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Instructional Coaching: Self-Efficacy, Resilience, And Joy

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INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN EFFICACY, RESILIENCE, AND JOY

by

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Aimee M. Volk
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like many things in life, this educational journey began with excitement followed by a period of struggle. I was ultimately rewarded with a rush of adrenaline and joy upon completion. However, this work was not easy or quick. It was not a task I accomplished on my own. It took a team.

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ABSTRACT

At the time of this study, research on instructional coaching suggests positive outcomes for teacher retention and student achievement. However, merely providing an instructional coach to support a teacher is not sufficient. Effective coaching programs are built around foundational, structural, and instructional coaching program standards as well as employ coaches who are capable and effective in a multitude of content, instructional, and behavioral situations. Research illustrates that coaches vary significantly in effectiveness. Therefore, coaching outcomes may produce inconsistent results among various coaching programs and even between individual schools within the same school district. In other words, not all coaches or coaching programs will yield the same results.

This qualitative study explores the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' self-efficacy, resilience, and their ability to effectively coach teachers. Although this study focuses on instructional coaches, school leaders will find the implications of this work timely and relevant to the state of our current school structures. This dissertation attempts to answer the following questions: (a) What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers?; (b) What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers?; and (c) How do the researcher's perceptions and experiences about self-efficacy

and resilience relate to instructional coaching and the implementation of effective coaching practices?

This topic of study is important because it offers an inner, personal lens to instructional coaching to better understand how coaches perceive and experience self-efficacy and resilience. Additionally, this study explores how these factors impact one's coaching ability and how self-efficacy and resilience can be built or hindered throughout each day. This work may assist with informing stakeholder support structures to ensure instructional coaches continually develop and refine the skills they need to increase teacher effectiveness, develop teacher leaders, increase student growth, and support equitable outcomes for all learners.

The key findings of this work included: (a) how instructional coaches build self-efficacy and overcome barriers to building self-efficacy; (b) the importance and presence of resilience in order for coaches to be successful in the coaching role; and (c) how the absence of resilience impacts one's ability to experience joy in his or her personal, professional, and family life.

Keywords: PreK-12 education, instructional coaching, efficacy, resilience, educational leaders

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although coaching in the business profession was established in the 1950s, educational coaching was not introduced until the 1980s. During this time, Joyce and Showers (1982) stated coaching was a key component of professional development and could assist teachers with transferring learning and new skills into their classrooms. In the 1990s, the United States government worked toward increasing the quality of reading instruction and began to implement educational coaching. During this time, efforts began to define the coaching role and funding for reading coaches began through legislation such as the Reading Excellence Act in 1999, No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act in 2004 (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018).

Today, coaching encompasses many different fields such as business (executive coaching), personal life (life coaching), and education. Within the educational field, various titles are used for coaches such as literacy coaches, data coaches, and 21st Century coaches. In essence, they are all instructional coaches. At the time of this study, the term coach and the definition of the coaching role had not been universally defined and agreed upon. Killion and Harrison (2017) believe creating a single coaching definition is difficult due to the "wide range of approaches or orientations to coaching or to a coaching program" (p. 5). However, the

coaching role is based on the premise that instructional coaches are not administrators, evaluators, or supervisors. “Instructional coaches are educators in a non-supervisory role who collaborate with teachers so they can choose, and implement, research-based interventions to help students learn more effectively” (Knight, 2007, p. 13). Therefore, coaches facilitate teachers’ reflections about their classroom practices through effective communication skills such as empathizing, listening, building trust, developing positive relationships, modeling, and co-teaching (Aguilar, 2013; DiPrima Bickel, Bernstein-Danis, & Matsumura, 2015; Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). In addition to demonstrating strong emotional intelligence skills, coaches must be knowledgeable in research-based instructional strategies across a broad range of educational issues such as classroom management, content areas, and assessment practices (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Knight, 2007). In other words, instructional coaches work, support, and learn alongside teachers to help them reach their professional goals.

Instructional coaches are not only available to new teachers. Regardless of how long one has been teaching, teacher self-efficacy is a critical component of effective teaching and student achievement. Teacher self-efficacy is defined as a “teacher’s belief in his or her capabilities to positively affect students’ learning and success, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Pedota, 2015, p. 54). According to Pedota (2015), teachers who have high self-efficacy and “use it in their daily routines with their students, are more likely to have students who achieve, and are more likely to remain in the profession” (p. 54). Therefore, instructional coaching can help teachers develop emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, which may also help teachers become more resilient to various challenges they face each day.

Building emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience is imperative since teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful occupations (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010). Teachers report that anxiety, frustration, and stress are the strongest factors determining if they will stay or leave a teaching position (Pedota, 2015). Hence, support for self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and resilience must be embedded into teachers' careers. Aguilar (2018) suggests that building emotional intelligence and resilience can take longer and may be more complex than building pedagogical knowledge and skill, although both are critical components needed in order to decrease teacher attrition rates. Subsequently, schools that provide effective mentoring and coaching programs are able to effectively reduce teacher turnover, which positively impacts school costs and student achievement (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017). These positive outcomes emerge from additional teacher support to build and further develop high emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience skills.

It must be noted that merely providing an instructional coach in a school is not sufficient. Reddy, Glover, Kurz, and Elliott (2019) expressed that it is critical to ensure coaches are effective. However, these authors stated it is difficult to ensure coaches are capable of meeting the diverse needs of teachers. In addition, instructional coaches must demonstrate high levels of proficiency in multiple areas such as problem solving, collecting and interpreting data, modeling, offering actional feedback, building relationships, and creating a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. Furthermore, Reddy et al. (2019) discussed how effective coaches need specialized training and continuous feedback to support the continued development of effective instructional practices. Fullan and Knight (2011) suggested when instructional coaches do not receive training, or only a short training after they have already been expected to work with

teachers, it is detrimental to the effectiveness of the coaching role. In other words, when coaches do not "know what to share and how to coach . . . [or are] lacking the pedagogic, communication, and leadership skills necessary for" (p. 52) coaching, coaches become frustrated and ineffective, which negatively affects school culture, morale, and student achievement. Therefore, it is essential that states, districts, and schools provide sufficient training for coaches (Desimone & Pak, 2017) in order to "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 1).

Although research shows that instructional coaching has a positive impact on the implementation of research-based practices, not all coaching programs produce equal results (Kraft et al., 2018; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Killion et al., 2012). Due to variabilities within coaching programs and individual instructional coaching skills, coaching programs even vary among schools within the same district (Kraft et al., 2018; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Killion et al., 2012). Therefore, instructional coaches must have continued training and collaboration time with other coaches. Researchers note that this may be difficult, as there may only be one or two coaches per building. Hence, the opportunity for collaboration and peer feedback is limited, and coaches may feel like they are on an island (Kraft et al., 2018). Aguilar (2016) reiterated the importance of collaboration. Aguilar explained, "We can't do it alone. No individual alone can transform our schools into places where all children get what they need every day" (p. 7). Therefore, providing ongoing professional learning and collaboration opportunities for instructional coaches is a critical component for an effective coaching program. These opportunities allow a coach to build efficacy, resilience, and culture of learning.

Thus far, research has focused on self-efficacy, resilience, and burnout in teachers, yet little research exists regarding the impact of these components on an instructional coach's abilty to coach. Throughout this study, it is the researcher's presumption that instructional coaches must have high self-efficacy and resilience in order to effectivly support teachers, just as teachers need these qualities to effectivly support students. Therefore, this study focuses on how self-efficacy and resilience impacts instructional coaches as well as how these qualities are built or hindered throughout each day.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and resilience regarding a PreK-12 instructional coach's ability to effectively support teachers through new learning. The study aimed to gather evidence in order to assist stakeholders with: (a) ensuring instructional coaches understand their coaching role, (b) helping coaches acquire and maintain foundational knowledge, (c) gaining the skills to implement effective coaching strategies with teachers, and (d) identifying support structures to help build self-efficacy and resilience. This knowledge, in turn, will promote a culture of learning within a school to "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 2).

Significance of Study

There is a growing body of research about the importance of self-efficacy and resilience for teachers. However, limited research exists regarding these same concepts and their impact on an instructional coach's ability to effectively coach teachers. Further, little research exists regarding effective methods aiming to build and sustain self-efficacy and resilience in coaches.

This information is important to understand as coaching promotes teacher growth and refinement of instructional and reflective practices.

Therefore, this study gathered evidence in order to inform stakeholders about how and when instructional coaches receive training on effective coaching practices, how coaches receive feedback to improve their coaching skills, and how self-efficacy and resilience impact coaches' ability to effectively support teachers.

Furthermore, this study aimed to offer an understanding about the perceived need for additional instructional coaching training and feedback in order to develop effective coaches who are able to meet the diverse needs of teachers. This information may positively impact stakeholders' decision-making in a number of ways: (a) requiring instructional coaches to complete coursework prior to accepting a coaching position, (b) encouraging area university systems to develop instructional coaching certificates, (c) informing school leaders about professional development needs, and (d) ensuring instructional coaches are able to build the self-efficacy and resilience skills needed to effectively support teachers, and themselves, in their diverse learning needs.

Research Questions

This study explores the following research questions:

1. What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers? (Article #1)
2. What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers? (Article #2)

3. How do the researcher's perceptions and experiences about self-efficacy and resilience relate to instructional coaching and the implementation of effective coaching practices? (Article #3)

Assumptions and Limitations

The main assumption of this research is that emotional intelligence, feedback, self-efficacy, and resilience are qualities for effective coaches to possess. This study was limited to one Midwestern state and focused on PreK-12 public school instructional coaches.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kraft et al. (2018) explained that although coaching models and foundational beliefs vary, there are some common effective instructional coaching programing features. For example, pairing coaching with professional development trainings has demonstrated larger gains for implementing research-based instruction. Kraft et al. (2018) also noted that instructional outcomes are associated with greater gains when pairing coaching with instructional resources and materials. Although increased student learning is often the most noticeable benefit of coaching, Guiney (2001) believes coaches also promote a culture of collaboration between colleagues, which can increase implementation practices and sustain school wide initiatives (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Furthermore, instructional coaches have a crucial impact on teachers' development of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience. These are critical qualities for teachers to possess not only for increased student achievement, but also to improve teachers' emotional health and decrease teacher burnout and attrition rates.

Researchers discussed the feasibility of sustaining coaching positions. Although there are many positive benefits of teachers working with coaches, the positive effects must be weighed against the cost of staffing a skilled coach (Knight, 2012). District administrators must determine the feasibility and sustainability of coaching (Knight, 2012). This is an important consideration for district administrators to evaluate. Research suggests districts that reduce the frequency of

coaching and/or coaching feedback experience no effect or a negative effect on instructional outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018). Therefore, the fidelity of a coaching program, along with continuous professional learning for coaches, is a key component of ensuring coaches are able to help "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 1).

Research on coaching has demonstrated that simply providing a coach to support teachers is not enough. Coaching programs must be built upon foundational coaching concepts and supports. Programs must also employ coaches who are capable and effective in a multitude of content, instructional, and behavioral situations (Sprick, 2013; Knight, 2013). In other words, coaches must have a high level of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience. In order to develop these qualities, they must receive the appropriate training and support.

In 2018, the New Teacher Center, a non-profit organization supporting educators across the United States, released eight instructional coaching *program* standards as well as six instructional coaching *practice* standards. These standards ensure that instructional coaching programs and practices "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 1). For the purpose of this study, the New Teacher Center's (2018) *Instructional Coaching Program Standards* is referenced as the document presents the supports needed to ensure that an effective coaching program is developed and sustained.

The New Teacher Center's (2018) instructional coaching program standards consist of three layers of programing standards: foundational, structural, and instructional (p. 2). These overarching program standards are defined as follows: (a) foundational standards focus on

developing a strong coaching program design, implementation, administration, and growth; (b) structural standards outline essential program components; and (c) instructional standards examine the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions required for coaches to support teacher development. In all, the Teacher Center (2018) created eight instructional coaching program standards:

- Standard 1: Program Vision, Goals, and Institutional Commitment
- Standard 2: Program Leadership and Communication
- Standard 3: School Leader Engagement
- Standard 4: Instructional Coach Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, Assignment, and Assessment
- Standard 5: Instructional Coach Professional Learning, Learning Communities, and Onboarding
- Standard 6: Instructionally Focused Formative Assessment of Teaching Practice
- Standard 7: Instructional Coaching for Optimal Learning Environments
- Standard 8: Instructional Coaching for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

These standards describe a framework for accomplishing several objectives: (a) developing and supporting an effective coaching program of any size, (b) assisting program leaders with collaboratively developing a program framework, (c) outlining essential program components, and (d) delineating the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions that coaching staff must possess. This document is a vital resource to ensure learning coaching programs are structured in a way that promotes emotional intelligence, supported risk-taking, efficacy, and

resilience for instructional coaches and the entire learning community. Hence, these standards are the basis of the conceptual framework for this qualitative study.

This study utilized two types of methodologies: phenomenology and ethnography. Phenomenology was used while researching two of the three research questions. Phenomenologists question cultural interpretations and phenomenon experiences in an objective way to "reveal and convey deep insight and understanding of the concealed meanings of everyday life experiences" (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 165). In addition, interpretive phenomenologists gather participants' stories and look for meanings that are not always obvious to participants. Hence, the focus of interpretive phenomenology is on human experience as opposed to "what they [participants] consciously know" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Therefore, interpretive phenomenology was used to better understand how instructional coaches perceive and experience a phenomenon within the coaching role.

Ethnography is used to describe a culture sharing group's ordinary experiences and how that group makes meaning of specific events, actions, or circumstances. Therefore, ethnography was used to study the last research question. The primary purpose of ethnography is to share "descriptive data free from imposed external concepts and ideas" (Robson & McCartan, 2016) about a specific culture-sharing group. In other words, an ethnographer studies a specific culture-sharing group. Then with an insider's perspective, the ethnography tells the story of the people or helps the people tell their story. Since ethnography studies culture and how it is seen through patterns of socially shared behavior, a researcher is the primary research instrument, which also means that the one conducting ethnographic research is not overly reliant on others' previously gathered data (Wolcott, 1999).

Autoethnography is a subheading within the methodology of ethnography. Autoethnographies are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Ellis et al. (2010) stated that researchers write autoethnographies with thick descriptions that include personal and interpersonal experiences. LeRoux (2017) believes autoethnography research "requires self-exploration, introspection and interpretation that assist researchers to locate themselves within their own history and culture, thus allowing them to broaden their understanding of their own values in relation to others" (p. 198). The purpose of using an autoethnography style of writing is not only to make meaning from personal experience and to develop an engaging description of a cultural experience, but it is also used to "reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15). Therefore, autoethnography was used to ensure this work would be accessible to a more diverse audience to promote an increased understanding of the instructional coaching role.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the description of two types of methodologies: phenomenology and ethnography. This research required multiple methodologies to gather and analyze data in order to gain information to better understand how coaches perceive and experience self-efficacy and resilience. The methodologies outlined below are written within the context of the articles produced, related to these findings. Therefore, in chapter outlines the methodology and research design for each of the three articles are included within this work.

The research for Article #1: Instructional Coaching: Efficacy is Built through Role Definement focused on the question: What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers?

The research for Article #2: We're in This Together: Educational Leaders, Instructional Coaches, and Resilience focused on the question: What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers?

The research for Article #3: My Road to Resilience: Advice to New Instructional Coaches focused on the question: How do the researcher's perceptions and experiences about self-efficacy and resilience relate to instructional coaching and the implementation of effective coaching practices?

Article #1 and Article #2 Research Design

Phenomenology

This study utilized phenomenology, while researching two of the three research questions. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2013), phenomenology is the study of experiences from the first-person point of view. This source explained that phenomenology is the study of a "phenomenon" such as experiences or how one perceives experiences of specific things, ideas, or events. Groenewald (2004) explained that a phenomenologist is "concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched" (p. 5). Therefore, phenomenologists often question cultural interpretations and phenomenon experiences in an objective way to "reveal and convey deep insight and understanding of the concealed meanings of everyday life experiences" (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 165). Therefore, it must also be noted that while the goal of phenomenology is to describe an experience of a phenomenon, there is not a hypothesis or any preconceived notion about collected data.

Since phenomenology deals with experience, imagination, thought, emotion, and desire, researchers must remain objective. Groenewald (2004) stated that a phenomenologist "cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise" (p. 7). In other words, researchers must acknowledge their own experiences and culture (to remove bias from observations, descriptions, or findings) as they criticize real situations or describe new meaning. Therefore, it is critical that phenomenological researchers include various methodology processes and reflection practices in their research to ensure they are able to "return

to embodied, experiential meanings aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay, 2009, p. 6).

Related to the theoretical underpinning of phenomenology, researchers must gather data about participant perspectives as opposed to hypothesizing a reason for a specific experience or perspective of a phenomena (Groenewald, 2004). The notion of research objectivity is a critical component of the phenomenological process. Additionally, Groenewald (2004) stated that phenomenologists do not delineate specific steps to complete their research as it is believed "that one cannot impose method on a phenomenon" (p. 44) "since that would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon" (Hycner, 1999, p. 144). Finally, Finlay (2009) explained that for a method to be considered phenomenological, it must have a rich description of the lifeworld or lived experience, where the researcher initially has an open attitude and is able to resist judgement about the phenomenon.

This phenomenological study used interpretive phenomenology. Interpretative phenomenology looks "beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). In other words, interpretive phenomenologists look for meanings that are not always obvious to participants. However, the researcher can gather meaning from the participants' stories. Therefore, the focus of interpretive phenomenology is on human experience as opposed to "what they consciously know" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728).

Sampling and Recruiting

This research study was designed to gather stories from PreK-12 instructional coaches about their perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and resilience. Therefore, purposeful

sampling was used. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to choose specific participants, in this case PreK-12 instructional coaches, to better understand their perceptions of the phenomena of self-efficacy and resilience and how these phenomena impact the participants' coaching practices (Maxwell, 2013). Participants were recruited from one Midwestern state, and all were over the age of 18. The recruitment of participants took place from December of 2019 through March of 2020. Appendix A shows the initial recruitment email sent to participants.

Sample Size

This study utilized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews; therefore, the sample size varied for each type of data collected. Forty-two participants completed the questionnaire portion of this study, and seven participants partook in the semi-structured interview portion. These participants represent the urban and rural population of PreK-12 public school instructional coaches within this one Midwestern state.

Data Collection

Data was collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were created in UND Qualtrics (Appendix B) and emailed to school districts participating in this research and the North Dakota Teachers Support System. In addition, the researcher recruited questionnaire participants at a professional learning event sponsored by the North Dakota Teachers Support System. Data collection for questionnaires included survey response questions on a six-point Likert scale as well as open-ended, follow up questions. Although questionnaires are often written with close-ended questions, a researcher may also add open-ended questions. Creswell (2015) explained an advantage of this process is

that close-ended responses may be useful to support theories and concepts in literature, whereas open-ended responses may help connect research to better understand participants' reasoning behind their close-ended responses. Creswell further explained this mixed method of questioning may be difficult to analyze as the depth of responses and length of responses for each question will vary. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to gather additional information about instructional coaches' experiences and perceptions. Finally, an informed consent statement (Appendix C) was included at the beginning of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used in this study focused on assessing five constructs: need for professional development, amount of professional development school districts provide for instructional coaches, amount of professional development instructional coaches seek independently, and amount of effective feedback instructional coaches receive about their coaching practices. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on 20 questions using a 6-point Likert-type scale with 6 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *agree*, 4 = *slightly agree* (4, 5, and 6 are all some form of agreement), 3 = *slightly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, and 1 = *strongly disagree* (1, 2, and 3 are all some form of disagreement).

At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were provided an additional anonymous survey link to share contact information if they were willing to answer additional questions or be further interviewed. No identifying information was collected on the coaching questionnaire and there was no identifiable information to connect questionnaire participants to the interview survey. Each coaching questionnaire was given a participant number to ensure that any personal information was removed from the raw data. Further, research findings were labeled with a pseudonym, and participant names and identification numbers were not stored in the same

location to further protect the anonymity of participants. This data will be securely stored for three years.

Saldaña (2016) explained that embedding paradigmatic corroborations in a questionnaire may be beneficial as it may provide "two sets of lenses to examine the data for a multidimensional and more trustworthy account" (p. 27) of the gathered information. Therefore, by utilizing a 6-point Likert survey question in addition to an open-ended written response, the researcher aimed to gather richer data than if she had relied on only one type of question. This method allowed the researcher to better understand multiple lenses, or perspectives, which led to paradigmatic corroboration within the data. Paradigmatic corroboration is when the quantitative data "appear to correspond with the qualitative" outcomes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 26). In other words, when quantitative results and qualitative data correspond, it not only creates richer data, but it also strengthens a researcher's findings.

Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were used to gather additional information. Roulston (2010) stated that the purpose of a phenomenological interview is to "generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences" (p. 16). Additionally, to ensure that participants are able to offer rich interviews, a researcher must use purposeful sampling to ensure participants are able to explicitly discuss the phenomenon the researcher is studying. Seidman (2006) believes in-depth interviews require three separate interviews with each participant. Seidman explained that the purpose a phenomenological interview is to understand participants' lived experiences within the context of ". . . their lives and the lives of those around them. Without context there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an

experience" (p. 17). Therefore, researchers must have multiple interviews with participants to ensure the interviewee is able to clearly reconstruct and articulate his or her experience as well as for the researcher to "build upon and explore their participants' responses" (Seidman, 2006, p. 15).

Interviews were conducted one-on-one and took place over digital video conferencing or in person at a mutually agreed upon location. Each interview was no more than one hour in length, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. All interview data will be stored for three years, and only the researcher will have access to the data. In addition, all participants were anonymous on the transcripts and no identifying personal information was shared. Each transcribed interview was given a participant number so that any identifying information was removed from the raw data. Each participant was labeled with a pseudonym. Finally, participant names and identification numbers were not stored in the same location as the transcripts to further protect the anonymity of participants.

Interviews were semi-structured, which means an interview guide was created for the interview process. Although this guide recorded topics to discuss and specific wording of questions to be asked, Robson and McCartan (2016) stated that during an interview, wording and order of questions asked can be modified depending on the flow of the interview, to meet an interviewee's needs, and to ask follow up questions in order to gain additional information.

As previously discussed, Seidman (2006) believes researchers must complete three interviews with each participant to ensure an in-depth interview of the participants and their lived experiences. Therefore, each set of interviews followed Seidman's (2006) recommendations: (a)

first interview: life history; (b) second interview: experience details; and (c) third interview: reflection and meaning.

First Interview: Life History. During the first interview, the researcher asks the participant "to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17). During this interview, it is important that the researcher asks *how* questions to ensure participants are able to "reconstruct and narrate" their experiences or stories on this topic (Seidman, 2006, p. 17).

Second Interview: Experience Details. According to Seidman (2006), the second interview focuses on gathering "concrete details of the participants' present lived experiences in the topic area of the study" (p. 18). Therefore, researchers may ask participants to stare a story about or reconstruct an experience as a way to gather specific details about their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

Third Interview: Reflection and Meaning. Finally, Seidman (2006) encourages researchers to space each interview session from three to seven days apart. This spacing allows time for the participant to reflect on the previous interview while ensuring that there continues to be a connection between the participant and researcher.

Using this three-part structure for the interview process in this study helped the researcher gather richer data as well as identify and fill in any gaps within the research. This particular interview process also helped the researcher remain focused, yet adaptable, throughout the research process. Figure 1 follows Seidman's (2006) three-part interview process and shows interview questions.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological research is both inductive and descriptive. In other words, the researcher strives to understand a subjective perspective from an individual's experience as well

Interview Questions
Based on Seidman's (2006) Three-Interview Protocol

Research Question	**Interview 1: Life History**	**Interview 2: Detail Experience**	**Interview 3: Reflection on Meaning**

Article #1
What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers?
	• What were your experiences before you became an instructional coach?
	• What experiences led you to becoming an instructional coach?
	  ○ How did you become an instructional coach?
	• Before becoming an instructional coach, did you know what an instructional coach was?
	  ○ What experiences help you to develop this understanding?
	  ○ Was your understanding accurate? Why or why not?
	• Before becoming an instructional coach, had you ever worked with an instructional coach to improve your practices?
	  ○ If so, would you share one of those experiences? How did that experience impact your teaching, implementation, or reflection practices?
	  ○ How did that experience impact your idea of what instructional coaches do?
	• How would you explain instructional coaching to
		• How would you describe instructional coaching?
		  ○ What do you think are the key components of successful coaching?
		  ○ Why do you think those components are so important?
		  ○ Is there an experience that you could share with me to better understand that?
		• How would you describe what instructional coaches do?
		• Can you describe some of the work you do with teachers?
		• Can you share one of your typical days as an instructional coach? From when you come in the morning until you leave in the evening?
		• Can you share how you are able to begin working with teachers?
		  ○ How do you continue working with these teachers?
		  ○ What are some strategies you use to build
			• What does it mean to be an instructional coach?
			• How do you make sense of this work from your experiences?
			• How have your experiences from being an instructional coach impacted your understanding of the coaching role?
			• Can you describe what you have learned about instructional coaching from your first year to today?
			• When reflecting on your learning and experiences from being an instructional coach, how would you describe effective professional development?
			• What advice would you share with new instructional coaches?

	someone who does not know what it is?
	• Were you required to complete any training before you accepted the position of instructional coach?
	  ○ Were you required to attend any coaching training after you accepted your coaching position?
	  ○ Will you describe the training you attended or did on your own?
	  ○ Will you describe the impact this had on you as a first-year instructional coach?
	• Will you describe any onboarding training that you received from your district about the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches in relation to the program's vision, mission, goals, and district priorities?
		relationships with teachers?
		  ○ How are you able to build teachers' trust?
		  ○ Are all teachers willing to work with you? Can you tell me about a time…?
		  ○ How did you learn to effectively work with teachers?
		• Can you describe some of the strategies you use to support teachers?
		  ○ How do you continue to learn new or more effective strategies?
		• How would you describe an effective implementation strategy you use to help teachers become successful during implementation of an initiative?
		• How do you know if your work with a teacher is a success?
		  ○ Can you tell me one teacher's story from beginning to success…?
		  ○ How did this impact the teacher? How did this impact the students?
		• Are you required to complete any professional learning to continue your work as an instructional coach? Explain.
		• Can you describe any opportunities that your district provides or that you take part in that impacts your role as an instructional coach?	

		• How do you perceive professional learning opportunities that are focused on coaching? • How would you describe your current professional learning opportunities and the impact they have on your coaching practices? • What does self-efficacy mean to you? • How does a coach's self-efficacy impact his or her ability to be successful in the coaching role? How does it impact the ability to work with teachers? • How do coaches build self-efficacy? • Can you tell me a story about a time when your self-efficacy grew? Was diminished?	

Article #2
What are PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers?
	• Can you describe your experiences with working with other coaches?
	• Can you tell me a
	• Can you describe how you receive feedback on your coaching?
	  ○ How does this impact your future work with teachers?
		• Can you describe how you work with other coaches in your school, district, or community?
		• How does your collaboration with other coaches impact your ability to apply and extend new learning, reflect on your practice, examine data of student learning, teacher's practice, and infield observations?
		• Can you share a story about when you felt successful as a coach?
		  ○ Can you tell me the story from the beginning to the success?
		  ○ How did this impact your coaching practices?
			• How would you define resilience?
			• How would you explain resilience in the coaching role?
			• Can you share a story about when you used resilience as a coach?
			• Can you tell me how you build resilience?
			• As an instructional coach, you give feedback to others often. Can you describe how you receive feedback to improve your practices?
			• What are your perceptions about the impact of instructional coaches and feedback?
			• Can you describe how feedback impacts your ability to effectively coach teachers and improve student learning?

		○ Did this impact how you felt about your abilities to coach? • Can you share a story about when you felt unsuccessful as a coach? ○ Can you tell me that story from the beginning to the end? ○ How did this impact your coaching practices? ○ Did this impact how you felt about your abilities to coach?	• Can you describe how you receive effective feedback? • Can you describe what would make the feedback you receive more effective?

Figure 1. Interview Questions.

as the effect that that perspective has on one's lived experience (Flood, 2010). Flood (2010) further explains that phenomenology can be structured, or it may be a more fluid approach. A phenomenologist's choice of data analysis will depend on the philosophical approach used for the study (Flood, 2010).

Interviews

All interviews were recorded by the research and transcribed by a transcriptionist. Data analysis began shortly after the first interview was transcribed and read. First, the researcher bracketed the information. Bracketing (or epochè) is the foundational analysis method in phenomenology (van Manen, 2017). As researchers bracket, they identify and separate their own biases, experiences, interpretations, theories, beliefs, and preconceived notions to ensure their focus is on understanding a particular phenomenon as it is experienced by the participant (van Manen, 2017). In this study, bracketing was used throughout the entire process of data analysis. For example, the researcher wrote memos, recorded questions, comments, or connections and

created a detailed audit trail to ensure her biases, interpretations, and beliefs were separated from those of the participants.

As previously stated, the goal of phenomenology is to describe the experience of a phenomenon in a participant's own words. Therefore, first cycle coding techniques, such as in vivo, process, and open coding were used. The researcher's first cycle of coding consisted of reading through an entire transcript and making preliminary jottings. Saldaña (2016) described preliminary jottings as when a researcher records "any preliminary words or phrases for codes or notes, transcripts, or documents themselves, or as an analytic memo or entry in a research journal for future reference" (p. 21). Many of the researcher's jottings were in her code book so they were easily seen and assessible throughout the analysis of the research. This was valuable as it helped the researcher develop connections, recognize if personal beliefs or experiences were interfering with the researcher's own analysis of data, and helped the researcher recognize holes in her data or thinking. In Figure 2, the researcher's first cycle coding of transcript is presented.

The next step in analysis was horizontalizing. Moustakas (1994) explains the process of horizontalizing as when researchers identify significant statements from the transcripts. Next, these statements emerge into common themes from various participants' descriptions of their experiences of the phenomenon. Using these themes, "the researcher writes both a textual (WHAT they experienced) and structural description (the context and setting influencing HOW they experienced the phenomenon)" (van Manen, 2017, p. 819). Finally, researchers use the textual and structural descriptions to write the essence of the phenomenon to help readers better understand what it would be like to experience that specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

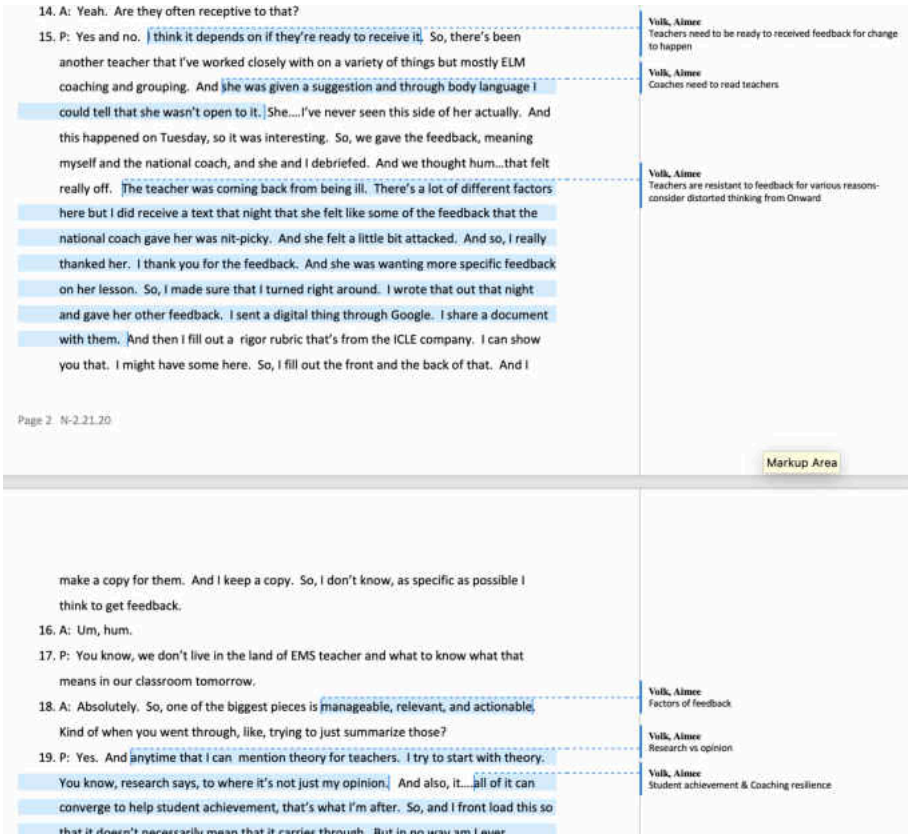
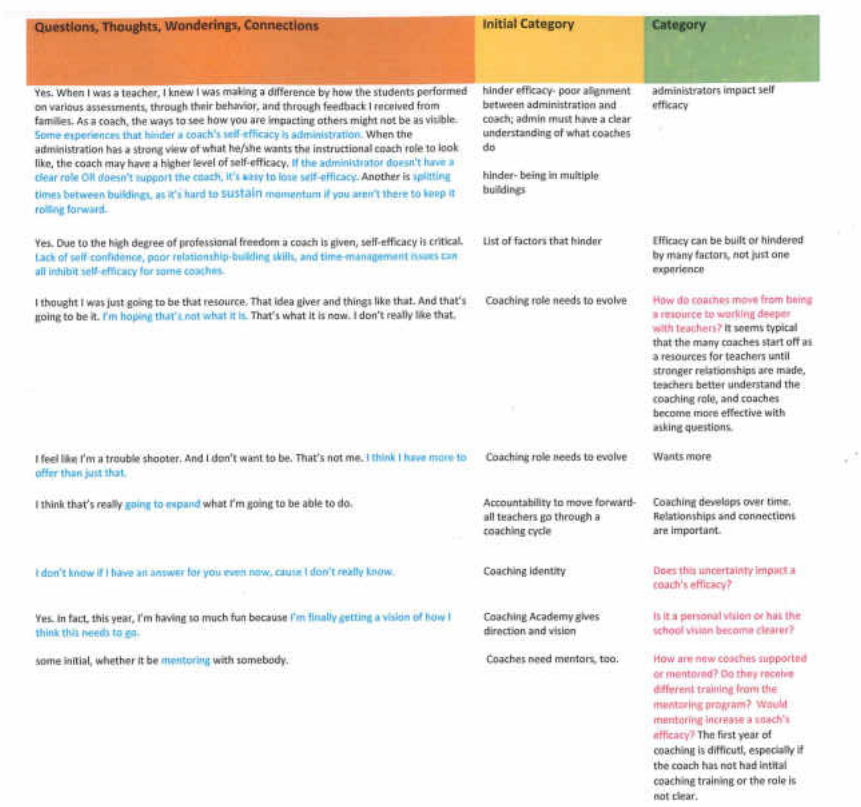


Figure 2. First Cycle Coding of Transcript.

Through this process, the researcher re-read, dissected her bias, and worked to identify the phenomenon of the coaches' experiences. Throughout the data analysis, the researcher initially found 1,656 significant statements. As the data was further analyzed, the researcher eliminated 191 statements due to various factors such as relevancy, power, or clarity. In Figure 3, significant statements, codes, and personal notes/thoughts collected during the study are presented.

After the researcher read the first transcript and recorded any preliminary jottings, she began to dissect the transcript through open coding, in vivo coding, and process coding. Open coding considers data and "breaks it down into discrete parts, closely examines them, and



Questions, Thoughts, Wonderings, Connections	Initial Category	Category
Yes. When I was a teacher, I knew I was making a difference by how the students performed on various assessments, through their behavior, and through feedback I received from families. As a coach, the ways to see how you are impacting others might not be as visible. Some experiences that hinder a coach's self-efficacy is administration. When the administration has a strong view of what he/she wants the instructional coach role to look like, the coach may have a higher level of self-efficacy. If the administrator doesn't have a clear role OR doesn't support the coach, it's easy to lose self-efficacy. Another is splitting times between buildings, as it's hard to sustain momentum if you aren't there to keep it rolling forward.	hinder efficacy- poor alignment between administration and coach; admin must have a clear understanding of what coaches do hinder- being in multiple buildings	administrators impact self efficacy
Yes. Due to the high degree of professional freedom a coach is given, self-efficacy is critical. Lack of self-confidence, poor relationship-building skills, and time-management issues can all inhibit self-efficacy for some coaches.	List of factors that hinder	Efficacy can be built or hindered by many factors, not just one experience
I thought I was just going to be that resource. That idea giver and things like that. And that's going to be it. I'm hoping that's not what it is. That's what it is now. I don't really like that.	Coaching role needs to evolve	How do coaches move from being a resource to working deeper with teachers? It seems typical that the many coaches start off as a resources for teachers until stronger relationships are made, teachers better understand the coaching role, and coaches become more effective with asking questions.
I feel like I'm a trouble shooter. And I don't want to be. That's not me. I think I have more to offer than just that.	Coaching role needs to evolve	Wants more
I think that's really going to expand what I'm going to be able to do.	Accountability to move forward- all teachers go through a coaching cycle	Coaching develops over time. Relationships and connections are important.
I don't know if I have an answer for you even now, cause I don't really know.	Coaching identity	Does this uncertainty impact a coach's efficacy?
Yes. In fact, this year, I'm having so much fun because I'm finally getting a vision of how I think this needs to go.	Coaching Academy gives direction and vision	Is it a personal vision or has the school vision become clearer?
some initial, whether it be mentoring with somebody.	Coaches need mentors, too.	How are new coaches supported or mentored? Do they receive different training from the mentoring program? Would mentoring increase a coach's efficacy? The first year of coaching is difficutl, especially if the coach has not had intital coaching training or the role is not clear.

Figure 3. Significant Statements, Codes, Personal Notes/Thoughts.

compares them for similarities and differences" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). Open coding is not one particular type of coding method. It is a first cycle approach that can be used with in vivo and process coding. The researcher began by breaking down each significant statement into codes. Since the initial significant statements were long, sometimes more than one code was found in a single statement. When this occurred, the researcher copied the significant statement and made the second code as a new entry. The researcher did this to ensure that she was focusing on coaches' experiences and perceptions while carefully breaking down the statements to fully understand this phenomenon.

In vivo coding is useful for a phenomenological study as it assists researchers to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). As the researcher utilized an in vivo coding process, she continued to note "impacting nouns, actions-orientated verbs, evocative vocabulary, clever or ironic phrases, similes and metaphors, etc." (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107). The researcher recorded these findings in her code book multiple times. The researcher created an initial category column to pinpoint impactful words or actions that may have a connection to other codes.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher noted themes in the data. For example, the researcher studied initial verbatim coding and then analyzed the connections among the impactful nouns and verbs previously recorded. As the researcher discovered connections between codes, she developed broader categories in which those statements fit and then created themes to represent participant data. Figure 4 shows how the researcher determined themes in the data.

To ensure the assertations were coming from coaches, the researcher reorganized the data to better understand the coaches' statements. The researcher recorded one theme from the data, key words found within that theme, and then recorded small codes or significant statements in the coaches' own words to ensure focus on coaches' perceptions and experiences. This served to remove researcher bias. It also allowed the researcher to identify and write assertions ensuring that these ideas came directly from coaches. The researcher identified 19 themes and many more assertations. Figure 5 shows how the researcher developed assertations.

Significant Statement & Codes (blue)	Notes	Questions, Thoughts, Wonderings, Connections	Initial Category	Category	Theme
Yes. When I was a teacher, I knew I was making a difference by how the students performed on various assessments, through their behavior, and through feedback I received from families. As a coach, the ways to see how you are impacting others might not be as visible. Some experiences that hinder a coach's self-efficacy is administration. When the administration has a strong view of what he/she wants the instructional coach role to look like, the coach may have a higher level of self-efficacy. If the administrator doesn't have a clear role OR doesn't support the coach, it's easy to lose self-efficacy. Another is splitting times between buildings, as it's hard to sustain momentum if you aren't there to keep it rolling forward.	hinder efficacy- poor alignment between administration and coach; admin must have a clear understanding of what coaches do hinder- being in multiple buildings	administrators impact self efficacy	Coaching- efficacy	Coaching- efficacy- hinder	Efficacy
Yes. Due to the high degree of professional freedom a coach is given, self-efficacy is critical. Lack of self-confidence, poor relationship-building skills, and time-management issues can all inhibit self-efficacy for some coaches.	List of factors that hinder	Efficacy can be built or hindered by many factors, not just one experience	Coaching- efficacy	Coaching- efficacy- hinder	Efficacy
I thought I was just going to be that resource. That idea giver and things like that. And that's going to be it. I'm hoping that's not what it is. That's what it is now. I don't really like that.	Coaching role needs to evolve	How do coaches move from being a resource to working deeper with teachers? It seems typical that the many coaches start off as a resources for teachers until stronger relationships are made, teachers better understand the coaching role, and coaches become more effective with asking questions.	Coaching role-evolves	Efficacy	Efficacy
I feel like I'm a trouble shooter. And I don't want to be. That's not me. I think I have more to offer than just that.	Coaching role needs to evolve	Wants more	Coaching role-evolves	Efficacy	Efficacy
I think that's really going to expand what I'm going to be able to do.	Accountability to move forward- all teachers go through a coaching cycle	Coaching develops over time. Relationships and connections are important.	Coaching role-evolves	Efficacy	Efficacy
I don't know if I have an answer for you even now, cause I don't really know.	Coaching identity	Does this uncertainty impact a coach's efficacy?	Coaching role-identity	Efficacy	Efficacy
Yes. In fact, this year, I'm having so much fun because I'm finally getting a vision of how I think this needs to go.	Coaching Academy gives direction and vision	Is it a personal vision or has the school vision become clearer?	Coaching role-evolves	Efficacy	Efficacy
some initial, whether it be mentoring with somebody.	Coaches need mentors, too.	How are new coaches supported or mentored? Do they receive different training from the mentoring program? Would mentoring increase a coach's efficacy? The first year of coaching is difficult, especially if the coach has not had initial coaching training or the role is not clear.	support for Coaches	Efficacy	Efficacy

Figure 4. Determining Themes.

Theme	Key Words	Assertation	Interview Support or Connections		
Efficacy	**Purpose** **Collaboration** **Feedback** **Resilience**	Efficacy is not about being an expert or overly self-confident. It is being vulnerable enough to understand that there will be successes and setbacks, having the courage to continue to adjust and move forward to reach a goal, and the ability to reflect on one's thinking and experiences to ensure we keep moving forward. Efficacy is built through many small moments of success. Efficacy can be built through continuous learning, collaboration, resilience. Experiences that hinder efficacy can be overcome through continuous learning, collaboration, resilience.	• The heart of everything that coaches do • Builds over many little moments • Good teaching is good teaching • Collaboration • Continuous learning • Helps me feel like I am not on an island • Helps me feel more confident in working with teachers • Self-efficacy can build when a group of people have worked together to accomplish a task or read a goal • Trainings and conversations build self-confidence to try new things • We need practice and feedback • Need to feel purposeful • Need focus and direction • Not about being an expert- learn beside teachers • Resilience • We tweak and keep moving forward towards our goal • Have initiative to try something • Growth mindset, there will be failures or setbacks Practice what you want others to learn	• Watch a teacher start getting confidence • Teachers overcome a frustration • Breaking down barriers • Watch teachers grow • Finding purpose in my role • Celebrating staff • Data • I could tell they were vested- meaningful work • Facilitate something that was exactly what the teacher needed • Student achievement • Notes from teachers • Teachers sharing success • Ah-ha moment from teacher • Trust me enough and feel comfortable • Referrals- success snowballs • Depth of coaching cycle	**Barriers** • Lack of direction or clarity of coaching role • Culture • Teachers facing burnout • Too many roles/tasks • Fear • Relationships • Lack of training- underprepared • When I am questioning myself or the things that I'm doing, I am less likely to act and, as a result, less likely to be effective. • Poor time management skills • Because your isolated you don't always feel your impact and you don't get feedback

Figure 5. Developing Assertations.

Throughout the data analysis, the researcher used various forms of trustworthiness and validity techniques in a number of ways: (a) creating an audit trail, (b) memoing, (c) triangulation with various data sources, and (d) incorporating member checking techniques.

Questionnaire

Data analysis on the questionnaire was completed when the online questionnaire link closed. All open-ended responses were recorded and added to the researcher's code book for further analysis in conjunction with the interview data. In addition, all Likert-type scale questions were analyzed by determining the percentage of "some form of" agreement among participants' responses. These answers were further analyzed to determine if they connected to any key words or themes found in the interview and open-response data. If they did, the researcher categorized that specific question and data result within the themes previously uncovered in the interview and open-response data. This information helped the researcher analyze the assertations to another data set to ensure accuracy. This was done when possible, but not every theme corroborated with a survey question. Figure 6 portrays interview and survey corroboration.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the data collection and analysis, the researcher attempted to remain objective by not including her personal experiences as an elementary or middle school teacher, instructional coach, or curriculum coordinator. Therefore, the researcher's code book and audit trail significantly improved the trustworthiness of this study.

Theme	Key Words	Assertation	Survey Connection Question				
Efficacy	Purpose Collaboration Feedback Resilience	Efficacy is not about being an expert or overly self-confident. It is being vulnerable enough to understand that there will be successes and setbacks, having the courage to continue to adjust and move forward to reach a goal, and the ability to reflect on one's thinking and experiences to ensure we keep moving forward. Efficacy is built through many small moments of success. Efficacy can be built through continuous learning, collaboration, resilience. Experiences that hinder efficacy can be overcome through continuous learning, collaboration, resilience.	16	I seek out colleagues to collaborate with about instructional coaching practices.	100	Seeks out colleagues	Efficacy
			2	Instructional coaches need effective professional development opportunities focused on coaching practices each year.	100	Need for specific coaching training	Efficacy
			3	Effective professional development opportunities improve coaching practices.	100	PD improves coaching practices	Efficacy
			5	Coaches need continued professional development to continue to learn about and implement effective coaching practices.	97.8	Need for continuous coaching PD	Efficacy
			13	I pay to belong to a professional organization that focuses on instructional coaching.	28.9	Pay to belong to professional organizations	Efficacy
			14	I purchase my own books or other resources to help me learn more about effective instructional coaching strategies.	80	Purchase own resources	Efficacy
			15	I seek out websites, podcasts, articles or other resources to support my learning about effective instructional coaching practices.	97.8	Seeks out additional resources	Efficacy
			17	I would like to attend more professional development opportunities to learn about coaching and to collaborate with other coaches.	95.6	Would attend PD	Efficacy
			22	Receiving specific and actionable feedback on my instructional coaching practices improves my coaching skills.	97.8	Feedback improves practice	Efficacy
			23	I need more specific and actionable feedback on my coaching skills.	86.7	Need more feedback	Efficacy
			24	Effective coaching positively impacts teacher strategy implementation.	97.8	Teacher success	Efficacy
			25	Effective coaching positively impacts student achievement.	100	Student success	Efficacy
			27	Effective coaching positively impacts teacher's self-efficacy.	100	Impacts teacher self-efficacy	Efficacy
			28	Effective coaching has a positive effect on teacher retention.	95.6	Impacts teacher retention	Efficacy
			29	Effective coaching increases my self-efficacy in regards to coaching teachers.	100	Impacts coach self-efficacy	Efficacy
			30	Increased professional learning opportunities on coaching would increase my coaching self-efficacy.	97.8	PD increases coach efficacy	Efficacy
			31	Increased time to meet with coaching colleagues	95.6	Collaboration increases	Efficacy

Figure 6. Interview and Survey Corroboration.

The researcher used a code book to create an audit trail. The code book included a record of data, codes, content descriptions, jottings, memos, and so on (Saldaña, 2016). Audit trails are important when presenting research (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) as they demonstrate that thorough documentation, decisions, analysis, assumptions, interpretations, and conclusions were made throughout the research process (Cope, 2014). Robson and McCartan (2016) noted that when researchers carefully document their steps and processes used throughout their study, such as design decisions, field notes, memos, and transcription data, they are not only creating a "researcher check," but they are also creating an audit trail for external auditors. This continual "researcher check" ensures that data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions may be considered trustworthy and valid. However, Robson and McCartan also explained that although a researcher creates an audit trail, that does not mean that validity is guaranteed (2016).

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), audit trails document the "inquiry process through journaling and memoing, keeping a research log of all activities, developing a data collection in a chronological order, and recording data analysis procedures clearly" (p. 28). This detailed audit trail allows other external auditors to review the process of documentation, analysis, and interpretation and draw the same conclusions as a researcher, which helps establish credibility (Cope, 2014). In addition, Roulston (2010) explained that audit trails, or chronological evidence of processes, decisions, and interpretations, help researchers explain their decision-making process and how specific interpretations and conclusions were developed within a study. Roulston (2010) further explained that it is this specific evidence that allows a researcher, or an external auditor, to ensure sufficient information was collected in a systematic and thorough way and then appropriately analyzed and interpreted to ensure findings are credible. Therefore, audit trails must be very explicit to ensure that study methods, processes, analyses, and conclusions are as repeatable as possible (Morrow, 2005).

Another way the researcher developed trustworthiness in this study was by using thick descriptions. Researchers use thick descriptions to present data or findings (Whittemore et al., 2001) with rich details that are explicit or creative (Cope, 2014). Thick descriptions offer additional details that help readers better understand a research site, participants, events, and progression of a research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), thick descriptions help readers better understand specific settings, descriptions, and events, which in turn, may increase the credibility of a research study as well as how the research connects to other settings and similar contexts (p. 128). Morrow (2005) further explained that

thick descriptions help connect various layers of "culture and context in which the experiences are embedded" (p. 252).

Cope (2014) explained that thick descriptions add creativity to a work, which can challenge traditional thinking, while continuing to follow the scientific process. Onwuegbuzie (2007) added that thick description must "correspond to data that are detailed and complete enough to maximize the ability to find meaning" (p. 244). Therefore, thick description may include verbatim transcripts and detailed, descriptive notetaking about specific events and behaviors (Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Thick descriptions are critical as they not only provide evidence, or data points, for a specific theory, but thick descriptions can also eliminate bias as the rich, descriptive details describe the creation of emerging theories (Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Finally, thick descriptions offer specific, detailed information to help a reader "transfer information to other settings and contexts" (Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 244).

Additionally, Seidman (2006) suggests that his three-interview protocol embeds trustworthiness and validity. For example, with the three-interview design, researchers are able to ensure their participants' responses are consistent over time, which leads to trust of authenticity. These multiple interviews also ensure that the researcher has gathered sufficient information (reflects the population outside of the sample) and he or she has saturated research findings (same information is reported in multiple participant interviews) (Seidman, 2006, p. 55).

Seidman (2006) believes the three-interview protocol ensures internal consistency and external consistency of participants' stories or reconstruction of experiences. Since the researcher utilized the three-interview protocol for this study, she examined multiple interview transcripts to determine how the participants' syntax, dictions, and even nonverbal aspects led to confidence in

authenticity of the participants' responses (Seidman, 2006). This understanding may be applied to a larger set of data in addition to determining the consistency within each participant's interviews and examining how this information connects to other interviews, research, and findings.

Bias

The researcher has experience in education as an elementary teacher, middle school teacher, and high school instructional coach. At the time of this study, the researcher was an administrator supporting secondary instructional coaching program development and coaches. Therefore, the researcher aimed to set aside beliefs as a teacher, instructional coach, and program administrator in order to remain unbiased and open-minded while collecting data regarding the instructional coaches' perceptions, experiences, and needs. Throughout the process, the researcher recorded and evaluated inklings, wonderings, assumptions, and assertions to ensure that the researcher's personal perception, or bias, did not overshadow the intended meaning of the participants' stories and experiences. The researcher's code book was a critical component of this process as it helped the researcher remain unbiased while recording and analyzing the coaches' words.

Article #3 Research Design

Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of a "culture's relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purpose of helping *insiders* (cultural members) and *outsiders* (cultural strangers) better understand the culture" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010, para. 7). Hence, ethnographic research is used to describe a culture sharing group's ordinary experiences

and how that group makes meaning of specific events, actions, or circumstances. Then the researcher shares a description in a way that identifies commonalities that can be explained across that specific cultural group (Wolcott, 1999). Therefore, ethnography is used to describe, analyze, and interpret a culture as it is "revealed through discerning patterns of socially shared behaviors" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 67). The primary purpose of ethnography is to share "descriptive data free from imposed external concepts and ideas" (Robson & McCartan, 2016) about a specific culture-sharing group. In other words, an ethnographer studies a specific culture-sharing group. Then with an insider's perspective, the ethnography tells the story of the people or helps the people tell their story.

Although ethnography studies culture and how it is seen through patterns of socially shared behavior, a researcher is the primary research instrument, which also means that the one conducting ethnographic research is not overly reliant on others' previously gathered data (Wolcott, 1999). Thus, ethnographers observe or participate in a participant's natural setting (Wolcott, 1999). Researchers often spend a considerable amount of time "in the field interviewing, observing, and gathering documents about the group to understand their culture-sharing behaviors, beliefs, and language" (Creswell, 2015, p. 466).

Methods

Since ethnographers collect data through observation of a group's behaviors, gestures, interactions, and ceremonies or performances, as well as any material objects used regularly in their every day, or natural, setting (Brewer, 2000), data collection methods must be "flexible and unstructured to avoid pre-fixed arrangements that impose categories on what people say and do" (p. 19).

While ethnography is used to develop a deep understanding of what people think, how they behave, and how they interact in a given culture, community, or organization, ethnographers typically focus on a single setting or group. Additionally, researchers strive to collect unbiased data with as little impact as possible on the field site and the people being studied, which requires time in the field as well as developing trust with subjects (Brewer, 2000). This methodology is most often accomplished by some level of *participatory observation* in which a researcher participates, communicates, and interacts within the group of study (Wolcott, 1999). Brewer (2000) explained that although data is collected with various techniques, the primary means of data collection is observation, although ethnographic methods also incorporate *interviews* to better understand the meanings attributed to things by participants.

Fieldwork. Creswell (2015) explained that ethnographic fieldwork occurs when a researcher gathers data in a participant's natural setting, where participants' shared patterns can be studied. Wolcott (1999) stated that participant observation is sometimes used to describe everything researchers do on-site (fieldwork). However, others refer to fieldwork as any "activity that is not some form of interviewing" (p. 44). Wolcott stated that three categories of ethnography data collection could be described as participant observation (experiencing), interviewing (enquiring), and archival research (examining).

Participant Observation. Participant observation is firsthand experience of a naturally occurring event (Wolcott, 1999). Wolcott explained that all of a researcher's senses are engaged in these experiences. However, Wolcott also explained a difference between participant observation and non-participant participant observation (p. 48). In other words, "non-participant participant observation" is a "label for researchers who make no effort to hide what they are

doing or to deny their presence, but neither are they able fully to avail themselves of the potential afforded by participant observation to take a more active or interactive role" (p. 48). However, Brewer (2000) reiterated that as a researcher participates in a setting, and possibly even a group's activities to collect data, it is critical that it is done in a "systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them" (p. 6).

Interviewing. Wolcott (1999) explained that there is a critical difference between being a passive observer and taking an active role by questioning what is happening during an experience. He further explained that interviews may be difficult for an ethnographer, as one must engage in natural conversations or activities with participants. Therefore, researchers must be able to determine when to interject to gain specific information and when to stay quiet and remain patient to see if that information will be revealed naturally (Wolcott, 1999). Wolcott further stated that interviewing may include "everything from casual conversations to the formal structured interview" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 44). Therefore, interviews may be completed in various formats such as one-on-one, focus groups, unstructured forms, or semi-structured forms.

According to Roulston (2010), ethnographic interviews often appear to be very unstructured and similar to "friendly conversations; the key difference being that the research introduces 'ethnographic elements'" (p. 19) to ensure that participants are able to respond honestly and naturally. In addition, ethnographic interviews "explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds" (Roulston, 2010, p. 19). Therefore, ethnographic interviews often use descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Roulston also noted that ethnographic interviewing promotes a researcher's ongoing analysis of data generated

from field notes, observations, participation in research settings, rapport with participants, and multiple interviews over an extended period of time.

Archival Research. Wolcott (1999) also discussed the importance of archival research in which researchers may examine documents or other items such as "personal letters, diaries, and photographs, to examining ordinary apparel or esoteric art objects, to listening to recordings of speech or music, to making or reviewing inventories of household items" (p. 47) as well as any other personal items "that may be shared with the ethnographer" (p. 47).

Although each researcher may use a variety of techniques to gather data, Creswell (2015) explained that researchers may collect three types of data to gather various perspectives: emic data, etic data, and negotiation data. Emic data is information provided by participants. In other words, this refers to "local language and ways of expression used by members in a cultural-sharing group" (p. 474) or the differences within a group's culture—an insider's perspective. Etic data is an ethnographer's interpretation of participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2015). Etic typically refers to the language used by a researcher "to refer to the same phenomena mentioned by participants" (p. 475), which is often helpful for social scientists interested in intergroup comparisons. Finally, negotiation data is created jointly by the participant and the researcher. Creswell (2015) explained how negotiation occurs at different stages throughout research and may include gate keeping procedures, engaging in respectful interactions with individuals, and determining a plan to compensate participants for participating in the study.

Analysis

Data must be analyzed and interpreted "to make sense of particular cultures, including the language or 'folk terms' that members of the culture routinely use, and to generate findings that

will provide descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of how members experience and understand their world" (Roulston, 2010, p. 158). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) explained that ethnographic research analysis takes place throughout the entire research process, and it is directly connected to interpretation. Creswell (2015) stated that ethnographers typically utilize a "general process of developing a description, analyzing data for themes, and providing an interpretation for the meaning of" information (p. 482).

Although there is not a single approach to use when analyzing ethnographic data, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) suggested first reading through all data, then becoming familiar with empirical data. As a researcher continues to read, additional anecdotal notes are created as patterns, connections, similarities, or contrastive points are found. The second step of data analysis is data reduction (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Finally, a researcher can utilize additional coding methods to determine specific meaning within data. As with other forms of qualitative research, researchers must ensure data and interpretations are valid and trustworthy by creating clear audit trails, utilizing member checking strategies, incorporating forms of triangulation, creating thick descriptions, and so on.

Thick descriptions are a critical component of ethnography as they allow others to understand the culture being studied from an insider's perspective (Geertz, 1973). Thick descriptions are important because they help readers understand that culture is not a specific event, behavior, process, or the like, but how one creates meaning from those culture-sharing experiences (Geertz, 1973). Creswell (2015) further stated that thick descriptions help to "place the reader figuratively in the setting, to transport the reader to the actual scene, and to make it

real . . . [by] awakening the reader's senses through adjectives, nouns, and verbs that elicit sounds, sights, feelings, and smells" (p. 476).

Finally, Creswell (2015) explained that as ethnographic researchers make interpretations and write, they must write with reflexivity. Creswell explained that reflexivity is the "researcher being aware of and openly discussing his or her role in the study in a way that honors and respects the site and participants" (p. 478). This process ensures that a researcher has little impact on the group and field site.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography integrates characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) explained autoethnography as when researchers *retrospectively and selectively* write about a realization that is derived from being part of a culture-sharing group in addition to analyzing these experiences. Autoethnographers use ethnographic tools, existing research, and personal experience to "illustrate facets of cultural experience … [and to describe] characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis et al, 2010, para. 10). Therefore, autoethnographers may compare and/or contrast personal experiences to existing literature, conduct interviews, and/or examine cultural artifacts (Ellis et al., 2010). Hence, autoethnography embodies "subjectivity, emotionality and researcher influence" (LeRoux, 2017, p. 198).

Autoethnographies are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Ellis et al. (2010) stated that researchers write autoethnographies with thick descriptions that include personal and interpersonal experiences. First, autoethnographers determine a cultural

experience by examining field notes, interviews, reflective journals, and/or other artifacts, and then they work to describe these cultural patterns through "storytelling (e.g., character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15). The purpose of using an autoethnography style of writing is not only to make meaning from personal experience and to develop an engaging description of a cultural experience, but it is also used to "reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15). In addition, these authors believe that "writing personal stories may also be therapeutic for participants and researchers" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 25). However, it must be noted that autoethnographers do not participate in experiences to publish a writing; they connect previous lived experiences and richly describe a cultural-sharing group's phenomenon in a way that helps outsiders gain a deep understanding of an insider's meaning. Therefore, LeRoux (2017) states that autoethnography research "requires self-exploration, introspection and interpretation that assist researches to locate themselves within their own history and culture, thus allowing them to broaden their understanding of their own values in relation to others" (p. 198).

When writing an autoethnography, Ellis (2000) explains that this work must not just engage a reader; it must evoke a reader. For example, an engaging piece of writing is one that may encourage a reader to read "without stopping to evaluate cognitively" (p. 274). Whereas when one stops "frequently to think about details of [one's] experience…memories or feeling called forth by the piece, then the work has evoked" the reader (p. 274). Therefore, Ellis (2000) believes that writers must tell their story with "narrative soul" to ensure the reader clearly

understands an insider's experiences and how they have made meaning of a cultural phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher gathered data and reflected on personal experiences as a former teacher, former instructional coach, and current administrator supporting a secondary instructional coaching program and coaches. Therefore, the researcher's data collection and analysis methods focused on self-artifacts such as the following: (a) anecdotal notes, (b) calendar notes, (c) journal entries, (d) instructional coaching meetings, (e) small group collaboration sessions, (f) collaborative discussions, (g) collecting artifacts, and (h) writing an autoethnography. The researcher used these methods to further explore her perceptions and experiences about self-efficacy and resilience in relation to instructional coaching and the implementation of effective coaching practices. Therefore, the researcher used a layered account of an experience. Ellis et al. (2010) describe layered accounts as a way that the researcher/author focuses on his or her personal experience alongside "data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 30). These authors further state that layered accounts often include vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection, which provide a detailed account for those not in the culture-sharing group. In essence, autoethnography "turns autobiography or memoir genre into a *method* for conducting and displaying research" with an emphasis "on self-interrogations of the sociocultural processes of identity construction" which has formed the researcher's identity (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 417).

LeRoux (2017) explains that there are various types of autoethnography on a continuum with evocative autoethnography and analytic autoethnography being on opposite ends. LeRoux (2017) explains that the primary purpose of autoethnography is to document personal experience.

However, each type of autoethnography approaches this work slightly different. For example, evocative autoethnography is written to evoke an emotional response through "thick description, a value of aesthetics, evocative and vulnerable stories with little concern about objectivity and researcher neutrality" (p. 199). On the other side of the continuum is analytic autoethnography. Analytic autoethnography "incorporates empirical data to gain insight into and develop a theoretical understanding of a broader set of social phenomena" (p. 199).

The researcher chose to write an evocative autoethnography to investigate her own experiences of being an instructional coach and to explore her perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and resilience to advance an understanding of instructional coaches, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Throughout this study, the researcher reflected on her perceptions and experiences as an instructional coach as well as the needs of her fellow coaches and the interviewed coaches. This autoethnographic approach led the researcher to an in-depth study of self which enabled her to create a reflexive dialogue with readers so that the researcher's stories and experiences resonate with others who have experienced similar stories or situations.

Since research has demonstrated that ethnography requires the use of memories of experiences (Wall, 2008), the researcher used her own memories of coaching and supporting coaches. Wall (2008) explained that even fieldwork, interview transcripts, diaries, journals and the resulting texts cannot be separated from the memories; they become headnotes (memories from the field). Therefore, throughout this research process, the researcher participated in observation and reflection, recorded self-reflection notes, reviewed past emails and notes from teachers, conducted self-evaluation surveys, and reviewed surveys completed by teachers

regarding the researcher's performance as an instructional coach. Additionally, the researcher reviewed interview transcripts and the code book from previous research to identify common themes as data was analyzed. The researcher did this in order to determine the most important aspects of her story to share. Throughout this work, the researcher incorporated LeRoux's (2017) proposed criteria for autoethnographic studies: subjectivity, self-reflexivity, resonance, credibility, and contribution.

Subjectivity

The self is primarily visible in the research. The researcher re-enacts or re-tells a noteworthy or critical personal relational or institutional experience – generally in search of self-understanding. The researcher is self-consciously involved in the construction of the narrative which constitutes the research (LeRoux, 2017).

Throughout this autoethnographic research, the researcher strived to be visible. The researcher shared her personal stories, perceptions, and emotions as a way to better understand herself. In order to relive her experiences, the researcher reviewed past emails, notes, surveys, and feelings. The researcher conducted further research by identifying and further understanding the underpinnings of her perceptions, biases, actions, and needs.

Self-Reflexivity

There is evidence of the researcher's intense awareness of his or her role in and relationship to the research which is situated within a historical and cultural context. Reflexivity points to self-awareness, self-exposure, and self-conscious introspection (LeRoux, 2017).

This research required the researcher to become more aware of her perceptions and biases as well as her identity and understanding of her role within the instructional coaching

community. To do this, the researcher reviewed the themes and assertations uncovered during previous research. The researcher made many connections to coaches' perceptions and experiences, thus deepening her self-awareness and ability to reflect on her own personal experiences and beliefs with a broader lens. This work prompted the researcher to revisit previous self-assessments and learning activities as well as seek additional research literature. These activities led the researcher to a better understanding of the reasons for her own perceptions, emotions, actions, and necessary next steps.

Resonance

Resonance requires the audience to enter into, engage with, experience, or connect with the writer's story on an intellectual and emotional level. There is a sense of commonality between the researcher and the audience, an intertwining of lives (LeRoux, 2017).

The researcher aimed to connect with the reader at both an intellectual and emotional level in her autoethnography. The researcher chose to write about themes that were emphasized within her previous research, and she worked with coaches to ensure that stories were timely and relevant within the coaching community. Additionally, the researcher strived to be vulnerable in the emotions she shared throughout various experiences and how these emotions impacted her over time in order to recreate authentic experiences and develop a sense of real-life connection between the researcher and the reader.

Credibility

There should be evidence of verisimilitude, plausibility, and trustworthiness in the research. The research process and reporting should be permeated by honesty (LeRoux, 2017).

The researcher's writing was honest and vulnerable. The researcher shared experiences that were positive, but she also openly shared experiences that caused fear, anxiety, and sadness. At times, writing the autoethnography was uncomfortable for the researcher, but she persevered in order to create an honest picture of the experiences and perceptions instructional coaches encounter within their personal, professional, and family lives.

Contribution

An autoethnography should extend knowledge, generate ongoing research, liberate, empower, improve practice, or make a contribution to social change. An autoethnography teaches, informs, and inspires (LeRoux, 2017).

This research study adds to the existing research on instructional coaches. It is the researcher's hope that this study will allow others to see into an instructional coach's world. At the same time, it is the researcher's hope that instructional coaches will be able to identify emotions, actions, or tendencies within themselves in order to strive towards a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, this study can offer school leaders an inside lens into what instructional coaches experience and consider how instructional coaches can be supported in building self-efficacy and resilience.

Lastly, the researcher wishes to echo the words of Ellis (2000): "I want the two sides of [reader's] brain to be engaged simultaneously or for the text to call forth one side and then the other, back and forth, until thinking and feeling merge. I want [my reader] to be immersed in the flow of the story, lost in time and place, not wanting to come to the end (as in a good novel), and afterwards unable to stop thinking about or feeling what I've experienced" (p. 273).

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY AND FINDINGS

The articles that describe this research focused on the perceptions and experiences of instructional coaches about self-efficacy and resilience. As the data was analyzed, these broad topics molded themselves into three focused works. Interestingly, each of these articles built on one another, which further demonstrates the importance of this work. Article #1 illustrated the impact of self-efficacy, Article #2 identified the importance of resilience, and Article #3 illustrated the impact that self-efficacy and resilience have on coaches' ability to experience joy in their professional and personal life. Figure 7 depicts the relationship among self-efficacy, joy, and resilience.

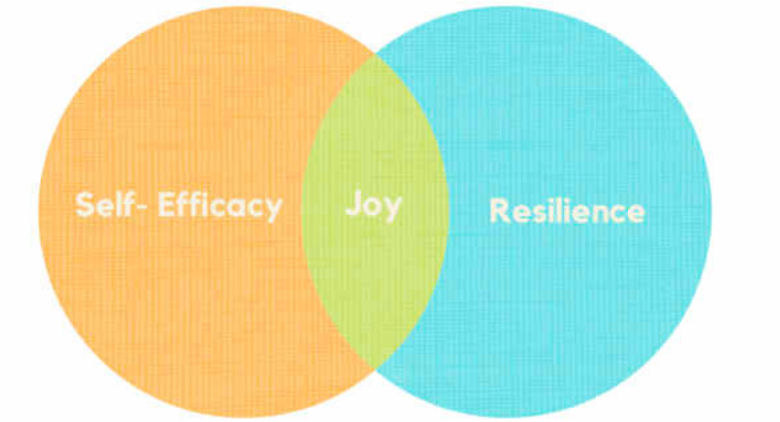


Figure 7. Relationship Among Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Joy.

The key findings of this work included: (a) how instructional coaches build self-efficacy and overcome barriers to building self-efficacy; (b) the importance and presence of resilience in order for coaches to be successful in the coaching role; and (c) how the absence of resilience impacts one's ability to experience joy in his or her personal, professional, and family life.

Article #1: Instructional Coaching: Efficacy is Built through Role Definement

This qualitative study explored the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' self-efficacy and their ability to coach teachers. At the time of the study, the research participants worked in one Midwestern state. The study included interviews of eight full-time instructional coaches in addition to 42 instructional coaches who completed a questionnaire. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the interview data and the open-response questions on the questionnaire. The Likert scale questions on the questionnaire were analyzed by determining some form of agreement for each question. This research identified the importance and presence of self-efficacy for coaches to be successful in the coaching role. These findings included how instructional coaches build self-efficacy and overcome barriers to building self-efficacy. The findings also offer considerations for school leaders which may increase the effectiveness of their instructional coaching programs, as well as individual coaches, by defining roles and expectations, providing coaching specific training, and offering effective feedback to improve coaching efficacy.

Article #2: We're in This Together: Educational Leaders, Instructional Coaches, and Resilience

This qualitative study explored the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' resilience and their ability to coach teachers. At the time of the study, the research participants worked in one Midwestern state. The study included interviews of eight full-time

instructional coaches in addition to 42 instructional coaches who completed a questionnaire. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the interview data and the open-response questions on the questionnaire. This research identified the importance and presence of resilience in order for coaches to be successful in the coaching role. This research suggests that resilience is built through the following: (a) understanding, possessing, and practicing high emotional intelligence; (b) engaging in a collaborative learning culture; and (c) allowing themselves and others grace. Further, this work offers considerations for school leaders to support building resilience within their learning community. In Figure 8, the components of resilience are portrayed.

Figure 8. Factors of Resilience.

Article #3: My Road to Resilience: Advice to New Instructional Coaches

Throughout this autoethnography essay, the researcher reflected on her personal experiences as an educator – teacher, instructional coach, and district administrator. The researcher explored the stories she created at various times throughout her career. As the researcher expanded on her experiences, she came to the realization that it was time to rewrite her story. Throughout the essay, the researcher explored vulnerability, resilience, joy, and perfectionism. The researcher discussed the importance of resilience, examined experiences that built or hindered her resilience, and identified how the absence of resilience impacted her personal, professional, and family life. Finally, the researcher offered pieces of advice inspired by her research and experiences of instructional coaching to school leaders so they can understand how to effectively support instructional coaches with building resilience in themselves and for teachers.

CHAPTER V

ARTICLES

Article #1: Instructional Coaching: Efficacy is Built through Role Definement Abstract

This qualitative study explores the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' self-efficacy and their ability to coach teachers. The research participants are from one Midwestern state. The study includes interviews of eight full-time instructional coaches in addition to 42 instructional coaches who completed a questionnaire. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the interview data and the open response questions on the questionnaire. The Likert scale questions on the questionnaire were analyzed by determining some form of agreement for each question. This research identified the importance and presence of self-efficacy for coaches to be successful in the coaching role. These findings included how instructional coaches build self-efficacy and overcome barriers to building self-efficacy. The findings also offer considerations for school leaders which may increase the effectiveness of their instructional coaching programs, as well as individual coaches, by defining roles and expectations, providing coaching specific training, and offering effective feedback to improve coaching efficacy.

Key words: instructional coaching, efficacy, educational leaders, instructional coaching roles, professional development, feedback

Introduction

Coaching encompasses many different fields such as business (executive coaching), personal life (life coaching), and education. Within the educational field, there are various titles used for coaches such as literacy coaches, data coaches, and 21st Century coaches, but in essence, they are all instructional coaches. Due to coaches having various titles, and often multiple roles and responsibility within a school or district, coaches experience stress and frustration, which may lead to burnout or ineffective work with teachers. All of which negatively impact student achievement.

At this time, the term coach and the definition of the coaching role has not been universally defined and agreed upon. Killion and Harrison (2017) believe creating a single coaching definition is difficult due to the "wide range of approaches or orientations to coaching or to a coaching program" (p. 5). However, the coaching role is based on the premise that instructional coaches are not administrators, evaluators, or supervisors. "Instructional coaches are educators in a non-supervisory role who collaborate with teachers so they can choose, and implement, research-based interventions to help students learn more effectively" (Knight, 2007, p. 13). In other words, coaches work, support, and learn alongside teachers to help them reach their professional goals.

Coaches facilitate teachers' reflections about their classroom practices through effective communication skills such as empathizing, listening, building trust, developing positive relationships, modeling, and co-teaching (Aguilar, 2013; DiPrima Bickel, Bernstein-Danis, & Matsumura, 2015, Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). In addition to these soft skills, instructional coaches must be knowledgeable in research-based instructional strategies across a

broad range of instructional issues such as classroom management, content areas, and assessment practices (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Knight, 2007).

Instructional coaches do not lead an individual teacher's work; coaches support a teacher's work. For example, in a coaching relationship, both a teacher and a coach work collaboratively to identify a goal, plan instruction, observe each other, and then collaboratively reflect on their learning. Since coaching offers direct assistance, support, training, and feedback to teachers, improved instructional practice is a direct outcome (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Kurz, Reddy, & Glover, 2017; Knight, 2007; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Teemant, 2014). In essence, coaches help teachers continue to learn and develop as they build a system-wide culture of learning.

At the time of this study, research on coaching teachers suggests positive outcomes in building teacher efficacy and student achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Kraft et al., 2018; Pedota, 2015; Renbarger & Davis, 2019; Killion & Harrison, 2017). However, providing a coach to support teachers has not been enough. Research has indicated coaches vary significantly in effectiveness (Kraft et al., 2018; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Killion et al., 2012). Therefore, coaching outcomes may produce inconsistent results between various coaching programs and even between individual schools within the same school district. In other words, not all coaches, or coaching programs, will yield the same results in increasing the implementation of research-based instructional practices, cultivating teacher efficacy, and positively impacting student achievement.

Up until this time, there has been a growing number of research articles written about the importance of teacher and student efficacy, but very little has been written about how an

instructional coach's self-efficacy impacts a coach's work with teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers. Since effective instructional coaches can help teachers develop self-efficacy, it is critical to understand how instructional coaches build coaching efficacy and become effective coaches.

Due to the lack of research on instructional coaches, the research presented thus far primarily focuses on teachers, even though the premise of this particular study focused on instructional coaches. Due to the similarities between instructional coaching and teaching, the researcher infers that instructional coaching data would be similar to teaching data. Therefore, the foundational research shared in this work must be inferred for all PreK-12 professional educator roles.

This qualitative study explored the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' self-efficacy and their ability to coach teachers. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze interview data and open response questions on a questionnaire. Findings included how instructional coaches build self-efficacy and overcome barriers to building self-efficacy. The findings also offer considerations for school leaders which may increase the effectiveness of their instructional coaching programs, as well as individual coaches, by defining roles and expectations, providing coaching specific training, and offering effective feedback to improve coaching efficacy.

Literature Review

Teacher Efficacy Matters

Efficacy is an important factor in one's success because "efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Efficacy impacts everyone, regardless of their career, education, gender, socioeconomic status, culture, or any other factor. Therefore, it is critical to examine how instructional coaches support teachers in building self-efficacy.

One reason self-efficacy plays such an important role in education is that it involves human agency. According to Bandura (1977), human agency is the idea that individuals control the actions that affect their lives. In addition, Bandura believed self-efficacy is created by what one expects to happen as well as how one perceives his or her individual capabilities (1977). On the other hand, Bandura also explained perceived capabilities, or self-efficacy, go beyond environmental outcomes (1977). In other words, even though a teacher may know a certain instructional strategy may likely result in a desired effect, this information is useless if the teacher does not believe they have the ability to successfully implement the strategy. According to Wang, Hall, and Rahimi (2015) teacher self-efficacy may vary according to task types, students, and classroom circumstances. Hence, an instructional coach may serve as a bridge for teachers to implement effective instructional strategies in a variety of situations, which leads to increased teacher self-efficacy.

What is an Instructional Coach?

The lack of clarity for the coaching role creates misconceptions about an instructional coach's purpose and intentions. For example, "when a principal expects a coach to act as an

expert coach correcting teacher practices and enforcing new instructional practices while the coach perceives themselves in a different way" (Killion and Harrison, 2017, p. 5). This type of misunderstanding or misalignment of the coaching role may be detrimental to an instructional coaching position as it creates an unclear line between administrators and coaches. Although administrators and coaches are both instructional leaders, coaches are not evaluators; coaches work and learn beside teachers. Consequently, when the coaching role is not clearly defined and fully understood by all stakeholders, instructional coaches may become overwhelmed, stressed, and ineffective (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Killion et al., 2012, Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015).

The New Teacher Center published Instructional Coaching Practice Standards and Instructional Coaching Program Standards in 2018. The purpose of these standards is to "accelerate the development of teacher effectiveness, improve teacher retention, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (2018, p. 1). These guiding documents can support the development of instructional coaching programs, define the coaching role, and increase the overall effectiveness of instructional coaches. Within each of these standard documents, the New Teacher Center (2018) incorporates a framework of foundational, structural, and instructional standards.

Instructional Coaching Practice Standards

The New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Practice Standards were developed to provide instructional coaches clarity to their role and include reflective questions for coaches to guide their next steps in becoming an effective coach. The foundational layers of these practice standards are as follows: (a) foundational standards focus on developing the

critical knowledge, skills, and professional goals necessary for effective coaching; (b) structural standards focus on partnerships that characterize and support quality coaching; and (c) instructional standards are a strategic focus on optimal and equitable classroom practice and student learning. The New Teacher Center (2018) created six Instructional Coaching Practice Standards. These standards outline critical components of the coaching role such as:

- Demonstrates strong knowledge of pedagogy for rigorous content standards and social emotional learning (p. 6)
- Collaborates with school and district instructional leaders, teacher leaders, and the school community (p. 5)
- Promotes, designs, and/or facilitates professional learning (p. 5)
- Cultivates trust, caring, mutual respect, and honesty with teachers (p. 8)
- Fosters teacher agency, problem solving, resilience, and a commitment to success of every student (p. 8)
- Advances teacher effectiveness and the learning of every student through research based instructional strategies, assessment practices, and feedback (p. 10)
- Develops, expands, and strengthens teacher capacity through instructionally focused coaching cycles (p. 12)

These components not only help define the coaching role, but they also illustrate the knowledge, skills, and social emotional intelligence and qualities effective coaches must possess.

Instructional Coaching Program Standards

Similar to the Instructional Coaching Practice standards, the New Teacher Center (2018) also provides Instructional Coaching Program Standards. The Instructional Coaching Program Standards were created to help school leaders develop and grow not only effective instructional coaches but also whole instructional coaching programs. Although the program standards sound similar to the practice standards, these overarching program standards are defined as follows: (a) foundational standards focus on developing a strong coaching program design, implementation, administration, and growth; (b) structural standards outline essential program components; and

(c) instructional standards examine the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions required for coaches to support teacher development.

These standards identify critical components to understand the coaching role. In all, The Teacher Center (2018) created eight Instructional Coaching Program Standards. This particular research study focuses on the following program standards:

Standard 2: Program Leadership and Communication

- Provides a knowledgeable and committed program leader who: collaborates with stakeholders about vision, mission, goals; communicates how coaching practices align to district and school instructional priorities, professional learning, leadership development programs, and teacher/school evaluation; and shares evaluation findings with stakeholders and utilize collaborative decision-making, improvement, and accountability.

Standard 3: School Leader Engagement

- Implements policies, defines time, and allocates resources to create conditions to promote teacher and coach success and program impact and sustainability; develops clear roles, expectations, and conditions to support educational leaders; and provides instructional leadership teams with ongoing professional learning to cultivate coaching capacity.

Standard 4: Instructional Coach Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, Assignment, and Assessment

- Communicates clearly defined roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches; develops rigorous criteria for instructional coach recruitment; and engages in a system of continuous improvement and accountability.

Standard 5: Instructional Coach Professional Learning, Learning Communities, and Onboarding

- Implements initial coach onboarding and coach professional learning; designs and implements instructional coaching communities of practice; and builds capacity of instructional coaches.

These components help describe a framework for an effective coaching program. They also illustrate the knowledge, skills, and social emotional qualities coaching leaders must possess to ensure that an effective coaching program is developed and continues to grow.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and the Connection to Instructional Coaches

Research indicates that self-efficacy impacts teachers' instructional practices. For example, teachers with high self-efficacy often persist longer in difficult situations, provide an increased academic focus in the classroom, and incorporate more effective forms of feedback than teachers who had lower expectations about their ability to influence student learning (Zee & Koomen, 2016; Guo, McDonald Connor, Yang, Roehrig, & Morrison, 2012). Researchers also noted high self-efficacy teachers have an increased sense of personal accomplishment, feel less emotionally exhausted, have increased confidence in their abilities to actively engage their students as well as to handle student misbehavior (Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & vanVeen, 2018; Renbarger & Davis, 2019). These researchers further explain that teachers with high self-efficacy may suffer less from stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and overall burnout, in addition to experiencing higher levels of personal accomplishment, commitment, and job satisfaction (Aguilar, 2018a; Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014). Although these researchers studied teachers, it can be inferred that instructional coaches experience comparable conditions in their roles and may experience similar effects as teachers.

Teacher self-efficacy not only affects student achievement, but it also affects the ability for teachers to build relationships with students, which may even have negative effects on student behaviors. For example, when a teacher is under stress, his or her ability to build student relationships may also deteriorate and lead to increased negative academic and behavioral outcomes for the students (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2018; Aloe et al., 2014). This research regarding teachers may also transfer to an instructional coach's role. For example, if an instructional coach is under stress, it is likely his or her ability to build relationships with

teachers will deteriorate as will his or her impact in supporting positive instructional change. Therefore, instructional coaches must also maintain high self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Cultivates Effectiveness and Job Satisfaction

Instructional coaches build collaborative relationships in order to support teachers in their professional growth and self-efficacy building. Marzano, Simms, Roy, Heflebower, and Warrick (2013) believe coaching "has become increasingly popular to help teachers increase their knowledge and skill. While educational coaches fill a variety of roles and perform various functions, the primary purpose of an instructional coach should be to help teachers increase their effectiveness" (p.1). Instructional coaches are able to help teachers build self-efficacy in a variety of ways. As coaches work with teachers to implement effective instructional strategies and classroom management practices, teachers may begin to build more self-efficacy and reverse the effects of low self-efficacy tendencies. For example, as teachers become more effective in their practices, and student achievement increases, teachers begin to build self-efficacy.

As a teacher's self-efficacy increases, teachers may also experience less job-related stress and fewer student stressors (Wang et al., 2015; Aguilar, 2018a). Researchers believe building self-efficacy is a critical component to embed in instructional coaching because student stressors may significantly reduce a teacher's job satisfaction (Aguilar, 2016; Aguilar, 2018b; Pedota, 2015). Consequently, when teachers are not satisfied with their jobs or perceived performance, teacher attrition rates may increase. However, teachers who work often with their instructional coaches develop more confidence about their teaching ability and demonstrate an increased impact on their students' achievement as opposed to colleagues who had less contact with their coach or perceived themselves with less self-efficacy (Reddy, Glover, Kurz, & Elliott, 2019;

Pedota, 2015). Similar to teachers, when an instructional coach implements effective coaching practices, and that teacher demonstrates increased professional growth, an instructional coach's self-efficacy begins to increase. In other words, both teachers and instructional coaches need high self-efficacy to be effective.

Developing Effective Coaches Matters

Research indicates effective coaches need specific coaching training and continuous feedback to support the development of research-based instructional practices (Reddy et al., 2019; Killion & Harrison, 2017; Killion, 2015). When instructional coaches receive little to no training after they have already been expected to work with teachers, it is detrimental to the effectiveness of the coaching role (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Killion et al., 2012). In other words, when coaches do not "know what to share and how to coach . . . [or are] lacking the pedagogic, communication, and leadership skills necessary for their work…coaches become frustrated and ineffective, which negatively affects school culture, morale, and student achievement" (Fullan & Knight, 2011, p. 52).

Desimone and Pak (2017) also believe it is critical to ensure coaches are effective; however, Reddy, Glover, Kurz, and Elliott (2019) explain that it is difficult to ensure coaches are capable of meeting the diverse needs of teachers due to inconsistent coaching training. For example, Reddy et al. (2019) explain that instructional coaches must demonstrate high levels of proficiency in multiple areas such as problem solving, collecting and interpreting data, modeling, offering actional feedback. In addition, they must function proficiently in relationship building as well as creating a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. All of these skills can be incorporated into coaching specific training and continuous professional learning opportunities.

In addition to coaching training, instructional coaches also need to receive specific and actionable feedback to continually improve their coaching practices. Reddy et al. (2019) believe "that providing instructional coaches skill-focused and valid assessment-based feedback is critical" (p. 105). However, these authors continue to explain that an inadequate number of coaching assessments are available. Without skill-focused assessments, educational leaders often evaluate instructional coaches on teacher standards, which leads to inconsistent coaching evaluation practices and poorly defined feedback (Killion et al., 2012). This reality pairs with an unclear understanding of the coaching role or misalignment of coaching expectations, which may lead to inaccurate or ineffective feedback for coaches. Without specific and actional feedback, an instructional coach may become unable to progress in their coaching practices, become frustrated in their coaching role, and become less effective when supporting teacher professional growth.

Coaching Self-Efficacy

Although there is not a universal definition of coaching efficacy, one can be gleaned from the definition of athletic coaching self-efficacy. Feltz, Chase, Moritz, and Sullivan (1999) define athletic coaching self-efficacy as the extent to which coaches believe they have the capacity to affect the learning and performance of their athletes. Kavussanu, Boardley, Jutkiewicz, Vincent, and Ring (2008) further explain that athletic coaching self-efficacy consists of four dimensions including motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building. Borrowing from this definition of athletic coaching self-efficacy, the researcher of this particular study defines instructional coach self-efficacy as the extent to which instructional coaches believe they have the capacity to impact the learning and performance of their school communities. This includes knowledge in pedagogy, content standards and research-based instructional strategies, coaching

techniques, cultivating a culture of learning, and modeling and supporting social emotional intelligence to ensure there are equitable outcomes for all learners.

Previously, limited research existed regarding self-efficacy and its impact on an instructional coach's ability to effectively coach teachers. Further, little research existed regarding effective instructional coaching methods aiming to build and sustain self-efficacy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers.

Methodology

Study Design

This research study used interpretive phenomenology to identify meanings that may not be obvious to participants; however, the researcher can gather meaning from the participants' stories. The focus of interpretive phenomenology is human experience as opposed to "what they consciously know" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Phenomenological researchers gather data about participant experiences and perspectives. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were utilized to collect data.

Participants

This qualitative study involved instructional coaches from one Midwestern state. Participants included eight instructional coaches: two high school instructional coaches (one male and one female), two middle school instructional coaches (both female), three elementary school instructional coaches (all female), and one preschool instructional coach (female). Table 1 shows detailed information about seven of the eight study participants who were interviewed.

Table 1. Interviewee Information – Article #1.

Interviewees				
Name	Highest Education Degree	How many students does your school district have?	Years of Coaching Experience	Years of Teaching Experience
Holly	Master's	11,000+	1	13
Tonya	Master's	3,000-4,999	1	12
Clara	Master's	11,000+	13	Interventionist
Lisa	Master's	7,000- 8,999	2	7
Todd	Bachelor's	3,000-4,999	1	29
Helen	Master's	0-500	3	11
Maddie	Master's	11,000+	5	15

Additionally, 45 instructional coaches completed the questionnaire. Participants in the interview and questionnaire sampling represent a broader population of rural and urban PreK-12 instructional coaches within this one Midwestern state. Table 2 shows information about questionnaire participants.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Data collection for questionnaires included questionnaire response questions on a six-point Likert scale as well as some additional open-ended, follow up questions. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were used to gain additional information. Seidman (2006) believes in-depth interviews require three separate interviews with each participant.

Table 2. Questionnaire Participant Information.

Questionnaire Number	How many years have you been/were you an instructional coach?	How many students does your school district have?	What is your highest educational degree?	How many years were you a classroom teacher before becoming an instructional coach?
8	2-5	1,000-1,999	Master's	14
10	2-5	3,000-4,999	Master's	6
13	6-9	0-500	Master's	19
14	1	7,000- 8,999	Master's	6
18	2-5	9,000- 10, 999	Master's	10
19	1	0-500	Bachelor's	11
20	1	5,000-6,999	Specialist	10 years in the classroom + 18 years as a Reading Specialist
27	6-9	500-999	Master's	18
28	6-9	11,000+	Bachelor's	24
29	15+	9,000- 10, 999	Specialist	20

Seidman explains that the purpose of a phenomenological interview is to understand participants' lived experiences. Therefore, the first interview focused on their educational careers up until the present time, the second interview focused on specific coaching experiences, and the third interview focused on reflection and meaning of the coaching role. Questionnaires were completed online through UND Qualtrics or on paper and then collected and analyzed by the researcher. Interviews were transcribed by a transcriptionist and analyzed by the researcher.

After preliminary notes were recorded from the first transcript reading, the researcher used open coding, in vivo coding, and process coding to further understand the data.

Open coding is not one particular type of coding method. It is a first cycle approach that can be used with in vivo and process coding. The researcher began by breaking down each significant statement into codes. Since the initial significant statements were long, sometimes more than one code was found in a single statement. When this occurred, the researcher copied the significant statement and made the second code a new entry. The researcher did this to ensure that she was focusing on coaches' experiences and perceptions while carefully breaking down the statements to fully understand this phenomenon.

In vivo coding is useful for a phenomenological study as it assists researchers to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). As the researcher utilized an in vivo coding process, she continued to note "impacting nouns, actions-orientated verbs, evocative vocabulary, clever or ironic phrases, similes and metaphors, etc." (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107). Data analysis included a detailed codebook, an audit trail documenting analysis, interpretations, conclusions, member checks, and peer debriefs.

Findings

Instructional coaches believe efficacy is at the heart of everything they do. To them, efficacy means being flexible enough to understand that successes and setbacks are inevitable. They believe efficacy means having the courage to adjust and move forward as well as possessing the ability to reflect on one's thoughts and experiences to develop a growth mindset. Coaches also believe that without high self-efficacy, they would be unable to effectively support teachers through their professional learning journey. Therefore, these findings describe the

importance of coaching self-efficacy, how an instructional coach's self-efficacy can be built or diminished, and how a coach may recognize and disassemble barriers to building self-efficacy. In addition, these findings identify necessary factors in order to achieve coaching efficacy: (a) clear understanding and definition of role and responsibilities, (b) opportunities for specific coaching training, and (c) feedback on coaching practices. Thus, it is critical to understand how instructional coaches build self-efficacy throughout their work.

Coaches and Self-Efficacy

Coaches believe high self-efficacy is a critical characteristic of a successful coach. They suggest self-efficacy is built through many small moments of success, which does not mean or imply that coaches are, or should be, experts. However, questionnaire participant 29 explained that coaches need to have a bit of a "attitude" alongside high self-efficacy. This participant wrote, "I think a coach needs a little 'let's roll up our sleeves and do this' attitude as well as learning alongside teachers. It is not about us being the experts and knowing it all." This statement illustrates that although instructional coaches are knowledgeable in pedagogy, content, and social emotional learning, coaches are not experts. They work alongside teachers to support the teachers' professional growth. Throughout this collaborative process with teachers or other coaches, instructional coaches experience successes and failures. However, self-efficacy is what keeps a coach motivated to continue supporting teachers, even when a task becomes difficult, uncomfortable, or overwhelming. Questionnaire respondent 28 wrote:

> Self-efficacy is huge! Being an instructional coach is not for the insecure or weak! You need to learn that you can't please everyone all the time, and you can't know everything, but you can find out. You often hear more complaints and concerns than

compliments or positives. A coach needs to be confident enough to seek knowledge, admit when they don't know, and model vulnerability.

Efficacy requires a coach to have the initiative to try something new, wisdom to know there will be successes and setbacks, and a growth mindset to adjust and keep moving forward. Strengths of a coach with high self-efficacy include perseverance, vulnerability, reflectiveness, resourcefulness, and collaboration while learning new experiences and interacting with others. According to questionnaire participant 20, it is crucial for coaches to have high self-efficacy. This participant wrote:

> High self-efficacy is important. You need to be willing to put yourself out there to facilitate tough conversations to support improvement, model teaching practices that may be new for you and lead district initiatives.

Coaches further explained efficacy is built through many small moments. The participants voiced several examples of this building process. Some of them include witnessing a teacher (a) become successful implementing a new strategy, (b) overcome a frustration, (c) experience an “aha” moment, (d) trust a coach enough to participate in a critical conversation, (e) facilitate a deep coaching cycle, and (f) discuss his or her coaching work with another staff member. Maddie revealed a small moment that increased her coaching efficacy:

> Sometimes teachers don’t even see what they’re good at, but I get to help them see that. To do that, I have to start breaking down barriers and get to the root of what their frustration really is. I ask a lot of questions.
>
> I keep picking away and continue to ask them questions, encourage them to reflect and process their thinking, and then soon, teachers start to see their success. And I get to

watch teachers overcome different things that might be a frustration for them. In the end, I get to see teachers value the work we do together. And when they get to that, that's exciting. Because then they start growing again.

According to the questionnaire responses, all participants believe effective coaching increases their self-efficacy and 97.8% of respondents believe effective coaching impacts teacher strategy implementation. In other words, coaches strongly believe in coaching efficacy, the extent to which a coach believes they have the ability to impact the learning of those they work with. Since all experiences positively or negatively impact a coach's self-efficacy, it is critical that educational leaders support instructional coaches to build self-efficacy through a variety of experiences. Table 3 shows the participants' answers of agreement regarding effective coaching.

Table 3. Questionnaire Some Form of Agreement.

Questionnaire Question	**Some Form of Agreement**
Effective coaching increases my self-efficacy in regard to coaching teachers.	100 %
Effective coaching positively impacts teachers' self-efficacy.	97.8 %

Barriers to Coach Self-Efficacy

When instructional coaches reflected on their first years of coaching, the majority revealed they maintained a limited understanding of what was expected of them as coaches. They also felt they received limited training before becoming a coach as well as feeling like they were on an island in their coaching roles. In fact, a number of coaches referred to the first year of coaching as entering or living in "a world of the unknown." When the coaching role was unclear, coaches noted that they lacked a clear vision and purpose in their work, struggled to determine

priorities, and felt overwhelmed and unsuccessful in their position. Multiple coaches shared they do much of their work independently since they are the only coach in their building, confidentiality, or the lack of trusting relationships. Maddie further explained how the lack of collaboration contributed to her feelings of isolation:

> I think the biggest thing that could help me not feel like I am on an island is collaboration. Collaboration gives me ideas. It helps me not feel like I'm on an island. It helps me feel more confident in working with teachers. It helps me feel like I have something to add or to add value to someone else's work. Sometimes, I think because coaches are isolated, they don't always feel their impact or may not be able to have an impact. Learning is not done in isolation.

Maddie conveys learning is social; it does not happen in isolation. She illustrates that coaching collaboration impacts learning, professional growth, and confidence when working with teachers. In addition, Maddie describes the importance of collaborative relationships to help coaches identify and build the value, or impact, of their coaching practices.

Lisa also expressed that she felt isolated in the coaching role. She identified confidentiality as a barrier to collaboration. This barrier sometimes caused her to feel that isolation. Lisa stated:

> There's so much island work as coaches because of that confidentiality bit. So, if there was somebody that was a coach with the training that would oversee other coaches, I think we would feel comfortable having those conversations because they were in the trenches with us. They could sit right next to us and help us purposely plan. We need coaches too.

Here, Lisa implies the importance of a "firewall" between coaches and others. A firewall ensures that the coach will not share confidential information with others, and others will not share confidential information with the coach. Although confidentiality and creating a firewall is a critical component of building trust with teachers, it makes collaboration with others difficult.

At times, Holly also felt she was isolated in her coaching role:

> Although there are other coaches, it is hard to collaborate when we are both new and have different personalities. Even in our coaching PLC, there are sometimes many different personalities, and just like with teachers, it takes time to build trust with other coaches. So, I sometimes feel like I am an island. I need others to brainstorm with, to help me think through things. I need a team. Yeah, sometimes I feel like an island. I know it will continue to get better as we build more trusting relationships. It just takes time.

Trust is a critical component in building relationships with teachers and coaches. Without trust, coaches are not able to be vulnerable enough to collaborate, practice new learning, or grow in their coaching practices.

Vision and Alignment. Like many coaches, due to a lack of clear vision during his first year of coaching, Todd was often unsure of his purpose and at times became frustrated with his coaching position. Interestingly, not only did he feel frustration, but he was also concerned teachers would be negatively impacted by the lack of clarity and purpose of the school district's coaching positions. Todd explained:

> We didn't have a job description…we had to make it our own…In a way I love the freedom of being able to make this position my own, but I think I could do a better job of that if I had some direction of what I really am.

Todd expresses that an undefined coaching role impacts a coach's ability to understand the priorities and impact of their position as well as a coach's ability to create his or her coaching identity. Consequently, a coach may feel isolated and overwhelmed while questioning his or her purpose as a coach. Questionnaire participant 27 also expressed frustration with the lack of clarity within his or her current coaching position. Interestingly, throughout this participant's coaching career, understanding of the coaching role has become "more muddy" due to the lack of a defined vision and purpose for coaches throughout the school district:

> My current understanding is more muddy than it previously was on the coaching role. Every school, teacher, staff, etc. sees the role differently and in the current school I am in, not all are on the same page with the instructional coach's role. This needs to begin with the principal understanding that you are not an assistant principal, not in an administrative role/position.

Alignment among the district, building administrators, and the instructional coach is critical in developing a coach's self-efficacy and an effective coaching program. Without this alignment, a coach's role may become "more muddy" and cause unnecessary stress and isolation thereby negatively impacting the coach's self-efficacy. Additionally, questionnaire participant 27 conveyed the importance of understanding an instructional coach is not an assistant principal. Therefore, the coach should not be involved in administrative duties. A coach's role is to work and learn beside teachers. A coach does not evaluate teachers.

Questionnaire respondent 27 continued to explain that coaches are sometimes assigned additional tasks that detract from aiding a teacher's professional growth, which may be due to the misalignment of a particular school district's understanding of the coaching role. Questionnaire respondent 27 explained:

> Most of my time currently has been providing behavior support, administering and monitoring data/tests/progress monitoring, managing the MTSS system in the building, mentoring 1 teacher, and facilitating team PLCs.

Although coaches believe that part of their role encompasses the facilitation of these tasks, they feel torn between these needs and the loyalty they have to their teachers and building. Holly explained:

> I also get comments that I am never here, or that I am just in my office. I just want to tell teachers that they do not see me because I am in classrooms working with teachers!
>
> Our building gets an attendance email every day, so we know who's out of the building. Because of trainings I attend for my PD or sessions I attend with teachers, I'm on the list often. So, I get why they are asking me where I am, which is good.
>
> I am starting to know when I can step back or say, I'll attend half a day or a portion of it. Because I do want be there…to be there for teachers, but I also have an obligation to the teachers in the building.
>
> So, I'm getting better at weighing that out. Especially if it's a training that I, as a teacher, had recently gone through. Sometimes it's just a repeat. I mean I want to be there for the teachers, but I just did this 9 months ago, so it may not be a good use of my time.

Here, Holly illustrates the passion coaches have for working with teachers in their buildings. She acknowledged that essential trainings, meetings, and other district needs require her to be away from executing specific coaching work with teachers. Hence, it is crucial for administrators and coaches to fully understand the coaching role and expectations within their school districts (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard #2 and #3, 2018).

Additionally, coaches explained that misalignment among the district, administrators, and coaches can cause coaches to feel overwhelmed by various meetings, trainings, and additional duties assigned by various district levels. At times, these duties limit the ability to effectively coach teachers. Therefore, a healthy balance of all tasks is necessary while ensuring that a coach's primary role is supporting teachers.

The participants also noted that an unclear vision or misalignment of the coaching role often creates a "middle man" situation for the coach. The coach can become the liaison among the district, administrators, and teachers for a variety of reasons including new curriculum, initiatives, or other new learning. Holly explained:

> So, it's that fine line between. It sometimes feels like, kind of like you're in purgatory here. Like you're not on the teachers' side but you're not on the admin side and you're literally stuck in the middle. But yet you're not a middle man.

Numerous coaches discussed how they have had to learn to navigate this "middle man" position. It negatively impacts teachers' perceptions of the coaching role and the ability to build trusting relationships with teachers. Therefore, it is critical that alignment and communication measures are established for the district, building administrators, and instructional coaches.

Otherwise, inconsistencies in coaching roles may emerge which could lead to the misalignment of coaching expectations. Consequently, the coaches become overwhelmed with various tasks, and their stress level increases. In other words, these barriers may hinder a coach's self-efficacy as well as the development of an effective coaching program.

Overwhelming. Coaches shared that when the coaching role is unclear, it is difficult to complete tasks throughout the day. Because of this, they feel unsuccessful in the coaching role. Several coaches thought having additional duties makes it difficult for them to complete all required tasks each day. Hence, coaches become overwhelmed because they feel as if they are being pulled away from their work with teachers. This situation causes the coaches to feel uncertain about the priorities within their position. Questionnaire respondents 13 and 19 explained:

> The newest instructional coaching role continues to be vague and being developed. I understand it to support teachers in their use of best practices in teaching and learning. However, this broad definition is overwhelming to know where to best direct time and efforts. (Questionnaire 13)

> I think the lack of direction in my position makes it hard for me to get things that I need to complete done. Also, I'm very busy doing all sorts of other things that are not exactly part of my position. (Questionnaire 19)

Coaches noted that their additional tasks include: (a) district and building leadership meetings or trainings, (b) attending various teacher trainings, (c) creating and facilitating professional learning experiences for teachers, (d) facilitating grade level or PLC meetings, and (e) supporting teachers with technology. They believe these duties are essential to the

instructional coach's position, however some instructional coaches are also required to substitute teach, set up and monitor testing, and so on, which are not part of the instructional coaching role. Lisa explained additional duties often delegated to instructional coaches and how they can hinder the work coaches are able to do with teachers:

> It's [meetings, trainings, subbing, and other tasks] taking us away from our work with teachers in classrooms. Not because we can't say that to our principals, but because there isn't anybody else doing the work. So, it's a systematic thing and it has fallen under the umbrella of coaches. And so, who else would do it? Who else even knows how to do it? So, it's gonna take some redefining.

Although these additional responsibilities may not fit into the instructional coaching role, many coaches understand the rationale for performing these necessary tasks. However, coaches stated that this work often takes a substantial amount of time away from a coach's ability to work with teachers. They also believe there should be a balance. Lisa explained it is important for district and building level administrators to examine how coaching expectations and responsibilities impact a coach's ability to work with teachers:

> I was pulled out for necessary trainings but nevertheless, unavailable for teachers. Just a variety of things that equal 10 and a half days. So that's big when there's only 21 teaching days in January. [District and building administrators] must be mindful of the true work that is happening so solidifying again what that looks like for coaches. And then making sure that the left hand is talking to the right hand. That we know who is asking coaches to go to different training. Then asking how much have we asked of them [coaches] this month.

Stressful. The lack of vision, purpose, and role definition for an instructional coach is detrimental to a coach's self-efficacy. Without a clear purpose, coaches feel unsure about the importance of their work and overwhelmed with coaching and non-coaching tasks. Therefore, they begin to feel incompetent and stressed in their work. Due to these barriers, coaches explained they often experience stress and feel defeat, which negatively impacts their self-efficacy and ability to effectively support teachers. The coaches explained:

> Todd: I think I could do a better job of that if I had some direction of what I really am.
>
> Maddie: Every day [is stressful]. I think sometimes it's hard because you take it so personally because sometimes people's jobs are on the line. And how they feel about themselves is on the line.
>
> The other biggest stressor has been, that I am worried that I am not doing my job. I am doing [technology support]. I am doing grades, which I'm working with a program and not [teachers]. We've had … a lot of [district] pushes. Some of those I feel are my job. And some of those aren't my job. But regardless, they have to be part of my job because they affect teachers.
>
> Lisa: How do we wrap our brains around becoming experts in so many areas to where we feel like we're successful for teachers? You know, there's one of us and my brain doesn't work all the time. So, I don't know how to get around that … and I don't know that there's enough of me to go around.

Although coaches experience stress for a number of reasons, coaches disclosed they may place undue stress upon themselves. Coaches want to perform well and positively impact a teacher's ability to implement research-based instructional practices. They want to deepen a

teacher's depth of reflection. Coaches also want to build a teacher's self-efficacy, and ultimately, impact student achievement. Striving to effectively perform these crucial responsibilities is stressful. Lisa said, "Stresses do come with doing a great job." Therefore, coaching-specific training may be necessary for instructional coaches to receive additional support to curb unnecessary stress and overwhelming experiences in their role.

Coaching Training. An undefined or misaligned coaching role and additional tasks are not the only aspects that overwhelm coaches. For example, one's ability to fully understanding the role of an instructional coach, learning effective instructional coaching strategies, and being able to effectively implement coaching techniques can also be daunting. Several coaches explained that they often feel overwhelmed by the lack of appropriate coaching training before working with teachers. Clarà expressed that her first year of instructional coaching was one of the hardest:

> I think that first year when we're jumping into this role, it's so overwhelming. We hear some of the great things that others are doing, and it just overwhelms us more. Just overwhelms. It made me wonder, how do I even possibly do that? How do I even get into a classroom? Sometimes, it was just because I didn't understand how do things. It's just overwhelming.

Holly compared her first year of coaching to her first year of teaching. She described her first year of coaching saying, "This first year of coaching is so parallel to first-year teaching. It's uncanny. But instead of maybe looking like a fool at times in front of 25, it might be the whole staff at PD." She went on to say that she was thankful for the coaching training she was able to receive throughout her first year.

When the coaches became overwhelmed, they explained that they were often unsure about what type of support they even needed. Coaches repeatedly stated, "We do not know what we don't know." Lisa clarified:

> When we don't know, we don't even know what to ask for. So, I don't know, if it starts with more coaches or if it starts with less on our plates? I think that we're looked at as experts in so many areas. And we're not experts, really in much. We know a lot about a few things, and we know a little about a lot of things. We're learning right along with teachers.

Therefore, coaches believe new instructional coaches should have specific coaching training before working with teachers (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard #5, 2018). Coaches noted they may not need this training prior to obtaining a coaching position. However, the training should be completed, or at least in the process, before they begin coaching teachers. Throughout this research, coaches voiced that coaching training should include: (a) a clear definition of the coaching role, (b) learning instructional coaching strategies, and (c) tracking and illustration of the impact of coaching. Todd explained:

> We got hired in May. It would have been beneficial for us to go through this [training] in the summer, before we worked with teachers. Having this training in the summer would have let us think about these things before we worked with teachers.
>
> A lot of us have already had to do a little bit of professional development…and it would have been nice to know what I know now. We could have done a better job.

Todd believes if he would have received coaching training before working with teachers, he would have been more prepared and effective in his coaching role.

Coaches believe specific training for new coaches would equip them to better understand the coaching role, strategies for the coaching position in their school, and factors to consider when working with adult learners. Tonya also expressed the benefit of initial coaching training before working with teachers. She said, "I feel like, during our June and July we were really stumped… What are we going to do? What do we do? What do I do? I didn't know who I was as a coach."

Clara also believes it is important for new coaches to have specific coaching training before working with teachers. She stated that new coaches would benefit in a variety of ways by understanding the following: (a) the complexity of the coaching position, (b) the importance of building culture, (c) the development of trusting relationships, and (d) how to begin the coaching role. Clara conveyed the importance of coaching training:

> It would help if you even have that background with how to have those relationships. How adult learners learn. How to have a coaching conversation. Just even having an idea of what is your week look like. What are some things you can do to build a culture in your school? I mean, those things. Even though they're not the high impact coaching strategies. It is just about the basics of surviving.
>
> All those little pieces. And how they fit. And for coaches to understand some of that before they go in. Then, they might have some ideas of what to look for. Like, what's the culture look like here? What do I need to do to help turn that? How do I work with a principal? How do I work with specific teachers?

New instructional coaches, who attend coaching specific training before working with teachers, may feel more confident in their work. Coaches who do not receive this training often

struggle throughout the school year because they do not understand the foundation of the coaching role. Additionally, experienced coaches should receive on-going coaching specific training to continue learning about best coaching practices in an ever-changing field. The coaches who participated in this study believe that continued learning positively impacts their coaching efficacy. When questionnaire participants were asked about professional development, all of them expressed that effective professional development opportunities improve coaching practices. They also believe that coaches need effective professional development opportunities focused on coaching practices annually.

In addition, coaches stated the following about the need for specific coaching professional development opportunities:

> The more I can learn about helping teachers the better they are going to be able to help students. (Questionnaire 18)
>
> Professional development for coaches is definitely necessary. It is important for coaches to develop skills in supporting adult learners. By learning more about effective coaching practices and instructional strategies, I am better able to support the teachers in my school. (Questionnaire 10)
>
> It makes me feel more confident in my abilities as an instructional coach. With the limited training that I had prior to becoming a coach, it also helps me really know that the things I'm doing are positive and worthwhile and what other things I should be thinking about doing or trying. (Questionnaire 14)
>
> The job warps into so many different areas that without professional development, it would be difficult to be "the expert" or feel capable to coach anyone. Teachers need to

have trust that you can help them, or they will stop asking for advice, etc. (Questionnaire 28)

> We need PD because within the district, we are often the ones planning PD days/events/PLCs. If we are asking others to learn, we must also. In addition, we need to keep up with the latest strategies so we can present them to our teachers. Finally, sometimes instructional coaches carry a lot and we need a place to vent, especially since our work is confidential. (Questionnaire 15)

Numerous questionnaire participants voiced that without continuous professional development, coaches feel stagnant and unprepared to work with teachers. Professional development provides coaches the tools they need to build a coaching support network, learn current coaching practices, and feel confident in coaching their skills.

Feedback. Receiving continuous feedback is an effective way coaches can grow in self-efficacy. The majority of participants stated that they receive feedback from teachers, administrators, district coordinators, and other coaches. While the majority of the coaches generally receive positive feedback, it was noted the feedback is often general and not specific or actionable. Numerous coaches stated that although it feels good to have a pat on the back for doing a good job, it does not improve their coaching practices. Furthermore, 97.8% of questionnaire respondents expressed that receiving specific and actionable feedback on their instructional coaching practices improves their coaching skills. Therefore, coaches may build self-efficacy if they receive more specific and actionable feedback that directly impacts their coaching skills.

Lisa stated that she sought opportunities for specific feedback and was "hungry for feedback." However, the feedback she received was vague and did not impact her coaching practices:

> I have asked for feedback from both of my principals, and they say, "You're doing a great job. You're doing a great job." But again, that pat on the back is great, but I know that I could be better.

Although some coaches receive effective feedback from district or building administrators, many coaches explained it is often difficult for administrators to give effective coaching feedback due to the uniqueness of the coaching position or a misunderstanding the coaching role. Questionnaire participant 8 and 28 described their experiences with feedback:

> I receive limited feedback from other coaches, limited feedback from teachers, and limited feedback from administrators, in part because few individuals understand the nuances of the job, the required skills, or the context of the work. (Questionnaire 8)

> I don't get as much feedback as I would like. My staff fills out a questionnaire at the end of the year. My principal gives me minimal feedback throughout the year. I would appreciate much more! (Questionnaire 28)

Questionnaire results indicated 86.7% of the respondents stated they need more specific and actionable feedback on their coaching skills (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard #4, 2018).

Feedback from other instructional coaches may be presented differently, but nonetheless, this kind of feedback is crucial to a coach's development. Feedback from other coaches may not always be in the form of data or observations. Coach-to-coach feedback may include discussing

specific situations, assisting with processing information, or sharing additional resources with one another in order to improve coaching practices. According to questionnaire results, all respondent stated that they aim to collaborate with their colleagues regarding instructional practices. Maddie revealed the instructional coaching role can feel isolating at times. Hence, collaborating with others is critical to enhance instructional practices. She confided:

> I have grown, and I have learned that I don't work well in isolation. I need to talk to people. I need to collaborate. I'm not one who can formulate an idea in my head and carry it out. I need others around me.

Other coaches also felt collaboration is important. They noted that collaboration helps them feel part of a team, encourages coaches to see the same situation from different perspectives, and can even help coaches remove their emotion, or bias, from a specific situation to more clearly determine their next steps. Helen explained that coaches need a support system just like anyone else in the school system. Coaches also need to feel valued and supported in their work as Helen explained:

> They [coaches] need to feel valued. And I think coaches need to be able to get together and hash things out. Talk about it. Put great minds together to come up with some ways and different ways to do things is really powerful.

In addition, Clara discussed how she benefitted from the support of her collaborative coaching group about a specific situation she had encountered:

> It was important to be able to have the conversations with somebody else about this. I realized why the work that I was doing with that 2nd year teacher wasn't working and why I felt like she wasn't valuing it. But once I went through that, I went, "Uh, oh. I

know what I'm doing." Like, now I know what she's looking for. And I wasn't going there before. But now I could.

This situation was particularly powerful for Clara because it was relevant, timely, and actionable. This collaborative work provided Clara with the knowledge, ability, and confidence to take the next step to help this teacher move forward in her professional growth journey. Collaboration helps coaches feel like they are not alone, and it pushes their professional learning forward which builds coaching self-efficacy.

Discussion

Findings from this research indicated that efficacy is a critical component of successful instructional coaching. This research identified common complexities, or barriers, surrounding one's ability to build efficacy in the instructional coaching role. As participants discussed their perceptions and experiences of the instructional coaching role and efficacy, three common themes emerged. These themes illustrated that instructional coaches need the following supports to build self-efficacy: (a) a clear definition, understanding, and purpose of the coaching role; (b) opportunities for focused professional learning regarding coaching practices; and (c) specific and actionable feedback on their coaching practices. These findings are crucial not only for instructional coaches' knowledge, but also for educational leaders' ability to effectively support the development of individual coaches as well as implement a successful coaching program.

What is Coaching Efficacy?

Although there is not an official definition for coaching efficacy, the definition used for this research refers to instructional coaching self-efficacy as an instructional coach's belief in his or her capabilities to positively impact a teacher's professional growth. Throughout this work,

instructional coaches explained high self-efficacy is a critical component for an instructional coach to possess. Self-efficacy is needed to ensure coaches are able to overcome various obstacles and positively impact a teacher's professional growth.

This research further suggests high instructional coaching self-efficacy positively impacts teachers similar to how high teacher self-efficacy impacts student achievement. Coaches with high self-efficacy are likely to experience a number of accomplishments: (a) gain increased confidence in their abilities, (b) persist longer in difficult situations, (c) provide more focused coaching sessions, (d) incorporate more effective forms of feedback, (e) feel less emotionally exhausted, and (f) possess an increased sense of personal accomplishment. Therefore, coaches with high self-efficacy will have a greater impact on effective teacher practices and student achievement.

Educational Leaders Impact Coaching Efficacy

Educational leaders are able to support instructional coaches in building their self-efficacy. This research indicates that successful instructional coaches should have a clear definition, understanding, and purpose of the coaching role, various opportunities for focused professional learning regarding coaching practices, and receive specific and actionable feedback on their coaching practices.

Each of the themes discovered in this research are connected to specific standards from the New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standards (2018). The purpose of these standards is to "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learning" (p. 1). Throughout this study, the researcher did not reference these standards when interviewing instructional coaches. However,

coaches' perceptions and experiences continually connected to the foundational components of these instructional coaching program standards.

Coaching Roles, Alignment, and Expectations

Throughout this study, participants expressed that a lack of clarity, purpose, or system alignment can cause coaches to become overwhelmed and stressed. Due to a lack of clear vision during his first year of coaching, Todd confided that he was unsure of his purpose and became frustrated with his coaching position. In addition, he was concerned about the lack of focus in his position and how it may also negatively impact teachers. Numerous coaches mentioned misalignment, an undefined role, and unclear expectations when coaches were assigned additional tasks unrelated to the coaching role.

Holly discussed that misalignment of the coaching role often creates a "middle man" situation for the coach. Consequently, the coach can become the liaison among the district, administrators, and teachers for a variety of reasons including new curriculum, initiatives, or other new learning. Therefore, it is critical for the district, building administrators, and instructional coaches to ensure proper alignment and communication. Without clear expectations and alignment, inconsistencies in coaching roles may emerge, which may lead to the misalignment of coaching expectations. This, in turn, overwhelms coaches with various additional tasks and increases stress level.

Overcoming Barriers Regarding Coaching Roles, Alignment, and Expectations

Throughout this study, instructional coaches noted that the lack of understanding about coaching roles, expectations, and alignment in a school district can cause barriers for instructional coaches. As data was further analyzed, the researcher discovered that coaches

voiced four common barriers regarding the lack of understanding, expectations, and alignment of the coaching role. Each of these barriers align with the New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard 2: Program Leadership and Communication; Standard 3: Leader Engagement: Instructional Coach Roles and Responsibilities, Selections, Assignment, and Assessment (2018).

The four common barriers surrounding the lack of understanding, expectations, and alignment of the coaching role are listed below. Ideally, educational leaders should consider reflecting upon these questions as a means to evaluate their coaching programs for clarity in the coaching role, expectations, and alignment:

1. Are building administrators and instructional coaches meeting weekly to ensure they are working towards the same goal?
2. Are district administrators, building administrators, and instructional coaches meeting monthly to discuss goals, current status, and next steps?
3. Are upcoming trainings, meetings, or other duties assigned to the instructional coach evaluated to ensure teacher support needs are the priority of the coach?
4. What can be eliminated from the instructional coach's duties to ensure that the majority of time is spent on supporting teachers in their professional growth?

Specific Coaching Training

According to this study, almost all of the questionnaire participants consistently responded that effective professional development opportunities improve coaching practices, and coaches need effective professional development opportunities focused on coaching practices annually. Coaches believe it is crucial to have specific coaching training before working with

new teachers to ensure that coaches would benefit in a variety of ways by understanding the following: (a) the complexity of the coaching position, (b) the importance of building culture, (c) the development of trusting relationships, and (d) how to begin the coaching role. Without an initial coaching specific training, new coaches may struggle to fully understand the coaching role, learn effective instructional coaching strategies, and be able to effectively implement coaching techniques with teachers. Additionally, experienced coaches should receive on-going coaching specific training to continue learning about best coaching practices. Without continuous professional development, the participants stated that they become stagnant and ineffective when working with teachers.

Overcoming Barriers Regarding Specific Coaching Training. Throughout this study, instructional coaches noted that the lack of coaching specific training causes barriers for the coaching role. As the data was further analyzed, the researcher discovered that coaches voiced six common barriers surrounding the lack of specific coaching training.

These barriers expressed by the coaches align with the New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard 5: Instructional Coach Professional Learning Communities and Onboarding (2018). The following coach-inspired reflection questions can assist leaders in education to continually evaluate their coaching programs to ensure positive impact on coach self-efficacy, teacher instructional practices, and student learning:

1. Do your new coaches receive onboard training specifically on coaching practices?
2. How is coaching capacity being built within your coaching program?

3. Is there a knowledgeable coaching program leader (coach of coaches) that supports coaches while processing and reflecting on new learning, implementation of strategies, and the impact of their work?
4. Is there time set aside each week for district coaching collaboration?
5. Does your school district encourage instructional coaches to collaborate with other districts?
6. Does your school district offer specific coaching training for coaches within your district or provide additional learning opportunities through outside conferences, trainings, etc.?

Provide Specific and Actionable Feedback

According to this research study, instructional coaches receive feedback from administrators, teachers, and other coaches. Coaches indicated that they are "hungry for feedback" and seek out additional opportunities to receive feedback on their coaching skills. According to the questionnaire, 86.7% of the respondents stated that they need more specific and actionable feedback on their coaching skills. Although most coaches receive positive feedback, they noted it is often general and does not move their coaching practices forward.

Coaches also explained how the instructional coaching role can feel isolating at times. Therefore, collaborating with other coaches is critical for improving instructional practices. Numerous coaches explained that collaboration helps them feel part of a team, encourages coaches to see the same situation from different perspectives, and can even help coaches remove their emotion, or bias, from a specific situation to more clearly determine their next steps.

Feedback and collaboration require high levels of trust and confidentiality. Mraz, Algozzine, and Kissel (2009) believe coaches must be "collaborative confidants" (p. 22) in that they must build collaborative and trusting relationships with teachers which requires confidentiality. Mraz et al. explain that "when coaches talk about their teachers to other teaching colleagues or to the principal, they undermine [their] relationship" (p. 22).

For this reason, coaches must create a "firewall" between themselves and others. A firewall ensures that the coach will not share confidential information with others, and others will not share confidential information with the coach. For example, if an administrator asks a coach who they are working with, the coach may reply by sharing the teacher's name, task they are working on, and amount of time they have worked with a teacher, but the coach may not share any additional details about their work together. Although confidentiality and creating a firewall is a critical component of building trust with teachers, it makes collaboration and opportunities for feedback difficult for instructional coaches.

Overcoming Barriers Regarding Specific and Actionable Feedback. Throughout this study, instructional coaches conveyed a need for more specific and actionable feedback. As the data was further analyzed, the researcher identified five common barriers regarding the lack of feedback.

These five common barriers directly connect to the New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard 4: Instructional Coach Roles and Responsibilities, Selections, Assignment, and Assessment (2018). The following coach-inspired reflective questions focus on feedback that can assist educational leaders to evaluate their coaching program and ensure it has a positive impact on a coach's self-efficacy, teacher instructional practices, and student learning:

1. Who will offer feedback to instructional coaches?
2. How often will feedback be provided to instructional coaches?
3. How will feedback be provided?
4. Do those offering feedback fully understand the purpose of the coaching role?
5. Are “firewall” procedures in place?

Implications

Educational leaders and instructional coaches must create a unified support team for teachers. To do this, educational leaders must critically evaluate how they: (a) ensure that the coaching role and expectations are clearly aligned across the district, (b) promote coaching specific professional learning opportunities, and (c) provide specific and actionable feedback to instructional coaches. These themes are the foundation of developing a framework for a coaching program, cultivating a support system to promote coaching self-efficacy, and ensuring that instructional coaches are equipped to guide continuous improvement towards equitable outcomes for all within the learning community.

The New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standards (2018) offers guidance for developing or supporting an instructional coaching program of any size. These standards help program leaders work collaboratively to develop a program framework, outline essential program components, and delineate the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions their coaching staff must possess in order to “accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner” (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 1). This foundational framework also defines the coaching role for teachers, coaches, and educational leaders.

Article #1 References

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Article #2: We're in This Together: Educational Leaders, Instructional Coaches, and Resilience Abstract

This qualitative study explored the perceptions and experiences of PreK-12 instructional coaches' resilience and their ability to coach teachers. At the time of the study, the research participants worked in one Midwestern state. The study included interviews of eight full-time instructional coaches in addition to 42 instructional coaches who completed a questionnaire. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the interview data and the open response questions on the questionnaire. This research identified the importance and presence of resilience in order for coaches to be successful in the coaching role. This research suggests resilience is built through the following: (a) understanding, possessing, and practicing high emotional intelligence; (b) engaging in a collaborative learning culture; and (c) allowing themselves and others grace. Further, this work offers considerations for instructional leaders to support building resilience within their learning community.

Key words: instructional coaching, educational leaders, resilience, efficacy, collaboration, culture, emotional intelligence

Introduction

In a 2014 study, the American Institute of Stress discovered job pressure (co-worker tension, bosses, work overload, etc.) was the most significant cause of stress-related illness, both physical and emotional. Research shows that human service professionals (nurses, physicians, social workers, teachers, etc.) are predisposed to burnout, with teachers having the highest levels (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey, & Collins, 2018; Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014; Jennings et al., 2017). Additionally, statistics on teacher retention indicate that the first five years of the teaching profession is when new teachers are most vulnerable (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2018). However, embedding emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-efficacy into professional development for teachers may decrease teacher attrition rates that are associated with stress and burnout.

According to Carr, Holmes, and Flynn (2017), schools that provide effective mentoring and coaching programs are better able to reduce teacher turnover. However, mentoring or coaching must provide both instructional and emotional intelligence support. Aguilar (2018) suggests building emotional intelligence and resilience can take longer and may be more complex than building pedagogical knowledge and skills. However, both are critical components needed to decrease teacher attrition rates.

Currently, educational literature has focused on resilience and how it impacts teachers and students. Up until the time of this study, there has been a limited amount of research focused on how resilience impacts an instructional coach and his or her ability to effectively coach teachers. There is also little research on how instructional coaches build and sustain resilience. The purpose of this study is to understand PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and

experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers. Since effective instructional coaches can help teachers develop resilience, which may increase student achievement, it is critical to understand how instructional coaches build their coaching resilience and become effective coaches.

What is an Instructional Coach?

The term coach and the definition of the coaching role has not been universally defined and agreed upon. Killion and Harrison (2017) believe creating a single coaching definition is difficult due to the "wide range of approaches or orientations to coaching or to a coaching program" (p. 5). However, the coaching role is based on the premise that instructional coaches are not administrators, evaluators, or supervisors. Knight (2007) states that "instructional coaches are educators in a non-supervisory role who collaborate with teachers so they can choose, and implement, research-based interventions to help students learn more effectively" (p. 13). In other words, coaches work, support, and learn alongside teachers to help them reach their professional goals.

Current research primarily focuses on teachers, even though the premise of this work is focused on instructional coaches. Due to the similarities between instructional coaching and teaching, the researcher infers that instructional coaching data would be similar to teaching data. Therefore, the foundational research shared in the literature review must be inferred for all PreK-12 professional educator roles.

Literature Review

The term *resilience* has been defined in various ways. Initially, resilience was defined as specific qualities one individual possesses to overcome adverse situations. Later, researchers

discussed resiliency as a process, which transpires within an individual and environment. Most recently, researchers have focused on the *adaptive processes* that individuals undergo to develop resiliency (Yonezawa, Jones, & Robb Singer, 2011; Gu & Day, 2007; Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Wang, Tao, Bowers, Brown, & Zhang, 2018). This research study defined resilience as one's ability to bounce back, cope, or successfully recover strength and spirit from stress when faced with adversity (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Gu & Day, 2007; Wang et al., 2018).

Individuals acquire both personal and professional resilience. Since each individual encounters different experiences and perceives similar experiences differently due to unique perspectives, values, and previous experiences, individuals develop resilience in different areas, at varying paces, and in different amounts. Therefore, resilience is developed or diminished through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social constructs (Gu & Day, 2007; Newell, 2017; Wang et al., 2018; Clarà, 2017) which fluctuate over time (Gu, 2014).

Resilience and Education

Resilience is an important tool one can use to combat stress, which is particularly important for those in human service fields such as education. Even though resilience can provide a cushion for teachers from stresses associated with teaching, resilience is not an innate characteristic (Gu & Day, 2007; Bowles & Arnup, 2016). Researchers believe resilience is a combination of personality traits, developmental processes, and learned skills (Ebersohn, 2014; Newell, 2017; Bowles & Arnup, 2016). Hence, it is something that coaches must learn, build, and continue to cultivate.

Professional Resilience

Resilient teachers believe *professional resiliency* is a mixture of individual characteristics and environmental contexts and supports (Newell, 2017; Yonezawa et al., 2011). Some of the characteristics linked to resilient teachers have included insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, morality, persistence, determination, optimism, self-reflection, risk-taking, and self-efficacy (Yonezawa et al., 2011; Clarà, 2017). As previously stated, resilience is not an innate characteristic (Gu & Day, 2007; Bowles & Arnup, 2016); it is a combination of personality traits, developmental processes, and learned skills (Ebersohn, 2014; Newell, 2017) which must be learned and developed. Gu and Day (2007) believe resilience is an important component of teaching for three reasons: (a) teaching is a demanding and stressful career; (b) teachers are students' role models for learning resiliency practices; and (c) resilience is aligned with high teacher efficacy. Resilience is a crucial characteristic for teachers to possess for several reasons: (a) it better equips teachers to manage stress and uncertainty; (b) it improves teacher retention rates; (c) it manifests skills such as goal setting, building relationships, communication and conflict resolution skills, and finding support when needed; and (d) it builds a teacher's self and collective efficacy (Sciaraffa, Zeanah, & Zeanah, 2018; Van Marter Souers & Hall, 2019; Henderson, Washington, Hamit, & Ford, 2018; Silver & Stafford, 2017).

Teacher Stress and Burnout. The term burnout was first used in the 1970s by Herbert Freudenberger within the clinical setting (1974). Christina Maslach further developed the concept of burnout and created the most widely used questionnaire for assessing burnout (Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). Maslach and Jackson (1981) later identified three types of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and personal accomplishment. Maslach and Leiter (2017) believe burnout is not an individual deficit, but it is an organizational problem. In other words, an organization's social environment, which includes how people interact and carry out their work, can lead to the three types of burnout described by Maslach and Jackson (1981). *Emotional exhaustion* means teachers may feel frustrated, have a lack of interest in teaching, may be reluctant to try new strategies or approaches, and may even blame students or their educational system for the lack of student success (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010; Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Jennings et al., 2017). Additionally, educators experiencing *depersonalization* may be cynical and have a poor attitude towards students, colleagues, and even their school. This is often noticeable to others as these educators may not greet colleagues, may avoid sharing their classroom experiences with others, and may even avoid socializing with colleagues (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010; Bowles & Arnup, 2016). The third type of burnout Maslach and Jackson (1981) described is *personal accomplishment*. Teachers that experience personal accomplishment burnout may not set professional goals, may seem uninterested in learning new things, and may also have low self-confidence (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010; Bowles & Arnup, 2016).

Resilience supports teachers' ability to cope with exhaustion and fatigue from stress and burnout associated with teaching (Chang, 2009; Aguilar, 2018). Burnout is indicated by emotional exhaustion; cynicism; decreased efficacy; a poorly managed workload; and a lack of sense of community, fairness, and values (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010; Jennings et al., 2017; Maslach, 2003). Using resilience to deal with stressful work environments has become an expectation, and current literature suggests resilience should be pursued continuously by individuals in order to combat stress (Knight, 2019; Bowles & Arnup, 2016;

Aguilar, 2018). However, it is not a finite resource (Jennings et al., 2017; Friedman, 2000; Silver & Stafford, 2017).

Teacher Attrition. According to a University Council for Educational Administration report (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, & Barnes, 2018), about 16% of teachers leave their schools each year. Castro, Quinn, Fuller, and Barnes (2018) explained that half of these teachers leave the teaching profession completely and the other half move to different schools. Additionally, the University Council for Educational Administration report (2018) illustrated that 90% of the demand for teachers is attributed to teachers leaving the profession. Statistics on teacher retention indicate that the first five years of the teaching profession is when new teachers are most vulnerable (Ingersoll et al., 2018). In fact, researchers estimated between 40-50% of beginning teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of their career (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Consequently, high levels of attrition may be a symptom of an underlying organizational dysfunction and may lead to increased system costs or other negative consequences (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Aguilar, 2018; Jennings et al., 2017). Some of these negative consequences could include a school's sense of community, the amount of school district resources that must be used towards hiring, and negative impact on student achievement (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Aguilar, 2018; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018).

Gu & Day (2007) suggests the need to distinguish between two forms of attrition in the teaching profession: a teacher's physical continuation in the role and a teacher's perseverance of motivation and commitment as key indicators of quality teaching. In other words, even teachers who continue to stay in a teaching position may become less motivated and committed to their

career and students, which leads to decreased student achievement. Researchers indicate that various factors need to be dissected in teacher attrition data to fully understand why teachers choose to leave the teaching profession or a particular school (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Clarà, 2017; Harmsen et al., 2018). However, embedding goals like teachers' emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-efficacy into professional development may decrease teacher attrition rates that are associated with stress.

Aguilar (2018) believes that building emotional intelligence and resilience can take longer and may be more complex than building pedagogical knowledge and skills, although both are critical components needed to decrease teacher attrition rates. Not only is emotional intelligence important to consider in the hiring process, but it also must be incorporated into various support systems throughout our schools. Schools that provide effective mentoring and coaching programs are better able to reduce teacher turnover, which has a positive effect on school system costs and student achievement (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017; Castro et al., 2018).

New Teachers, Coaches, and Mentors. Many new teachers have mentors or coaches that provide induction programs to support them once they become teachers of record. Researchers believe coaches can support new teachers to develop both skills and dispositions to continuously improve learning within a school (Gardiner, 2012; Wang et al., 2018; Knight, 2019). However, researchers further suggest new teacher induction often focuses on technical skills like offering advice, explaining policies, completing administrative tasks, and how to "fit in" as well as emotional support like encouragement and listening. For new teachers to develop skills and habits that lead to effective teaching, there must also be continuous professional learning and growth (Gardiner, 2012; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Knight, 2019; Wang el al.,

2018). Both technical and emotional support are important to help new teachers adjust to the demands of becoming a teacher; however, these two supports alone will not lead to effective teaching. Resilience, efficacy, emotional intelligence, and self-care are important for early career teachers to develop through the support of a mentor, coach, or learning community (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016; Killion & Harrison, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). Over time, teachers who receive the technical and emotional support they need will be able to build resiliency, increase their self-efficacy, and experience less stress. It is important for instructional coaches to receive these additional supports as well.

Instructional Coaching Standards

In 2018, the New Teacher Center published Instructional Coaching Practice Standards and Instructional Coaching Program Standards. The purpose of these standards is to "accelerate the development of teacher effectiveness, improve teacher retention, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (p. 1). These guiding documents can support the development of instructional coaching programs, define the coaching role, and increase the overall effectiveness of instructional coaches. The New Teacher Center (2018) incorporates a framework of foundational, structural, and instructional standards into both standards documents.

Instructional Coaching Practice Standards

The New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Practice Standards were developed to provide clarity for instructional coaches regarding their role. They were developed with reflective questions for coaches to guide their next steps in becoming effective coaches. The foundational layers of these practice standards are as follows:

1) foundational standards focus on developing the critical knowledge, skills, and professional goals necessary for effective coaching;

2) structural standards focus on partnerships that characterize and support quality coaching; and

3) instructional standards are a strategic focus on optimal and equitable classroom practice and student learning.

The New Teacher Center (2018) created six Instructional Coaching Practice Standards. These standards outline critical components of the coaching role such as:

- Challenge oneself to take risks in coach professional learning contexts (in-field coaching)
- Use data (personal and colleagues) to engage in thoughtful dialogue and reflection to solve coaching-related problems
- Provide professional learning environments that are emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe
- Create a connection between academic and social emotional learning
- Recognize and promote curriculum that is culturally responsive and inclusive
- Cultivate relational trust, caring, mutual respect, and honesty with individuals and groups
- Foster teacher agency, resilience, and commitment to success of every student
- Facilitate strength based, reflective conversations
- Foster equity-focused conversations that are characterized by respectful listening, perspective-taking, and honesty

These components not only help define the coaching role, but they also illustrate the knowledge, skills, and social-emotional intelligence qualities possessed by effective coaches.

Instructional Coaching Program Standards

Similar to the Instructional Coaching Practice standards, the New Teacher Center (2018) also provides Instructional Coaching Program Standards. The Instructional Coaching Program Standards were created to help school leaders develop and grow effective instructional coaches as well as whole instructional coaching programs. Although the program standards sound similar to the practice standards, these overarching program standards are defined as:

1) foundational standards focus on developing a strong coaching program design, implementation, administration, and growth;

2) structural standards outline essential program components; and

3) instructional standards examine the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions required for coaches to support teacher development.

These standards identify critical components needed to develop a clear, rigorous, and effective coaching program. In all, the Teacher Center (2018) created eight Instructional Coaching Program Standards. However, this research study focuses on the following program standards:

Standard 7: Instructional Coaching for Optimal Learning Environments

- Provide coaches with current, researched-based resources, knowledge, and skills to support teachers in creating optimal learning environments characterized by positive, trusting relationships, supported risk-taking, productive struggle with rigorous content, healthy expression of emotions, and routines and procedures that support safe and engaged interactions
- Discover resilience and a growth mindset within oneself
- Understand, expect, and welcome learner variability

        - Develop formative and summative assessments that deepen the learning community's understanding of students' academic, social, and emotional skills and needs

- Standard 8: Instructional Coaching for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
    - Advocate and maintain equitable and inclusive learning environments
    - Professional learning to develop knowledge, mindsets, and skills needed to recognize and address bias within the school community
    - Develop and support learner agency, persistence, and resilience
    - Incorporate culturally responsive practices
    - Support and model resilience
    - Build capacity of instructional coaches

These components describe a framework for an effective coaching program. They also illustrate the knowledge, skills, and social-emotional qualities coaching leaders must possess in order to ensure that an effective coaching program is developed and continues to grow.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's perceived capabilities to positively impact student achievement. Research has shown that burnout causes low self-efficacy for teachers. Researchers found that teachers who have more experience and high self-efficacy reported lower levels of burnout, and teachers who have low teacher self-efficacy tend to experience higher levels of burnout (Zee & Koomen, 2016; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). Burnout affects teachers in a variety of ways both physically and emotionally. For example, someone experiencing burnout may become physically ill, have increased feelings of hopelessness, irritability, impatience, and even develop poor interpersonal relationships with family, coworkers, and students. Researchers believe burnout is not just about stress. It could also include feelings of loneliness and isolation (Larson, Cook, Fiat, & Lyon, 2018; Aguilar, 2018). Therefore, it is critical for coaches to understand the stages of teacher burnout and be able to

identify warning signs in order to intervene and support a teacher's efficacy and emotional resilience.

Self-efficacy, resilience, and burnout are critical factors for coaches to consider while coaching teachers. Helpful coping resources can build teacher self-efficacy and resilience which decreases teacher burnout (Carr et al., 2017; Zee & Koomen, 2016; Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). It is also important to note that teachers with high self-efficacy do not necessarily have more coping skills or resources, but they experience less stress since they are able to implement effective teaching strategies as well as appropriately respond to unexpected situations and diverse student needs (Larson et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Hence, building resiliency may be a factor in reducing teacher stress by increasing self-efficacy.

Instructional Coaching Effects On Teacher Self-Efficacy, Burnout, and Attrition

Coaching self-efficacy is an instructional coach's perceived capability to positively impact a teacher's performance. According to Zee and Koomen (2016), effective instructional support is often reported as a degree in which a teacher increases students' "meta-cognitive skills, applies their thinking to real-world situations, scaffolds learning for struggling students, and expands on their understanding" (p. 986). However, researchers also believe effective instructional support includes teaching practices such as providing clear directions, rules, and expectations, focusing students' attention toward learning objectives as well as maintaining an effective classroom environment with few behavioral disruptions (Sprick, 2013; Knight, 2013). Although these are critical factors of teacher support, effective instructional support also includes supporting teachers' emotional needs. Therefore, it is important to support teachers and

instructional coaches in research-based instructional practices as well as promoting emotional intelligence and resilience.

Coaching for Resilience

Coaches use supported risk-taking and reflection strategies when working with teachers to reach their professional goals. This continuation of the coaching cycle helps teachers realize that new learning may take time, and they may encounter some productive struggle along the way. Since one's ability to make change requires risk-taking, high self-efficacy, and resilience, a coach is a critical component in supporting teacher learning and positive school change.

Researchers across various fields have discovered that by "focusing on strengths, talents, competencies, and things we're doing right we are far more likely to make long-lasting change" (Aguilar, 2016, p. 196). In other words, assets-based or strength-based coaching focuses on one's strengths, determining what is already working, noting effective practices already implemented, and highlighting any undiscovered skills a teacher possesses. Assets-based coaching develops a foundation of strengths, which assists teachers in developing their vision for their individual growth (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Assets-based coaching does not ignore deficits; it builds upon strengths, helping teachers cultivate a growth mindset and the momentum to take their next steps in learning. When working with teachers and focusing on strengths, teachers begin to increase their knowledge, instructional practices, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Although Lev Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development is often used when teaching children, this concept is also important to consider when considering adult learners. For example, when coaches are working with teachers, it is critical that coaches work within the teachers' zones of proximal development. Coaches must guide teachers through practice, and

they should provide necessary scaffolding or supported risk-taking to ensure success (Knight, 2019; Aguilar, 2013). As a coach works with a teacher, they must continually evaluate if a task is too easy or too hard and then adjust the approach as needed to ensure the teacher is supported, gains confidence, and is able to move towards independence. This collaborative effort builds both teacher and coach self-efficacy and resilience.

Throughout the collaborative process with teachers, coaches must remember adult learning research indicates that learners have had various experiences in multiple learning situations, some positive and some negative. In other words, some teachers may be resistant to change because they have had a negative experience and may not be open to new learning (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Aguilar, 2013). Therefore, it is critical that coaches create emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe learning environments (New Teacher Center Practice Standards, 2018).

Instructional coaches need to obtain sufficient knowledge about research-based instructional practices. They also should have an exhaustive understanding of emotional intelligence about individuals and teams. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) believe that emotional intelligence has four components: (a) self-awareness which is the ability to recognize and name your own feelings; (b) self-management which is the ability to make conscious decisions about how to respond to emotions; (c) social awareness which is the ability to recognize and understand feelings that others experience; and (d) relationship management which is the ability to manage conflicts with others. Barreiro and Treglown (2020) further explain the importance of emotional intelligence by stating that it is the strongest predictor of successful job performance. Emotional intelligence then becomes the foundation of building

trusting relationships, flexibility, collaboration, regulating stress, dealing with unexpected change, engaging in critical conversations, and creating positive change within a school.

Developing Instructional Coaches

Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018) explained that coaching programs vary even when schools are in the same district. Therefore, it is critical that instructional coaches have continued training as well as sufficient time for collaboration with other coaches. Research has also suggested that this may be difficult, since there may only be one or two coaches per building. Therefore, the opportunity for collaboration and peer feedback is limited, and coaches may even feel like they are on an island (2017). Aguilar (2016) reiterated the importance of collaboration. Aguilar explained, "We can't do it alone. No individual alone can transform our schools into places where all children get what they need every day" (p. 7). Therefore, providing continuous professional learning and collaboration opportunities for instructional coaches is a necessity for an effective coaching program that include both instructional and emotional support.

At the time of this study, there was a limited amount of research focused on how resilience impacts an instructional coach's self-efficacy and their ability to effectively coach teachers, and how instructional coaches are able to build and sustain resilience. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand PreK-12 instructional coaches' perceptions and experiences of resilience and their ability to effectively coach teachers.

Methodology

Study Design

Semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were utilized to collect data from instructional coaches. A phenomenological methodology was used to gather and analyze data

about participant experiences and perspectives as opposed to hypothesizing a reason for a specific experience or perspective of a phenomena (Groenewald, 2004). This methodology was used to ensure the researcher had an open attitude and was able to resist judgement about phenomena (Finlay, 2009) instructional coaches experience. Utilizing interpretative phenomenology allowed the researcher to look for meanings in participants' stories that were not always obvious to participants.

Participants

This is a qualitative study that involved instructional coaches from one Midwestern state. Participants included eight instructional coaches: two high school instructional coaches (one male and one female), two middle school instructional coaches (both female), three elementary instructional coaches (all female), and one preschool instructional coach (female). Additionally, 45 instructional coaches completed the questionnaire. Participants in this sampling represent a broader population of rural and urban PreK-12 instructional coaches within this one Midwestern state. Table 4 shows detailed information about five of the eight study participants who were interviewed.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Data collection for questionnaires included questionnaire response questions on a six-point Likert scale as well as some additional open-ended, follow up questions. However, only the additional open-ended, follow up questions were analyzed for this research. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gain additional information. Seidman (2006) explains in-depth interviews require three separate interviews with each participant.

Table 4. Interviewee Information – Article #2.

Interviewees				
Name	Highest Education Degree	How many students does your school district have?	Coaching Experience (Years)	Teaching Experience (Years)
Holly	Master's	11,000+	1	13
Tonya	Master's	3,000-4,999	1	12
Clarà	Master's	11,000+	13	4, Interventionist
Lisa	Master's	7,000-8,999	2	7
Maddie	Master's	11,000+	5	15

Seidman explains that the purpose of a phenomenological interview is to understand participants' lived experiences. Therefore, the first interview focused on educational career up to the present time, the second interview focused on specific and detailed coaching experiences, and the third interview focused on reflection and meaning of the coaching role.

Questionnaires were completed online through UND Qualtrics or on paper and then collected and analyzed by the researcher. Interviews were transcribed by a transcriptionist and then analyzed by the researcher. After preliminary notes were recorded from the first reading of a transcript, the researcher used open coding, in vivo coding, and process coding to further understand the data.

Open coding is not one particular type of coding method. It is a first cycle approach that can be used with in vivo and process coding. The researcher began by breaking down each significant statement into codes. Since the initial significant statements were long, sometimes more than one code was found in a single statement. When this occurred, the researcher copied

the significant statement and made the second code a new entry. The researcher did this to ensure that she was focusing on coaches' experiences and perceptions while carefully breaking down the statements to fully understand this phenomenon.

In vivo coding is useful for a phenomenological study as it assists researchers to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). As the researcher utilized an in vivo coding process, she continued to note "impacting nouns, actions-orientated verbs, evocative vocabulary, clever or ironic phrases, similes and metaphors, etc." (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107). Data analysis included a detailed codebook, an audit trail documenting analysis, interpretations, conclusions, member checks, and peer debriefs.

Findings

Instructional coaches believe they need to be knowledgeable in more than just research-based instructional practices. They also believe they should possess a thorough understanding of emotional intelligence as well as practical skills to apply that knowledge while supporting individuals and teacher teams. Throughout this research, coaches expressed that high emotional intelligence increase a coach's ability to build positive relationships, resiliency, and coaching efficacy. Therefore, this study revealed common themes coaches identified for building resilience: (a) emotional intelligence, (b) culture and collaboration, and (c) allowing grace. Finally, instructional coaches illuminated the importance of building resilience within the instructional coaching role.

Resilience

Coaches believe resilience is an important component of the coaching role. Although there were many commonalities in the coaches' definitions of resilience, unique perceptions of the term surfaced. Holly shared her definition of resilience:

> Resiliency is when you try something, and when it doesn't go the way you expected or planned, you have the courage to try again.
>
> Maybe you decide to change something very minute or maybe you just try it again exactly the same, just to see if it works this time. It's like, you're just ok with learning from your mishaps. And you have that ambition to keep pushing forward.

Here, Holly explains that resilience looks different in different situations. Sometimes resilience may look like trying again, making changes, or thinking about something in a different way. Regardless, it is one's ability to keep pushing forward during an adverse situation or experience.

Lisa agreed that resilience is important for the coaching role. She explained resilience in the following way:

> Resilience means leaning into the sharp points when they come. And we do what it takes to feel good about the job that we're doing. I don't know that it necessarily means getting the job done per say but doing the best that we know how to do as we keep moving forward.
>
> Resiliency is not giving up on those tough questions. Or not accepting the status quo whether it's district trickle down or if it's being brought from the bottom up. We're just constantly researching to continuously improve our system.

Further, Lisa agreed that resilience involves forward movement. She also described resilience as "leaning into the sharp points." This means that resilient coaches have the ability to embrace challenges, engage in critical conversations, recognize and address bias, and expose their vulnerabilities as they work beside and learn with teachers.

Maddie also believes resilience is the ability to keep pushing forward. However, she also revealed resilience does not happen in isolation. Maddie connected her perception and experiences with resilience:

> Resilience is the ability to get back up when we don't succeed. It is probably one of the most important things in this job.
>
> The idea of resilience is embedded in our education system. After a hard day, after things with students are difficult, teachers have to be able to pause, take a breath, let it go and not take that stress home with them. And so do coaches. Coaches have hard days too. I would say I need to use resilience each day, sometimes hourly with this job. Just because there's so many things that can affect you.
>
> To be resilient, we have to figure out what our part in the problem or challenge is. Fix it if we can. If we cannot fix it, we have to determine the next steps to take. We need to be able to come back to work the next day and move forward with those next steps or whatever it is. And we need to be able to do it with an open mind. We cannot be judgmental. It is also important to know that we cannot always take a next step without support, so it is important to involve others who can support us. We all have to have support to go through the process and learn. We all need support to build resilience.

Although each individual learns skills to build resilience, Maddie clarified that building resilience cannot be accomplished in isolation. Everyone needs support to grow professionally. This is a reminder that resilience is not an innate skill; it has to be learned and cultivated.

Coaches repeatedly voiced resilience as an important part of the coaching role. They believe resilience involves persistence, flexibility, and vulnerability when working with others and is developed through supported risk-taking (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard #7, 2018). Tonya revealed her understanding of resilience and why it is important for the coaching role:

> Resilience is not giving up when things get hard. This job is definitely not easy. There are many reasons it is hard. Like, people's resistance to change and the lack of clarity for my role.
>
> Although my role is becoming much clearer, the resilience piece is just working through barriers and identifying why people are resistant to change. Getting to the bottom of the problem. I think that's resilience.

Tonya reiterated the theme of resilience as one's ability to persevere in an adverse situation. In addition, Tonya echoed that resilience begins with identifying a problem and moving forward from there. Lisa agreed about the importance of coaches possessing and continuing to build resilience throughout their coaching role. However, she also believes that instructional coaches must continually model and cultivate resiliency for their teachers and staff. Lisa shared:

> I think we have to model resiliency because we're coaching that in teachers. If we are unable to be resilient, which does happen sometimes because we're human, we lose

credibility with those that we're coaching. We lose credibility because we begin coaching when we are unregulated.

As an educational leader, Lisa believes coaches must model productive struggle, resilience, emotional intelligence, and regulation for teachers, just as teachers must model resilience to students. Not only does this increase a coach's ability to build trust with an individual teacher or group, but it can also have an impact on building a resilient school culture.

Emotional Intelligence

The coaches agreed that emotional intelligence is a factor in building resilience. Emotional intelligence is one's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions, even when experiencing failure. Holly connected the importance of experiencing failures and understanding emotions:

> I have learned more from my failures than my successes this first year...Not all of my fails have been catastrophic. Like none of them have been catastrophic. But you do have to admit them.

Here, Holly explains how productive struggle has helped her grow as a coach this year. Holly first stated that not all of her failures were catastrophic. Then, she clarified that none of her failures were catastrophic. This is an example of regulating emotions which is one's ability to step back, assess the situation, and put an experience in perspective. Lisa agreed that regulating emotions is an important part of building resilience. She stated:

> Being in control of how we react to situations. Not letting the situations control us. It's all that, that's part of resilience.

Lisa voiced that regulation, controlling how we choose to react to an experience or emotion, is a critical component of resilience. Coaches must strive to build safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments for the entire learning community (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standard #8, 2018).

Throughout the interviews, coaches continued to identify ways they used emotional intelligence to build resilience. Clara and Holly confided how they used these skills to collaborate with their teachers:

> Clara: When there is a teacher I am struggling to work with, I try to build a commonality between us…but it's hard. Sometimes, I think it's hard to build a relationship because I really think I can't do it because a teacher has a hard personality...I can't coach her. That's when I realized that I needed to figure out how to talk with that teacher and get to know her…It wasn't until I discussed this with my coaching team that I realized I was not giving this teacher what she needed. That's why I was not able to create the relationship I wanted with her. After talking this out with my team, I was able to go back and give that teacher what she needed. That teacher and I now have a relationship and are able to work together.
>
> Holly: I would say at the start of the year, I was really hesitant to start coaching cycles because I didn't quite feel like I knew my full role yet. As the year went on, I reached out to certain teachers and would kind of promote or sell the coaching cycle.
> Sometimes people blatantly say, no, I don't want to work with you. And that's hard for me to hear personally. Because I take that personally even though it has nothing to do with me…But then I have to think, nope. Maybe they've just got a lot of things going on.

> Then, I come back to the resiliency and think, "Ok, well, they said no maybe for this time. I could try again in a couple of months and maybe they'll say yes."

Both Clara and Holly's scenarios included the common theme of resilience as the ability to continue to move forward while experiencing a productive struggle. However, both of these scenarios also revealed that vulnerability is needed to build resilience and trust. Finally, each scenario alluded to the need for instructional coaches to have high emotional intelligence. Clarà explained how she needed to make a mind shift. Through reflection, Clarà discovered some possible distorted thinking she had about a teacher or situation, and then she reflected on how that teacher may be perceiving the situation due to her core beliefs. Holly described her process as an uncomfortable experience. She revealed she may have realized she was experiencing some distorted thinking and then tried to combat those thoughts by incorporating affirmation statements to help her experience this situation in a more resilient way. Both of these coaches encountered productive struggle that developed their resilience.

Collaboration

Throughout this study, coaches reiterated the need for teamwork, collaboration, and support in order to build resilience. Tonya, Lisa, and Holly expressed how collaboration has helped them cultivate their resilience:

> I've worked really closely with my other coaches. So that's been very helpful. And I just keep showing up, being there for teachers, and trying new avenues for approaching different situations.

Here, Tonya illustrates the importance of her coaching team to help her through the process of building her coaching resilience. She shared how her team works closely together to find a solution. Lisa also stated a support system is important for her to build resilience:

> I think first of all my resilience has been built upon the relationships that I have with my colleagues, my administrators, fellow coaches, and teachers. They know that they can come to me if there's something going on. Perhaps we can problem solve together.

Lisa suggests that the support she receives from her administrators and colleagues help her to build resilience in her coaching role. She explains that collaborative relationships foster resilience when individuals are vulnerable enough to share a concern, and others are willing to support them through the problem-solving process.

Holly believes that supported risk-taking helps coaches build a growth mindset and resilience (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Standard #7, 2018). She explained:

> To build resilience, in part, you need intrinsic motivation because you have to personally want to progress and try again. But externally, you have to have people around you who are encouraging you to try again. And I'm not a person who enjoys being shoved forward, but sometimes I do need a gentle nudge. Like, hey, that didn't work but try it again. So, I would say a support system is a big part of building resilience.

Holly believes although resilience may have a connection to motivation, building resilience also relies on others for gentle nudging, encouragement, and support. Holly clearly voiced the importance of having supported risk-taking while going through a difficult situation or experience. It is also important to note that Holly alluded to the importance of learner agency and persistence as components of building resilience.

Culture

Throughout this study, coaches referenced the need for collaboration and how collaboration can build a resilient school culture. However, it was noted that school culture has the capacity to build or diminish one's resilience. Lisa explained:

> If your school culture can be resilient, then often times individuals can pull from that culture of resilience and grow too.

Lisa revealed that we learn from being around others who are resilient. She conveys that resilience may even be contagious with other staff members.

Maddie believes that creating a culture of learning and resilience in a school can be a difficult task. Many parallels to developing a classroom culture exist. However, working with adults is very different than working with students. Maddie identified a situation that impacted her coaching resilience:

> Building resilience with teachers, or an entire school staff, is kind of the same thing you did to build culture in the classroom. But this classroom is a little bit different since we are working with adults and it has a different feel to it.
>
> If you make mistakes with kids, they're highly forgiving. Adults aren't. So, learning to fail forward with adults is really hard, especially if the culture's not there. I think sometimes in this job, the adults feel you're supposed to have all the answers…I know I don't…But sometimes, it feels as if there's some judgement because I don't have all the answers. I don't know if it's real or not. And I'm always afraid to misstep.

Maddie connects the importance of creating a safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for staff, just as a teacher would create for her students (New Teacher Center

Instructional Coaching Program Standard #8, 2018). However, Maddie revealed that building a school culture can be difficult, and culture can build or hinder a staff's resilience. Maddie explained that she works to build a safe and resilient culture in her school. She stated that she is cautious when working with teachers due to the current school culture. Consequently, it has taken Maddie longer to build resilience in her coaching role.

Holly also compared her effort of building school culture to that of building classroom culture:

> Building a school culture is just like working with students. You know which ones not to poke. And which ones you can go and try something out with. So, it is important to know your staff.
>
> I'm a fairly positive person. And people notice that, and they say it's nice to work with someone positive. But I hope I'm also realistic.
>
> I've also gotten comments, like, you do seem a little too positive sometimes. Which I can understand and do see where they're coming from. Not everything is unicorns and sunshine.
>
> So, after meeting with people a few times, you know the ones that you need to be more real and to the point with. And then the ones that you can be more conversational, and you'll get there eventually with. It all depends on knowing who your client is.

Holly conveyed the importance of instructional coaches getting to know their staff. Coaches must know how and when to connect with and respond to specific teachers, just like a teacher interacts in a unique way with each student. Holly's perceptions connect to Maddie's previous statement. Culture is built through knowing your staff, creating unique situations in

order to connect with learners, and slowly building trust. In other words, coaches must create safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments.

Allowing Grace

Multiple coaches expressed the importance of allowing grace for themselves and others. As coaches shared their experiences, they expressed that the term grace means to be forgiving to oneself and others. They further communicated that grace is an important factor in building resilience in oneself as well as a culture of resilience. When asked how she builds a resilient culture with staff, Lisa responded:

> The hardest teachers to coach for resilience are the teachers that believe they're an island. That they can do what they want to do. Maybe because they've always done it, or maybe because they've always done it a certain way. Regardless, they feel they know best and they've got this on their own.
>
> But I think about team. We're a member of a team and these are all of our kids. So, the instruction in each classroom has an immense ripple effect on other learners and other teachers. So, maybe helping them understand that bigger picture will help those teachers.
>
> I think it's also important to know that learning is messy, and we muck around, just like we expect students to do. So, we should allow ourselves to do that too. We need to allow ourselves that grace. I don't know if you can see that window behind me. Those things hanging down. Those are little letters and it spells out grace. So, it's a constant reminder that we need to do this work with grace.

Lisa echoed the need for teamwork, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. Here, she describes that developing a sense of team among the staff will build a resilient school culture. One must create urgency for an atmosphere of teamwork when it comes to the common good of students collectively. To do this, coaches strive to support teachers by providing research, fostering a growth mindset through supported-risk-taking, as well as welcoming and expecting learner variability (New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Standard #7, 2018). Nevertheless, this is a difficult task and instructional coaches must allow themselves grace as they strive to build a resilient school culture of learning.

Lisa discussed that it is important for coaches to allow themselves grace, knowing that they will not be perfect but will try their best. As coaches revealed their stories, many referenced allowing grace, even if they did not specifically use that term. Holly provided a scenario to show how coaches build resilience through allowing themselves grace:

> I use resiliency when modeling or co-teaching a lesson. One particular experience I can think of is when I was working with a teacher to implement a strategy called "Numbered Heads Together." And which I still don't quite conceptually understand.
>
> But I was asked by a teacher to try it. So, we worked together, I came to her classroom, and we did the lesson. But it wasn't the greatest.
>
> So, I said, "Hey, could I try it again with another class this afternoon?" And we did it with a different class and of course different students, different dynamic, and it worked a little better.
>
> Afterwards, the teacher that I was coteaching with was like, "Hey, that happens to me all the time."

I said, “I know, it happens to me too!” Now, I think we are going to work together on another topic.

It is important for teachers to see that we all have mishaps, but it is especially powerful for new teachers to see. It helps them know that I don’t have this job because I am an expert at these things. I’m just human. It happens. We do our best and then we reflect and try again.

Holly’s scenario depicts the importance of honesty, trust, and vulnerability. When questioned by the researcher, Holly showed her vulnerability when she stated that she did not fully understand the teaching strategy and was honest with the teacher about lessons that do not go well. By being honest and vulnerable with this teacher, Holly built trust in their relationship. She also modeled resilience by allowing herself to experience and share her own productive struggle while revealing her growth mindset at the same time. Holly engaged in this powerful experience because she allowed herself grace.

Building Resilient Coaches

Since resilience has emerged as an important component of the instructional coaching role, coaches were asked how they build resilience. Holly believes her previous teaching experience has helped her build resilience for her coaching role. She explained:

I have been teaching or in education for 13 years. I have had some really big spills and really big wins. Experience in general has helped me build resilience.

Holly revealed that the successes and failures throughout her teaching career have helped her become resilient. She infers that productive struggle, reflection, and the development of a growth mindset are the foundation of building resilience:

> I am a fairly positive person. But when something does not go well, I might dwell on it for a little bit. Then, it's like, ok, I'm still alive. I'm still here. Even if someone is angry, no one truly hates me. So, I would say it's just kind of personality mixed with experience that has helped me build resilience. And sometimes the environment in which you work impacts your ability to build resilience too.

Although experience with productive struggle is important, Holly believes a positive outlook and growth mindset are important factors that develop resilience. It is important to note that both a positive outlook and growth mindset connect to acquiring high levels of emotional intelligence.

Coaches further discussed that professional development is needed for building coaching resilience. Maddie shared:

> Professional development helps me develop resiliency. Like, doing the *Onward* book and book study with my coaching team. But it doesn't have to be a book study, it could be anything. The important part is talking together about how to apply the information in our coaching practices. I also think going to conferences or hearing others speak would be beneficial. We just need to keep getting tools in our basket.

Maddie states that continuous learning is important for building resilience since it helps a coach learn new strategies and perspectives. Continuous learning also helps a coach feel more prepared to support teachers. However, Maddie reiterates that the impactful part of professional learning is the collaborative dialogue, productive struggle, and supported risk-taking with others. Lisa agreed that resilience is built through working with others. She stated:

In-field coaching and receiving feedback helps me improve and that helps me build resilience.

Here, Lisa explains that the professional learning strategy of in-field coaching is particularly powerful. The process of in-field coaching explores supported risk-taking, productive struggle, collaborative discussion, and coaching specific feedback. According to Lisa, all of these aspects of in-field coaching build her coaching resilience.

Coaches offered a variety of ways that they continue to build resilience in their coaching role. The prominent themes that emerged from the interviews are as follows: (a) coaches need time for collaboration, (b) coaches need more specific feedback, and (c) coaches need more professional development opportunities in order to increase their resilience and self-efficacy.

Discussion

Findings from this study indicated that resilience is an important component of successful instructional coaches. In addition, this study revealed common themes coaches identified for building resilience: (a) emotional intelligence, (b) culture and collaboration, and (c) allowing grace. These findings are important not only for instructional coaches' knowledge. Educational leaders can also benefit from information on best practices for supporting the development of individual coaches, implementing an effective coaching program, and building a school wide culture of collaborative learning and resilience.

Each of the themes discovered in this research study are connected to specific standards from the New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Program Standards, even though the researcher did not use these standards with participants. The purpose of these standards is to

"accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (p. 1).

Coaching Resilience

Resilience is a crucial component for instructional coaches to possess and continue to build throughout a coaching career. Coaches defined resilience in a variety of ways, but in essence, they believe that resilience is the ability to embrace challenge, persevere through adversity, and continue to develop a growth mindset. They explained resilience is composed of persistence, incorporates flexibility and vulnerability when engaging with others, and is fully developed through supported risk-taking and productive struggle.

Throughout the interview process, coaches repeatedly referenced resilience as an important facet of the coaching role. Without resilience, they believe coaches are unable to effectively support teachers, develop a collaborative learning community, and may even decrease coaching self-efficacy, all of which may lead to burnout for coaches.

Considerations for Educational Leaders

Educational leaders are able to support instructional coaches in building resilience. This research indicated that successful instructional coaches must do the following: (a) understand, possess, and practice high emotional intelligence; (b) engage in a collaborative learning culture; and (c) allow themselves and others grace.

It is particularly important for educational leaders to be aware of these findings as they strive to support instructional coaches in developing emotional intelligence, allotting coaching collaboration time, and allowing coaches grace. Ideally, educational leaders should work closely with the instructional coaches to ensure emotional intelligence, productive struggle, supported

risk-taking, and grace for oneself and others. Implementing these practices may safeguard a collaborative learning environment while building resilience school wide.

Emotional Intelligence

Throughout this research study, participants expressed the need for coaches to possess high levels of emotional intelligence. Productive struggle was one term that repeatedly surfaced throughout this study. Productive struggle is when one experiences a struggle but learns to persevere through that struggle by engaging in reflection, supported risk-taking, and striving to develop a growth mindset. Holly shared experiences where she encountered productive struggle in her first year of coaching. Holly believes that productive struggles force her to pause, reflect, and ensure regulated emotions while striving to persevere. Through these experiences, Holly explained that she began to embrace productive struggle, and it helped her build resiliency in her role as instructional coach and leader.

Another key component that surfaced in the findings was the importance of vulnerability and trust. Creating trusting relationships is a foundational piece of the instructional coaching role since an individual cannot be vulnerable or take risks with someone they do not trust. Although one may believe that trust must be created before vulnerability, Coyle (2018) indicates that vulnerability must come before trust. Coyle states, “Leaping into the unknown, when done alongside others, causes the solid ground of trust to materialize beneath our feet” (2018, p. 107). Therefore, instructional coaches must create emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe learning environments.

Considerations for Educational Leaders. Throughout this study, instructional coaches discussed the importance of high emotional intelligence, vulnerability, and productive struggle.

As the data was further analyzed, the researcher discovered that each of these areas aligned to the New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Program Standard 7: Instructional Coaching for Optimal Learning Environments. Although these standards provide a wealth of reflective questions for educational leaders to consider as they build or develop their coaching program, below are additional considerations that directly connect to the findings from this study:

1. How does the learning community continue to learn, develop, and practice emotional intelligence?
2. How do educational leaders promote and model productive struggle within their learning community?
3. What strategies do educational leaders use to understand the academic, social, and emotional skills and needs of their learning community?
4. How is vulnerability used to build within the learning community?
5. How are emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe learning environments created for the entire learning community?

Culture and Collaboration

Culture and collaboration were common threads discovered throughout the coaches' stories. When analyzing these stories, the following components surfaced: (a) supported risk-taking, (b) learner variability, and (c) safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environment.

Numerous coaches offered examples of supported risk-taking. Supportive risk-taking was explained by coaches as being a gentle nudge, encouragement, planning together, and co-teaching. Coaches believe supported risk-taking helps a learner feel safe when trying something new and can help develop a growth mindset and resilience in both the learner and the supporter.

Coaches shared experiences of both themselves and teachers needing supportive risk-taking to develop resilience. As coaches discussed collaborative risk-taking, they also explained that this can naturally emerge from coaching collaboration and is an important way to continue learning new coaching practices and to implement new learning.

Lisa believes coaches support teachers by providing research, fostering a growth mindset through supported-risk-taking, and welcoming and expecting learner variability. In other words, instructional coaches must be ready to differentiate their coaching practices for each teacher they support. All teachers have unique skills, strengths, and needs.

Finally, coaches explained the need to create a safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environment. To do this, coaches must have an in-depth knowledge of the following: (a) academic, social, and emotional intelligence; (b) key needs and practices for adult learners; (c) how to recognize and address bias; and (d) culturally responsive practices. These components need to be incorporated throughout the entire learning community.

Considerations for Educational Leaders. Instructional coaches conveyed the importance of supported risk-taking, learner variability, and creating a safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environment. As the data was further analyzed, the researcher noted that each of these areas aligned to the New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Program Standard 7: Instructional Coaching for Optimal Learning Environments and New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Program Standard 8: Instructional Coaching for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Although these standards provide a wealth of reflective questions for educational

leaders to consider as they build or develop their coaching program, below are some additional considerations that connect to the findings of this study:

1. Are there opportunities for the learning community to engage with one another as learners?
2. Is there time set aside each week for district coaching collaboration?
3. How does your school encourage staff to be supported risk-takers, fail forward, and to develop their growth mindset?
4. What strategies do district leaders use to advocate and maintain equitable and inclusive learning environments?
5. Does your school district offer specific coaching training for coaches within your district or provide additional learning opportunities through outside conferences, trainings, etc.?

Allowing Grace

Instructional coaches believe allowing oneself grace is one of the most difficult, yet most important parts of the coaching role. Lisa conveyed the importance of coaches to allow themselves grace, knowing that they will not be perfect but will try their best. As coaches revealed their stories, they illustrated that allowing themselves and others grace promotes vulnerability, productive struggle, and a growth mindset. These are all critical factors for increasing resilience.

Throughout the interviews, coaches reiterated that resiliency is built piece by piece, bit by bit, and day by day. Previous researchers have compared resilience to a muscle because it has to be practiced each day to become and stay strong. Although there are no easy paths to developing

resiliency, coaches described grace as one of the most difficult, yet needed, components of developing resilience.

Each coach said that they strive to develop their ability to allow themselves grace in a variety of ways. Examples of these practices are as follows: (a) listening to inspiring podcasts each morning, (b) playing classical music throughout the day in order to pause, reflect, and remain in the appropriate mindset, and (c) setting a timer on tough days to stand up, move around, get a drink, and eat lunch. According to the coaches, these practices helped them stay focused and regulated throughout the day.

It is important to note that resilience is not a self-care or mindfulness strategy. Resilience is a critical component that encompasses perseverance, flexibility, and self-efficacy. However, self-care is also an important factor in building resilience. It helps one to determine the next step while ensuring his or her level of resilience does not become too low or entirely depleted.

Considerations for Educational Leaders. Throughout this research study, instructional coaches discussed the importance of high emotional intelligence, vulnerability, and productive struggle. As the data was further analyzed, the researcher discovered each of these areas aligned to the New Teacher Center (2018) Instructional Coaching Program Standard 7: Instructional Coaching for Optimal Learning Environments. Although these standards provide a wealth of reflective questions for educational leaders to consider as they build or develop their coaching program, below are some additional considerations that connect to the findings of this study:

1. What strategies do educational leaders use to understand the academic, social, and emotional skills and needs of their learning community?
2. How are resiliency strategies learned and practiced in the learning community?

3. How do educational leaders support their learning community to learn, develop, and practice self-care in order to foster resilience?
4. How do educational leaders support and model resilience within the learning community?
5. How do educational leaders model and allow grace for their learning community?

Implications

Educational leaders and instructional coaches need to create a culture of collaborative learning in order for teachers to be equipped to build resilience. To do this, educational leaders evaluate how they: (a) develop and support social and emotional learning with their entire learning community, (b) encourage collaborative professional learning opportunities to develop a culture of learning, and (c) allow themselves and the learning community grace as they go through the learning process and develop resilience. These themes are the foundation of developing a framework for a coaching program, cultivating a support system to promote resilience, and ensuring instructional coaches are equipped to guide continuous improvement toward equitable outcomes for all within the learning community.

The New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching Program Standards offers guidance for developing or supporting an instructional coaching program of any size. These standards help program leaders work collaboratively to develop a program framework, outline essential program components, and delineate the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions their coaching staff must possess in order to "accelerate teacher effectiveness, build teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner" (New Teacher Center, 2018,

p. 1). This document is a vital resource to ensure leaning communities are structured in a way that promotes supported risk-taking and resilience.

Article #2 References

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Article #3: My Road to Resilience: Advice to New Instructional Coaches Abstract

Autoethnographies are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Autoethnographers determine a cultural experience by examining field notes, interviews, reflective journals, and/or other artifacts, and then they work to describe these cultural patterns through "storytelling (e.g., character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15). The purpose of using an autoethnography style of writing is not only to draw meaning from personal experience and to develop an engaging description of a cultural experience, but it is also used to "reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15).

Throughout this autoethnography essay, I reflect on my experiences as an educator – teacher, instructional coach, and district administrator. I explore the stories I have created at various times throughout my career and how I came to the realization that it was time to rewrite my story. Throughout this essay, I explore vulnerability, resilience, joy, and perfectionism. I discuss the importance of resilience, examine experiences that built or hindered my resilience, and identify how the absence of resilience impacted my personal, professional, and family life. Finally, I offer pieces of advice inspired by my research and my experiences of instructional coaching to school leaders so they can understand how to effectively support instructional coaches with building resilience in themselves and for teachers.

Key words: instructional coaches, resilience, education, emotional intelligence

Why Stories?

Stories are powerful. They "shape how we understand ourselves and make sense of the world. When we weave the scattered facts and moments of our lives into narratives, we give the events of our life form, meaning, and longevity. Words bring the essence of things into being…Stories tell us who we are and what is possible for us" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 70).

Autoethnographies are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Autoethnographers use ethnographic tools, existing research, and personal experience to "illustrate facets of cultural experience … [and to describe] characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010, para. 10). Therefore, autoethnographers may compare and/or contrast personal experiences to existing literature, conduct interviews, and/or examine cultural artifacts (Ellis et al., 2010).

An autoethnographic writing style aims to derive meaning from personal experience as well as develop an engaging description of a cultural experience. It is also used to "reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 15). Throughout this evocative autoethnography writing, I strived to create an emotional response for my reader by sharing my personal experiences with thick descriptions (LeRoux, 2017).

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout this work, I gathered data and reflected on personal experiences as a former teacher, former instructional coach, and current administrator supporting a secondary instructional coaching program and coaches. My data collection and analysis methods focused

on self-artifacts such as the following: (a) anecdotal notes, (b) calendar notes, (c) journal entries, (d) instructional coaching meetings, (e) small group collaboration sessions, (f) collaborative discussions, (g) collecting artifacts, and (h) writing an autoethnography. I used these methods to further explore my perceptions and experiences about self-efficacy and resilience and the relationship to experiencing joy. Therefore, I used a layered account of an experience, focusing on personal experience alongside "data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 30).

Throughout this study, I reflected on my perceptions and experiences as an instructional coach as well as the needs of my fellow coaches and the interviewed coaches. This autoethnographic approach led me to an in-depth study of self which enabled me to create a reflexive dialogue with readers so that my stories and experiences resonate with others who have experienced similar stories or situations.

Since research has demonstrated that ethnography requires the use of memories of experiences (Wall, 2008), I used my own memories of coaching and supporting coaches. Wall (2008) explained that even fieldwork, interview transcripts, diaries, journals and the resulting texts cannot be separated from the memories; they become headnotes (memories from the field). Therefore, throughout this research process, I participated in observation and reflection, recorded self-reflection notes, reviewed past emails and notes from teachers, conducted self-evaluation surveys, and reviewed surveys completed by teachers regarding the researcher's performance as an instructional coach. Additionally, I reviewed interview transcripts and the code book from previous research to identify common themes as data was analyzed. I did this in order to determine the most important themes from coaches and aspects of my story to share: (a)

understanding emotional intelligence, (b) building self- efficacy, (c) being vulnerable, (d) cultivating resilience, and (e) finding joy. All of these were identified as key common experiences, perceptions, or themes in my previous research with instructional coaches.

This is my story. It is a story about how instructional coaching changed me. It is a story about how I left myself behind. And it is a story about my realization that I needed to focus on filling my resilience reservoir for myself and my family. It is a story of rediscovering joy. Although this work was created from my experiences, it represents the stories, experiences, perceptions, and emotions of many instructional coaches who are my colleagues, my mentors, and the instructional coaches who were willing to participate in my previous research on instructional coaching.

Navigating this Work

The path to personal and professional growth does not happen on a straight, well-groomed road. In fact, it is often not a road or even a gravel trail at all. Life takes each of us on overgrown paths, across treacherous waters, and through uncharted territory, often without a GPS or even a tattered and worn hand-drawn map. Therefore, we continually evaluate our current location, modify our route based on our immediate needs, and begin to take small steps forward, which hopefully leads us closer to our desired destination. Although this lifework is exhilarating, challenging, chaotic, and frightening at times, it is through these life experiences we gain knowledge, learn diverse perspectives, glean new understandings, and ultimately achieve joy.

This autoethnography essay explores the experiences, perceptions, and learning that I, and other instructional coaches, have encountered through becoming an instructional coach. It is

written within the context of the most significant themes that were uncovered in my instructional coaching research: (a) understanding and practicing emotional intelligence, (b) building self-efficacy, (c) understanding perfectionism and learning to be vulnerable with oneself and others, (d) cultivating resilience, and (e) continuing to find joy in one's personal and professional life. Figure 9 shows the steps of these themes.

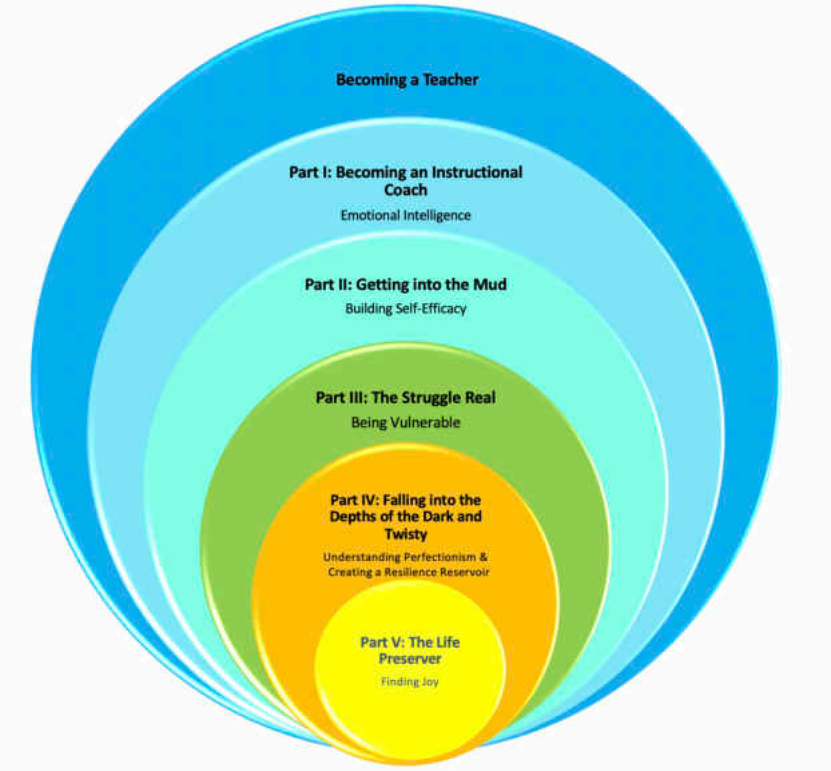

Figure 9. Layers of the Autoethnographic Work.

This writing begins with a description of how I became an educator and then became interested in the coaching role. As this work continues, each specific part focuses on a unique themed experience, perception, emotion, or new learning instructional coaches experience in their work. Finally, this work concludes by offering pieces of advice for new instructional coaches, which were inspired by my research and experiences of instructional coaching. The

advice helps coaches explore the ways they can build their road to resilience and experience joy in their personal and professional life.

Who are Instructional Coaches?

At the time of this autoethnography, the term coach and the definition of the coaching role had not been universally defined and agreed upon. Killion and Harrison (2017) believe creating a single coaching definition is difficult due to the "wide range of approaches or orientations to coaching or to a coaching program" (p. 5). However, the coaching role is based on the premise that instructional coaches are not administrators, evaluators, or supervisors. "Instructional coaches are educators in a non-supervisory role who collaborate with teachers so they can choose, and implement, research-based interventions to help students learn more effectively" (Knight, 2007, p. 13). In other words, instructional coaches work to support and learn alongside teachers as they strive to reach their professional goals.

Becoming a Teacher

I am not exactly sure how I became a teacher. I was not particularly good at school, and I did not particularly like school. To me, school was a social place, a place to be part of extracurricular activities with my friends. When I graduated from high school, I knew I would go to college; *everyone* goes to college, right? So, the summer after graduation, I started general classes at a community college and began thinking about what the future might hold for me.

When I realized my freshman year of college that marine biology was not likely my calling, I considered teaching since I liked working with kids. After I completed my last freshman course in May, I packed my bags, shoved them in the car, and bolted to a state

university 200 miles away from home. There, I began summer classes. Once I began taking education classes in the fall, I never turned back. Surprisingly, teaching was absolutely my thing.

I graduated from college with a major in elementary education and a credential in teaching kindergarten. My dream was to be a K-3 teacher. However, I got an interview for a sixth-grade position. *What the heck. If I get the position, I can always change grade levels later. I just need to get my foot in the door!* I was interviewed, landed the position, and was teaching sixth grade three days later. Being a first-year teacher hired three days before school started was stressful enough. On top of that, I found out I had the principal's daughter and a colleague's daughter in my class. That was terrifying. *Everyone would know every mistake I made. I had to be on top of my game 100% of the time. I took a deep breath and hung on.*

Much to my surprise, I loved sixth grade! However, four years and two kids later, I took a half-time fourth-grade teaching position at a different school within my district. Ironically, I was nervous about leaving sixth grade. *I really wanted to work with younger kids when I first began teaching, but I love my sixth graders. And I'm a good sixth grade teacher! Is it a mistake to leave? I'm feeling more comfortable with my curriculum. I've developed some great units that my students love. I have sixth-grade stuff! I have teacher stuff! What if I don't like fourth grade?* These thoughts hounded me. In the end, I did move to fourth grade because I got to be home more with my children. And I was a little bit intrigued by this change and how it would impact my career. So, I packed up my classroom and moved to a new school and grade level.

The first days at my new school, I spent a lot of time working with my new teaching partner, Jess. Jess and I worked together through various district professional development courses, and she was amazing. She had taught fourth grade half-time for the last eight years. Jess

was smart, organized, collaborative, and extremely reflective. Our personalities were a great fit. We had the same high expectations for students, and we pushed each other to continually improve our teaching practices. However, I did not realize that Jess and I would have some "overlap" time. She would be teaching, and I would come in early to prepare for class. Or she would stay and finish a few things while I was teaching. *Maybe this move was a mistake?* This made me pretty nervous, but I would roll with it. *What else was I supposed to do?* However, I was determined to be overly prepared in order to make a good impression.

On the first day of school, Jess and I co-taught during our overlapping time to build our classroom culture together. As time went on, and we were in our routine, I was able to watch Jess teach her morning classes as I prepared for my afternoon. I saw how she used transitions to keep students engaged. I noticed how she got Jack to finish his math before he started reading his favorite book. I noticed how Jess used her voice to control the classroom. There were so many practices she did that I wanted to learn. Reflecting on my experiences with Jess, I realized that she was like an instructional coach for me. We would set a goal and get to work. We engaged in collaborative learning, tested our ideas, and then reflected on the results. Through this collaborative work, we both grew. If Jess told this story, she would say that she learned from me. But obviously, we learned from each other. That is the power of collaboration.

Educators often use the terms cooperation and collaboration as synonyms. However, they are actually very different. Cooperation is when a group works toward *someone else's goals* whereas collaboration is when a group works toward *a shared objective*, outcome, or goal. The difference between these two terms is important because one term implies ownership by one individual (group members working independently, sharing information) and the other implies

interaction and co-ownership (Nissen, Evald, & Clarke, 2014). In other words, it is the difference between working on someone else's project and working with someone to achieve a shared goal. Jess and I made a great team and continued improving our teaching practices because we were collaborative, supportive risk-takers, and reflective.

Throughout my first years of teaching, I entertained the idea of going back to school for my master's degree. I wanted to keep learning and become a better teacher. Similar to my undergraduate degree, I had no idea what I wanted to get my master's in. So, I picked a class from the curriculum and instruction program at a local university, jumped in, and got rolling with a reading in the content area course. About midway through this course, I changed my master's program from curriculum and instruction to reading. Saying this still makes me smile because I was the student that never did the assigned reading. I only chose non-fiction books from the library because I liked the pictures, and I read the yellow cliff note booklet when I had to write a paper about a book. But again, the reading master's was intriguing to me and was going to be right up my alley.

After having my third child and completing my master's, I continued to learn and grow. A few years later, I earned a middle level endorsement as well as an elementary and secondary administrator's credential. I am currently completing my doctoral degree. Additionally, I have challenged myself in my professional career by teaching seventh and eighth grade English language arts, working as an adjunct college professor, becoming a high school instructional coach, and now working at the district level supporting instructional coaches in their work with teachers. At the time of this essay, I have been in education for almost 25 years, and the only thing I really know is that I still have a lot to learn.

Well, I guess I have learned one other thing. I have learned that once I feel I am able to do something well, I seek out a new challenge. In the past, that challenge was changing grade levels, getting another degree, leading more professional development, taking on a different role in the district, and so on. Interestingly, even if I was seeking change, I often did not know if I was actually ready for the next challenge in my career. But there was always a nagging part of me wondering if I would be able to succeed in that new role. *Okay, sometimes it was the screaming in my head that would be yelling, "Congratulations! You got the job! What were you thinking? Can you really do this? Now what?"*

If you know me, you may be surprised to learn that this continual drive to seek challenge was not a trait I always possessed. Throughout my adult life, I have embraced challenge and change. Perhaps in my younger years there was a part of my personality that needed a spark. Regardless, I have grown and further developed due to life experiences. I have learned to approach challenges head on. Reflecting on my career, and life in general, I have discovered a cyclical pattern that I have followed. It is important to note that this cycle could last for a month, a year, or longer. Figure 10 shows the cycle of challenge in my own life.

I am not saying this cycle is healthy, but it is a huge step for me to acknowledge my tendencies to follow this pattern. Good or bad, this cycle has become part of who I am. I continually watch for the next door of opportunity to open, or even shed a little twinkle of light, to spark my next move. I do love a good challenge!

Being an instructional coach is one of the most challenging and rewarding positions I have had. Throughout this written work, I have reflected on the lessons I learned through instructional coaching and collaborating with other coaches.

Figure 10. Aimee's Cycle of Challenge.

Part I: Becoming an Instructional Coach

Emotional Intelligence

I am a teacher and will always be a teacher. But after my 18th year of classroom teaching, I came to a point where I needed a new challenge. Yes, my students gave me new challenges every day in my classroom, and I continued to grow professionally, but I was looking for more of a leadership role. By this time, I had been a part of many building and district leadership committees, supported and facilitated building and district-wide professional learning, and had built wonderful community connections. These leadership and facilitator roles sparked my interest in the instructional coaching role.

In July 2017, my school district posted a high school instructional coach opening, and I considered applying. *Do I really know enough to support other adult learners? Could I possibly*

have what it takes to lead others to positive change? I might as well apply. So, I filled out the online application, pressed submit, and got an interview!

My interview was set for the following Monday morning. That afternoon, I was offered the position. I was ecstatic! Then, I panicked. *What was I thinking? How did I even get this job? I'm SO not qualified for this. I have never even taught high school. Everyone is going to find out that I'm incapable of fulfilling this position. Then what? Call them back before it is too late!*

Beck, Rush, Shaw, and Emery (1979) call this type of negative talk distorted thinking. These researchers describe distorted thinking as logic errors when interpreting situations, which may include overgeneralization, personalization, catastrophic thinking, or all-or-nothing thinking (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Aguilar, 2018). In other words, distorted thinking is when a person's mind tries to convince him or her that negative thinking is rational or accurate, even when it is not. Distorted thinking is difficult to identify since these thoughts are often habitual. Additionally, a person may have little awareness distorted thinking is happening as it may have defined who he or she is for so many years. It is also important to note that emotions and feelings are temporary (Aguilar, 2018), and each person has the power to decide what to think about himself or herself and certain situations.

My panicked thinking from the above experience is an example of disqualifying the positive distorted thinking (Brown, 2018). I was qualified for this position. I had been in the classroom for 20 years, taught grades four, six, seven, eight, and at the college level, provided multiple professional learning opportunities at the building and district level, earned my master's in reading, presented at conferences outside of the district, and obtained an administrator's credential for both elementary and secondary. On top of these accomplishments, I was

completing my doctoral degree in teaching and learning. Additionally, I completed a coaching course, conducted research and reading on coaching, and possessed a comprehensive understanding of the coaching role. I had the knowledge, experience, and emotional intelligence needed to do this job well. *This is going to be a challenge, but it is going to be great! I can do this!*

Then my thought distortions attacked. *I am never going to earn credibility with high school teachers. I don't know anything about German, chemistry, welding, and for sure, not trigonometry. AP classes? No way! I could never work with a coach who had not worked in the area I wanted to be coached in. What if an elementary teacher started coaching in the middle school? I would never have wanted to work with them. Never. And high school teachers are even tougher than middle school teachers. No one is going to work with me.*

This negative thinking is an example of emotional reasoning distorted thinking. Here, I based my negative feelings on the *feeling* that I would not work with a coach that has not been in a teaching position similar to mine. At the time, there were not facts on which to base this feeling. I used my inferred feelings and predisposed them onto all high school teachers. I did not take into account how knowledgeable I was or that I had gained extensive experiences at various levels. *I can do this. Make your goals and action steps. Keep learning. Keep your chin up. You've got this! It's only July; you have time to figure this out! Let's go!*

As I reflect on my first year of instructional coaching, I am confident that I could share an example of each type of distorted thinking. After all, I used most of them! However, I also realize that I used affirmations to help me get past my negative thinking process. Affirmations help us get rid of negative thinking and replace it with a new story (Sciaraffa, Zeanah, & Zeanah,

2018). Research shows that our brains have neuroplasticity, the ability to change thought patterns as we learn from new experiences (Medina, 2014; Sciaraffa et al., 2018). We amazingly have the power to retrain our brains to release, or at least diminish, our distorted thoughts. Affirmations were the little pep talks I gave myself to keep going, push a little harder, and dig in for just a little bit longer. Throughout my first year of coaching, I gave myself pep talks all the time. Every day. Every new situation. Whenever I felt unsure. And I still do! *Who doesn't need a little pep talk now and again?*

Some of my go-to affirmations are:

- *You've got this!*
- *Come on, you can do this!*
- *I can do this.*
- *You have done this before.*
- *Breathe.*
- *Breathe and smile.*
- *Chin Up.*
- *Relax.*

Getting a Grip on my Emotions

My new instructional coaching position was in the same school district but in a different building. It was also at a grade level I was not used to. And I did not know many staff members. I was exploding with excitement and extremely terrified at the same time! From the outside, the culture of this school was perceived as traditional, unaccepting, and resistant to change. So, I knew I would have to work tirelessly to build relationships and help staff realize I was there to support them. Without recognizing it at the time, I began implementing Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee's (2002) components of emotional intelligence, which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Getting to Know Myself

I began my work by exploring core emotions. Aguilar (2018) explains that emotions have varying degrees of intensity. However, each degree is connected to one core emotion. Researchers disagree on the number of core emotions. Olivo (2014) believes there are eight core emotions. As I looked at this list, I thought about the phone call when I was offered the coaching position. When reading Olivo's (2014) descriptive terms on her emotion list, I determined that I felt happy. I was thrilled about this opportunity, eager to learn more about my role as a coach, enthusiastic to support individual teacher change, ready to foster a collaborative learning culture, and hopeful that I would positively impact teachers and students. However, I was also worried, nervous, and anxious…I was terrified. These are all emotions that Olivo (2014) uses to define the core emotion of fear.

How could I be feeling emotions from polar ends of the emotional spectrum at the exact same time? Interestingly, Aguilar (2018) believes not one specific emotion is positive, negative, good, or bad. She explains that emotions themselves are not problematic, "rather, the way we respond to our emotions can be positive or problematic" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 50). The important part of this stage of emotional intelligence was that I was able to name my core emotions: happiness and fear. Next, I needed to understand these emotions were not good or bad and it is okay to feel uncomfortable. Then, I needed to determine how I was going to use these emotions to gather up the energy and strength necessary to push myself forward and take the first steps of becoming an instructional coach.

Further, I needed to explore my core values. *Core values* are personal beliefs that mirror one's morals or what is important in life. Often, core values are beliefs connected to our families,

religious traditions, or experiences we have encountered throughout our lives (Brosch & Sander, 2014). Since values are synonymous to beliefs, we must also understand that beliefs are strongly held opinions (Aguilar, 2013), and our values, or beliefs, change over time (Brosch & Sander, 2014). *What do I value? How will my actions help others know my core values?*

Using Aguilar's guide Identifying Core Values ("Bright Morning," n.d.), I discovered my core values. It was a struggle to summarize my core values in only ten words, and then down to three words! I envisioned my coaching role and determined what mattered most to me. Then I narrowed down my core values to these three values: collaboration, risk-taking, and trust. *Okay, now I'm getting somewhere.* Figure 11 portrays the identification of my core values from the self-assessment.

Figure 11. Core Values Self-Assessment.

Next, I developed my coaching vision and mission statement which would be the "true north" of my work. My vision and mission statement would keep me focused on my goals, the accomplishment of those goals, and my formation as an effective instructional coach. Figure 12 shows the development of my coaching vision and mission statement.

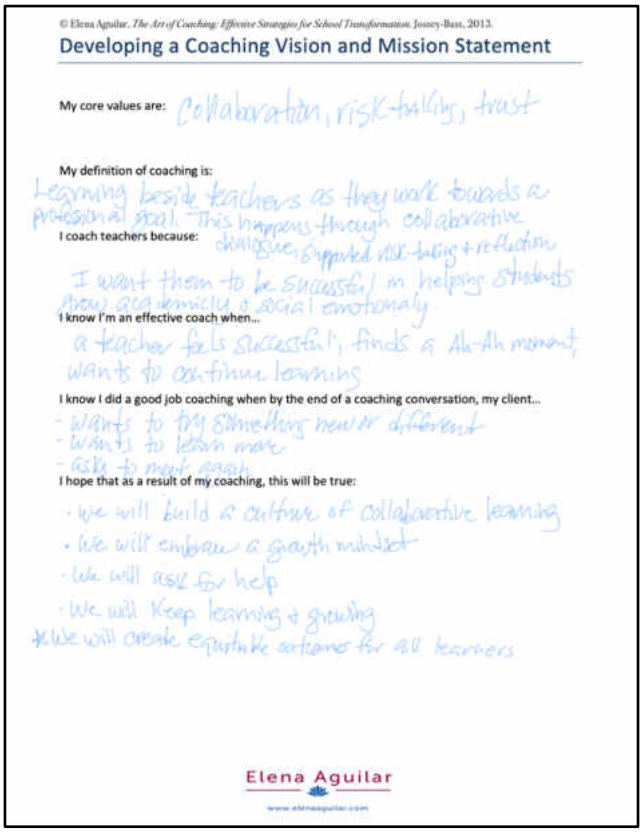

Figure 12. Coaching Vision and Mission Statement.

This process helped me understand myself. It also allowed me to extensively explore what instructional coaching would entail. As I continued to discover my views, my visual thinking skills led me to imagine the coaching role laid out in a brochure format. Soon, I had outlined my role as an instructional coach. This was beneficial for me as a new coach, and it was also beneficial for teachers to understand the coaching role. I purposefully titled this brochure

"Individual Professional Development & Support" in order to avoid any negative emotions that may have been previously connected to a coaching role. At the time, I neatly tucked it in my back pocket for later. Figure 13 portrays the coaching brochure that I designed.

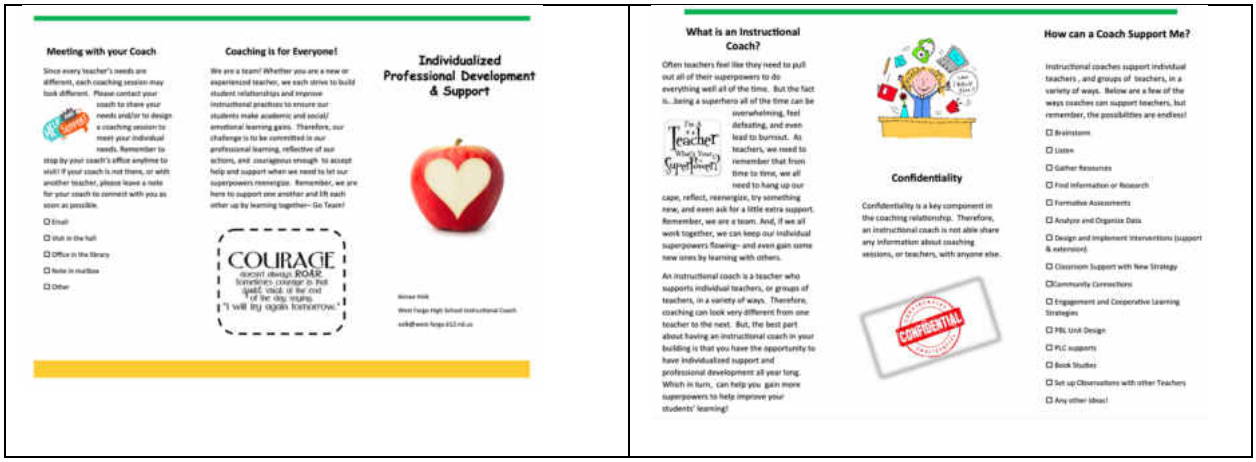

Figure 13. Coaching Brochure.

Creating a Blueprint

At the beginning of August 2017, I began officially preparing for my new instructional coaching role by setting up a meeting with my principal. This initial meeting was critical for my success or failure. At this meeting, we discussed her view of my position and what her expectations were for me. We also scheduled bi-weekly meetings to ensure our collaborative connection. I shared my overarching goal for the year which was building relationships. My principal and I discussed professional learning opportunities for staff. Finally, we discussed the upcoming teacher workshop days.

Many coaching books discuss the importance of instructional coaches introducing themselves and the coaching role at back-to-school workshop days. With my principal's permission, I prepared a short blurb, an elevator speech, to share with teachers. An elevator speech is a short speech a person has in his or her back pocket to introduce oneself. It should

only be the length of an elevator ride. This was my elevator speech on the new teacher workshop day:

Hi! My name is Aimee, and I am an instructional coach. Welcome to our school! My job is to support you in any way that I can. I can help you move into your room, find supplies, get your keys, and help you find answers to anything else that you are wondering! Let me know how I can help you get settled in! I look forward to working with you this year!

This elevator speech was for my new teacher audience which included first-year teachers and veteran teachers who were new to the school district. I understood the uneasy feelings of change because I was new to this school and new to this role too. Therefore, I wanted to focus on their most important needs first. I purposely did not present any *real* coaching work at that time. I focused on the desire to build relationships in order to make teachers feel emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe.

This preparatory work was important for multiple reasons. First, it helped me think through who I was, and wanted to be, as an instructional coach. It helped me develop an overarching goal and then break that goal down into small, achievable action steps. Second, this work helped me anticipate what teachers may need, the kind of support I may be able to offer, and readiness to connect with teachers in a variety of ways. In addition, this initial work helped me think about how I could build a safe and collaborative learning culture with teachers.

Is It Safe Here?

After my effort to determine my core values and how they fit into the coaching role, I began to think about safety and office set up. This was my first real office which was exciting. It was small; it had sufficient space for me and one other person, maybe two. But it was my space!

Being a visual person, I believe in creating a welcoming environment. I work best when I am in a space that is visually appealing, warm, and portrays a sense of comfort. Although I could not change the size of the tiny space, I could infuse my personality into the room. I used my abilities to make it a safe and welcoming space. Table 5 shows how I arranged my office and why.

Table 5. Office Items.

Item	Reason	Location
Repurposed antique chair	I made it. It was cute. It looked friendly and inviting for others to come in and sit on so we could comfortably collaborate	Near my conversation desk for teachers
Wooden pencil holder & mason jars	Simple. I am not a fancy person. I am just like everyone else. We are equals and will learn together.	Near my work area on my desk
2 galvanized buckets for chocolate and mints	Sometimes we just need chocolate…or a mint. Sometimes, I rotated out the mints for lifesavers. At some point, we all need a lifesaver.	On my conversation desk for easy access at all times
Puffs with lotion Kleenex	Who wants that hard, scratchy stuff schools buy?	On my conversation desk for easy access at all times
Galvanized magnetic board	Cute, simple, a little rough on the edges – kind of like learning.	Above my computer for quick notes and reminders
Inspirational sign	A reminder to keep a positive mindset at the forefront of all we do.	Small wall cutout, seen right from the door
Old window with picture of my family	Warms my heart and lets others see I am just a person too.	Above my cabinets so it would be the first thing I see
Funny cow picture	It made me smile.	Wall by the door so it was "looking" at me at all times
3x5 white board	Inspiration for collaboration.	Side wall for easy collaboration
Magnetic cups with white board markers	Easy to grab when inspiration strikes or need to map our thinking out.	On magnetic white board
Hanging wooden apple	I am a teacher.	Outside door by name plate
White coat hook	Visually appealing, neat, welcoming	Behind door

Although this seems like a lot of work, I believe it made a significant difference. I received many positive comments about how it felt warm and homey. I also received positive feedback on the candy and soft Kleenex. So, I continued to make these items available, and the teachers kept coming back.

I am not saying that a coach should spend an excessive amount of time decorating an office, but I do believe one's office space represents a person, his or her values, and how one's coaching will help teachers move forward. I was determined to show teachers warmth, compassion, collaboration, empathy, and humor through my office environment. Coaches can develop a space that represents them and their work. It matters. For example, my first official coaching meeting was with a new teacher. She entered my space, looked around, and commented on a few of the items I had. We began talking casually which led us into in-depth conversation about her, both professionally and personally. It was comfortable. She was comfortable in the space and with me. This new teacher felt safe and cared for.

Another way I built a safe environment was by using constant, clear, and specific communication while demonstrating dependability. For example, I never "popped in" on a teacher. I always sent an email or some type of reminder when I planned on attending a PLC or department meeting. I always phrased the message in a way that reminded the teachers that I was there to support their work. I never sent an agenda or something for teachers to bring unless I was asked to facilitate something. I wanted teachers to know that I was a learner right beside them as shown in Figure 14.

Happy Halloween!

I am just double checking to see if you wanted me to bring anything special for the PLC tomorrow, or just come ready to learn with others? Let me know your thoughts!

See you tomorrow,

Figure 14. We are All Learners Email.

After every meeting with a PLC or team, I always sent a follow up email as shown in Figure 15.

Good morning!

Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of your PLC last week! As we discussed, the ACE writing organizer may be a good way to help students organize their writing in your classes. Attached I have a DRAFT of the organizer, two writing samples with questions, and then bank of possible questions you could ask students when reflecting on their learning.

Since this is a draft, please let me know if you would like anything changed, added, or deleted- this is a work in progress!

Also, please let me know if you would like support implementing a writing piece into your classroom- I would love to help!

Aimee

Figure 15. Follow Up Email.

This was a great way to reconnect with the teachers; at the same time, it was a reminder that I was there to help. I attached all of the materials we used so that they were easy to find. I also aimed to spark enthusiasm for future collaborative learning.

Building a Foundation

It was a week before new teacher workshop days, and my excitement and anticipation were overwhelming! I wanted to connect with teachers before workshop days to ensure they had

the dates on their calendar and to make sure teachers knew who I was, why I was here, what my role was, and how to connect with me. The first emails I sent targeted new first and second year teachers from the district. I wanted to make sure that I connected with these teachers before our teacher workshop days as shown in Figure 16.

Welcome Email to New Teachers	**Welcome Email to 2nd Year Teachers**
Welcome to West Fargo High School! My name is Aimee Volk, and I am the instructional coach at West Fargo High School. My role at West Fargo High School is to support you in any way I can throughout the year. This can look very different from teacher to teacher, so in short, if you have questions, want someone to brainstorm with, need an ear to listen, want to try something new, need to find some new resources, need some extra help with an activity, need assistance to create community connections- I can do that! And if you need anything else, I can help with that, too! I look forward to meeting you at the New Teacher Workshops, but if you need anything before then- please do not hesitate to let me know how I can help! Have a great afternoon,	Good evening! I am Aimee Volk, the new instructional coach for West Fargo High School this year. I understand that you worked with Barb last year, and I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with you this year! As you are getting ready for this school year to start, please let me know if there is anything I can help with. If you have any questions, want someone to brainstorm with, are looking for some new ideas or resources, need an extra hand in your classroom to try something new, or anything else- please let me know. I would love to help in any way that I can! Have a great last couple weeks of summer, and I look forward to meeting you at our upcoming Teacher Workshop days!

Figure 16. New Teacher Email.

My next round of emails went to mentors. I targeted mentors next so that they knew that I could offer this level of support too. I wanted to create a sense of team and support. It was also important to make sure all stakeholders understood and respected one another's firewall, which are boundaries to our confidentiality vaults. Figure 17 shows the email sent to mentors.

Introduction to Mentor's Email

Good afternoon!

My name is Aimee Volk, and I am the new instructional coach as WFHS. First, thank you so much for being a mentor this year! As you are working with your new teacher this year, if you find an area that I can assist with, please let me know! I can help with a variety of tasks, but not limited to teaching and/or modeling instructional strategies, analyzing data, creating formative assessments or rubrics, assisting with planning PBL units, finding additional resources, or whatever else you or your mentee needs from me!

I understand that confidentiality is extremely important, so please do not feel that you need to talk to me directly. And in turn, please know that I cannot share specifics about your mentee, but I will follow up to assist on all concerns or positives/encouragements right away. You are always welcome to just put a note in my mailbox, on my desk, etc. or connect with me in any other way that you feel comfortable. I will be meeting with each new teacher every week throughout the year, so I can easily incorporate any areas of concern that you see. On the flip side, please share anything that I can encourage and celebrate with your mentee, too!

Thank you for your help!

Figure 17. Mentor Email.

I was ready. Now, I just needed the teachers.

The Teachers are Coming, the Teachers are Coming! It was the night before our first new teacher workshop day, and I could hardly hold in my excitement. It was like my first day of teaching all over again. My clothes were preplanned and set out, my lunch was made and put in the fridge, and my work bag was sitting by the door. As I began getting ready for bed, I could already tell I was not going to sleep because of my excitement. I needed to relax. *Breathe.* I needed to focus. *Breathe.* I realized I needed to set my intentions for the next day. Intentions are statements we make to ourselves about how we intend to experience a situation. Intentions are important because they can help us focus on the task at hand and help eliminate distorted thinking (Aguilar, 2018). In addition, intention setting presents the opportunity to decide how we

want to be, which allows us to be in control of ourselves in specific situations. My intention for the next day: *Smile. Learn. Listen.*

After I introduced myself during our introductory meeting, I shared what an instructional coach can offer immediately and what can be offered after getting settled in. I sat with new teachers throughout their building meetings unless they were meeting with another department such as human resources. I sought them out when they had office or classroom work time. It was critical for me to sit with, seek out, and check in on teachers during this time. This was a cornerstone of building a relationship. While carrying out these activities, I remained focused on my day's intentions. I shared a welcoming smile with everyone, learned about teachers by asking safe questions, and listened attentively as they shared about themselves and their prior experiences. I found intention setting to be a beneficial strategy for me to stay focused through stressful times, and I continued to use this intention setting strategy throughout the year.

Other intentions I often used my first year of coaching include:

- Smile and say hello to everyone that I see in the hall.
- Be present in conversations I have with staff.
- Listen attentively during the meeting with Mr. Brown today, so I can better understand perspective.
- Show empathy in the new teacher meeting.
- Have an open mind when I reflect on the feedback I receive from teachers.

The two days with new teachers were wonderful. I smiled, I learned, and I listened deeply. I helped a couple of teachers get their keys and find some supplies. I gave them a school tour and was even able to answer some questions. *This was going to be a great year!*

Two days later was the night before our full staff teacher workshop day. I still had a lot of positive adrenaline from working with new teachers the previous days, so I was excited for the

next workshop day. However, instead of 15 new teachers like the previous days, there would be 125 teachers. I could feel the fear welling up inside me…I was petrified! But I preplanned and set my clothes out, my lunch was made and in the fridge, and my work bag was sitting by the door. Next, I set my intentions for the next day: *Don't say something dumb. Don't stutter when you give your elevator speech. Don't trip when you walk up to introduce yourself.* I realized those were not very positive intentions, so I tried again: *Smile. Learn. Listen. Well, it's the same as the previous day, but it worked before, so let's try it again.*

The next morning, I walked into the building with a smile, put my things in my office, and wandered down to the commons for our first meeting of the day. I walked in by myself and realized how big this space was. As I looked around, I did not see any of the teachers I worked with the previous day. I saw no familiar faces. I took a deep breath and found a spot to sit. I introduced myself, smiled, and listened. Then, I felt the uneasiness of the situation begin to build. I scanned the area to find the nearest exit, restroom, somewhere, anywhere besides here. Then I heard the mic scratch on, and my attention was diverted to the front of the room. The meeting was about to begin. I was trapped. Somehow, my trembling legs allowed me to stand up, walk over to the microphone, and introduce myself and the instructional coaching role without any major disasters. All was good. Throughout the day, I found and checked in with most of my new teachers, met many staff members, helped out everywhere I could, and was busy all day long. I smiled, learned, and listened deeply. It was a nerve-racking day but great!

At the end of the first full day of district-wide teacher workshop days, I sent my next round of emails. My first round was a follow up email to check on my first-year teachers. That day was their first day with their departments, teaching teams, and mentors. Due to the craziness

of meetings and trainings, I was not able to personally connect with each new teacher, so I wanted to see if there was any support I could offer. It was important that they knew I was thinking about them and available to help in any way as shown in Figure 18.

New Teacher Check in After Teacher Workshop

Good afternoon!

I hope that you are feeling more settled today, and that you are excited for Back to School Night tonight! Due to your department meetings and other planning, I have not been able to meet up with some of you. If you would like to visit, go on a tour, need supplies, or have questions, please shoot me an email of where I can find you, and I will be right there!
Also, please remember to complete the following survey about the New Teacher Class: survey.

I look forward to learning with you,

Figure 18. New Teacher Workshop Email.

Next, I wanted to connect with the whole staff. I sent an email asking teachers to help me learn more about what it means to be a Lion, the school's mascot. Again, my only purpose was to build relationships. I crossed my fingers for at least a couple of teachers to fill out the survey and invite me into their classroom. However, I promised myself that I was not going to look at the results of the survey until Monday, so teachers would have a chance to fill it out. *It would save me from heartache over the weekend if no one signed up.* This work laid the foundation for building relationships with staff. The Lion in Action email is shown in Figure 19.

Next, I sent a check-in email to my first-year teachers. I tried to reach everyone, but due to building, department, and team meetings, I was unable to personally connect with each new teacher. Figure 20 shows this particular communication for first-year teachers.

Email for me to see Lions in Action

I am Aimee Volk, and I am the instructional coach for West Fargo High School. I am so excited to be part of WFHS and to be part of the Lion traditions! Since I am new to this building, I would love to be able to see some of the things that you do the first day/week of school! If you are willing to have me pop in to learn about Lion traditions, see what goes on in classes the first day/week, see some of our students in action, and to allow me to learn about our school culture- please let me know! If you are willing to have me as a quiet visitor in your classroom, please fill out this survey so that I can keep track of when and where you teach by Monday, August 28! I may not stay the whole class period, as I would like to see as many different classrooms as possible!

Thank you for allowing me to learn from you and your students!

I look forward to learning with you this year,

Figure 19. Lions in Action Email.

New Teacher Check in After Teacher Workshop

Good afternoon!

I hope that you are feeling more settled today and that you are excited for Back to School Night tonight! Due to your department meetings and other planning, I have not been able to meet up with some of you. If you would like to visit, go on a tour, need supplies, or have questions, please shoot me an email of where I can find you, and I will be right there!

Also, please remember to complete the following survey about the New Teacher Class: survey.

I look forward to learning with you,

Figure 20. New Teacher Check In Email.

After the end of the second full day of teacher workshop days, I sent out invitations to first and second year teachers. I wanted to encourage them to participate in a class, specifically designed for them. These classes were a powerful way for me to build relationships with new teachers. The classes also allowed teachers to develop a sense of community through this cohort

group. This effort laid the foundation for me to build relationships with staff as well as with one another. The emails regarding classes for teachers are shown below in Figure 21.

New Teacher Class Email	**2nd Year Teacher Class Email**
Good afternoon! I hope that you are starting to feel a little more settled now that you have been able to meet with your mentor and your departments. I will be walking around the building today and tomorrow to connect with each of you. Please let me know if you need anything! Earlier this week, we briefly discussed the New Teacher Class, and I am SO excited to do this learning with you! Please complete this survey to let me know what day and time you would like to meet, and we will then get our first class date set up. I am also attaching the course syllabus to this email, but remember, even if you do not take the course for credit, you are welcome to come and learn with us. This class is structured as a support system for you. Therefore, this syllabus is flexible and will be changed to meet your requests and needs. This is your class, and I want it to be meaningful and useful to you. You will be paid for the off contact time you attend the face-to-face sessions, as well as receive the book *Teach Like a Champion*. I look forward to learning with you this year!	Good morning! My name is Aimee Volk, and I am the new Instructional Coach at WFHS. I am so excited to meet all of you during teacher workshops next week! During that time, I will pop in to meet each of you and to see if you have some ideas on what I can do to help support you this year. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to help you right away! Last year as new teachers, Barb offered a New Teacher class for you. And it sounds like you had a wonderful group of teachers in this cohort, built some fantastic relationships, and did a lot of learning together! As second year teachers, I would love to offer another class for you! It would run similar to, but a little different from last year. Here are some of the details: · Meet as a cohort for one hour to discuss what is going well and/or any questions or concerns (8 times over the course of this school year) · Receive the book *Teach Like a Pirate* o We will discuss this so that it fits everyone's needs! This book is about engagement, and with so many second year teachers working in the Feldman training, this may be a great connection to our PD work this year. But this is your class and needs to fit your needs…

	o Additional book ideas to consider: § Teach Like a Pirate § What Great Teachers do Differently § Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles § Hacking PBL § Other suggestions? · Create lasting relationships with colleagues · Have the opportunity to earn 1 graduate credit (about $50) If this class is something that you are interested in, we will discuss dates, times, places, and choose the book next week so that I can get everything ordered. Remember, this is your class, so I want to make sure that it fits your needs! I look forward to visiting with you more next week!

Figure 21. Teacher Class Emails.

This effort was relentless. I worked countless hours over my contracted time, but this is what teachers do, and I knew in my heart it would be worth it. It was critical that I was visible to staff, communicating that I cared and was available to them. I continually listened, watched, and asked how I could help.

Although instructional coaches need to be knowledgeable about research-based instructional practices and pedagogy, they must also have a strong understanding of emotional intelligence about themselves and others. Instructional coaches must be able to build

relationships with others through an understanding of emotional intelligence. This is the foundational skill needed to build and sustain positive and meaningful relationships.

Interestingly, utilizing emotional intelligence is also important because it is the strongest predictor of successful job performance (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020) and has been connected to effective leadership, job retention, stress management, work satisfaction, burnout preventions, and use of conflict management styles (Sharon & Grinberg, 2018). Therefore, emotional intelligence is critical because it is the foundation of building trusting relationships, demonstrating flexibility, fostering collaboration, regulating stress, dealing with unexpected change, engaging in critical conversations, and creating positive change within a school. These are all critical qualities that educators, teachers, and instructional coaches must possess.

The Students are Coming, the Students are Coming! Finally, Monday came. It marked the first week of school with students and the day I could look at my Lions in Action survey that I sent to teachers. I knew my focus needed to be building relationships, supporting new teachers, and developing a safe culture of learning. I took a deep breath, prepared myself for the worst, and opened the Lions in Action survey. I exhaled, stared at the screen, and then smiled. There were teacher names on the survey! Seventeen teachers responded, which meant I had 17 classroom observations already set up for the first week of school! I was astonished by the staff's willingness to open their doors to me as a co-learner. At that time, I realized that my email with the survey really paid off. Although this was a great first step, I knew I needed to work to build trust at all times.

Once those teachers invited me in as a quiet observer in their classrooms, I sent a calendar invitation to them for the day and time they suggested. It was important to input dates

and times on my calendar as well as each teacher's calendar. That way no one would forget that I was going to be in the classroom. It also opened up a line of communication. The calendar invitation to teachers is shown in Figure 22.

Good morning! Thank you so much for allowing me to be a quiet observer in your classroom so I can learn about what it means to be a Lion. I look forward to learning from you at this date and time.

Figure 22. New Teacher Open House Email.

In this email calendar invitation, I reminded teachers of the purpose of my Lions in Action visit: for me to learn from them, not the other way around. Making this process about me made me vulnerable, and it gave the teachers control of the situation. In turn, it helped the teachers feel emotionally, physically, and intellectually safe (Faye & Hooper, 2018; McCoy, 2013; Chinnery, 2013).

Honestly, this was one of the best ideas I had as a coach. The Lions in Action strategy helped me connect with staff, learn where different classrooms were, and how teachers could help me or another teacher in the future. I learned so many things I wish I would have known when I was teaching. This was an amazing experience for me, and I knew I had to continue to work diligently to be invited into classrooms.

Throughout the first week of school, I persisted in my same intentions: Smile. Learn. Listen deeply. I worked tirelessly to be positive, flexible to each teacher's needs, and completely transparent and honest. I checked in daily with new teachers. I was visible in the hallways between classes, in the office, in the lounge, in department offices. I kept walking around and saying "hello" to staff and joined in conversations as they progressed. And even though I was supposed to be supporting teachers, I think I asked more questions than they did.

Culture

Up to this point, every move I made was strategic. I knew building safety was the foundation to building relationships, but how was I supposed to begin building a culture? That concept felt overwhelming and ominous. Yet, at the same time, the word culture felt like a buzz word or a cliché. *What is culture and how does one build it?*

Culture *noun*: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an instruction or organization- Merriam-Webster

I thought this definition was interesting. Culture is about a set of shared attitudes, values, and goals. Culture is not about an individual's attitudes, values, and goals. Culture is not about professional isolation: working alone, alongside colleagues (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional isolation is especially dangerous in teaching due to the amount of uncertainty teachers face each day. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) believe:

> "uncertainty is what makes teaching interesting, variable, and challenging – a job that is different every day. But uncertainty encountered alone…is uncertainty magnified to unhealthy proportions, because teachers must figure out how to deal with all the uncertainty on their own" (p. 107).

When teachers face uncertainty without support, feedback, or advice, they often become anxious which causes them to get stuck in their own ways and unable to grow professionally. Consequently, uncertainty and isolation lead to a "learning impoverished" setting which negatively impacts student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989). Therefore, I knew it was critical for me to continue developing high emotional intelligence as well as creating emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe environments in order to foster a culture of collaboration.

However, culture begins with safety. Pentland (as cited in Coyle, 2018) believes that people develop a sense of safety through belonging cues. These belonging cues have three basic qualities:

1) Energy (invest in the exchange that is occurring);
2) Individualization (treat the person as unique and valued); and
3) Future orientations (signal the relationship will continue) (p. 11).

As I reflected on these three qualities, I realized I had already begun to incorporate many of these belonging qualities to help teachers feel safe. First, I worked to create a warm, welcoming, and physically safe environment in my office. Then, I strived to connect with teachers in a variety of ways such as in person and through email. I also made an effort to get to know teachers professionally and personally. These foundational pieces helped teachers believe that I cared about them, I was responsive to their needs, and I was adaptable to change in order to properly support their unique needs. Coyle (2018) believes safety is built through repeated belonging signals, that is why safety is hard to build but easy to destroy. Therefore, I needed to continue demonstrating and strategically embedding these belonging clues in all I did.

A Sense of Belonging

At the end of the week, I was exhausted yet excited for this new school year. I felt I was ready for the next step of reaching my goal for building positive relationships with the staff. What is the best way to build relationships and a culture of safety? Food. So, I decided to host a Coaching Open House. The first open house was for my first and second year teachers. I targeted this group for the following Friday so that we could continue to stay connected, begin to get to

know each other better, share more information about the upcoming new teacher class, and so I could begin to set up coaching cycles. Figure 23 shows the invitation to the open house.

I understood that coaching cycles may be intimidating for some, so I began with making personal connections in the hallways before getting individual coaching sessions set up. This was a balance because I did not want to overwhelm teachers. At the same time, I wanted to start working with them as soon as possible. Due to current teacher attrition data, I knew this work needed to be at the top of my priority list.

New Teacher Coaching Open House

Good morning!

Happy Friday! I hope you have had a wonderful first week of school!

COACHING OPEN HOUSE
When: Friday, September 1
Where: Library (Coach's Office)
Time: 7:15am-8:15am OR 3:00pm-4:00pm

Please stop down to my library office to celebrate the first week of school and a long weekend! There will be snacks, visiting, and time for you to sign up for your individual coaching sessions for September (come early to get your first choice day and time). We will also make the final decisions on the time and day that our teacher classes will happen so that we can get started ASAP. You are welcome to just stop by and grab a snack, just sign up for coaching sessions, or stay and visit awhile, but I hope to see you all for a few minutes on Friday, September 1, from 7:15am-8:15am or 3:00pm-4:00pm.

Figure 23. New Teacher Open House Email.

According to a University Council for Educational Administration report (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, & Barnes, 2018), about 16% of teachers leave their schools each year. Castro, Quinn, Fuller, and Barnes (2018) explained that half these teachers leave the teaching profession completely, and the other half move to different schools. In addition, the University Council for Educational Administration report illustrated 90% of the demand for teachers is attributed to

teachers leaving the profession. Statistics on teacher retention indicate the first five years of teaching is when new teachers are most vulnerable (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey, & Collins, 2018). In fact, researchers estimated that 40-50% of beginning teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of their career (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

It was Thursday night, and I baked like crazy for the coaching open house the next day. Chocolate chip cookies, blueberry and raspberry muffins, rhubarb crisp, and brownies. Plus, I had an assortment of fresh fruit for those who preferred a healthier choice or were gluten free. The next morning, I arrived at the office extra early. I set up the food, cued up the coaching survey on the computer, and then laid the coaching survey QR codes on the table beside the coaching brochure, which I had tucked in my back pocket just waiting for a gathering like today's event.

The coaching open house was a hit! Almost everyone came to one of the sessions, and some even came twice. A couple of teachers came back during their prep! This was a perfect opportunity to connect on a more personal level with some treats and great company. By the end of the day, all but three of my first and second year teachers had set up their weekly or biweekly coaching sessions. I was so excited!

After everyone left for the day, I sent out my follow up email. I tried to follow up each staff connection I had. For example, after the New Teacher Open House, I sent a thank you email to all that were invited. I always tried to send a thank you message to the people who were able to attend. It was important to continually find ways to stay connected with teachers. Figure 24 shows the thank you note sent to teachers.

New Teacher Coaching Open House Thank You

Good morning!

Thank you so much to those of you who were able to stop down today to the open house. It was fun to have some time to meet and visit with you, as well as to start setting up our coaching sessions for this year!

You will see that I sent out another email for all WFHS teachers about another coaching open house next Friday (9/8)- please feel free to stop down again to visit and have treats! I will have a new assortment or goodies…and, yes, I do take requests!

If you were unable to come to the open house today, or did not complete the survey, please do so as soon as possible! This survey allows me to know when the best time for us to meet is, as well as how I will best be able to support you. The survey will only take about 1 minute. Remember, first year teachers - I will send appointments for us to meet once per week, and second year teachers I will send appointments for us to meet once every other week. These guidelines are set by WFPS, so we can certainly meet more often if you would like. I can support you in a variety of ways- from listening, collaborating, brainstorming, gathering resources, co-teaching, supporting a new project in the classroom, collecting and reviewing data, engagement strategies, creating formative assessments, etc.

Finally, please watch for an invite to this year's teacher classes. If you receive more than one, it is because there is more than one time option available. Please just decline the session that does not work for you, but know that you are welcome to attend whichever time works best for you for each session. I am only creating invites through Christmas break, as we may need to discuss day and time changes depending on how class schedules change. We can be flexible! And we can be flexible about where we meet. For example, if you choose a morning session, we could meet somewhere close for coffee. If we meet afterschool, we could go somewhere then too!

Even if you do not need a credit, please consider attending this class. First, there is no required outside work unless you would like to earn a credit! Second, you get a great book! Finally, this is a great way to continue collaboration with colleagues, discuss struggles and celebrations in our teaching, and help us become more reflective teachers and lifelong learners. I look forward to learning with you this year!

Please remember to complete the coaching survey as soon as possible!

Figure 24. New Teacher Open House Thank You Email.

Once my follow up email was sent, I drafted an email to the entire staff inviting them to a Whole School Coaching Open House. I felt more nervous for this open house. I felt more

comfortable with the first and second year teachers because I have had more connections with them. They were eager to visit and meet each other, and the idea of a cohort was exciting since it gave them somewhere to belong right away. *What if no one comes to my whole staff coaching open house?* Regardless, I typed the email and pressed send. Fingers crossed. The invitation for the whole school open house is shown in Figure 25.

Whole School Coaching Open House

Happy Friday! I hope you have had a wonderful first week of school!

Thank you so very much for welcoming me into WFHS! I have had an amazing week getting to know some of you as I have been in and out of classrooms. I have already learned so much from all of you. Thank you for sharing your classroom with me! Next week I will continue to visit classrooms, so if you did not complete the previous survey to let me know when you are willing to allow me to learn about WFHS by vising your classroom, please complete this survey, and I would love to come visit! Thank you for considering!

You are invited:

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING OPEN HOUSE
When: Friday, September 8
Where: Library (Coach's Office)
Time: 7:15am-8:15am OR 3:00pm-4:00pm

Please stop down to my library office to celebrate the second week of school on Friday, September 8! There will be snacks, visiting, and time for you to sign up for coaching sessions or for us to visit about ways that I can support you this year. You are welcome to just stop by and grab a snack, just sign up for coaching sessions, or stay and visit awhile, but I hope to see you all for a few minutes on Friday, September 8, from 7:15am-8:15am or 3:00pm-4:00pm.

Figure 25. Whole School Coaching Open House.

Now, I can call it a day! Even though I had a ton of food left (I am an over planner by nature), I walked out of the building with a rush of emotions. I was giddy. I had a great turnout for the first coaching open house. I scheduled more classroom observations. And I even had

coaching cycles set up for the next week. *Wow! I see a glimpse of hope that I really could make a difference for teachers in this role. Life is good.*

Exhilarated. Thrilled. Enthusiastic. Core emotion: happiness.

Part II: Getting into the Mud

Building Self-Efficacy

At this point, I was not doing any "real" coaching work. However, I was strategically working to build relationships so I could get to the *real* work. To do this, I continued to connect with teachers in a variety of ways: personally, through email, and handwritten notes. I looked for ways to support teachers in any way I could, and whenever I was given the chance, I put my boots on, rolled up my sleeves, and got right into the mud with them.

Ann

Worried. Tense. Apprehensive. Core emotion: fear.

It was the second week of school, and I fully understood the magnitude of my first coaching session. *This could be amazing and blaze a path to incredible collaborative work. Or it could bomb, and she may never come back. She could tell everyone it was useless and a waste of time! Then, no one would come.*

Feeling the overwhelming need to practice one last time, I grabbed my favorite coaching books, perused the importance of goal setting, asking questions, and how to critically listen. I practiced smiling without being too toothy, too giddy, or just in general weird. I double checked that I still had good chocolate in the candy jar, the door was all the way open, and my desk was picked up. Then I tried to look busy, but not too busy, while I waited for Ann. I began to sweat.

Ann came right on time. She had a big smile on her face, walked right in, and made herself at home. I welcomed her and shared how excited I was for us to start working together. I discussed the instructional coaching role and the firewall concept. I wanted to make sure that Ann knew she was safe with me and that this was a safe space. Our conversations were safe. Our feelings were safe. After that, we just talked and got to know each other. I asked about school and family and if she had any questions. Partway through our coaching meeting, I realized that I was not "coaching," and it would be inappropriate for us to even start talking about goals yet. I was building trust. Ann and I needed to be vulnerable with each other for her to know that she could trust me. That was when I realized I did indeed have a powerful goal for myself this first year of coaching: building relationships. This was the key to how I could impact teachers.

Ann helped me learn the importance of building trusting relationships brick by brick, one step at a time. I had to make intentions for myself to contain my excitement about the coaching work in order to slow down to build relationships. If I go too fast, a brick may be placed incorrectly, the foundation will begin to lean, and the relationship will ultimately collapse. Therefore, I needed to take time to get to know teachers on a personal level, just as teachers needed to get to know me on a personal level. After this realization, I was much less nervous for my other coaching sessions. I began thinking of them as a casual conversation, a check-in on them as a teacher but also as a person. For the first four weeks of coaching sessions, that was the philosophy I used. I believe it paid tremendous dividends in the end.

Building Community

Optimistic. Excited. Cheerful. Core Emotion: happiness.

Between observations and coaching meetings with first-year teachers, it had been a wonderful, crazy, and stressful week. On a Thursday afternoon, I had to hustle home after work so I could bake for the whole school open house the next day.

I had no idea how many people were going to come, and with a staff of 125, I began the cooking frenzy. Apple crisp, pecan bars, seven-layer bars, pumpkin bars, scotcheroos, chocolate bundt cake, and cheesecake with mixed berry compote. Yes, all from scratch! And I brought fresh fruit. The following morning, I arrived at school extra early. I grabbed a cart to haul everything. I lugged two large coolers full of food, a large plastic bin of plates, silverware, napkins, serving utensils, and fun little table toppers into the school. I set up at 7 a.m., and I was sweating and exhausted. *But I'm ready!*

I did not keep track of the number of staff members that came by my office, but the turnout was amazing! It was a wonderful way to meet staff in a non-threatening way, for each of us to get to know each other, and begin breaking down some barriers. It was fun to see that all of my first and second year teachers came again and some even brought others from their departments. The conversations were wonderful. The staff was wonderful. I felt that not only was I welcoming them to be part of coaching, but they were also welcoming me into their school. This was nothing like what I had expected due to the previous stories I had heard about this school.

After everyone left, I cleaned and packed everything up. Then I drafted my "thank you for coming" email to the staff and attached a copy of my coaching brochure. I pressed send.

Next, I grabbed the stack of printed coaching brochures from my cupboard and strolled down to the office. I put a coaching brochure in each teacher's mailbox. Since I taped a piece of candy on each brochure, I was sure everyone would read it. I hoped it would be a good reminder that I was there to support them. *I'll be coaching in no time!*

Once I got back to my office, I loaded the wheel cart with my bins and coolers and was ready to take my first load out to the car. I came back in, put the cart away, and was getting ready to shut down my computer. As I was about to press the shutdown button, I saw an email notification on the bottom of my screen. I quickly opened up the email so I could head out for the day. I started reading and smiled. A veteran teacher asked to set up a coaching meeting for next week!

Brandy

Nervous. Shocked. Hopeful. Core emotion: fear, disgust, and happiness.

One of the first teachers to welcome me to the building was Brandy. Brandy was a veteran teacher, in the midst of completing her National Board Certification. She was also a leader within the school. She seemed friendly, outgoing, and excited to work together on non-traditional ways to connect students and learning. She was always scouring to find something new to implement. So, when I received an email from Brandy wanting to meet about a project she wanted to revamp, I was so excited. I sent a calendar invitation confirming our meeting on a Wednesday. I reviewed a few question stems to prompt discussion and reflection about the project and next steps. I also gathered some resources that might be useful as we discussed the learning involved in this project.

Brandy planned to come to my office for our meeting, so I made sure it was tidy, the candy bucket was full, and I had my notes and resources ready for our discussion. When Brandy arrived at my office, she smiled, came in, shut the door, and sat on my antique chair. I smiled and welcomed her to my space. She glanced around my office, crossed her legs, crossed her arms, and looked straight at me. *I was starting to feel uncomfortable.*

"I am so glad you emailed to talk about your project! It sounds wonderful, and I can't wait to learn more about it today." I smiled again, but now the edges of my smile and the corners of my eyes were starting to twitch because I was getting nervous.

Brandy continued to look at me, and her smile faded away. "Do you even have any classroom experience?"

"Yes!" *I was shocked that she was asking me this! Was she questioning if I was qualified for this position? Does she think I look young?* I cheerfully responded, "I was a classroom teacher for 20 years! I have taught a variety of grade levels. For the last few years I taught 7th grade English at the middle school and am also working on my doctoral degree. This is my first year out of the classroom, and I am so excited to have the opportunity to be here and everyone has made me feel so welcome. How long have you been teaching?"

Brandy uncrossed her arms and legs, leaned into the conversation, and we ended up fostering a wonderful relationship. In fact, I was able to work with Brandy and her department multiple times throughout the year.

Brandy helped me remember that there are six steps to emotions: prompting event, interpretation, physical response, urge to act, action, and aftereffects (Aguilar, 2018). Thinking about my first office visit with Brandy, I realized that I needed to work on how I interpret events.

For example, when Brandy asked me if I had ever been a classroom teacher, I immediately became defensive and began to make unfounded judgments about her intentions. I jumped to conclusions, which is another type of distorted thinking pattern. I now realize events are often interpreted within seconds, and I have to be cautious with interpretations I make. Aguilar (2018) believes "our interpretations can cause, exacerbate, or intensify emotional distress, or they can boost our optimism, help us connect with others" (p. 73). Knight (2016) cautions coaches to be aware and critically analyze their assumptions to ensure they do not interfere with the coach's ability to listen and interpret another's words or actions. However, since assumptions are often made unconsciously, this is a difficult task.

Part III: The Struggle is Real

Being Vulnerable

Linda

Mortified. Regretful. Disgusted (at self). Core Emotion: shame.

One of the most difficult parts of instructional coaching was navigating multiple grade levels and content areas. For example, working in a high school, I knew that I needed to support all teachers, at all grade levels, and in all departments. However, initially, I did not always feel I had the skills to support every teacher.

One September afternoon, I received an email from Linda, a veteran German teacher, asking me if I would work with her to build a Project Based Learning (PBL) unit. I was so excited she reached out to me! Once I sent the calendar invitation to her for our meeting, my distorted thinking started creeping in again.

You don't know anything about German or how to teach a foreign language. How will you be able to help her create a PBL on the Olympics? There is no way you are going to be able to pull this off.

Linda met with me two days later and brought several resources with her for our discussion. I listened attentively to Linda as she explained her standards and goals for the project. As she talked, I took some notes and asked questions. We began brainstorming and decided to meet again later in the week after we both further explored a few ideas. Linda left me some of her resources and marked the pages where the verbs were that she wanted to focus on. As she marked pages in multiple resources, I continued to record a few last notes from our discussion and sent her a calendar invitation once we determined the day and time. Linda slid her resources over to me and headed back to class before the bell rang.

I was excited to collaborate with Linda on this project, and it was right up my alley. I grabbed the first book she had marked for the verbs, and I opened it up to the terms she wanted to focus on. But I could not read it; it was in German! I checked a couple of other pages – all in German. I opened up to the table of contents. *There must be an English section, right?* I closed the book and slid it to the other side of my desk. *Ha! That's funny. I don't know German!*

I grabbed the next book, flipped to the sticky note, and it was all in German too! *Seriously?* I closed the book and slid it to the other end of my desk. I took a piece of chocolate from my candy bucket and ate it. I closed my eyes, inhaled deeply, and exhaled slowly. I picked up the last resource packet she left me. Yep. It was in German. I set those on the stack of other German books, got one more piece of chocolate, and headed down to the pop machine to get a Diet Coke. I was mortified. *There was no way I could collaborate with this teacher on this*

project. I was in over my head. I can't believe I said I could help do this and that I had some ideas. I should have known better!

I got back to my office, cracked open my Diet Coke, and took another deep breath. I looked at my notes and then back at the stack of German books setting on my desk. I was going to do my best. *Google Translate was invented for a reason.*

Linda helped me learn a great deal about myself and the coaching role. One of the most important things that I learned was that ability does not just refer to one's ability to complete a single specific skill. To achieve anything effectively, a person needs skill, will, knowledge, capacity, and emotional intelligence (Aguilar, 2016). In other words, I realized in this situation that I did not need the skill of speaking German or knowing the details about the pedagogy of teaching German. What I did need was the will to support the creation of a meaningful project and learn alongside the teacher. I also needed the knowledge of building effective PBL units that directly connect to standards, the capacity to try something new, and the ability to keep my emotional intelligence balanced to ensure I could accurately determine this teacher's needs through the development and implementation of this unit with her students. This I could do. But to do it well, I needed to regulate my emotions and distorted thinking. Finally, I needed to be aware of my strengths, limitations, and areas of growth.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is not good or bad but is the core of all emotions and feelings (Brown, 2012; McCoy, 2013). Vulnerability is not weakness; it is the foundation of courage. Vulnerability is defined as the capacity to experience hurt (McCoy, 2013). It is an emotion one experiences during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure (Brown, 2018).

Vulnerability is also about sending a clear signal that you have weaknesses and that you could use help (Coyle, 2018). In other words, vulnerability is less about the individual engaging in a vulnerable experience and more about the individual observing the process of vulnerability and setting the foundation for risk-taking which is needed to be vulnerable (Chinnery, 2013). For example, when I emailed teachers to see if I could practice using a new observation tool, I was being vulnerable with my level of coaching abilities. I was the learner, and when a tool did not work, or I used it incorrectly, I was open and honest about what I would do differently next time. However, this interaction was less about me and more about teachers seeing my willingness to be vulnerable.

Reflecting on this vulnerability research, I was reminded of one of my favorite Brené Brown (2018) quotes: "If you are not in the arena getting your ass kicked on occasion, I'm not interested in or open to your feedback" (p. 20). I wholeheartedly believe in this for myself as a learner. No matter what, I knew I had to keep getting back into that arena with teachers. I had to continue making myself vulnerable in order to work effectively with my teachers in the future.

Through this process, I was slowly building trust. However, researchers have found that trust is not stable. "Every single moment your brain is tracking your environment and running a calculation whether you can trust the people around you and bond with them. Trust comes down to context. And what drives it is the sense that you're vulnerable, that you need others and can't do it on your own" (DeSteno as cited in Coyle, 2018, p. 107). In other words, it is critical that we show vulnerability and build trust. Brown (2018) identified seven behaviors that create trust, which she calls BRAVING:

1) Boundaries (respect boundaries, ask if unsure, ability to say no)

2) Reliability (do what you say you will do)

3) Accountability (own your mistakes, apologize)

4) Vault (do not share information or experiences that are not yours to share)

5) Integrity (choose courage over discomfort)

6) Nonjudgement (ask for and offer help with no judgement)

7) Generosity (interpret others' intentions, words, and actions generously) (p. 225)

Brown (2018) states that researchers believe trust is the glue that holds groups together. Therefore, vulnerability is an important component in the coaching role.

Tom

Frustrated. Worried. Shocked. Core Emotion: anger and disgust.

One late September morning, Tom trudged into my office and sat down. It was earlier than he usually came in, and I was surprised to see him at school so early. I smiled and greeted him, "Good morning! I'm so glad you're here! How are you doing today?"

Tom pushed the door closed, looked at the ground, and shook his head. I was not sure what to say, so I sat quietly and waited. As the seconds slowly ticked by, I started to become extremely uncomfortable and was frantically searching my brain for what I should say or ask.

Finally, Tom looked up. "Mr. Smith came in last week to observe my class, and I had my first evaluation meeting with him yesterday. It didn't go well." He took a deep breath and shook his head again. "I think we just have two different philosophies about teaching."

I tilted my head slightly to the side, "Can you tell me more about that?"

"He felt my kids were on their phones too much in my class, and I should not allow my students to be on their phones. I just don't think it's a big deal. I think the most important thing I

can do for my students is to build relationships. Does it really matter if their phones are on their desks? I tell them not to use them. It doesn't have anything to do with my teaching. I'm not sure why he's making such a big deal out of it."

"When he brought up the cell phones, did he say anything else?"

Tom was working to stay calm, but I could tell his face was becoming flushed. "No! And it just doesn't make any sense! It's my classroom. And why does it matter if their earbuds are in?"

"When students are on their phones, what are they working on?"

"They only go on them when they are done with their work. You are welcome to come in anytime. Why don't you come in and see if you think it is a problem?"

Tom picked his most difficult class period for me to observe. We decided I would conduct a time audit of teacher talk, student talk, individual assessment, and transition time. This information would allow Tom to examine these structural components of his classroom as well as how he was engaging students in their learning. We determined where I would sit, what we meant by each of these categories, and when we would meet to discuss the data. Once we determined the dates and times, I sent him a calendar invitation. By collecting data on teacher talk, student talk, individual assessment, and transition time, it would allow the data to show Tom a few different things. First, it would help identify the flow of the lesson. Did it follow the gradual release model of instruction? Were transitions efficient and effective for learning? This could connect to student engagement, students being off task, and so on. Structuring the observation data in this way put the focus on classroom structure and was not specific to just cell

phones. This approach aimed to remove the frustration caused by the phone comment from the principal. I was trying to put a positive spin on this.

A couple days later, it was time for me to enter Tom's classroom. I grabbed my computer, paper, pencil, and timer. I got to Tom's classroom a few minutes early to avoid walking through all of the traffic in the hall once the passing time bell rang. Soon, the period bell rang, students rushed out of the classroom for their next class, and the next group of students filed in. I walked in with the students, smiled and waved to Tom, and headed to the back where Tom had planned for me to sit. I got all of my things out and set up. I was ready!

I would not officially start timing anything until the beginning of the period bell rang. As students came in, I noticed that some yelled to each other across the room, others threw things to friends across the room, four students went to the front of the room to talk to Tom, and others sat in their desks. The bell rang, and I started my timer.

Fifteen minutes passed by the time all students were in their seats and Tom was ready to begin class. Once class began, students continued to talk, get up, walk around, and throw pencils to friends. Students were constantly on their phones, even when they were asked to put them away. At the end of the class period, I smiled, waved to Tom, and walked out of the classroom with the traffic. Once in my office, I compiled the data. After double checking my work, I discovered that there were a total of 15 minutes of instructional time used during that 52-minute period. The rest of the time was transition time or Tom trying to get kids' attention for the lesson. I was not sure how our data discussion would go. *Would Tom be frustrated or angry? Will he feel that I recorded information inaccurately? Will he question my objectivity?*

My first question to teachers is often, "What was your goal in your lesson today? How did you feel that went? I was anxious to see what Tom thought before and then after he saw the data. *How would I keep this discussion positive and honest? What questions could I ask Tom that will help him dig into the data and his classroom management? How can I ensure Tom has the support he needs to be successful?* Through our work together, Tom helped me think more about the difference between dialogue and discussion as well as how to promote positive dialogue.

Dialogue versus Discussion

I do not like conflict, and I do not enjoy difficult or critical conversations. I prefer to avoid those situations. In preparation for this conversation, I revisited the difference between discussion and dialogue. According to Graybill and Easton (2015), discussion is used when a group is trying to make a decision, whereas dialogue is used when a group is trying to understand an issue. Knight (2016) further explains that dialogue fosters better conversations since "participants listen with empathy, and they respect and encourage others' views" (p. 71). In addition, Knight (2016) believes dialogue builds relationships and improves thinking. However, assumptions often get in the way of dialogue. Assumptions can disrupt dialogue when we interpret what others communicate through our assumptions, and when we often unconsciously hold on to our assumptions (Knight, 2016). For example, Mr. Smith assumed that effective classroom structure is a classroom that is orderly. Tom's assumption about classroom structure was that it was about relationships with students. In order to foster dialogue in this discussion, both individuals would need to critically analyze their assumptions.

Through this effort with Tom, I needed to remember my role. My role was not to make any judgments from my observation and not to bring any of my assumptions into our

conversation. My role was to help Tom process and critically analyze his assumptions and the data through reflective questioning. He was leading this work, and I was supporting him through productive struggle and supportive risk-taking.

Tom helped me learn and practice that "clear is kind, unclear is unkind" (Brown, 2018). Brown (2018) explains that most people avoid clarity of expectations because they want to be kind. However, this is just the opposite; it is unkind and unfair. She states:

> Feeding people half-truths or bullshit to make them feel better (which is almost always about making ourselves feel more comfortable) is unkind. Not getting clear with a colleague about your expectations because it feels too hard yet holding them accountable or blaming them for not delivering is unkind. (p. 48)

Therefore, no matter how difficult a conversation would be, I needed to listen attentively and be empathetic while being honest.

Teams

Individual teacher positions often change because of the fluctuation of students at a particular level or a particular course. It is difficult to ensure teacher teams collectively have skills and personalities that complement and compensate for one another's strengths and struggles. During my first year of coaching, I worked with a few teams that experienced conflict for various reasons. One team struggled due to the addition of a new team member whose personality was viewed as challenging to some of the other group members.

That October, an English teacher reached out to me and asked if we could meet. I was ecstatic this teacher reached out to me, especially since I had hardly worked with her that fall. She was a strong, well-respected, veteran teacher with a pretty tough personality, which slightly

scared me. She did not communicate her reason for the meeting, so I asked if she wanted me to think of anything special or have anything ready before our chat. She responded that she just wanted to visit.

During our conversation, she revealed that her Professional Learning Community (PLC) team was struggling. The struggle was creating animosity within the department, and she wondered if I could attend their PLC meetings to support them. This was tricky. A critical component of my coaching position is to hold confidentiality in a vault for all stakeholders. I have to keep up my firewall, which protects my confidentiality vault, at all times to ensure I never encroach upon breaking anyone's trust. It was also tricky because this teacher was on that team, and she was asking for support. *How would I go into this team and help navigate this situation when I didn't have strong relationships with each team member? I need to figure out how to support this teacher and this team in order to build deeper relationships before I can begin the "real work" of coaching.*

At this point, I realized I had a structure in place for observing the PLC in order to understand the dynamics of this group. I was not assigned to a PLC group each week, but I attended groups that invited me. If on a given week, I was not invited to attend a PLC meeting, I picked a PLC group I had not yet been with. I sent an email asking if I could attend as a quiet observer, similar to how I began my year with Lions in Action. Since I already had this framework in place, I emailed this particular PLC team and asked if I could be a quiet observer to become familiar with their work. Before the meeting, I mentally prepared by reading through my sticky notes and resources about working with teams.

During my observation of this team, I sat quietly, listened, and nodded my head. I wanted the group to know that even though I was a "quiet observer," I was actively listening and engaging in their conversation. I was careful not to offer any opinions or suggestions, even if I really wanted to share something! However, during the team conversations, I shared pertinent information about a helpful resource or what teachers of another grade level had done. I wanted to be respectful since I was invited as an observer not as a member of the team. This approach worked well for me because at the end of their team collaboration time, I was asked to come back the following week with some of the resources I brought up in our discussion. I was invited to become part of the team.

As I walked back to my office to record notes, I thought about the items I was asked to share with them. Then, I began reflecting on how this team worked together. I observed many characteristics of an effective team. The teachers followed meeting norms. Each meeting had a purpose and followed an agenda. The teachers discussed standards connected to student work and student performance. They made decisions and next steps. Although these pieces are all important, effective teams must also be a collaborative and emotionally intelligent group. In other words, group members must express their feelings, be aware of one another's moods and how those moods affect group members, and have strategies for dealing with each other's emotions (Aguilar, 2016). Once in my office, I grabbed a pencil to make a list of the requested resources. Then, it hit me. I realized what was missing from this team and what was creating a barrier and causing frustration. This team lacked awareness and understanding of emotional intelligence for each individual member of the group and each member's unique needs. For example, the new teacher wanted to learn more expectations for projects, next steps, how lessons

were taught, and so on. More experienced teachers were frustrated because they were not able to discuss student work or create assessments as often due to the time spent on other items. This was hindering their collaboration. *How was I going to navigate this discussion? What strategies could I model as we worked together as a team? How could I navigate these conversations without offending anyone?*

To better support this team, I needed to revisit my resources about teams. I remembered that teamwork and collaboration are defined in a similar way and can be used interchangeably. For example, both collaboration and teamwork are dependent on each group member, which requires high levels of trust, risk, and effective dialogue to successfully achieve a goal (Nissen et al., 2014). Aguilar (2016) states that successful teams have three outcomes:

1) product (something of quality gets done that is valuable, useful, and appreciated);
2) process (the group's collaboration skills increase as a result of working together); and
3) learning (the team experience is a learning experience that increases the skills and knowledge of individual team members (p. 3)

Although collaborative teams are dependent on one another, researchers suggest that teams may work both interdependently and intradependently, depending on the task (Cain, 2013; Aguilar, 2016). However, effective teams do not develop without a culture of collaboration.

Coyle (2018) explains that group culture "is one of the most powerful forces on the planet" (p. xviii). Hence, creating trusting relationships is a foundational piece of the instructional coaching role. Although one may believe trust must be created before vulnerability, Brown (2018) suggests that "we need to trust to be vulnerable, and we need to be vulnerable in

order to build trust" (p. 22). In essence, teams must understand and implement emotional intelligence practices to know themselves as well as others in the group.

This group helped me learn the importance of team emotional intelligence. I realized that many team members may be polite in a team meeting but later express frustration with a particular person or decision. Coyle (2018) shares three skills needed to develop a collaborative culture:

1) build safety (create belonging and identity);

2) share vulnerability (habits of mutual risk drive trusting cooperation); and

3) establish purpose (stories create shared goals and values) (p.xix)

When considering these three skills, teams must identify how each skill is collaboratively learned, practiced, and discussed when there is a concern. I noticed each individual portrayed varying levels of understanding and implementation of emotional intelligence practices. Therefore, each group member had unique needs. Interestingly, group members often were not aware of assumptions, interpretations, or distorted thinking of themselves or others.

Further, throughout my work as a coach, I realized every individual or team experienced stress in some capacity. And each individual identified and dealt with stress in unique ways. For example, some teachers dealt with stress head on, others incorporated mindfulness practices into their workday, some avoided it, others cried it out, and so on. As I continued to reflect on this ah-ha moment, I realized that I needed to learn more about productive and unproductive stress, the signs of each, and how I could effectively support teachers in this way.

Stress

In a 2014 study, the American Institute of Stress discovered that job pressure, such as co-worker tension, pressure from bosses, and work overload, was the most significant cause of stress-related illness, both physical and emotional. Research has illustrated human service professionals like nurses, physicians, social workers, teachers, and the like are predisposed to burnout, with teachers having the highest levels (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014; Jennings et al., 2017). Additionally, statistics on teacher retention indicate the first five years of the teaching profession is when new teachers are most vulnerable (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2018). However, embedding emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-efficacy into professional development for teachers may decrease teacher attrition rates that are associated with stress.

Medina (2014) found that stress is hard to detect because what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to someone else. For example, in the book *Brain Rules*, Medina (2014) asks the readers if they view skydiving as fun or stressful? Personally, I feel skydiving would be stressful, and I will continue to avoid that situation whenever possible. Therefore, stress means there is a measurable physiological response, a desire to avoid the situation, and a feeling of loss of control (Medina, 2014).

Shonkoff et al. (2012) describe a three-tiered model of stress:

1) Positive stress (moderate, short lived, part of life, challenges learning, promotes growth, develop sense of mastery)
2) Tolerable stress (stronger than positive stress, risks of long term negative effects)
3) Toxic stress (chronic uncontrollable events or circumstances, frequent, strong, or prolonged activation of the stress management system, impacts long-term ability to respond to and manage stress)

These authors illustrate that not all stress is the same. Some stress is positive, some is negative, and can lead to depression or other illnesses. *So, how is stress different than productive struggle?*

The National Council of Math Teachers (2016) defines productive struggle as the tool students use to engage in learning at a deeper level by focusing on the understanding rather than the final solution. Edwards (2018) believes productive struggle is successful when learning is facilitated in a way that it "allows for think-time, teacher and student questioning, and collaboration" (p. 183). In addition, the process of struggling is what helps students take ownership (build agency), encourages resilience, and promotes a growth mindset (Edwards, 2018; Dweck, 2006; Hiebert & Grouws, 2007). Edwards (2018) explains that for productive struggle to be beneficial, a teacher and student must have equal parts in the work.

Although this definition is written for teachers and students, I believe it can also be connected to teachers and coaches. It is important to note Hiebert and Grouws (2007) state that struggle does not mean "needless frustration" or "overly difficult" problems. A productive struggle occurs within a student's zone of proximal development, as defined by Vygotsky (1978). Although Vygotsky's (1978) research is primarily referenced when describing a child's zone of proximal development, this concept is also applicable when working with adults.

Sometimes when we are in the thick of it, it is hard to tell if we are feeling stress or if we are engaged in productive struggle. If you are unsure, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you trying to avoid the situation?
- Do you feel that you are losing control?
- Are you experiencing a physiological response?
- Are you growing from this struggle?
- Is this challenge overly difficult and causing you to feel needless frustration?

If you are a coach engaging in productive struggle with a teacher (adapted from Townsend, Slavit, & Roth McDuffie, 2018), are you:

- Providing adequate scaffolds (supported risk taking) to allow your client to experience success?
- Are engaging in frequent collaboration and bringing in other resources for increased collaborative efforts?
- Are you encouraging and motivating your client?
- Are you providing an emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe environment?

Identifying and working through stress is critical not only for teachers, but also for instructional coaches. As a coach, I experienced stress and productive struggle. It is important to note everyone will experience stress. A person needs to know when he or she is transitioning from positive stress to negative stress as well as the tools to overcome negative stress.

Part IV: Falling into the Depths of the Dark and Twisty

Understanding Perfectionism and Creating a Resilience Reservoir

I loved this job. I loved learning with teachers, knowing every day would be different, anticipating a change in plan or a "fire" that needed immediate focus. I loved the challenge, the unknown, and the energy this role required every day. As much as I loved being an instructional coach, this was one of the hardest roles I have ever had.

The Storm

This job was relentless. It was a constant emotional rollercoaster with no time to use the restroom or grab lunch. I worked with teachers who were: worried about an upcoming parent meeting, angry and humiliated because they were placed on an improvement plan, frustrated with students because of poor behavior, loving every day with their students, blaming students for poor academic skills, grateful for a supportive team or colleague, felt judged because they

were exhausted from being up all night with a sick child, unwilling or scared to change their thinking about classroom management, curious about others' perspectives, experiencing grief or guilt in their personal lives, excited to implement something new into their classroom, feeling humiliation and shame because their contract was not renewed, feeling joyful because of a new baby, worried they could not get their work finished effectively for school and home while they took graduate classes at night. I could continue with this list, but you get the point. Teachers were overwhelmed. They were experiencing a lot of stress, and I feared some were nearing burnout.

I was overwhelmed. As a coach, I wanted to support and help every one of my teachers, and I began to hold all of these emotions and struggles. *That is my job, right?* I dug my heels in and continued to strap myself into the rollercoaster right next to them day in and day out. I worked tirelessly to support them in any way that I could throughout this rollercoaster of work and life experiences. I strived to build stronger relationships, promoted deeper reflection, offered co-teaching and modeling, researched and learned new ways to support teachers in their vast needs, searched for outside resources to support teacher needs, and continued to learn about instructional coaching strategies in order to become a more effective coach. Last but not least, I never ceased to provide good chocolate and Kleenex. Honestly, we all needed them.

This job was exhausting. There was not enough time in the day to accomplish all of my required tasks, especially when I was juggling my responsibilities for my teachers, my family, and my night courses for my doctoral degree. But I kept pushing.

I felt guilty about not spending enough time with my family. I felt more guilt when I could not do more for my teachers. I regretted working late at school every evening and weekend

for my teachers or on my doctoral coursework. I was embarrassed that I used to be a great mom, and now I felt that any negative behavior my children exhibited was a reflection of me being an inadequate mother. I needed to work harder. I needed to be better. I had no boundaries. I was not present to my family.

I refused to give in. Quickly, I realized it was easier to work than to deal with these feelings and emotions. So, I shoved them into a deep, dark corner. I grabbed my computer and got back to work. That way, I did not feel any more emotions. I was numb, so I kept pushing forward and did not look back. I was doing it all. I was doing it all by myself. Then I realized, I was alone.

The Foghorn

I want to be clear. This did not happen overnight, in a week, or in a month; it happened slowly over time. Surprisingly, at first, I did not even notice I was lost. *Or maybe I did but did not want to acknowledge it because it was too painful.* Honestly, I did not even come to the realization I was lost until I began learning more about emotional intelligence and resilience so that I could better support my teachers and fellow coaches.

Once I decided to learn more about emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-care, I was not sure what to expect or even if this was worth my time or energy. *I don't like hokey, I don't like fluffy, and I don't like touchy feely.* And I do not have time to waste time on something that would not be valuable to my teachers or myself. However, I do like stories, and I do like research. I decided to throw out some feelers and see what I could find to determine my next move.

Ironically, my learning became inspired by my research on self-efficacy for my doctoral work. Through my research, I learned that high self-efficacy was linked to building resilience (Zee & Koomen, 2016; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Wang, Tao, Bowers, Brown, & Zhang, 2018). Building resilience was linked to lower levels of stress (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017; Zee & Koomen, 2016; Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). Finally, lower levels of stress decreased burnout (Carr et al., 2017; Castro et al., 2018). My eyes began to widen, and my ears perked up. Wow, this was important.

I learned that one of the most important parts of emotional intelligence and resilience was getting to know oneself. Hence, I dove into a self-assessment about knowing myself. I read the questions or statements and marked the appropriate boxes. Yep, I knew myself. I was aware of my strengths. I realized how others' attitudes and beliefs affect my feelings about myself. I knew my life's purpose, and so on. Yes. Yes. And yes. Done. I kept reading.

As my research continued, I realized emotional intelligence and resilience are not concepts about which a person can just read and learn. One must self-reflect to fully learn the meaning and impact. This requires more than surface self-reflection. It requires the deep and dark self-reflection. As I slowed down and reflected more attentively, I thought about the self-assessment I had previously completed. After additional learning, I looked at the self-assessment again and realized I did not actually reflect. Although I answered "yes" to each of the questions, I could not provide a response explaining my purpose in life and what makes me feel vulnerable. I realized I could not answer any of the questions on this self-assessment. *Did I really know myself?* I did not want to reflect on my self-assessment any longer. I pushed through and kept reading so I could determine if this learning would be valuable to my teachers.

I learned more about emotions and distorted thinking. Distorted thinking really struck me as something important for a coach to understand when working with teachers. At the same time, I realized I engaged in distorted thinking and began to notice how often I engaged in my own distorted thinking. This new information forced me to slow down, recognize, and reevaluate my own distorted thinking. In turn, this process helped me recognize this same pattern in the teachers I coached. This was a tremendous realization. It was valuable to understand distorted thinking and the impact it has on oneself and others. The process of distorted thinking also helped me to stop, reflect deeply, and grapple with learning about myself.

As I continued to persevere in this research, I read about mindfulness and rolled my eyes. *I don't like hokey and fluffy*. To my surprise, I learned that mindfulness is more than talking slow, taking deep breaths, sitting quietly to acknowledge all senses, and finding inner peace. Mindfulness is knowing when to hit the pause button on life. Mindfulness is understanding personal bias and distorted thinking. It is also about being present, speaking clearly, and acting intentionally while eliminating emotion, judgment, or bias (Aguilar, 2018; Jennings et al., 2017). Aguilar (2018) describes mindfulness as a "resource not only for changing our inner world and experience but also for helping us change some of our most entrenched habits of thinking about other people" (p. 134). *Wow. Mindfulness isn't hokey and fluffy.* It is important to understand oneself in order to better understand others, their perspectives, and their actions. I become more intrigued by the concept of mindfulness.

The next concept I researched was joy. In my reading, I was prompted to reflect on moments that have filled me with joy and then consider what images and feelings came to my mind. I stopped reading and looked up from my book. I could not even think of the last time I

felt joy. My eyes began to well with tears. I took a deep breath, put my head back down, and kept reading. I was not sure what to do with that realization. So, I suppressed the feelings that surfaced and moved on.

A few days later, I needed an evening break. All my impending tasks swirled through my mind, and I knew I did not have time to go for a walk. But I compromised with myself. I would listen to a podcast while I walked. Although I was not doing academic research, I figured this podcast would still keep me thinking about the research I was working on. I grabbed my dog's leash, cued Brown's Unlocking Us Podcast Episode #4, and listened to her talk about the "family gap plan." Brown explained that the family gap is when she and her husband discuss what they each have left to offer their family once they get home from work. Brown explains:

> I'd say (to my husband), "Steve, all I have is 20%." And he's like, "Hey, I've been holding down the fort here. All I got is 20." So, we'd say, "Okay, we've got a gaping 60%. What are our rules when we don't have 100% as a family?"

This made me think about what I would say to my husband. *What do I have left for him and our kids each day?* My jaw dropped. Most days, I would tell my husband I had 5%, maybe 10% for him and the kids. On my best days, I would be able to tell him I had 20%. *So, I am saying I have only 5-10% of myself to give to my family? I was expecting my husband to fill in the rest of the gap every day? And when he was unable to meet my expectations, I got angry? Was he really at 90% every day when he came home from work? Doubtful.* I felt like I had been smacked with a 2x4 across the head. This was not okay. *This is not the kind of mom, wife, daughter, sister, aunt, or friend I want to be.* But this was my reality.

The tipping point in all of my learning was reflecting on the importance of having a resilience reservoir. Research demonstrates that resilience varies over time (Clarà, 2017; Gu, 2014) and that we can determine how we build or lose resilience. (Gu & Day, 2007; Newell, 2017; Wang et al., 2018; Clarà, 2017). With a group of other instructional coaches, I completed a resilience self-assessment, and much to my dismay, my resilience reservoir was empty. Once again, my eyes began to well with tears. This is when I truly realized I was surviving not thriving.

The Glimmer of Light

Throughout this learning process, I learned a lot about emotional intelligence and resilience as well as how to support teachers in this capacity. But most importantly, I learned a lot about myself.

I learned that I am an introvert. I work slowly and deliberately. I maintain concentration for extended periods of time. I possess strong social skills but prefer to be at home in my pajamas. I recharge my energy by spending time alone or with small groups. I become drained by being in large groups with numerous interactions with others (Aguilar, 2018; Cain, 2013). Interestingly, although I do exhibit the majority of an introvert's qualities, I enjoy and participate in risk-taking and working with others. This self-knowledge was important because it helped me understand what I needed to do to be productive as well as how I can recharge myself and keep my resilience reservoir full.

I learned that perfectionism is not a commitment to excellence or strong work ethic; it is a belief that in order to be loved and accepted, we must be the best at all times. Brown (2012) explains perfectionism:

- It is a self-destructive and addictive belief system that fuels this primary thought: *If I look perfect and do everything perfectly, I can avoid or minimize the painful feelings of shame, judgment, and blame*. Perfectionism is self-destructive because perfection does not exist;
- It is addictive, because when we invariably do experience shame, judgment, and blame, we often believe it's because we weren't perfect enough. Rather than question the faulty logic of perfectionism, we become even more entrenched in our quest to look and do everything just right; and
- It sets us up to feel shame, judgment, and blame which leads to even more shame and self-blame: "It's my fault. I'm feeling this way because I'm not good enough." (p. 130)

Reflecting on the meaning and components of perfectionism, I realized I exhibited many of these dysfunctional emotional tendencies, which may have attributed to loss of joy in my life. This was an important realization for me. It helped me understand some of the root causes of my distorted thinking. It also helped me determine my next steps to address and overcome the dysfunction of perfectionism.

I also learned that these perfectionistic qualities created a barrier for me to experience joy. According to Brown (2012), joy is the most vulnerable emotion we can feel. Interestingly, Brown states that when we feel joy, we also begin to feel fragility (2012). We often wonder, *What if it gets taken away? What if I lose it?* She further explains that fragility comes right after joy happens because our brains are "protecting" us from feeling too good. That way if something unfortunate happens in the future, we will not feel worse. Hence, we immediately start to

diminish our joy or think of worst-case scenarios to regulate our emotions into a more "normal" state (Brown, 2012).

Another self-realization was that I struggled to be vulnerable. When I first read Brown's (2018) definition of vulnerability which is an emotion we experience during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure, I thought I did vulnerability well. I was good at taking risks and being in uncertainty. I thought that was why I thrived on going through the challenges of change. However, as I reflected deeper on this, I realized I missed an entire part of Brown's definition. I also needed to be vulnerable with my emotions. I needed to have the capacity to experience hurt (McCoy, 2013). Maybe this was a key reason why I was unable to feel joy. However, during my struggle to understand vulnerability, I discovered the research of Hartling, Rosen, and Jordan (2000). Their research focuses on strategies of disconnection, which are strategies people use to avoid shame. These strategies are:

1) Moving away: withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves and keeping secrets;
2) Moving towards: seeking to appease and please; and
3) Moving against: trying to gain power over others, being aggressive, and using shame to fight shame.

Oh no. I used every one of these strategies of disconnection to avoid feeling embarrassed, unworthy, or guilty. Brown (2012) explains shame as:

> The fear that something we've done or failed to do, an ideal that we've not lived up to, or a goal that we've not accomplished makes us unworthy of connection…Shame is the intensely painful feeling or belief we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging." (p. 69)

I withdrew from family and friends, I continually worked to be the best at everything I did, and I became combative with my husband when I did not like the direction things were going. I realized that many of these feelings stemmed from my perfectionistic traits which impacted my view of self-worth. Brown (2018) explains when self-worth becomes:

> a function of productivity, we lose the ability to pump the brakes: The idea of doing something that doesn't add to the bottom line provokes stress and anxiety. It feels completely contrary to what we believe we want to achieve in life. We convince ourselves that downtime, like playing with our kids, hanging out with our partners, napping, tooling around in the garage, or going for a run is a waste of precious time. Why sleep when you can work? (p. 106)

This is *exactly* what I did. I did not set boundaries, and I convinced myself working was more important than any family time or downtime for myself. However, setting boundaries cultivates empathy, helps us understand and work with complex social groups, and is at the core of creativity and innovation (Brown & Vaughan, 2009). In other words, in order to have a purposeful, productive, joyful life, we must create boundaries. "If we want to live a life of meaning and contribution, we have to become intentional about cultivating sleep and play. We have to let go of exhaustion, busyness, and productivity as status symbols and measures of self-worth" (Brown, 2018, p. 106). Now I knew what my next steps needed to be.

Part V: The Life Preserver

Finding Joy

Stories are powerful. Stories can inspire. Stories can destroy. But we each have the power to choose the stories we tell. Regardless of where we are in life, whether in the land of sunshine

and unicorns or in the depths of the dark and twisty, we must "be mindful of the stories [we] believe, those that [we] tell, and those that [we] create and put forward" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 84). Finally, I realized I must rewrite the stories I have told myself and others.

This has been some of the most difficult work I have ever done. When I first began this journey, I kept putting it off, finding something *more important* to do first so I could continue to ignore my emotions, my missteps, and the hurt I had caused others and myself. I discounted the value or impact of my story. I had to be honest. I had to be vulnerable. If rewritten, these stories would validate I am not perfect. This thought process caused me to experience fear, anger, sadness, and shame. But it is time for me to end this first story. It is time to start working on the sequel, which will involve resilience and joy.

Grab onto the Rope – Advice for New Coaches

To date, many research studies have focused on teachers, burnout, and resilience. However, I believe instructional coaches are plagued by many of the same hurdles teachers face when working to overcome stress and build resilience. As instructional coaches, we spend the majority of our days supporting others, and often, we leave ourselves behind. Below are several realizations about emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, resilience, and joy that I discovered through my research, my personal experiences, or from other fellow coaches. It is my hope that these discoveries will help other coaches create stories for themselves which will lead them down the road to resilience.

You are not an Island

The first important lesson I learned in my first year of coaching: I was not alone in this work. I could not effectively support my teachers if I worked in isolation. Coaches are not

experts; we are collaborators. Therefore, these are examples of what makes a great coach: (a) knowing who to ask for help, (b) digging in and finding others more equipped to offer support, and (c) collaborating with other coaches. Collaboration is a critical component of coaching not only because it helps us build our own sense of belonging, but it also supports us in continued learning.

Begin building your coaching support network right away. You can find support within your district, your state, and online. Do not be afraid or too proud to ask for help, advice, a shoulder to lean on, or an ear to listen. Be vulnerable in your work, actions, and emotions. We are in this together.

Know Yourself

Know your core values. Ensure your words and actions represent your core values each and every day. Knowing yourself will help you better understand both yourself and others. Take time to reflect on how you are feeling, why you are feeling a particular emotion, and if you have any bias or distorted thinking that interferes with understanding the real story of yourself or others.

Be aware of distorted thinking at all times. When it creeps in, grab hold of it and discard it immediately before it affects the stories you tell yourself and others. Be intentional with the affirmations you create for yourself in order to dispel distorted thinking. Create meaningful intentions to keep yourself focused and grounded in your emotions, thoughts, and work each day. Be aware of how your distorted thinking may impact your ability to understand and support teachers as well as take care of yourself.

Get Organized

Unlike a teacher's schedule, a coach's schedule is unstructured and fluid. Consider investing in a good planner, color code events for quick reference, and know you will have to erase and reschedule. That is okay! However, if you say you are going to do something, you must follow through with both your words and actions.

Since coaches strive to support others, it is easy to put our needs on the back burner. It is important you schedule and protect time to eat lunch each day. Avoid scheduling back to back meetings without time to get water, use the restroom, and take a few minutes to reset your thinking, emotions, and intentions for the next part of your day.

Show your Inner Human

Open up and share who you are and let your personality shine through everything you do! Let others know that you care about them, you are there to support them, and you will not judge or evaluate them. We are all learners! Remember, keep your confidentiality vault protected behind your firewall at all times and strive to build an emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe environment for all.

Be aware of your thoughts, words, voice tone, facial expressions, body language, and actions. These are all ways you show your core beliefs and who you are as a person and coach. Just like a teacher, a coach always needs to be *on*. Therefore, it is critical to continually reflect on and address how we present ourselves to others, acknowledge biases we bring to a situation, and identify when we are wrong or emotionally unregulated. Offer a heartfelt apology when needed.

Set Boundaries

We have all heard of the work-life balance. But do we practice it? Work-life balance is having an equal focus or balance on one's personal, professional, and family life. As an instructional coach, this line can easily become blurred, so take extra precautions here. When pondering boundaries, consider leaving work on time a few days per week. Take time each day to eat healthy, exercise, drink water, and get enough sleep each night.

Beware of overcommitting. Learn to say no. Admittedly, this is one of my most difficult tendencies to break, but it is one of the most important. It is okay to say, *No, I can't meet right now, but how about Thursday at 10 a.m.? No, I can't come to the gathering because I need to get home to family. Thank you for asking though! No, I can't get that to you before the end of the day, but I can get it to you by the end of the day tomorrow.* Saying no does not mean that you are uncommitted, do not care, or do not find a task valuable. Saying no protects you from being overcommitted, stressed, overwhelmed, and exhausted.

Press Pause

The average person has about 65,000 thoughts each day (Blackburn & Epel, 2017). When life and work get crazy, press the pause button on everything. Just stop! Take a deep breath and reflect. Think about your core values. *What are my core values? Are my thoughts, words, and actions representing my core values? What is pulling me away from demonstrating my core values? Have I set my intentions for the day? Do I need to reevaluate my boundaries?*

Pause as long as you need to regulate your emotions and thinking. If we instructional coaches continue to work when we are unregulated, we lose trust and credibility with others. Take a walk to fill up your water bottle. Grab a cold pop from the pop machine. Listen to

classical music. Quickly stroll around the school hallways to remind yourself that your students are at the center of all you do. Continue to pause until you are regulated and able to enter the next part of your day in a calm, unbiased, and nonjudgmental way. Although this is difficult, you will put your trust and credibility with others in jeopardy if you do not pause and reflect.

Allow Grace

We are human, and we will make mistakes. Welcome them. Share them. Own them. Get into the mud, get dirty, and learn and grow with your teachers. Coaches are not experts. We are not perfect. And we only perform better by engaging through productive struggle, which causes us to grow. So, be the first one to jump in, be vulnerable, and fail forward. Throughout this process, allow grace for yourself and others. Learning is a process for all of us.

Sometimes teachers do not want or need help, but they do want to be heard. As a coach, we need to understand the difference and identify a teacher's purpose for meeting with us. We must acknowledge other's emotions and actions without judgment and embrace the productive struggle of the learning process. I have found that many teachers who need to be heard come back because they realize they do want help. They just needed to be heard first.

Be Grateful

Gratitude is one of the most important values in life. Take time to reflect each week on what you are grateful for. Consider writing a few personal thank you notes to staff each week, make a list of things you are thankful for at work and at home, and leave a treat in the lounge for everyone once in a while.

As a coach, I learned the value of overdoing thank you notes. Each time I worked with an individual or small group, I taped a lifesaver or mini-chocolate bar on a handwritten thank you note. This small gesture was meaningful to teachers and staff.

Take Care of Yourself

Self-care is an important component to ensure that we maintain a healthy work-life balance. No matter how busy you are at school, take time to make healthy meals and eat with your family. Exercise to strengthen your mind, body, and spirit. Get a good night's sleep. Taking care of yourself will allow you to better support others.

Taking time to care for yourself does not mean you are uncommitted to your teachers or school, nor does it show weakness. It shows that you understand the importance of selfcare for you to stay physically and emotionally strong. Leave work on time two or more days each week to get home or do something for yourself. (Grocery shopping or other errands do not count!) Do not get lost. Yes, your work will always be waiting, but that may not be true for your family, friends, or you.

Find Joy

Joy is not one thunderous moment that happens in a lifetime, a year, a month, or a week. Joy is created from many small moments throughout each day. Often, we do not notice these micro-moments of joy because we have not taken time to stop, pause, and notice them. Therefore, we must learn to become conscious of the small moments of joy we experience, take time to recognize them, and then savor them.

We can more easily notice our micro-moments of joy by being grateful. I found that writing personal notes to teachers at the end of each day was a powerful way for me to reflect on

my work with teachers. It helped me to reflect on my next steps as a coach, and it helped me pause and acknowledge my teachers' great achievements, growth, and learning. I used several different approaches when I wrote notes to teachers: thanking them, thinking about them, encouraging them in something new they were trying, and giving them due recognition for persevering through a difficult task.

Celebrate

Celebrations happen in a variety of ways. Celebrations can include a large school gathering, but oftentimes, celebrations are small and personal. When learning something new, teachers often do not see the little accomplishments along the way. They are often critical of themselves and always strive to improve for their students. Teachers need help with pausing, reflecting, and noticing their small micro-moments of joy too. As coaches, we also need to pause, acknowledge our micro-moments of joy, and celebrate them!

Celebrations help us realize that we are doing amazing things to support students. Take time to celebrate the positive accomplishments even if it is celebrating the strength to try something new. Celebrations are important for our work life as well as our personal life.

Because of the learning and realizations through my research, I have entered the struggle of getting on the path to building resilience and finding joy. Notice that I said path. I am not on the road yet, but I am out of the weeds! This effort has been particularly difficult because I have had to overcome, or at least begin to acknowledge, my perfectionistic tendencies, understand that I will never be perfect, and that perfection does not exist. These tendencies have been woven into me so tightly, I continue to struggle through these thoughts and feelings each day. But step by step, I keep moving closer to the road of resilience.

"The healing of our world my lie in how we make space for stories to be told, how we listen to stories, and that we tell our stories" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 84). Therefore, I am forever thankful that my experiences of instructional coaching have helped me learn and understand the importance of emotional intelligence and resilience. Through this work, I have taken small steps to build the relationships within my family, begin filling my resilience reservoir, and discover my micro-moments of joy. I have begun to change my story. And through my journey, I hope that you will be able to write your story of coaching differently than I have written mine.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

From the Researcher

When I choose to do something, I do it well. I put my whole heart into it and brace for the struggles I will encounter along the way. However, I continue to look forward to the new learning and growth I will gain once I reach my final destination. Reflecting on myself, I realized that true learning and growth have been a result of choosing a personal goal and then working toward that goal. Along the way, I often needed help or coaching in order to process, implement, and critically reflect on my experiences and new learning before determining my next steps. I am truly grateful for all of the coaches in my personal and professional life. They are the ones who inspired me to begin this work.

This research was a labor of love. It was exhausting, invigorating, frustrating, and rewarding both professionally and personally. This work surpassed my expectations of pushing myself to grow and has changed me for the better, as all extensive learning should. However, it is my hope that these findings will help others better understand the coaching role, reflect on components of effective coaching programs, and encourage school leaders to determine and infuse appropriate supports to ensure instructional coaches are able to build self-efficacy and resilience.

Previous research illustrates that effective teachers are imperative for increasing success for students' academic and social emotional growth. The instructional coach is often the backbone and behind-the-scenes support for teachers throughout the process of new learning and classroom implementation. Coaches offer supported risk-taking, promote reflection throughout productive struggle, and foster a collaborative culture of learning for the entire learning community while supporting each teacher's development and growth in emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience. Since coaches assume a significant role in the success of teachers, students, and schools, I was surprised to discover that limited research exists regarding instructional coaches, specifically how emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience impact a coach's ability to support teachers and how a coach's self-efficacy and resilience is built or hindered.

Addressing School Leaders and Instructional Coaches

School leaders, you are the backbone of a coaching program. If a coaching program does not have a strong foundation, both individual coaches and coaching programs will be ineffective. Therefore, it is critical to continuously review and evaluate coaching programs and practices using the New Teacher Center Instructional Program and Practice Standards (2018) as a guide. In addition, throughout this work, it was revealed that successful coaches have high levels of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience. Interviewed coaches repeatedly stated the importance of these qualities in an instructional coach. Finally, this research found that you, school leaders, are needed to build and sustain a coaching program that promotes effective coaching practices as well as fosters coaches' self-efficacy and resilience.

Coaches, throughout this study, I heard and felt your passion for supporting teachers each day. You openly shared your successes and struggles. You repeatedly noted that high levels of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and resilience are critical for the work you do. You shared that although you love your work, it is one of the most challenging roles you have had. You also validated the importance of taking care of oneself. Coaches, you are an inspiration to me and those around you, and I am thankful for the passion and energy you offer to the world of education.

Appendix A
Initial Recruiting Email to Educators

Good morning!

You are invited to participate in a survey and/or an interview to examine how and when instructional coaches currently receive training on effective coaching practices, how effective coaching training impacts the use of effective coaching strategies, how coaches receive feedback that continuously improves their coaching practices to ensure equitable outcomes for all learners, and how self-efficacy impacts effective coaching practices.

The benefit to participating in this research is that it will inform stakeholders' understandings of how and when instructional coaches currently receive professional learning about effective coaching practices, how effective coaching training promotes the use of effective coaching strategies, how coaches receive feedback that continuously improves their coaching practices, and how self-efficacy impacts an instructional coach's work with teachers. Furthermore, this study may also offer an understanding about the perceived need for additional instructional coaching training to continue to develop effective coaches who are able to meet the diverse needs of teachers. This information may inform decisions to require instructional coaches to complete coursework prior to accepting a coaching position, encourage area university systems to develop instructional coaching certificates, and to inform school district administrators about professional development needs, and ensure instructional coaches are able to effectively support teachers throughout their diverse learning needs. In addition, this research will be shared with the North Dakota Teacher Support System which may be used to guide future instructional coaching trainings offered at the state level. Only instructional coaches in North Dakota will participate in this research.

This survey should take you 10-15 minutes to complete. Please know that this study has been approved by the IRB at the University of North Dakota, and that I have received approval from your school district to contact you about this work.

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature of this research or the survey, please contact Aimee Volk at aimee.m.volk@ndus.edu. Thank you for helping me learn more about instructional coaches and professional learning.

Sincerely,

Aimee Volk, University of North Dakota

Take the Survey:

- Click here to take the Instructional Coaching Survey **OR** Copy and paste the URL into your browser: https://und.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_78nPrru4tqf1Jhr

Participate in an Interview:

- Email aimee.m.volk@ndus.edu
- Click here to sign up to be contacted about participating in an interview

Appendix B
Qualtrix Survey Software

Consent to Participate in Research

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Fostering Instructional Coaching Practices

Principal Investigator: Aimee Volk

Phone/Email Address: aimee.m.volk@ndus.edu

Department: Teaching and Learning

Research Advisor: Dr. Pamela Beck

Phone/Email Address: 701-777-6173; pamela.beck@UND.edu

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this research study is to explore the relationship between professional development and an instructional coach's ability to utilize effective coaching practices when supporting teachers through new learning.

Procedures to be followed:
If you decide to take part in this research study, you will complete a one-time questionnaire which includes Likert scale responses and short answer (approximately 15 minutes). After the questionnaire, you may also choose to participate in a three individual interviews to share additional experiences, perceptions, and understandings.

Risks:
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

Benefits
It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research.

Possible benefits to others include future knowledge about professional learning and instructional coaches, how instructional coaches receive feedback, and how effective instructional coaches impact the teachers they mentor.

Duration

It will take about 15 minutes to complete the questions.

Statement of Confidentiality:

The questionnaire does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server, or in a secure location if you chose to complete the survey by hand. However, given that the survey can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in this study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Aimee Volk. You may ask any questions you have now or contact her. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Ms. Volk's academic advisor, Dr. Beck, at 701-777-6173 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach the research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Instructional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html.

Compensation

You will not receive compensation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation:

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitles.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research study.

Completion of this survey implies you have read the information in this form and consent to participation in this research.

- ◯ I AGREE to participate in this research.
- ◯ I do NOT agree to participate in this research

Demographics

What is your current role?

- ◯ I am an instructional coach.
- ◯ I am not an instructional coach, but I support instructional coaches.

Do you work in a private or public school system?

- ◯ Private
- ◯ Public

How many years have you been/were you an instructional coach?

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2-5
- ◯ 6-9
- ◯ 10-15
- ◯ 15 or more

What percentage of the day are you an instructional coach?

- ◯ Full time coach

- ○ 0.75
- ○ 0.5
- ○ 0.25

Do you fulfill any other positions as well as being a coach?

- ○ Interventionist
- ○ Media Specialist
- ○ Administrator or Dean
- ○ Counselor
- ○ Teacher
- ○ [ ] Other- please record below

How many teachers work in your building?

- ○ 1-9
- ○ 10-19
- ○ 20-29
- ○ 30-39
- ○ 40-49
- ○ 50-100
- ○ Over 100

How many instructional coaches work in your building?

- ○ 0-0.5

- ○ 1
- ○ 1.5
- ○ 2
- ○ 2.5
- ○ 3 or more

Do all of the instructional coaches in your building have the same focus? (For example: instructional practices, technology, intervention, etc.). Please explain.

How many students does your school district have?

- ○ 0-500
- ○ 500-999
- ○ 1,000-1,999
- ○ 3,000-4,999
- ○ 3,000-4,999
- ○ 5,000-6,999
- ○ 7,000-8,999
- ○ 9,000-10,999
- ○ 11,000

What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Other

What is your ethnic origin?

- ◯ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Black or Affrican American
- ◯ Hispanic or Latino
- ◯ Native American
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Lslander
- ◯ White
- ◯ Other

Education, Experience, and Training

What is your highest educational degree?

- ◯ Bachelor's Degree
- ◯ Master's Degree
- ◯ Currently Completing Master's Degree
- ◯ Specialist Degree
- ◯ Currently Completing Specialist Degree
- ◯ Doctoral Degree
- ◯ Currently Completing Doctoral Degree

How many years were you a classroom teacher before becoming an instructional coach?

Did you have any prior instructional coaching training before obtaining your first instructional coach position?

- ◯ Continuing education course(s) focused on instructional coaching
- ◯ An instructional coaching certificate
- ◯ I did not have any prior instructional coaching coursework before obtaining my first instructional coaching position.
- ◯ Other- please explain

Were you required to have any instructional coaching coursework prior to accepting your instructional coaching position?

- ◯ Yes- please explain
- ◯ No

Were you required to attend any instructional coaching professional development training during your first year in your instructional coaching position?

- ◯ Yes- please explain
- ◯ No

Instructional Coaching and Professional Development

Need for Professional Development

	1- Strongly Disagree	2- Disagree	3- Slightly Disagree	4- Slightly Agree	5- Agree	6- Strongly Agree
1. Strong teachers make effective coaches even if they have not had instructional coaching training or professional development focused on coaching.	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. Instructional coaches need effective professional development opportunities focused on coaching practices each year.	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Effective professional development opportunities improve coaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Instructional coaches should be required to have training on coaching practices prior to obtaining a coaching position.	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Coaches need continued professional development to continue to learn about and implement effective coaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. My school district provides instructional coaches professional development opportunities focused on coaching strategies each year.	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. The coaching professional development opportunities provided by my school district are relevant to my needs and help me grow towards being a more effective coach.	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. My school district provides time for me to collaborate with other instructional coaches within my district throughout the year on a regular basis.	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. My school district provides time for me to collaborate with other instructional coaches in other school districts.	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. My school district pays for me to be part of professional organizations that focus around instructional coaching.	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. My school district provides books, resources, and/or additional training opportunities for me to learn more about effective coaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. I pay to belong to a professional organization that focuses on instructional coaching.	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. I purchase my own books or other resources to help me learn more about effective instructional coaching strategies.	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. I seek out websites, podcasts, articles or other resources to support my learning about effective instructional coaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○	○

16. I seek out colleagues to collaborate with about instructional coaching practices.	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. I would like to attend more professional development opportunities to learn about coaching and to collaborate with other coaches.	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. I receive effective feedback on how I can improve my coaching skills.	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. I receive effective feedback on my coaching skills from teachers.	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. I receive effective feedback on my coaching skills from my administrator.	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. I receive effective feedback on my coaching skills from my coaching colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○	○
22.Receiving specific and actionable feedback on my instructional coaching practices improves my coaching skills.	○	○	○	○	○	○
23. I need more specific and actionable feedback on my coaching skills.	○	○	○	○	○	○
24. Effective coaching positively impacts teacher strategy implementation.	○	○	○	○	○	○
25. Effective coaching positively impacts student achievement.	○	○	○	○	○	○
26. Effective coaching fosters collaborative relationships and builds a culture of learning.	○	○	○	○	○	○

27. Effective coaching positively impacts teacher's self-efficacy.	○	○	○	○	○	○
28. Effective coaching has a positive effect on teacher retention.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Effective coaching increases my self-efficacy in regards to coaching teachers.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Increased professional learning opportunities on coaching would increase my coaching self-efficacy.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Increased time to meet with coaching colleagues would increase my coaching self-efficacy.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Explain your understanding of the coaching role when you first began your position

Explain your current understanding of the coaching role.

What types of professional development opportunities and supports are available for you to continually develop and refine effective coaching skills? What other professional learning opportunities would you like to have? Explain.

Is continued professional development for instructional coaches needed? Why or why not? How does it impact your work with teachers?

How do you receive feedback on your instructional coaching practices? Who do you receive feedback from and is it useful? Explain.

Self-efficacy is the belief that you can achieve a specific task or outcome. Do you feel that high self-efficacy is important for instructional coaches? What experiences build or hinder a coach's self-efficacy? Explain.

Please record any other thoughts you would like to share.

Appendix C
Informed Consent

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Fostering Instructional Coaching Practices

Principal Investigator: Aimee Volk

Phone/Email Address: aimee.m.volk@ndus.edu

Department: Teaching and Learning

Research Advisor: Dr. Pamela Beck

Phone/Email Address: 701-777-6173; pamela.beck@UND.edu

What should I know about this research?
- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don't take part, it won't be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it won't be held against you.
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will I be in this research?
Each of the three interviews will last about an hour for three hours total participation.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this research study is to explore the relationship between professional development and an instructional coach's ability to utilize effective coaching practices when supporting teachers through new learning.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?
You are being asked to participate in three individual interviews to share experiences, perceptions, and understandings about instructional coaching. Interviews can be in person, online, by phone, or through email (approximately one hour each). If any follow up information is needed, it is your choice if you continue to work with the researcher or if you choose to end your participation.

Could being in this research hurt me?
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

Will being in this research benefit me?
It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research.

Possible benefits to others include future knowledge about professional learning and instructional coaches, how instructional coaches receive feedback, and how effective instructional coaches impact the teachers they mentor.

How many people will participate in this research?
Approximately 4-10 participants will participate in the one-on-one interview portion of this research project.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?
You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Who is funding this research?

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

What happens to information collected for this research?
Your private information may be shared with individuals and organizations that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Pamela Beck – Research advisor

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. We will protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

You have the right to review/edit the recordings, determine who will have access, if the recording maybe used for educational purposes, and when they will be erased. Data collected in this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed.

What if I agree to be in the research and then change my mind?
You may decide to leave the study at any time without consequences.

Who can answer my questions about this research?
The researcher conducting this study is *Aimee Volk.* You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Ms. Volk's academic advisor, Dr. Beck, at 701-777-6173 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html.

Voluntary Participation:
You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age older to participate in this research study.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subject's Name: _____

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____ _____
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

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