisfied with coaching support in relation to DIBELS data when the coach highlighted this as a part of their job (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012.) Support was well received by teachers because it was relevant to their needs.

Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching

In their study, Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson (2008) sought to examine the perceptions of principals, teachers, and school-based literacy specialists on the effective use of literacy coaching and to contemplate the implications of these attitudes and beliefs in terms of the potential of coaching to lead to the development of successful literacy programs development and

implementation. Their interview results suggest that the position of the literacy coach is often left open to interpretation and largely ambiguous to the administrators, teachers, and coaches themselves (Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008). Participants continually expressed a need to develop and clearly articulate the schedule of activities of the literacy coach and to give coaches opportunities to implement and improve their specialized training (Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008). They suggest the following implications for improvement in practice:

- "**Implication 1**: The role of the literacy coach is currently open to much interpretation on the part of principals, teachers, and the coaches themselves. A consistent and clear job description for the role of the coach is desirable.

- **Implication 2:** Once a clear job description has been established, the role of coach and a schedule of activities in which the coach engages should be clearly communicated to those with whom the coach works.

- **Implication 3**: Given the recommendation of professional organizations that literacy coaches possess specialized training in reading, coaches need consistent opportunities to apply and enhance that training."

(Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008)

A study conducted by Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) sought to better understand the effect literacy coaches had on teachers. Specifically, to (a) find out what coaches did that teachers found beneficial, and (b) determine ways in which teachers' beliefs and practices altered because of their coach's influence (Vanderburg and Stephens, 2010). The researchers analyzed interviews with 35 teacher participants in a statewide professional development program, the South Carolina Reading Initiative. They found that teachers valued the collaborative space created by coaches, their continuous support, and modeling of research-based instructional

practices. Additionally, teachers gave credit to their coach for helping them explore new teaching strategies, introducing more authentic assessments, grounding their decisions in relevant literature, and developing a more student-centered curriculum (Vanderburg and Stephens, 2010).

Through a qualitative research design, a study conducted by Ferguson (2014) explored how literacy coaching participants (teachers, literacy coaches, and principals) view the effectiveness of their literacy coaching programs. Four common criteria have been identified as successful: increase in student achievement, better teaching, enhanced professional interaction in a safe environment, and dedication to literacy coaching (Ferguson, 2014). According to Ferguson (2014), their research implies that it is difficult to identify the effectiveness of literacy coaching and advises measuring literacy coaching programs using a range of indicators. Ferguson (2014) concluded that in order to expand our knowledge of effective literacy coaching, further studies are needed in different contexts.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning relates to a compilation of theories and methods for outlining the terms under which the processes of learning are maximized (Merriam, 2001; Trotter, 2006; Yang, 2003; Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette, 2009). Knowles (1984) used the term andragogy to describe the assumptions of adult learning: readiness-to-learn, self-directedness, active learner participation, and solution-centered (Dunst, Hamby, O'Herin, & Trivette, 2009). In the early 60s, in response to a need for alternate directions for the practice of adult learning, the term andragogy, a new theoretical model, was developed by European adult educators (Cyr, 1999). In 1968, Malcolm Knowles presented the concept of andragogy into American adult education literature (Cyr, 1999). Knowles defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Cyr, 1999).

Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy is a constructivist approach to learning that involves facilitating adults to draw on their experience and so create new learning based on previous understandings (Cox, 2015). Knowles argues that readiness to learn is linked to the relevance of the learning to adults' lives and that they bring an expanding pool of experience that can be used as a resource for that learning (Cox, 2015). Knowles linked andragogy with pedagogy (defined as the art and science of teaching children). Pedagogy was the customary instructional method for all learners, regardless of age, prior experience, or developmental level (Cyr, 1999).

Knowles supposed that if the opportunity arises, adults tend to be active participants in all phases of the learning process and that self-directed practice provides this opportunity, enabling adults to become proactive, life-long learners (Cyr, 1999).

Knowles believed that the process of applying andragogical concepts, philosophy, and principles in all programs and individual learning experiences included the following steps:

- the establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning;

- the creation of an organizational structure for participative planning;

- the diagnosis of needs for learning;

- the formulation of directions of learning (objectives);

- the development of a design of activities;

- the operation of the activities;

- the re-diagnosis of needs for learning (evaluation)

  (Cyr, 1999)

Knowles later amended his belief that andragogy was restricted to adult learning, claiming that the andragogical assumptions were relevant to all learners and could apply to both

models (Cyr, 1999). He supported that the situation determined which model was suitable, not whether the learner is a child or adult (Cyr, 1999).

Resistance. The majority of learners are not ready for coaching until the easiness and familiarity of their everyday life is interrupted in some way; they are generally not open to being coached prior to this because their accustomed or habitual approach to events does not require significant thought or explanation (Cox, 2015). It is not until there is a disjunction between expectation and actuality and some form of disorienting dilemma occurs that the learner becomes 'coachable,' and the potential for some change or transformation becomes apparent (Cox, 2015).

It is no wonder that teachers often face criticism for 'resisting change' (Knight, 2007). Educational leaders increasingly voice their dissatisfaction with teachers who resist change, and teachers who experience an inadequately developed program after program "adopt apathy as a cultural norm" (Knight, 2007). Research shows that when teachers are provided with an adequate amount of support for professional learning, more than 90% of them embrace and apply practices that improve students' experiences in the classroom. Knight (2017) asserts that the task for educational leaders is to create and deliver professional development opportunities that promote the execution of change initiatives by educators (Knight, 2007).

Self-determination Theory

According to Niemiec & Ryan (2009), self-determination theory suggests that the tendency to be curious about one's world and to learn and develop one's knowledge is inherent in human nature. They suggested that people have three innate human needs — competence, autonomy, and relatedness — that will boost motivation when achieved and lower motivation if not achieved (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Knight (2019) stated in similar terms that "people will feel motivated when they (a) are competent at what they do, (b) have a large measure of control

over their lives, and (c) are engaged in positive relationships." The converse is true: once people are controlled and mandates placed upon them, they are no longer in circumstances that allow for them to improve their skills and have positive relationships, their morale will diminish, and they will be 'crushed' (Knight, 2019, p.16, 68). This dynamic directly applies to instructional coaching and coaches' approach to coaching teachers. Knight (2019) contends that coaches have to work to shift this dynamic. If we want active and empowered students, we must make sure they have meaningful choices about what they are doing, including the right to say no to specific proposals (Knight, 2019).

"People can be motivated because they value an activity or because there is strong external coercion" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Niemiec & Ryan (2009) posit that educators frequently implement outside constraints into learning environments that can disrupt the sense of connection between teachers and students and inhibit the normal, voluntary processes involved in high-quality learning. The theory of self-determination is a macro theory of human motivation, emotion, and development which focuses on variables that either support or prevent permeable and growth-oriented processes in people (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, p.134). Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that when comparing externally driven individuals with those whose motivation is intrinsic (literally, self-authored, or endorsed), intrinsically motivated individuals tend to display more curiosity, enthusiasm, and confidence, which in turn results in improved performance, determination, and innovation.

Gap in Literature

There is little empirical evidence, given the demand for instructional coaches, which proves that coaching improves teacher practice. However, more qualitative work is required to firmly identify coaching as a valuable educator professional development tool (Desimone & Pak,

2016). In fact, there are still many concerns about the significance of coaching as a professional development practice, given the prevalence of coaching throughout educational systems (Schachter, Weber-Mayrer, Piasta, & O'Connell, 2018).

Although instructional coaching holds promise as a method to improve teacher practice, conversely, there is little research, given these optimistic beliefs and promising research findings (Reid, 2019), which examines the tasks that instructional coaches engage in and how instructional coaches are empowered to carry out their daily work. Existing research suggests that the roles of instructional coaches are rarely defined and vary widely (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017; Woulfin, 2018; Reid, 2019).

Further studies are needed to better understand the most efficacious coaching practices. Galey (2016) asserts that the various parameters of instructional coaching and part of its impact on teacher practice are generally recognized. However, there is sparse systematic analysis of what types of coaching are most effective, in which contexts, and the wider institutional factors that form coaching policies and practices (Galey, 2016). Furthermore, despite the proliferation of coaching throughout education systems, there are still many questions about the value of coaching as a professional development tool (Schachter et al., 2018). In order to expand our knowledge of effective literacy coaching, further studies are needed in different contexts (Ferguson, 2014).

Summary

The research findings on high-quality professional development and effective instructional coaching are straightforward. However, the uncertainty lies in executing the most effective ways for coaches to put the research into practice. Studies have indicated that successful instructional coaching will not only require a committed, collaborative effort between

educators, coaches, principals, and leadership teams, it may also need a significant shift in school culture (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). Much of the literature reviewed emphasized the importance of the teacher-coach relationship as vital to the success of coaching. Instructional coaching is a partnership between teachers, coaches, and administrators. To be effective and function at its fullest potential, the instructional coaching model must be fully understood and embraced by all stakeholders.

The ultimate goal of high-quality professional development and instructional coaching is to improve teacher practice. Based on the literature, this undertaking is a highly collaborative process. By implementing coaching as a practice for job-embedded, ongoing professional learning, schools and districts can take action to ensure high-quality support for both educators and students (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016).

The literature reviewed highlighting defining the coaches' role underscores the importance of identifying the roles and responsibilities of coaches clearly, and how these differ from those of reading specialists, consultants, mentors, and lead teachers. In order to implement a successful coaching program and create a valuable professional development experience for teachers, the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the coaching process (teacher, coach, administrator) must be clarified before the enactment of a coaching program.

Research supports the idea that the most efficacious coaching programs have embraced a coaching model. The effectiveness of a specific coaching model utilized by instructional coaches in a district should be understood. Different coaching models may yield different results.

Chapter III

Research Design & Methodology

Through a qualitative research design, the study utilized narrative research methods to investigate a social phenomenon. The use of a narrative study gives the ability to investigate the lived experiences of practicing teachers and instructional coaches to identify significant patterns and universal themes. Clandinin (2013) describes narrative inquiry as a method of studying human interactions, conceptualized as a means to honor lived experiences as a source of valuable knowledge and understanding. The researcher utilized grounded theory as a specific research method of data collection and analysis, taking an inductive stance to derive meaning from the data and identifying emerging theories grounded in the data (Merriam, 2009, p. 29). Qualitative research is an inductive process, and in that, researchers collect data to develop concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). For this study, pieces of information gathered from interviews were merged into broader themes as the researcher moved from the specific to the general (Merriam, 2009 p. 15-16).

For this study, a narrative approach was appropriate in investigating the lived experiences of practicing teachers and instructional coaches in New Jersey. This approach intended to illustrate the participants' perceptions of specific strategies for successfully utilizing instructional coaching support as part of professional development practice, and as derived from their personal experiences, helped determine which factors they attributed to developing the successful implementation of an instructional coaching program.

This study explored the perceptions of practicing teachers and instructional coaches through open-ended personal interviews. Interviews were conducted with nine teachers and seven instructional coaches from a New Jersey public school district during the 2019-2020

school year. This study investigated the personal perceptions of the efficacy of instructional

coaching as a professional development practice through the personal experiences of teachers

and coaches in the context of a school district setting. The rationale for selecting nine practicing

teachers and seven instructional coaches was to examine the experiences of teachers and coaches

in a district that has implemented an instructional coaching program for more than five years to

evaluate the program's effectiveness. A combination of inexperienced and experienced teachers

across different year levels was selected to establish a population of teachers who received

coaching support and could demonstrate learned professional development strategies. Teacher

perspectives were explored based on in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interview questions

provided a means to explore and uncover the answer to the basic research question: What are

teacher perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development

practice? The study examined teachers' perceptions of their professional development

experiences and the impact of instructional coaching on professional development practice.

Sampling Plan

This study explored the perceptions of practicing teachers and instructional coaches

through open-ended personal interviews. Interviews were conducted with nine teachers of

Grades 1-4 and seven instructional coaches from a New Jersey public school district during the

2019-2020 school year. The rationale for selecting nine practicing teachers and seven

instructional coaches was based on research by Boyd (2001) considering that two to ten

participants or research subjects are adequate to meet saturation and Creswell (1998, pp. 65 &

113) suggests that a phenomenological study should include "long interviews with up to ten

people" (Groenewald, 2004).

The overall criteria for sample consideration included (a) teachers and literacy coaches who indicated a willingness to participate in the study; (b) available teachers and literacy coaches within the selected New Jersey public school district; and (c) teachers who had at least one year experience working with an instructional coach to be able to examine situational effects on their perceptions. The teachers considered for the study represented diverse profiles and level of experience in the district.

Participants

This study was an investigation of the personal perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice through a teacher's own experiences in the context of a school district setting. The teachers who participated in the study were recruited upon Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this study. Additionally, approval was given by the district's superintendent and board of education members. The teachers and coaches considered for this study were part of a Title I school district located in northern New Jersey. More than 60% of the student population within this school district met the criteria of low socioeconomic status.

Teachers involved in the study met the following criteria: 1) elementary school English Language Arts teacher of Grades 1-4 and 2) worked with a literacy coach for at least one full school year. Literacy coaches participating in the study met the following criteria: 1) Served as a literacy coach working with Grades 1-4 for at least one full school year.

The purposive sampling of participants provided an analysis of perceived challenges and successful strategies from the perspective of teachers of the primary grades with varied experience levels. Merriam (2009) suggested that to initiate purposeful sampling, you must first decide which selection criteria are necessary for selecting the individuals to study. Therefore, a

combination of inexperienced and experienced English Language Arts teachers across different primary grade levels were selected to establish a population of teachers who received coaching support and could demonstrate learned professional development strategies. Additionally, literacy coaches with varying levels of coaching experience were considered to provide insight into their perspectives on coaching. Teachers and coaches working with the primary grades in this particular district were heavily immersed in the literacy coaching program because of various literacy initiatives and implementation of new reading programs within these grade levels.

This population of teachers and literacy coaches was considered 'information-rich' (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), "information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry." Therefore, this population of teachers and coaches was best suited to answer the overarching research question: What are teacher perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice?

The rationale for selecting nine practicing teachers and seven instructional coaches was to examine the experiences and insights of teachers and coaches in a district that has implemented an instructional coaching program for more than five years to evaluate the program's effectiveness on instructional practices.

The superintendent agreed to notify teachers and coaches meeting the criteria, as outlined above, of the researcher's intent to conduct this study within the school district as well as ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all participants are protected. Upon completion of the recruitment of teachers and coaches, informed consent was distributed to all parties willing to participate in the research study.

Interviews

One-to-one interviews were conducted with teachers and coaches at their buildings. Whenever possible, interviews should be conducted one-to-one. In a group setting, people are more inclined to comment in ways that are consistent with the cultural norms of their organization (Schein, 1992); (Knight, 2007). Teacher and coach participants were privately interviewed in a quiet setting such as a private office or an empty classroom on their school site at a time most convenient for them that did not interfere with instruction. The interview process lasted no longer than one hour and took place during the winter and spring semesters of the school year. Results from the interviews remain confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms were used to conceal the identities of the participants and the school district. No costs were incurred by the school district or the individual participants. With participant permission, interviews were audio-recorded.

Teacher perspectives were explored based on in-depth interviews. Bold (2011) explained that the semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility to stray from the proposed 'course of action' and follow a 'line of interest' while simultaneously maintaining the research's original focus and purpose; thus, permitting additional insights to emerge. Semi-structured interview questions provided a means to explore and uncover the answer to the basic research question: What are teacher perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice? The study examined teachers' perceptions of their professional development experiences and the impact of instructional coaching as a professional development practice. One-to-one interviews assisted in further understanding the perspectives of each participant, their feelings on professional development, as well as their specific perceptions of whether instructional coaching is an effective professional development practice.

Semi-structured interviews typically include a series of questions to steer the interview instead of dictating its direction (Bold, 2011). Central questions allow the interviewer to remain focused while permitting the adaptability to pose additional clarifying points the interviewee may raise (Bold, 2011). To best understand teacher and coach perspectives, some sample questions included in the interview protocol are, "What types of professional development opportunities do teachers believe impact teacher practice?" and "How can an instructional coach best assist with helping you reach your professional goals?" (see Appendix A).

Preliminary questions:

Can you give a brief description of your career background in education?

- Grade levels taught?

- Years in the field of education?

Table 1

Research questions and corresponding interview questions

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question (Teacher)
RQ(1): What are *teachers'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?	• What were your initial perceptions of working with a literacy coach? Has that perception changed? If so, what has caused the change? • What was your teaching experience like prior to working with an instructional coach? After? • In your opinion, what makes a good teacher-coach relationship? • What makes an effective literacy coach? • What aspects of working with a literacy coach do you value *most*? Value least? • What do you define as a high-quality professional development experience? • What types of professional development *opportunities* do you believe impact teacher practice? • In what ways, if any, has a specific professional development experience improved the effectiveness of your classroom instruction or teacher performance?

	• What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of professional development practices?
RQ(2): How do *teachers* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?	• How do you perceive the implementation of literacy coaching model?
RQ(3): What are specific strategies *teachers* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?	• How can an instructional coach best assist with helping you reach your professional goals? • What factors increase the success of a literacy coaching program? • Can you describe a successful teacher-coach experience? Unsuccessful teacher-coach experience? What made it so? • What *specific strategies* do you perceive as effective in a professional development experience? • What kind of professional development is *most* effective for you? *Least* effective? • How can literacy coaching be improved to meet your instructional needs?

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question (Coaches)
RQ(1): What are *coaches'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?	• In your opinion, what is the role of a literacy coach? • What were your initial perceptions of the role of a literacy coach? Has that perception changed? • What characteristics make a good teacher-coach relationship? • What are the characteristics of an effective literacy coach? • What aspects of literacy coaching do you value *most*? Value *least*? • What do you define as a high-quality professional development experience? • What types of professional development opportunities do you believe impact teacher practice? Coaching practice? • In what ways, if any, has a specific professional development experience improved the quality of your coaching?
RQ(2): How do *coaches* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?	• How do you perceive the implementation of literacy coaching model?

RQ(3): What are specific strategies *coaches* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?	• How can you best assist in helping teachers reach their professional goals? • What factors increase the success of a coaching program? • Describe a successful teacher-coach experience. • Describe an unsuccessful teacher-coach experience. • What specific strategies do you perceive as effective in a professional development experience? • As a literacy coach, what do you need to ensure you are meeting the instructional needs of the teachers you serve?

Field Notes

The researcher took field notes to record a description of people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations observed by the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Since the human mind often quickly forgets, the researcher's field notes are essential to retaining data collected in qualitative research (Lofland & Lofland, 1999; Groenewald, 2004). The researcher also documented thoughts while collecting and reflecting on the process. Groenewald (2004) emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, feelings. In addition to the interviews conducted in this study, field notes were gathered, recorded, and compiled to provide a record of the researcher's understandings of the lives, people, and events that are the focus of the research, allowing the researcher to develop a narrative (Gay et al., 2012). The researcher's field notes are a recording of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the process of collecting and reflecting on the interviews (Groenewald, 2004).

Limitations

Certain limitations of the study have been identified. This study collected data from personal interviews; thus, the results relied entirely on the self-reports of the respondents. Like any self-reporting tool, responses were influenced by honesty, integrity, willingness to answer,

and interpretation of the questions. Since the study involved personal interviews, ambiguity may have impacted participant responses as to what defines the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice.

Gathering evidence from initial educators' perceptions was a limitation based on their preconceived beliefs about whether instructional coaching as a professional development practice, in general, is worthwhile. Also, those in the study were professional educators who volunteered to partake in this study and may have held bias as a result of personal experience. Their perceptions may not be generalized to all educators working with an instructional coach.

The results of this study might not be generalizable to states other than New Jersey. Researcher bias was also a limitation given that the researcher is an instructional coach in a New Jersey public school district, and therefore, her perceptions and experiences might have reflected those of the participants.

Additionally, given that the researcher is an instructional coach, the researcher believes coaching is an effective and valuable practice. However, Merriam (2009) suggested that before beginning interviews, those with direct experience with the phenomenon should examine their own experiences to become mindful of personal prejudices, perspectives, and assumptions, in other words, refrain from judgment (p.25). Furthermore, Bogdan and Biklen (2016) stressed that while "it is fine to shape your study," it is important to "remain open to being shaped by the research experience and to having your thinking be informed by the data." To ensure validity member checks were conducted to reduce any possibility of misinterpretation of the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) further suggested that member checking is an important way of recognizing your own potential biases and avoid misunderstanding information (Maxwell, 2005, p.11).

Delimitations

Because of geographic constraints, this study focuses solely on practicing teachers and instructional coaches in New Jersey. This study is restricted to practicing teachers and instructional coaches working in a public school district that has implemented an instructional coaching model for more than five years. The qualitative nature of this study allows participants to respond to open-ended questions and may cause this study to lack specificity.

Reliability and Validity

The interview protocol included semi-structured, open-ended questions. The initial interview protocol was first shared in its entirety with two teachers and two math coaches to obtain feedback on the general format as well as to test the items for clarity. Additionally, in preparation for the study, an interview pilot was conducted with two teachers and two coaches. A pilot interview is encouraged as it is a fundamental aspect and useful in the process of performing qualitative research as it emphasizes the improvisation of the major study (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim, & Yusof, 2017). The researcher asked the teachers and coaches for recommendations to ensure content validity. To ensure validity, the researcher reviewed the questions and gathered data to determine themes and patterns. The interview questions were constructed based on the information discovered in the literature review, as well as on the research questions. Multiple questions, leading questions, and yes-no questions were eliminated to avoid confusion and unclear responses. Upon the conclusion of the analysis and coding of the interviews, member checking was conducted for clarification. The researcher contacted the participants to verify whether the researcher had accurately depicted their perspectives.

Data Analysis Plan

 With the permission of the interviewees, audio recordings of the interviews will be stored. The practice of audio recording guarantees that what is said is "preserved for analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 109). Audio recordings were collected via a digital audio recorder and transcribed through the transcription service application, Rev. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants involved in the study. Participants were reassured that their identity and interview locations would remain confidential. Each interview was assigned a code; for example, 'Ms. Michaels, September 25, 2019.' Each interview was recorded in a separate folder. Each folder was labeled with the assigned pseudonym. Upon the conclusion of the interview, the researcher reviewed the recordings and made notes. Keywords, phrases, and statements were transcribed to allow the voices of research participants to speak (Groenewald, 2004).

 According to Lichtman (2012), "The goal of qualitative analysis is to take a large amount of data that may be cumbersome and without any clear meaning and interact with it in such a manner that you can make sense of what you gathered" (p. 250). Utilizing Lichtman's (2012) six-step process as shown in Figure 3, "Three Cs of Data Analysis" coding process, the raw data was moved into meaningful concepts.
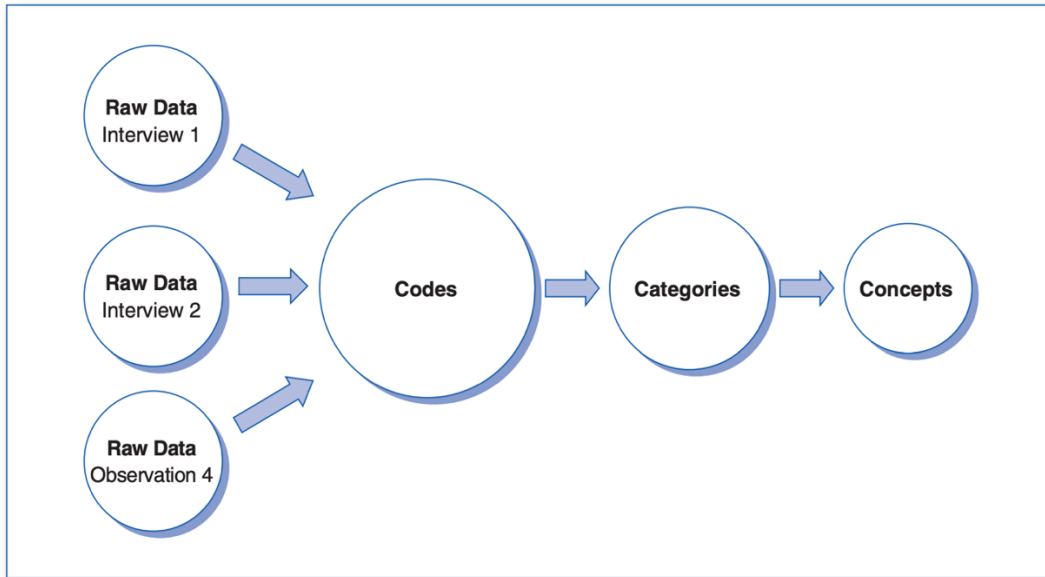
Figure 3. Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts (Lichtman, M. 2012)

Lichtman (2012) outlines the six-step process as follows:

Step 1. Initial coding, going from responses to summary ideas of the responses

Step 2. Revisiting initial coding

Step 3. Developing an initial list of categories

Step 4. Modifying initial list based on additional rereading

Step 5. Revisiting categories and subcategories

Step 6. Moving from categories to concepts

Summary

Interviews with nine teachers and seven instructional coaches in New Jersey provided data for a qualitative analysis of how teachers perceive the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice. This data will inform the development or current practices of instructional coaching programs in public education. Specifically, the research design and purposive sampling of participants provided an analysis of perceived obstacles and successful strategies from the perspective of teachers of the primary grades with varied experience levels.

Finally, this study investigated how these teachers and coaches interpret their own experiences and examine how data can be utilized to improve future instructional coaching professional development practices.

Chapter IV

Results and Findings

This chapter presents the results and findings from the study. Drawing on their stories, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a valuable professional development practice. The study was designed to reveal each participant's reality as perceived by the individual and as it relates to the efficacy and value of literacy coaching.

The research questions included: a) What are *teachers' and coaches'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice? b) How do *teachers and coaches* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model? c) What are specific strategies *teachers and coaches* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program? The semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted during the months of February, March, and April of 2020. The overarching themes that emerged from these interviews are discussed in detail below.

The study consisted of a total of sixteen interviews that were conducted in five different public schools. Participants in the interviews are teachers and literacy coaches from public schools in an urban area in New Jersey. Each teacher and coach was asked the same questions, and their responses were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Following the interviews, each recording was downloaded and transcribed by Rev.com, an external transcription service. Once the coding was completed, common codes were merged into themes. The themes, which emerged from the experiences of teachers, developed from the text of the sixteen participants in the research study. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the schools were coded: A, B, C, D, and E, and each respondent was assigned a pseudonym.

The findings in this chapter represent the overarching themes that emerged from the interviews. The narrative of the participants' personal experiences with literacy coaching depicts their perceptions of what makes coaching an effective and valuable professional development practice.

Profile of Participants

Table 2

Profile of Teacher Participants (School, Years of Experience)

Teacher Participants	School	Years of Experience
Ms. Dean	School E	20
Mr. Lopez	School E	8
Mr. Maloof	School C	12
Ms. Monaco	School B	20
Ms. Nassar	School D	9
Ms. Simmons	School E	18
Ms. Vargas	School B	13
Ms. Valdez	School A	14
Ms. Williams	School C	7
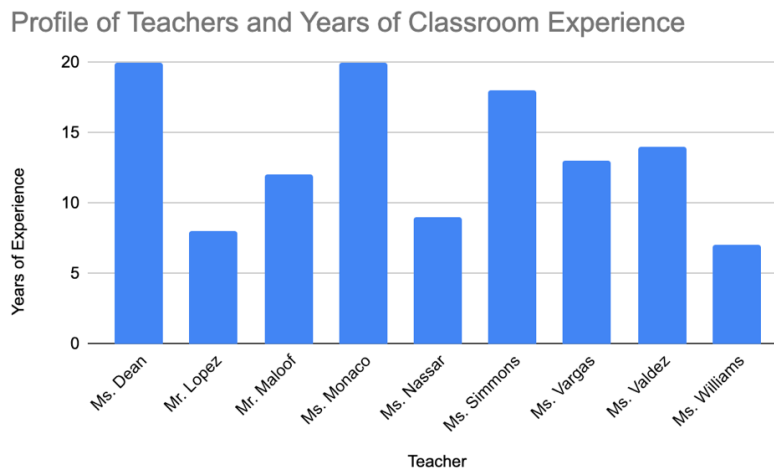
Figure 4. Profile of Teachers and Years of Experience

Profiles of Teachers

Ms. Dean (School E)

Ms. Dean has a total of 20 years of experience in education. She received a master's degree in early childhood education. She has experience teaching pre-K, kindergarten, and Grades 2 and 3. She has been a second-grade teacher for the last three years.

Mr. Lopez (School E)

Mr. Lopez has been a teacher for eight years. He began his teaching career as a second-grade teacher before transitioning to Grade 4 and later Grade 5. He is currently teaching Grade 4, all subjects.

Mr. Maloof (School C)

Mr. Maloof has been a teacher for 12 years. His primary experience is in supplemental instruction working with Grades 3, 4, 6, and 7. This is his first year working with Grade 2.

Ms. Monaco (School B)

Ms. Monaco has over 20 years of experience in education. Upon receiving a master's degree in education she entered the teaching workforce. Ms. Monaco has experience teaching Grades 2 and 4. Additionally, she serves as an adjunct professor at a university in New Jersey. She explains her current area of interest is STEM education.

Ms. Nassar (School D)

Ms. Nassar has been teaching for a total of nine years teaching Grade 4. Prior to teaching Grade 4, she was a replacement teacher in a reading specialist position.

Ms. Simmons (School E)

Ms. Simmons has been a teacher for 18 years. She began as a second-grade teacher for nine years. She later taught kindergarten and Grade 1. Currently, she is a third-grade teacher.

Ms. Vargas (School B)

Ms. Vargas has a total of 13 years of experience in education. The first six years of her career were spent as a supplemental teacher in an inclusion classroom. Currently, she is a second-grade classroom teacher in an inclusion setting and has been so for the last seven years.

Ms. Valdez (School A)

Ms. Valdez has a total of 14 years of experience in education. She has been a fourth-grade teacher in an inclusion setting for the last 12 years. Prior to that, she was a basic skills teacher servicing Grade 6 students.

Ms. Williams (School C)

Ms. Williams, a teacher in School C, has been a teacher for seven years. Her experience includes working with Grade 2 for two years and teaching Grade 4 for the last five years.

Table 3

Profile of Literacy Coaches (School, Years of Experience)

Coach Participants	School	Years of Experience
Ms. Jackson	School A	17
Ms. Kim	School B	14
Ms. Scott	School E	13
Ms. Thomas	School A	20
Ms. Valente	School D	20
Ms. Walker	School B	20
Ms. Wang	School C	20

Profile of Coaches' Years of Experience
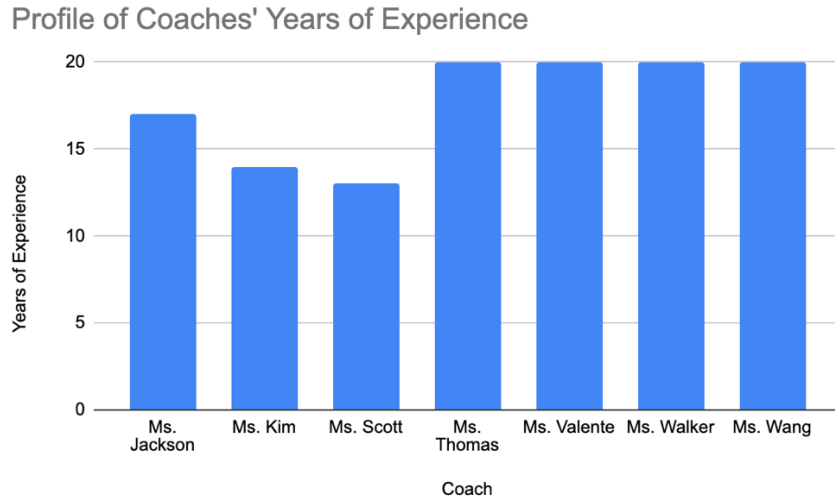
Figure 5. Profile of Coaches' Years of Experience

Profiles of Literacy Coaches

Ms. Jackson (School A)

Ms. Jackson has 17 years of experience in education. She served as a second-grade teacher for 13 years. For the last four years, Ms. Jackson has served as a literacy coach.

Ms. Kim (School B)

Ms. Kim has worked in education for 14 years. She started as a fourth-grade teacher before transitioning to a literacy coach. Ms. Kim has eight years of experience and a literacy coach. Additionally, Ms. Kim has two years of experience as a dyslexia therapist.

Ms. Scott (School E)

Ms. Scott has a total of 13 years in education. She has a master's degree in reading and educational leadership. She began as a first-grade teacher for five years, then transitioned to third grade for six years. Ms. Scott has two years of experience as a literacy coach.

Ms. Thomas (School A)

Ms. Thomas has over 20 years of experience in education. She began her career as a seventh-grade teacher for a total of 10 years. Ms. Thomas has eight years of experience as a

literacy coach in addition to two years as a structured literacy dyslexia specialist.

Ms. Valente (School D)

Ms. Valente has a total of 20 years of experience in education. She began her career as a Kindergarten teacher for fourteen years. She later transitioned to a Title 1 teacher position servicing kindergarten and Grade 3. She has two years of experience as a literacy coach.

Ms. Walker (School B)

Ms. Walker has 20 years of experience in education. She has taught Grades 3, 4, and 5 and has experience as a Title 1 teacher. She has been a literacy coach for two years.

Ms. Wang (School C)

Ms. Wang has been involved in education for 20 years. Her certifications include teacher of Grades K-8 and teacher of psychology. Additionally, she has a master's degree in reading. Her teaching experience includes teacher of Grades 7-8 science for one year, teacher of Grade 3 for three years, teacher of Grade 4 for six years, and literacy coach for 10 years.

Table 4

Profile of Participant Links

SCHOOL	COACH	TEACHER
School A	Ms. Jackson Ms. Kim	Ms. Valdez
School B	Ms. Thomas Ms. Walker	Ms. Monaco Ms. Vargas
School C	Ms. Wang	Mr. Maloof Ms. Williams
School D	Ms. Valente	Ms. Nassar
School E	Ms. Scott	Ms. Dean Mr. Lopez Ms. Simmons

Findings: Major Thematic Strands

This section identifies the major findings based on the coding process used in this study. The following themes were constructed from the interview transcriptions based on the research questions, a) What are *teachers' and coaches'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice? b) How do *teachers and coaches* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model? c) What are specific strategies *teachers and coaches* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program? The themes emerged from this study through inductive analysis.

Table 5

Summary of Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Guidance Valuable resource Support Improve Someone to rely on Open to change	Valuable aspects of the coaching role Willingness to change Self-determination	(1) The Value of Coaching "Get out of your comfort zone"
Communication Trust Personality Good rapport	The foundation of the teacher-coach relationship Open lines of communication Trust Respect Good rapport	(2) Key Components of the teacher-coach relationship 'The building blocks of relationships'
Knowledgeable Good communicator Passionate Trustworthy Responsive Present Diplomatic	Qualities of effective coaching	(3) Effective coaching looks like "Play the part"
Relevance Modeled practice Role-play Learn something new Takeaways Structure Peer collaboration	Knowledgeable facilitator On-going PD Relevant Modeled practice Interactive and hands-on Collaborative Takeaways	(4) Qualities of Effective Professional Development "Don't tell me, show me"

Preference Time Collaborative Modeling Buy-in	Modeling Feedback Strength of the model Planning Beneficial to new teachers Useful for new initiatives Time consuming Difficult to schedule Follow-up	(5) Strengths and Challenges of the Coaching Model Understanding the 'Why' of Coaching
Feel comfortable Reassurance Relationship	Comfortable Reassurance Support with new initiative or strategy	(6) The Best Strategy is Found in the Coaching Environment Created 'A Culture of Coaching'
Time spent Concentrated support Support with new initiative/strategy Make suggestions	Time spent on concentrated focus Collaborative Negative to positive	(7) Turn the Skeptic into Believers
Specific to needs Discussions Consistency	Coaching Small group Relevant and relatable Follow-up and check-in	(8) Factors that Increase Success
Admin support Admin involvement Admin accountability Buy-in	Administrator support, involvement, and accountability Perception of coaches Buy-in	(9) It Starts at the Top

Themes from Research Question #1

What are teachers' and coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?

Theme 1 – the Value of Coaching:

'Get out of your comfort zone'

Valuable aspects of the coaching role

The value of coaching was the first theme that emerged through the teachers' narratives. Evident in their responses were key concepts that they attributed as valuable or important in their

teacher-coach experiences. The respondents cited their initial perceptions of the role of the

literacy coach as someone to guide, support, help, improve their instruction, and rely on.

> It has been a positive influence, it's good to have someone that you can go to for help or
> resources. A resource, for certain skills or strategies, center ideas. Someone to go to for
> guidance, because we never had that prior. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal
> communication, February 27, 2020)

In order to feel that coaching is effective one must first find value in the position of the

coach. Most participants noted that they regarded literacy coaches as experts in their field and

felt reassured when seeking their support because of the knowledge they have in the content area

that their administrators may not.

> The aspect of working with a literacy coach that I value most is the ability to turn to
> someone other than my principal. Teachers might not want to go to their boss for advice
> on every little thing because it may seem like they don't know how to do their job. A
> literacy coach expects teachers to ask for advice. In addition, literacy coaches are experts
> in the field, whereas a principal may not be. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal
> communication, March 12, 2020)

To better understand the valuable aspects of the literacy coaching position, both teachers

and coaches were asked where they found the most value in coaching. Some coaches cited

supporting and advocating for teachers as valuable aspects of literacy coaching.

> I value literacy coaching in the relationships I have formed with my teachers. That they
> will text me even in nighttime hours knowing that we have that kind of relationship.
> There are very few teachers who I do not have this type of relationship with. (Ms. Wang,
> literacy coach, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Kim stressed the importance of advocating for teachers and being a support system

for them.

> I think supporting teachers. Teachers needs support. I think that they need someone to

talk to. They need someone to support them. They need an advocate. They need people who are going to be on their side. Teachers usually do not feel like anyone is on their side and they do feel that with administrators, it's an 'I gotcha,' especially with evaluations, unfortunately. (Ms. Kim, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Other coaches shared that improving student learning outcomes on a larger scale were most valuable.

I love being able to improve student learning in a broader sense. I love that it's school wide. I love that I don't see it as just a classroom. If I support one teacher and let's say fourth grade, it's not just fourth grade because fourth grade collaborates. It's like my efforts are going grade-wise. If fourth grade's improving, that's going to help fifth grade next year. I just feel like it's in a broader scope. My help, my support is helping the school wide. That's the best part of being a literacy coach. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Some coaches mentioned assisting teachers with data analysis to help drive their instruction was a valuable practice.

Diagnosing, assessing, and analyzing where the students were at and where the teachers were at and trying to find ways, strategies to help them improve. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Additionally, some coaches felt those heartwarming moments and fun educational events they lead are most valuable.

The things I value most are the events that we do, like the vocabulary parade, the spelling bee, all of the fun things that we're trying to do. I think all those fun things that bring fun to education are the most heartwarming, and the teachers appreciate it. I feel like they like all that stuff, and so do the kids. (Ms. Jackson, literacy coach, March 4, 2020)

When teachers were asked what they valued most about literacy coaching, many of the

responses included the aspect of having a support person to go to for guidance.

It's comforting knowing that we have someone to turn to for guidance, help us, and keep us on track, discuss data. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

I am grateful to have someone to go to when I have any questions, regardless of the type of question it is, she'll answer it. (Ms. Williams, teacher, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Having somebody on hand, another professional, someone who is really geared toward a certain subject matter that I could reach out to if I was having trouble teaching a skill or if I saw that my students really weren't understanding something, or if I was just looking for a better way to teach something. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, March 2, 2020)

Willingness to change

The stories of participants highlighted the value that the coaches provided to them professionally and personally. Coaches are often described as agents of change and their chief role is to assist teachers with the implementation of change. This process sometimes forces teachers out of their comfort zones.

I remember when I started teaching and it was very staged. Everything I did, I would practice at home. And it was very like, this is what we're going to do. I wasn't comfortable, like loose in my room. Having a coach allowed me to explore different parts of my teaching. With the coach, I learned to let go a little more. Having the coach there allowed me to explore those other horizons in terms of don't just be that statue up there, walk around like a performer. When you perform, you want to use the whole stage. That's exactly what it was like with the coach. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

As trends in education and curriculum continue to evolve from year to year, some teachers stressed the importance of the coach's role in helping them to move forward professionally.

I'm always open to change. Pedagogical trends come and go and things happen. So, I

said all right, let's see what this will be. I was open to having someone give me assistance or advice. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Mr. Maloof noted the importance of teachers evolving as educational practices evolve.

You can't say I know better when the curriculum is changing constantly. I mean you may want to be stuck in your ways, but you need to be willing to listen to the person who has the closest relationship to the top to help you to move forward. You've got to be progressive to move forward and you got to be willing and on board. (Mr. Maloof, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Self-determination

Self-determination was a common thread throughout many interviews. Several participants discussed how the intrinsic motivation to want to grow in their role was a factor in not only their willingness to change but in the effectiveness of literacy coaching.

I think it boils down to how coaches are perceived in our district. So I think that is what makes us [coaches] effective. I think if people are willing to grow and change in their classroom, they're receptive to us. If they're not, it's kind of like, yeah, thank you. And then moving on to the next time I see you again in the next meeting. (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

When asked the same question, Ms. Scott, a literacy coach, echoed a similar sentiment.

I guess, a willingness to change or a willingness to try something new, so you have to be open minded. It has to be a little inspiration in there and there has to be positivity from both sides in hopes that things going to work. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Theme 2 – Key Components of the Teacher-Coach Relationship:

'The Building Blocks of Relationships'

The foundation of the teacher-coach relationship

In order to understand the efficacy of literacy coaching as a valuable professional

development practice, the teacher-coach relationship must first be understood because the quality and depth of that relationship contributory to the efficacy of coaching. The success of coaching depends primarily on the relationships that coaches have formed with the teachers they support (Toll, 2017, p.14). Coaches must have a personal connection with their teacher colleagues so that coaching can take a positive step forward (Toll, 2017, p.14).

Participants were asked, *What makes a good teacher-coach relationship?* Common responses included open lines of communication, trust, mutual respect, and a good rapport. These commonalities define the building blocks of the teacher-coach relationship.

Open lines of communication

Ms. Nassar highlighted open communication as an important piece in the teacher-coaching relationship. She also mentioned embracing constructive criticism on both ends as teacher and coach.

> Definitely communication. Absolutely communication is up there. I think that both teacher and coach should be willing to accept constructive criticism. I always want to know if I can do something better. I do think a coach, if we have suggestion for the coach, they should take those on. I'm not saying they have to, but we should always have an open mind, especially in this field. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Ms. Dean discussed the value of having that person to talk to without intimidation.

> Somebody that you can talk to. Somebody who's not going to make you feel intimidated or like, "I told you this," you know? "No matter how many times if you don't understand this one concept, they have no problem going over and over and over and over with it. I think that makes somebody a good coach." (Ms. Dean, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Valdez expressed the role of staying in constant communication with her coach. She

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further shared that the teacher-relationship formed has allowed her to feel comfortable voicing expressions.

My experiences to date have been positive with both coaches I've worked with. We are in constant communication. We continue to have a good relationship. I feel comfortable I see her as a friend; I am not hesitant to voice opinions or make comments. Anything I need she has been very helpful. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Trust

The majority of respondents cited trust as an important element of the teacher-coach relationship.

Building a good working relationship with the teacher, if that doesn't exist then there is no trust and the teacher will not be comfortable asking those hard questions. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Ms. Williams voiced a similar sentiment sharing that knowing that she has the trust of her coach has positively impacted her participation in the coaching process.

If you feel like your literacy coach is just there to catch you on something you aren't doing exactly the right way, then you lost any chance of actually forming a relationship. Relationships are what makes literacy coaching successful. If I felt that I could not trust and talk to my lit coach, then they would get nothing from me. I would just be another body at a meeting. (Ms. Williams, teacher, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Monaco compared the characteristics of the effective teacher-coach relationship to those necessary in any relationship.

Well, I think in any relationship, communication and trust is the key, right? So, if you feel your coach is not valuable or the position is invaluable, there's not going to be a relationship no matter what. I think there has to be a level of personalities they have to mesh. I mean, it's unfortunate, but we just don't work well with people that we just don't get along with. So, I think it's important the selection of coaches is also important. It's

important to be personable. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Ms. Wang shared the value of the element of trust in teacher-coach relationship and the build block of that relationship.

Trust is the number one thing that makes coaching work. When you have trust, you can build relationships. (Ms. Wang, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Respect

Participants expressed the value of respect in teacher-coach relationships. Teachers voiced the need to feel treated like an equal.

I love my coach because she has a lot of respect for me. And I like that she talks to me like I'm her equal. Whereas, I've heard in the past from other people, they [coaches] kind of talk down to them, or 'This is not the way you do it.' She treats me like an equal and speaks to me with respect. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Valente added that respect for each other's time plays a vital role in the relationship. She mentioned the importance of staying true to your word as a form of respect.

I think respect for one another. I think respect for each other's time. If you say that you're going to meet with someone, meet with them, don't just blow them off or come up with an excuse at the very last minute. I think it also has to be a friendly relationship. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Good rapport

A good rapport was a common element discussed in terms of what makes a good teacher-coach relationship.

Good rapport just in general. Because that goes a long way when ... It's like parents, you have a good rapport with them and you do what you need to do for their students, you're going to go a long way with that student. Same with teachers and coaches. You're going

to go a long way in your classroom and with your instruction when you have that rapport with a coach. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Ms. Walker explained that creating a good rapport is essential in developing a relationship.

It's like a confidence talking with somebody and you keep what they're sharing with you, just between you, and you don't share it with others. The rapport is really important. Developing the relationship, I think is key. (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Valdez echoed a similar sentiment, including a solid rapport as important in the teacher-coach relationship.

Solid rapport, feeling comfortable, can't be intimidated, no hesitation to ask questions, having a positive relationship. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Speaking from a literacy coach's point of view, Ms. Valente believes a good rapport is necessary in getting teachers to welcome coaches into their classrooms.

I think I have a good rapport with almost all the teachers here so I'm welcomed in their rooms. I know that. I know that if I go to someone's room and say, hey, can I pop in? I've yet to have someone say, I'd rather you didn't. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Theme 3 – Effective Coaching Looks Like:

'Play the Part'

When respondents were asked to define the characteristics of an effective coach it was evident that participants believed that an effective coach should be knowledgeable in her field, trustworthy, and a good communicator. Additional attributes mentioned were personality, responsiveness, and passionate.

I think they [literacy coaches] have to be knowledgeable in their subject matter first and foremost, of course. And then there are those other personality traits that are kind of, I think not in a position. If you're front and center at a restaurant, they want you to look a certain way, they want you to speak a certain way. I think it's the same thing with the literacy coach. They have to get along with everyone. They have to be the type of person that's going to be able to go into someone else's classroom. I think it's a very delicate area where your peer has to give you criticism. So, I think that the ability to communicate with the other teachers in a way that is non-confrontational and supportive is also an important quality. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Aside from knowledge, trust, and communication, Mr. Lopez believes the personality of the coach matters. He expressed the importance of having a coach who "brings out the best in you."

I realized that every literacy coach is not the same person and not every literacy coach is as easy to work with. It helps to have somebody with a certain personality or someone who you work well with to bring out the best in you as a coach would bring out from the teacher. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Ms. Vargas communicated that her coach's knowledge and ability to answer her questions in a prompt manner were qualities she perceived as effective in a coach.

My coach is very knowledgeable, so she knows her stuff. Anytime I have a question, she knows her information. And if she doesn't know, she always gets back to me within the next day. I'm not waiting a whole week. So, I would say, maybe knowing her stuff and being on time, she doesn't keep me waiting. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Dean revealed the importance of having a knowledgeable and passionate coach.

Somebody who understands what they're doing. Somebody who's not just winging it. Someone who actually understands why they're doing something. Somebody who's

passionate about what they're doing. (Ms. Dean, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Theme 4 – Qualities of Effective Professional Development:

'Don't Tell Me, Show Me'

To get an understanding of what participants define as effective professional development and as related to coaching practices, teachers and coaches were asked to define high-quality professional development experiences and share personal experiences where they believed a certain experience improved the effectiveness of their classroom instruction or coaching performance.

The responses revealed that participants seek professional development experiences that are facilitated by a knowledgeable presenter, on-going through coaching support, relevant to their circumstances and address their needs, offer modeled practiced and role-playing techniques, are interactive and hands-on, highly collaborative, and offer applicable takeaways. Many of the concepts shared through the participants' responses are in alignment with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler's (2017) Elements of Effective Professional Development.

Knowledgeable facilitator

Just as teachers felt an effective coach should be knowledgeable, they denoted that any person delivering professional development should be knowledgeable.

Knowing that the speaker is a credible source, experienced, and vested and is not spewing out the typical rhetoric that we hear time and time again. (Ms. Wang, literacy coach, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Valente indicated that not only do professional development facilitators need to be knowledgeable about the material they are presenting, but also knowledgeable of the district they are servicing.

You have to be knowledgeable about best practices in literacy and all the current trends in literacy. I think you have to be extremely knowledgeable about the programs that the district uses. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Ms. Valente further articulated that knowledge of the presenter is also contributory to the value of the professional development session.

I think that was very helpful because it's something we need to use. There was a lot of value in it and I got to ask as many questions as I wanted and he was just completely knowledgeable. As I said, technology is not my strong point so anyone who can teach me how to manipulate a website or especially one as difficult as that is to generate reports. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

On-going PD

Additionally, respondents asserted that on-going professional development was an effective practice.

Ongoing, concentrated, and I think that the teachers have to do it in order to really have the opportunity to understand it. So, we can give PD all day, but in two weeks they won't really have an understanding of what's going on. So, it has to be an ongoing model with feedback just like with our kids. (Ms. Kim, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Valente conveyed the value of a continuum of professional development versus one-day workshops. She shared that on-going PD given by the same person has been effective for her.

There was a continuum of the PD. That's why I like it better than a one-day workshop. Sometimes with a one-day workshop you're left wanting more or sometimes you have more questions than you began with. So, I think ongoing PD by the same person happens to be effective, at least for me. Especially when I want to try something and then I can come back to you and say this really didn't work, what am I doing wrong? Or I'm glad

that you showed me this. It worked well. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Ms. Monaco added that the on-going piece in terms of the message being delivered is effective. She indicated that the on-going piece is what makes the coaching cycle.

> So, the specific strategies that the presenters themselves had as far as the knowledge and maybe the lessons that would deliver to you were valuable and useful. And then that ongoing piece I guess, as far as them delivering the message to the coaches and then that makes a coaching cycle. They present to us, but they presented more one-on-one with the lit coaches and then the lit coaches came back and we've had PLCs with them over these same topics that were more in depth. It was a better scenario for it [information] to come from someone in our district that we knew, that we trusted, and that we cared about giving us this information. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Relevant

Consistent with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017), coaching support should incorporate the sharing of expertise of content area and practice concentrated specifically on the individual needs of the teacher.

> You want professional development where maybe the population of students that's being discussed is relative to your population. My students are very low in reading, and the Ready Gen [reading series] is not. So, when I'm reading, I'm reading and stopping, all the time, just to kind of reword things. I wish I knew maybe a better way how to go about that. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Monaco communicated that modifying practices to fit the needs of the district is an effective practice.

> Another factor is coaches being able to 'modify' practices to fit their district. In that way, teachers are gaining useable practices, because we all know 'one size does not fit all'! (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Mr. Lopez echoed a similar sentiment, adding that observing a strategy done with his own students was an effective practice.

Watching it [strategy] done directly in the classroom. We went into an actual classroom with kindergarten students and they work directly with the students. I feel that seeing something like that, you would always get the feeling that, "Oh, I can do this," because I'm watching this being done directly with students I would work with. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Modeled practice

Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) claim that the modeling aspect of instruction gives teachers clarity into what best practices look like. Such models help teachers' ability to 'see' what good practices look like as they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms.

Presenters/coaches not just explaining what is expected or what type of lessons they should be creating but showing us by modeling exactly what type of lesson they expect to be done. A lot of PD requires you to look at a lesson, answer questions, and then the expectation is to create your own, but the modeling piece is missing. Especially when bringing in a brand-new series, 'Don't tell me, SHOW me.' Same thing with our students. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Kim illustrated the value of the gradual release of responsibility model. She indicated that in the most effective PD sessions she attended there was always a model.

Never a lecture. It was always the gradual release of responsibility. So, we always had a model and it was professional development. She then had us do it ourselves. She watched us do it and then we did it ourselves and we were observed by her nonstop and given feedback. There was never a time where I felt that it was an 'I gotcha.' It was very much 'this is going to help you.' So, I think that just like our kids, the best professional development experience I had was that gradual release of responsibility because I felt

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comfortable doing it. I wasn't afraid to do it on my own because I had that cushion she provided for us. (Ms. Kim, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Vargas highlighted the value of modeling, conveying that she learns best by seeing it done.

I need to see it and do it. Modeling something, "This is how we do it." And then if she uses me or the other teachers as students, I learn better that way. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Nassar recounted a high-quality PD experience as one where the presenter also used the gradual release of responsibility technique. She indicated that after the presenter modeled, she as the teacher was then also given the opportunity to practice what the instructor had modeled.

There was one PD we had that was really good and I would consider this high quality. So, we went through a teacher edition. We actually were able to model something after the instructor modeled for us. So, we were able to see a full lesson in focus and see what was expected of us for the series. We went in on a question-and-answer session where we were attacking [in a good way] her with questions that were valuable. The PD instructor was very knowledgeable in the area and I feel like I took a lot away from it. So, a high quality PD in that sense is something we can work in together and get a lot of knowledge from it. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Interactive and hands-on

Active learning provides opportunities for teachers to receive hands-on experiences as they design and practice new teaching strategies. In PD models featuring active learning, role-playing is often a technique incorporated into the session. This allows teachers to take part in the same learning style they are creating for their students by using actual examples of curriculum, student work, and instruction (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

I think it should be something that is hands-on if it's high quality. I always get more out of things when I'm actively participating in them than just watching a video or reading some information. To me, that says high quality. When you get somebody who has a lot of enthusiasm for what he or she is doing and a lot of experience and usually at those workshops, there's so much knowledge that if you can come away with only three things, you're lucky. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 26, 2020)

Ms. Monaco added that interactive and hands-on PD is necessary to any type of learner. She believes everyone can be reached through hands-on and interactive PD.

It has to be interactive and hands-on because I think that whether you're a visual learner or a tactical learner, it doesn't matter. Everyone is reached in that manner when we do things. But again, the number one thing is that it has to be something new to the table that's implementable in our district. We don't have 10 kids in the class that sit like this. We have a lot of issues to our culture and to our socio-economical area and things like that. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Similarly, Ms. Scott communicated the importance of active learning in PD.

I think anytime I've gone to PD, that's been a strategy they've used. It's obviously anytime you're doing something hands-on when they're involved, I think that's important. You have to be able to be doing something. You can't just sit and listen to someone else. That's always been successful. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Collaborative

Teachers and coaches both noted that high-quality professional development experiences that offer the peer collaboration piece were perceived as effective. This concept is in alignment with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) elements of effective professional development. High-quality professional development fosters an environment of sharing and peer collaboration for teachers and is often facilitated through job-embedded contexts that relate new

instructional strategies to teachers' students and classrooms (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, &

Hyler, 2017).

"By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the

culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school, and/or district.

'Collaboration' can span a host of configurations — from one-on-one or small group

collaboration to schoolwide collaboration to collaboration with other professionals beyond the

school" (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

> I think professional development opportunities that are collaborative with teachers across
> the grade level and across the districts are effective so that everybody is kind of on the
> same page and sharing the same information. It's always good to come home with
> examples of what somebody is doing. If they give you handouts or links to supportive
> videos or websites, I find that very helpful and high quality. And coffee. (Ms. Thomas,
> literacy coach, personal communication, February 26, 2020)

Ms. Dean emphasized the value of learning from your peers in addition to the person

delivering PD.

> I think you gain a lot through your peers. Because maybe I know something that
> somebody else doesn't know, maybe somebody else knows something I don't know.
> Maybe my insight is more beneficial, or it can help somebody else out. (Ms. Dean,
> teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Walker shared a similar thought, mentioning the advantage of peer collaboration.

> I love communicating with other coaches to see what they're doing, and you learn from
> them as well. So, it gives you the idea of like, okay, that's something doable and it also
> gives me a chance to hear that some people struggle with the same things. And then they
> give you suggestions of what you could do to handle those situations. So, I really thought
> that was of worth. (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Scott pointed out the effectiveness in sharing of ideas through peer collaboration.

The opportunity to just talk with other coaches, we don't get that enough. For me, that's been huge. I've gotten a lot of great ideas on how to coach with my teachers, but also how to handle myself as a coach with parents like what I can do with that aspect. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Takeaways

Respondents indicated that receiving some type of takeaway from a professional development experience was effective.

I think the best ones I've been to is where we had something that we take away from it. For instance, the one that a coach did with us and we made the vision boards, or we've done where we make centers for the teachers, or we've done them where we conduct them and the teachers make centers, or where they're working with the database. Something that's hands-on I think is the best type of PD for us. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Thomas usefulness of takeaways from PD, whether it's reference or something that can be built upon.

I think we all kind of agreed as coaches that when we gave somebody takeaways it helped them more and then even to refer to those takeaways or bring it to the next meeting or take it out and look at it and build upon it that help the effectiveness. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 26, 2020)

Ms. Simmons believes without a takeaway PD is ineffective.

Something that I can take from it [PD]. Otherwise, it's an utter waste of my time. I'd rather be in the classroom. It's a waste. (Ms. Simmons, teacher, personal communication, February 28, 2020)

Ms. Dean expressed a similar point of view to the respondents.

I would say a high-quality professional development is where you leave with some type of new tool. Or that you walk away with some type of idea or new thought. (Ms. Dean, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Summary of Findings from Research Question #1

Most participants noted that they regarded literacy coaches as experts in their field and felt reassured when seeking their support because of the knowledge they have in the content area that their administrators may lack. When teachers were asked what they valued most about literacy coaching, many of the responses included the aspect of having a support person to go to for guidance. Evident in the participants' responses were key concepts that they attributed as valuable or important in their teacher-coach experiences. The respondents cited their perceptions of the role of the literacy coach as someone to guide, support, help, improve their instruction, and rely on.

The stories of participants highlighted the value that the coaches provided to them professionally and personally. Coaches are often described as agents of change and their chief role is to assist teachers with the implementation of change. This process sometimes forces teachers out of their comfort zones. A willingness to change and self-determination was a common thread throughout many interviews. Several participants discussed how the intrinsic motivation to want to grow in their role was a factor in not only their willingness to change but in the effectiveness of literacy coaching.

The responses revealed that participants seek professional development experiences that are facilitated by a knowledgeable presenter, on-going through coaching support, relevant to their circumstances and address their needs, offer modeled practiced and role-playing techniques, are interactive and hands-on, highly collaborative, and offer applicable takeaways. Teachers and coaches both noted that high-quality professional development experiences that offer a peer collaboration component were perceived as effective.

Themes from Research Question #2

 How do teachers and coaches perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

Theme 5 – Strengths and Challenges of the Coaching Model:

Understanding the 'Why' of the Coaching Model

Both teachers and coaches were asked to share how they perceive the specific literacy coaching model implemented by the literacy coaches in the district. While the overall perceptions were positive, teachers and coaches shared what they believe to be the strengths and challenges of the model. Teachers and coaches were aligned in terms of a shared understanding of the structure of the coaching model.

> Class visits, then pre-conference, pick a focus and plan together, then demo or co-teach/etc., and follow-up with a post conference. (Ms. Wang, literacy coach, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

The underlying theme of the responses was the importance of the 'Why' of the coaching model. Their perceptions and interpretations of the 'Why' of the coaching model were evident in their responses.

One of the most valuable aspects of the coaching model for teachers was the in-class support modeling component. "The opportunity to model instructional practices in teachers' classrooms is critical to effective coaching." (Matsumara et al., 2009)

Modeling

Mr. Maloof shared that modeling is helpful because it provides an alternative approach.

> I like the modeling because there's always an alternative way of doing something because as somebody in my position who works with differentiation, you have to do things as a different approach. So, you know, as long as you're showing different ways and giving me feedback; you need feedback because again, everything changes. (Mr. Maloof, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Simmons recalled an effective use of the modeling component of the coaching model.

> I liked that she [the literacy coach] would come in, model it [a lesson] for the kids, so I could see how to do it. I would try it, and then I liked that she came back and asked me about it, like, "Did you get it? How'd it go?" I'm like, "You need to come back and do it again. I didn't get it. It didn't work." And so she did. So, I liked that. "Did you get it?" or "Do you need it?" I'm like, "Yeah, I got it. It's good. We're good." (Ms. Simmons, teacher, personal communication, February 29, 2020)

Feedback

Additionally, the feedback component of the coaching model that takes place during the post-conference was perceived as effective. "Observing in classrooms is critical because it offers coaches the opportunity to understand teachers' instructional needs and to provide feedback to teachers that is tailored to the specifics of their instructional practice" (Matsumara et al., 2009).

> I actually think it [the coaching model] is pretty effective because it gives me a chance to see what's going on in the classroom, and then have a conversation about it afterwards. Then it gives that person a chance to say, "What do you think?" I think discussing it afterwards and praising when you do meet and talking about the good you saw and giving a suggestion to incorporate along with it. So, they [the teacher] see the meeting is of importance, that there is something that we can do to enhance. So more of the enhancing once you meet. (Ms. Walker, coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Nassar reflected on the benefits of the feedback component of the coaching model.

> I was nervous because the follow-up was the coach coming in to see me do this. And I was like, "Oh my God, I can't be as good as that person," and whatever. But it was so positive because when I did it, the coach's feedback was like, "You did a great job." So, to me, that was rewarding and that was an amazing experience because I didn't feel like a student, if that made any sense. I didn't feel like somebody was out to get me. I felt like someone was out to make me better. It did make me better and it made me feel good. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Strengths of the Model

Strengths of the coaching model included planning, benefits for new teachers, useful when learning new initiatives.

Planning

Ms. Jackson indicated that the planning piece is a strength of the model.

I think it works, in the sense of where the pre-conference I feel like is necessary. I think planning with the teacher before you go into the classroom is totally necessary. I've done it where they're like, "Can you just come in and watch," and I don't know what's happening beforehand, so I think that's necessary. I think deciding on the roles beforehand is needed. (Ms. Jackson, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Scott shared the usefulness of all levels of planning involved in the coaching model, co-planning, and collaborative planning.

It's a lot of planning. It's a lot of sitting with the teacher and getting feedback with the teacher. It's a lot of co-planning, collaborative planning. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Beneficial to new teachers

Respondents believed the coaching model is beneficial to new teachers.

This model is also super beneficial for a new teacher or even a veteran teacher going into a new grade. I think if done correctly and you have a good relationship with your coach then the literacy coaching model can excel. (Ms. Williams, teacher, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Monaco shared a similar perspective, echoing the benefit of the model to new teachers.

So, I think it's [the coaching model] more valuable for beginning teachers when there's something completely different and new. For example, when we introduced guided

reading to the district, I think it was valuable then. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Useful for new initiatives

The coaching model is also effective for introducing new initiatives.

You're learning something, then you're trying it out in your own classroom. And then the person who really knows how to do that is coming in to, I guess, get you through, on how to get something done. And then I like, I guess, the post observation. I like it because I always want to make myself better. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Challenges of the Model

Challenges of the model discussed in the participants' responses included time consuming, difficult to schedule, the need for more coach modeling (in-class support), and follow-up.

Time consuming

A common challenge experienced by the respondents was the time-consuming aspect of the coaching model.

As I started going through this process more and more, it does take up a lot of time and it does take away from a lot of planning periods and things like that. But I also feel it isn't something that can be overdone. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

As a literacy coach, Ms. Valente shared that she tends to tweak the model to avoid putting a strain on her teachers in terms of time.

I try to keep the pre-conference short, no more than 10 minutes. Is there something that you want me to look for? Is there something that you feel you need help with? What am I going to see? Any area that you want me to pay closer attention to and the post conference I tried to do fairly quickly. I don't want them to wait. I know I can, but I try

to do it within a day. I just want to give them feedback and get their perceptions. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Monaco divulged that she feels the coaching model is very time consuming for both teachers and coaches.

> I feel the whole process is time consuming for both the teacher and the coach. I think I actually prefer the smaller group PLC kind of things unless you're a first-year teacher and you really need the support. But I've been in the district for a long time and if there's something new, yes, I need to learn it. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Difficult to schedule

Another common challenge of the coaching model shared by the participants was the difficulty in scheduling the various components necessary to complete the coaching model.

> I think that it's effective. I think, though, it's often difficult to schedule. I sometimes feel guilty and that's a personal thing, asking someone for three periods of their time. I feel like I hate doing that to someone. This is your prep period, I'm sure you have other things to do, can you meet with me? (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Scott specified that organization is crucial to level of scheduling needed when implementing the coaching model.

> You also have to make sure you're really organized and you're scheduling like the first thing; I'm thinking is I'm scheduled something for the next month out. But a million things happen so with implementation, it's just making sure you stick to the plan and your meetings so that way you get the feedback you need from the teacher. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 7, 2020)

More modeling (in-class support)

While modeling itself proved to be a valuable aspect of coaching, the teachers' responses revealed they seek more in-class support. The need for more of an in-class support coach model

was a common response from the respondents.

> We would like the coach to model a little more, instead of having us do it, then observe, then a discussion. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Nassar's response indicated the need for more time spent on modeling by the coach.

> I don't hate it [the coaching model], but I don't love it. I feel like we don't get enough time with our lit coaches. I think I would find a way just to make it a little better that we would see more of the coach in our classroom depending on what we need. Come see me, let me know if this is all right, or can you model a little more? That's all. Just a little more demand on them with us. It could be their [the coaches] demands versus our [teachers] demands are not matching somewhere. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Follow-up

Participants felt that the follow-up piece of the coaching modeling tends to be rushed because of time constraints and/or follow-up by administration, which is vital to the success of the coaching model.

> The follow-up I'm not as good at as I would want to be. I think sometimes it ends up being a little rushed because of time restraints, and where it's at the end of the period and they're asking me a couple of questions, and I'm like, "I just really would really rather have a follow-up where it's during your prep." (Ms. Jackson, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Kim stressed the gravity of the administrative follow-up piece of the coaching model.

> I think that no matter how hard you try to implement the model, you always run into an issue when there isn't follow-up from the administrative portion because not every teacher does really have a great understanding of what you're trying to do. (Ms. Kim, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Summary of Findings from Research Question #2

Teachers and coaches were aligned in terms of a shared understanding of the structure of the coaching model. The underlying theme of the responses indicated the importance of the 'Why' of the coaching model. Their perceptions and interpretations of the 'Why' of the coaching model were evident in their responses and demonstrated through what they perceived as valuable aspects of the model. It was evident in the participants' responses that one of the most valuable aspects of the coaching model for teachers was the in-class support modeling component. Additionally, the feedback component of the coaching model that takes place during the post-conference was perceived as effective.

Strengths of the coaching model included planning, benefits for new teachers, useful when learning new initiatives. Challenges of the model discussed in the participants' responses included time consuming, difficult to schedule, the need for more coach modeling (in-class support), and follow-up.

Themes from Research Question #3

What are specific strategies teachers and coaches perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

Theme 6 –The Best Strategy is found in the Coaching Environment Created

'Culture of Coaching'

To gauge an understanding of teachers' and coaches' perceptions of specific strategies found useful in an instructional coaching program, participants were asked to describe a successful coaching experience and what made it so. The successful teacher-coach experiences recounted by the respondents largely illustrated the environment that the literacy coach created.

Teachers and coaches highlighted successful experiences where they felt comfortable, reassured, and received support with a new initiative or strategy.

Comfortable

Most participants recalled successful coaching experiences where they felt comfortable.

My experiences to date have been positive with both coaches I've worked with. We continue to have a good relationship. I feel comfortable. I see her as a friend, I am not hesitant to voice opinions or make comments. Anything I need, she has been very helpful. We are in constant communication. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Ms. Nassar recalled a coaching experience where both she as the teacher and the coach were both comfortable as they worked through the coaching model.

So, to me, that was rewarding and an amazing experience because I didn't feel like a student, if that made any sense. I didn't feel like somebody was out to get me. I felt like someone was out to make me better. It did make me better and it made me feel good. And I do think the coach actually felt comfortable and good. And that's another thing, the coaches should always feel comfortable coming into your room. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Reassurance

As the participants reflected on teacher-coaching experiences, common responses specified a feeling of reassurance the coach fostered as successful.

"Whenever I come in here, please don't feel nervous. We're just here to help guide you." So that made me feel a lot better for ... Because she was coming in the following week to make sure that I was taking what she was telling me. You just ... you always want to make people happy. So that made me feel really good and made me feel better about the coaches. (Ms. Vargas, teacher, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Nassar illustrated an experience where she felt overwhelmed and anxious but through the coaches' support she felt a sense of relief and reassurance.

So, we did something called the non-fiction pyramid. And I was like, what is that? I felt the anxiety coming on because I was actually ... Again, like I said before, I'm open to new things. So, I did want to be able to expand my knowledge and give the kids something different than what I was doing. So, I had asked the coach to come in and model that specific strategy. At first, I was overwhelmed because it looked like a lot, per se. I was just thinking it seemed like a lot. However, when I was able to sit back and watch and the coach gave the instructional model and did everything, I was so relieved. (Ms. Nassar, teacher, personal communication, March 6, 2020)

As a literacy coach, Ms. Scott illustrated an experience where she was able to demonstrate the ability to make a teacher she was working with feel a level of reassurance.

I didn't want her [teacher] to feel that I was leaving her after a certain cycle was done. I think it was knowing that if she ever needed support with something along the way, she didn't feel like I was going to be judging her or anything. It was like, "Okay, you want to refresh on this? Of course, let's try. Do you want me to check to see if this was being done correctly? Yeah, sure." I feel like that was huge, that she knew it was ongoing throughout the year and my support was always available there for her whenever she needed it. She liked that someone was actually checking in on her. I think a lot of times when teachers feel like they're just in a room alone and they have no one else, like nobody cares what it is that they're doing in that classroom, I think showing that I actually care with what they were doing in their classroom, that was a help. I felt like I never stopped checking in on her. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Support with new initiative or strategy

Support received with a new initiative or strategy was a common response amongst teachers interviewed in reflection of successful teacher-coach experiences.

Ms. Wang has come to my room many times to teach me something I have never done before. One example was when I was in 2nd grade she came into my classroom for a scooping model. I was new to the profession and had no idea what scooping was or how

to teach it. To this day, I still use the scooping model with my students in 4th grade in small group instruction. (Ms. Williams, teacher, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Monaco added that while receiving support with a new initiative, her literacy coach respected teacher autonomy and rather than dismissing Ms. Monaco's practices she made suggestions that added to her practices.

A successful teacher-coach experience is one where the teacher comes away learning something new and feeling respected by the coach. Constructive criticism is necessary but must be delivered diplomatically. I had many successful interactions with my coach. What made it so successful is that the coach didn't dismiss my own teaching practices, but rather offered suggestions that added to my current teaching practices or taught me something new. (Ms. Monaco, teacher, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

Ms. Simmons recalled a successful experience with learning a new strategy from her literacy coach.

Definitely choosing the annotating [new strategy]. I had no idea what it was. She was like, "I'm going to come in." I'm like, "Okay." She came in once, and I'm like, "Yeah, I didn't get it." And then she came in again and the kids ran with it. I ran with it. (Ms. Simmons, teacher, personal communication, February 28, 2020)

Theme 7 – Turn Skeptics to Believers

Coaches were also asked to share a successful teacher-coach experience and what made it so. The respondents expressed that successful teacher-coach experiences were those where they spent a significant amount of time with a teacher on a concentrated focus, involved collaboration and co-planning, and turned a negative situation into a positive. Coaches revealed that having a 'breakthrough' with a resistant teacher was a major success for them.

Time spent on concentrated focus

Some of the successful teacher-coach experiences depicted included those where the

teacher and coach had the ability to spend time on a concentrated focus.

> Turnkeying to an entire grade level; one of the reading strategies going into the classroom and it took about seven days just to get through that whole strategy. The teachers loved it and after they were comfortable with it, they were able to work it into a center and the kids all seem to adopt the language and terms and I think that was one of the most effective strategies we had. What made it successful was I think it was a lot of ownership involved with ... everybody has a certain role to play and I think it works. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Lessons where coaches dedicated 'weeks at a time' to a concentrated focus were deemed successful.

> I think back to when we started using writers' workshop. I spent weeks at a time modeling, co-teaching, visiting with my second-grade teachers ... and it stuck. With all three of my second grade teachers at the time ... and it was a beautiful thing. They fell in love with teaching writing ... and as a matter of fact, using writers' workshop as the format for lessons, so did I. (Ms. Wang, literacy coach, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Jackson discussed a similar concept. A concentrated focus with a specific grade level proved successful.

> Successful, I think this year I've been very successful in the third grade. I got a focus grade in the beginning of the year based off of their scores, and they were very low. This year I've been tasked with saturating the third grade, and I learned from my prior experience where I was doing a lot, and now I'm just asking a lot of questions. I'm asking why. I'm asking how are you doing that, and then why are you doing that. (Ms. Jackson, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Collaborative

Other successful teacher-coacher experiences detailed by the respondents included those that were collaborative.

> Throughout the year, I started noticing that instead of me just supporting, supporting,

supporting, the teacher started bringing stuff to the table like, "Well, what do you think about this? What do you think about trying this out, these lessons? What do you think if we both ...? I really want to try this; would you mind coming in and helping me with it?" It was perfect when midyear, the tables adjusted where it wasn't just me going in all the time, it was more her welcoming me into do it together. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Valente highlighted the sharing of ideas as an effective collaborative piece of a successful teacher-coach experience.

She doesn't see me as being threatening or being a spy. She comes in here a lot and says, "What do you think about this?" Or "Come here, I want to show you ..." She invites me in more than let's say most. She's always like, "I want to show you how I'm doing, this writing piece" or "I want to show you how I'm incorporating." I gave her standards that she was weak on for Linkit and she's like, "I want you to see how I'm remediating on Fridays. "We're doing this in many lessons. (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Ms. Walker shared the importance of creating collaborative plans, sharing ideas, and partaking in collaborative conversations as successful.

A successful one is going to a classroom and the teacher was pretty much honest, telling me she wasn't doing guided reading. And I said, "Okay, can I show you? Can we talk about it?" So, we pretty much planned and prepared, I sent her ideas, lessons in what she could do with two different leveled groups. We planned it out, I met with her, I showed some modeling, I watched her do it, we met, discussed. I thought that was pretty successful, where we kind of followed the pattern of coaching. And that I thought was good. (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Negative to Positive

From the perspective of a coach, experiences that were turned from negative to positive or where a 'breakthrough' with a resistant teacher was experienced are considered a success.

Teacher who was very closed off. I was only trying to be there to support her. She allowed me to come in, she allowed me to share some information with the administrators. Once she knew that I knew what I was talking about and I wasn't there to hurt her in any way, shape, or form and that I wasn't trying to be an administrator, I was only trying to be there to support her. We were able to not 'catch her' in anything but support her. I did not bombard her with things. It was very much, 'this is what you need, so this is what we're going to do.' Initially she yelled at me. It was screaming, she was screaming at me, and I sat there, and I took it. I gave her a hug and I told her that I'm going to leave her alone until she's ready. And I said, 'I will not bother you until you need me.' I left her alone, and when I told her I was going to leave her alone, I think she was a little curious about what I had to offer her. I didn't engage in the negative. I stayed positive. I think that was why she was afraid and then that that made her feel a little bit more comfortable. So, I think it's just approach. (Ms. Kim, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Scott recounted an experience where she was able to successfully assist a teacher who was transitioning into a new grade level and was feeling overwhelmed. That collaborative piece was instrumental in turning a situation to a positive circumstance.

A successful teaching-coaching experience I've had is with a teacher who was recently changed in classrooms, grade levels, starting from scratch, feeling lost, feeling angry, feeling upset. There was a lot of collaboration but there was also having that understanding with the teacher. You have to have that compassion for them [teachers] that you understand they are going through changes and so you let them also ride their own style and then just keep giving that support in anything they need. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Theme 8 – Factors that Increase Success

Understanding what teachers and coaches perceive as effective in the professional development aspect of a literacy coaching program is vital to the success of the program. Teachers and coaches were asked to detail their perceptions of the most effective components of

professional development practices. The participants felt the most effective professional

development practices are those individualized (one-to-one) coaching approaches or small group

setting, relevant and relatable to their circumstances, involves follow-up and check-in, and

allows for educational conversations.

Coaching

Coaching, particularly individualized, was characterized as a perception of the most

effective professional development practice.

> I would much rather work like this, with a coach, one-on-one, than there would be 10 of
> us, 10 or 15. Gear it [professional development] toward me. I need to see it and try it,
> and that's how I'll go back and use it. Most effective, I think, either individualized or
> what's geared toward third grade, per se. (Ms. Simmons, teacher, February 28, 2020)

Ms. Monaco highlighted the shared partnership piece of coaching as most effective in a

professional development practice.

> Coaching or consultants, they present to us, but they also present more one-on-one with
> the lit coaches and then the lit coaches came back and presented in PLCs over these same
> topics but more in depth. So, I really feel it's [information] something that the lit coach
> has brought to us, because it was kind of a turnkey. But it doesn't matter whether it was
> their idea or not, it was a better scenario for it to come from someone in our district that
> we knew, that we trusted, and that we cared about maybe giving us this information.
> (Ms. Monaco, teacher, March 12, 2020)

Ms. Valente reflected on a prior experience where she believed the consistent and on-

going support of a coach was an effective practice.

> We did have an ELA coach. What I liked about it was it was consistent. She was there
> often and there was continued support and we would leave off on let's say point B and
> then we would pick back up and then move forward. There was a continuum of the PD.
> (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Small group

Some participants also expressed they preferred professional development that was conducted in a small group setting.

> The PD was in a small group, so teachers may have felt more comfortable being vocal. The presenter was able to give teachers more one-on-one support and not rush through the information. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Relevant and relatable

Professional development that was described as relevant and relatable was classified as part of an effective professional experience. Participants recalled PD sessions that were targeted to their population of students, needs of the districts, or specific needs of teachers were well received.

> Relatable – PD I can use in 'my' classroom. If you have the teachers actually try out some of the things that are being taught in the professional development instead of the presenter speaking the entire time can also be useful. Clear instructions and time to apply/practice. "Sometimes we are taught something during PD and given five minutes to try it. It is very often not enough time or directions are not clear." (Ms. Williams, teacher, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Mr. Lopez explained that observing a professional development provider working directly with his students was most effective.

> Watching it done directly a classroom in the district. We went into an actual classroom with kindergarten students and they work directly with the students. I feel that seeing something like that, you would always get the feeling that, "Oh, I can do this," because I'm watching this being done directly with students I would work with. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Recounting a specific experience, Ms. Valdez shared that the coach modeled using a teacher's data. This technique showed that the coach was tailoring the support to teacher needs.

They modeled with a teacher's data, we followed along as he modeled, we were able to stop and ask questions. He walked around to check in with each teacher to make sure everyone was on the same page. (Ms. Valdez, teacher, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Follow-up and Check-in

Some respondents communicated that providing follow-up sessions to discuss application is an effective technique that effective coaches and presenters implement.

Present info, then show how it can be applied. Have an additional (second) workshop to discuss how everything went. Some follow-up or accountability. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Discussion

Additionally, allotting for time to discuss as material is presented was mentioned as an effective strategy. The respondents felt when they had the opportunity to digest information and discuss it with a peer, coach, or other person conducting PD, it was effective.

Most effective is the ones where there's a little bit of information provided and then there's some, the concept of turn and talk, where you're discussing it or you're interacting and you're creating something. (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Theme 9 – It Starts at the Top

To understand teachers' and coaches' beliefs of the success of a literacy coaching program, participants were asked to discuss the factors that increase the success of a literacy coaching program. Administrative support, involvement, and accountability was a recurrent response. Additionally, teacher and administrator buy-in and the perceptions of coaches were believed to be integral to the success of a literacy coaching program. Each of those concepts can

be directly linked to the level of administrative support and commitment given to the coaching program.

Administrator support, involvement, and accountability

Administrator support, involvement, and accountability were specified as factors that increase the success of a literacy coaching program.

> Administration, big time. Administration, accountability. Accountability, not only for the coaches. Yes, for the coaches, but also for administrators. That relationship is crucial. I feel if you don't have that administration support, it doesn't matter how great you interact with your teachers, the teachers won't have that buy-in. I think the hardest but most important is having the administrators buy-in, understand the importance of a coach, and work with the coach consistently. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Thomas stressed the fine line coaches walk between administrator and coach. The literacy coach position is not designed to be evaluative, so the involvement of the administrator is essential.

> Administrators, accountability on their part. "As a literacy coach, you walk a fine line of not being able to evaluate ... it would be too threatening to teachers. But you walk a fine line of how to motivate them [teachers] and without good administrator backup, it's not going to work." Administrative support is a big part of it. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 27, 2020)

Ms. Jackson expressed that it would be helpful to her coaching if administrators provided more direction in terms of where she should extend her support.

> Support from our administration. I think my principals and vice principals, I think they need to be a little more assertive in what they want me to do and where they want me to go with it. (Ms. Jackson, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Mr. Lopez pointed out the need for administrators to publicly support the coach in an effort to create more buy-in.

> Good support from administration. Everyone is on board with the coach's purpose. "This instructional coach is here to help everybody in the building." I think that in turn would create more buy-in from teachers to trust that coach in helping them reach their goals. (Mr. Lopez, teacher, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

In addition to administrator support, Ms. Wang expressed the gravity of the need for instructional leadership on the principal's end. This is where the instructional leadership aspect of an administer is vital.

> Administrative support and knowledge. They need to be on board. They need to know what lessons should look like. They need to support their teachers at the classroom level. (Ms. Wang, literacy coach, personal communication, April 6, 2020)

Ms. Valente underscored the role administrators play in buy-in and generating belief in coaching. She mentions that knowing her administrators support her work and are involved in the sharing of ideas with the coach adds to the success of the coaching program.

> I think having administrators who believe in your value and appreciate you. I don't know if I really experienced it so much last year because I was new but I know this year with the newer principal, he comes to me very often asking my opinion on certain ideas or he'll ask me to meet with a specific grade level because he was told that they're not performing maybe as well as expected. And I think it's nice when he says, "You know what, you did a really, really great job." (Ms. Valente, literacy coach, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Perception of coaches

The perceptions of coaches were believed to be integral to the success of a literacy coaching program. Coaches should maintain the integrity of the coaching position.

"Maintain the intention of the literacy coach ... maintain what they were initially brought into that position for." (Mr. Maloof, teacher, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Walker divulged that she has experienced people who believe the job of the literacy coach is something that is very easy to do or requires little effort. She expressed that that perspective tends to taint the perception of the role of the coach.

> I just think that people think it's a cake job. I think they think you're not a teacher anymore. I also think that people who are in this position, the reason they have this position is because they have knowledge, I don't think they would give this position to people who don't have knowledge. So, you would hope that their mindset changes that there is value and that we're here as a support and not to just get out of the classroom per se. I think if there might've been a presentation to explain what their [coach] role is as they were just kind of placed there without any explanation. So maybe a better understanding of what a coach is to a teacher and not just, 'here's this coach, she's going to have a meeting with you right now.' (Ms. Walker, literacy coach, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Buy-in

Buy-in on all levels (teacher, coach, administrator) was described as pivotal to the success of a literacy coaching program.

> The factors that increase the success of a literacy coaching program are buy-in from all involved. Particularly the administrators. (Ms. Wang, literacy coach, personal communication, April 4, 2020)

Ms. Scott indicated that consistent buy-in over time is key to the success of a coaching program.

> I guess getting teacher buy-in is huge and not just for a day; consistent school yearlong buy-in from teachers. Trusting the process is, I think, if I could get the teachers to do that, that would be the best. It's really hard just getting teachers to find that love again. As much as I can support them and give them everything. I think the hardest but the

most important is having the administrators buy-in, understand the importance of a coach, and work with the coach consistently. (Ms. Scott, literacy coach, personal communication, March 11, 2020)

Ms. Thomas highlighted that buy-in from teachers, especially veteran teachers, is necessary for a coaching program to succeed.

A concern is buy-in from the teachers, especially teachers who have been here forever, for a very long time. That was my biggest concern, having that openness of having somebody come in who didn't have as much experience as them. (Ms. Thomas, literacy coach, personal communication, February 26, 2020)

Summary of Findings from Research Question #3

The successful teacher-coach experiences recounted by the respondents largely illustrated the environment that the literacy coach created. Teachers and coaches highlighted successful experiences where they felt comfortable, reassured, and received support with a new initiative or strategy. The literacy coaches expressed that successful teacher-coach experiences were those where they spent a significant amount of time with a teacher on a concentrated focus, involved collaboration and co-planning, and turned a negative situation into a positive. Coaches revealed that having a 'breakthrough' with a resistant teacher was a major success for them.

The participants indicated that the most effective professional development practices are those individualized (one-to-one) coaching approaches or small group setting, relevant and relatable to their circumstances, involves follow-up and check-in, and allows for educational conversations.

Administrative support, involvement, and accountability was a recurrent response in defining what coaches needed to be successful. Additionally, teacher and administrator buy-in and the perceptions of coaches were believed to be integral to the success of a literacy coaching

program. Each of those concepts can be directly linked to the level of administrative support and commitment given to the coaching program.

Summary of Findings

Research Question #1

In order to feel that coaching is effective, one must first find value in the position of the coach. The interview questions were designed to get an in-depth understanding of the initial perceptions of working with a coach, what characterizes as a good teacher-coach relationship, qualities of an effective coach, valuable aspects of coaching, what qualifies as high-quality professional development, and in what ways has a specific professional development practice improved the effectiveness of instruction. Understanding these concepts helped to address Research Question #1 through interview questions 2, 3,4, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 15 (See Appendices).

Most participants noted that they regarded literacy coaches as experts in their field and felt reassured when seeking their support because of the knowledge they have in the content area that their administrators may lack. When teachers were asked what they valued most about literacy coaching, many of the responses included the aspect of having a support person to go to for guidance.

The value of coaching was the first theme that emerged through the teachers' narratives. Evident in their responses were key concepts that they attributed as valuable or important in their teacher-coach experiences. The respondents cited their initial perceptions of the role of the literacy coach as someone to guide, support, help, improve their instruction, and rely on.

To better understand the valuable aspects of the literacy coaching position, both teachers and coaches were asked where they found the most value in coaching. Some coaches cited supporting and advocating for teachers as valuable aspects of literacy coaching. Other coaches

shared that improving student learning outcomes on a larger scale were most valuable. Some

coaches mentioned assisting teachers with data analysis to help drive their instruction was a

valuable practice. Additionally, some coaches felt those heartwarming moments and fun

educational events they lead are most valuable.

The stories of participants highlighted the value that the coaches provided to them

professionally and personally. Coaches are often described as agents of change and their chief

role is to assist teachers with the implementation of change. This process sometimes forces

teachers out of their comfort zones. A willingness to change and self-determination was a

common thread throughout many interviews. Several participants discussed how the intrinsic

motivation to want to grow in their role was a factor in not only their willingness to change but

in the effectiveness of literacy coaching.

In order to understand the efficacy of literacy coaching as a valuable professional

development practice, the teacher-coach relationship must first be understood because the quality

and depth of that relationship is contributory to the efficacy of coaching. The success of

coaching depends primarily on the relationships that coaches have formed with the teachers they

support (Toll, 2017, p.14). Coaches must have a personal connection with their teacher

colleagues so that coaching can take a positive step forward (Toll, 2017, p.14).

When asked what makes a good teacher-coach relationship, common responses included

open lines of communication, trust, mutual respect, and a good rapport. These commonalities

define the building blocks of the teacher-coach relationship.

When respondents were asked to define the characteristics of an effective coach it was

evident that participants believed that an effective coach should be knowledgeable in his or her

field, trustworthy, and a good communicator. Additional attributes mentioned were personality,

responsiveness, and passionate.

To get an understanding of what participants define as effective professional development and as related to coaching practices, teachers and coaches were asked to define high-quality professional development experiences and share personal experiences where they believed a certain experience improved the effectiveness of their classroom instruction or coaching performance. The responses revealed that participants seek professional development experiences that are facilitated by a knowledgeable presenter, on-going through coaching support, relevant to their circumstances and address their needs, offer modeled practiced and role-playing techniques, are interactive and hands-on, highly collaborative, and offer applicable takeaways. Many of the concepts shared through the participants' responses are in alignment with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler's (2017) Elements of Effective Professional Development.

Consistent with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017), coaching support should incorporate the sharing of expertise of content area and practice concentrated specifically on the individual needs of the teacher. Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) claim that the modeling aspect of instruction gives teachers clarity into what best practices look like. Such models help teachers' ability to 'see' what good practices look like as they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms. Active learning provides opportunities for teachers to receive hands-on experiences as they design and practice new teaching strategies. In PD models featuring active learning, role-playing is often a technique incorporated into the session. This allows teachers to take part in the same learning style they are creating for their students, by using actual examples of curriculum, student work, and instruction (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017).

Teachers and coaches both noted that high-quality professional development experiences that offer a peer collaboration piece were perceived as effective. High-quality professional development fosters an environment of sharing and peer collaboration for teachers and is often facilitated through job-embedded contexts that relate new instructional strategies to teachers' students and classrooms (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017). "By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school, and/or district. Collaboration can span a host of configurations — from one-on-one or small group collaboration to schoolwide collaboration to collaboration with other professionals beyond the school" (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017).

Research Question #2

Both teachers and coaches were asked to share how they perceive the specific literacy coaching model implemented by the literacy coaches in the district to address Research Question #2, interview question #5 (See appendices). While the overall perceptions were positive, teachers and coaches shared what they believe to be the strengths and challenges of the model. Teachers and coaches were aligned in terms of a shared understanding of the structure of the coaching model. The underlying theme of the responses was the importance of the 'Why' of the coaching model. Their perceptions and interpretations of the 'Why' of the coaching model were evident in their responses and found through what they perceived as valuable aspects of the model.

In alignment with Matsumara et al. (2009) the belief that the process of the coach modeling instructional practices for teachers in their classrooms is an integral part of effective coaching, it was evident in the participants' responses that one of the most valuable aspects of

the coaching model for teachers was the in-class support modeling component. Additionally, the

feedback component of the coaching model that takes place during the post-conference was

perceived as effective. Matsumara et al. (2009) asserted that classroom observations are vital

because it gives coaches a chance to grasp the needs of the teacher, then provide focused

feedback that is customized to their instructional practice. Additionally, Poglinco & Bach (2004)

found that teachers are more likely to buy-in and alter their instructional practices when coaches

provide them with modeled instructional techniques in their classrooms. "Of all the techniques

coaches employ, modeling instruction in individual classrooms is most likely to result in

modifications in instructional practices and adherence to the instructional delivery formats

(Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Koh & Neuman, 2006).

Strengths of the coaching model included planning, benefits for new teachers, useful

when learning new initiatives. Challenges of the model discussed in the participants' responses

included time consuming, difficult to schedule, the need for more coach modeling (in-class

support), and follow-up. While modeling itself proved to be a valuable aspect of coaching, the

teachers' responses revealed they seek more of it, in-class support wise. Participants felt that the

follow-up piece of the coaching model was a challenge because it tends to feel rushed because of

time constraints and/or lack of follow-up by administration, which is vital to the success of the

coaching model.

Research Questions #3

To understand Research Question #3, interview questions 8, 9,12,13,14,17 were posed to

the participants in order to best interpret specific strategies teachers and coaches perceived as

useful in an instructional coaching program. The context of the questions included their beliefs

of what qualifies as effective PD, a description of a successful and unsuccessful teacher-coach

experience, factors believed to increase the success of a coaching program, ways a coach can best assist with reaching professional goals and improve coaching to meet their needs.

To best interpret teachers' and coaches' perceptions of specific strategies found useful in an instructional coaching program, participants were asked to describe a successful coaching experience and what made it so. The successful teacher-coach experiences recounted by the respondents largely illustrated the environment that the literacy coach created. Teachers and coaches highlighted successful experiences where they felt comfortable, reassured, and received support with a new initiative or strategy.

Coaches were also asked to share a successful teacher-coach experience and what made it so. The respondents expressed that successful teacher-coach experiences were those where they spent a significant amount of time with a teacher on a concentrated focus, involved collaboration and co-planning, and turned a negative situation into a positive. Coaches revealed that having a 'breakthrough' with a resistant teacher was a major success for them.

Understanding what teachers and coaches perceive as effective in the professional development aspect of a literacy coaching program is vital to the success of the program. Teachers and coaches were asked to detail their perceptions of the most effective components of professional development practices. The participants felt the most effective professional development practices are those individualized (one-to-one) coaching approaches or small group setting, relevant and relatable to their circumstances, involves follow-up and check-in, and allows for educational conversations.

To understand teachers' and coaches' beliefs of the success of a literacy coaching program, participants were asked to identify the factors that increase the success of a literacy coaching program. Administrative support, involvement, and accountability was a recurrent

response. Additionally, teacher and administrator buy-in and the perceptions of coaches were believed to be integral to the success of a literacy coaching program. Each of those concepts can be directly linked to the level of administrative support and commitment given to the coaching program. "No matter how much a coach knows, and no matter how effective a coach is, the principal's voice is ultimately the one most important to teachers" (Knight, 2006).

Chapter V

Discussion, Implications, and Summary

This final chapter summarizes the findings of this study, relates the findings to the literature reviewed, and offers suggestions for practice, policy, and future research. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a valuable professional development practice. This study addressed the following research questions:

RQ(1): What are teachers' and coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?

RQ(2): How do teachers and coaches perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

RQ(3): What are specific strategies teachers and coaches perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

As indicated in the methodology chapter of this dissertation, the study consisted of a total of sixteen interviews that were conducted in five different public schools in one school district in New Jersey. Participants in the interviews were teachers and literacy coaches in a public school district in New Jersey. Teachers and coaches were asked the same questions, and their responses were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Upon completion of the coding process, similar codes were combined into categories and then into major themes. The themes, which emerged from the experiences of teachers and coaches, were elucidated from the text.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question #1: Teachers' and coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice

The perceptions of professional development and as related to effective coaching practices were defined as those experiences facilitated by a knowledgeable presenter, on-going through coaching support, relevant to their circumstances and address their needs, offer modeled practiced and role-playing techniques, are interactive and hands-on, highly collaborative, and offer applicable takeaways. These features are in alignment with a large body of literature that reflects the notion that effective professional learning experiences encompass "several critical features including job-embedded practice, intense and sustained durations, a focus on discrete skill sets, and active-learning" (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hill, 2007; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018).

Many of the concepts shared by the participants are in alignment with Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler's (2017) *Elements of Effective Professional Development.* Consistent with the research of Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017), coaching support should incorporate the sharing of expertise of content area and practice concentrated specifically on the individual needs of the teacher. Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) claim that the modeling aspect of instruction gives teachers clarity into what best practices look like. Such models help teachers' ability to 'see' what good practices look like as they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms. Active learning provides opportunities for teachers to receive hands-on experiences as they design and practice new teaching strategies. In PD models featuring active learning, role-playing is often a technique incorporated into the session. This allows teachers to take part in the same learning style they are creating for their students, by using actual examples of curriculum, student work, and instruction (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

Teachers and coaches both noted that high-quality professional development experiences that offer a peer collaboration piece were perceived as effective. High-quality professional development fosters an environment of sharing and peer collaboration for teachers and is often facilitated through job-embedded contexts that relate new instructional strategies to teachers' students and classrooms (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017). "By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school, and/or district. Collaboration can span a host of configurations — from one-on-one or small group collaboration to schoolwide collaboration to collaboration with other professionals beyond the school" (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

Evident in the participants' responses were key concepts that they attributed as valuable or important in their teacher-coach experiences. The respondents cited their perceptions of the role of the literacy coach as someone to guide, support, help, improve their instruction, and rely on. This finding is consistent with research of Scott, Cortina, and Carlisle (2012), which indicated that teachers appreciated coach input on their literacy instruction, given the connection with satisfaction of coaching support (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012). Coaches who indicated that teachers regarded them as a guide for feedback and ideas on how to improve instruction in teaching literacy appeared to report teachers content with their performance and classroom conditions (Scott, Cortina, Carlisle, 2012).

Self-determination was a common thread throughout many interviews. Several participants discussed how the intrinsic motivation to want to grow in their role was a factor in not only their willingness to change but in the effectiveness of literacy coaching. Coaches are often described as catalysts of change and one of their chief roles is to support teachers while

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implementing change. This process often forces teachers out of their comfort zones. Ryan and Deci (2000) asserted that when comparing externally driven individuals with those whose motivation is intrinsic (literally, self-authored or endorsed), intrinsically motivated individuals tend to display more curiosity, enthusiasm, and confidence, which in turn results in improved performance, determination, and innovation. The participants who voiced their willingness to grow in their teacher role seemed to be more receptive to literacy coaching.

In order to understand the efficacy of literacy coaching as a valuable professional development practice, the scope of the teacher-coach relationship must be understood because the quality and depth of that relationship is contributory to the efficacy of coaching. The success of coaching depends primarily on the relationships that coaches have formed with the teachers they support (Toll, 2017, p.14). Coaches must have a personal connection with their teacher colleagues so that coaching can take a positive step forward (Toll, 2017, p.14). Common elements of good teacher-coach relationships include open lines of communication, trust, mutual respect, and a good rapport. These commonalities define the building blocks of the teacher-coach relationship.

The overall perceptions of coaching were positive for both teachers and coaches. The positive perception of coaching can be attributed to the trusting teacher-coach relationships developed and the culture the coaches created. These two dynamics are vital to how well the coaching program is received in the district studied. The literacy coaches were all aligned in terms of having shared beliefs and a shared understanding of the practice of instructional coaching. It was evident in their responses that a common language exists from coach to teacher across the district. Therefore, the findings were common amongst all teachers and coaches interviewed.

Research Question #2: The perception of the coaching model

The underlying theme of the perceptions of the coaching model underscored the importance of the 'Why' of the coaching model. The basic understanding of the 'Why' of the coaching model followed in this district became clear as the participants described valuable aspects of the model, including strengths and challenges of the model were discussed. The 'Why' of the model included the opportunity to learn, improve practice, and discuss.

One of the most valuable aspects of the coaching model for teachers was the in-class support modeling component. "The opportunity to model instructional practices in teachers' classrooms is critical to effective coaching" (Matsumara et al., 2009). Additionally, the feedback component of the coaching model that takes place during the post-conference was perceived as effective. This concept is in alignment with the research of Matsumara et al. (2009). "Observing in classrooms is critical because it offers coaches the opportunity to understand teachers' instructional needs and to provide feedback to teachers that is tailored to the specifics of their instructional practice."

Strengths of the coaching model included planning, benefits for new teachers, and useful when learning new initiatives. Challenges of the model discussed in the participants' responses included time consuming, difficult to schedule, the need for more coach modeling (in-class support), and follow-up. While modeling itself proved to be a valuable aspect of coaching, the teachers' responses revealed they seek more of it, in-class support wise. This concept is consistent with research findings of Galey (2016) which suggests that teachers are more likely to alter their instructional practices when coaches model best instructional practices for them.

Research by Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) also document the effectiveness of this 'show and tell' strategy for improving and changing teacher practice (Galey, 2016). Poglinco and

Bach's (2004) research also found that in-class support provided by coaches proved to be received well by teachers; therefore, coaches need to be skilled in various practices for providing in-class coaching support.

Participants felt that the follow-up piece of the coaching modeling tends to be rushed because of time constraints and/or follow-up by administration, which is vital to the success of the coaching model. Time constraints faced by teachers and coaches can be attributed to several factors, including scheduling, number of teachers assigned to a coach, additional duties and responsibilities of the coach, lack of planning time dedicated to co-planning, and many others. Several research studies have found that literacy coaches do not have adequate time for coaching (Poglinco et al., 2003; Smith, 2006; Marsh et al., 2008; Lynch and Ferguson, 2010; Toll, 2018). In line with Knight (2009), the single most powerful way to increase the effectiveness of coaches is to ensure that they have sufficient time for coaching. Principals and other district administrators must make certain that numerous non-coaching tasks are not delegated to coaches and diminishes sustained coaching opportunity (Knight, 2009). Since existing research indicates that the amount of time coaches spend with educators seems to influence the outcome of the coaching (Bean et al., 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015), external factors such as those mentioned above, prohibiting teacher-coach interactions could lead to reduced effectiveness of coaching and thus might help explain some of the mixed findings about the efficacy of coaching.

Research Questions #3: The perceived specific strategies that are useful in an instructional coaching program.

The most useful strategy in an instructional coaching program is found in the coaching environment or culture of coaching that is created by the instructional coach. The successful teacher-coach experiences recounted by the respondents largely illustrated the environment that

the literacy coach created. Teachers and coaches highlighted successful experiences where they felt comfortable, reassured, and received support with a new initiative or strategy.

The respondents expressed that successful teacher-coach experiences were those where coaches spent a significant amount of time with a teacher on a concentrated focus, involved collaboration and co-planning, and turned a negative situation into a positive.

Coaches revealed that having a 'breakthrough' with a resistant teacher was a major success for them. Often teacher resistance to coaching is a deterrent. Coaches can be knowledgeable about teaching, but if they don't grasp the challenges of working with adults, they may influence others to resist what they are offering (Knight, 2016). It is important for coaches to have an understanding of Adult Learning Theory and how it can be applied to improve their instructional coaching practices.

Understanding what teachers and coaches perceive as effective in the professional development aspect of a literacy coaching program is vital to the success of the program. Teachers and coaches were asked to detail their perceptions of the most effective components of professional development practices. The participants felt the most effective professional development practices are those individualized (one-to-one) coaching approaches or small group setting, relevant and relatable to their circumstances, involves follow-up and check-in, and allows for educational conversations.

To understand teachers' and coaches' beliefs of the success of a literacy coaching program, participants were asked to delineate the factors that increase the success of a literacy coaching program. Administrative support, involvement, and accountability was a recurrent response. Additionally, teacher and administrator buy-in and the perceptions of coaches were believed to be integral to the success of a literacy coaching program. "Principals play an

incredibly important role in shaping the success or failure of coaches (Knight, 2016). "The most effective principals are instructional leaders who understand the positive impact professional learning can have on student learning" (Knight, 2016).

With an understanding of literacy coaching, principals will be effective in promoting support for coaching, preparing teachers to engage in coaching, displaying enthusiasm for coaching, and creating the collaborative community in which coaching can flourish (Kral, n. d.; Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt, 2008; Toll, 2014; Toll, 2018). In alignment with the research of Reid (2019), with principal support of the coaches they were enabled to build trusting relationships amongst all involved in the coaching process (administration, the coaches, and the teachers). When administrators are involved in and support coaching, that support creates conditions for success. Reid (2019) further stated that the principal encouraged collaboration between coaches and teachers, but did not make these interactions compulsory, but rather the main 'direction provided,' and 'conditions created' for purposeful interactions (Fullan, 2008; Reid, 2019). Literacy coaching programs struggle as a result of the absence of principal understanding and knowledge in supporting literacy coaches (Poglinco and Bach, 2004; Lynch and Ferguson, 2010; Toll, 2018).

Each of those concepts can be directly linked to the level of administrative support and commitment given to the coaching program. "No matter how much a coach knows, and no matter how effective a coach is, the principal's voice is ultimately the one most important to teachers" (Knight, 2006). The level of principal support the coaches received varied from building to building. Some coaches felt that they were fully supported by their principals while others only received minimal support. Each coach made it very clear that administrative support, accountability, and involvement in the coaching process is vital to the success of the coaching

program. Coaches who felt they had full principal support reported that principals attended their professional learning community meetings with staff, had consistent status meetings with the coach, completed follow-up walk-through classroom visits, and made an effort to be involved in the coaching process. Coaches who felt they had minimal principal support shared that they seek more direction and involvement from administration, principal buy-in to the program, acknowledgment of their efforts, and follow-through.

Implications for Policy

As districts make and enforce policies aiming to improve teacher practices and student outcomes, professional development opportunities continue to be proliferating. Professional development is designed to assist teachers and administrators with the improvement of their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Instructional coaching is an approach to professional development that many schools have embraced as a way to alter specific teacher behaviors and improve classroom instruction (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007). As cited in Desimone & Pak (2016), "Instructional coaching has been an especially salient choice for policymakers seeking to enhance reading and literacy pedagogy through site-based, individualized, and sustained professional development" (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, [4]; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, [26]).

Schools need to have a well-defined and well-structured coaching program in place with an end goal of improving teacher practice and student learning. Failure to develop a coaching program that includes specific indicators of success can result in poor application of skills and knowledge, and generate resistance to the coaching model (Knight, 2016). The adoption of a coaching model should be a well-thought-out process that considers the district's dynamics,

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adaptability to district needs, considers the population of teachers, involves realistic expectations, and is thoroughly supported by the administration.

Districts should ensure that professional development expectations are continually updated to establish tailored, ongoing, job-embedded activities accessible to all staff. For school administrators to effectively implement an instructional coaching program and hire instructional coaches, they must first have a solid understanding of instructional coaching, their support in the role, and the appointment of instructional leaders to support and uphold their vision for success (Gomez-Johnson, 2016).

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study have yielded some implications for practice that should assist district leaders and those involved in the implementation of instructional coaching programs.

First, district leaders should understand what teachers define as a high-quality professional development experience and ensure that those expectations are met through the selection of professional development opportunities provided to teachers in the district. When seeking professional development for staff, district leaders should consider the seven commonly shared elements of professional development as defined by Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017): (1) content-focused, (2) involves active learning utilizing adult learning theory, (3) supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts, (4) uses models and modeling of effective practice, (5) provides coaching and expert support, (6) offers opportunities for feedback and reflection, and (7) is of sustained duration.

Second, the related research reviewed highlighted the value of developing strong teacher-coach relationships for coaching to be effective. Additionally, the findings from this study

underscore the notion that the best strategy utilized by the literacy coaches is the coaching culture that the coaches cultivate, which is conducive to creating 'conditions for success.' Therefore, coaches must be supported in their efforts to create such conditions and receive adequate training in the areas of further developing a culture of coaching.

Third, a district must choose a coaching model that works for them and is adapted to meet their needs. Research supports the idea that the most efficacious coaching programs have embraced a coaching model. Therefore, it is vital to implement a structure that is understood by all involved in the coaching process. A lack of understanding of the 'Why' of the coaching model can decrease the effectiveness of an instructional coaching program. It is recommended for districts to conduct surveys from time to time to evaluate the current model in place and tailor it to meet the needs of the district. Challenges of a coaching model that commonly arise include time consumption, difficult to schedule, the need for more coach modeling (in-class support), and follow-up. Most of the challenges listed can be remedied by the building principal by providing teachers and coaches adequate time to meet. Reid (2019) found that by providing sufficient time for teachers and coaches to meet within the school day, typically, but not exclusively, the principal enabled teachers and coaches to work together without the worry of time constraints. Also, to remedy the time issue, Schachter et al. (2018) recommends that those developing and studying coaching models may need to anticipate use of time through either reducing the number of administrative tasks for coaches or building extra time for administrative work into the design of professional development.

Finally, school leaders are instrumental in building coaches' capacity for success, and in turn, both administrators and coaches are integral in building capacity for teacher success. In his study, Reid (2019) found that the principal encouraged collaboration between coaches and

teachers, but did not make these interactions compulsory, but rather 'direction provided,' and 'conditions created' for purposeful interactions (Fullan, 2008; Reid, 2019). For a coaching program to have an impact, it is crucial to ensure that all parties have a shared understanding of coaching goals and that goals set are purposeful. Therefore, principals and district leaders must commit to creating strong partnerships with coaches and teachers and support a culture of coaching. More importantly, principals should often speak positively and openly about the value of instructional coaching (Knight, 2016). If the administrative piece is absent, and principals aren't buying into the value of coaching, the result could be teachers' failure to value coaching support. A shared vision of coaching must exist, and principals should act as a guide and provide direction for coaches when implementing coaching support based on the varying need levels in their buildings.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study generated some implications for future research. These recommendations could help school districts and researchers better understand instructional coaching practices and their place in professional development. First, it is important to understand the effectiveness of a specific coaching model utilized by coaches in a district. It is beneficial to know which specific coaching model yields the most success and under what conditions this success was achieved. Taking a deep dive into the strengths and challenges of specific coaching models as they are experienced by teachers and coaches is beneficial in understanding the factors that increase effectiveness of instructional coaching.

An additional area of research to consider is how instructional coaches create successful coaching environments that foster a culture of coaching. It is important to know what specific factors besides relationship building and administrative support allow coaches to create

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conditions for success. Understanding how coaches are enabled to create a culture of coaching is beneficial to school leaders and coaches looking to improve or develop an instructional coaching program.

More research should be conducted into measuring coaches' impact on teacher practice. Research should target understanding whether teachers are changing their instructional practice after working with an instructional coach. It would be beneficial to know if after working with an instructional coach, teachers are utilizing newly learned strategies and methods and the impact implementation has on teacher practice.

Summary

This study was conducted to understand teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a professional development practice. Attention to professional learning loosely described as coaching has heightened (Knight, 2009). Such increased interest in coaching is likely due to educators' opinions that "traditional one-shot approaches to professional development — where teachers hear about practices but do not receive follow-up support — are ineffective at improving teaching practices" (Knight, 2009). Further, in-depth support is necessary to assist teachers in translating research into practice. For many districts, that support is coaching (Knight, 2009); therefore, the findings from this study can inform researchers, school districts, and educators currently or seeking to implement an instructional coaching program as part of a high-quality professional development.

Currently, there is limited existing research pertaining to teacher perceptions of the efficacy of instructional coaching as a professional development practice. Desimone and Pak (2016) stated that more empirical investigations need to be conducted to firmly establish coaching as a valuable PD opportunity for teachers. This research study aimed to close that gap

and provide insight into the efficacy of instructional coaching as a valuable professional development practice. This data yielded from this investigation may also bring awareness to the existing issues surrounding educational professionals seeking to understand the linkage between teacher efficacy, instructional coaching support, and professional development. This awareness will hopefully afford educators with greater insight into how to best utilize an instructional coach as part of daily professional development practices. This study extends the existing literature on instructional coaching since few empirical studies examine factors related to teacher perceptions of instructional coaching as a professional development practice.

This study confirms research of Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler (2017) that found seven commonly shared elements of professional development. Features of effective professional development include: (1) content-focused, (2) involves active learning utilizing adult learning theory, (3) supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts, (4) uses models and modeling of effective practice, (5) provides coaching and expert support, (6) offers opportunities for feedback and reflection, and (7) is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond, Gardner, & Hyler, 2017).

Literacy coaches deliver job-embedded professional development that encourages reflective practice that generates better teacher decision making (Toll, 2014). Effective coaching tackles the characteristics of adult learners and promotes collaboration and reflection (Toll, 2014). Essentially, literacy coaching done well results in greater student achievement (Toll, 2014). Additionally, research suggests that sustained professional development through literacy coaching has a positive impact on teacher practice. Response to Intervention and the Common Core State Standards are two major initiatives in the United States leading to the increase in the need for literacy coaches (Toll, 2014). The literacy coach's priority is to support teachers with

the implementation of these initiatives effectively. To be effective and function at its fullest

potential, the instructional coaching model must be fully understood and embraced by all

stakeholders. Instructional coaching is a partnership between teachers, coaches, and

administrators.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Questions (Teacher)

1. Can you give a brief description of your career background in education?

2. What were your initial perceptions of working with a literacy coach? Has that perception changed? If so, what has caused the change?

3. In your opinion, what makes (characteristics) of a good teacher-coach relationship?

4. What makes (characteristics) of an effective literacy coach?

5. How do you perceive the implementation of literacy coaching model?

6. What do you define as a high-quality professional development experience?

7. What types of professional development *opportunities* do you believe impact teacher practice?

8. What *specific strategies* do you perceive as effective in a professional development experience?

9. What kind of professional development is *most* effective for you? *least* effective?

10. In what ways, if any, has a specific professional development experience improved the effectiveness of your classroom instruction or teacher performance?

11. What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of professional development practices?

12. How can an instructional coach best assist with helping you reach your professional goals?

13. What factors increase the success of a literacy coaching program?

14. Can you describe a successful teacher-coach experience? Unsuccessful teacher-coach experience? What made it so?

15. What aspects of working with a literacy coach do you value *most*? Value least?

16. What barriers, if any, interfere with you achieving your professional goals?

17. How can literacy coaching be improved to meet your instructional needs?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol Questions (Coaches)

1. Can you give a brief description of your career background in education?

2. In your opinion, what is the role of a literacy coach?

3. What were your initial perceptions of the role of a literacy coach? Has that perception changed?

4. What characteristics make a good teacher-coach relationship?

5. What are the characteristics of an effective literacy coach?

6. How do you perceive the implementation of literacy coaching model?

7. What do you define as a high-quality professional development experience?

8. What types of professional development opportunities do you believe impact teacher practice? Coaching practice?

9. What specific strategies do you perceive as effective in a professional development experience?

10. What kind of professional development is *most* effective for you? *least* effective?

11. What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of professional development practices?

12. In what ways, if any, has a specific professional development experience improved the quality of your coaching?

13. How can you best assist in helping teachers reach their professional goals?

14. What factors increase the success of a coaching program?

15. Describe a successful teacher-coach experience and an unsuccessful teacher-coach experience.

16. What aspects of literacy coaching do you value *most*? Value *least*?

17. What barriers, if any, interfere with you achieving your professional goals?

18. As a literacy coach, what do you need to ensure you are meeting the instructional needs of the teachers you serve?

Appendix C

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Perceptions of the Efficacy of Literacy Coaching as a Valuable Professional Development Practice

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

In making **this application**, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

Erin Stinson-Dioguardi
RESEARCHER(S)   DATE: 1/02/20

Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature. Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

Dr. David B. Reid
_____   01/03/2020
RESEARCHER'S FACULTY ADVISOR [for student researchers only]   DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the _____ meeting.

The application was approved ____ not approved ____ by the Committee. Special conditions were ____ were not ____ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

_____   _____
DIRECTOR,   DATE
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Seton Hall University
3/2005

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Appendix D

SHU Institutional Review Board Approval of Amendment

April 3, 2020

Erin Stinson-Dioguardi

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Re: Study ID# 2020-043

Dear Ms. Stinson-Dioguardi,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the amendment to your research proposal entitled "Teachers' Perception of the Efficacy of Literacy Coaching as a Valuable Professional Development Practice" as submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval.

Approval of this amendment does not change the previous expiration date from your one-year approval period. You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to the original expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research to close the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Office of the Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall · 400 South Orange Avenue · South Orange, New Jersey 07079 · Tel: 973.275.4654 · Fax 973.275.2978 ·
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Appendix E

Informed Consent

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF STUDY: Teacher Perceptions of the Efficacy of Literacy Coaching as a Valuable Professional Development Practice

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: Erin Stinson-Dioguardi, Student in the Executive Educational Leadership Management and Policy (Ed.D) Program

FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. David B. Reid

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore teacher perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a professional development practice through the lived experiences of practicing teachers and literacy coaches.

Procedures

Subjects will participate in one in-depth interview and one follow-up interview. If permission is given to be audio recorded, the researcher will audio record the interviews. The interviews will take no more than one hour and will take place at the participants' current site of employment. Should the current employment site be unavailable interviews will take place via telephone, or video conference via Zoom or Skype video conferencing platforms. At the start of the interview, the researcher will explain the reason for her research.

The interview protocol will start as follows: the participant will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be used during the transcription of the audio recording. The researcher will ask participants to describe a brief history of their career background in education. The researcher will then move to ask questions related to the research questions:

> (1): What are *teachers'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?
>
> > a. What are *coaches'* perceptions of the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a professional development practice?

(2): How do *teachers* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

    b.   How do *coaches* perceive the implementation of an instructional coaching model?

(3): What are specific strategies *teachers* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

    c.   What are specific strategies *coaches* perceive as useful in an instructional coaching program?

Instruments

The interview protocol includes semi-structured, open-ended questions. The interview protocol questions are designed to inform how teachers and coaches perceive the effectiveness of a literacy coaching program as a professional development practice.

Interview questions will focus on the following areas: each individuals' career background in education and their lived experiences relating to their involvement in a literacy coaching professional development program.

Voluntary Nature

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from study participation at any time without any penalty or prejudice. Participants do not have to answer any of the questions they do not want to.

Anonymity

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym, for example, "Ms. Michaels." All data collection, analysis, and reporting will utilize coding to preserve anonymity.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. No reference shall be made in written or oral materials that could connect participants to this study.

Records

All records shall be stored in a secured facility for a minimum of three years after the conclusion of the study. After three years the data collected will be shredded and audiotapes destroyed. A digital copy of the data will be stored electronically on a USB memory key in the principal investigator's office in a secured and locked cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to identifying information and coding schema.

Potential Risks and/or Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research study.

Benefits to Participants

There are no direct benefits associated with participation. Your participation in this study will significantly contribute to the field of education professional development practices by highlighting your perceptions of the efficacy of literacy coaching as a professional development practice and your role in such practice. The school district and field of education will benefit from this study as it intends to understand how teachers are impacted by literacy coaching as a form of professional development. The research could influence school districts contemplating how best to support, design, develop and implement effective literacy coaching programs.

Remuneration
There is no remuneration of any kind for participating in this study.

Compensation
No compensation is associated with participation.

Alternative Procedures
The researcher is not aware of any alternative procedures that may be advantageous to the subject.

Contact Information
If the participant has any questions as to their rights as a human subject, he or she can contact Seton Hall Univerisity IRB at telephone (973) 313-6314

If the participant has any questions about the research, he or she can contact the Primary Investigator/Doctoral Student, Erin Stinson-Dioguardi at telephone: ███████ or email erin.stinsondioguardi@shu.edu or her Faculty Advisor, Dr. David Reid at telephone ███████ or email david.reid@shu.edu.

Participant Consent
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this signed and dated Informed Consent form will be provided to you.

_____	_____	_____
Particpant Name	Signature of Participant	Date
(Please Print)		

Agree to be Audio-Recorded or Not:
Please check your preference for audio recording:
+ I agree to be recorded
+ I do not agree to be recorded

If permission is given to be audio recorded, the researcher will audio record the interviews. However, audio recording is optional. The information collected from the interview will be transcribed. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher plans to contact participants to ensure that analyses accurately depict their perspectives.