HALL, MELISSA JILL, Ed.D. A Closer Look at Instructional Coaching: Lessons from Two Schools' Successful Implementations of Job-Embedded Professional Development. (2016)
Directed by Dr. Kimberly Hewitt. 143 pp.

Professional development is an investment for districts and schools because it aims to positively impact student achievement by increasing the efficacy and performance of teachers. District and school leaders are charged with selecting and implementing adult learning aligned with district and school visions for instruction, in order to provide teachers with innovative, high quality professional development experiences. Instructional coaching has emerged as a popular form of job-embedded professional development in the last decade because it provides teachers with support through modeling, demonstration, observation/feedback, and reflection.

This multi-site case study involved closely examining the instructional coaching models of two high schools that have experienced success with coaching as professional development for teachers. The schools were selected because they have implemented instructional coaching as their primary professional development model for more than two consecutive years and attribute gains in student achievement at least in part to their coaching initiatives.

The goal of my study was to identify key components and strategies for implementing a successful instructional coaching program. Through interviews of 20 participants, including coaches, principals, and teachers, and reviews of important documents and artifacts, I was able to answer the primary research question of what can be learned from an exemplary implementation model of instructional coaching. To

answer the primary research question, I focused on two secondary questions: (a) What are the roles of the key players (principals, coaches, and teachers) in a successful coaching model?, and (b) What are the most important influences in successful coaching programs?

This research found that principals must be actively engaged in the instructional coaching process with strong support for the coach/teacher relationship. Strong leadership is vital to the success of coaching initiatives. Coaches must be highly skilled in both pedagogical knowledge and interpersonal relations in order to build strong, trusting relationships with teachers and must build and maintain impeccable systems of communication with the principals and teachers they serve. The coach/teacher relationship should be a partnership where teachers are given voice and choice in the coaching process.

This research also substantiates the value of instructional coaching in building strong professional learning communities and teacher leadership through a strong commitment to a culture of open and honest dialogue around teaching and learning. My study has found that job-embedded coaching can be a highly successful initiative to improve teacher practice when implemented strategically.

A CLOSER LOOK AT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING: LESSONS FROM TWO

SCHOOLS' SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATIONS OF JOB-EMBEDDED

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Melissa Jill Hall

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2016

Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

This work is dedicated my amazing parents who never let me quit and supported me throughout my educational endeavors, and in loving memory of my grandfather, Howard L. Hall, Sr. ("Big Daddy") who had great faith in me and always believed in my work as an educator. He is the reason I became a teacher. He challenged me to earn my graduate degrees, but more than that, he instilled in me a passion for the power of public education. Big Daddy was and will always be my deepest inspiration and biggest fan.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Melissa Jill Hall, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair Kimberly Hewitt

Committee Members Carl Lashley

Rick Reitzug

Ann Davis

February 25, 2016
Date of Acceptance by Committee

February 25, 2016
Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support throughout this long journey! Calvin, Mom, Dad, Jenni, Bryan, Josh, Sydney & Zaiah—you all are my joy and everything I love about life! To my partner and best friend, Calvin Freeman, I want to thank you for being by my side through the hardest parts of this process. Thank you for your understanding and most of all, just for being there when I needed you. I am really looking forward to sharing many worry-free weekends together—the best is yet to come! You are simply my heart, and I thank God for you each day.

To my sister and best friend, Jennifer Savage, I just want to tell you how much I appreciate your prayers and words of encouragement. You are so special and you are always there when I need you most—especially in those final hours!

To my parents, Dale and Brenda Hall, you two are simply the best parents in the world and I am so blessed to be your daughter. Thank you for believing in me and never letting me give up even when I really tried. Mom, you are always there when I need you and you are the most selfless, giving person I have ever known. You have done so much for our family and your love is something we can always depend on in the toughest of times. Dad, you have been my biggest cheerleader and motivator. Thank you for the pep talks, the words of wisdom, and for picking up where Big Daddy left off and just never allowing me to give up. I am so happy to be able to share this with you and my heart is full of joy because I know how proud you are of this family accomplishment but I want

iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the school systems of the U.S. continue to work towards improving the

American educational system and foster the growth of elementary and secondary students

who can succeed as globally competitive, 21st century skilled citizens, accountability

continues to heighten, and standards increase for all aspects of education. The 1983

publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education

[NCEE], 1983), generated deep concern over the state of American schools, warning they

were failing to adequately educate students. This report, considered by some as the most

important education document in the 20th century, laid the foundation for decades of

reform in the American educational system as well as the increased presence of federal

control in our schools (Zhao, 2009). Accountability has become a central focus of school

reform, most notably with the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The law required that students

be given yearly reading and math assessments in Grades 3 through 8 in order to measure

grade level competencies and that schools meet adequate yearly progress in student

achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The goal of NCLB was to require

schools and districts to focus their attention on the academic achievement of historically

under-served student populations such as students from low-income families, students

with disabilities, and racial and ethnic subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Schools and districts that failed to meet the standards of adequate yearly progress faced sanctions by their state education departments (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The movement towards measuring student achievement through standardized testing has resulted in heightened accountability for school systems, school leaders, and especially teachers. Currently, 35 states and the District of Columbia now require that teacher evaluation be closely tied to student performance (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). The movement to use student growth data to evaluate teacher performance is in response to the U.S. federal government's regulations for accountability in education, first with NCLB waivers and more recently with the launch of the Race to the Top competition, allowing for the distribution of over $4 billion to states through a competitive application process. To be eligible to compete for these funds, states were required to develop models to assess teacher effectiveness based on student performance. There have been various models over the past decade proposed to increase accountability and evaluate teacher performance. In these accountability models, teacher performance incorporates student growth. This shift in accountability has made the need to build teacher capacity an even greater priority for school leaders.

As accountability in education increases, educational leaders are paying close attention to how students and teachers learn in their schools and classrooms (Knight, 2007). The need and demand for highly skilled teachers continues to grow, and professional growth for teachers continues to be a strong focus of school leaders as research confirms that the most important factor contributing to a student's success in school is the quality of teaching (Mizzell, 2010). Professional development is the strategy

schools and districts use to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of their teachers, and it is the most effective means of insuring high quality teachers are before their students each day (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). School leaders must be strategic in planning the professional support available to teachers in order to foster consistent and sustained improvement in teacher effectiveness. Just as instruction must be differentiated in order to meet the needs of every student, professional development must be differentiated in order to meet the needs of every teacher (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012). The emergence of job-embedded professional development as strategic support for teachers has enabled school leaders to provide teachers with personalized and prescriptive coaching and feedback in order to maximize impact on student achievement (Knight, 2007).

Learning Forward, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council, has found that professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work (Mizzell, 2010). When learning is school-based and embedded into the school day, all educators are engaged in professional growth rather than learning being limited to those who volunteer to participate outside of school (Mizzell, 2010). Because of the increasing shift towards school-based professional learning, job embedded instructional coaching has emerged as a popular strategy to provide ongoing sustained professional growth for teachers.

Problem Statement

In my role as a principal and district level educator, I have invested heavily in professional development. I have experienced great success with job-embedded coaching.

I have seen improvements in teacher effectiveness, Teacher Working Conditions Survey data, and in student achievement. Because of my own personal success with coaching as professional development, I became interested in what the research says about job embedded coaching. I was surprised to find that research on the effects of coaching and the data to support assertions that coaching positively impacts student achievement are just beginning to become prevalent and available. Although coaching is not a new concept, it has materialized rapidly in the past 10 years as a preferred professional development model.

With the popularity of job-embedded professional development growing rapidly, there are many options for school and district leaders to consider. Coaching services are available through textbook companies, big name education resource providers such as Pearson and Scholastic, independent educational consulting groups and individual service providers. Additionally, as school districts are realizing the benefits of job-embedded professional development, the number of full time coaches at the district and school level is increasing rapidly (Knight, 2007). Coaching comes in many different forms, both internal and external. Districts may cultivate coaching structures using school-based staff or district leaders. Additionally, coaching may be in the form of a contracted service from an outside organization or consulting firm. In order for district and school leaders to make informed decisions about professional development options for teachers, it is important for them to understand the best practices of coaching, and this is an area within the extant scholarship that requires further investigation. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is substantial advice within the existing literature about what successful coaching

programs should look like. However, not all coaching programs are successful, and I am interested in knowing what it takes to cultivate and sustain a successful coaching initiative using an external model for targeted professional development.

Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken to explore my interest in a deeper understanding of what influences the effectiveness of coaching initiatives in schools. The purpose of my study was to examine the relationships, practices, and components of exemplary instructional coaching programs in order to provide insights into and recommendations for maximizing the success of coaching. The coaching model considered for this study was an external model provided by an educational consulting group. Participants in the study were a part of a structured model of coaching.

Research Questions

1. What can we learn from an exemplary instructional coaching program?

   a. What are the roles of the key players (principals, coaches, and teachers) in a successful coaching model?

   b. What are the most important influences in successful implementation and sustainment?

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted a multi-site case study of two successful job embedded coaching programs in high schools.

Summary

In Chapter I, I described the research topic, problem statement and research questions that guided this study. Because professional development is paramount in

supporting the ongoing growth and education of teachers, this topic has significant

relevance to school leaders and those who are charged with providing high quality staff

development experiences for teachers. In Chapter II, I will share relevant research around

instructional coaching and a conceptual framework I developed based on my

understanding of instructional coaching and knowledge gained from the review of

literature. Chapter III describes my methodology for a multi-case research study of

successful job embedded coaching. I provide relevant information to frame and situate

the research, including details regarding site selection, participant information, and my

own positionality in the research. In Chapter IV, I present the data collected through

interviews with coaches, administrators, and teachers, and my review of relevant artifacts

from the two coaching initiatives. Chapter IV provides deep insights into the background

of the coaching and the lived experiences of key participants from each school. This

study concludes with Chapter V, which summarizes the findings and provides my

interpretations of the data and its relevance and implications for future instructional

coaching implementations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The need to improve the quality of teaching through high quality professional development is growing as administrators and teachers strive to increase student achievement (DeMonte, 2013). Over the past 20 years, teacher support and professional development have changed dramatically. Traditional "one size fits all" workshop models and conferences, which are not tailored to fit individual needs and often require teachers to leave their classrooms in order to attend, have become less desirable. The focus has shifted to professional development opportunities that are job-embedded, collaborative, and individualized (DeMonte, 2013).

According to the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET, 2012), effective professional development has a "focus on curriculum and shared instructional challenges; collective participation; opportunities for active learning; sustained duration; and coherence with student achievement goals" (p. 4). Although recent federal education regulations prominently feature the term *job-embedded professional development* and propose it as a strategy for school improvement, only recently has the concept been explicitly defined and shown to significantly impact student achievement through research such as that of The National Staff Development Council (2010), The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004), and Jim Knight (2007) with The Kansas Coaching Project. Job-embedded professional development refers to teacher learning that occurs

within the school setting, is grounded in day to day teaching practice, and is designed to

enhance teachers' practices in order to improve student learning (NSDC, 2010). This

review of literature discusses the various models of job-embedded coaching as

professional development for teachers and the research that examines the impact of job-

embedded instructional coaching on teacher capacity and effectiveness. I will be defining

coaching based on the current literature and research and the findings of the

aforementioned researchers will be discussed in greater detail.

Emergence of Coaching as Professional Development

The emergence of coaching as professional development is relatively new in the

field of education; however, coaching is not a new idea. The coaching profession has

emerged from a number of fields and combines ideas and theories about human

performance and achievement (Reiss, 2007). For decades, educational researchers have

sought to improve instructional practice, and ultimately student learning (Neufeld &

Roper, 2003). Education specialists have studied the types of staff development offered

to teachers and made recommendations on how to enhance professional practice, but the

recommendations began to change drastically in the 1980s.

Prior to that time, the primary professional development model in the United

States was in-service trainings which primarily involved single session workshops with

no follow up learning to support reflective application. Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers

were among the early researchers to critique professional development models and their

impact on teacher efficacy. Their research supported the notion that the most effective

teacher training included theory, demonstration, feedback, and classroom demonstration

(Joyce & Showers, 1980). Decades later in their 2002 published research, they cautioned that there was only a 10% return on the professional development investment with professional development modules that did not include sustained support over time (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Throughout the end of the 20th century and continuing today, educational experts have closely examined the multifaceted approaches to professional development, especially as the importance of professional development grew during the school reform movements of the 1990s and early 2000s. Lieberman (1995) advised that professional growth cannot occur in isolation and that teachers must be engaged in collaborative, practical learning experiences to maximize gains. Additionally, Sparks and Hirsh suggested paradigm shifts away from traditional, less effective professional development approaches. They encouraged job-embedded learning, focusing on continuous improvement, and content-specific learning for teachers (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997, as cited in Church, Bland, & Church, 2010).

In a 2009 status report on teacher development published by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC; now known as Learning Forward), researchers reported that six of 10 teachers (59%) shared that content-related related learning opportunities were useful or very useful (NSDC, 2010). However, fewer than half found professional development in other areas to be of much value (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Additionally, they found that the United States has made some progress in the induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers and building teachers' content knowledge. However, there is still a need for job-embedded professional development

that sustains teacher learning and fosters collaborative teaching and learning

environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

According to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004), the best

information available about the essential components of professional development for

teachers suggests:

- It must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation driven by

  participants.

- It must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge and a focus on

  professional learning communities rather than individuals.

- It must be connected to teachers' work with students.

- It must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching

  and problem solving practices.

- It must engage the teachers in reflective practice in order to support learning

  and development.

- It must be connected to other aspects of school reform.

These recommendations for adult learning have led to great interest in coaching as

a critical component of teacher professional development. Taking into consideration the

recommendations of education experts and drawing upon the success of coaching in

athletics, school district leaders across the country have adopted coaching as a

professional model for the development of teachers (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Lieberman

(1995) suggested adult learning should be as engaging as we aim for student learning to

be; yet traditional forms of professional development lack learning opportunities such as

experiencing, creating, solving real problems, and working with others. For adult

learners, traditional staff development takes place outside of the school but authentic

opportunities to learn from and with colleagues happens inside the school (1995).

Coaching is a natural outgrowth of the lessons we have learned from decades of research

on professional development and building teacher capacity. The purpose of professional

development is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions

they need to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward, 2011). Coaching

is an important means of professional development because a skilled coach helps

individuals create change in what they think, believe, and ultimately what they do by

helping to unlock their hidden potential to bring extraordinary results (Reiss, 2007).

Implementing a coaching model does mean giving up other types of professional

learning. There are important benefits to whole group discussions and intensive summer

institutes that focus on content and pedagogy. But improving teachers' learning and

subsequently their practice, requires professional development that is closely and

explicitly tied to their daily work in the classroom (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Job-

embedded coaching addresses these requirements and recommendations and is therefore

emerging as an effective approach to meet the needs of adult learners in the teaching

profession.

Models of Coaching

Job-embedded professional development for teachers refers to learning that

occurs during the day to day teaching practice and is designed to enhance content

knowledge and professional practice with the intent of improving student learning. There

are four models most frequently mentioned in the research on coaching teachers. They are: peer coaching, cognitive coaching, literacy coaching, and instructional coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2008). These four models are being used across the U.S. today for professional development.

Peer Coaching

Peer coaching emerged in the 1980s as a best practice to maximize teacher learning. Joyce and Showers (1980) defined peer coaching as the collaborative work of teachers to solve problems and answer questions that arise during the teaching and learning process. Longitudinal studies conducted by Robert Bush from 1979 to 1983 found that when the components of peer coaching—modeling, practice, and feedback accompanied professional development opportunities, teachers' implementation of newly acquired instructional skills increased by 2% with each added component (as cited in Cornett & Knight, 2008). Training followed up with peer coaching was found to be much more effective at enhancing teacher efficacy than without the peer interactions (Joyce & Showers, 1980). According to Cornett and Knight (2008), Showers was able to conclude through his own research and that of other studies on peer coaching, that 75% of teachers who received peer coaching transferred the new learning of the initial professional development to classroom practice, as compared to only 15% of teachers who did not participate in coaching after the professional development (p. 198).

Cognitive Coaching

Cognitive Coaching is a process which encourages teachers to explore the thinking behind their practices. Developed in the 1980s by Art Costa and Bob Garmston,

the mission of Cognitive Coaching is to increase cognitive capacity for high performance

as individuals and members of communities (Center for Cognitive Coaching, n.d.).

Cognitive coaching has been reported to promote values such as risk-taking, open-

mindedness, and continuous learning that can support and enhance collaborative cultures

(Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993). According to Cornett and Knight (2008), the rich

benefits of Cognitive Coaching are well documented through qualitative research but the

impact on student achievement and other positive outcomes have not been substantiated

through rigorous means of investigation and scientific research (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

Literacy Coaching

In 2004, the International Reading Association defined "Literacy Coach" as a

person who supports teachers in their daily work (as cited in Cornett & Knight, 2008).

Literacy coaching can involve any type of support which aims to increase literacy. The

International Literacy Association's (2010) Standards for Reading Professionals define a

Literacy Coach as a

> specialist [who] may have the primary responsibility of supporting adult learning.
> These professionals provide coaching and other professional development support
> that enables teachers to think reflectively about improving student learning and
> implementing various instructional programs and practices. Often, they provide
> essential leadership for the school's entire literacy program by helping and
> creating long-term staff development that supports both the development and
> implementation of a literacy program over months and years. Such work requires
> these specialists to work with individuals and groups of teachers (e.g., working
> with grade-level teams and leading study groups). (para. 3)

The Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse suggests that effective Literacy Coaching involves

collaborative dialogue for teachers at all knowledge and experience levels, facilitates a

school-based vision for literacy linked to district goals, incorporates data driven student and teacher learning, is job embedded, and involves classroom observations over time (Shanklin, 2006). The literacy coach plays a very important role in realizing the literacy vision of a school through its actual implementation in classrooms.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is an approach to professional learning in which instructional coaches support teachers as they learn to incorporate research-based instructional practices. The principles of instructional coaching are grounded in research on effective professional development models, professional learning communities, and researched-based instructional strategies (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004). Instructional coaching is content-driven, job-embedded support intended to assist teachers in meeting the aims of instructional reform (Gallucci, DeVoogt Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). The job-embedded support may be in the form of classroom observations, demonstrations of model practices, and cycles that include pre and post conferencing with the teacher (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Knight (2007) recommends that instructional coaches consider seven components when collaborating with teachers. Although these components do not have to be a part of every effective instructional coaching model, most models do include some variation of these seven practices. The seven practices include:

1. Enrolling the teacher
2. Collaborative planning
3. Modeling

4. Post-conferencing

5. Coach observation

6. Collaborative data analysis, and

7. Ongoing, continued support

The coach begins by enrolling the teacher through a one on one interview process prior to the professional learning in order to build a relationship and set learning goals based on the interests and concerns of the teacher. Collaborative planning involves co-constructing a lesson around a new teaching practice. Next, the coach models the lesson in the teacher's classroom while the teacher observes using the observation questions that were constructed collaboratively. After the model lesson, the teacher and coach meet to debrief using a teacher directed post-conferencing format. The teacher is then given the opportunity to teach a lesson while the coach observes using the same co-constructed observation tool previously used to observe the coach. After both observations are complete, the coach and the teacher explore the observation data together and share mutual observations, trends and ideas. Lastly, the coach provides ongoing, continued support to the teacher while the teacher implements the mutually agreed upon strategies (Knight, 2007). It is important for instructional coaches to be knowledgeable about their content area as well as the achievement goals of the school and district in which they are coaching (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Participant Roles in Coaching

Professional learning can have a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge and on student learning if it is sustained over time, content based, and embedded in the

work of professional learning communities that are grounded in continuous improvement

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). While coaching is emerging as a professional

development model that addresses these requirements, it is important to consider the roles

of all stakeholders involved in the coaching process. The National Staff Development

Council (2009) concluded that research suggests professional development tends to be

more effective when it is an integral part of school and district reform efforts. When

teachers can connect their own learning to curriculum guidelines, strategic planning and

district initiatives, the learning is more meaningful and therefore has potential for greater

impact (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). The Annenberg Institute for School Reform

explained coaching in the following manner:

> Instructional coaching is fundamentally about teachers, teacher leaders, school administrators, and district leaders examining practice in reflective ways, with a strong focus on student learning and results as the ultimate barometer of improvement. In coaching, teacher leaders, or coaches, facilitate and guide a school-based professional learning program for groups of teachers in specific content areas. These groups focus on the intersection of school and student needs and district reform initiatives with the goal of building a professional learning community that supports collective leadership, continuous improvement of teaching practice, and ultimately, improved student learning. (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004, p. 3)

Coaching is not just about individual teachers. Coaching supports the collaboration of

professional learning communities. Through coaching experiences, teachers learn to put

student learning in the forefront of every conversation. Coaches facilitate the efficacy of

school-wide improvement in student-focused goal setting and instructional practice.

District Involvement

For many years, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has required low performing schools to set aside at least 10% of their Title I allocations for school-wide professional development (Hirsh, 2009). More than 40 states have adopted professional development standards aimed at improving student learning, and several national studies on what distinguishes high-performing, high poverty schools from their lower performing counterparts consistently identify collaborative school-wide professional development as critical to the school's success (Hirsh, 2009). A school's plans for professional development are most effective when they are customized to school standards and differentiated to meet the needs of the teachers. The school and school district must take the lead in developing a plan for its own professional learning (Cooper, 2009). In order for professional development to be effective, the district leaders must insure that it relates directly to what teachers are doing every day. The most effective professional development is focused specifically on the content that teachers are using for their instruction (Hammond, 1999). Neufeld and Roper (2003) suggest district involvement in shaping the model for coaching is crucial. Their research supports the idea that

> Successful coaching depends not only on the knowledge and skill of individual coaches, but also on a number of district and school level factors that can enhance or thwart coaching efforts. The work of coaching is highly localized and the principal plays a key role in the program, but its ultimate success at the school level depends on the district. Therefore, it is the district that needs to shape the coaches' role, focus the coaches' work around the district's instructional goals, and articulate the connection between that work and schools' overall reform strategy. (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 15)

District support is vital to the success of professional development initiatives. Additionally, as the district sets the standard and focus for improvement, the involvement of the principal is critical to the overall implementation of school-based professional development. Leadership is at the heart of successful learning for the students as well as the teachers.

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004) suggests the support of district curriculum leaders is particularly crucial. According to their report, district leaders should:

- Provide clear, explicit, and continuing support for the coaching programs.

- Understand the schools' reforms and possess the knowledge and skill with which to support schools in implementing them.

- Ensure the coaches have well-specified roles and explicitly detail those roles and responsibilities to all district educators.

- Provide principals with professional development that enables them to create a school culture in which coaching is accepted.

- Ensure the process of selecting coaches is rigorous and fair at both the district and school levels, and results in the hiring of coaches who will be received as credible by the teachers and principals with whom they work (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004).

With strong support, direction, and accountability from the district, principals are better equipped to create school cultures suitable for coaching (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

School-based Leadership

Principals need strong direction, support and accountability from their district to create school cultures suitable for coaching. However, principals play a crucial role in insuring effective professional development is successful (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Over the years, the expectations of principals have changed. Where the job was previously defined as primarily managerial, principals are now expected to not only manage their buildings but also serve as change leaders and improve student achievement (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013). The role of the principal is significant when implementing coaching as professional development. Teachers as learners are similar to students as learners in that they benefit from multiple opportunities to learn. Those opportunities are created when teachers are afforded the time, space, structures and support to engage in school based coaching (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010). Kay Psencik (2011) suggests principals need a new vision of school leadership that includes developing the skills of their teachers:

> As principals face greater demands and pressure to have all students reach higher levels of achievement, leading is increasingly challenging. Leadership requires continual learning and a cycle of improvement, with staff continually exploring and honing new skills. However, the traditional model of school leadership, in which principals are not skilled in leading professional learning, is pervasive. The leader's role is pivotal to schools becoming communities of learners in which teachers continuously improve their practice so they can enable students to succeed at higher levels. (p. 10)

Effective school leaders make teacher education a primary focus in their daily work. In discussing principals as instructional leaders, Steiner and Kowal (2007) noted "a natural way for school leaders to take on the role of instructional leader is to serve as a

chief 'coach' for teachers by designing and supporting strong classroom level
instructional coaching" (p. 1).

In discussing principals as leaders of learning, Psencik (2011) asserted, "They
ensure teachers expand their deep knowledge of content as well as their skills in effective
instructional strategies. They recognize quality professional learning is key to supporting
significant improvement in student performance" (p. 46). In order to structure a
successful coaching program, principals should begin by helping teachers understand the
importance of high quality professional development and how it relates to student
performance. It is vital for the principal to emphasize the importance of continuing
education for all staff members (Croft et al., 2010). Creating a culture where continued
professional development is valued and considered essential should be a priority for
school leaders. This can be done through ongoing communication of the expectations and
vision for continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Principals must be
thoughtful in their planning of professional development, and they must be effective
instructional leaders in order to support the implementation of the initiatives they
implement. Aguilar (2013) asserts:

> In order for a site to ripe for a coach, the principal must demonstrate some degree
> of effective leadership. The main areas to assess for are in the domains of how a
> leader fosters vision or mission, determines instructional foci, creates and sustains
> a collaborative culture, organizes professional development, and makes decisions.
> (p.13)

Successful implementation of coaching as professional development necessitates taking
time to select high qualified coaches, providing support in multiple logistical areas, and

insuring coaches are well trained prior to their work with teachers (Lloyd & Modlin, 2012).

Providing the necessary learning time is another key factor principals must consider when planning for coaching as professional development. Teachers and coaches must be afforded time to engage in reflective dialogue during each coaching visit (Croft et al., 2010). It is also recommended that principals work to extend the learning between coaching visits by allowing teachers to visit the classrooms of colleagues, participate in professional learning communities, and engage in collaborative teaching (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Beverly Showers (1985) reminds us:

> Not only are principals in a unique position to influence building norms, they are also perfectly situated to facilitate the implementation of coaching systems through collaborative problem solving with their teachers. Principals can design flexible scheduling for training, observations, feedback, and planning to meet the needs of individual faculties; offer rewards and incentives to encourage developing norms of collegiality; and solicit support from parents and community members by explaining the purpose and expected outcomes of intensive training programs embedded in larger school improvement efforts. (p. 25)

Additionally, the collaboration between principals and coaches is critical for effective teacher support. Neufeld and Roper (2003) stress the importance of principal support for coaches. Principals must honor coaches' roles and not divert their time to other areas of the school (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). It is important that coaching not be instituted as an evaluative process and it should not be mandated (Aguilar, 2013). Principals must recognize that coaches should only be giving teachers formative feedback aimed at helping teachers get better; a coach's feedback should never be summative or evaluative in nature (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Conversations between coaches and

principals about teachers' work must be treated as delicate. Because coaches do not evaluate teachers, they must be able to discuss their work and their progress candidly with administrators in order to support teachers' continuous growth. Coaches and principals must work out the gentle balance between confidentiality and reasonable feedback so the coach can be a productive informant for the principal while also maintaining a strong trusting relationship with the teacher (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The relationship between the coach and the teacher must be protected in order to maximize the impact of coaching.

In addition to supporting the relationship building component of the coaching process, principals must have substantial knowledge about the content their teachers are working to implement. In order for the principal to appropriately set priorities for the coaching, the principal must have a clear instructional vision aligned with district goals and expectations. The principal determines the role of and more importantly drives the incorporation of the coach into the school culture (Jorissen, Salazar, Morrison, & Foster, 2008). The collaboration between the coach and principal is as critical to the success of coaching projects as the relationship between the coach and teacher. As Hall and Simeral (2008) suggest:

> When the collaborative partnership between the instructional coach and the building administrator is effective, the positive results are clear. The school community benefits from the expansion of the teachers' instructional capacity, and, as a direct consequence, the school makes progress toward its ultimate goal of increased student achievement. The key is for the coach and the administrator to view their roles as interdependent, relying on each other to fully support, challenge, and guide teachers as they strive for improvement. (p. 30)

The coach/principal partnership begins with the instructional vision of the principal for the school. No element of an instructional coaching program is more important than its design and fit with the particular goals and needs of each school, and the principal as the instructional leader is charged with insuring that fit (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

The Coach and Teacher Partnership

Coaches are onsite professional development specialists who work collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into classrooms (Knight, 2007). Despite the growing prevalence of coaching as professional development in schools, there is not a standardized model for coaching. School systems may identify teacher leaders to serve as coaches, hire content specialists to serve as coaches for multiple school settings, or they may choose to contract with external service providers. Additionally, school systems have a variety of purposes for implementing coaching as professional development model. Some adopt a coaching strategy to improve instructional capacity across the district, while others focus their efforts only on low-performing schools (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Districts and principals define coaches' goals differently depending on the local context and their goals for reform and professional development. Coaches may be asked train teachers to use a particular approach to teach a particular content area, or they may work to improve overall instructional efficacy or to promote a more reflective, collaborative, and professional culture among the school staff. Coaching programs across the United States are extremely varied because they tend to be designed to meet local needs using available resources (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). In order to fully understand the role of a coach in a

successful coaching initiative, it is important to understand what coaches are not. Elena

Aguilar (2013) explains a few things coaches must never be used for:

1. Coaches are not program enforcers. Coaches should never be used as

    enforcers, reporters, or evaluators.

2. Coaches are not there to 'fix' people. Coaching is not something you should

    do with or to ineffective teachers. Coaching won't be effective if the client

    doesn't want to engage in it.

3. Coaches are not therapists. A coach does not pursue in-depth explorations of

    someone's psyche, childhood, or emotional issues. Although these things may

    arise, the role of the coach is not to dwell here. A coach must remember the

    focus of coaching is on learning and developing new skills and capacities.

4. Coaches are not consultants. A consultant is usually an expert who trains

    others in a way of doing something. Coaches may do this, but not necessarily.

    A coach helps build the capacity of others by facilitating their learning (p.19)

The competence of coaches is vital to the success of coaching initiatives. Earning

the confidence of the teacher is one of the first and most important steps in building a

strong coaching relationship and this can only be done when the teacher believes the

coach has the skills and experience to positively impact their practice. Psencik (2011)

proposes,

> Competent people inspire trust. Competent people have the skills, attitudes, and
> dispositions to achieve what they say they can. Taking on challenges outside
> one's area of expertise can be tempting, but staying focused in one's area of
> competence is essential to having others pay attention to the coach and to feel

confident in the leader. The coach's competence gives others the courage to act. (p. 91)

Although the specific competencies of coaches vary from school to school, there are several qualities that are common throughout the research and literature. As Kowal and Steiner (2007) suggest, "the current work points to three broad categories of skills effective coaches should possess: pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and interpersonal skills" (p. 3).

Pedagogical knowledge. Instructional coaches should possess a strong level of pedagogical knowledge in order to be effective in their coaching practice. Highly effective coaches have a strong understanding of how students learn and are skilled in developing and implementing instructional strategies and best practices (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). They should possess expert skills in every facet of classroom instruction from questioning strategies to effective classroom management. In order to successfully support teachers in improving their practice, coaches must know what excellent teaching looks like and be able to articulate and model it for teachers (Croft et al., 2010). Coaches are charged with helping teachers transfer their learning about new practices into their classrooms. While receiving support from their coach, teachers are encouraged to try the strategies they are learning, and if they encounter difficulties, the coach is able to provide feedback for improved implementation (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Content knowledge. In order for coaches to have a great impact on the instructional efficacy of teachers, they should have a thorough understanding of the subject matter they are coaching. Content knowledge is especially important when the

focus is on a subject area such as literacy or mathematics, or when coaching at the secondary level because these areas of focus require an in-depth understanding of the complexities of the content (International Reading Association, 2006). Content knowledge can also include knowledge about specific programs or areas of focus. For example, a teacher may receive coaching in classroom management, and the coach's content expertise would be focused on student management strategies. Another example of content knowledge in practice would be coaching for a particular model of teaching such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs. A STEM coach may work with a teacher on implementing the design process in their classroom or on implementing problem-based learning (North Carolina New Schools, 2013).

Interpersonal capabilities. Successful coaching hinges on the coaches' ability to build and sustain strong relationships with the school administrators, other support staff, and most importantly the teachers they coach. It is vital for coaches to possess strong interpersonal skills and competencies as these skills foster their ability to build trust and credibility which are integral components of successful coaching relationships (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Psencik (2011) suggests that a coach's success "depends upon the coach's own trustworthiness" (p. 87) and she suggests a coach should have six essential traits: self-awareness, honesty, sincerity, competence, reliability and the ability to be "other-centered" (p. 88). Researchers from the Kansas Coaching Project have found coaching practices to be grounded in seven principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Cornett & Knight, 2008). These seven principles are described

below and provide a conceptual language for how coaches interact with school staff members.

Equality: Coaches and teachers are equal partners. Instructional coaches serve as thought partners and critical friends for the teachers they coach. They value the thoughts and beliefs of the teachers and treat them as their equal. Instructional coaches listen with the intent to learn and understand, and then respond, rather than with the intent to persuade (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

Choice: Teachers should have a choice in what and how they learn. Student choice is encouraged regardless of the level or subject matter because when students have a voice in their learning their level of investment and engagement increases. Effective coaches use the same approach with their adult learners (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). The teacher-coach relationship is a partnership, so the coach does not make decisions for the teacher. Teacher choice is very implicit in the coaching process. The coach's goal is to tailor the learning to meet the individual needs of the teacher and offer choices for learning (Knight, 2007).

Voice: Professional learning should empower and respect teacher voice. Effective coaching hinges on the power of the partnership between the coach and the teacher. All points of view in a partnership are honored and respected. By encouraging teachers to express their thoughts and opinions about the content being learned, coaches are empowering the teachers to act as reflective practitioners. When teachers act as thought partners with the coaches, they are invested in the learning. "Instructional

coaches view coaching as a process that helps teachers find their voice, not a process determined to make teachers think a certain way" (Cornett & Knight, 2008, p. 5).

   Dialogue: Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue. The dialogue between teacher and coach is vital to the success of the professional development for the teacher. Coaches should be skilled communicators who are able to provide authentic feedback to the teachers and engage them in meaningful discussions about their observations (Croft et al., 2010). Instructional coaches avoid manipulation, engage participants in conversation about content, and collaborate as both a thought partner and learner in the coaching process with the teacher (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

   Reflection: Reflection is an integral part of professional learning. Reflection is a vital component of authentic adult learning. Coaching is a partnership in which the coach provides the teacher with information to consider. The coach supports the teacher in making instructional decisions through deep consideration and reflection (Cornett & Knight, 2008). When teachers act as reflective practitioners, they gain a deeper understanding of the intersection of their content knowledge and their own teaching style. Coaches provide explicit feedback to teachers and support them in transferring the feedback into practice through reflective inquiry. By gaining a better understanding of their own individual teaching styles through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom (Croft et al., 2010).

   Praxis: Teachers should apply their learning to their real life practice. The partnership between coaches and teachers should focus closely on how to use the ideas and strategies they discuss in the classroom as they are being learned (Cornett & Knight,

2008). The goal of coaching is for teachers to turn their learning into practice while the learning is occurring, so the learning is always in context to real life practice. "Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting just as their students do; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see" (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 598). This approach to learning empowers teachers to make the leap from theory to accomplished practice.

Reciprocity: Coaches should expect to get as much as they give. Coaching is most effective when the coach is able to form a strong, trusting relationship with the teacher. When the coach approaches the relationship as a collaborative partnership, the coach becomes an equal partner in learning. Through the equal partnership, the learning is shared, and the coach learns alongside the collaborating teachers (Knight, 2007). With each professional learning experience, coaches become more deeply skilled in assessing and strengthening the practices of teachers (Cornett & Knight, 2008). As the instructional practices of the teachers improve, the coaching practices of the coaches also improve.

Coaches have a tremendous responsibility to the teachers they serve and the relationship between the coach and teacher is extremely important. Coaches take teachers on a journey of self-reflection that may be scary to teachers because it is a journey of change (Aguilar, 2013). Coachees will only join their coaches on that journey of change when trust and they feel comfortable and safe in the relationship.

Research on the Impact of Coaching

Educational coaching is a relatively new field of professional development. Educators and policy makers want to know what research says about coaching but

currently there have not been enough relevant research based studies to make definitive

conclusions about the impact of coaching on student achievement (Cornett & Knight,

2008). One reason this is the case is that many forms of coaching are newly developed

approaches. These approaches began with people developing theories and practices,

conducting exploratory research, and making recommendations for implementation

(Cornett & Knight, 2008). Jake Cornett and Jim Knight with the Kansas Coaching Project

have examined more than 200 publications describing some form of research related to

coaching, but most of the studies are preliminary and do not meet the standards of

rigorous research (Cornett & Knight, 2008). The majority of the publications on coaching

have been focused on the impact of job-embedded professional development on teacher

attitudes and effectiveness. However, the teacher effectiveness in these studies has been

based more on perceptual data and qualitative research than on student achievement data.

The research on the impact of coaching as professional development is emerging and

only very recently have studies been published that demonstrate that job-embedded

professional development can significantly improve student achievement (NIET, 2012).

Recently, researchers at Stanford University, University of Chicago, and Literacy

Collaborative published the results of their longitudinal four-year study on the impact of

literacy coaching on student learning (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010). In this

federally funded study, the researchers were assessing the impact of Literacy

Collaborative professional development on student achievement. The Literacy

Collaborative builds upon 30 years of research and development grounded in the reading

theories of Marie Clary and elaborated by literacy experts Fountas and Pinnell

(Biancarosa et al., 2010). The overall goal is to improve the reading and writing achievement of all children in a school. A key component of Literacy Collaborative is the training and support of school-based literacy coaches who provide extensive school-based professional development activities, including individual coaching to individual building teachers (Biancarosa et al., 2010). The study showed value-added improvements in K-2 student learning of 16%, 28%, and 32% over three years of implementation as compared with the baseline year (Biancarosa et al., 2010). The study also found improvements in classroom teaching that were correlated with the amount of coaching teachers received and with student achievement outcomes (Biancarosa et al., 2010). The impact of the coaching program varied significantly across schools and across classrooms in the same school primarily due to the variance in the number of coaching sessions teachers received (NIET, 2012). The schools whose teachers received the most coaching experienced the greatest gains in student learning. Furthermore, researchers found the teacher-per-coach ratio to be a critical factor in the efficacy of one-on-one coaching, suggesting that when the ratio becomes too large, the quality of the coaching is compromised (NIET, 2012). The researchers found that in similar schools, unequal amounts of coaching had a stunning impact on student achievement outcomes (Biancarosa et al., 2010). In schools where coaching was consistently implemented with low coach-to-teacher ratios, the impact was significantly greater. While this study is one of few that correlates coaching with improvements in student achievement it offers promising evidence for the impact of individualized, on the job teacher learning when implemented as recommended by the developers of the Literacy Collaborative model.

Although the research on the effects of job-embedded professional development on student achievement is emerging, there is significant literature on the positive impacts of coaching on teacher practice. When coaching is integral to a larger instructional improvement plan that aligns professional development goals with district goals, it has the potential to substantially improve instructional efficacy which ultimately improves student achievement (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Coaching shows great promise for changing professional practice as well as school culture (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Effective coaching encourages collaboration as well as reflective practice. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform suggests that a growing body of research shows that coaching is a highly effective form of professional development in the following ways (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004):

- Effective coaching encourages collaborative, reflective practice

- Effective embedded professional learning promotes positive changes in culture

- Data analysis is encouraged to inform practice

- Coaching promotes the implementation of learning and reciprocal accountability

- Coaching supports collective, interconnected leadership across a school system

With coaching, teachers apply their learning more deeply and consistently than teachers working alone which enables them to improve their capacity to act as reflective practitioners (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Limitations and Lessons in School-based Coaching

Creating and sustaining high quality professional development programs is a complex task for educational leaders. Even when the most highly recommended conditions are met for the implementation of coaching, districts, schools and coaches still face challenges in implementing this emerging model of professional development (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Coaching can be a costly professional development model. As districts face challenging budget cuts and financial barriers, finding resources to support the allocation of coaches for professional development can be very difficult (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Districts must determine how many coaches they can afford and how to most effectively deploy the coaches in order to achieve the greatest impact (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Because coaching is a relatively new model of professional development, there is not enough research to establish a set of guidelines for implementation.

Another challenge with allocating coaches is making sure coaches are not spread too thin. In order to be effective, teachers must have sufficient time with the coaches in order to learn from them. When coaching is fragmented and lacks continuity, coaches and teachers find it more difficult to build strong partnerships. Without the strong relationships in place, coaching cannot be effective (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Coaching requires a great deal of time. Even with strong commitment from district and school leaders, it is difficult to provide coaches and teachers with adequate time to implement this professional development model to the fullest extent (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). One of the most critical components of instructional coaching is the

conferencing between the coach and the teacher. In order for the feedback to be most effective, it must be timely. Coaches have found that immediate conferencing is essential to the coaching process yet scheduling the feedback conferences is one of the most challenging parts of the coaching process (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Research suggests that time delays reduce the effectiveness of feedback (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

There are many relationships involved in coaching. The coach is charged with developing and sustaining a strong, trusting relationship with the teacher but must also maintain a productive relationship with the principal. Balancing the interpersonal components of the coaching process is challenging. Coaching is non-evaluative and coaches are not administrators. It is imperative district and school leaders support the work of coaches by clearly defining each stakeholder's role in the process. When roles are not clearly defined, job-embedded professional development will not yield productive results. There must be a commitment and buy in from all participants in order to achieve maximum efficacy (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

One of the greatest limitations of coaching as professional development is the lack of definitive research linking coaching to student achievement gains. Although the preliminary research is promising, more research is needed to support coaching as a research-based strategy for improvement in student achievement. Additional research is needed to identify the most effective strategies in building and sustaining coaching programs because there is great variance in the way coaching is currently conducted (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Without definitive links between coaching, teacher learning, and student achievement, it is difficult to justify the costly expense of coaching (Neufeld

& Roper, 2003). In tight budget times, it is much less expensive for districts to revert back to older, large group forms of professional development models unless there is proof that differentiated, individualized staff development will yield substantially greater gains in student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

From my review of the literature, I created a conceptual framework to guide my research and data collection (see Figure 1). This conceptual framework represents the most critical components of the coaching process.
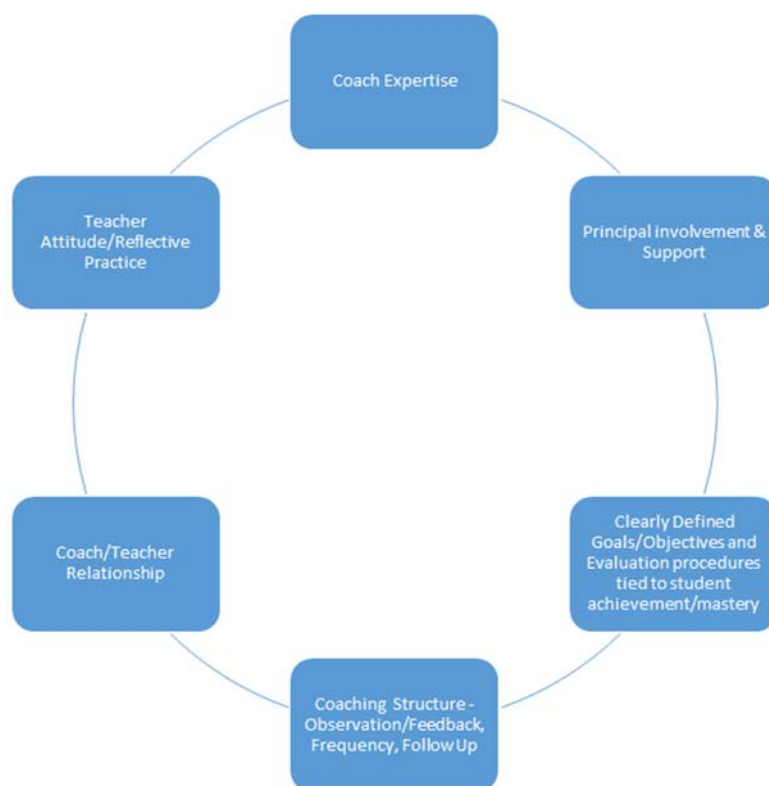
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

The framework is designed as a cyclical relationship with each part of the coaching process being interdependent with the other. Coaching is a process and in order to be most highly effective, the cycle is continuous. Each of the components is important to the success of a school-based coaching program and is grounded in the research cited in the review of literature (see Table 1). This model is implemented in order to change teacher practice, which in theory, will improve student achievement.

Table 1

Correlation of Conceptual Framework to Research

Framework Component	Research Connection
Coach Expertise	• Steiner and Kowal (2007): Coaches should possess pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and interpersonal skills. • Croft et al. (2010): Coaches must know what excellent teaching looks like and be able to articulate and model it for teachers. • Neufeld and Roper (2003): Coaches must be able to provide feedback that leads to improvement. • International Literacy Association (2010): Content knowledge is especially important when the focus is on a subject area such as literacy or math because these areas require in-depth understanding of the complexities of the content.
Principal Involvement & Support	• Showers (1985): Principals are perfectly situated to facilitate the implementation of coaching systems to support school improvement. • Neufeld and Roper (2003): Principals play a crucial role in ensuring professional development is effective. • Lloyd and Modlin (2012): Principals must ensure coaches are well trained and must provide support in multiple logistical areas. • Psencik (2011): Principals must be instructional leaders and work to create culture of learning in their school communities. • Steiner and Kowal (2007): The principal must ensure that a coaching program aligns with the instructional vision of the school. • Jorissen, Salazar, Morrison, and Foster (2008): The principal drives the incorporation of the coach into the school culture.

Table 1

(Cont.)

Framework Component	Research Connection
Clearly Defined Goals/Objectives and Evaluation Procedures tied to student achievement/mastery	• Steiner and Kowal (2007): Instructional coaching programs must have clear goals and must be closely aligned to the school's instructional vision. • Knight (2007): Teachers should have a voice in setting the goals for their work with coaches and it should be aligned with what they want to accomplish with students. • Aguilar (2013): Coaching programs should work with principals and teachers to identify high-leverage areas of focus, an area that has great potential for improving outcomes with students.
Clearly Defined Goals/Objectives and Evaluation Procedures tied to student achievement/mastery (cont.)	• Learning Forward Standards of Professional Learning (2011): Professional learning should be consistently evaluated to address its worth, merit and effects. The results should be communicated with teachers and used for future planning.
Coaching Structure: Observation/Feedback, Frequency, Follow-Up	• Knight (2007): Instructional coaching should involve a cycle of planning, modeling, observing, feedback & data analysis, and ongoing support. • Aguilar (2013): Coaching should involve learning activities aimed at providing valuable feedback to teachers. • Joyce and Showers (1980, 2002) and Showers (1985): Professional development yields much higher returns when support is sustained over time.
Coach/Teacher Relationship	• Neufeld and Roper (2003): The relationship between the coach and teacher must be honored and protected in order to maximize the impact of coaching. • Knight (2007): Coaches should adopt a partnership approach with teachers and treat them as equal partners in the coaching process. • Psencik (2011): Trust is essential in coaching relationships. • Aguilar (2013): Teachers can be apprehensive about coaching because of the risk taking involved. Coaches must work to enroll the teacher in the process and help them to become open to what coaching can offer. Gaining and maintaining the trust of the teacher is paramount.

Table 1

(Cont.)

Framework Component	Research Connection
Teacher Attitude/Reflective Practice	• Knight (2007): Coaches must encourage teachers to be reflective and to make real, meaningful choices regarding their practice. Resistant teachers may need guidance in opening up to practices and concepts that may seem foreign to them initially. • Aguilar (2013): Coaching is about changing behaviors and beliefs and helping teachers to reflect upon their own personal practices and belief systems. • Reiss (2007): Coaching is a discovery process that helps teachers learn and reflect about themselves and what they want to accomplish.

Through my research, I will inquire in detail about how these components are cultivated, refined, and sustained. I will also examine how each component functions, and how each works interdependently with the others in successful coaching models and will examine how schools with successful coaching programs balance the components to create a collaborative support system for teachers.

Summary

The goal of professional development is to change teacher practice and improve student learning. Teachers, similar to their students, benefit from multiple opportunities to learn. These opportunities are created when teachers are afforded the time, space, structures, and support to grow professionally through job-embedded coaching (Croft et al., 2010). Teaching is a complex job that requires extensive professional knowledge of learning, teaching practice, behavior management, relationships, and content. It takes years to master this type of knowledge and practitioners must have the willingness to

change as the research of effective teaching practices evolve, as curriculum changes, and as the needs of learners evolve (Croft et al., 2010). Teaching is the learning profession so learning practices of teachers must be consistently examined and ultimately improved upon in order to positively impact student learning.

Job-embedded professional development constitutes a powerful lever to advance student learning when skillfully implemented and supported by federal, state and local education agencies (Croft et al., 2010). Although we know less than what we would like to know about the effects of coaching, the preliminary research suggests it is a promising approach to propel teachers as learners (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

In order for school leaders to make informed decisions about professional development options for teachers, it is important for them to understand the best practices of instructional coaching and how to maximize the benefits of coaching programs. My research study will offer valuable information and insights gained from closely examining successful coaching programs.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the structure and dynamics of

successful instructional coaching programs in order to provide insights into and inform

future coaching initiatives for schools and school leaders. Utilizing a qualitative case

study approach, this research aimed to identify key components and processes of

exemplar instructional coaching models that have been successful over a period of two or

more years. Qualitative case study research involves an in-depth examination of a

particular case or cases (Lichtman, 2010). I chose to do case study research because of

my interest in examining instances of instructional coaching in action and studying the

dynamics involved in maximizing the impact of instructional coaching on teacher

practice and student achievement. Case study research allows the investigator to focus on

a particular case or cases and maintain a holistic or real-world perspective when studying

such phenomena as organizational processes (Yin, 2014). For this study, I focused on the

"how" and "why" of two successful instructional coaching programs. If I were simply

interested in researching the basic structure of instructional coaching models, my

questions could have been answered without doing a case study, but because I was

interested in how and why the instructional programs were successful in particular

situations, case study research was helpful in answering these and other questions (Yin,

2014).

Research Questions

Utilizing a case study approach to this research allowed me to examine closely all components of an instructional coaching program as a best practice of professional development. I was particularly interested in the relationships and involvement of the key players in the coaching process (administrators, coaches and teachers) at the exemplar sites.

Table 2

Research Questions

Research Questions	Rationale	Data Source
Primary Guiding Question:		
What can we learn from an exemplary implementation model of instructional coaching?	Studying each exemplar will provide experiential knowledge and deep understanding that will inform recommendations for practice (Stake, 2006).	Interviews, review of documentation and supporting records
Secondary Questions:		
What are the roles of the key players (principals, coaches, and teachers) in a successful coaching model?	The roles of and relationships between coaching participants are important to the success of coaching initiatives (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Knight, 2007; Psencik, 2011; Aguilar, 2013).	Interviews, review of artifacts
What are the most important influences in successful coaching programs?	Identifying key factors of successful coaching initiatives can help to inform future decisions and program implementation.	Interviews, review of artifacts

Case Selection

Background

I became very interested in studying the impact of instructional coaching through my own work as a school principal. Prior to beginning this research, I contracted with EduConsulting, Inc. to provide job-embedded literacy coaching for all of my teachers. I saw amazing improvements in teacher practice, and our student achievement increased dramatically with double digit gains in reading growth and proficiency. As a principal, I believed the ECI job-embedded coaching model had great merit, and I was very interested in learning more about the impacts of coaching and which models were most effective. Because my experiences with coaching had been primarily at the K-8 level, I was particularly interested in studying coaching at the high school level. Once I developed my inclusion and exclusion criteria, I shared them with ECI leaders, and they shared a list of schools that met my criteria for me to consider as I selected cases for my study.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Case selection is perhaps the most unique aspect of case study research (Stake, 1994). According to Yin (2014) understanding the phenomena being studied may depend on choosing the case well. For my research, I selected two schools in order to complete a multi-site case study. Because the goal of this study was to understand the process of successful instructional coaching, case selection was important. In considering the selection of cases, I used the following inclusion criteria present in Table 3 to identify

possible case sites. Additionally, I also incorporated some exclusion criteria into my case

selection process. The exclusion criteria are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Selection Criteria

Criteria	Rationale
North Carolina Public School, preferably at the secondary (6-12) level.	I am particularly interested in the impact of coaching as professional development under the new accountability model for North Carolina.
Has implemented instructional coaching for more than two years.	In order to understand trends and implications of instructional coaching at the school level, especially with regards to changes in teacher practice and student achievement data, it is important to consider cases where the model has been fully implemented and afforded adequate time to have impact.
Principal must be in place for the first two years of coaching implementation.	The principal plays a key role in selecting and implementing professional development at the school level.
Principal must be actively involved in the coaching implementation. For this study, the ECI coaches recommended schools with principals who were highly engaged throughout the coaching process.	For this research, I am particularly interested in the value of and impact of the principal role in instructional coaching.
Improvements in teacher performance and practice must be attributed at least in part to coaching implementation.	For this research, I am interested in identifying exemplary practices in coaching which positively impact teaching and learning processes.
Accessibility for research: must be within a 100-mile radius of Durham, NC and must be a part of a school system which supports this type of research.	Because of the number of interviews being conducted for this research, it was important to select a school system that would be easily accessible to me.
Principal must be supportive of the research project and willing to participate.	The principal plays a key role in this research as the instructional leader of the school. In order to gain accessibility to the teachers, archival data, and coaches, principal support and involvement will be key.

Table 4

Exclusion Criterion

Criteria	Rationale
Could not be a part of the Durham Public Schools system due to my central office role	In order to prevent any influence or bias in the research, it was important for me to select schools outside of the system where I current serve as the Executive Director of Professional Development.

Site Selection

Based on the aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria, I selected two sites for my multi-site case study. The sites I selected are Brown High School[1] and Central Early College. Both schools are high schools serving grades 9–12 and both are located in the same North Carolina district, Freeman County Schools. Additionally, both schools had coaching contracts with ECI, were readily accessible to the researcher, and district and school administration supported the study.

Brown High School

Brown High School is a traditional public high school located in North Carolina. Brown serves 950 students in grades 9–12. I selected Brown as a case site because it met all of my inclusion criteria. Instructional coaching was first implemented at Brown in 2011 with English I teachers as a part of a district initiative to improve English I scores. The principal worked with the instructional coaches to expand the coaching impact through the implementation of peer coaching in Year 2 of the project. The Brown

---

[1] All proper nouns are pseudonyms.

principal was actively involved in all aspects of the coaching initiative and worked

closely with the coaches to plan for successful implementation. Achievement gains were

attributed to instructional coaching, particularly in the area of English I and new teacher

growth.

Central Early College

Central Early College is a non-traditional, small innovative high school that

serves just under 300 students in Grades 9–12 with an additional fifth-year program to

provide support to Central graduates who take courses for college credit. The 'Early

College,' as it is called, is located on the campus of a local community college and

utilizes nontraditional scheduling to allow students the opportunity to be dually enrolled

in high school and college courses. Students who complete the course work will earn a

high school diploma and will have the opportunity to earn an Associate's Degree.

Instructional coaching was strategically and systematically implemented with select

teachers in the fall of 2011 and has been in place since that time. The principal was

highly involved in the coaching process throughout implementation and attributes the

school's growth in achievement in part to instructional coaching.

<div align="center">

Participants

</div>

Recruitment

For this study, it was important to have the multiple perspectives of teachers,

administrators and coaches as each plays a significant role in the coaching process. I

began my recruitment process by working with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to

obtain approval of the recruitment letter (see Appendix A). Additionally, I also submitted

the adult consent form to the IRB for approval (see Appendix B). Both documents were approved and stamped and used in the recruitment of all participants.

In order to be able to conduct the research with Freeman County Schools, I had to submit a written request to the district's Director of Research and Accountability with a brief description of the research study. Within several weeks, I received an official approval letter from Freeman County Schools giving me permission to conduct research at Brown High School and Central Early College.

Once I was approved to begin the research, I began sending the recruitment letter to the coaches and administrators involved in the Brown and Central coaching projects. The administrators shared a list of teachers who were a part of the coaching initiatives along with their contact information, and I sent the recruitment letter to each of them requesting participation. The recruitment letter was a successful strategy to recruit teacher participants. Most teachers who had been a part of the projects agreed to participate with the exception of those who had left the school or the profession of teaching altogether.

Participant Descriptions

The participants in this case study included the former school principal of Brown High School who has now advanced to a central office position, the principal of Central Early College, instructional coaches contracted through EduCoaching Inc., and teachers from both schools who were involved in the coaching project. I also attempted to interview the current principal of Brown High School but was unable to schedule that interview after multiple contacts.

Table 5

Research Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	Project (School)	Role/Grade Span
Olivia Adams	Central Early College Brown High School	Coach (K-12)
Renee Hodges	Brown High School	Coach (K-12)
Rhonda Moore	Central Early College	Coach (K-12)
Dr. Reilly Harper	Brown High School	Coach (K-12)
Jennifer Lawson	Brown High School	HS Principal
Helen Dixon	Central Early College	HS Principal
Tonya Keller	Central Early College	Teacher—Science (9-12)
Alexander Collins	Central Early College	Teacher—English I (9)
Christina King	Central Early College	Teacher—Math (9-12)
Henry Kirkland	Central Early College	Teacher—Science (9-10)
Bill Taylor	Central Early College	Teacher—History (11-12)
Amanda Vaughn	Central Early College	Teacher—Social Studies & History (9-12)
Sam Wilson	Central Early College	Teacher—English (10-12)
Sean Ross	Central Early College	Teacher—Math (9-12)
Maria Morris	Brown High School	Teacher—English (10-12)
Wendy Cook	Brown High School	Teacher – English (9-10)
Hillary Kennedy	Brown High School	Teacher—English (9-12)
Susan Little	Brown High School	Teacher—English (11-12)
Gretchen Anderson	Brown High School	Teacher—English (9-10)
Rachel Crawley	Brown High School	Teacher—Science (9-12)

EduCoaching Inc. is an educational consulting company that provides professional development to teachers through instructional coaching. EduCoaching Inc. was founded in 2004 by two North Carolina educators. They began with a primary focus on literacy coaching but have since expanded to include math coaching and new teacher support coaching. EduCoaching Inc. (ECI) specializes in job embedded instructional coaching through model lessons, observations and feedback for teachers. Through a targeted focus on building teacher skills, confidence and understanding of best instructional practices, ECI has expanded their work throughout the state, serving multiple districts at all school levels. ECI uses a coaching model that involves a cycle of observation and feedback for each teacher served. During the process, ECI coaches observe the teachers they are coaching during the regular school day. Each observation is followed by a debrief session which is always conducted on the same day of the observation in order to provide timely and meaningful feedback to the teacher. The teacher also receives a written summary of the observation and feedback session within 48 hours of the observation. A recent article (Oakley & Reagan, 2014) provided an overview of an ECI instructional coaching project and how the cycle of observation and feedback had been particularly successful for high school teachers resulting in growth percentage gains of 12% for one high school.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data collection consisted of interviews with the selected participants in this case study and archival data reviews. Twenty interviews were conducted for this study and various locations were used for the interviews based on participant preference. The nine

participants from Central Early College chose to be interviewed at their school site. The

six teacher participants from Brown High School chose to be interviewed at their school

site as well. The former principal of Brown chose to meet with me at a quiet public coffee

shop for her interview. Two of the coaches from ECI asked to meet on site in a private

room at a hotel where they were conducting a conference. One ECI coach asked to be

interviewed at a school site where she was serving as a coach, and the fourth ECI coach

requested to be interviewed by Skype due to the fact she resides more than three hours

away from me.

      I designed three sets of interview questions: Questions for Coaches (Appendix C),

Questions for Administrators (Appendix D) and Questions for Teachers (Appendix E).

The interview length was anticipated to be 45 minutes, but the actual interview times

ranged from 35 to 75 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital recording

device as well as the voice recorder on my smartphone as a backup recording method.

Interviews with participants were conducted using a semi-structured protocol. Semi

structured, open-ended interviews involve the use of structured and unstructured

questions, meaning some of the questions will be developed in advance while others will

evolve as the interview progresses (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The interviews were

conversational in nature allowing participants to openly share their perspectives and

insights. The questions asked the participants to share their thoughts, feelings and

experiences regarding instructional coaching. As Creswell (2013) suggests, a good

interviewer is a good listener rather than a frequent speaker during the interview. This

allows the interviewee to share freely while the interviewer listens intently, asking

clarifying questions when needed and taking notes to highlight important points to guide reflection later in the data analysis process.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if there was any additional information they wanted to add they may give further insight into their experiences and perspectives on the research topic. The interviews were uploaded to a computer and transcribed to prepare for coding which will be further explained in the section on data analysis. Once the interviews were complete, I sent each participant a copy of her/his transcribed interview for review. I asked participants to review the document for content and accuracy and to feel free to add any additional information that may be significant or valuable to the research. This process is known as member checking.

In addition to the interviews, I examined various types of archival data to gain insight into the instructional coaching system that has been implemented in these schools. Archival data included observation notes from coaches, feedback documents provided to teachers, schedules, and coaching implementation plans from previous years. Each school has a coaching contract with EduCoaching Inc., the service provider for the instructional coaching. In addition to school records, I reviewed coaching proposals, contracts, and archival data provided by EduCoaching Inc. for each school. Finally, I reviewed student achievement data and Teacher Working Conditions survey data for each school. The data reviews gave me deeper insight into the coaching initiatives and allowed me to have a reference point to which I could align the information gathered in the interviews.

Data Analysis

Once the interview transcriptions were complete and other relevant documents were collected, the data analysis began. In addition to the transcribed interviews, I also analyzed personal notes and reflections (memos) as well as the artifacts I previously described. Lichtman (2010) describes this process as the 'three C process': coding to categorizing to concepts. I used coding experiences to decide what information is most important and what meaning can be found from the information and data collected. Reorganizing, rewriting, and rethinking throughout the coding process proceeded to more powerful ideas and conceptual understanding (Lichtman, 2010). I utilized *a priori* codes developed from my conceptual framework. Through the interviews and data analysis, I used inductive/open coding to identify *a posteriori* codes. I began this process using print copies of the interviews and highlighters to color code important points in each transcription. Once I completed the color coded highlighting, I had a preliminary understanding of common themes and ideas. Next, I used Dedoose software to assist with coding the information in the interviews and documents. This software assisted me in organizing my data into a series parent codes and child codes, which are similar to categories and subsets. From the codes, I was able to identify major themes and key ideas about the implementation of instructional coaching. In addition to assisting me with coding the interviews and other documents, the software also enabled me to highlight important quotes, match them to codes, and create memos with reflections about the significance of the quotes. The Dedoose software was very helpful in providing multiple

analyses of the data and how often each code was used. From the Dedoose reports and analytics, I was able to decide on the most important themes found in my research.

In Chapter IV, I discuss the findings of the data, citing specific examples and comments from the participants to support the data findings. In Chapter V, I present the conclusions and connections made from the research and interpretations of the data.

Positionality and Subjectivity of the Researcher

I currently serve as the Executive Director of Leadership and Professional Development for Durham Public Schools in Durham, NC. My role involves planning and executing professional development opportunities for the district as well as coordinating special personnel development programs such as new teacher induction, new principal coaching, and programs for assistant principals and aspiring leaders. Prior to serving in this role, I was a school administrator for seven years after serving as a middle school mathematics teacher for 13 years.

During my time as a school leader, I became very interested in improving teacher performance through high quality professional development opportunities. Through my own experiences as a school leader, I found that teachers were more receptive to growth opportunities when they received feedback that was personalized and related to their own classroom experiences. It was during my first year as a principal that I was introduced to the concept of coaching for teachers. I experienced great success with several coaching initiatives and felt the professional development provided to my teachers contributed significantly to the increases we experienced in teacher satisfaction, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. As I became more invested in job-embedded professional

development, I expanded the opportunities for teachers to participate in coaching. The

expansion of coaching opportunities provided me the opportunity to engage with many

coaches and teachers who were being coached. Additionally, in my current professional

development work with over 50 schools, I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of

coaching programs being offered and implemented in the district. I have found through

my observations and experiences that not all coaching initiatives are successful and

beneficial to the participants. Thus, I am interested in a deeper exploration of what

dynamics affect the success of coaching initiatives in schools.

Because of my experiences, I do have strong opinions about the value of coaching

as professional development for teachers from the perspective of a school and district

leader. It is important for me to be cognizant of the fact that my own experiences and

beliefs could influence my research.

<div align="center">**Trustworthiness**</div>

Reflexivity

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, it was important to consider

my own perspectives and understanding of the research topic. Merriam (2009) proposes

that in qualitative research the researcher is the primary tool for data collection and

analysis. The researcher has biases based on personal knowledge and experiences and it

is important to identify them and monitor their shaping of the research rather than try to

eliminate them completely from the process (Merriam, 2009). As the researcher I used

my perspectives as a guide to help build further understanding but also challenged my

own assumptions and preconceived notions by focusing on the perspectives of the study

participants. The concept of acknowledging the role of the self in research and sorting through the effects of biases to make meaning is known as reflexivity (Lichtman, 2010). As the researcher, it was important for me to be aware of the way my own views shaped my understanding of the research.

Triangulation

In addition to understanding my role in the research, I also worked to ensure trustworthiness by interviewing multiple participants who had different perspectives. The strategy of using multiple data sources to verify viewpoints and information is known as triangulation (Shenton, 2004). Another way to triangulate the data is to identify claims from at least three data sources. For example, a participant may make a claim about coaching which is supported through the research in the literature review and further substantiated through the archival review. The verification from those three sources would bring credibility to the findings (Lichtman, 2010). Triangulation of the data substantiates the research and strengthens the interpretations of the researcher. Locating evidence to document a code or theme in different sources of data triangulates information and provides validity to the findings (Creswell, 2013). By completing an in depth review of the literature, conducting interviews of multiple stakeholders and reviewing pertinent documents, I was able to ensure trustworthiness of my findings through triangulation.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process in which the researcher takes data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so they can verify and confirm the

credibility of the information (Creswell, 2013). In efforts to add credibility to my findings

and interpretations, I sent each participant a copy of their transcribed interview and asked

them to check it for accuracy. I also invited them to add any additional thoughts and

comments that may provide additional insights and understanding. Additionally, as I

made conclusions and interpretations about the data, I consulted with several of the

research participants to ensure I was capturing the information completely and with great

accuracy.

Benefits and Risks

Participants in this study may benefit from the dialogue and reflection involved in

the interview process. As principals reflected on the coaching process, they may have

uncovered new understandings about their role in ensuring the success of the program.

Additionally, their reflections may guide their future decisions about professional

development for teachers. Coaches who participated in the study reflected upon their

work and key actions that supported their success with teachers as well as barriers which

may have hindered the success of the program. Coaches could use their reflective insights

to guide their future planning and decision making for coaching projects. The teacher

participants reflected upon their own growth and experiences which could provide benefit

in their continued journey as educators. Reflecting on how the coaching process impacted

their work could help them identify patterns in their work as well as challenges they

faced and successful practices they learned in order to conquer those challenges.

The risks involved with participation in this study were minimal. Because

pseudonyms were used for all participants, school names and the coaching service,

anonymity has been protected to the greatest extent possible. However, there could be potential risk in the fact that examples and personal stories of the participants may serve as identifying factors and compromise privacy and anonymity.

Summary

Chapter III detailed the methodology of this research study including background information, site selection, participant recruitment, and trustworthiness. Additionally, this chapter described the data collection and analysis process in order to provide a clear understanding of the approach used in this research. In Chapter IV, I present findings from the research including details of the interviews to capture the perspectives of the participants as to what factors contributed to the success of the coaching initiatives at their schools.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the findings of the research conducted on the two cases of

the study. The results are derived from analysis of the interviews, study of related

documents, and examination of personal notes. The study focused on the central research

question: What can be learned from an exemplary implementation model of instructional

coaching? Two secondary questions helped to build an understanding to answer the

primary research question. The secondary questions I considered were:

1. *What are the roles of the key players (principals, coaches, and teachers) in a*
   successful coaching model?

2. *What are the most important influences in successful coaching programs?*

In order to answer the questions of my study, I conducted a series of interviews

with teachers, coaches, and administrators from each of the two sites. I also studied

artifacts and resources from the coaching projects including correspondence, coaching

logs, feedback documents, and data results from state testing and Teacher Working

Conditions Surveys that addressed teacher perceptions on professional development. I

begin the presentation of findings by providing an overview of each school site's

coaching journey before discussing the emerging themes that address the research

questions.

Brown High School

Brown High School began job-embedded instructional coaching with select

teachers in the fall of 2011 and has continued coaching initiatives each year since. Brown

High School was introduced to the idea of an instructional coaching project through an

improvement initiative facilitated by the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum for their

district. After reviewing district data in high school English, the Assistant Superintendent

decided to implement instructional coaching in order to build the capacity of high school

English teachers in reading comprehension strategies. The district contracted with

EduCoaching, Inc. (ECI) to provide the instructional coaching services in the district's

four traditional high schools, and Brown High School was one of those four schools.

Jennifer Lawson, who has since moved into district level leadership, was in her

first month as the new principal of Brown High School when her Assistant

Superintendent initiated the coaching contract for the comprehensive high schools.

During our interview, she shared that she was thrilled with the idea of instructional

coaching because she had heard great things about EduConsulting, Inc. from colleagues

who had contracted with them in other districts, and she felt coaching would be beneficial

to the teachers. Jennifer shared,

> I think one of the most important things we can do for teachers is to give them
> ongoing, job-embedded professional development experiences. We provide lots of
> 'sit and get' PD and never really give teachers a way to implement it in their
> classrooms, nor do we follow up on a consistent basis. I was all for this project for
> Brown because I knew that job-embedded, ongoing professional development and
> coaching was the key to improving student achievement and teacher learning and
> the key to changing teaching and learning in the classroom.

Although she was in favor of the coaching initiative, she was new to the school. Because she did not know her staff intimately, she knew it would be important to be very intentional and strategic with setting the stage for the project in order to encourage teacher buy-in while also setting clear expectations for participation in the coaching initiative.

The coaching was scheduled to begin in the fall of 2011. The Assistant Superintendent asked the ECI coaches for the project, Olivia Adams and Renee Hodges, to meet with each principal prior to the district launch in August. Olivia and Renee met with Jennifer Lawson in July 2011 to share more about the ECI model for this project as well as to discuss goals for Brown High School. Coach Renee Hodges shared in her interview,

> Jennifer asked us to come in and talk to her before the project began and not all of the principals did that. She had a strong background in literacy so she was very involved in setting goals for the project and knowing exactly what she wanted to accomplish.

The district contract with ECI included services of two consultants and a total of 30 days of coaching. This meant that each consultant would serve the school for 15 days which averaged twice per month. Jennifer shared that during that meeting Olivia and Renee gave her an overview of their coaching cycle but also asked her what her goals were for her teachers. She recalls that both coaches expressed their commitment to making sure they tailored their services to meet Jennifer's goals and the needs of Brown in general. The model planned for the project was as follows:

Step 1: Share and model a Literacy/Comprehension strategy for the group. Ask

them to try and practice the strategy before their individual coaching visit.

Step 2: Coach observes teacher and conducts an individual debrief session on the

same day of the observation to provide feedback and guide reflection.

Step 3: Provide written feedback to each teacher within 48 hours of the classroom

observation/debrief session.

This 3-step cycle was repeated monthly so that each teacher received at least five

"touches" or individual coaching sessions.

Figure 2 shows a sample of the ECI observation/feedback form used in the high school

literacy projects. The form was shared with teachers prior to the first round of

observations. See Figure 2.

Immediately following the meeting with the ECI coaches, Jennifer crafted a plan

for how she would implement the coaching initiative at Brown. She believed job-

embedded coaching could be a powerful professional development model, but she also

knew that as the new principal she would have to be very strategic about how she rolled

out the initiative in order for it to be accepted by the teachers. In our interview, Jennifer

asserted,

> High School teachers can be stubborn, very departmentalized and fragmented
> from the other teachers, and I knew that in order for the strategies they were
> learning to infiltrate the school there was going to have to be collaboration and
> peer coaching because there was no way I could afford to hire coaches for every
> teacher so I needed my English teachers to really learn the process and then coach
> others but I was brand new to the school so I hadn't had the opportunity to form
> any meaningful relationships with staff yet so I knew I was going to need some
> help making this happen.

eci educonsulting, inc.
High School Literacy Project

Goal:

School: **Teacher/Class:**

	Observation/Feedback Areas	Notes
B	A comprehension/metacognition strategy is explicitly highlighted in this lesson and the purpose for the lesson is clear (linked to Common Core)	.
B	A meaningful piece of text has been selected for the lesson in order to promote thinking.	.
D	The students spend some time reading the text in order to practice the comprehension strategy. (Release of responsibility)	.
D	Teacher is conferring during independent practice time.	.
D and/or A	Students are making their thinking visible through writing, talking, graphic organizers, drawing etc. (release of responsibility)	
D and/or A	Teacher is assessing student understanding through conversations and written work	
A	Comprehension of text is discussed and connections are made with how this strategy has helped students become better readers	
	There is evidence of integration of ideas from CASA, Canvas, and assigned readings	

Comments:

Figure 2. HS Literacy Tool. The left hand column indicates B (before the lesson); D (during the lesson); A (after the lesson).

With this in mind, Jennifer made what she referred to as a "key decision." She decided to meet with the English Department chairperson, Susan Little, to enlist her help in promoting the project with the English Department. As the new principal of Brown, Jennifer did not know Susan well, but she did know Susan was very influential in her department and very well respected among Brown teachers. Jennifer met with Susan and explained the project to her and asked her to be a leader in making sure her department made the most of the coaching initiative. Jennifer recalled, "I said Susan, by the end of this year my expectation is that everybody in the English Department become coaches. You all will be the experts coaching others so I need you to help me make that happen." She explained that from that day forward Susan understood the importance of the project and made it her personal goal to make sure every teacher in her department was on board and willing to maximize their work with the coaches. Jennifer believes bringing Susan on board as a leader of the project really made a difference in how others received the coaching. Teachers respected her greatly as a veteran, and because she supported the initiative, other teachers were much more open to participating willingly.

In August of 2011, the district launched the coaching initiative with an initial district-wide professional development session for all traditional high school English teachers. This meeting introduced the district teachers to the two coaches from ECI, Olivia Adams and Renee Hodges, and provided an overview of the project structure and goals. Jennifer Lawson attended the launch with her teachers even though it was not required by the district. She shared that following the launch she took the department to lunch and reiterated how excited she was about this opportunity for them and stressed her

expectations for their work with the coaches to result in their own growth and

advancement and ultimately positive impacts on student learning. This was an important

move on Jennifer's part because during my interviews, *every* Brown teacher interviewed

mentioned Jennifer introducing the project and letting them know how important it was

and how she expected them to make the most of the coaching initiative. Susan Little

recollected Jennifer's introduction of the project:

> I think what Jennifer Lawson did that made this work from the beginning is that she made us all feel like it was a team decision, like we were all in this together, and it started with me. Ms. Lawson came to me first as the Department Chair and just asked me how I felt about my Department and our test scores, and I immediately knew that she was right, we had to do something different. So the first thing she did was help me to see that we needed a change, and she talked with me about the idea of bringing in instructional coaches who could help us help the students. And our conversation helped me to see how this could be a great thing for our department. So then, Ms. Lawson met with our whole department and she knew I was behind it and they knew I was behind it and she just made it clear this was a team project and she fostered the idea that we are all in this together and we need to plan together.

Another teacher, Maria Morris, recalled Jennifer's role in preparing them for

work with the coaches:

> Not every teacher is going to be open to people coming into their classroom because that can be really intimidating to some, so Jennifer's role was to help all of us embrace the idea of coaching and that was really about helping us understand the importance and value of coaching. She really wanted us to trust the project and take it seriously.

Each teacher recalled understanding Jennifer expected them to participate and

learn the literacy strategies because she believed it was the right thing to do for kids. I

found this to be fascinating because every teacher described Jennifer's high expectations

as passion for the students. They knew she was very serious about her expectations but they had a great deal of respect for her because she framed her expectations around what was best for children.

As I learned more about the coaching project from the interviews and artifacts, I found three major themes that seemed to drive the success and/or struggles of the coaching initiatives at Brown: Involvement of School Leadership, Building Teacher Leaders, and Coaching Strategies.

Involvement of School Leadership

Each of the coaches I interviewed shared that one of the most important factors in determining the success of a coaching project is the involvement of the school principal. The coaches also suggested that projects are generally more successful when the principal has asked them to come in and coach rather than having the district mandate the coaching. Jennifer Lawson (principal of Brown) was an exception to that because her project initially began because of the district initiative, but she was very supportive of the project because of her belief that job-embedded coaching was the most effective approach to professional development. Renee Hodges (Brown Coach) proposed:

> It's best if principals ask us to come into the school, on the other hand, we have done some coaching that was district-driven and that can be tricky at the school level because then I think then sometimes the principals feel like it is something being done to them, and so then we get into, you know, how to win the trust of the principal. It can be threatening in that some principals feel like they're being exposed, you know, with these people they don't know, didn't ask to come in, seeing things in their building they may not have handled, being sent by the district—it can be real tricky so we focus on gaining trust by educating them on the value of job-embedded coaching. But with (Jennifer) it was not like that at all. Even though it was a district project, she had a strong literacy background, she was self-taught, she reads books, she is very interested in all content areas so she

was very involved in setting the goals of the project and she knew exactly what she wanted to accomplish from the coaching.

In addition to being instrumental in the launch, Jennifer was also an active participant throughout the coaching project. Jennifer explained that she felt it was very important for the teachers to trust the coaches, so she was strategic with her involvement. Jennifer recalls,

> In my mind my role was to get out of the way. I know that sounds crazy but what I mean is to have all of the information and know all the details of the project but be very limited in how I used it. My teachers never knew how much I talked to the coaches and the things (Olivia and Renee) told me always stayed in confidence. They would give me things to look for and the three of us would talk about okay, how can I address this without giving up the coaching relationship so that the teachers don't think you're running back to me? I was very adamant with them that whenever they sent me the feedback that they blind copy me, and that they not let the teacher know that I'm reading the feedback. My teachers never knew all the things that I knew. I think that was probably the most critical part of it being successful and the coaches really being able to infiltrate and get that relationship going because my teachers never knew that I knew what was going on, even though every visit we talked on the phone, we talked every visit, and I got every bit of the feedback, they just didn't know I was getting the feedback. But I did, and then I used it for my own knowledge to guide me in helping a teacher, in my walkthroughs, in everything I did as an instructional leader.

Brown teachers supported Jennifer's claims that she was very much a "behind the scenes" supporter of the coaching because they did not speak a lot about her involvement once the coaching began. Their interpretation of her involvement was to set the stage for the coaching initiative and to create teacher buy-in by helping them see the importance. One teacher, Maria Morris (Brown) shared, "Jennifer's role was to get us excited about the coaching and then she took herself out of it because she really wanted us to trust them and get the most out of it," while another teacher, Wendy Cook (Brown) asserted,

> Ms. Lawson made it clear this was a priority for her and she wanted us working on the strategies not just when the coaches were here but all the time. She pumped us up about it and talked to us about the strategies and just really took it upon herself to back up what they were doing but always in a positive way

Each teacher I talked with reiterated that Jennifer made it clear that the work they were doing with the coaches on comprehension was a priority. Not one teacher mentioned feeling as though the project was evaluative. Although they knew Jennifer was actively involved in the work, none of the teachers felt the project feedback was used to evaluate them in any way. In cases where the coaches had concerns that needed Jennifer's support, she was very strategic in how she responded to the concerns. She shared an example of using the feedback to guide her work:

> I always used their (the coaches') feedback as I was doing walkthroughs. I may have a notepad with some things to look for based on the feedback and then I could address the things I saw with my own eyes rather than ever saying "Olivia told me this or Renee told me that" because that would ruin the trust. I remember one time Renee shared with me that one of my 11th-grade English teachers was doing third-grade work and that was really hard for me not to just go wrangle that in but I knew it would ruin their relationship so instead I scheduled an observation a week and half later and I got in there that way but she never knew Renee shared anything and that was really important, I think. But the feedback was key, I had to have that feedback to keep things moving in the right direction.

Renee also spoke of Jennifer's active involvement:

> We sent the feedback to her like she requested and she was able to singlehandedly, as a principal, follow up and connect the dots when we were not there, so she did it in a very, very non-threatening way, she is a coach type leader herself and she would read it and tag onto something we mentioned with the teacher and then she may even find a resource that matched the need of the teacher and follow up with it herself. So she was very involved in understanding where each teacher was with capacity building, she was involved with following

up with needs of the teacher, she was involved in setting goals from coaching session to coaching session for the teachers, she was just very involved.

Although Jennifer moved on to district leadership after her third year at Brown, teachers still remember her leadership as the driving force behind the success of their work with ECI. Her visionary leadership was instrumental in Brown achieving high growth as well as the highest gains in student achievement of all the traditional high schools included in the project after the first year. Brown High School's proficiency rate in English I jumped from 73% to 79% in 2012 with a growth percentage of 12% (data provided by principal and coaches). However, increasing student achievement wasn't her only goal for coaching. Jennifer wanted to strengthen teacher knowledge and teacher practices in a way that would last beyond her time at Brown.

Building Teacher Leaders

In addition to being actively involved in the ongoing coaching process, Jennifer also had a clear vision for what she wanted to accomplish with her coaching initiative. Because they made such great progress the first year, the district cut back on the funding for the project. Jennifer, however, was committed to continuing the job-embedded work, so she crafted a plan for sustainability and extension of the learning. For the second year of the project, Jennifer asked ECI to work with the English Department on becoming peer coaches. Her idea was to have ECI continue to work with the English Department but begin to train them as instructional coaches so they could train other departments within the school. Jennifer explained her plan and rationale:

I knew I had to do something because I knew the district wasn't going to give us more money for coaching after that second year. So my idea was to have ECI work with the English department and train them to coach teachers in other departments with a peer coaching model. And I didn't have a clue if it would work because I had three baby teachers in the English department but I told them my expectation was that we were going to have a schoolwide model of coaching and they were going to lead it by coaching their peers and sharing the strategies they learned from ECI. I didn't know exactly how to make it happen, I had to work that out with ECI, I just knew I wanted my English teachers to become leaders and coach other teachers so that all departments could benefit from understanding comprehension strategies and good teaching. I had no idea it would take off like it did, but I definitely put the challenge and expectation out there to them in the beginning and I told them I expected them to lead the next year. Like I said, I had three baby teachers in that department so there was no guarantee but when they knew my expectation they worked hard to meet it. If your principal says to you, "Hey we are going to take this school-wide next year and you're going to be an instructional coach to your colleagues in social studies department or the science department or the math department," then you're gonna pay a little bit more attention to what you're doing and you're gonna be a little bit more engaged in the feedback and how to do that. And it worked, they really rose to the challenge, even the new teachers. The department really rose to the occasion.

The peer coaching plan involved the English teachers continuing to work with ECI coaches on comprehension strategies, and between visits with the coaches, the English teachers would teach the strategies to the Social Studies Department. Additionally, Olivia and Renee helped Jennifer further maximize the project impact by conducting guided observations. For the guided observations, a teacher from the English Department would go with Olivia or Renee to a Social Studies classroom and observe the Social Studies teacher working with a strategy they had shared. The English teacher would offer feedback to the Social Studies teacher with the guidance of the coach, and the teachers would debrief together. Coach Renee Hodges (Brown) explained Lawson's inventive approach to expanding and sustaining the coaching during her interview:

Jennifer really wanted to extend the comprehension work to departments but she knew funding would be a challenge so we worked on a plan to build teacher leaders and do some peer coaching. We noticed in the first year we had emerging leaders, literacy leaders, and so we took advantage of these teachers having interests and passion in leadership with what they were doing and started the second year with the goals of let's continue some coaching with our English teachers but let's coach our English teachers with a format of training other teachers within the building, so they started delivering professional development, what we call 'nuggets', in meetings and they also started doing a form of a classroom observation that was very nonthreatening and just offering some of their colleagues tips, and so they started coaching the social studies teachers, and started building really strong relationships among themselves so that they could do some peer coaching and extend the results. Jennifer was really an innovative thinker and her decision to move in this direction was brilliant. I really feel it was one of our greatest accomplishments at Brown - building teacher capacity to the point that the teachers felt comfortable delivering professional development to their colleagues. When teachers have the confidence and self –efficacy to deliver to their colleagues, I really think that's an indicator of success.

Jennifer admits that her vision for the peer coaching did not go as deep as she had hoped because during her second year, she was involved in a serious automobile accident that kept her out of school for several months. Once she returned in the spring she was only able to work partial days. Jennifer shared,

The second year I had my wreck and was out most of the second semester. Luckily, I had brought both my Assistant Principals into the coaching conversations much more that second year than the first year and they were able to keep it going but I do think we could have made more progress had I not been out.

Although the peer coaching project may have been inhibited by Jennifer's absence, the teachers at Brown still felt their work strengthened their department, their collaboration with other departments, and their leadership as teachers. One teacher, Hillary Kennedy asserted,

> I feel like there is a tremendous positive impact on our department. I would say definitely in our department there's more cohesion, there's more teamwork involved, especially since we're all trying these same strategies and there's more discussion about that, and you know, different things we might try and that went well and as far as a whole school culture goes, I like the idea of us helping other departments with strategies for—especially for reading comprehension, that's kind of helped us get out of our comfort zone a little bit and get more involved with the other people, the other professionals in our school.

Other teachers shared they have become leaders and continue to share strategies with new teachers who have come into their departments, and the peer coaching in which they participated truly gave them insight and tools to serve in that capacity. Another Brown teacher explained,

> Doing the peer coaching really changed the way we work with our colleagues in other departments. It has just really made us more collaborative. I still share what I learned from ECI with new colleagues. And when a new teacher joins our department, we coach them using all the strategies we learned that first year. So even though it's not an actual coaching program now without Jennifer, those of us that were teacher leaders are still coaching and sharing the strategies.

When the district initiative ended at the end of the 2013 school year, Jennifer found funding to continue instructional coaching with ECI for a third year but opted to shift the focus from English Teachers to beginning teachers. Jennifer shared that the district initiative was only for two years, so in order to continue for a third year she had to do a smaller project. Because she had a larger than normal number of beginning teachers (seven), she talked with Olivia and Renee about how best to support those teachers with coaching. Additionally, she believed their previous coaching work had set a strong foundation and that she and the teachers from the English department could continue to expound upon the comprehension work. ECI was launching a new model for beginning

teacher support, so Olivia and Renee assisted Jennifer in setting up an instructional

coaching model for beginning teachers that launched in the fall of 2013. The ECI coach

who specialized in this service was Reilly Harper and she began working with Jennifer

and the new teachers of Brown High School in August 2013. The ECI new teacher

support model differs from the literacy coaching model in that the focus is very general,

and teachers work on the best practices of teaching and learning which may include

literacy strategies but also includes a wide range of other topics including classroom

management, planning, and general teaching and assessment strategies. The model

Jennifer and ECI Coach Reilly Harper agreed on for Brown was as follows (as described

by Harper):

> Strategy 1: Monthly whole group meetings to provide support to new teachers in
> the form of a Professional Learning Cohort led by Reilly Harper. Each month will
> have a specific area of focus that correlates with the experiences of a first year
> teacher.
>
> Strategy 2: The cohort will engage in a group book study using a book designed
> to support new teachers such as *First Days of School* by Harry Wong.
>
> Strategy 3: Observation/Debrief - Coach observes teacher and conducts an
> individual debrief session on the same day of the observation to provide feedback
> and guide reflection. Additionally, written feedback will be provided to the
> teacher within 24-48 hours.
>
> *This cycle continues each month with each teacher receiving a minimum of 6*
> *individual coaching visits in addition to the group support.*

Figure 3 shows a sample of the ECI observation/feedback form used in the high school beginning teacher project. The form was shared with teachers prior to the first round of observations.

New Teacher Induction Inventory

Teacher: _____   Date_____

Grade/Subject Area: _____   Obs. # 1 2 3 4 5

Classroom Instruction

		Evidence/Comments
1	Sets clear learning goals, objectives, and expectations.	
2	Makes connections to prior knowledge.	
3	Uses effective, research-based strategies and methods.	
4	Engages students in the learning process.	
5	Uses effective scaffolding to support student learning.	
6	Incorporates higher order thinking activities.	
7	Incorporates 21st century skills.	
8	Uses formative assessment to monitor student learning.	
9	Uses technology to enhance instruction.	
10	Meets the needs of EC students.	
11	Meets the needs of English Language Learners.	

Classroom Management

		Evidence/Comments
1	Establishes clear and consistent procedures.	
2	Uses effective time management.	
3	Uses quick and smooth transitions within that classroom that do not take away from the learning process.	
4	Maintains order and discipline within the classroom.	
5	Reinforces positive behavior.	

Figure 3. New Teacher Inventory.

6	Deals with inappropriate behavior in an appropriate manner.	
7	Employs consistent consequences.	
8	Establishes positive relationships with students.	

Planning and Preparation

		Evidence/Comments
1	Plans developmentally-appropriate lessons.	
2	Develops lessons that are based on the Common Core/Essential Standards.	
3	Demonstrates an appropriate understanding of content knowledge/subject matter.	
4	Collaborates and plans with colleagues.	
5	Uses data to inform instruction.	

Reflects on Teaching and Learning

		Evidence/Comments
1	Evaluates effectiveness of instruction.	
2	Identifies pedagogical strengths and weaknesses.	
3	Participates in professional development.	

Collegiality and Professionalism

		Evidence/Comments
1	Develops professional relationships with colleagues.	
2	Establishes a positive home-school relationship.	

Comments:

Figure 3. (Cont.) New Teacher Inventory.

Just one month into the third year of the coaching projects (2014), Jennifer

Lawson was promoted to a district level position and one of her Assistant Principals was

named principal of Brown. Unfortunately, he was not available to interview for this

research despite invitations to do so. A change in leadership can definitely create a

challenge for existing programs and initiatives. Several teachers I interviewed mentioned

that losing Jennifer definitely affected the school focus on coaching and professional

development, but they agreed that strategies they learned continued to be an integral part

of their teaching and learning experiences. Wendy Cook shared,

> The change in leadership has really changed things. Mainly, it just feels like it is
> not as much of a priority for our new principal as it was with Jennifer. We still do
> the strategies, and it is still important in our department, and there is still coaching
> going on for new teachers, but it's not the same and it is just not viewed as a
> whole school priority. With Jennifer, I didn't agree with every single thing she did
> but at the end of the day, I supported her because I knew she was about doing
> what was best for kids, I wanted to be in on that. That's how it was with the
> coaching; she got us excited because it was about doing what was best for kids.
> So, yes the leadership change has made it harder to keep things going.

With regards to the new teacher project specifically and the impact of a shift in

leadership, Renee Hodges asserted,

> Jennifer's Assistant Principals really trusted her, and she really mentored them
> and coached them. Having one of them take over as principal was probably the
> best case scenario for Brown because he allowed the coaching to continue and
> because he took over Brown at the beginning of the new teacher project he was
> able to be involved from the inception and bring his own leadership style into the
> process.

The new teacher coaching continued through the 2014–2015 school year and continues to

receive positive feedback from the new teachers who are a part of the project. Several of

the teachers I spoke with involved in the new teacher coaching shared that the coaching

with Dr. Harper was one of the most important factors in them returning for their second

year of teaching. Brown teacher Rachel Crawley described her experience with Dr.

Harper:

> I absolutely loved it, if it wasn't for Dr. Harper I probably would have left after
> the first semester. I had a really, two really difficult classes, and for her to come in
> and constantly give me feedback and ideas and things to try to do and also to give
> me a little bit of confidence in letting me know it was okay. But she gave me a lot
> of strategies and a lot of things to sort of look out for and that did, that helped me
> tremendously. The most helpful thing to me was the feedback, absolutely the
> feedback. It's one thing to have someone come in your classroom and observe
> you, and say good job, but it's another thing for them to come in and say okay,
> this specifically is good, this could be improved on and here's ways that you can
> improve on it. And sometimes just a spark of oh, you did this, have you thought
> about this, just the ideas behind it was, was great, it was just a big resource. I
> learned how to give feedback from her, it really made an impression on me and
> now I give feedback like that to my students and it has really made a difference.

Coaching Strategies

Administrative involvement and building teacher leaders were critical to the

success of the coaching initiatives at Brown, but the work and expertise of the coaches

was also instrumental in supporting a strong coaching program. When asked what is most

important in launching a coaching initiative, all coaches I interviewed said building a

strong, trusting relationship with the teacher was paramount. Olivia Adams shared,

> The receptiveness of the staff to our services is very important. We have to know
> if they are willing and able to receive innovative staff development, not
> everybody is, and so if they're not able to receive it then it becomes a waste, so it
> depends on where they are in their professional development journey, I know that
> sounds cliché, but it matters. Ideally, we want teachers to want to participate and
> making sure they feel comfortable with the process and understand that it is non-
> evaluative is very important. That starts with just having honest conversations

about the topic of the project and letting the teacher know the coaching is designed to be supportive.

With Brown High School English teachers, the idea of coaching was new to them. The principal did an excellent job of setting up the project, but it was still important for the coaches to work to build strong, trusting relationships with the teachers in order for the work to be fruitful. The coaches call their strategies "coaching moves." Each time they encounter a situation, they make a coaching move to push the work forward and grow the teacher. One of the most important coaching moves, according the ECI coaches, is encouraging and teaching the teachers to deeply reflect. Encouraging teachers to reflect begins with strategic questioning—asking teachers to think about their current practice and how their current practice does or does not achieve the results they are aiming for. As Renee Hodges suggested, this process can be uncomfortable and initially unfamiliar for teachers, so it is critical to always tread gently and allow the teacher to ease into the process of reflection. A teacher in the comprehension project, Maria Morris, shared that as a high school teacher, she had never stopped to think deeply about whether her students were using comprehension strategies. She just assumed they were readers because they were in 10th grade. In working with Olivia, she began to reflect deeply on the varying levels of her readers and how to teach them strategies to become better readers rather than teaching a text in a one-size-fits-all manner. Another teacher, Susan Little, shared that reflecting with her coach on what she was doing well was just as effective as reflecting on the things upon which she needed to improve. She explained

that sometimes teachers don't stop to really reflect on what worked in a lesson so they

can build upon what works and replicate it in their teaching.

Another important coaching move or strategy for both Brown projects is the

strategic feedback shared with the teachers. All of the teachers I spoke with shared that

having both the verbal and written feedback was extremely important to them. Several

teachers noted that having the written feedback was extremely beneficial because they

could refer to it again and again as they worked on the strategies. Susan Little shared,

> The immediate feedback was the most important part of the process to me, the
> immediate feedback. If you come in and observe me and then wait days or months
> to give me feedback, I don't like that, it is pointless. The timeliness of their
> feedback was so important. They always met with us the same day and then they
> even sent us a copy of our feedback by the next day. The timeliness was big
> because if you observed me on Friday and I did something wrong, chances are I
> am going to do it Monday, Tuesday, and every day until you tell me otherwise. So
> they came to us the same day, and it wasn't about telling us what we did wrong, it
> was about guiding us to think about different ways to reach the students. Their
> feedback was what helped us the most.

Teachers always received verbal debriefs the same day as their observation and their

written feedback within 48 hours of the visit. Figures 4 and 5 are completed feedback

forms that guided the debrief sessions with teachers that were emailed to the teacher

following the observation.

Writing Inventory for High School

<u>Goal:</u> *Develop writers who are efficient, independent and can write for a variety of reasons.*

Teacher: █████   Date: 3/13/14

	Benchmarks	**Evidence/Comments**
	Processes and Procedures are in place	• Students clearly understood the expectations for writing and conferencing today.
	The purpose for writing is explicit and authentic	• The purpose for the writing assignment was clear and students were wrapping up the first draft of a piece related to propaganda.
	Explicit teacher modeling is evident	• "Anytime you are trying to figure out what you don't know, think about what it cannot be."
	Mentor text is used	• n/a
	Students are released to write during the lesson	• Students were writing for an extended amount of time today. (30+ minutes) • This is a PERFECT way to increase student time as writers and allow yourself an opportunity to confer with students. • You got a lot of instructional bang for your buck today. Excellent job!
	Teacher conferences with students within the lesson and makes mental notes	• You were able to confer with multiple students. • This was one of the strengths of your instruction today. Your conferences allowed students to get individual feedback that moved each one of the forward with their writing. • Examples of your feedback: **Student 1**: "When you are writing a proposal, you want to use strong language..." **Student 2**: "I know this because I have talked with you but I need you to put it into the piece." **Student 3**: "You want to switch this around a bit. The formatting needs to be changed in the first paragraph. It applies to both so if you put it in the second paragraph it's misleading."
	Students share thinking with each other	• Students were able to share ideas with each other in a natural way as they were writing.
	Opportunities for revision and editing are allowed (if process writing)	• Your conferences allowed students to jump right in to the revision and editing process. • Super! Keep doing this!
	Writing is used as a formative assessment	• You were able to use the writing to learn more about your students. • As we discussed you are seeing that students have similar issues with reading as they do in writing and you are working to address these in your conferences. Great work!

█████

Your high quality writing conferences were a strength in this lesson! Your students are obviously comfortable discussing their work with you in an effort to improve. This is a nice platform for you to reinforce what they are doing right and offer suggestions for them to improve in specific ways.

Continue to do these conferences as often as possible and by taking notes, you can cross-reference what they should be improving on. It is refreshing to hear that you (and your students) are seeing a huge benefit to your conference work and see the need to continue.

Nice work today! ☺

Figure 4. Completed Feedback Form 1.

High School Literacy Project

School: Brown   Teacher/Class: ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉
January 24, 2013

	Observation/Feedback Areas	Notes
B	A comprehension/metacognition strategy is explicitly highlighted in this lesson and the purpose for the lesson is clear (linked to Common Core)	• Text Structure was the strategy for this lesson. This literacy work was to prepare these students to write their own piece with similar structure (synthesis) *** I love how you were able to use explicit language to help the student understand that he was making connections to help him comprehend the text.
B	A meaningful piece of text has been selected for the lesson in order to promote thinking.	• <u>MS. SUPERTEACH</u> • This is a great piece of text. I am going to connect you to a blog about "complex text". You hit all of the points in this blog. (see link below)
D	The students spend some time reading the text in order to practice the comprehension strategy. (Release of responsibility)	• Students read the text independently and re-read as needed.
D	Teacher is conferring during independent practice time.	• You dropped in to chat as students worked.
D and/or A	Students are making their thinking visible through writing, talking, graphic organizers, drawing etc. (release of responsibility)	• Did you notice that when students contributed thinking to the group, others grew their understanding? This is the beauty of collaboration. "We are smarter together"
D and/or A	Teacher is assessing student understanding through conversations and written work	• You used a "catch and release" technique today. (see attachment)
A	Comprehension of text is discussed and connections are made with how this strategy has helped students become better readers	• The progression of your lesson and other lessons that will follow, are anchored in comprehension.

Comments:

▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉

Here is a blog for you. You can sign up to get this blog by email. I thought this one in particular aligned with your lesson today as your peice of complex text was important to the lesson.

http://www.burkinsandyaris.com/3-criteria-for-selecting-text-for-close-reads/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BurkinsYaris+%28Burkins+%26+Yaris%29

Figure 5. Completed Feedback Form 2.

Perhaps the most important coaching move for the Brown projects was the coaches' commitment to differentiation for the teachers. With each visit, they responded to the needs of the teacher. Although the goals of the projects were clearly defined, the coaches responded to individual teacher needs and met each teacher where he/she was in his/her understanding just as they were asking the teachers to do for the students. For example, when one teacher was struggling with understanding how to teach the strategy of inferencing to her students, the coach responded by asking her if she would like to have a mini-model lesson for that strategy. Initially, the Brown teachers did not want model lessons, but in this case the coach felt it would be beneficial and the teacher was able to observe the coach teaching the strategy and then replicate it during the next class period.

Coaching moves vary from project to project and even teacher to teacher, but every project is centered on strengthening teacher reflection in order to support teacher growth. Additionally, every project begins with building strong coach-teacher relationships. With a trusting relationship guiding the work, teacher growth is accelerated and the transformation that occurs is strengthened. The work at Brown High school was not without barriers and challenges along the way, but the success perceived by the participants was driven by the school leadership, the teacher leadership that emerged from the coaching experiences, and the strategies used by the coaches to achieve the desired outcomes. The success of the coaching model at Brown was shared throughout the district, according to the coaches and administrators, and sparked the interest of other school leaders including Helen Dixon of Central High School.

Central Early College

Central Early College came upon their coaching initiative in a much different way than the comprehensive high schools in the district. In our interview, Helen Dixon, the principal of Central Early College, shared that because of their altered school calendar, Central often missed out on district trainings and professional development opportunities. She recalls hearing about the district coaching initiative for English I at a principal's meeting. Her teachers had also been hearing about the coaching their colleagues at other high schools were receiving. Because Helen knew her teachers needed support with implementing the Common Core standards as much as any traditional high school teachers, she went to her Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent and lobbied for her school to be included in the instructional coaching with EduCoaching, Inc. She said,

> I went to my supervisor and said Olivia and Renee are working on literacy with other high schools. We need Olivia and Renee too. We really need them. She agreed to fund a portion of the project for us and we were able to get Olivia that first year to come in and do a project with our English teachers.

With Central Early College being much smaller than the traditional high schools in the district, their contract was for 15 days with one consultant, Olivia Adams. Central's first coaching project began in the fall of 2012, and they have continued with a new coaching project each year since then. Additionally, in 2014 they funded two projects with ECI— the continued comprehension and writing work with Olivia Adams and a new Math culture project with ECI math coach, Rhonda Moore. Coaching has become an embedded part of the Central Early College culture and although the partnership with ECI is consistent and Olivia Adams continues her work with the staff each year, the focus of the

work changes based on the needs of the staff and the vision of Helen Dixon. Central

Early College has made steady progress in student achievement since the inception of

their coaching initiatives, with over a 10-point increase in overall student growth over the

last three years, according to data provided by Helen Dixon. Helen believes the growth is

largely due to the progress her teachers have made because of their coaching experiences.

She shared her thoughts on one particular case:

> There was one teacher in particular I asked Olivia to focus on and he has made
> amazing growth, just amazing progress in his day to day teaching. In addition, his
> data went crazy, huge improvements in is student data. So, not only do I feel the
> coaching helped the teacher, but it helped him help all of those students. And I
> know it because of the coaching because there wasn't anything else we did
> differently—we definitely didn't get new kids—they were the same kids from
> ninth grade but they made amazing gains and when we looked at what we did
> differently, it was the coaching.

Strategic Leadership

Helen's involvement in the coaching project was somewhat different than

Jennifer's. Although they were both very active participants, they did so very differently.

Whereas Jennifer felt it was important to keep her involvement discrete, Helen was much

more transparent with her teachers about her involvement and they knew she was driving

the project. In the beginning of the project, Helen did not make it mandatory for her

teachers. Because her staff was small and her project was small, she started with teachers

who were receptive to the idea of coaching. During the first year, her goals for the project

were to have Olivia come in and work with four teachers on comprehension and literacy.

Helen explained that by the end of year people were asking to work with Olivia because

they saw how supportive and innovative the job-embedded coaching was for the teachers

involved. Helen's small staff allowed her to have a very close relationship with each of

her teachers. Additionally, she was able to spend time in each classroom and with each

teacher, so she knew exactly what she wanted to accomplish with her ECI projects and

exactly what she wanted her teachers to work on. She described herself as very

transparent and shared that her teachers absolutely knew she met and debriefed with

Olivia regularly and that she was actively involved in the direction of the work. She

reiterated that it worked for her school because she had built trusting relationships with

her staff and they knew she was investing in coaching for them and expected returns on

her investment. Olivia described Helen's ability to maximize the services:

> Central's projects have been so successful because Helen is a master at using the feedback and the work of the project as a tool to get where she wants teachers to go and so a large part of the success is her knowledge of the staff and her ability to differentiate the service to meet every teacher's needs. I've never worked in a project where anybody was able to do it the way she does. She just knows and she is able to direct my work and get results. I always debriefed with Helen before I sent her the written feedback. That allowed me to frontload her and put it all in context. We were able to talk through any issues and make decisions together about next steps. And the conversations were not only to frontload Helen. My conversations with her really guided my work too. I remember one case in particular I was working with a brand new teacher. This teacher would do a lesson they thought I wanted to see which was nowhere near their normal lesson and then when we debriefed the teacher claimed there were no problems and that nothing was wrong. But because of my conversations with Helen, I knew what the concerns were and I was able to be more strategic with my debriefing and questioning. And with this teacher, we were finally able to make a breakthrough when Helen used another colleague to talk with him and mentor him on how to use my coaching and take risks in the classroom. So that began to happen and our meetings were much more productive.

Olivia also shared email correspondence between she and Helen that exhibited their level

of commitment to the project, and their ability to work as a team to maximize results. In

one email exchange, Olivia shared the feedback she had given to a teacher and attached the resource she shared with the teacher to support the feedback, and Helen responded by sharing a diagram she had given teachers that addressed the same concepts (See Figure 6). This type of exchange, according to both Olivia and Helen, helped keep the project aligned because they were able to provide consistent messages to teachers and support one another. A second email shared by Olivia demonstrates the way Helen helped direct Olivia's work by frontloading her with important information (See Figure 7).

Helen's teachers described her as very active in the coaching projects. They all spoke of the coaching as support and they seem to understand that the job-embedded coaching is for their benefit. Each teacher I spoke with shared that Helen had worked to get the coaching for them, and they seemed to value the experience. In contrast to the Brown teachers who did not seem to be aware of their principal's true level of involvement in the project, the Central teachers are well aware of Helen's involvement with the coaches, and in fact they describe it as collaboration in order to make decisions for the school.

Helen also utilized the coaching project to help a struggling teacher and did so in a very open and honest way. In one instance, she placed one of her teachers on a plan of support and included the coaching with Olivia as a strategy for improvement. Helen had to be very intentional with the way she included the coaching as a support piece for a struggling teacher because she never wanted the coaching to be viewed as punitive. Olivia Adams attributes Helen's ability to use the coaching in this way to her deep understanding of how coaching truly supports teachers.

-------- Original Message --------
Subject: Re: Feedback and Resources
From: "Dixon, Helen" <​█████████████​>
Date: Thu, January 22, 2015 4:09 pm
To: Olivia Adams <​█████████████​>

Thanks so much!!! It is so weird how much we think alike. Take a look at the attached diagram I shared with teachers back in September...great minds! Thanks for the reinforcement, it helps me when 'experts' come in and back up what I'm doing. Take care! hd

On Thu, Jan 22, 2015 at 12:42 PM, Olivia Adams <​█████████████████​> wrote:

█████████

I am attaching your feedback and a few resources for you.

Prompts for conferencing will help you keep your questions open-ended. Effective feedback will help you craft your language so your feedback is a powerful instructional tool.

The last handout is the assessment cycle. The assessment cycle should begin in the bubble of "clarify what good readers do". Ignore the word reader and replace it with "student"...pay special attention to the bubble that is about modifying instructional plans- this is the responsive piece we talked about yesterday and is the key to moving students forward!

If you have questions, let me know!

Have a wonderful day,

Olivia Adams
Educoaching, Inc.

████████████████
████████
████████

Our site: ███████████████
Our blog: ██████████████

--
Helen Dixon, Ed.S.
Principal

Figure 6. Email Exchange 1 (Central).

Subject: Re: October 8th
From: To: Olivia Adams <███████████████>
Date: Thu, September 03, 2015
To: Melissa Hall <████████████>

This emails shows example of how ████ shows me how to be responsive-

Olivia Adams

████████████
████████

Our site: █████████████
Our blog: ███████████████

-------- Original Message --------
Subject: Re: October 8th
From: "Dixon, Helen" <██████████████>
Date: Thu, October 02, 2014 5:20 pm
To: Olivia Adams <█████████████>

Hi Olivia-
I am attaching a tentative schedule. I'll send to teachers and see if there are any conflicts.
AC needs help with scaffolding and differentiation. We spent time working on this last week, and I shared a graphic organizer I created, and he has at least attempted to use it when planning...████ and/or ██████ can show you and discuss with you. He really doesn't understand how to scaffold for those students who need a little more support or need to fill in gaps before moving on.

████...still seems to be doing lots of whole group, but I've seen protocols and several group activities, but I'm not sure grouping is intentional or data based...not sure she is checking for reading comprehension and differentiating based on their understanding...just see what seems to be going on there.

████ IS working to differentiate! She was doing a DBQ type reading/analysis activity for pre-writing when I visited last. The students did not do much planning before writing though, so we need to get her to help them do more planning before writing.

████ talked the entire time I observed him a couple of weeks ago. My visits since then have been better, but I am still a little concerned about what seems to be lack of planning, so just talk alot to fill in the time??? He is doing some intentional grouping in 3rd block, so I'm interested to see what your take is on what he has them doing.
I hate I have to be gone, but I will be █████████████████████. I'll catch up with you later after I see your feedback for our debrief. Enjoy your visit. Thanks. hd

On Wed, Oct 1, 2014 at 11:03 AM, Olivia Adams <██████████████> wrote:

Hi Helen!
I am looking forward to being on campus next week. Let me know if there are any specifics you want me to focus on with folks.

Have a great day,

Olivia Adams

██████████████
████████

Our site: █████████████████
Our blog: ██████████████████

Figure 7. Email Exchange 2.

Olivia shared,

> Helen was able to have me work with a few teachers who were on "plans" as a true support piece. This required, on her part, tenacity, supervision and real understanding of how coaching supports teachers, not punish. She was able to help the teachers understand that I was a support for them—a support she provided because she wanted them to be successful and believed they could be. It was all about the way she framed it that made it work. Her agenda was improvement, not dismissal.

Olivia also shared that while every principal does not approach the project in this manner, it definitely worked for Central, and it equipped Helen with intricate details about her teachers that she needed in order to differentiate the professional development to meet their individual needs.

Shift to a Culture of Learners

In talking with the teachers and coaches of Central Early College, one thing that came through clearly as a result of their coaching initiatives was their transformation into a collaborative culture of learners. They came to understand the feedback was in no way evaluative, but truly to guide their own reflection as they worked to reach their goals with students. A teacher from Central Early College expressed,

> What I appreciate about the detailed feedback from Olivia and Rhonda is that it is never about telling me what I did wrong. The feedback is about helping me to think through what my end goal is for the students and how best to reach the goals. When I meet with them, they always begin by asking me what I feel went well in my lesson—that question alone really forces me to think, you know? Because it is fresh in my mind and we can really talk about what went well, what could go even better and what strategies I can use to get there. Then, getting the written feedback later is an extra plus because I have time to process everything and I can go back to it again and again for reminders. It's just really good communication, and never in a negative or threatening way. It's all about helping me reach my goals.

They came to view coaching as a gift and a tool to achieve the results they wanted

not only for their students but for themselves. In fact, it was two of the teachers who

approached Helen about adding a math project with ECI. The fascinating thing about

their request was that it was not about simply raising math scores, it was about wanting to

change adult perceptions and conversations about math in order to positively impact the

way students felt about math. Christina King (Central) asserted,

> Sean and I came to Helen and told her that everyone seemed to have a very
> negative view on math at this school! If a kid comes up to them and asks for their
> help with math work, the response they get is "well I can't do math." And we
> asked what kind of image is that projecting for our kids? And out of that
> conversation came our math culture project with Rhonda Moore. That project first
> started as a whole group conversation where Rhonda asked "Have you ever had
> your students' reason why something happened?" Of course everyone said yes,
> and so she told them, "you're doing math!" So it kind of first started as a
> conversation and evolved into Rhonda working with teachers of all content areas
> on how math is a part of what they teach and how they could support
> mathematical reasoning through their content.

With the coaching initiatives at Central, the staff became much more collaborative and

began to think deeply about teaching and learning together. They became more open to

feedback and even began to invite each other into their classrooms to give feedback.

Helen shared that, without her prompting, her teachers began to replicate the kind of

feedback they were getting from their coaches for one another. The teachers described it

as instructional rounds and spoke positively of the process of observing and learning

from one another. Through their coaching experiences, they became a collaborative

culture of learners. Their work has been de-privatized through their experiences and they

now approach teaching and learning as a team endeavor according to Helen. Helen

attributes the shift to her work with ECI:

> What is so interesting is that when we first started with ECI, it was only my
> English teachers. We started with literacy strands and then we added a math
> project to improve math culture. After the first year it was such a positive
> experience, I had people coming in asking to work with Olivia and now everyone
> wants to work with ECI—it is just a part of our culture. And it's funny—at one of
> our collaboration sessions we were talking about formative assessment and one of
> the teachers said 'hey, can we have a data Olivia?' So that's probably what we
> will begin to work on next year—d ata. The teachers love it and even on our
> district survey when asked about PD we said it's the best thing we've ever had.

Helen and her teachers view themselves as one professional learning community

dedicated to improving teaching and learning for both the teachers and the students.

Coaching is a welcomed part of their culture and they seek out opportunities to learn

from the coaches and one another.

Coaching as a Three-way Partnership

In talking with the Central teachers, one of the most important aspects of the

coaching initiative for them was having input into the process. It was very important for

the Central teachers to feel they were driving the coaching and working on goals they had

set for themselves. Even the beginning teacher who struggled in his first year commented

on how his experience changed with coaching because he was able to share with Olivia

what he wanted to work on, which in turn helped him to understand the goal of the

coaching process. From Olivia's perspective, this was a strategic coaching move to allow

her to create a positive relationship with a guarded teacher who needed her coaching and

support. In order to help him become more open to the idea of coaching, she guided him

to select something he wanted to work on which made him feel empowered in the coaching process and valued in his own growth journey.

Most of the Central teachers were not beginning teachers and had more than five years of classroom teaching experience. Understanding that teaching is a very personal art, Olivia and Rhonda shared they it was important for them to honor what the teachers already knew and were doing well and to validate their experience and expertise before offering constructive feedback. Again, this coaching move was a way to make the coaching process a partnership. In addition to valuing the teachers' experiences and expertise, the coaches also molded the project to fit and compliment Helen's leadership style. Olivia spoke repeatedly about Helen directing her work and guiding the project. This is significant because although Olivia was contracted as the expert coach, she understood that Helen was the expert on Central and her work would be much more fruitful and successful if she allowed Helen's leadership and input to guide the project.

Returns on the Coaching Investment

Both the Brown and Central coaching projects were successful and yielded positive results in both student achievement and teacher satisfaction. Brown made high growth each year from 2012–2014, and Jennifer Lawson insists the coaching on literacy strategies was the key to the significant gains. Helen Dixon shared that Central had been making steady progress in student achievement for the last three years, and she attributes it greatly to the coaching from ECI. Additionally, both schools made noteworthy gains on their state's Teacher Working Conditions Survey data in the areas of school leadership, teacher leadership and professional development after their coaching initiatives were in

place (see Figure 8). For Brown High School, in the category of school leadership, the

percentages of teachers who felt the school leadership made a sustained effort to address

teacher concerns about teacher leadership and new teacher support increased over 20

percentage points in each category over a four-year period. Teachers also expressed a

substantial increase in feelings of empowerment with gains ranging from 20 percentage

points to over 40 percentage points in areas such as solving problems as a group,

opportunities to serve in roles of leadership, and being trusted to make sound decisions

about teaching and learning.

Additionally, once the coaching programs were in place, the percentage of

teachers who felt professional development was differentiated, increased collegial

collaboration for the refinement of teaching practices, and enhanced teachers' abilities to

improve student learning all increased by over 20 percentage points over a four-year

period at Brown. Jennifer Lawson attributes her monumental gains in teacher satisfaction

to the instructional coaching projects with ECI. When speaking of Brown's progress,

Jennifer asserted,

> Over the course of three years we were able to improve not only proficiency but
> we exceeded growth, and I just think that it was a direct result of the instructional
> coaching model that we had, and building leadership capacity by having those
> teachers that were coached become coaches in the building. We really improved
> instruction, everything about it, co-planning, co-teaching, vertical alignment, and
> even the way the teachers gave descriptive feedback to students, I mean I actually
> had two teachers really start implementing the standards-based curriculum in
> English II and that was awesome because I didn't tell them to do it but they
> started really thinking about how they were assessing kids and I think it's a direct
> result of their conversations with the coaches about assessments and the kinds of
> feedback we give students. We just made some real improvements and I know
> that was because of the coaching.

Brown High School *Coaching implemented 2011-2012* *Brown experienced leadership changes in July 2011 and September 2014*		**2010** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *prior to coaching* *n= 85.33% response*	**2012** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *n=69 92% response*	**2014** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *n=66 100% response*	**Gains over Time**
School Leadership	School leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about *professional development*	77.1	80.6	87.1	10
	School leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about *teacher leadership*	67.9	93.4	89.1	21.2
	School leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about *new teacher support*	68.5	85.7	89.8	21.3
Teacher Leadership	Teachers are recognized as educational experts	71.4	89.9	93.8	22.4
	Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	75.8	97.1	100.0	24.2
	Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	71.7	92.4	98.4	26.7
	Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	76.6	97.1	97	20.4
	The faculty effectively solves problems as a group.	52.4	87.5	95.2	42.8
	Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in our school.	42.6	77.8	85.9	43.3

Figure 8. Most Significant Gains (> 10%) on TWCS.

Brown High School *Coaching implemented 2011-2012* *Brown experienced leadership changes in July 2011 and September 2014*		**2010** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *prior to coaching* *n = 56* *85.33% response*	**2012** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *n = 69* *92% response*	**2014** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *n = 66* *100% response*	**Gains over Time**
Professional Development	An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development in my school.	72.1	83.6	92.4	20.3
	Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	82	95.2	100	18
	Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers.	57.1	68.2	82.3	25.2
	In this school follow up is provided from professional development.	66.1	85.1	93.7	27.6
	Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	66.7	91	90.5	23.8
	Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.	73.6	92.4	96.8	23.2

Figure 8. (Cont.) Most Significant Gains (> 10%) on TWCS.

	Central Early College *Coaching implemented 2012-2013*	**2012** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree*	**2014** *% of teachers who agree/strongly agree* *n=13* *100% response*	**Gains over Time**
School Leadership	There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect	81.8	92.3	10.5
	The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about **professional development**	80	100	20
	The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about **teacher leadership**	90	100	10
	The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about **instructional practices & support**	90	100	10
Teacher Leadership	Teachers are recognized as educational experts	81.8	100	18.2
	Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	90	100	10
	Teachers use data to inform their instruction.	60	100	40
	The faculty effectively solves problems as a group.	72.7	92.3	19.6
	Teachers work together in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	63.6	92.3	28.7
Professional Development	An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development in my school.	72.7	92.3	19.6
	Professional development offerings are data driven.	60.0	92.3	32.3
	Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers.	54.5	75	20.5
	Professional supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.	90	100	10
	In this school follow up is provided from professional development.	63.6	76.9	13.3
	Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	45.5	69.2	23.7
	Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	72.7	100	27.3

Note. Data retrieved from http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/

Figure 8. (Cont.) Most Significant Gains (> 10%) on TWCS.

Central Early College also made significant gains in the state's Teacher Working Conditions Survey data which Helen Dixon also believes are a result of the shift in culture their work with ECI ignited. Helen was extremely proud of the fact that 100% of her teachers agreed that school leadership made sustained efforts to address teacher leadership, professional development and instructional practices and supports, but she insisted she could not have achieved such results without the collaboration with her ECI coaches. Helen reflected upon the impact of coaching: "I know coaching has made a huge difference for us."

Satisfaction also increased greatly in the area of data driven decision making for Central. Helen explained that as teachers became more reflective about their work and more collaborative as a school community because of their experiences with coaching, they began to look at data differently and think critically about how to use their data to drive improvement. The percentage of teachers who agreed data is used to drive instruction at Central increased by 40 percentage points from 60% in 2012 to 100% in 2014. Additionally, the number of teachers who felt professional development was data driven and felt teachers collaborated to improve instruction increased by over 30 percentage points with two consecutive years of coaching being the primary professional development offering. Notable gains were also made in teachers' perceptions of professional development at Central with gains ranging from 10 percentage points to over 30 percentage points in the areas of differentiation, follow-up, and contributions to increased student achievement. Helen Dixon said she has seen major improvements in her TWC survey results since the inception of her coaching initiatives and can directly

relate each improvement to the changes that have taken place in the school culture and her staff becoming a community of professional learners and collaborators.

Summary

While there are many factors that contributed to the success of these coaching initiatives, school leadership, effective communication, changes in the cultures of the school, and strategic moves on the part of the coaches to support strong relationships with teachers appear to be the most compelling influences that emerged from my study. School leadership was paramount in launching and maintaining consistency throughout the project. The coaches and teachers who participated in the study felt the principals played a significant role in the success of the coaching initiatives.

Strong, effective communication was a theme that emerged as important throughout the research. It is important for administrators and coaches alike to be effective communicators in order to achieve optimal results. As one of the ECI coaches shared, "The more we are able to communicate with the principal, the more we are able to align our work to the principal's vision—and when the work is aligned, the results are powerful." Coach Rhonda Moore (Central) insisted that being a good communicator was the most important role of the coach in ensuring a successful coaching model:

> Being a great communicator, researcher, and reliable—those are the three most important things. But communication, like I have said throughout, is key—with the teachers and the principal. If your communication piece isn't strong, anything can present as an obstacle and throw the whole thing off course.

Both schools experienced changes in their culture with regards to collaboration and feedback/reflection. Departmental meeting included team planning, teachers visited

one another's classrooms and shared feedback, and cross-curricular conversations commenced. Collaboration ignited in both cases, and teachers were empowered to authentically engage in school improvement as a team through feedback, reflection and honest dialogue with peers.

The growth of teachers revealed in the data can be attributed to the strategic work of the coaches. With Brown and Central the coaches made coaching moves that enhanced their relationships with teachers and opened the door to major improvements in teacher practice. In both cases, the coaches adapted their model to fit the needs of the teachers. They differentiated for each learner, just as we ask teachers to do for students. For some teachers, this meant model lessons; for others it meant being more persistent with questioning and guided reflection. The coaches also supported the teachers at Brown by building a peer coaching model that extended the learning to other departments. At Central, ECI coaches crafted a math-culture initiative especially for the Central staff, something they had not done prior to that time. The data revealed that throughout the work with Brown and Central, ECI coaches were responsive and willing to craft their coaching moves to meet the needs of the teachers, which in turn strengthened their relationships throughout each school.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Researchers have consistently identified teacher quality as the most important school-based factor in student achievement, which makes the investment in improving teacher performance through high quality professional development paramount for schools and school districts (Hightower et al., 2011). Instructional coaching has emerged as a recommended professional development model based on the fact that coaching involves demonstration, modeling, feedback and reflection, which are all important in transforming teaching practices (Knight, 2007).

My study involved closely examining the instructional coaching models of two schools that have experienced success with coaching as professional development for teachers. The goal of my study was to identify key components and strategies for implementing a successful instructional coaching program. In my current role as a central office administrator who oversees professional development, I have found that schools and districts continue to try program after program or initiative after initiative in efforts to improve teacher practice and student achievement. This is especially true with professional development. School and district leaders are consistently looking for "the next big thing'" to get results. Opportunities to provide job-embedded coaching for teachers are becoming readily available, not only as a 'perk' from big publishing

companies marketing their latest programs, but also from independent providers who can be contracted by schools and districts for coaching work. Instructional coaches are also being employed at the school and district level as faculty members. Coaching is becoming a buzz-word in education, and I believe research into the best practices of job-embedded coaching initiatives for schools will be valuable in guiding the decision making processes of school and district leaders who are charged with providing high quality professional development that yields results.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the coaching models at the two schools in the study, I conducted a qualitative, multi-site case study. I collected data through the audiotaped interviews of 20 participants: two administrators, four coaches, and 14 teachers. I also collected artifacts and documents pertinent to the coaching initiatives. I categorized the participants by school and coaching project, and I coded data gathered from the interviews in order to identify trends and answer the research questions. I examined artifacts and supporting documents to gain a deeper understanding of the coaching initiatives and compare to the information shared in the interviews. I have found that job-embedded coaching can be a highly successful initiative to improve teacher practice when implemented strategically. In this chapter I will offer conclusions, implications and recommendations based what I have learned from the study of these two schools.

Research Questions

The study centered on the question of what can be learned from an exemplary implementation model of instructional coaching. Two secondary questions helped to

build an understanding to answer the primary research question. The secondary

questions I considered were:

1. *What are the roles of the key players (principals, coaches, and teachers) in a*
   successful coaching model?

2. *What are the most important influences in successful coaching programs?*

In order to fully answer the primary question, it is important to first explain the

findings related to the secondary questions.

Secondary Question 1: What are the Roles of the Key Players (Principals, Coaches

and Teachers) in a Successful Coaching Model?

For the sites used in this study, the key players in their coaching models were the

building principals, the coaches, and the teachers. In both cases, all three were integral to

the success of the coaching programs. The interviews coupled with the review of

essential documents and artifacts provided insight into the role of each participant in a

successful coaching initiative.

Principal. In a coaching initiative, the role of the principal is critical. In order for

principals to understand their roles in school-based coaching initiatives, they must first

understand the importance of their role as an instructional leader. Strong instructional

leaders promote equity and excellence in education by holding steadfast to their vision

for student learning, garnering and allocating resources, communicating progress, and

supporting the people, programs and activities implemented to achieve the school's

vision (Zepeda, 2007/2013). Keeping the school's vision in the forefront is important in

ensuring success of any initiative but especially coaching. It is important to create a sense

of alignment to the vision for all parties involved. This alignment begins with the principal. The principal should be involved throughout the project from beginning to end and beyond in order to support and extend the work of the coaches.

Before the initiative. The study uncovered that each project began with a collaborative meeting between the principal and the coaches. The purpose of these meetings was to set clear goals for the project based on the principal's vision for the school. The principals in each case worked collaboratively with the coaches to set clear goals for the project and develop a plan to share the goals with their staffs in order to enlist their active participation in the coaching. In the case of Brown High School, the coaching implementation was a part of a district-mandated initiative, so while the project focus was set by the district, Principal Lawson still met with the coaches outside of the district mandated administrator-coach meeting to discuss her vision for the Brown teachers and what she hoped to gain form the instructional coaching project. Principal Lawson wanted to have direct input into the project goals because she wanted to make sure the project would support and compliment her strategic plan for elevating teaching and learning.

In the case of Central Early College, Principal Helen Dixon initiated contact with the EduCoaching, Inc. consultants so she had a clear idea of the professional development she wanted to provide for her teachers through coaching. The coaches all expressed that projects work best when the principal has chosen to implement instructional coaching and has asked them to come in and serve their teachers. Principal Dixon knew exactly what she wanted to accomplish with her comprehension coaching

project and communicated her goals clearly to the coaches. Together, they crafted a plan

that was agreeable to both the school and the coaches. The preliminary meetings between

the principal and coaches are vital because the parties can collaborate around all aspects

of the impending project including:

- Goals and intended outcomes

- Coaching model

- Anticipated needs and/or possible barriers; and

- Project timeline, scheduling logistics, and contract terms

Once the project goals and timeline are agreed upon by the principal and the

coaches, the next step in a successful launch is to present the project to the teachers in a

way that supports and encourages buy-in and willing participation. This can be

accomplished through transparent communication of project purpose and expectations

with an emphasis on the importance of continued education and growth for all staff

members (Croft et al., 2010). Principals must make it a priority to create a culture of

continuous improvement with professional development being valued and considered

essential to success. Teachers must see themselves as learners, eager and able to improve

their practice when given support (Aguilar, 2011). The coaches and principals who

participated in the study all stressed the importance and value of teacher buy-in. Coach

Olivia Adams shared that one reason the Brown and Central projects were so successful

is because both principals presented the projects to their teachers in such a positive way

that teachers felt it was a gift and an opportunity to grow and achieve more with their

students. Placing value on continuing education for teachers is an important part of strong

instructional leadership (Croft et al., 2010). As the data showed in chapter 4, Jennifer was operating under a district mandate and required all English teachers to participate which made her role in introducing the project even more critical. Dixon did not mandate participation but instead recruited participants by presenting the initiative as a support to the teachers as they tackled the implementation of the Common Core standards. In both cases, their leadership was situational and respectful of the school context.

As the review of literature suggested, successful implementation of coaching as professional development is highly dependent on the principal taking an active role in ensuring the project is set up for success by attending to areas including but not limited to coach selection, project logistics, and preparing coaches and teachers to work together (Lloyd & Modlin, 2012). Principals are the instructional leaders of the school, and their voice is most important to the teachers; therefore, coaches must fully understand the principal's vision for school improvement, and principals must fully understand the interventions and services their coach has to offer (Knight, 2007). When principals play an active role in designing and launching a coaching project, they are more invested and more committed to serving as an instructional partner to ensure the project goals are met with fidelity.

During the project. Once a project is underway, a principal's role can vary depending on her approach and intended goals. The principal may choose to create the coaching schedules for each visit or they may delegate that to the coach or another instructional team member. Both Jennifer Lawson and Helen Dixon took the lead in creating the schedules for the coaching visits. They both agreed that creating the schedule

themselves was an important part of ensuring successful coaching visits. Additionally, they both followed the recommendations of ECI and always sent the schedule to the teachers in advance. ECI recommends that coaching visits always be announced. The coaches shared that announced visits give teachers time to prepare their best attempts at teaching which allows the coach to more accurately address capacity. Additionally, by announcing the visits, the coaching is less likely to be perceived as a 'gotcha' for teachers. To be most effective, coaching should not be evaluative and should not be connected to disciplinary measures (Aguilar, 2013).

According to the coaches in the study, the most important way for the principal to support the success of the initiative once in motion is to readily communicate with the coach on a regular basis. ECI coaches suggest that principals debrief with the coaches at the end of each coaching visit. Both Lawson (Brown) and Dixon (Central) met with their ECI coaches at the end of each visit. Jennifer Lawson shared that she met with the coaches each time they were on campus because she valued their feedback in guiding her own work as an instructional leader. She used their feedback as a reference as she did walkthroughs, and it helped her to keep the momentum of the project going in between visits. Dixon also stressed the value and importance of debriefing with her coaches after every visit. She explained that it was very helpful in her own instructional leadership to know what the coaches were seeing and compare it to what she was seeing in her own walkthroughs and observations. She and her coaches were partners in moving instruction, and she aligned her walkthrough feedback to the feedback the coaches were sharing in order to provide clarity and consistency for her teachers. When Olivia Adams spoke of

the value of debriefing with principals, she shared her debriefs with Helen were more like

collaborative planning sessions than just debriefs. The conversations between Helen and

her coach were vital in deciding next steps and making critical decisions about the areas

of focus for the project. Continuous evaluation of the progress of the initiative is critical

and communication between the principal and coaches supports that continuous

evaluation. The coaches and principals in the study agreed that because their

communication involved the coach sharing information about their work with the

teachers, it was important for them to keep it discrete and protect the relationship

between the coach and teacher. The coach must provide vital information to the principal

while also maintaining a trusting relationship with the teachers (Neufold & Roper, 2003).

Close communication not only keeps the principal informed, but it also provides the

principal with key information as they address any concerns or difficulties with the

project, look for opportunities to extend the coaching through their own work, and

continuously evaluate progress towards the overall project goals. Both principals in the

study closely communicated with the coaches in order to support their initiatives. Their

differing approaches will be discussed further later in this chapter when we examine the

value of strategic leadership in coaching initiatives.

Coach. The role of the coach in instructional coaching programs is multifaceted

and complex and can change from teacher to teacher. However, in talking with the

coaches, principals, and teachers involved in the Brown and Central initiatives, the role of

the coach is ultimately to support improvements in teaching and learning. The coaches in

these projects aimed to fulfill that expectation by providing job-embedded professional

development to teachers designed to build capacity. As Aguilar (2013) suggested, coaches should not be used as program enforcers, evaluators or therapists expected to "fix" people.

The coaches in my study avoided the aforementioned. Further, the cases studied in this research support the suggestion of Kowal and Steiner (2007) that although the work of coaches may vary from school to school, it generally connects to three broad categories of coaching skill: pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and interpersonal skills. The interviews and review of artifacts supported this suggestion. The coaches at both Brown and Central shared the following roles across all projects:

- Partner with Principals to set project goals

- Enlist teachers in setting personal goals and project benchmarks

- Build strong, trusting relationships with teachers in order to promote the learning partnership

- Conduct regular observations with same day face-to-face debrief sessions with each teacher observed

- Provide written feedback to teachers within 48 hours of each observation

- Debrief with Principals after each coaching visit

- Provide key resources to teachers (aligned with feedback) to support progress towards goals

- Provide additional professional development experiences as needed (book studies, instructional rounds, guided peer observations, mini workshops, model lessons)

Each coach interviewed provided evidence and examples of attending to all of these roles in order to support the instructional coaching initiatives. Coaching is a collaborative partnership in which the coach must be an equal partner in learning (Knight, 2007). Coaching is most effective when the coach skillfully personalizes the service and differentiates the coaching to meet the needs of the individual learner. Coaches must support others to become conscious of their belief systems about everything related to students and learning (Aguilar, 2013). If teachers are conscious of their beliefs and how they impact their work, they are able to change them in order to grow and further develop their capacity. The work of a coach is as much interpersonal as it is content-related. Almost every teacher interviewed described an effective coach as someone who supports the teacher and provides feedback that is not meant to evaluate but help the teacher grow and become more effective.

Teacher. Without the active and willing participation of the teacher being coached, coaching initiatives cannot be successful. The role of the teacher in a successful coaching initiative is to be an actively engaged learner. According to the coaches in the study, the work is most successful when the teachers' view it as a partnership with the coach. At Brown High School and Central Early College, the programs were successful because the majority of the teachers were committed to the following actions to support the coaching initiatives:

- Teachers took an active role in setting their own goals and determining the areas in which they wanted to grow and improve

- Teachers honored the scheduled visits and actively participated in the observations and debrief sessions

- Teachers became reflective practitioners reflecting not only on their own work but the overall direction and effectiveness of the schoolwide initiative

- Teachers were collaborative colleagues who supported schoolwide progress through peer observations, sharing, and feedback

In addition to the aforementioned actions, classroom teachers must also be open and honest in consistently evaluating the coaching initiative by providing feedback to the coaches and the principal. According to the both principals in the study, teachers were consistently asked to share their feedback regarding professional development informally in leadership team meetings, staff meetings, professional learning community meetings and in individual conferences. Additionally, the Teachers Working Conditions Survey, the results of which are taken quite seriously in the district, provided teachers with an avenue for communicating their perceptions about coaching initiatives.

It is important for teachers to understand their ultimate role is to provide high quality instruction that results in increased student achievement (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). When teachers view coaching as a vessel to help them excel in that role, they are willing to participate and engage in the coaching process. As the coaches in the projects shared, a teacher who participates as an active partner in the coaching process, reflecting and focusing on continuous improvement, will transform their practice and achieve their teaching and learning goals.

Secondary Question 2: What are the Most Important Influences in Successful Coaching Programs?

Although there were two sites in this study and their coaching initiatives were different, four major influences (themes) emerged across the sites as critical components of successful coaching models. These influences manifested differently in each case but are consistent across each project. The influences found to be most important to the coaching programs in this study are:

1. Effective Communication

2. Strategic Leadership

3. Coaching Moves

4. Collaborative Culture

As participants discussed their experiences with coaching, the thoughts, ideas and interpretations they shared fit into one of these four themes either directly or through implied understanding.

Effective communication. Communication plays a fundamental role in all facets of the instructional coaching process. From the initial planning to the project evaluation, effective communication is vital to the success of a coaching initiative. Communication is at the heart of each stage of the coaching process. The principal must communicate with the coach and teachers. The coach must communicate with the principal and the teachers. The teachers must communicate with the coach, the principal and each other. If any part of the communication chain is lacking, the project could suffer.

Principals. As previously discussed, in the most successful projects, the principal and coaches collaborate closely from start to finish in order to ensure the coaching project is aligned to the overall school vision. Principals meet with the coaches throughout the project not only to be briefed on teacher progress but to also share insights from their own work with teachers in order to guide and inform the work of the coaches. Strong, effective communication is a part of the collaborative partnership between principals and coaches, and that partnership drives the results of the coaching initiative (Hall & Simeral, 2008).   The principals in this study were strong communicators not only with the coaches, but with their teachers. They were open and honest with their communication and modeled the collaboration they wanted to see from their teachers.

Coaches. Instructional coaches must be master communicators in order to excel in coaching. Because successful coaching hinges on strong relationships with principals and teachers, having strong interpersonal skills and competencies is a vital trait for coaches (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). In every interview conducted, the participant stressed that the coach must be a strong and effective communicator. With the ECI coaching models, the coaches are charged with providing both verbal and written feedback to the teachers after each observation and throughout the project. The coaches must be skilled with communicating the feedback in a way that supports reflection on the part of the teacher. Coaches must also engage the coachee in communication that establishes a sense of accountability for the plan of action they have created together (Psencik, 2011).

Every teacher talked about communication being an important part of the process. The teachers especially appreciated the feedback being both verbal and written. Multiple

teachers shared that the feedback was always communicated in a non-threatening way, that it was never about what they were not doing, but rather what they were doing well and what they could do differently to achieve their teaching and learning goals. Additionally, every coach cited communication as a key component of project success. The coaches agreed that if the communication component was not strong, all other components could suffer. The principals felt the feedback they received from coaches was a critical component of their own instructional leadership, and insisted the information the coaches shared throughout the project guided them in maximizing the results. Both principals shared examples of using the feedback to move instruction in their buildings.

The ability to communicate effectively is at the heart of what coaches do. Knight (2007) suggests six aspects of effective communication: (a) understanding the communication process, (b) employing authentic listening, (c) understanding our audiences, (d) recognizing stories, (e) interpreting nonverbal communication and facial expressions, and (f) building relationships through emotional connection (p. 57). Each of these six aspects were mentioned or referenced by the coaches as important factors for a successful project. Ultimately, effective communication impacts every stage of the coaching process and serves as the foundation for all progress and growth. Meaningful communication between project participants is the driving force for lasting success.

Strategic leadership. There are many factors that determine the success of coaching initiatives, but leadership is undoubtedly one of the most critical components in successful coaching implementations. In both cases, the school principal was an active

participant in the coaching process but their approaches were not the same. However, each of them made strategic leadership moves that propelled their coaching programs toward success. The research uncovered that there is no exact leadership model to support a coaching initiative; instead the key is simply to be actively involved as both a leader and a learner.

Brown's principal, Jennifer Lawson made some very strategic decisions in order to make her coaching program successful. First, she was at a disadvantage from the beginning because the district was mandating the initiative, and she was new to the school. The findings of the literature review caution against mandating coaching because it will likely be perceived as punitive and evaluative (Aguilar, 2013). In order to protect against her teachers rejecting the coaching initiative because of the district mandate, Jennifer focused her conversations on how fortunate Brown was to be receiving coaching support. She strategically put very little emphasis on it being a district mandate and presented it to her teachers as her vision for professional development. Additionally, she actively participated with them throughout the launch, met individually with her English Department chairperson to enlist her as a leader for the project, and clearly communicated her expectations for success with her staff. Each teacher I spoke with from Brown shared that Jennifer made it clear how much she believed in coaching and her expectations for their participation and hard work with the initiative.

In addition to actively and openly supporting the project, Jennifer made it a priority to protect the coach/teacher relationship by being very discrete with her involvement once the project was underway. She was able to masterfully maintain the

balance between using information from the coaches strategically and honoring the coach/teacher relationships, a factor stressed as critical in the research (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

In addition to strategically supporting the coach/teacher relationships, Lawson was also very intentional in addressing sustainability with the coaching which can be one of the greatest challenges for school leaders. She knew the funding for the coaching would be limited from the district, and she was concerned early on with the fact that coaching was limited to the English department. Lawson knew that in order to maximize results and really infiltrate the school with the best practices, she needed to find a way to extend the coaching beyond the English department. Lawson decided to expand the project by having her English teachers serve as peer coaches for other departments during the second year of coaching. The coaches felt the peer coaching component was one of the greatest successes of the Brown project because they were able to build teacher capacity to a level where teachers had the confidence and self-efficacy to provide coaching to their colleagues. The peer coaching initiative was powerful because as the research suggested the benefits were multifaceted, not only improving teacher skill but also strengthening collegial collaboration (Joyce & Showers, 1980; Cornett & Knight, 2008).

Jennifer's strategic leadership and forward thinking added a layer of sustainment for the instructional progress that had been made. She was able to expand the project using teacher leadership and peer coaching as vessels to take Brown to the next level of success. Even after Jennifer left Brown to serve at the district level, the peer coaching had

infiltrated the staff to the point that it continued even unofficially. Jennifer Lawson's

leadership was described by the coaches and the teachers as instrumental in making the

coaching initiative a success. Each person interviewed credited her leadership as one of

the most important factors in achieving the exceptional results they achieved.

Additionally, the gains in the Teacher Working Conditions Survey corroborated the

teachers' assertions that Jennifer's leadership for this initiative not only supported the

coaching initiative but made a difference in the way teachers viewed professional

development, teacher leadership, and empowerment as well.

Central Early College principal, Helen Dixon, was also described by the ECI

coaches as a strong and actively involved instructional leader. Her style and approach,

however, differ from Jennifer Lawson. In contrast to Brown, the Central coaching

initiative was not district mandated. Helen elected to contract with ECI for coaching

services, and she made sure her teachers were aware that this initiative was an investment

in them. Additionally, Helen did not mandate the coaching for her teachers. She allowed

them to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in the process. This approach

ensured the first attempt with coaching would be well received with the Central teachers.

Once the project launched, Helen remained very involved. The difference in Helen and

Jennifer's approach is that while Jennifer elected to be very discrete with her

involvement, Helen used a more transparent and forthright approach. The Central

teachers are all aware that Helen meets with the coaches and debriefs about the progress

of the project. Helen is very deliberate with her follow through and works to extend the

work of the coaches through her own support between visits. Additionally, in reviewing

correspondence between Helen and her coaches, it was clear she consistently provided insights and information to guide the work of the coaches. She shared trends in observations/walkthroughs, feedback from teachers, and awareness into their work as a staff. Helen shared that because they are small in size, her staff is able to have open dialogue about their school's progress on a regular basis. Her transparent leadership style has created a culture of reflective learners who hold each other accountable for student outcomes.

Helen has strategically used the coaching initiatives to change the culture of her building and de-privatize teaching and learning for Central. Her teachers spoke of the coaching as schoolwide commitment. The two Central teachers who initiated the schoolwide math project with ECI did so because they saw the shift in culture with the comprehension project and wanted to achieve a similar culture shift for Math. With the collaborative guidance of ECI coach Rhonda Moore, Central crafted a coaching project plan which would include teachers of all content areas in order to improve the math culture throughout the school. As a result of their coaching projects, the teachers at Central feel that no matter the content they are responsible for, they are both reading and math teachers to all students.

Both Jennifer and Helen used strategic leadership moves to enhance their coaching initiatives and sustain the learning beyond the project. Both leaders maximized growth and progress through their deliberate involvement. Leadership is not about the time principals devote to instruction—but the quality and type of instructional involvement that make a difference (Center for American Progress, 2014). For these

leaders, involvement in the coaching project was not limited to compliance checks and walkthroughs—it was about intentional leadership aimed at improving student achievement.

     Coaching moves to build strong coach/teacher relationships. The relationships between a coach and the teachers they serve drive an instructional coaching program. If the coach/teacher relationships are not strong, the outcomes cannot and will not be effective. Throughout coaching initiatives, coaches have to make coaching moves to keep the project moving in the right direction. The coaching moves involve using best practices in specific situations in order to strengthen the work with the teacher. Make the right coaching moves in a situation strengthens the teachers' faith in the process and strengthens the coach/teacher relationships which are the driving force of teachers' growth. Aguilar (2013) refers to this as the "coaching dance" which she describes as the process by which coaches listen, observe and assess the needs of teachers, respond through probing questions, and suggest actions and/or resources for growth. As Chapter IV highlighted, coaching moves for ECI included (but were not limited to) strategies to increase buy-in, differentiation to meet individual needs, modeling, detailed feedback, providing additional resources to support the work towards goals, and strategically using guided questioning to strengthen teacher reflection. All of these moves work synergistically to strengthen the coach/teacher relationships in order to maximize project outcomes. In each of the 14 interviews with teachers, the relationship with their coach was what was most important to them even before the coach's knowledge of content. Additionally, almost all of the teachers mentioned having a voice in the coaching process.

The ECI coaches approach coaching teachers as a partnership. Knight (2007) reminds us that "partnership, at its core, is a deep belief that we are no more important than those with whom we work, and that we should do everything we can to respect that equality" (p. 24). The teachers in the Brown and Central projects highly valued being a partner in their own learning. By giving the teachers a voice in the work, the ECI coaches engaged them in the process at a deeper level.

When asked what was most important in building a strong relationship with teachers, every coach talked about trust. Trust is at the core of the coach/teacher relationship and creating a mutually trusting relationship should be the highest priority at the onset of the project (Reiss, 2007). The ECI coaches did this by framing their support as a resource and having honest conversations with teachers about the purpose and goals of the work. The open, honest dialogue helped teachers to look at observations from the coaches very differently from their evaluative observations, because the coaching observations were about taking steps to reach student goals that the teacher sets. The coaches also presented themselves as experts in their field and strategically gave teachers strategies that are research-based and have proven results to improve teaching and learning. Doing this early on in the relationship built the teachers' trust and faith in not only the coaches, but the process of coaching.

Once trusting relationships were established, the coaches and teachers were able to work together as a team to accomplish the project goals. The interviews revealed that teachers valued being an equal partner in the process. When teachers are enlisted as partners, they are more highly engaged in the work and more committed to their own

progress. For the teachers, being a partner is viewed as having a voice and having input into their own experiences. For the coaches, approaching the process as a partnership is a strategy to empower the teachers and guide them to become reflective practitioners. The partnership approach is especially important when a teacher is initially resistant to the coaching experience. As described in Chapter IV, one teacher in the Central project recalled not understanding the purpose of coaching in the beginning. From his perspective, he was not able to find value in the process until he had a voice in the work. From the perspectives of the coach and the administrator, this teacher was a struggling new teacher who was resistant to accepting help and guidance. Principal Dixon and Coach Adams worked strategically to provide him with supports so that he could be successful. But because their approach was centered on protecting and deepening the relationship and empowering the teacher, he was able to make great progress. With the supportive relationship in place, the coach was able to guide the teacher into the work of being a reflective practitioner and realizing what actions he needed to take to improve his own practice. This is an example of coaching moves that involve differentiation to meet the needs of the individual teachers.

The relationship between the coach and the teacher is the foundation of the coaching initiative. Without strong relationships, there can be no coaching. Initially, going into this research, I assumed that *what* the coach knew (content knowledge) would be important to the teacher and important in gaining the respect of the teacher, but that is not what the research revealed. The teachers rarely mentioned coach expertise in terms of content knowledge as being important. Their relationship with the coach, being able to

trust the coach, and feeling supported by the coach were the factors that were most important to the teachers.

Collaborative culture. In much of the research on instructional coaching, the focus is on the impact of coaching on individual teachers and individualized job-embedded professional development (Aguilar 2013; Knight 2007). For the schools in this study, the impact of the coaching initiatives on the overall school culture was just as profound as the impact on individual teachers. Neither of the school principals originally entered the coaching projects with the goal of transforming the school culture. Their initial goals were around providing literacy support and strategies to their teachers. However, through their strategic leadership, the work of the coaches and the collaboration between teachers that was born from the coaching initiatives, both principals saw significant shifts from an isolated, departmentalized high school culture to a very collaborative and cohesive culture centered on improving student achievement as a team.

For Brown High School, the shift in culture began with the English Department. The work with ECI made the department more cohesive because they began to share a common language around instruction. As discussed in Chapter IV, several teachers shared that their department meetings completely changed once the coaching initiative began. Prior to the coaching initiatives, department meetings were more related to housekeeping and managerial topics than instruction. With the implementation of the instructional coaching, the conversations shifted and the teachers began to engage in discourse about teaching and learning. They shared strategies, gave each other honest

feedback, and focused their dialogue around improving student achievement. From their departmental shift came the peer coaching initiative, which ultimately impacted the school culture as a whole. Several of the teachers shared that their peer coaching experiences were the first time they had ever collaborated outside of their department.

The Central Early College staff prides themselves on being a collaborative culture of learners and attributes their shifts in culture to their work with ECI. Principal Dixon shared that she felt the significant gains in the Teacher Working Conditions Survey were a direct result of the coaching initiatives and that her teachers now approach improving student learning outcomes as a team. In fact, their second project with ECI was an initiative to improve the Math culture and was initiated by teachers. In talking with the Central teachers, they present as a unified schoolwide PLC dedicated to providing high quality teaching and learning, and they speak of ECI coaches as if they are members of their team and not outside consultants. Many of them referenced giving each other feedback, visiting each other's classrooms for instructional rounds, and doing peer observations. Each time these actions were mentioned, the teachers attributed them to their work with ECI. The shifts at Central have been profound and everyone is working together to impact student achievement.

<div align="center">**Barriers and Challenges**</div>

As the data revealed in Chapter IV, Brown and Central have experienced great success with their instructional coaching initiatives but not without challenges and struggles. The key to their success was that the school leaders were able to work closely with the coaches to mitigate the barriers and continue the work. Once of the early barriers

for Brown was the fact that the coaching initiative was mandated for all English Teachers in the district, even though the research is clear that coaching should never be mandated or forced (Aguilar, 2011). Jennifer Lawson had to be very intentional about presenting the project as a positive support to her teachers in order to counter any negative perceptions because of the mandate.

Both principals in the study faced funding issues when working to sustain their coaching initiatives. With Brown, the district funding ended after the first two years, so Jennifer was proactive in creating a peer-coaching model to extend the learning to other teachers in her building and create a collaborative structure to sustain the learning beyond the project timeline. For Central, Helen Dixon had to lobby the district to help fund their coaching project because they were not included in the district mandate. Each year since, she has had to fight and strongly advocate for the district to assist with funding. Additionally, both schools used grant money to help fund the coaching. Helen finds the money through strategic budgeting—using multiple funding sources to support the initiative. As funding continues to be a roadblock for many schools, maximizing the project impact by focusing on building a collaborative culture and sustaining the learning through instructional leadership becomes even more crucial for school leaders.

Communication can also be a barrier to project success. As the data revealed in Chapter IV, the school leaders in this study worked diligently to ensure communication was a priority not only between them and the coaches, but between the teachers and coaches and between the teachers and themselves. Communication is not only important

to keep the project aligned to the school vision, but also to mitigate problems that may arise along the way such as scheduling issues or teacher resistance.

Next Steps and Future Research

This multi-site case study aimed to answer the question of what can be learned from an exemplary coaching model. From the research, interviews, and review of documents, some significant information was gleaned, and the following conclusions/recommendations can be made based on the findings:

- Coaching initiatives are most successful when the principal is actively involved in the planning and goal setting for the project.

- The principal's involvement and style can vary, but the active engagement of the principal in the project is vital. Specifically, the principal should meet and debrief regularly with the coaches to strongly support the coaching process and keep it aligned to the overall instructional vision of the school.

- The relationships between the coaches and teachers are paramount and should be held sacred by the principal. Coaches must be skilled in building relationships and should value the teachers as equal partners in the process.

- Coaching can be a mechanism to transform school culture. By leveraging the coaching process to provide more opportunities for collaboration, peer coaching, and open and honest dialogue, the school culture can shift from departmentalized and fragmented to cohesive and student centered.

- Effective communication between all parties involved in the coaching process is the most important factor in an exemplary coaching model. The school

principal and coach should make every effort to make communication the

number one priority for the project.

o   Ongoing communication between the principal and coach is essential.

o   Feedback to teachers is essential. The coach should not only provide face

to face feedback on the day the observations occur but should also provide

written feedback to the teacher in a timely manner.

o   Open and honest communication between the coach and the teacher is

invaluable. The coach must make every effort to protect the relationship

by being very discrete with what is shared and what is held in confidence.

•   Coaching initiatives are not quick fixes. In order to garner the results that the

schools in this study achieved, the process must extend over time. At least five

touches (coaching sessions) per teacher is recommended to achieve optimal

results. As the needs of the school and teachers change, the focus of the

coaching initiative can change to support those needs.

In Chapter II, I introduced my Conceptual Framework for Coaching (Figure 1).

My experiences through this research supported my initial framework with regards to the

coaching cycle. However, the research revealed that the impact of coaching is more

complex than the simple implementation of the coaching cycle. One of the conclusions

the data clearly supported is that coaching can positively impact the culture and climate

of the school and enhance the collaborative work of the staff as an instructional team.

Additionally, in both cases, the principal played a critical and active role in the

implementation of coaching. Therefore, as depicted in Figure 9, the implementation of a

coaching model (as described in the framework) in conjunction with strong leadership creates a synergistic cycle of continuous improvement that strengthens the school culture. Together, these components improve teacher practice and positively impact student achievement.

Figure 9. The Impact of Coaching Implementation.

Entering this study, I knew school leadership was an important piece of ensuring success in a school-based coaching initiative, but this helped me to understand there is no 'one size fits all' model for leading instructional coaching initiatives. The charge for leaders is to build an initiative that fits their school. They must align the coaching initiative to their own broader school vision; establish the initiative's goals and processes; cultivate authentic teacher engagement and participation; share and exchange information

regarding instruction with the coaches and apply it in their own instructional leadership work; infiltrate the school with the tenets of coaching by building on successes; and build capacity and plan for long-term sustainability. Because of the extremely crucial nature of a school leader's role in building and sustaining a successful coaching model, it is imperative that coaching projects be planned with thoughtful intention. I have created a resource to guide and assist leaders through the planning and execution of instructional coaching implementation. See Appendix F for a School Leader's Checklist that was created based on the findings of this research.

For coaches, this study revealed that coaching is as much an art as it is a science. This means coaches should be as dedicated to building the interpersonal relationships with teachers as they are to sharing the pedagogical and content-related strategies. Coaches should work to maintain a three-way partnership to include the administrators and teachers in every step of the coaching process. Coaches should work to be responsive to the needs of each teacher and differentiate their service to accommodate specific teacher needs as well as the overall school instructional vision. A coach's role is not to provide answers but instead to provide questions to promote reflection and growth as they guide teachers to reach their full potential.

Teachers who are involved in instructional coaching initiatives can benefit from this research by understanding their role in the coaching process. Teachers should not be passive participants in a coaching initiative but instead be the driving force behind the work. Coaching is not something that is done *to* teachers. Coaching is something done *with* teachers, and the progress achieved is because of teachers.

There are also recommendations that can be made for central office leaders who may consider implementing coaching initiatives in their district. The most important recommendation is that coaching should not be a mandate put in place to "fix people." Coaching can, however, be supported by the district and even funded by the district when principals are given the autonomy and backing to mold the coaching initiative to fit the mission and vision of their individual school.

As the field of job-embedded professional development develops, it is critical that qualitative and quantitative data be collected in order to reveal the impact of coaching on teacher performance (Aguilar, 2013). Promising research on job-embedded professional development has shown that when implemented effectively and with intention, instructional coaching initiatives can improve teacher efficacy and have a positive impact on teaching and learning (Knight, 2007). This study provided an in-depth look at the efforts of two schools to improve achievement by implementing instructional coaching initiatives. Additionally, this study raised some critical questions that would support additional research on this topic. These questions include but are not limited to:

- To what degree do coaching influences go beyond teacher technical changes to produce a culture shift?

- How do coaching initiatives impact principal leadership?

- Did the coaching initiatives create the culture changes in the schools, was it the principal leadership that changed the culture, or what it the combination and interaction of the two?

- Are the improvements in student achievement a result of improved teacher
  practice or a function of improved school culture?

By sharing the perceptions and lived experiences of the administrators, coaches, and teachers involved in these initiatives, this study provides valuable insights into the necessary conditions to establish a successful school-based coaching model. Additionally, this study leads to areas of further exploration and research into the power and impact of coaching as professional development as the quest for continuous improvement and excellence in education continues to be the focus of dedicated, student-centered educators.

REFERENCES

Aguilar, E. (2011). *Four conditions essential for instructional coaching to work.* Retrieved from Edutopia website at http://www.edutopia.org/blog/four-conditions-instructional-coaching-elena-aguilar

Aguilar, E. (2013). *The art of coaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. (2004). *Instructional coaching: Professional development strategies that improve instruction*. Providence, RI: Author. Retrieved from AISR website at http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/270/files/InstructionalCoaching.pdf

Biancarosa, G., Bryk, A. S., & Dexter, E. R. (2010). Assessing the value-added effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. *The Elementary School Journal, 111*(1), 7–34.

Center for American Progress. (2014). *The changing role of the principal: How high-achieving districts are recalibrating school leadership*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/07/01/93015/the-changing-role-of-the-principal/

Center for Cognitive Coaching. (Ed.). (n.d.). *Overview of cognitive coaching*. Retrieved from Center for Cognitive Coaching website at www.cognitivecoaching.com

Chenoweth, K., & Theokas, C. (2013). How high poverty schools are getting it done. *Educational Leadership, 70*(7), 56–59.

Church, E., Bland, P., & Church, B. (2010). Supporting quality staff development with best practice aligned policies. *Emporia State Research Studies, 46*(2), 44–47.

Cooper, J. D. (2009). *Professional development: An effective research-based model*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Cornett, J., & Knight, J. (2008). Research on coaching. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Coaching: Approaches and perspectives* (pp. 192–216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008). *Implementer's guide to growth models*. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Implementers_Guide_ to_Growth_2008.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Croft, A., Coggshall, J., Dolan, M., Powers, E., & Killion, J. (2010). *Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well* (Issue Brief April 2010). Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence*. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington.

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(8), 597–604.

Darling-Hammond, L., Chung Wei, R., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on*

teacher development in the United States and abroad. Washington, DC: National

Staff Development Council.

DeMonte, J. (2013, July). *High quality professional development for teachers:*

Supporting teacher training to improve student learning. Washington, DC: Center

for American Progress. Retrieved from http://www.sheeo.org/sites/default/files/

PD%20Research%20-%20High%20Quality%20PD%20for%20Teachers%2007-

2013.pdf

Doherty, K., & Jacobs, S. (2013). *State of the states 2013 connect the dots: Using*

evaluations of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice. Washington,

DC: National Council on Teacher Quality.

Gallucci, C., DeVoogt Van Lare, M., Yoon, I., & Boatright, B. (2010). Instructional

coaching: Building theory about the role and organizational support for

professional learning. *American Education Research Journal, 47*(4), 919–963.

Garmston, R., Linder, C., & Whitaker, J. (1993). Reflections on cognitive coaching.

Educational Leadership, 51(2), 57–61.

Hall, P., & Simeral, A. (2008). *Building teachers' capacity for success: A collaborative*

approach for coaches and school leaders. Alexandria, VA: Association for

Curriculum Supervision and Development.

Hightower, A. M., Delgado, R. C., Lloyd, S. C., Wittenstein, R., Sellers, K., & Swanson,

C. B. (2011). *Improving student learning by supporting quality teaching: Key*

issues, effective strategies. Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education, Inc.

Hirsh, S. (2009). *Creating effective professional learning systems to bolster teaching quality and student achievement.* Stanford, CT: The School Redesign Network at Stanford University.

International Literacy Association. (2010). *Standards for Reading Professionals 2010.* Retrieved from http://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/standards/ standards-for-reading-professionals

International Reading Association. (2006). *Standards for middle and high school literacy coaches*. Neward, DE: Author.

Jorissen, K., Salazar, P., Morrison, H., & Foster, L. (2008). Instructional coaching: Lessons from the field. *Principal Leadership, 9*(2), 17–19.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1980). Improving in-service training: The messages of research. *Educational Leadership, 37*(5), 379–385.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for the Supervision of Curriculum Development.

Killion, J., Harrison, C., Bryan, C., & Clifton, H. (2012). *Coaching matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Kowal, J., & Steiner, L. (2007). *Instructional coaching* (Issue Brief September, pp. 1-8). Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for professional learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.

Lichtman, M. (2010). *Qualitative research in education* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(8), 591–596.

Lloyd, C., & Modlin, E. (2012). *Coaching as a key component in teachers' professional development* (OPRE Report 2012-4, pp. 1-15). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Lunenburg, F., & Irby, B. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mizzell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Retrieved from Learning Forward website at http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/why_pd_matters_ web.pdf?sfvrsn=0

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2012). *Beyond job-embedded: Ensuring that good professional development gets results*. Santa Monica, CA: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

National Staff Development Council. (2010). *Professional learning in the United States: Trends and challenges.* Dallas, TX: NSDC.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute & The Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

New Teacher Center. (n.d.). *North Carolina teacher working conditions: Teaching, empowering, leading and learning.* Retrieved from http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/

North Carolina New Schools. (2013). *STEM Education*. Retrieved from North Carolina New Schools Web site at http://ncnewschools.org/community-business-leaders/how-we-do-it/stem-education/

Oakley, A., & Reagan, H. (2014). Model lessons: A new professional development approach provides ongoing support to teachers in the classroom throughout the year. *American School Board Journal, 201*(6), 34–35.

Psencik, K. (2011). *The coach's craft: Powerful practices to support school leaders.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Reiss, K. (2007). *Leadership coaching for educators: Bringing out the best in school administrators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Shanklin, N. (2006, September). *What are the characteristics of effective literacy coaching?* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530356.pdf

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Education for Information, 22,* 63–75.

Showers, B. (1985). Teachers coaching teachers. *Educational Leadership, 42*(7), 19–27.

Stake, R. (1994). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Steiner, L., & Kowal, J. (2007, September). *Issue Brief: Principal as an instructional leader: Designing a coaching program that fits*. Retrieved from Reading Rockets website at http://www.readingrockets.org/article/26023/

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act*. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education website at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zepeda, S. (2013). *The principal as instructional leader: A handbook for supervisors* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published 2007)

Zhao, Y. (2009). *Catching up or leading the way: American education in the age of globalization.* Alexandria, VA: Association for the Supervision of Curriculum Development.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Melissa Jill Hall and I am a student from the Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the implementation of instructional coaching as professional development for teachers. This study is a multi-case study about the implementation and impact of job-embedded instructional coaching for teachers. You're eligible to be in this study because you have participated as a teacher, administrator, or coach in an instructional coaching initiative at McMichael High School or Early College High School in Rockingham County. These two schools have been selected as exemplars for instructional coaching implementation.

Participation in this study would involve one face to face interview with me, the researcher, which would be 45-60 minutes in length. I would like to audio record your interview and will then use the information to assist me in identifying the most important factors of instructional coaching implementation. The audiotaped interview would be kept confidential and would only be shared with the transcription service provider contracted to transcribe the interviews for this study.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at mjhall2@uncg.edu. Additionally, I will visit your school site on [*insert date*] and will be available to answer any questions about this study and to provide consent forms for participants who choose to participate in the study.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Jill Hall

mjhall2@uncg.edu

336.686.5566

Approved IRB
4/14/15

APPENDIX B

ADULT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: <u>Instructional Coaching: A Study of Two Schools' Implementation of Job-Embedded Professional Development for Teachers</u>

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if applicable): <u>Melissa Jill Hall (PI); Dr. Carl Lashley (FA)</u>

Participant's Name: _____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.
Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future.   There may not be any direct benefit to you for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researcher named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?
This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. This study is a multi-case study about the implementation and impact of job-embedded instructional coaching for teachers. The researcher has selected two school sites to study. The sites were chosen as exemplars in instructional coaching implementation.

Why are you asking me?
You are being asked to participate in this research study because you participated in an instructional coaching project as an administrator, coach or teacher at either McMichael High School or Rockingham Early College High School.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?
As a participant in this study you will be asked to participate in a private interview session with the Principal Investigator regarding your experiences with instructional coaching.
The interview length will be between 45-90 minutes. The interview will be audiotaped.
You will also be asked to share any relevant artifacts from your coaching experiences such as protocols, feedback forms, correspondence and instructional resources shared through coaching. All artifacts will be kept confidential and will be linked only to the pseudonyms used for the study.

Is there any audio/video recording?
The interviews conducted for this study will be audiotaped. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below:
The audiotapes will only be shared with the person contracted to complete the transcription service for this research study. The transcriptionist will be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality.

What are the risks to me?
The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that

participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. However, if during the interview any of the questions make you uncomfortable, you may choose not to respond.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact:

M. Jill Hall, Principal Investigator
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
336.686.5566
jillbean72@gmail.com

Dr. Carl Lashley, Faculty Advisor
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
(336) 549-9163
carl.lashley@gmail.com

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?
The results and findings from this research may assist schools and school districts in future planning and consideration of professional development opportunities for educators.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?
Participants may benefit from this study through the self-reflection involved in interview participation. The self-reflection may assist the participant in understanding professional development needs and outcomes and may be valuable to future planning of and participation in professional development opportunities.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?
There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?
All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Information obtained in this study will be kept confidential on a cloud server (Box). Information will be password protected. Identifying information about participants will be stored separately from research data in a password protected file on the hard drive of the researcher's computer. Participants will not be identified by name when data are disseminated and pseudonyms will be used for participants as well as school/school district.

What if I want to leave the study?
You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?
If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:
By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you

are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by <u>Melissa Jill Hall</u>.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COACHES

Coach Interviews

1) Please tell me about how you first became involved with instructional coaching?

2) Tell me about your beliefs about instructional coaching.

3) Explain the process of coaching you currently use with teachers (how does it work?).

4) When implementing an instructional coaching model, what are the most important factors to consider?

5) What factors are important when forming a strong coach/teacher relationship?

6) What are your most important roles in insuring a successful coaching model for the schools you serve?

7) What is the principal's role in successful instructional coaching implementation?

8) What were some of the challenges to implementing instructional coaching at this school?

9) What were the greatest successes of your instructional coaching program at this school?

10) From your perspective, how is instructional coaching different from other types of professional development?

11) Why do you believe coaching is a valuable professional development experience?

12) How can instructional coaching positively impact student achievement?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

1) Please tell me about how you first became interested in implementing instructional coaching as professional development for your teachers?

2) Tell me about your beliefs about instructional coaching.

3) From your perspective, what are the most important qualities you look for in an instructional coach?

4) When implementing an instructional coaching model, what are the most important factors to consider?

5) What were your goals for your instructional coaching implementation? How can teachers benefit? How can students benefit?

6) What is the principal's role in successful instructional coaching implementation and coaching process?

7) What were some of the challenges to implementing instructional coaching at your school?

8) What were the greatest successes of your instructional coaching program?

9) From your perspective, how is instructional coaching different from other types of professional development?

10) As you consider future professional development goals, how will instructional coaching be a part of your plan for school improvement?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Teacher Interviews

1) Please tell me about your experiences with instructional coaching?

2) Describe the process of coaching (from your experience).

3) As a participant in instructional coaching, what is most important to you?

4) From your perspective, what makes an effective coach?

5) What is a principal's role in supporting an instructional coaching implementation?

6) How can instructional coaching impact student achievement?

7) How is instructional coaching different from traditional professional development such as workshops?

8) What about instructional coaching has been most beneficial to your teaching practice?

9) How has the implementation of instructional coaching impacted your school's culture and climate?

APPENDIX F

SCHOOL LEADER'S CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

A School Leader's Checklist for Successful Implementation of Instructional Coaching

Before the Project Launch:

- ✓ Meet with prospective coaches to discuss your desired outcomes for coaching. Make sure the proposed coaching model is a good fit for your staff and your vision.
- ✓ Work with the coaches to set data-driven goals and intended outcomes for the project.
- ✓ Create an agreed upon timeline for the coaching project and set dates early so the dates can be protected and considered when planning other school initiatives.
- ✓ Make sure you understand your role in the coaching process. Be explicit about your expectations of the coaches, and ask them to share their expectations of you as the school leader. Consider the following guiding questions:
  - o How will the daily coaching schedule be created? Who will be in charge of creating it and how far in advance will it be communicated to the teachers?
  - o How will the coaching progress be communicated to me? Will we meet to debrief after each visit? Will I receive written feedback?
  - o How will we handle issues of resistance or non-compliance with teachers?
  - o How should I use the feedback in my own work?
- ✓ Discuss, prior to the project launch, a plan for long range sustainability. Ask yourself these guiding questions and discuss them with your coaches:
  - o How can I maximize the coaching process between coaching visits?
  - o How can I extend the coaching impact to teachers who are not involved in the process?
  - o How will our school extend the learning beyond the actual project? Discuss and consider the following guiding questions:
    - ▪ How can teacher leaders and/or other support staff members help in this process?
    - ▪ How can peer coaching and/or instructional rounds be incorporated to extend the coaching benefits?
    - ▪ How can we sustain the initiative through unforeseen circumstances such as personnel changes, leadership shifts, changes in funding?
- ✓ Develop a comprehensive plan to launch the project with your staff. Consider the following guiding questions as you create your launch plan:
  - o How can I frame this initiative as a positive investment in my teachers? How can I communicate that coaching is a gift?
  - o Who are the 'key players' or influential teachers who can help enlist the support of the staff for this project?
  - o How will I communicate the goals and intended outcomes of the project?
  - o How can I explicitly communicate my expectations for staff participation so that everyone clearly understands their role in this initiative?

During the Project:

- ✓ Make sure the coaching dates are clearly communicated to the teachers and be sure to send updates prior to each visit.

- ✓ Meet with the coaches on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the initiative. Use the meetings to help direct the project work as well as your own work. Consider the following guiding questions:
  - ○ What are the trends I am seeing between coaching visits in walkthroughs, professional learning community meetings, observations and lesson planning?
  - ○ What information can I share with the coaches to help guide their planning and preparation?
  - ○ Are there any areas of urgent concern? Are there specific concepts or topics we need to target? Are there specific teachers who need additional support?
  - ○ How are we progressing against our overarching goals and targets? Can we see evidence of progress in the data?
  - ○ How can I support the project between visits? What feedback, support, and resources can I provide to my teachers to maximize the project impact?
- ✓ Seek input from your teachers throughout the project. Make sure you know how they feel the project is progressing. Consider the following suggestions:
  - ○ Survey the teachers anonymously to elicit honest feedback to evaluate the project.
  - ○ Talk with the teachers about the project both individually and in small groups (such as grade level or department meetings).
  - ○ Tweak the project, as needed, based on the feedback of the teachers and communicate the changes to them so they know and understand their voice is valued and that they are the drivers of their own growth.
- ✓ Work with the coaches and other administrators in your building to identify possible teacher leaders who can serve as peer coaches.
- ✓ Continue to look for opportunities to extend and enhance the project impact. You may consider book studies, instructional rounds/peer observations, and peer coaching projects.
- ✓ Continue to build your plan of sustainability. Involve your teachers in the creation of the plan so that it becomes their plan. Collaboration and buy-in are critical!

After the Project Completion:

- ✓ Conduct an internal project evaluation through a teacher survey. Make sure your project evaluation is in addition to the evaluation completed by the coaches.
- ✓ Meet with the coaches to debrief the project. Share your evaluation results and have them share theirs.
- ✓ Identify data-driven project successes and opportunities for improvement. Work with the coaches to develop a plan to extend successes and address improvement areas.
- ✓ Communicate the results to your staff and continue to develop future plans based on their feedback.

And remember to ALWAYS:

- ✓ Explicitly communicate your intentions and expectations for professional development! Transparency is paramount! A clearly communicated vision is a living vision!
- ✓ Be an active player in the process. The success of the project hinges on your strong leadership!