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A FRAMEWORK
FOR TRANSFORMING ELEMENTARY LITERACY COACHES'
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

by

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A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT

Elementary literacy coaches serve as one component in a professional learning system to support teacher learning. This dissertation in practice intended to highlight the need for an effective professional learning system for elementary literacy coaches that will enable them to impact teacher and student learning. The pilot study explored needs and perspectives of professional learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches in a central Florida school district. Findings from the pilot study, along with literature surrounding the topic, resulted in the design of *A Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning*. This Framework utilized components from existing resources to develop access points for literacy coaches' professional learning. Access points included choice in coaching cycles, collaborative learning communities among coaches, and differentiated learning opportunities for literacy coaches to build their repertoire of literacy content knowledge and coaching skills. Theoretical contributions of adult learning and the sociocultural learning perspective within the Framework ensured literacy coaches' choice, ownership, and embedded learning opportunities. Suggested use for this dissertation in practice is to inform professional learning practices for in-service and pre-service elementary literacy coaches to ensure continued growth in coaching skills and literacy knowledge.

This work is dedicated to my sweet boys, Jacob and James; may you both be so lucky as to find a career and a passion that align. To Garret, who surely wins the best spouse award for patience, unwavering support, and certainty; thank you for traveling this journey with me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
- English Language Arts (ELA)
- English Language Arts Resource Teachers (ELART)
- Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS)
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- Professional Learning (PL)
- Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR)
- Targeted Coaching Cycle (TCC)
- Woodland County Schools (WCS)

CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Introduction

In today's era of new educational standards, assessment systems, and demands for 21st century teaching and learning, literacy coaches can play a pivotal role in teacher and student success (Aguilar, 2013; Annenberg Institute for School Reform [AISR], 2004; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Gulamhussein, 2013). According to Burkins and Ritchie (2007):

Literacy coaches have the ability to effect change at multiple layers, creating vast implications for the shape of literacy education, from the way coaches and teachers relate to one another to helping students become truly literate to effecting large scale change as more and more students and teachers become active agents in charge of their own learning and growth. (p. 46)

Literacy coaches serve as a single component in a larger professional learning system that promotes continuous improvement in teachers' instructional practice (Aguilar, 2013; Gulamhussein, 2013), yet determining how to best provide professional learning for literacy coaches remains a large obstacle (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Research on professional learning for teachers is plentiful and much applies to literacy coaches; however, opportunities specific to literacy coaches are limited (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). It is important to note that the availability of professional learning opportunities is not the culprit; yet, it is the amount of quality professional learning offered that actually seems to change teacher practice and increase student learning that is minimal (Gulamhussein, 2013). Furthermore, effective professional learning requires significant amounts of support during the implementation phase of a new skill which could take up to 20 separate instances before mastery is achieved (Gulamhussein, 2013;

Joyce & Showers, 2002). Educational reform shifts warrant quality learning experiences for literacy coaches in order to maximize the potential of their role to aid in student learning, and therefore school improvement.

Problem Statement

Researchers have shown that current professional development practices for elementary literacy coaches do not translate to professional growth for literacy coaches. The complex problem of practice that this dissertation in practice (DiP) addressed was the need to adjust existing professional development to professional learning practices so as to enable elementary literacy coaches to feel supported while leading at the forefront of educational change.

Coaching

Coaching is a broad term that is used to generalize various types of work. For the purpose of this study, a coach was defined as anyone who partners with teachers to help them incorporate research proven practices that improve the quality of teaching and student learning (Cornett & Knight, 2009). More specifically, standards for reading professionals, developed by the International Reading Association [IRA] (2010), defined a literacy coach as a professional whose specific goal was to support teachers with the instruction of and improvement in literacy achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Upon release of those standards, the organization shifted to the International Literacy Association [ILA] (2015) which provided a clearer definition of the literacy coaches' role stating that it is "to work with teachers and facilitate efforts to improve school literacy programs" (p. 8).

Coaching programs within school districts often are of various designs, some focusing on particular curricular areas or instruction and others on overall teaching practices. All coaching programs, however, are meant to affect teacher knowledge, instruction, and student achievement (Marsh et al., 2008). Evidence supports professional learning, coaching, and mentoring as methods that improve teacher instruction and promote the retention of highly effective teachers (Aguilar, 2013; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; IRA, 2010; National Reading Technical Assistance Center [NRTAC], 2010). Further consideration deems coaches as a valuable resource to teachers because they provide necessary, job embedded, ongoing, professional learning opportunities at individual school sites (NRTAC, 2010). Guskey (2002) posited that in order for sustainable changes to occur in schools, teachers need regular feedback, and a combination of support and pressure, all of which can be provided by a coach. In many cases, the implementation of literacy coaching is considered the most effective way to provide ongoing professional learning for teachers (NRTAC, 2010).

Professional Learning

Professional learning, as opposed to professional development, is meant to convey the need for educators to be self-developing, continuous learners (Easton, 2008). It encompasses the perspective of adult learning theory, or andragogy, which ensures the need for professional learning experiences to consider participants' prior knowledge, relevance of topics, and autonomy (Knowles, 1978). According to Fullan (2007), "Student learning depends on every teacher learning all the time" (p. 35). Literacy coaches can facilitate this constant need for learning by providing site based, ongoing, embedded experiences for teachers (Aguilar, 2013; IRA, 2010). Two early studies completed by Showers (1982, 1984) connected coaching to a

95% implementation transfer rate of content learned in professional learning settings. Without coaching, this transfer rate drastically dropped to approximately 20% (Showers, 1982). In the second study, coached and non-coached teachers were compared after attending the same workshop; results indicated that coached teachers were more likely to transfer new teaching practices from the workshop into instruction, leading to higher student achievement (Showers, 1984). Similar to these successful experiences with coached teachers, professional learning experiences for literacy coaches should apply the use of peer coaching as an effective tool for growth; yet, literacy coaches often struggle to find meaningful learning experiences that enhance their practice (Aguilar, 2013).

People

Literacy coaches have the opportunity to transform teaching and learning at their school sites, meaning they can positively impact the entire school in which they work. While research on the effectiveness of coaching has been minimal, one could assume that when a coach partners with a teacher to improve instructional practices, student achievement results are impacted in a positive manner (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Showers, 1984). Substantial research findings have supported the use of feedback, modeling, practice, and peer coaching to improving the rate of transfer from workshops to instruction (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Showers, 1982, 1984).

Literacy coaches are often site-based, meaning their position within the school naturally isolates them from other literacy coaches (Aguilar, 2013; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Coaches often seek professional learning experiences, but very few opportunities or structures exist for maximizing the development of the coach (Aguilar, 2013; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Cornett & Knight, 2009). Current learning experiences for coaches are similar to those that are provided to

teachers, and they fall within the category of professional development. The common, one day, “one stop” workshop with minimal follow up that removes teachers or coaches from their school sites is typical practice, yet researchers have reported that these professional development practices are ineffective (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Andree, 2010). Furthermore, the researchers negating these practices cited specific evidence from countries with successful professional learning systems, all of which provided ongoing, embedded, collaborative learning time for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). It is vital that we begin to honor these research based, best practices to support elementary school literacy coaches with professional learning opportunities, as they have the ability to serve as an agent of change alongside teachers in the improvement of teaching and student learning.

Connections to Other Relevant Problems

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE] (2015), the rigorous demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will not be met unless teacher preparation and development are transformed. This transformation should include personalized, engaging, higher level thinking, and collaborative professional learning (AEE, 2015). Coaches are tasked with facilitating professional learning at their schools, making it especially crucial that they experience adequate learning experiences that build their own repertoire of literacy knowledge, coaching skills, and instructional practices (IRA, 2010). By focusing on collaborative school environments, teachers and coaches can foster a much needed shift in today’s classrooms that will produce productive, successful citizens.

Significant barriers impact the approach to professional learning for literacy coaches. Time is a limited resource within the school day, and this often forces educators to volunteer

time beyond their work day to engage in professional learning. Funding for substitute teachers would alleviate this problem by providing uninterrupted time for coaches to collaborate with teachers; however, funds are usually minimal. Additionally, there is no structure that supports ongoing, collaborative learning among elementary school literacy coaches (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). A popular model for alleviating this barrier among teachers is professional learning communities (PLCs), which, when implemented effectively, provide a structure for educators to collaborate and learn together within a school (DuFour, 2004). At this time, minimal structures exist to support PLCs for coach to coach interactions (across schools) for professional learning (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007).

Last, the role of the literacy coach is ambiguous across schools, and often varies depending on how school and district administration value and delegate tasks to the position. Variations as grand as these create an added layer of difficulty in benefitting from coach to coach collaborations because it is extremely rare for coaches to have the exact same tasks, roles, and responsibilities.

Significance of the Problem

Currently, there is a strong focus to provide an equal, accessible education for all children. One of the most common initiatives that strives to address this goal is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These standards are meant to unite the states and provide some level of homogeneity in the area of what students in grades K-12 need to learn and be able to do to be prepared for college and career (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In 2014, Florida opted out of the CCSS, instead adapting the national standards at the state level, titled The Florida Standards, or specific

to literacy, the Language Arts Florida Standards [LAFS] (FLDOE, n.d.). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE] (2015) the CCSS are a top educational focus. The ILA supports this stance by defining literacy as a means for producing college and career ready students that gain skills needed to become successful members of the workforce (Lewis-Spector, 2015). Furthermore, consensus is forming around the idea that literacy education must be transformed due to ever-changing technological advancements. With a need for high quality instruction, college and university programs preparing and retaining teachers are also under scrutiny to meet the demands of today's classrooms (Duncan, 2015a, 2015b).

Instructional practice, particularly in regard to the teacher's impact on student success, has received much attention and pressure to meeting current demands in education. For example, according to the United States Department of Education [USDOE] (2015), the quality of the classroom teacher has been proven to be the single, most important, school-based factor for a child's academic success (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Literacy coaching is repeatedly identified as a "hot topic," and this highlights the need to prioritize further research on how literacy coaching offers a means for preparing, supporting, and retaining teachers (Blamey et al., 2008; Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Ortlieb, 2015; IRA, 2010). When used effectively, the literacy coach fosters an environment where teachers can collaborate and grow as professionals (Aguilar, 2013; Blamey et al., 2008; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; IRA, 2010). In recognizing the power of a coach in developing highly effective teachers, several states and universities (i.e., Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Iowa; University of Florida, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, LaSalle University) established coaching certification programs. Though specialized certification for coaching is not

yet required, these programs pave the way for solidifying the position of coach as valid and important to teacher and student success.

In Florida, school districts have been required to submit an annual K-12 Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan that documents school and district level administrative roles, professional learning, assessment, curriculum, and instruction that is in place to support student learning of the Language Arts Florida Standards [LAFS] (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2015). The plan identifies ways that professional learning is differentiated and intensified based on need and data. It also states that teachers should be provided with weekly professional learning opportunities through PLCs and lesson study (FLDOE, 2015). Literacy coaches are specifically addressed in the K-12 plan, and school districts are responsible for ensuring that the number of literacy coach positions funded in schools is maintained or increased each year and that assignments are prioritized based on school needs (FLDOE, 2015). District plans must indicate how they monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the *Just Read, Florida!* coaching model. This model clearly defines the role of the literacy coach as “a stable resource for professional development through a school to generate improvement in reading and literacy instruction and student achievement. Coaches will support and provide initial and ongoing professional development to teachers” (FLDOE, 2015, p. 2). Specific to literacy coaches’ learning, the plan clearly states that coaches must “continue to increase their knowledge base in best practices in reading instruction, intervention, and instructional reading strategies” (FLDOE, 2015, p. 2) and they must “exhibit knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality reading instruction, and infusing reading strategies into content area instruction, and data management skills... they must have a strong knowledge base in working

with adult learners” (FLDOE, 2015, p. 2). Maximizing the potential role of literacy coaches in improving and supporting teacher instruction calls for the need to examine current professional learning experiences for coaches and considerations for enhancement. For this reason, this dissertation in practice addresses the need to adjust existing professional development practices that will provide a system of support to enable elementary literacy coaches to effectively serve as literacy leaders at the forefront of educational change.

Research Questions

The main question addressed in exploring this problem of practice is:

- In what ways can research-based best practices for professional learning be applied to literacy coaching in a central Florida school district?

In addition, several sub-questions offer further support:

- How are elementary literacy coaches in a central Florida school district “coached” to meet the demands of their roles and responsibilities? Who coaches them?
- What formats of professional learning experiences are provided to literacy coaches in a central Florida school district?
- What types of professional learning for coaches, including professional learning communities (PLCs), will improve the coaches’ ability to facilitate professional learning experiences that will help teachers to create effective 21st century literacy instruction?

Ultimately, the goal of this research was to adjust professional learning experiences in order to keep elementary literacy coaches up to date on current trends, research, practice, and issues in literacy education. The proposed adjustments will be made *with*, not just for, elementary literacy

coaches. Enhanced experiences for literacy coaches translate to enhanced coaching episodes with teachers which, in turn, may positively impact student learning. The remainder of this chapter contains an introduction to the school district from which data will be collected, an exploration of factors and barriers that contribute to the problem of practice, the research methodology, and the beginning development of a proposed solution.

Organizational Context

The organization for this problem of practice was a school district situated in east, central Florida that serves approximately 61,000 students across 89 schools. Woodland County School (WCS) district (pseudonym) was one of the 15 largest districts in Florida with 45 elementary schools attended by students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Two additional schools, titled combination schools, served students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Title 1 funding was provided to 34 of the elementary schools. As shown in Table 1, the student population was diverse. A shared vision statement was used to unite the large district stating: “Through the individual commitment of all, our students will graduate with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be successful contributors to our democratic society” (Woodland County Schools [WCS], 2015-16, p. 24). The target population for this study included the 12 elementary literacy coaches and 14 academic coaches that focus on ELA in WCS.

Table 1

Woodland County Schools Demographic Data

Demographic Criteria	% of Students
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.0%
Black	15.5%
Hispanic	18.4%
Multiracial	3.9%
White	59.9%
English language learners	5.3%
Students with disabilities	16.0%
Free or reduced lunch	61.0%

The school district operates under a top-down structure guided by a three-year strategic plan that aligns current initiatives to five main goals. In relation to this research, the fourth goal drew attention to the need to “foster an environment that promotes ongoing professional development and improved job performance for all teachers and staff” (Woodland County Schools [WCS] District Strategic Plan, 2012-2015, p. 4). A sub-goal for this priority included the need to provide methods and resources for ongoing training of novice and experienced teachers (WCS District Strategic Plan, 2012-2015). Coaching naturally provides a means for working toward this goal. During the 2015-16 school year, 13 elementary schools employed literacy coaches, and an additional 27 schools had academic coaches. For the purpose of this study, academic coaches, who were identified by their school administrators or by themselves as having an ELA focus, will be considered. Elementary literacy coaches receive literacy support from the school district’s Elementary English Language Arts (ELA) Department, which employed one ELA Specialist and five ELA Regional Resource Teachers on Assignment

(ELARTs) during the 2015-16 school year. Both the ELA specialist and ELA Regional Resource Teachers on Assignment were responsible for supporting, monitoring, and decision making of elementary Social Studies curriculum as well.

Recent professional development practices for elementary literacy coaches were implemented through the school district's Title 1 office which categorized all coaches as instructional coaches regardless of their specific domain (i.e., academic, literacy, mathematics, and science). Per the 2013-14 document, "A Guide for All Instructional Coaches," the goal of Woodland County's Coaching Initiative was to

. . . increase teacher efficacy to positively impact student learning. To accomplish this, all of the various coaches who go into classrooms need to have a common core set of competencies and consistent language for coaching. We call this Many Coaches, One Voice (p. 2).

During the 2014-15 school year, instructional coaches were required to attend a full day of professional development every other month. These trainings were designed to "improve skills in setting coaching outcomes based on student needs, conducting effective, targeted coaching cycles, and demonstration of content knowledge and instructional practices" (WCS, Title 1 Coaching Initiative-Year 6, 2014-2015, p. 1). Each professional development session began with coaches divided by their specific content area so as to receive information or training to relay back to their schools. The second portion of the session was dedicated to developing knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the coaching domains (classroom management, basic instructional design, individual student manipulations, program/curriculum integrity, and collaboration) and the Targeted Coaching Cycle [TCC] (WCS, A Guide for All Instructional

Coaches, 2012-14). According to district artifacts, TCC was the preferred coaching cycle used in WCS to help maintain a common language for coaching during the 2014-15 school year. This method provided a recommended cycle that initiates coaching immediately after a teacher attends professional learning with (a) initiation from the coach in person or via email; (b) targeted coaching episodes in which the coach observes, scripts a lesson, provides feedback; and (c) later follows up in person or via email after the targeted coaching to provide additional feedback (WCS, A Guide for All Instructional Coaches, 2012-14). In 2015-16, the district coaching initiative shifted to the Student-Centered Coaching Cycle (Sweeney, 2011). This model mimics TCCs but adds student data at the start and end of the coaching cycle which intends to connect coaching to student learning (Sweeney, 2011).

Instructional coaches are generally appointed by school principals who also complete their yearly evaluations. The school district under study supported the position as needed via virtual meetings using Adobe Connect, by communicating updates about coaching at principals' meetings, and with side-by-side coaching with district staff at individual school sites (WCS, A Guide for All Instructional Coaches, 2013-2014).

The problem of practice is significant to my former work as an elementary school teacher and literacy coach in the WCS district. In my eight years of literacy coaching at the same elementary school, I participated and led a variety of professional learning sessions. At that time, the position was titled reading coach; at present, WCS district refers to the position as ELA coach. To maintain consistency with terms and align with the current emphasis on literacy that includes listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing, I have used the term, literacy coach, throughout this study (ILA, 2015). Prior to coaching, I was a classroom teacher

who benefitted from coaching. From these experiences, I consider myself a knowledgeable outsider in regard to literacy coaching, having insight and several experiences that are important to the work I am completing now (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Initially, as a new literacy coach, I remember feeling very isolated and uncertain about how to effectively and correctly coach teachers. At the time I became the literacy coach at the elementary school where I was a classroom teacher, the school benefitted from the Reading First grant. The grant stemmed from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to ensure the use of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) in low socioeconomic schools. Funding from the grant was intended to be used to employ reading coaches to support teachers in implementing data-driven, SBRR instruction (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2015). As part of this statewide, federally-funded reading initiative, the grant provided coach mentoring from the Reading First Coordinator assigned to the school, who provided me with direction, knowledge, and understanding of both literacy content and coaching skills. This level of support was unique to schools with the grant, and the lowest performing Reading First schools received the highest levels of support. Looking back, the levels of support provided through the grant were integral to my success as a coach as well as to my school's progress in literacy instruction. Key elements of the supports received during that time, such as regular visits from the coordinator, ended upon completion of the grant. However, I believe similar supports could possibly be adapted within the school district without available state funding to help improve current professional learning practices for literacy coaches by including collaboration and ongoing, embedded learning opportunities.

Although my work within WCS district ended three years ago, my passion for literacy coaching remains. I continue to work in select elementary schools within the district as an outside consultant who supports literacy program implementation. This work typically takes on a “coach the coach” format. Additionally, my work as an internship coordinator with pre-service teacher candidates and their mentor teachers at a large metropolitan university in central Florida keeps my coaching skills active.

As a researcher, I consider myself an outsider to WCS, but this position comes with a caveat because many literacy coaches, teachers, and administrators are familiar with me as well as with my past and present work. Although I feel fortunate to have these relationships and know the context of the organization well, it is necessary to express caution in regard to data collection. My prior involvement with this school district may have influenced how the participants in the research study respond. I need to be cognizant of my positionality, and maintain a neutral stance in order to limit bias. As this research continues, my goal is for the presentation of a framework for professional learning for literacy coaches to be sufficiently well received that it becomes an “outside with inside collaboration” effort between the district and myself to adjust professional learning opportunities for literacy coaches (Herr & Anderson, 2015). According to Herr and Anderson (2015), the co-learning participatory method supports insiders and outsiders working together to share knowledge and create new understandings or an action plan or, in this case, a framework for professional learning options for elementary literacy coaches.

History and Conceptualization

Established in the mid-1850s, the school district of focus (WCS) has grown over the years to accommodate the flourishing central Florida population. As shown in Table 1, the district serves a diverse population of students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. As part of the state system for public education, five elected school board members serve at the summit of the organization to annually evaluate and assess the performance of the school district while ensuring it operates in alignment with state policies. Additionally, the school board appoints a superintendent who is responsible for the administration and management of the school district. As the top instructional leader, the superintendent oversees school district and school level functions to ensure proper, progressive performance. The top-down structure continues with district level departments, school principals, teachers, and students. District level departments impact the problem of practice. The professional learning department develops and provides learning opportunities, some of which are mandatory, to schools and individual teachers; and the Title 1 office oversees the coaching initiative. Also, an overlap exists within the organizational structure that is specific to instructional coaches. Instructional coaches (literacy, academic, and other content area coaches) are monitored and evaluated by their principals; however, they are further monitored by the Title 1 district office. This office collects accountability measures; they monitor attendance at professional learning sessions, require documentation of how time is invested in schools via a monthly, self-reported calendar from each coach, and review documentation of coaching episodes.

International Context

Literacy coaching, though not exclusive to the United States, is not a consistent role in schools throughout the world. Therefore, this problem of practice was examined through the international context by comparing and contrasting professional learning around the world. As a global competitor in education and workforce, the United States continually falls behind, revealing a large achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2014). In the annual Brown Center Report on Education that provided an analysis on how well American students learn, three key empirical studies indicated dismal results in comparison to other nations (Loveless, 2015). The most recent report focused on the gender gap in reading achievement, the effectiveness of the English Language Arts (ELA) CCSS implementation, and student engagement in mathematics (Loveless, 2015). Of the three studies cited within the report, the most relevant to this problem of practice was the implementation analysis of the ELA CCSS. The report compared fourth-grade reading achievement (measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]) in states with strong implementation of the ELA CCSS to states that opted not to adopt the standards. Results indicated that the standards, which were meant to better prepare students to become global competitors in society, did not show a significant difference in reading achievement (Loveless, 2015). Highlighted in this report was also the varying implementation levels of the standards across the states that adopted them. Considerations for improving implementation of the standards, as well as refining instruction, bring attention to teacher preparation and development, including how literacy coaches can impact growth as educators grapple with the ELA CCSS.

Teacher development, or how systems allow for teachers to continually learn, varies throughout the world. Research on teacher development in high achieving countries supports the need for thorough teacher preparation programs as well as continuous support for in-service teachers throughout their careers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). High achieving nations provide supports for teachers that include superior preparation, competitive salaries, mentoring, extensive opportunities for ongoing professional learning experiences, and teacher involvement in decision making (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Exemplary professional learning for teachers also happens in Singapore. There, the government pays for 100 hours of professional learning each year for teachers in addition to the 20 hours they are given weekly to collaborate with colleagues, visit classrooms, and complete action research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Teachers in Singapore also have the advantage of government assistance to earn a master's degree which provides additional career growth in curriculum, mentoring, and or leadership (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). The following section details how professional learning varies in the United States.

National Context

In the United States, teachers typically receive dramatically different levels of preparation and support, inadequate salaries, and minimal mentoring, coaching, or embedded learning experiences, all of which contribute to hefty teacher turnover rates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Per recent research studies, a very limited number of teachers in the United States receive ongoing, embedded professional learning that is credited with changing teacher practice and boosting student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Substantial evidence for these findings is further supported by the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).

Though the United States' participation in TALIS was not substantial enough to meet the international standards, the data collected did allow for independent reporting (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014). The survey, completed by teachers, addressed school leadership, teacher training, feedback given to teachers, as well as teachers' pedagogical beliefs and self-efficacy, including job satisfaction (OECD, 2014). According to the report, 35% of teachers surveyed in the United States indicated that they never receive feedback. When examining the effectiveness of the feedback received, a synthesis of the results indicated that an average of 43% of the teachers surveyed across participating countries found feedback to have an insignificant impact on their teaching (OECD, 2014). Hattie and Timperley (2007) extensively researched feedback for students and substantiated that in order to be effective it must be task related and contain information related to learning. Variability noted in response to feedback was attributed to the various types and the fact that feedback may be sought, rejected, modified, or accepted (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). If applied to teachers and coaches, Hattie and Timperley's (2007) work on effective feedback could critically influence learning and change the way teachers and coaches receive and respond to feedback.

In addition, TALIS findings positively correlated teachers' self-efficacy and the amount of participation in collaborative professional learning activities (OECD, 2014). Efforts to shift professional learning to collaborative, ongoing, learning experiences that researchers have supported have been stifled by individual school structures and systems within the United States (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Current professional learning practices are well intentioned for supporting adult learning; however, the typical one stop workshop is not powerful enough to lead to sustained change (Gulamhussein, 2013). Ineffectiveness of the one stop

approach was evidenced by Showers (1982) in her research. She highlighted the transfer rate from professional learning to classroom implementation as an increase from 20% without coaching to 95% with coaching.

The nation's urgency to globally compete in the realm of education has been amplified by the adoption of the CCSS which added rigor with the promise of better preparing students for college and careers (AEE, 2015). The intensity of the new standards drew concerns about whether or not teacher capacity can adjust to meet these new, ever changing demands. The standards created a need to transform education to include personalized, deeply engaged learning with a focus on high-level content and complex skills enabled by new tools. The National Council for Teachers of English [NCTE] (2015) recognized the need to build capacity within schools by examining how professional learning practices impacted student achievement. Environments in which educators learn with and from one another have the capacity to strengthen teaching and learning (NCTE, 2015). Collaborative professional learning is needed to enhance the quality of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Gulamhussein, 2013; National Center for Literacy Education [NCLE], 2013).

State and Local Context

Professional learning for coaches is inconsistent at the state and national levels. The WCS district holds monthly trainings for instructional coaches. These meetings range in focus from the coaching cycle to the latest initiatives adopted by the district, and alternate months with specific content area meetings. Instructional coaches (literacy, academic, and other content area coaches) are also used to deliver professional learning at their school sites. These mandated sessions are typically held once a month during early release Wednesdays (students are

dismissed an hour early from school) and are designed by the district's professional learning office. Coaches, in these sessions, deliver the school district's message at their school sites. Specific to WCS, coaches are required to submit documentation of at least two coaching episodes with teachers per school year.

Addressing the Problem

In the early 2000s, the establishment of PLCs in schools helped to foster teacher collaboration and allowed for teachers to provide input for their own learning needs at the school level (Bean & Morewood, 2011). PLCs operate under three key ideas: (a) they ensure student learning, (b) promote collaborative culture among teachers and students, and (c) use data to make decisions (DuFour, 2004). Interactions within PLCs are meant to be authentic rather than contrived, and school leaders must delegate time and resources for the initiative to be successful (Bean & Dagen, 2012). While many schools continue to function with effective PLCs, the implementation is inconsistent within and across schools. Furthermore, schools are often faced with difficulty in the ongoing implementation of PLCs due to individual school structures, scheduling conflicts, limited funding, and varying levels of administrative support. This results in a variation in how PLCs are implemented versus how they are described in research (Bean & Morewood, 2011). The reality of the PLC model, though not always implemented as intended, draws attention in honoring and recognizing the need for collaborative practice in improving teaching and student learning.

In their positions as literacy coaches, Burkins and Ritchie (2007) identified the lack of job-embedded professional learning opportunities for coaches and proposed that participating in dialogue and inquiry with other coaches could support contextualized professional learning. To

enhance and gain ownership of their own professional learning as coaches, Burkins and Ritchie (2007) paired up to visit one another's schools. These visits, coined the Coach-to-Coach Cycle, allowed for guest coaches to observe "home" literacy coaches as they worked in a targeted coaching cycle with classroom teachers (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Following the observation of the coaching session, the two coaches met for a reflective dialogue to pose questions and engage in deep thinking to enhance their understanding, decision making, and create an action plan for utilizing their new learning (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). This cycle provided a valuable experience for these coaches, as it was tailored to meet their individual needs, was supported by their administrators, and provided coach to coach connections (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007).

Coaching is another commonly implemented initiative in schools that, when used effectively, exemplifies the elements of effective professional learning by providing embedded, ongoing support for teachers in the implementation of best practices (Bean & Morewood, 2011). Though developing both PLCs and coaching align with research-based best practices for teacher development, how coaches are supported in these experiences to expand their own knowledge and practice is not addressed.

Exploring Factors that Impact the Problem

In order to recommend enhancements to professional learning for elementary literacy coaches, I proposed to complete a study with a small sample of elementary literacy coaches from a school district in central Florida to design and inform a framework. Operating under the premise of action research, I expected the research and framework design to evolve throughout the process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Additionally, I engaged with participants in reflective practices that guided ongoing research and decision making (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Methods

of discovery for the action research included focus groups to provide qualitative data as well as a review of district artifacts, and interviews with WCS school district personnel who supervised literacy coaches.

To help define the complexity of the problem, an application of lenses that addressed organization, learning, and motivation theories allowed for an in-depth, multi-faceted approach that assisted in framing the problem and creating solutions. A summary of each lens in relation to the problem is provided in Table 2.

In an effort to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations, Bolman and Deal (2008) developed an organizational framework that assists in examining a problem and developing solutions. This organizational theory consists of four lenses: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic which allow for multiple perspectives in the analysis of the organization of focus. The structural lens examines how an organization is or is not aligned to meet its goals. The human resource lens focuses on people in organizations and emphasizes that the right fit between the organization and human needs allows for increased effectiveness. Political dynamics are highlighted via the political lens with particular attention to how leaders understand power and conflict as well as build coalitions and deal with various types of politics, including the allocation of scarce resources. Culture and beliefs are captured within the symbolic lens, illuminating how culture can be built through ritual, ceremony, and story (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Table 2.

Summary of Causes/Factors Impacting the Problem of Practice

Lens	Possible Causes/Contributing Factors
Structural	Coaches are district “messengers” that relay information to teachers. Multiple initiatives (coaching vs. content areas) operate with different goals. Principals hire and evaluate coaches, but are not involved with PL of the coach.
Human Resource	PL dedicated to continued literacy content is extremely limited. Coaches feel unsupported and isolated. Coaches do not find PL to be satisfying or meaningful.
Political	Funding (typically federal) for coaches drives PL provided by the district. Multiple initiatives compete for time (coaching initiative, content areas, communication). Time for coaches’ PL is minimal. Individual school goals do not always align with district goals.
Symbolic	Coaches are perceived as experts by themselves and others. The role of the coach is ambiguous.
Learning	Learning opportunities do not consider Adult Learning Theory. Learning opportunities do not allow for coaches to collaborate (Sociocultural).
Motivation	Lack of choice in PL opportunities. Coaches do not value offered PL. Mandated PL often negatively impacts attitude and motivation to learn.

Note. PL = Professional Learning

In addition to organization theory, both learning and motivation theories also were relevant to the problem of practice. According to Mayer (2011), learning enables the creation of knowledge which is fostered by instruction that exposes learners to experiences that promote learning. Therefore, the learning lens highlights the importance of knowing how to help literacy coaches learn. Closely related to learning, motivation theory captures the impact of beliefs and

perceptions on performance and recognizes that knowing how to do something and actually doing it are separate entities (Rueda, 2011). Each lens, in relation to the problem of practice, is further described in the following sections.

Structural Lens

Organizational design is at the crux of the structural lens (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In relation to the problem of practice, this lens highlights the way that coaches are used as liaisons to communicate information between the district and the teachers. This method of communication is coined as a “top-down” model according to Bolman and Deal (2013). Although this method of communication seems necessary and difficult to avoid, it becomes more complicated by the diverging initiatives and goals of the district. Literacy coaches are responsible for supporting and communicating the goals of their individual schools, the ELA department, the Title 1 Coaching Initiative, and the overall district goals. This “top down” model allocates work to the coaches, but diverse efforts are not always considered first, creating confusion, frustration, and limiting efficiency (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In a national survey conducted by the NCLE (2013), educators in various roles reported the need for collaboration to strengthen their learning and teaching practices, yet the survey also indicated a lack of structure within schools and districts to support these practices. Successful organizations incorporate a mix of vertical and lateral methods to help align goals with practice (Bolman & Deal, 2013; AISR, 2004).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the coach is solely determined by an evaluation the principal completes. Often, principals have a limited knowledge base about coaching, making it difficult for them to accurately complete evaluations on coaches. The school principal is also

responsible for hiring the coach but has minimal opportunity to provide input on the professional learning for the coach. In general, the role of the coach is prioritized differently depending upon the school administrator (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014).

Human Resource Lens

The human resource lens recognizes that organizations and people need one another, and a good fit benefits both (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Assuming that literacy coaches have interest in continued learning in the area of literacy, it is likely a source of frustration that time is not readily dedicated to literacy content knowledge building. This, in addition to the little input on the professional learning that is required of them, may cause literacy coaches to become dissatisfied, frustrated, or withdrawn which risks the organization's ability to succeed. With instructional reform always on the forefront, content-focused professional learning is critical for literacy coaches in association with changes in policy and how student learning can face positive impact (Woulfin & Coburn, 2012).

Political Lens

Bolman and Deal (2013) identified politics as “the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (p. 183). This lens allows for the identification of several concerning facets of the problem. First, funds are generally a scarce resource in public schools. Coaches' salaries are often federally funded, which creates the need to document and use professional learning funds accordingly. This funding, though helpful in allowing for the role of the coach, limits the professional learning possibilities. Also, highlighted within this lens is how, in a sense, many of the district initiatives and/or departments seem to compete with one another or have divergent goals, making the role

of the coach more ambiguous. According to Woulfin and Coburn (2012), district and school leaders play a pivotal role in ensuring that diverse initiatives point in the same direction so that educators develop an understanding that improves instruction. Finally, the scarcity of time and in particular the time dedicated to the growth of coaches is an extreme factor within the political lens. Professional learning for literacy coaches is limited; they are often in isolated roles in which few learning opportunities exist to support them (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). There is a critical need for sustained, collaborative time dedicated to the professional learning needs of literacy coaches (Aguilar, 2013; Bean & Dagen, 2012).

Symbolic Lens

Capturing the impact of beliefs, culture, values, and rituals, the symbolic lens illuminates the role of the coach as one that is ambiguous (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Further, literacy coaches are perceived to be, or perceive themselves to be, experts in literacy. This perception may cause resistance to professional learning because it is thought to be unnecessary. Other times, the position is sought by those who wish to pursue administrative careers. In this instance, the multiple roles of the coach are further diluted due to these diverging interests, creating even more ambiguity.

Learning Lens

Understanding how a particular audience learns is important to consider when planning professional learning. In regard to elementary literacy coaches and how professional learning may best meet their needs, two theoretical perspectives will be considered in the learning frame: the sociocultural perspective and adult learning theory.

First, the sociocultural perspective provides a way to explore how social and cultural settings within professional learning impact knowledge development in literacy coaches (Vygotsky, 1978). Most of the current learning sessions provided to elementary literacy coaches do not promote collaboration. Continuous professional learning that provides collaborative structures aid in the development of reconstructing knowledge which paves the way for improved practices (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007). Specific to literacy coaches, Woulfin and Coburn (2012) stated that “literacy leaders’ interactions with their colleagues influence how they come to understand the meaning and implications of a new policy” (p. 344). Upon examination of professional learning internationally, effective countries provide time for collaborative planning, reflective conversations, and support for studying and evaluating teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). The NCLE (2013) offered that “When collaboration is the norm, educators reap a host of benefits, including higher levels of trust and the quicker spread of new learning about effective practices” (p. 6).

Second, adult learning theory, or andragogy, prioritizes the need for learning to be relevant and recognizes that adult learners can identify their learning needs (Knowles, 1978). It is evident in artifacts from WCS that elementary literacy coaches learn about andragogy with the expectation that it will support them in facilitating site-based professional learning at their schools; however, application of the theory is not clearly identified in the way coaches receive professional learning. Knowing how adults learn best is important for coaches to consider in their delivery of professional learning (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; IRA, 2010; Walpole & McKenna, 2013). The same level of understanding should be applied to professional learning for coaches as well. Adult learning theory recognizes the value in experiences that adults bring to

learning opportunities. The varied levels of prior knowledge impact the relevance of professional learning topics for each individual participant. In a study by Walpole, McKenna, and Morrill (2011) that examined a statewide support system for literacy coaches, success in professional learning came from specific demonstration lessons and instructional modeling rather than simply relying on delivery of information (“showing” rather than “telling”). Attending to the principles of andragogy, such as maintaining respectful interactions, relevance, and collaboration at the forefront of learning sessions, creates a community that is receptive to learning (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Knowles, 2002). Furthermore, adults have the ability to communicate their learning needs, take ownership of their learning, and seek feedback to monitor their growth (Knowles, 2002).

Motivation Lens

Motivational factors influence adults just as they do children (Rueda, 2011). Beliefs, values, and culture impact one’s desire to learn (Rueda, 2011). Current professional learning practices for literacy coaches work against what research says is best for motivating learners. Choice in professional learning is rare, and sessions offered are typically mandated. These mandates, along with lack of choice and focus on the topics that interest literacy coaches most, stifle motivation to learn. If we apply what is known about teachers to coaches, then we can assume that when participation is mandated, resistance and resentment develop, along with no real ownership of learning (AISR, 2004).

Examining each lens in relation to literacy coaches’ professional learning illuminates the various factors that contribute to the problem of practice. Overall, these factors encompass barriers that influence beyond the professional learning of the coach, highlighting the ambiguous,

inconsistent roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches in elementary schools (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Methods

First and foremost, the proposed research methodology called for an action research design which provided the flexibility to create, develop, and adjust the research agenda as data were collected (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Action research is cyclical, meaning it constantly operates under cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting alongside an ongoing review of the literature to shape the design (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Reflective journaling on my part served as important documentation for the evolution of ideas, decisions, and thoughts (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Research Design and Data Collection

Data about current practices and perspectives of professional learning for elementary school literacy coaches were gathered via focus groups. Focus groups were selected because of the need to gain an understanding of the research topic through a focused discussion from a group that possessed similar characteristics (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The goal of the focus groups was to learn how elementary literacy coaches see, understand, and value their own professional learning, and to learn the language they use to talk about the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Furthermore, by using elements of the qualitative research designs of phenomenology and grounded theory to support the action research, focus groups helped me gain insights on perceived effectiveness of professional learning and input for future learning needs in a permissive environment (Krueger & Casey, 2009). According to Creswell (1998),

phenomenological studies require the collection of in-depth interviews from participants who have experienced the phenomenon, making literacy coaches my greatest resource for this research. Grounded theory uses the phenomenon to create a theory related to the particular context which, in this case, is a framework suited to meet the needs of WCS (Creswell, 1998). Conducting focus groups with small groups of literacy coaches, rather than solitary interviews, capitalized on socially constructed needs and perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Ryan, Gandha, Culberson, & Carlson, 2013).

Data drawn from interviews with the district ELA Specialist and Title 1 Specialist who oversaw the coaching initiative contributed additional perspectives on the current and past practices of literacy coaches. Relevant artifacts that support triangulation of the data collected were also considered.

The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning

The goal of this action research was the development of a professional learning framework for elementary school literacy coaches that builds capacity and supports the professional growth and development of the coach. A framework allowed for modifications at individual school sites which also helped reduce structural barriers. Literacy coaches at the elementary school level are the main stakeholders; however, teachers, students, and administrators at the school site, as well as district level employees that work with the professional learning of literacy coaches, also faced impact. A framework, and the possibilities afforded for adaptation, would support the shift to professional learning for literacy coaches.

Figure 1 displays a draft framework, The Professional Learning Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches (henceforth referred to as the Framework) that served as a starting

point for the study based on my personal experiences as a coach and the review of literature. The Framework was repeatedly edited, and changes were informed by data gained from focus groups and interviews which captured voices from the field. These voices helped define current needs and perspectives of elementary literacy coaches on their professional learning while giving credibility to the Framework. I formed a preliminary plan using this information along with the suggestions of researchers as to research-based best practices necessary for effective professional learning. The intended product of this research was a framework for professional learning for literacy coaches that creates opportunities for embedded, ongoing, collaborative experiences that allow coaches to learn and grow from one another.

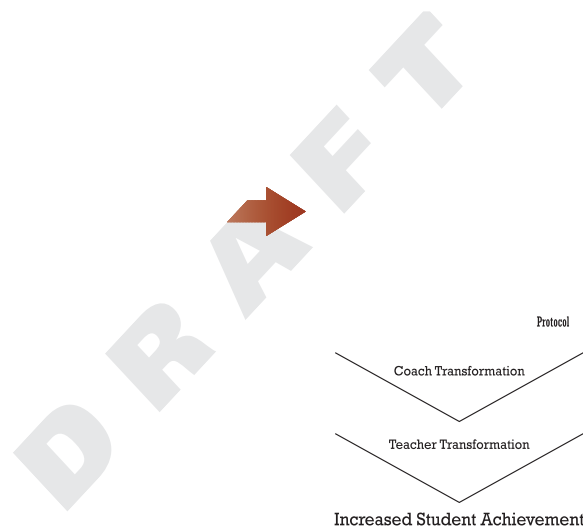


Figure 1. Initial Draft: The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning

CHAPTER 2 PILOT STUDY

Overview of the Pilot Study

Pilot study data were collected for this dissertation in practice (DiP) to show that current professional learning practices for elementary school literacy coaches do not necessarily or automatically translate to professional growth. The collection of data from this pilot study was meant to inform the need for adjusted professional learning practices that enable elementary literacy coaches to be supported while serving as agents of change at their individual school sites. Several questions supported the collection of data and identification of supporting themes described in this chapter. The overarching question that assisted in the exploration of the problem of practice was:

- In what ways can research based best practice for professional learning be applied to literacy coaching in a central Florida school district?

In addition, several sub-questions offered further support for determining current goals, implementation plans, attempting to capture the reality of these practices. These questions were:

- How are elementary literacy coaches in a central Florida school district “coached” to meet the demands of their roles and responsibilities? Who coaches them?
- What formats of professional learning experiences are provided to literacy coaches in a central Florida school district?
- What types of professional learning for coaches, including professional learning communities (PLCs) will improve the coaches’ ability to facilitate professional learning experiences that will help teachers to create effective 21st century literacy instruction?

For the remainder of this chapter, I (a) explain methods of data collection; (b) describe how the data were aligned to support the problem of practice under study; and (c) discuss how the data informed the framework for the proposed resolution of this problem of practice.

Methodology

In order to capture perspectives of those closest to the problem of practice, qualitative methods were used for data collection in this study. Creswell's (1998) traditions of collecting, analyzing, and reporting qualitative research guided the work, particularly in the areas of planning for the pilot study and data analysis. Krueger and Casey's (2009) work on focus groups aided in the development of the focus groups with support for training moderators and creating open-ended questions in a reasonable sequence.

Tools for Data Collection

The tools and process for data collection described in the following sections provided a means to capture current and historical professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches as well as themes to support the development of recommendations. I designed each tool using guidance from Krueger and Casey's (2009) work on focus groups and Creswell's (1998) work on qualitative research design.

Protocols

Interview and focus group protocols were pre-planned using guidance from Krueger and Casey's (2009) questioning route to ensure each question was purposeful and evoked conversation. Initially, I introduced myself and the supporting moderator and briefly described our roles. I began with opening questions, which were designed to gain background knowledge on the participant(s) (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Though I allowed for more depth to gather

background data during the interviews, I asked focus group participants to write this information on a provided planning sheet (Appendix B) to ease the time constraints in the group setting. This sheet captured work location, education background, areas of certification, job title, and number of years in education. Next, I introduced the term, professional learning, and compared the differences to the term, professional development. This ensured that all participants had common understanding of the language used during the sessions. An anchor chart showing the two terms was posted for ongoing support during focus group sessions. Open ended, key questions were asked to engage participants in sharing their thoughts and experiences in relation to the problem of practice. Last, ending questions offered opportunity for sharing final thoughts and ideas, and also brought closure to the discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

The Moderating Team

After much consideration, I identified myself as the lead moderator for focus group sessions. Though I knew this required me to have the ability to both listen and be conscious of my own personal reactions, I believed I was best suited for the lead role, because I was fully grounded in the purpose of the study and knew what type of information would be most useful (Krueger & Casey, 2009). As advised by Krueger and Casey (2009), a supporting moderator was used to “provide a second set of eyes and ears to increase the total accumulation of information and the validity of the analysis” (p. 89). To ensure smooth facilitation of focus groups, the supporting moderator managed technology, handled materials, and took notes. Additionally, in a brief training that I provided, the supporting moderator was made aware of my positionality in relation to the problem, and assisted by monitoring my facilitation techniques for possible bias. Appendix B contains the training agenda used with the supporting moderator.

Data Collection

The methods of discovery I used to explore the problem of practice were qualitative in nature. They included (a) focus groups with elementary literacy coaches, (b) interviews with district personnel, and (c) a review of artifacts. I strategically designed focus group and interview protocols to provide evidence about the existence of this problem of practice. I also used them to explore the problem's multiple facets from various perspectives and support the development of reasonable solutions using voices from the field and current research. I aligned the data collected in response to each exploratory research question to indicate success of the study's intent. Additionally, data collected were contingent on the participants, elementary literacy coaches, closest to the problem and how they perceived the problem. All data collection occurred within a three-week time period.

As part of their bi-monthly English Language Arts (ELA) coaches' meetings, elementary literacy and academic coaches who identified themselves as literacy focused coaches were invited by the district ELA Specialist to participate in focus group sessions. Original plans for the pilot study projected three focus groups with elementary literacy and literacy related coaches; however, participation levels prevented a third session. Instead, a focus group with English Language Arts resource teachers (ELARTs) was included to capture another perspective and is further described later in this section. During the December 2015 coaches' meeting, one focus group took place prior to the start of the meeting, and the second group took place on the same day, during the lunch break. Both focus group sessions were voluntary and took place on an elementary school campus in a private room adjacent to the media center where the coaches' meeting was located. With this meeting as one of three for the entire school year in which all literacy related coaches

were together and participation in the focus groups presented as voluntary, the participants constituted a purposive, convenience sample, meaning they were accessible and fit the criteria needed for the study (Creswell, 1998). A total of 45 minutes were allotted for each focus group, though the first session lasted approximately 30 minutes.

In the following week, the two district Title 1 Specialists who oversaw the coaching initiative in the 2015-16 school year, were interviewed together. Typically, this role is fulfilled by one employee; however, to accommodate an upcoming retirement, the responsibilities were shared during this school year. One week later, the sole district ELA Specialist participated in an interview. All five ELA resource teachers (ELARTs) participated in a 30-minute focus group session that same week, veering from the original data collection plan. After repeatedly hearing references to the ELARTs in both interview and focus group conversations, an additional focus group session was added with the ELARTs, as it seemed valuable and necessary to gain their additional perspectives surrounding the problem.

Table 3

Study Participants

Focus Group	Type of Participants	N
1	Literacy Coaches Academic Coaches	2
2	Literacy Coaches Academic Coaches	8
3	English Language Arts Resource Teachers (ELARTs)	5

Table 4

Focus Group Participant Demographics: Elementary Literacy Coaches

Focus Groups	Participant	Title	Level of Education	Years Teaching	Years Coaching	Area(s) of Certification
1	FG1, P1	Academic	Master's	11	2	ESOL
	FG1, P2	Academic	Master's	18	8	Reading K-12, Ed. Leadership
	FG2, P1	Literacy	Bachelor's	10	1	K-6, ESOL
	FG2, P2	Literacy	Master's	15	3	Reading K-12, ESOL, K-6
2	FG2, P3	Academic	Bachelor's	16	3	K-6
	FG2, P4	Literacy	Master's	17	3	Reading K-12, ESOL
	FG2, P5	Academic	Master's	27	5	VE K-12, Ed. Leadership
	FG2, P6	Literacy	Master's	7	8	K-3, K-6
	FG2, P7	Academic	Master's	26	2	K-3, Ed. Leadership, Reading Endorsed, ESOL
	FG2, P8	Literacy	Bachelor's	18	3	K-6, ESOL

Table 5.

Focus Group Participant Demographics: English Language Arts Resource Teachers (ELARTs)

Focus Group	Participant	Title	Level of Education	Years Teaching	Years Coaching	Area(s) of Certification
3	ELART1	ELART	Master's	25	20	Reading K-12
	ELART2	ELART	Master's	21	4	K-6, ESOL, ESE
	ELART3	ELART	Bachelor's	10	1	K-6, ESOL, ESE
	ELART4	ELART	Master's	11	1	Reading K-12
	ELART5	ELART	Master's	17	4	1-6, Ed. Leadership, ESE

Process for Analyzing Data

Qualitative methods, guided by Creswell (1998), were used to analyze data and develop themes. All sessions of data collection were audio and video recorded. Initially, focus groups

and interviews were transcribed using abridged transcription (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For the most part, transcriptions were word for word, with the exception of sidebar conversations that were beyond the scope of the problem.

A continuous analysis approach was used to analyze transcripts (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Data analysis happened in four phases: (a) analysis of focus groups with literacy coaches, (b) analysis of interviews and ELART focus group, (c) analysis of artifacts, and (d) analysis of all data collected as a whole. The process for analysis began with reading through each transcript several times to familiarize myself with the content. I then aligned the data with the exploratory research questions. To do this, I examined transcripts individually and assigned each research question a designated color. As a piece of data responded or related to a question, it was marked with the assigned color. Then, after all transcriptions were marked, I read through them again, this time writing on color coded sticky notes key points from the data. As a result, I created a chart that identified each method of discovery (interview, focus group, artifact) and placed a color coded sticky note that aligned with each research question beneath it. Each sticky note included abbreviated notes in response to the assigned question so I could easily identify the source of the data and the question it answered. In addition to aligning data with the research questions, I also made note when data connected to previously identified possible causes and contributing factors (identified in Table 2). These were also color coordinated to match the data source and factor that they supported. This process allowed for cycles of data analysis, and organization in this manner allowed for an at-a-glance scope of all data.

The process of continuous analysis allowed for the identification of frequently occurring themes across multiple data sources as well. Upon analyzing data from the focus groups with elementary literacy coaches, I identified six key themes as follows:

1. Professional learning is moving in the right direction for literacy coaches.
2. Literacy coaches need feedback on coaching.
3. Literacy coaches need training on literacy content.
4. Literacy coaches desire collaboration with other coaches.
5. Program specific training should be offered in a timely manner to coaches.
6. Time, consistent roles, and administrative support are identified barriers.

Once I completed analysis of additional data sources, including interviews and a review of artifacts, I narrowed my analysis to the following four key themes:

1. Literacy coaches perceive this year's professional learning as a shift toward best practices.
2. Literacy coaches seek feedback and collaboration.
3. Literacy coaches can identify and have professional learning needs in literacy content.
4. Literacy coaches perceive ambiguity of their role, time constraints, isolation, continuous changes, and existing structures as barriers to their professional learning.

Implementation Plan

To begin each focus group and interview session, participants were provided an explanation of professional learning versus professional development immediately following formal introductions and supporting documents for the research study. For focus groups, an anchor chart was posted that compared and contrasted the two terms to ensure consistency and

offer a point of reference for clarification as needed during the sessions. Next, the focus group protocol was used to facilitate conversation among the coaches. As the principal investigator and lead moderator of these groups, I was careful to maintain a neutral stance throughout the sessions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). When appropriate, I used facilitation techniques to probe for clarification or elaboration of ideas. Prompts such as “What do others think?” and “What might others share about that?” assisted in expanding conversations without applying bias.

Pilot Study Findings and Connections

Consistent themes were identified during data analysis across sources. Table 6 provides an at a glance scope of the data collected, identifies the source, and relevance to the theme.

Table 6

Pilot Study Findings and Connections

Research Question	Source	Theme Supported
1. How can PL be applied to literacy coaching?	Focus Groups-Q: 4 Interviews-Q: 2, 4, 5	Theme 1- Current practices shift to PL Theme 2- Need feedback and collaboration Theme 3- Need literacy content knowledge
2. How are coaches coached?	Focus Groups-Q: 2, 3, 4 Interviews Q: 3	Theme 1- Current practices shift to PL Theme 4- Barriers
3. What formats of PL are provided to literacy coaches?	Focus Groups- Q: 2, 3, 4 Interviews-Q: 3, 4, 5	Theme 1- Current practices shift to PL
4. What types of PL will improve literacy coaching?	Focus Groups- Q: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 Interviews- Q: 4, 5	Theme 2- Need feedback and collaboration Theme 3- Need literacy content knowledge Theme 4- Barriers

Note. PL = Professional learning.

The following subsections summarize the data collected from each source and align the findings to relevant research. By doing so, current practices and realities were considered alongside the literature to assist in the development of solutions and also in informing the Framework. Table 7 presents the codes used to anonymously label the data provided from each participant as discussed in the remainder of this document. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned numbers within their groups. The prefix for each citation is the “code” listed in Table 7 followed by the participant number. For example, when the fifth participant in the second focus group is cited, the citation used is FG2-P5.

Table 7

Participant Codes

Data Source	Code	Number of Participants
Focus Group 1	FG1	2
Focus Group 2	FG2	8
Focus Group 3	ELART	5
Interview- Coaching Initiative	Coaching Initiative	2
Interview- ELA Specialist	ELA Specialist	1

Elementary Literacy Coach Focus Groups

Two separate focus groups containing a combination of literacy and academic coaches provided data to inform the study. For the purpose of analysis, data from these two focus groups were analyzed as a whole to represent the perspective of elementary literacy coaches within this study. A total of 10 coaches participated; five of the 10 held the official title of literacy coach, and the other five were listed as academic coaches. The academic coaches stated that as part of their roles and responsibilities, they placed stronger focus on literacy above all other content

areas. Relatively speaking, the school district employed 12 elementary literacy coaches and another 19 academic coaches who identified literacy as their main focus in the 2015-16 school year. Therefore, these focus groups captured voices from approximately one-third of the possible population. I selected focus group methodology intentionally to encourage coaches to collectively engage in conversation and build upon each other's thoughts (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Though at times this format made it difficult to capture every conversation that occurred, it allowed for the participants to voice ideas and opinions among peers who corroborated a general consensus of needs, perspectives, and barriers. I used a 10-question, self-designed protocol (Appendix B) to guide the discussion during each focus group session, including the ELART session.

Collectively, the focus groups prioritized a need for time, collaboration, and feedback in order to improve their practice. Literacy coaches identified their designated ELART (English Language Arts resource teacher) as the sole resource for coaching and moving them forward in practice. In this past school year, monthly meetings that included learning walks were the professional learning format that was required of coaches. Additionally mentioned within the focus group sessions was that professional learning typically happens in isolation via Twitter, journal reading, and online resources (i.e., Teaching Channel). Participants shared that attending grade level PLCs at their school sites, and pairing with another academic or literacy coach were also excellent sources for learning opportunities. These findings concurred with those of other researchers who observed that coaches frequently feel like an "island" because they are often isolated in their schools and provided few opportunities to connect with others (Aguilar, 2013; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

When asked for methods of professional learning that could help improve their practice, common responses included training specific to literacy content or being kept abreast of resources, research, and relevant topics in literacy. Coaches expressed that they “do not have [knowledge of current] research and are not kept up to date. . . with research. . . different programs. . . and what’s relevant in literacy” (FG2, P2). Additionally, coaches voiced their desire to converse and collaborate with others, specifically mentioning shadowing one another, engaging in a PLC for coaches, and self-selecting another coach as a mentor. Coaches also expressed their need for feedback from knowledgeable others regarding their coaching practice. Last, frustrations were shared regarding the roll-out of new literacy programs and how this often occurred for coaches long after teachers received the information. From the perspective of these coaches, new literacy programs and initiatives needed to be presented and taught to coaches prior to teachers. Otherwise, they spend time “correct[ing] [teachers] after you find out what is best practice” (FG2, P5) or teachers “are frustrated because we don’t know how to help them” (FG2, P8).

Several points from these two focus group sessions align with contributing factors of the problem. Literacy coaches explicitly shared that they receive minimal coaching in regard to their own coaching performance. As the first focus group discussed their needs, a participant shared:

Feedback. . . Are we doing this properly? What can I improve? . . . to become better coaches. There is a stigma, there was years ago, but there wasn’t time [then] to be a coach and [coaching] was just administrative. I think there has been a shift, maybe partly because of my administrator, but I feel like I am able to do more coaching than years ago. Now [I need to know], am I doing this properly? Can I be better at it? (FG1, P1)

Participants expressed that the ambiguity of their role, especially when compared to other coaches (within their schools, or in other schools), significantly impacted their ability to demonstrate proficient coaching. Regarding the ambiguity, one participant shared: “[We need] clearly defined roles. One [coach] looks good to administration, one looks good to teachers. Both are doing a good job to help make the school run, but it’s a different job” (FG2, P2). Time, whether it be to collaborate with other coaches, work through coaching cycles with teachers, or to complete other duties assigned, was a significant stressor. The principal’s impact in determining the success of the coach via annual evaluations, as well as creating a school culture that honors coaching, was also mentioned as having a significant impact on how coaches spent their time and who the coach felt compelled to impress. According to Galloway and Lesaux (2012), principals appear to define and prioritize the role of the coach differently. This was further studied by Walpole and Blamey (2008) in their survey of principals and coaches in low performing schools. They found that it was expected that coaches serve as a “site-based change agent” who mentored teachers while leading the school’s literacy plan. Finally, researchers have also observed that coaching most often changed practice when principals openly valued and endorsed coaching (Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, & Garnier, 2009).

English Language Arts Resource Teachers (ELARTS) Focus Group

Five ELARTs supported in elementary schools in literacy and social studies instruction throughout the district were assigned approximately 10 schools each. All five (100%) ELARTs participated in the focus group session. The original plan for data collection did not include this focus group; however, after mention of the role in the focus groups with literacy coaches and individual district interviews, it was added to bring another valuable perspective to the problem

of practice. ELARTs brought a unique perspective because their role provided the experience of working with schools that did have coaches versus those that did not. Various backgrounds among the ELARTs also made the role unique, none of them having the same areas of certification. One commonality was that none of the ELARTs had coaching experiences; only one of the five obtained a graduate degree in reading education. Furthermore, in schools with coaches, the coach served as the primary contact for the ELART. This contrasts with schools that did not have coaches in which the ELART had primary contact with either the school administrator or a lead teacher. A consensus among the ELARTs was that “the principal really does make the decision [about coaching at their school] and you find out fast in this job that they have the most impact on us” (ELART1).

During the focus group, ELARTs shared that if provided the time to develop an area (or areas) of expertise, they felt they could fulfill some of the need for professional learning for literacy coaches. Participants in this group identified themselves as a resource for coaching the coaches, though this was voiced in frustration due to their own limited options for extended learning. Additionally, ELARTs shared that minimal involvement and input on the agendas for monthly coaches’ meetings also prevented them from impacting professional learning. As the school-based coaches revealed, ELARTs agreed that most of their learning happens in isolated, independent environments via Twitter, podcasts, and independent reading, with the exception of a few book studies. To enhance professional learning for literacy coaches, ELARTs cited needs for collaboration, additional training opportunities, and regular required meetings between the school based coaches and their designated resource teachers.

ELARTs also helped to identify barriers during their session. In support of the role of the coach, ELARTs expressed the ease with which they were able to impact schools that had coaches versus those that did not. Both positions required depth and breadth of skills to create competence in today's era of literacy reform (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Surface level knowledge of teachers and coaches, as opposed to depth, was cited as a concern that this group believed stemmed from limited district approval in attending conferences at the national and state levels. ELART1 shared that their department was “. . . missing that input. [They need to allow us to] look at a panel. . . see what experts are doing. . . to help [ELARTs and coaches] understand the research, trends, and changes.” In the event that travel to these conferences was approved, there was also frustration at the inability to disseminate the information upon return. Other duties assigned to coaches were also evident as barriers to ELARTs; they identified coaches being “spread too thin” with administrative and supplemental duties that needed to be done by someone, but certainly detracted from coaching. Additionally, ELARTs agreed with coaches that the ultimate success or demise of their role was based upon the support, or lack thereof, from school based administration in regard to coaching.

The intent of the focus group sessions was to collect qualitative data from a homogeneous group of people through a facilitated conversation (Krueger & Casey, 2009). I engaged focus groups in discussions that ultimately informed the Framework design. Common issues with focus groups included participants dominating discussions or not responding with honesty (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For the most part, even participation occurred among participants during the sessions. If and when one person seemed to share excessively, I interjected a facilitative question such as, “What do others think?” Another consideration was that much of

the conversation included requests for collaboration and feedback. The Framework includes components of both, though I am skeptical as to how literacy coaches will accept them once implemented, as they draw new attention to their work. It is simple to state that one desires feedback and collaboration, but that does not always correlate to positive response to it, or the desire to take extra steps to include it in one's daily work.

District Elementary English Language Arts Specialist Interview

A single specialist dedicated to elementary level ELA and social studies instruction also had responsibilities that included completing annual evaluations on ELARTs and facilitating the content specific portions of meetings for literacy coaches (three total meetings for the 2015-16 school year). Additionally, much like the ELARTs, the specialist also served as the lead literacy and social studies support for approximately seven schools. With more than 10 years of coaching experience in her background, the ELA Specialist had a strong grasp of expectations for coaches as well as an understanding of the capacity for the role as a catalyst for change in schools. According to Aguilar (2013), literacy coaches should be led by someone with a strong background in coaching as well as deep knowledge and understanding of literacy and literacy instruction.

The purpose of this interview was to gain a pulse on the current circumstances for professional learning of coaches and literacy coaching in general. To capture this information, I designed a protocol of open-ended questions specific to the role (Appendix B). The duration of the interview was approximately 35 minutes. With her top goal being to improve knowledge and implementation of literacy instruction for coaches, the specialist shared concerns for minimal professional learning on how to coach and keep up with relevant ELA content. She described

the current system of professional learning as “two parallel tracks;” one being the Title 1 office, and the other being the ELA department. New to her position this past year, the ELA specialist was unable to provide input on the overall professional learning plan; however, she was responsible for planning and facilitating three full-day meetings for elementary literacy coaches. Within these three full-day meetings, it was pre-determined that half of the day was dedicated to learning walks, leaving the remainder of the day to “ongoing coaching support in ELA. . . updating coaches on current resources and curriculum” (ELA Specialist). Learning walks seemed to mimic what Bean and Dagen (2012) described as instructional rounds; these walks entailed classroom walkthroughs and data collection tools used to systematize observations and guide school personnel in developing a common language through problem identification, observation, debrief, and development of next steps.

The ELA specialist cited both ELARTs and coach-driven inquiry via independent study as sources for coaching the coaches. When asked what could improve current practices, she voiced the need for differentiated professional learning because of the various levels of experience and expertise among coaches. Researchers have documented that typically a coach’s years of experience coincide with an increased amount of time the coach spent working with teachers which, in turn, supports the specialist’s need for differentiation (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). Furthermore, in order for coaches to gain expertise across many contexts, their training should be diversified to meet their coaching and school needs (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012). Time was a repeatedly mentioned barrier, along with concern for the lack of focus on best practices in literacy. It was assumed that unless coaches were doing so on their own, they had minimal support from the district in regard to knowledge and understanding of current literacy content.

Literacy coaches must be skilled in examining assessment data, curriculum, and instruction alongside teachers, and this demands deep and current knowledge of literacy content (Coskie, Robinson, Buly, & Egawa, 2005). Additionally, the specialist expressed need for literacy coaches to be pushed beyond comfortable areas of teaching expertise, specifically with writing. This coincided with the writings of L’Allier and Elish-Piper (2012) in that the work of the coach should be that of a literacy leader, one who helps teachers enhance instruction to support student growth in reading and writing. Oftentimes, coaches only coached their personal area of strength which left other areas neglected. Because of the shift to CCSS (2010) or the LAFS in 2014, it was observed that many are uncertain of writing instruction and therefore how to coach writing.

From the perspective of the ELA specialist, divergent goals between content knowledge of coaches and coaching ability contributed to a lack of professional learning. She stated: “Coaches need to be trained on how to coach but once you are [out of the classroom] . . . you have the hardest time keeping up with the [literacy] content.” The specialist’s lack of input on the professional learning initiative for literacy coaches, in addition to extreme limitations on time with coaches prevented in-depth literacy learning. Quite often, the specialist found herself responding to literacy related questions that she believed coaches should be able to answer on their own, but were unable to due to a lack of ELA content knowledge. Furthermore, the impact of the principal on the culture of coaching was reiterated in the interview with the specialist.

District Title 1 Teacher on Assignment (TOA) Interview

Within the district Title 1 office, typically one person oversees the coaching initiative as a Teacher on Assignment for Federal Programs and Grants Development Services. Oftentimes, mandates, guidelines, and funding impact the work of literacy coaches (Woulfin & Coburn,

2012). For the 2015-16 school year, this role was shared between two faculty members, as one approached retirement. For the purpose of this study, both were interviewed simultaneously to gain understanding of current and historical practices of the coaching initiative. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. I designed an interview protocol for the session similar to the one used with the ELA Specialist that included open ended questions (see Appendix B). First and foremost, this position was tasked with unifying professional learning and job role expectations for K-12 coaches of all subjects while honoring proper use of federal funds. Cohesiveness was needed because when coaches were funded through various means that included Title 1 and beyond, loopholes were created stating what coaches could and could not do (ILA, 2015). To alleviate this confusion, the TOA corralled all coaches under the Title 1 initiative regardless of their funding type, and created assurances (reviewed as an artifact) to reduce the ambiguity of the role throughout the district. Important to note is that the TOA's focus was on ensuring that coaches have a common language and system of coaching cycles rather than to build their specific areas of content knowledge.

The TOA annually surveys coaches twice a year for their professional learning needs. According to the TOA, coaches regularly cited collaboration as a need with both other coaches and school based administrators. Support for coaches came from three key areas: the Title 1 TOAs, content area specialists at the district level, and outside consultants who were brought in using federal funds. Formats for professional learning were identified as monthly meetings that, in the 2015-16 school year, included learning walks. Goals for the 2015-16 Coaching Initiative were to “move forward with student-centered coaching and the coaching model. . . to increase the work with the adult learner and feedback” (Title 1 TOA1). Focus on the student-centered

coaching model was to eventually assist in identifying coaches as a tool for improving student learning (Sweeney, 2011). To improve professional learning for all coaches, the TOAs cited needs for technology training, continued support with the coaching cycle, student-centered coaching (Sweeney, 2011), collaboration (among other coaches and school leaders), and a means of providing feedback to coaches. Additionally, the TOAs strongly voiced a need to develop beliefs about the role of the coach with school based administrative teams.

A large barrier to the coaching initiative mentioned by the Title 1 TOAs was that no measure of effectiveness exists for coaches. This barrier was further reinforced by the disconnect in the coaches' evaluations as well. With evaluations delegated as the principals' responsibility, district staff were unable to clearly grasp if assurances were maintained or if coaches were truly coaching. The TOAs believed that a large portion of the problem stemmed from principals following their own agendas for coaching rather than establishing a culture that follows the district initiative. Furthermore, divergent goals among the district departments and individual schools as well as the lack of structure to support collaborative needs among coaches were noted as contributing factors.

Artifacts

A review of relevant artifacts was essential to gathering the history of the coaching initiative and understanding the expectation of each role in relation to the context of WCS. By including an analysis of documents available publicly, I added credibility to the data I collected via focus groups and interviews (Bowen, 2009). I found the following artifacts relevant to this study:

- Position Descriptions
 - Reading Coach, K-5
 - Academic Coach, K-5
 - Regional Resource Teacher ELA/SS, K-5
- Instructional Coaching 2015-16 Implementation Assurances
- Audit Requirements for Instructional Coaches 2015-16
- History of Coaching Initiative 2008-2016
- A Guide for All Instructional Coaches

In order to identify documents that supported the study, I perused the WCS internet site, specifically targeting the Title 1 Coaching Initiative pages. Taking the advice of Bowen (2009), I completed a superficial scan of the available documents and downloaded those I found relevant. Once identified, I thoroughly read each document retrieved. Similar to the transcripts from focus groups and interviews, I coded the documents to align with both themes and barriers. The codes helped me to triangulate all data sources to ensure support existed for my findings (Bowen, 2009). Table 8 provides the title of each artifact that supported the study, as well as brief indicators from the artifact that validated themes or provided historical context about the coaching initiative.

Position descriptions, typically used to advertise vacant positions, list required qualifications and skills for the position along with goals and responsibilities. The description used for literacy coaches maintained the label of reading coach. Originally written in 1999, the description was reviewed and approved two additional times, once in 2002 and again in 2008. A simple comparison of the required/preferred qualifications alongside the qualifications of those

who participated in focus groups shows that many literacy coaches do not meet the preferred requirements. The same applied to ELARTs. An inconsistent job description that lacks clarity of the roles, responsibilities, and realities of elementary literacy coaches was frequently cited in professional literature on the topic (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Table 8

Artifacts, Indicators, and Themes

Document Title	Indicator(s)	Theme
Position Descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguous; non-specific • Out of date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers (4)
Instructional Coaching 2015-16 Implementation Assurances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds clarity to the role • Provides avenues for district support • Ensures participation in Coaching Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and collaboration (2) • Literacy content knowledge (3) • Barriers (4)
Audit Requirements for Instructional Coaches 2015-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents principal and coach discussions • Defines and monitors coaches’ tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers (4)
History of Coaching Initiative 2008-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides eight-year history of the Coaching Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Context
A Guide for All Instructional Coaches 2013-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines Coaching Initiative • Presents coaching model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy content knowledge (3) • Barriers (4)

Evidenced in the history of the initiative is a clear lack of content specific training beyond program implementation and assessment updates for literacy coaches spanning the last

five years. The ELA Specialist also voiced lack of time dedicated to building content area knowledge as a key deficit to the current professional learning system for coaches.

Efforts to create consistency among coaches and protect their roles were clearly attempted in the 2015-16 school year by requesting that each school based principal sign off on implementation assurances for their coaches. This document bulleted a list of expectations for the coach, as well as indicators of how the principal must support and pave the way for coaching to occur. Additionally, coaches were provided with audit requirements. These requirements assisted the Title 1 office in reporting use of the federal funds that paid for coaches' salaries and professional learning experiences. All coaches were expected to record and share their coaching activities via Outlook calendars. Calendars were monitored by the Title 1 office. Coaches were required to provide at least one professional development activity or one professional learning training each month. A professional development session is typically a district-provided session that the coach facilitates. In contrast, a professional learning training is developed and led by the coach, typically in a PLC setting. It was also strongly recommended that coaches document at least one complete coaching cycle with a teacher on their calendars per month, though only two cycles were required for the year. Last, the audit required that coaches submit "Coaching Process Plans" that documented one "Coaching Plan with Principal Conference" each semester (two per year). These audit requirements were meant to reduce the amount of non-coaching additional responsibilities that coaches often face (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

The next section presents a synthesis of the results and how they impact the development of solutions to the problem of practice under study. Also considered, as they relate to the

problem are the divergent priorities of coaches and the instructional leadership of principals as it relates to coaching.

Impact of Results

This dissertation in practice attempted to resolve a complex problem of practice surrounding professional learning for elementary literacy coaches. Ultimately, a framework to guide professional learning for elementary literacy coaches in a central Florida school district was developed to meet the following goals:

- To enhance existing professional development practices for elementary literacy coaches.
- To create effective professional learning experiences for elementary literacy coaches.
- To eventually help connect the work of literacy coaches to measures of success for teachers and students.

The collection and analysis of data impacted the proposed framework in several ways. Immediately after initial development of the framework, it was clear that assumptions should be included. These assumptions should include necessary criteria prior to focusing on effective professional learning for coaches. Upon analysis of data collected, another clear need was evident for the framework to capture and address the role of the principal's impact as an instructional leader on the culture of coaching.

Assumptions

Relationship building and maintenance are defined as essentials for effective literacy coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Bean, 2015; Cornett & Knight, 2009; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Almost immediately, I knew I needed to include assumptions regarding trust and relationships in the Framework. In order for the Framework to support professional learning, established relationships among coaches and teachers must exist. This way, we can assume that coaches have access to quality coaching opportunities with teachers at their school sites. Further, we can assume that literacy coaches have the disposition and skill set needed to maintain these relationships (ILA, 2015). The Framework assumed that literacy coaches have “situated themselves as peers with their teacher colleagues, [to] clarify their roles, build trust, and communicate effectively” (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012, p. 48). These competencies, along with knowledge and understanding of literacy and how to coach, are co-requisites to effective, job-embedded professional learning that impacts literacy instruction (L’Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). These assumptions align with the caveat that literacy coaches juggle multiple roles at one time which require an almost unspoken understanding of how to manage these roles in the culture of education (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; ILA, 2015; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012)

The Principal as the Instructional Leader

“School leaders themselves must take on the role of instructional leader and ultimately champion any reform initiative or effort, if it is to be successful” (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012, p. 523). Throughout the data collection process, principals were mentioned as a considerable factor in the success of coaching. Researchers have heavily supported principals as an essential to coach success (AISR, 2004; Bean & Dagen, 2012; Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Heineke & Polnick, 2013; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012; Matsumura et al., 2009). Hall and Simeral (2008) posited that the coach and administrator roles are reciprocal; that a balance exists among the two roles with the main goal of affecting positive change toward school

improvement. Furthermore, Heineke and Polnick (2013) identified five specific roles an administrator must fulfill to support a coach: (a) define the role of the coach for the faculty; (b) advocate the role of the coach to the faculty; (c) protect the coach's role and responsibilities; (d) facilitate collaboration among coaches and teachers; and (e) hire coaches who have the necessary expertise. Principals also need extensive preparation and understanding of literacy goals, practices, and expectations in order to effectively support and evaluate literacy coaches (ILA, 2015).

In this central Florida school district, principals were termed "instructional leaders." It is intended for principals to further support teacher learning by providing time and other necessary resources to allow for collaboration among coaches and teachers (Bean & Dagen, 2012). As evidenced in the data and literature, many school administrators have not had curriculum backgrounds, and it is even more rare to have a principal with a coaching background, making it difficult for principals to know how to support their coaches (Heineke & Polnick, 2013). Ultimately, the data collected brought forth an important reminder: principals establish the learning culture at their individual sites (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; Knight, 2011; Puig & Froelich, 2007; Sweeney, 2011). In addition to establishing culture, principals have the ability to structure the organization to "provide the climate, time, and opportunities for teachers and coaches to work together--growing, learning, and problem solving" (Heineke & Polnick, 2013, p. 50). This implies that principals can allocate resources (time, structures, personnel) and facilitate a shift in beliefs to make a coaching model more accepted by faculty (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Heineke & Polnick, 2013). By advocating for coaching as a ubiquitous component to teachers' professional learning in addition to the alignment of other school initiatives, principals create a

clearer path for instructional reform (Woulfin & Coburn, 2012). Interviews, focus groups, and artifacts pointed in the direction of the principal. This caused me to reflect on how this could be represented in the proposed framework as a vital component.

Divergent Priorities in the Roles and Responsibilities of Literacy Coaches

The work of literacy coaches is often diluted by a multitude of additional assigned responsibilities (Bean, 2015; ILA, 2015; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). The role on its own requires a literacy coach to have the skills and dispositions necessary to serve as a literacy leader and change agent at the school site for the benefit of student learning (Bean, 2015; Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; ILA, 2015; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012; Walpole & McKenna, 2013). Most often, these additional assigned tasks are based off of the school context, and delegated by the principal (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012). Other times, coaches themselves may view the role as a prerequisite to administrative positions, which then skews their focus on coaching related tasks.

The analysis of data aligned with the literature and showed that there were varying goals for the coaching initiative, along with a number of avenues the coach was charged with satisfying in order to be successful. District support was meant to unify the coaching initiative, but conflicting priorities and communication between the school and district often led coaches to perceiving this support as inaccessible (AISR, 2004). Within WCS, literacy coaches were challenged to meet the needs of three different administrative departments: The Title 1 Coaching Initiative, the ELA Department, and their school based administration. In the 2015-16 school year, accountability paperwork, such as calendars, assurances, and coaching cycles were monitored by the Title 1 Office. That office functioned under the goal of creating a body of coaches with common language and procedures for carrying out coaching cycles. The ELA

Department expected that coaches knew how to coach or could simultaneously learn while serving as experts in the field of literacy. Last, principals hired and evaluated coaches. They had the most impact on day to day activities for coaches and typically aligned the coach’s work with school improvement goals and other assigned duties. As shown in Figure 2, an effective literacy coach would have to balance the diverging priorities and meet the needs of the Title 1 Coaching Initiative, the ELA Department, and the site based principal, all the while coaching for improved literacy learning and carrying additional assigned duties.

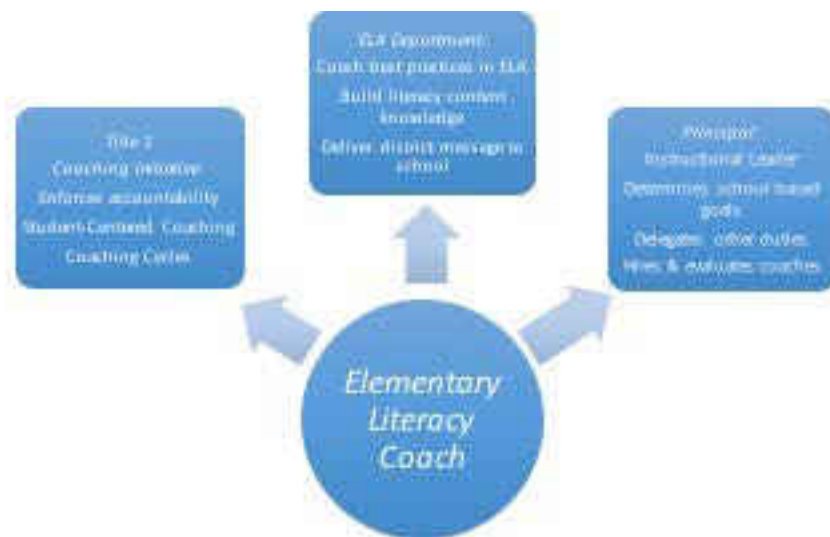


Figure 2. Roles and Responsibilities of WCS Literacy Coaches: Divergent Priorities

Summary

Findings from the data analysis supported the development of a professional learning framework for elementary literacy coaches. By obtaining data from multiple perspectives closest to the complex problem of practice and aligning it with relevant research, several implications

emerged to inform the framework. Prior to data collection and analysis, the second draft of the Framework (Figure 3) represented only minor changes from the initial design. Specific revisions were made to the language used to consistently represent learning as the key outcome for literacy coaches, teachers, and students. The term “protocol” was used as a placeholder beneath each access point that required further development in the final version.

As I continued to move forward with the Framework design using the information gained from focus groups, interviews, and the literature review, considerations needed to be made to represent the importance of coach and principal collaboration. Additionally, decisions regarding each component of the Framework to determine frequency or priority, as well as outcome measures, were warranted. Chapter 3 contains a final version of the Framework that encompasses changes based on the data gathered thus far.

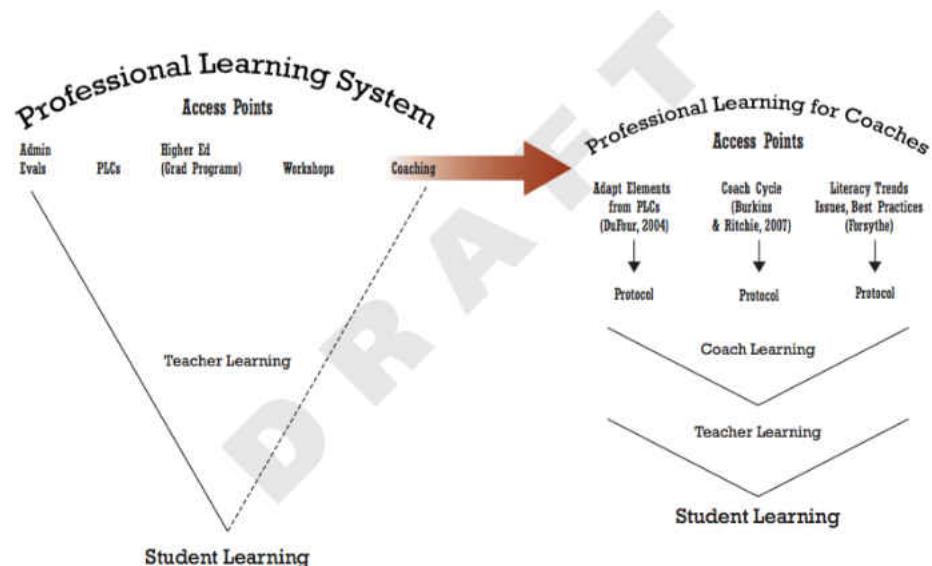


Figure 3. Second Draft: The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches’ Professional Learning

CHAPTER 3 THE FRAMEWORK

The Problem of Practice

As a significant source for moving teaching and learning forward in elementary schools, literacy coaches require a specialized level of professional learning. In review of current practice in a central Florida school district and relevant literature, evidence that professional learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches have minimal impact or transfer to the growth of the coach exists (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Gulamhussein, 2013). This dissertation in practice intended to alleviate this problem through the development of a framework that enhances professional learning experiences for elementary literacy coaches. Literacy coaches, simply defined, support teachers with literacy instruction and students' literacy learning (Cornett & Knight, 2009; International Literacy Association [ILA], 2015). Professional learning operates under the premise that learning is continuous, often site-based, and embedded within the regular work day (Easton, 2008).

Theoretical Frameworks

The development, implementation, and design created from the pilot study built upon two learning theories: adult learning theory and the sociocultural perspective. Because coaches are adult learners, andragogy or adult learning theory weighed heavily on the framework development (Knowles, 1978). This ensured that design accounted for learning opportunities relevant to the learner and acknowledged that adult learners self-identify learning needs (Knowles, 1978). The sociocultural perspective complemented andragogy by recognizing that social and cultural settings impact knowledge development (Vygotsky, 1978). Evidence of both

theories informed the framework design to offer choice and collaboration for elementary literacy coaches' professional learning.

Rationale for The Framework

A framework design was selected because of its adaptability to the context, meaning that the framework can be molded to meet the needs of the user. In this case, the user was a central Florida school district identified by the pseudonym, Woodland County Schools (WCS). The adaptability of a framework was especially important to consider as coaching initiatives in school districts are implemented in varying ways.

A pilot study design was used to focus on the coaching initiative in WCS. In the 2015-16 school year, this district employed 66 instructional coaches at the elementary level; 12 of which were labeled as literacy coaches, and another 14 academic coaches identified themselves as literacy focused. The Framework was designed with this district's coaching initiative in mind, and is specific to the subgroup of literacy and literacy-focused academic coaches. Data collected from the pilot were used to capture needs and perspectives of those closest to the problem: elementary literacy coaches, English Language Arts resource teachers (ELARTs), the elementary English Language Arts (ELA) Specialist, and those who oversee the Title 1 Coaching Initiative. Artifacts from the Coaching Initiative also provided a layer of data.

The Framework evolved since the onset of the study (see Figure 4). Initially, I created a rough draft framework based on my experiences as a literacy coach. As I reviewed research about professional learning and literacy coaching, I revised the draft framework accordingly. Finally, after careful analysis of data collected, including focus groups, interviews, and artifact review, I developed a final version of the Framework to align with the literature and findings. Its

design is meant to alleviate the disconnect between professional learning and implementation for elementary literacy coaches which then improves the function of the coaching position overall. Considerations for the Framework are described in detail in this chapter, along with explanations of how the design reduces the problem.

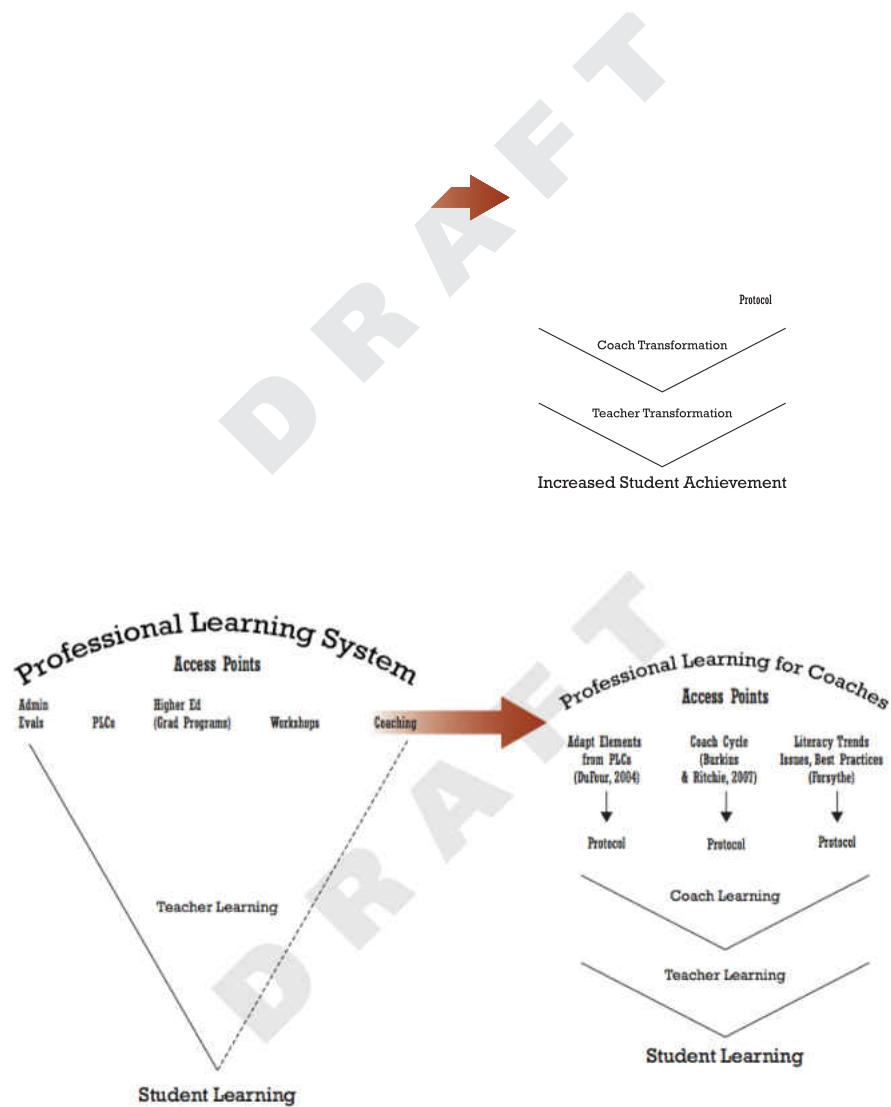


Figure 4. The Evolution of the Framework Design

The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning

The final design (see Figure 5) of the Framework intended to combine both reality and research surrounding professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches. First, the visual establishes that coaching is only one part of a successful professional learning system that supports teacher and student learning (Aguilar, 2013; Gulamhussein, 2013). By further developing options for improved learning of elementary literacy coaches, the entire professional learning system was strengthened. The significance of the design was to improve and document current practices and recommend additional practices for enhancing learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches. Some elements of the design are adaptations of professional learning formats that already take place in WCS (student-centered coaching, meeting formats, and PLC structures), and others were added based on the review of relevant literature. The Framework, displayed in Figure 5, resolves the problem of practice by drawing attention to the need for systematic professional learning for coaches and by providing a system for it to exist.

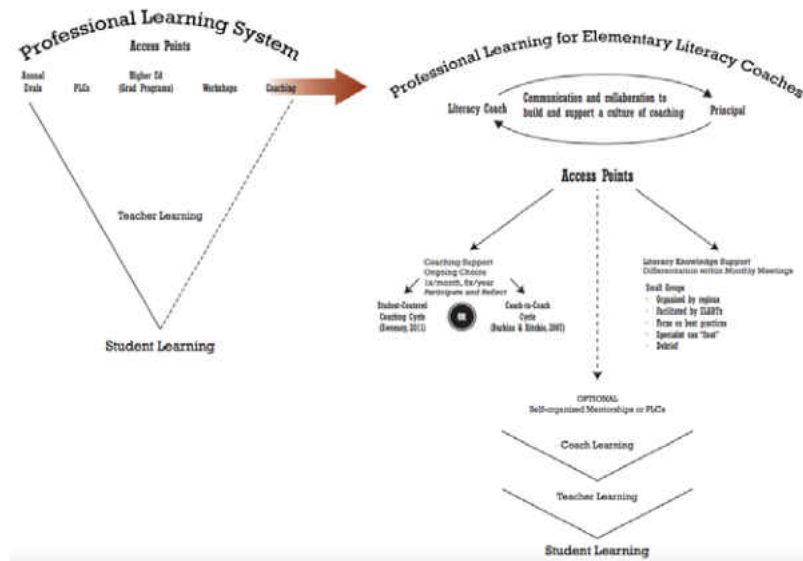


Figure 5. The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning (Forsythe, 2016)

Principal and Literacy Coach Collaboration

As a precursor to the access points for professional learning, an established, collaborative relationship between the coach and principal is illustrated in the Framework. With each individual elementary school functioning under the leadership of a principal, it was critical that the Framework recognize the impact of the principal on school goals including, but not limited to, the culture of coaching. Above all areas of professional learning, the Framework prioritized the collaborative relationship between literacy coach and principal. This relationship is vital to the success of the remainder of the Framework, as a principal must understand the role of the coach and pave the way for a coach to be successful. Principals must embrace the concept of professional learning for elementary literacy coaches.

Galloway and Lesaux (2014) posited that school administrators should clarify the role of the literacy coach and be a champion for collaboration in addressing the needs of the school with all faculty members. Within the Framework, the principal and coach relationship is represented by a continuous cycle that includes open communication and collaboration. In reality, this may translate to regular meetings of the coach and principal to discuss current events and situations on campus. It may also take on a “divide and conquer” stance in which the coach and principal intentionally move in separate directions within the school to further develop particular areas. For example, the principal may advocate for collaborative practices to happen in classrooms while the literacy coach supports a specific grade level in using those collaborative practices within a literacy strategy. Last, it involves the principal honoring the work of the coach by directing teachers to the coach for support. Principals can do this by recommending the coach’s support during teacher evaluation post observation conferences, within professional learning

community (PLC) meetings with grade levels, and as a layer of built-in support for new teachers.

According to Knight (2011),

Principals and coaches collaborate to support and lead all aspects of professional learning. This partnership is absolutely essential, but at the same time, coaches and principals must structure their relationship carefully so that teachers do not misunderstand the coaches' role in the schools (p. 96).

Representation of the coach and principal relationship within the Framework became necessary upon the first analysis of data from the pilot study. All data sources mentioned the principal's impact on the success of coaching which made addressing the ways that principals prioritize various roles of the coach a critical need (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Literacy coaches identified principals as one of the main sources of ambiguity in their jobs. As one focus group participant described the "push and pull" she felt between the Coaching Initiative and her principal's goals, consensus of the remaining coaches in the group was signaled by verbal agreement and nonverbal head nodding (FG2, P2). ". . . We all play a different role at our school[s] and have different things to do that don't connect to our job as coach that our administrators [assign to us]" (FG2, P2). Inconsistency in coaches' roles and responsibilities is not uncommon, as evidenced within the focus groups (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

ELARTs shared similar concerns about principal support being a vital component to their ability to coach. The ELART position is meant to offer literacy support to schools and serve as a liaison between the school and district. ELART5 summarized a situation with a principal's resistance to coaching, frustrated that the principal expected her to "walkthrough [classrooms] with [the principal] and tell what's wrong so that he can 'zing' the teacher." Examples such as

this deter from the intent of coaching and demonstrate the importance of administrators understanding the role of a coach, as stated by ELART1:

The principal really does make the decision, and you find out fast in this job that they have the most impact on us. We go in and think we can fix something, but you can't undermine a principal. You have to go through the principal.

When asked how school administrators impact the success of the coach, the district ELA Specialist responded by stating:

I think they [principals] have a direct impact on [success of the coach] . . . depending on whether or not [the principal] is willing to allow the coach to attend outside professional development. . . whether or not [the principal is] encouraging [coaches] to seek support from our [ELA] department. . .you know all [of this] directly affects professional growth of a coach.

The impact of the principal was further supported in the interview with the district leads of the Coaching Initiative. When discussing how, when, and what assistance is requested by coaches, the response was:

A lot of times [coaches] feel it's a disconnect between what they want to do or have been doing and maybe the principal's vision . . . a lot of times, and we only have so much power there . . . because the principal really is, I mean they're running the show (Coaching Initiative interview, P1).

This was later supported when discussing specific needs for improving professional learning for literacy coaches:

. . . the coach and principal collaboration piece is huge. . . . If the principals are the instructional leaders at the schools and [they] are not growing [a culture of coaching] then I don't think the coach can grow. I would like to see more. . . training the principals that this is what coaching is, and this is the expectation (Coaching Initiative interview, P2).

In an attempt to reduce the disconnect between coaching and administration, the Title 1 Coaching Initiative developed Implementation Assurances in the 2015-16 school year to openly communicate expectations for coaches and formally document principals' commitment to coaching. These assurances, signed by each school administrator, brought the role of the coach to the forefront and attempted to protect the coach from administrative duties that may interfere with coaching. This artifact, Instructional Coaching Implementation Assurances (2015), documented that coaches should be "provided time to meet regularly to support coaching goals and outcomes" (p. 1); and administrators should "facilitate collaboration among intervention teachers, coaches, and classroom teachers when responding to data and planning instruction" (p. 1); and "create and maintain respectful collegial dialogue between administration, coaches, and teachers" (p. 1).

Including the need for regular collaboration among literacy coaches and their administration within the Framework intended to call to action the importance of this relationship's impact and reciprocity on coaching and school improvement. With improved communication, articulation of goals for both the school and the role of the coach, as well as an increased awareness about the professional learning needs of the coach, the expected outcome

was for enhanced learning for coaches to trickle down to teachers and students. It was also expected for principal beliefs and understandings about coaching to further develop.

Access Points for Professional Learning

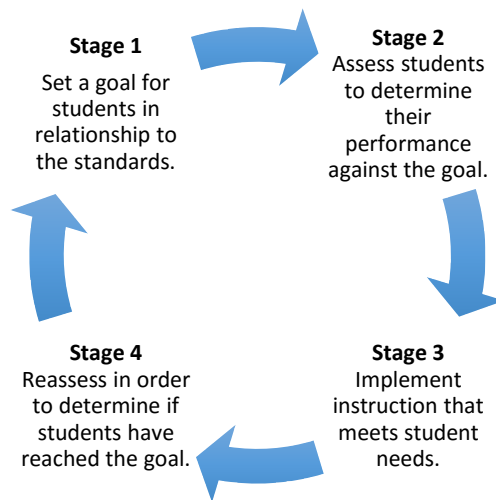
The Framework identifies access points in which professional learning supports elementary literacy coaches' development in the coaching process, literacy content expertise, and collaboration with other coaches. These access points fall just below the cycle of principal and coach collaboration, representing the need for this to occur regularly in order for the professional learning beneath each access point to be effective. A triad of different access points form the professional learning component for elementary literacy coaches. The following sections provide an explanation for each individual access point of the Framework. These include further detail as to the rationale and purpose as well as support from the pilot study data and related literature.

All instructional coaches, no matter their content area preference or assignment, must have knowledge and skills on how to coach. Although each coaching situation presents itself with varying nuances and possibilities, it is important for coaches to share a common language and model for coaching cycles. This access point in the Framework supports the need for accountability measures for coaches. In support of the school district's Coaching Initiative, this portion of the Framework requires coaches to submit evidence of coaching cycles completed. In the 2015-16 school year, it was a requirement for all instructional coaches to complete two full student-centered Coaching Cycles with a teacher of choice. The Framework maintains the student-centered coaching model and adds the Coach-to-Coach cycle. Both types of cycles provide practice and evidence of coaching episodes. With the Framework, the recommendation

is for elementary literacy coaches to complete a total of six cycles per school year. This is a drastic increase from previous years; however, six total cycles allow for one cycle per full month of school, and it is purposeful in clarifying how a coach's time should be spent. Additionally, this component of the Framework allows for choice, as it is at the discretion of the coaches to choose which type of cycle they would like to complete. By adding choice, the Framework honors coaches as adult learners who are motivated and have a greater sense of ownership in selecting their learning experiences (Knowles, 1978; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Student-Centered Coaching Cycle

The first option within the ongoing choice portion of The Framework is for elementary literacy coaches to use the student-centered coaching cycle (Sweeney, 2011). This cycle was the selected model for the Coaching Initiative within the district for training instructional coaches. Student-centered coaching focuses on student learning by identifying targeted areas for student growth based on standards and curriculum, cycling through collaborative work between coach and teacher until student data ensures learning occurred (Sweeney, 2011). The Coaching Initiative in WCS purposefully selected this cycle because of the need to connect the work of instructional coaches to measures of student success. This cycle consists of four stages, presented in Figure 6, that maintain students at the center of teaching and learning, helping to change the mindset from coaches *should* impact teacher learning to the mindset that coaches *do* impact student learning (Sweeney, 2011).



Source. Sweeney (2011)

Figure 6. Stages in a Student-Centered Coaching Cycle

The student-centered model was selected for the Framework because it serves the purpose of creating a common language for coaching and allows for forward thinking about coaches and their impact on student success. Discussion about this model with the district representatives from the Coaching Initiative provided insight on the need to prove the impact of the coach and the difficulty in doing so because most forms of data collected in similar research, such as coach or teacher surveys about a coaching cycle, are self-reported. In sharing the frustrations that come with trying to measure a coach’s success, one participant from the Coaching Initiative interview shared that:

It’s really hard to measure a coach’s effectiveness. . . that’s why we’ve gone so strongly with student-centered coaching because you have student data at the front and student data at the back. So even though coaches are working with teachers, and you are hoping they affect teacher practice...the ultimate [goal] is

that you are trying to affect student achievement. So that's where we're going, that's why we're trying to use it because besides a survey, you know that you ask them [coaches], the only [other] thing you can do is survey the teachers they work with. Or look at that data that's coming from the students... [measuring coach effectiveness] is very difficult. (Coaching Initiative interview, P2).

Selection of the student-centered model was based on a current practice in place from the Coaching Initiative. By continuing with this implementation, the Framework supported the goal of connecting the work of the coach to student success. Current research findings support the data collected from WCS in that it is difficult to measure a coach's impact (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Showers, 1984). The expected outcome was for elementary literacy coaches to continue to use this model (albeit, more frequently) to work through coaching cycles with teachers. This allowed coaches to practice their coaching skills, as well as improve teacher practice and student learning.

Coach-to-Coach Cycle

As an added layer of choice, collaboration, and a means to provide and receive feedback, the Framework provides Burkins and Ritchie's (2007) Coach-to-Coach Cycles as an option that encourages coaches to mentor one another and grow professionally. This model, detailed in Table 9, allows the coach to work with a teacher using the student-centered model (Sweeney, 2011) as another coach observes.

Table 9

Coach-to-Coach Cycles

Meeting	Guest Coach	Home Coach	Classroom Teacher	Purpose
Prior to pre-observation conference	Engages in dialogue and gathers information; documents coaching goals of the Home Coach	Engages in dialogue and articulates goals both as a coach and specifically for the pre-observation conference	Not present	To organize thoughts and plan upcoming Coach-Teacher conference
Pre-observation conference	Observes and scripts the Home Coach's interaction with the teacher	Engages in dialogue with teacher; gathers information about teacher's goals for the lesson and observation	Engages in dialogue with coach; articulates goals for the lesson and observation	To establish purposes for classroom visit
After pre-observation conference/Before observation	Engages in dialogue; shares notes from pre-conference, particularly those related to literacy coach's goals; may share insights on teacher's goals	Engages in dialogue; reflects on pre-observation conference as it relates to professional goals; clarifies priorities for observation	Not present	To reflect on pre-observation conference as it relates to observation
Classroom visit	Observes instruction, takes notes, and scripts teacher-student interactions	Observes instruction, takes notes, and scripts teacher-student interactions	Teacher lesson	To gather anecdotal notes for reflection.

Source. Burkins & Ritchie, 2007

The purpose of the model is to provide feedback to the coach and for coaches to engage in reflective conversations. Both knowledge of coaching cycles or content area feedback may be provided through use of this model. Coach-to-Coach cycles require a “Home Coach” and a “Guest Coach” to have reflective conversations throughout a coaching cycle with a classroom teacher. The term, Home Coach, refers to coaches who work at their schools with a classroom teacher, and Guest Coach refers to the visiting coaches who observe the process (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). This allows for collaborative and reflective conversations while honing in on the Home Coach's coaching skills. Additionally, the Guest Coach further develops by providing

feedback to the Home Coach, meaning that ultimately, both coaches grow as a result of working through this model (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Use of this model requires coaches to be intentional in scheduling time to come together and work within the demands of their busy roles (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012); however, having the autonomy to do so is conducive to adult learning.

According to Burkins and Ritchie (2007), one way for coaches to improve their professional learning is to engage in dialogue and inquiry with other coaches. Framing that dialogue and inquiry with another coach supports learning as a social event (Vygotsky, 1978) and reduces learning in isolation that coaches are inclined to experience (Aguilar, 2013; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Cornett & Knight, 2009; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). Review of the Coach-to-Coach Cycles supports needs acknowledged by literacy coaches. In focus group sessions, literacy coaches shared that at times they felt “nervous and not certain” (FG1-P1) about their coaching abilities, and that feedback was necessary to move forward (FG1-P1; FG1-P2; FG2-P4). When asked what type of professional learning they needed, a literacy coach focus group participant shared “I think [it goes] back to feedback. Are we doing this properly? What can we do to improve to become better coaches” (FG1-P1)? Another literacy coach agreed, stating:

You do all these things and create all of these things, but I really need to know if I am heading in the right direction [by] having someone else come in to give feedback. I feel like that’s really missing. . . . Give me specific feedback to move forward (FG2-P5).

Within this dissertation in practice, the Coach-to-Coach Cycle was presented to reduce several of the barriers found in the literature and also indicated by pilot study participants.

However, some adaptations may support coaches in implementation. For example, technology may be more time efficient for completing some or all of the cycles. Using Skype, Adobe Connect, or even simple video-recording and securely sharing pre or post observation conferences or the teacher's lesson may help reduce some of the structural barriers to using this model.

Another area to address is how coaches identify one another for working through these cycles. In focus groups, literacy coaches clearly shared they want mentoring and feedback, but that it was important that it comes from a self-selected mentor. A literacy coach shared, "As coaches, we want the opportunity to form relationships with our peers and have conversations. We want the time to work together outside of our own school" (FG2-P1). In regard to mentorships, the same participant continued,

I think we have to be careful in a sense, that it would need to be someone you are choosing that you trust because if you have someone assigned to be your mentor, it's just like saying it's non-evaluative, but it [may] still feel that way (FG2-P1).

Literacy coaches overwhelmingly shared their desire for feedback within the focus groups; and in the district Coaching Initiative interview it was clear that this was not new information. When asked about specific professional learning needs for literacy coaches, the response included:

They [school administrators] don't want them [coaches] taken out [from schools] more than one time per month, but I know the coaches would love it. It's just, you are fighting a battle. . . what they [coaches] want versus what administrators want. . . and because I know that feedback about how it is going is wanted...it is

very difficult [for the Coaching Initiative to provide feedback] with that many coaches (Coaching Initiative interview, P1).

Implementation of Coach-to-Coach Cycles aimed to develop partnerships among coaches that satisfied their desire for feedback. By participating in these cycles, coaches provide feedback to one another. This feedback is not limited to *how to* coach and may also develop content area expertise. Guskey (2002) highlighted the need for regular feedback for teachers in order for changes to occur in instructional practices, and the same should apply to instructional coaches. Use of this model also supports Hattie and Timperley's (2007) research in which they identified feedback as one of the most critical influences on student learning. They defined feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 102). If applied to adult learners, there are implications to reduce surface level, personal feedback (i.e., "good job") and increase task and/or process related feedback within each coach's specific context (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). By providing opportunities for coaches to provide one another the specific feedback needed to improve their coaching skills, learning is influenced in a positive way. The expected outcome from adding these cycles to the Framework was for coaches to feel more supported and to gain a source of task and/or process related feedback from a knowledgeable other.

Literacy Knowledge Support: Providing Differentiation at Monthly Meetings

In WCS, the Coaching Initiative facilitates monthly meetings for all instructional coaches. In the 2015-16 school year, these meetings were organized by content areas during alternating months, meaning that every other month literacy and literacy-focused academic coaches met for a full day of activity specific to literacy. It was during these meetings that there

was an opportunity to build content based knowledge regarding literacy. To meet the diverse needs of coaches, the Framework recommends time during these monthly meetings be dedicated to small groups.

Small groups should be flexible and the content addressed within should be diversified based on the need and context of each group (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Initially, coaches can be divided based on content area focus. Literacy and literacy-focused academic coaches have a natural divide based on the regions that are delegated to ELARTs. This also provides an opportunity for ELARTs to communicate with their assigned coaches, and that alleviates the time and communication barriers identified by ELARTs. ELART4 shared that in the 2015-16 school year, during meetings their role was more passive “. . . a lot of time we’re just the participants. . . whereas in the past we were involved in planning and presenting with the coaches.” Having time to collaborate with literacy coaches on a regular basis was a repeated theme during the focus group session with ELARTs. They expressed the belief that such time would improve the function of their position by building stronger relationships, improve coaching practices, and increase literacy knowledge for both the ELART and the collaborating literacy coach (ELART1, ELART3, ELART5). ELARTs will facilitate these groups initially; however, it is not intended for ELARTs to become the sole instructor of the group or developer during this time. Rather, they would serve as facilitators who will help keep conversations moving and focused. Topics for small group should be collected by participants and be based upon their needs. This aligns with adult learning theory by building knowledge upon topics that are relevant to the learner (Knowles, 1978). The goal of small groups is to improve literacy content knowledge for literacy coaches; these sessions provide opportunities for coaches to delve

deeply into current trends, best practice, and research in literacy education. This is a key element that has not happened consistently within the school district for the past several years (History of Coaching Initiative 2008-2016). Table 10 provides a timeline of the coaching initiative for the 2011-12 through 2015-16 school years.

Table 10

Historic Timeline of Professional Learning for Elementary Literacy Coaches

Professional Learning	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Coaching Initiative	Danielson Instructional Coach Rubric Kagan Cooperative Structures Adobe Connect	Instructional Coaching with Jim Knight	CCSS Data Analysis Train the Trainer (early release PD)	Coaching Cycles	Learning Walks & Feedback
Literacy Specific	CCSS	CCSS	<i>SIPPS</i>	<i>SIPPS</i> FAIR Data Response to Literature Whole & Small Group Instruction	Learning Walks <i>Ready Reading</i> <i>Ready Writing</i> ELA Modules

Note. CCSS = Common core State Standards; SIPPS = Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words; FAIR = Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading; PD = Professional Development; ELA = English Language Arts.

Small groups allow for differentiation to occur, making it possible to meet multiple needs at one time. Differentiating becomes important with professional learning for a group that encompasses diverse learners, such as elementary literacy coaches with varying backgrounds, years of experience, and career goals (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). If groups remain flexible, the possibilities are endless. For example, groups could master a

particular literacy strategy and teach the remaining groups. Options for the ELA Specialist are plentiful as well. She has the freedom to drift from group to group or to work with a small group of her own (perhaps new coaches or Plus-One coaches).

Pilot study data highlighted the need for more literacy knowledge and expertise for literacy coaches. In focus group sessions, literacy coaches readily admitted that they did not feel updated on best practices in literacy as evidenced in this conversation:

FG2-P1: “. . . we don’t have research and are not kept up to date. That’s something we really need”

FG2-P6: “Literacy, I feel like that’s the key. I feel like we have had a lot of professional learning related to, or on coaching.”

FG2-P1: “But literacy. . . ”

FG2-P4: [We need to know] “what resources are out there? What is the research?”

Later in the session, as the discussion moved toward brainstorming how professional learning could be enhanced for literacy coaches, one participant mentioned “more specific training in literacy” because she believed that so far this year specific components of literacy were not addressed (FG2-P8).

When asked about the overall understanding of literacy among literacy coaches, ELARTs observed that content knowledge was “pretty limited” (ELART3) and many did not know how to coach around traditional instructional practices such as weekly spelling tests and worksheets that researchers have put forth as ineffective (ELART1; ELART3; ELART4; ELART5). This need for differentiation was further substantiated with this comment:

You have some coaches that are powerhouses. They're going to go out there and figure it out. They're going to practice and call us if they don't know and they're going to make every effort to understand what they need to tell their teachers. And then you have some that are brand new and they have no idea what they should be asking. They're in with their head above water. . . and then you've got some that just was to ride along and coast (ELART5).

In regard to specific professional learning needs, the Coaching Initiative Specialists responded that when coaches ask for content area support, they direct them to the respective content area specialist. Thus, when a literacy specific question is asked, the inquirer is directed to contact the ELA Specialist. The ELA Specialist reported that many questions that come to her have opened her eyes to a gap in what literacy coaches are able to provide to teachers because of a lack of literacy content knowledge. She shared that sometimes literacy coaches are “not confident enough in their knowledge” to field questions from teachers (ELA Specialist interview). According to the ELA Specialist, content specific professional learning in the area of literacy for the past five years in WCS was minimal. She expressed that time and group size create challenges in meaningful professional learning:

I need a designated time with [literacy coaches] to first of all assess what their own knowledge is because they're all over the place. . . and then how do I differentiate for them? . . . we have coaches who have been coaching forever, but still their literacy knowledge is basic, then we have new coaches who have a lot of literacy background. So how do I meet all of those needs? (ELA Specialist interview).

Inclusion of differentiated learning for literacy coaches within the Framework recognized the need for tailored instruction. This allowed for each participant to gain new knowledge or understanding in the area of literacy at the end of each professional learning session. An expected outcome was for literacy coaches increased engagement as these learning opportunities would be relevant to their needs. Additionally, differentiation also allowed for the ELARTs to further develop relationships and provided the ELA Specialist to gain insight on strengths and weaknesses among coaches (coaching skills, content area knowledge, etc.).

Optional Self-Organized Mentorships or PLCs

The third and final access point for professional learning for elementary literacy coaches is optional, meaning this portion can be implemented at the discretion of each individual coach. Loosely defined, PLC implementation recognizes the need for communication and collaboration amongst educators as a source for professional growth. The PLC model, created by DuFour (2004) focuses PLCs on four questions to drive discussion:

- What do we want students to learn?
- How do we know when each student has learned?
- What will we do when students experience difficulty learning?
- What will we do when students already know?

In the past 10 years, elementary schools in WCS embedded time within weekly schedules to accommodate PLCs for each grade level. This model supports a collaborative culture that creates professional dialogue and team learning, which then leads to improved student achievement (DuFour, 2004). In most schools, instructional coaches are participating members of several, if not all PLCs. While a productive use of time, particularly for building and

sustaining trusting relationships with teachers and staying abreast of current beliefs and practices happening within the school building, coaches rarely have the opportunity to participate in a PLC that is unique to coaching. With the focus of PLCs maintaining student success as the result, this model aligns nicely with the student-centered coaching and Coach-to-Coach cycles.

Furthermore, support for professional learning activities that involve in-district networks of literacy professionals is recommended by the ILA (2015).

In the design of the Framework, the addition of a type of informal support system for elementary literacy coaches was critical based on the pilot study data. Literacy coaches reported that much of their own learning happened in isolation, outside of the school day, and often via Twitter, reading educational journals, and watching free video resources, such as those available on Teaching Channel (Aguilar, 2013; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Cornett & Knight, 2009; FG1-P1; FG1-P2; FG2-P5). Isolated learning experiences are a common thread in literature surrounding coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Cornett & Knight, 2009; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). Research also clearly defined the need for coaches to participate in mentorships and have opportunities to network with one another (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). While this component could be titled differently, as it is a variation from the intent, the reality is that the language literacy coaches used to describe their need to collaborate amongst one another was referred to as a PLC. Literacy coaches cited a need for collaboration as a source of support for their work, with one participant connecting the need to best practices with teachers when she stated, “We want the teachers to collaborate, but you know, as coaches we need to [also] and we only get together once a month now” (FG2, P-7). In a series of conversation, focus group participants bounced thoughts off of one another that started with the need for feedback,

which then lead to “[we need] coaches’ PLC” (FG2-P2) and then “we don’t have PLCs for coaches” (FG2-P3). With group consensus, the conversation continued with “[We need] time to sit down and talk...we don’t have research and are not kept up to date...on what’s relevant in literacy” (FG2-P2). In a separate focus group, a similar conversation occurred among two participants:

[I need to be] realistic about having time to develop as a coach, you know, even maybe PLCs amongst each other...I know some of the newer coaches have reached out to me, and asked. . . “Can I come watch you? Can I come talk with you?” ...I think that [PLCs] might be a good thing to have (FG1-P2).

Leaders of the Coaching Initiative knew that coaches desired this collaborative time together, but structural barriers, such as constraints on time and funding for travel, and appeasing school administrators by not pulling coaches off campus more than once a month contributed to the lack of implementation. In the Coaching Initiative interview, one participant articulated that:

[PLCs are] the other area [coaches have] always asked for, but just haven’t [happened]. They [principals] don’t want them [coaches] out of the schools anymore. But they [coaches] would love to have more during the day PLCs. They’ve always asked me to do more... groupings just to talk. It’s like when we get to the meetings all we really do is professional development. So, when do we get to talk about support for each other? (Coaching Initiative interview, P1).

Within the Framework, PLCs and or mentorships among coaches remained optional. Due to uncontrollable variables, this portion remained optional and self-directed by each individual coach. Inclusion of professional learning that allows participants to determine the

topics of study and self-develop honors what researchers have supported as an effective practice (Easton, 2008). It should be strongly recommended by both the Coaching Initiative and the ELA department that coaches develop relationships and participate in PLCs; however, with the coach's time managed and tasks delegated by each individual principal, it makes this portion of the Framework difficult to require. As beliefs continue to shift, principals should be encouraged to support coaches attending and hosting PLCs or mentorships. Parameters for these sessions should be made clear in advance. For instance, agendas should be developed by the participants, and meeting minutes should document that the sessions are an effective and productive use of time.

By encouraging coaches to engage in PLCs, the Framework honors learning as a social event. As literacy coaches value and grow from engaging with one another in collaborative practices, they are more likely to encourage, support, and foster a collaborative environment among teachers. Having the ability to facilitate growth in collaboration within schools is frequently identified in the literature as effective coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; IRA, 2010). The goal of this portion of the Framework was to provide a structure to reduce isolated learning events for literacy coaches and increase collaboration among coaches. Participation in PLCs aligned with the recommendations of Galloway and Lesaux (2012): "For support in broadening their skills, coaches may look to peer learning networks, to professional organizations, and to institutions of higher education" (p. 523). The expected outcome of this component was improved coaching and content area knowledge, as the collaborative piece provided reflective opportunities to build knowledge from one another.

Implementation Plan

The following sections briefly describe the recommended implementation plan for The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning. The plan was formed with WCS district in mind and considered some of the structures already in place in the school district.

Timeline

Before initial implementation, it is recommended that representatives from each stakeholder group review the Framework collaboratively. To accomplish this the Coaching Initiative, ELA Department, and a small sample of school administrators and elementary literacy coaches should be included. The intent of this group meeting is to discuss and reflect upon the Framework, develop a plan for implementation, documentation, and troubleshoot possible barriers. Furthermore, by reviewing the Framework and taking part in its implementation, I am hopeful that this group will become advocates of professional learning for elementary literacy coaches. As the creator, I recommend the Framework be presented in September of the 2016-17 school year at the first coaches' meeting of the new school year. I also expect in the first year of implementation, that conversations will regularly occur as to how the Framework is (or is not) supporting professional learning of elementary literacy coaches. Ideally, these conversations should happen with the same initial review committee and take place at least midway through and near the end of the school year.

Documentation

The Framework honors accountability measures that were already in place for coaches. For example, as a coach completes a coaching cycle using either the student-centered model or

the Coach-to Coach model, a reflection should be submitted to the Coaching Initiative, and the coaching cycle should be documented on the coach's shared calendar. Careful consideration and attention in the first year of implementation should be given to the number of required coaching episodes per coach. In the 2015-16 school year, each coach was required to document two student-centered coaching cycles. The Framework drastically increases this to six episodes per year with the added option of using the Coach-to-Coach cycle. Rationale for such a large increase revolves around the idea that these cycles represent one of the major intentions of the role of the coach. If six cycles seems excessive, the original review committee can make the decision to reduce the number.

Meeting agendas and minutes will serve as documentation for the small group, differentiated sessions during monthly meetings. These agendas and minutes should be housed with the ELA Specialist for review, as they are designed to increase content area knowledge in the area of literacy. Because they are an optional piece of the Framework, PLC and or mentoring sessions should also be documented with agendas and minutes. These sessions should be documented on the participants' shared calendars. Agendas and minutes for PLCs or mentoring meetings should be made available to school administrators, the ELA department, and the Coaching Initiative on an as-needed basis. Emphasis on documenting these events on shared calendars is critical for the Coaching Initiative to report appropriate use of the Federal funds used to pay for coaches.

Summary

At the onset of the study, a framework design was purposefully selected to ensure flexibility and adaptability that could meet the needs of the targeted school district, WCS. With

that in mind, implementation of the Framework was designed to be flexible, and adjustments should be made collaboratively to improve the quality of professional learning for elementary literacy coaches. In their 2015 position statement on the multiple roles of school-based literacy professionals, the ILA stated that it is the responsibility of the school district to “provide ongoing, job-embedded support and professional learning experiences for all specialized literacy professionals in the district” (p. 16). This statement alone addresses the need for the Framework, which provides researched based best practices in professional learning experiences that are ongoing, collaborative, and often job-embedded for literacy leaders at the school and district levels (Easton, 2008). Important to note is that the Framework alone will not solve the problem; ownership and responsibility to cultivate and enhance learning experiences for elementary literacy coaches within the district is required to move forward.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Background

With the ultimate goal of improved student learning, this dissertation in practice focused on how enhanced professional learning opportunities could improve literacy knowledge and coaching skills for elementary literacy coaches. Researchers have repeatedly acknowledged teacher effectiveness as a tremendous indicator of student success and professional learning as a tool for increasing teacher effectiveness that permit coaches to impact teachers' growth (Aguilar, 2013; AISR, 2004; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Gulamhussein, 2013). By enhancing learning opportunities for coaches, teachers benefit from improved coaching which can improve learning for students. The pilot study concentrated on one school district in central Florida, Woodland County Schools (WCS) and examined current practices for elementary literacy coach learning. As part of the pilot study, I collected data from those closest to the problem (elementary literacy coaches, ELARTs, district ELA Specialist, Title 1 Coaching Initiative personnel) and used the information collected to develop reasonable solutions. The pilot study, along with a review of relevant literature, informed the development of the Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning, presented in Chapter 3. This chapter further describes the goals of the Framework, success measures, implementation considerations, possible modifications, limitations, and impact.

Goals of the Framework

The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning (referred to as the Framework) intended to enhance the use of best practices in professional learning for

elementary literacy coaches. To recognize and implement these best practices, elements of professional learning, (e.g., ongoing, collaborative, learner-directed, and embedded within the school day), can be found within the Framework (Easton, 2008). By utilizing the Framework, the following goals occur for elementary literacy coaches:

- Complete coaching cycles with teachers and/or other coaches to build coaching skills and literacy knowledge.
- Engage in differentiated learning opportunities to build coaching skills and literacy content knowledge.
- Participate in collaborative learning practices with other coaches to develop continuous cycles of reflection and growth.

In a sense, this study provided a call to action, to improve learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches, for all stakeholders involved or impacted by literacy coaching. It required stakeholders to honor the role for what it is intended to be; it supported the need for a very valuable but often underutilized group of professionals to experience improved learning practices for the benefit of their schools, teachers, and students. The following sections describe the potential of the Framework to inform each stakeholder in alleviating the problem of practice.

The Potential Across Broad Contexts

“Professional learning is not the answer to all the challenges educators face, but it can significantly increase their capacities to succeed” (*Learning Forward*, 2011, p. 3). At the national level, informed decisions about professional learning often come from comparing practices among successful countries. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) compared practices in the United States to others and found that successful countries provide ongoing, collaborative

learning time for teachers embedded in their regular work schedule. Gulamhussein (2013) challenged school districts in the United States to discontinue current teacher learning practices and advocated for the development of new approaches that create change in teacher practice and, therefore, student learning. *Learning Forward*, The Professional Learning Association's (formerly National Staff Development Council) 2011 initiative, sought to support best practices in professional learning by developing and recommending standards that include:

- Learning communities committed to continuous improvement.
- Leadership opportunities that develop capacity, advocacy, and support systems.
- Coordinated resources for prioritizing, monitoring, and alignment of learning.
- Data analysis to support sustained implementation and determine effectiveness.
- Learning designs that connect theory to practice to increase effectiveness.
- Long-term support for implementation of effective professional learning.
- Professional learning that helps educator and student outcomes.

These seven standards directly connect improved teacher practices to student success (*Learning Forward*, 2011). According to *Learning Forward*, “When school systems, schools, and education leaders organize professional learning aligned with these standards, and when educators engage in professional learning to increase their effectiveness, student learning will increase” (p. 5).

In alignment with these standards, the Framework intended to enhance dialogue, collaboration, relevance, and choice in order to create more effective professional learning practices for elementary school literacy coaches. The Framework upholds these standards by providing elementary literacy coaches with learning experiences that adhere to these

recommendations while honoring the sociocultural learning perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and andragogy (Knowles, 1978). For instance, collaboration is a common thread throughout the Framework. It is included in both choices for completing coaching cycles, again within small groups of differentiation, and also as the crux of the PLC/mentorship option. Opportunities for leadership occur during the monthly differentiated meetings which provide a chance for coaches to share an area of expertise with others. During this time, data analysis, implementation, and outcomes can be discussed and addressed collaboratively. In addition, conversations about bridging theory to practice can take place, allowing for optimal learning designs.

In addition to professional learning standards (*Learning Forward*, 2011), another level of support exists for reading specialists and literacy coaches from the 2010 standards of the International Literacy Association (ILA), formerly the International Reading Association. Per these six standards, literacy coaches are expected to have foundational knowledge in literacy, curriculum, and instructional practices, and assessment and evaluation. They are expected to understand how to work with diverse populations, create literate environments, and participate in professional learning and leadership (IRA, 2010). These standards provide clarity for the role of the coach and imply the need to provide learning opportunities for literacy coaches. The Framework is supportive of these standards in recognizing the need for professional learning to keep literacy coaches abreast of content knowledge and best instructional practices in literacy, using collaboration as a means of furthering development and offering leadership opportunities. Utilization of the Framework upholds national standards for professional learning, and international standards for elementary literacy coaches.

Another key area in which the Framework has the potential to offer support is within graduate and certificate programs for literacy coaches. In these settings, the Framework informs programs in regard to continuous learning needs for current literacy coaches as well as expected learning formats for future literacy coaches. In a sense, the Framework can be adapted to meet the needs of these programs in training pre-service literacy coaches. By participating in continuous professional learning that fosters collaboration and builds literacy content knowledge within their graduate and certificate programs, candidates are more prepared to work in this unique role (Galloway & Lesaux, 2012; IRA, 2010).

The Potential in the School District

Within the Woodland County School (WCS) district, use of the Framework has the potential to provide clarity and consistency to the role of the elementary school literacy coach while improving the literacy coach's skills and knowledge. Ultimately, improved coaching improves teacher practice that can impact student learning in a positive way. This aligns with the school district's strategic plan to foster and promote ongoing professional learning for all teachers and staff (WCS District Strategic Plan, 2012-2015). Additionally, the Framework requires elementary literacy coaches to participate in, document, and reflect upon their professional learning. These requirements support the district's need for accountability measures and can be reported as appropriate use of federal funds spent on many coaches' salaries. It also upholds the district designed assurances that are meant to protect coaches in their roles from "other assigned duties" that often take them away from coaching activities (Instructional Coaching Implementation Assurances, 2015-16). Ultimately, from an organizational standpoint,

the district must have a vested interest in the coaching initiative and offer support to make it sustainable at the school level (Bean, 2015).

The Potential in Elementary Schools

At each individual school site, the Framework creates and maintains a culture of coaching by recognizing the need for principal leadership to establish a learning culture. Each individual school context weighs heavily on the success of the coaching initiative (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). WCS identified principals as “instructional leaders.” Despite the fact that they often have minimal curriculum knowledge, these principals are responsible, to a great extent, for the school context and culture. Collaboration between the principal and coach is essential in creating a teamwork approach to designing and reaching school goals as well as making informed decisions about curriculum and instruction. According to Bean (2015), “All literacy coaches should communicate with principals on a regular basis, seek advice, and provide information about what is needed for effective reading instruction” (p. 147). In school settings, where principals directly voiced the significance of the literacy coach and endorsed coaching as an important practice, teachers were more receptive and open minded about coaching strategies (Matsumura et al., 2009).

The Potential in Elementary Literacy Coaches

The Framework has the potential to enhance professional learning for elementary literacy coaches. By including elements of adult learning, literacy coaches will likely be more motivated to attend and participate in professional learning (Knowles, 1978). Literacy coaches will find these activities more motivating because they are relevant to their specific needs (Knowles,

1978). Engaging in PLCs with other coaches will help coaches find value in teacher-led PLCs at their school sites, as well as enhance reciprocal learning opportunities between teachers and coaches. Both parties will recognize this collaborative time together as an investment in improving instructional practice. As literacy coaches build their confidence and repertoire of content knowledge and coaching skills, they will increase the amount of effective coaching episodes that take place with teachers at their schools. Addressing both literacy knowledge and coaching skills within a professional learning system for literacy coaches is essential (Aguilar, 2013). These additional layers of professional learning will leave coaches more equipped to coach and will provide more access to coaching opportunities. The Framework also assists in breaking down a misnomer that coaches are “experts” who “mastered the classroom” by instilling a practice that recognizes continuous growth and learning opportunities as necessities for all educators.

The Potential of Elementary Teachers and Students

The design and implementation of the Framework is intended to benefit the learning of elementary level literacy coaches; however, it has the potential to impact teachers and students. Once implemented, coaches will rely upon teachers and students to carry out the embedded learning opportunities within the Framework, particularly in the coaching cycles. By doing so, improved teacher and student learning should occur simultaneously. An extra benefit of the Framework is that it presents teachers with opportunities to perceive coaches as learners, which may help alleviate dissonance between literacy coaches and teachers. Additionally, when teachers see coaches engaged in a support system to advance their learning, they witness a vulnerability that may help them to view the coach as more accessible or more like themselves.

Use of the student-centered coaching cycle (Sweeney, 2011) within the Framework engages teachers and literacy coaches in a united goal that focuses on improving student learning. This builds camaraderie among teachers and coaches. Students also benefit. It has been documented in the literature that when teachers receive coaching following training they are capable of providing more in-depth learning experiences and opportunities (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Cornett & Knight, 2009). In addition, students witness adult collaboration, a required skill for success in college and career.

Anticipated Changes as a Result of the Framework

Upon implementation of the Framework, anticipated changes will likely occur for members of the target audience which consists of elementary literacy coaches, though all stakeholders and decision makers surrounding elementary literacy coaching and instruction face impact. The main goal of the Framework was to improve professional learning practices for literacy coaches, though it is likely that implementation will alter knowledge, skills, and dispositions of others involved as well. The following sections discuss anticipated changes at the school district and school levels, (i.e., principal, literacy coach, teacher, and student stakeholder groups).

School District Level

Within WCS, two departments function to support elementary literacy coaches: the Title 1 Coaching Initiative and the elementary English Language Arts (ELA) Department. Both departments value coaches, and pilot study data confirmed that both believe in growing coaches' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in order to improve teacher and student learning. I anticipate

that use of the Framework will solidify this belief and produce data that correlates coaching to student learning. By strengthening the system by which coaches learn, the district may become more unified in understanding the role coaches play and more supportive of their work.

The structure of WCS, similar to other contexts, uses elementary literacy coaches as one component of the greater professional learning system for teachers. The use of literacy coaches honors professional learning practices for teachers by providing site based access to learning that is embedded within their regular work day and is targeted to meet specific needs (Aguilar, 2013; Easton, 2008; IRA, 2010). Implementation of the Framework has the potential to inform the Professional Learning Department in WCS as well. Currently, this department does not impact the coaching initiative. Literacy and other instructional coaches are often assigned the task of providing district designed professional learning at their school sites. With use of the Framework, professional learning will look different for elementary literacy coaches. Structural changes, such as adding differentiated learning opportunities and recognizing collaborative practices as a means for enhanced learning, has the power to inform the Professional Learning Department through implications that apply to teacher learning. Shifting learning experiences for elementary literacy coaches using the Framework has the potential to change the way these coaches and the Professional Learning Department design professional learning for teachers.

Elementary School Level

Although the Framework design intended to transform the way elementary literacy coaches learn, additional changes are anticipated at the school level. These changes, explained in the following subsections, outline how the Framework implementation expands benefit beyond the elementary literacy coach.

Principal

Evident in the first component of the Framework is the need for an ongoing, collaborative relationship between the elementary literacy coach and principal. In a roundabout way, I anticipate principals will enhance their practice by improving the culture of coaching at their school sites when honoring the Framework. I foresee that as literacy coaches and principals put effort toward their collaborative relationship, the overall function of schools in reaching and meeting their improvement goals will increase. Elementary school principals will also gain an improved understanding of the work in which literacy coaches should participate and pave the way for coaches to have more access to this type of work. With this newly acquired understanding of the role, principals are likely to engage more carefully in the annual evaluations of their literacy coaches, ensuring that they use the proper rubrics and measures to determine their coaches' evaluation scores. Strengthened relationships between principals and literacy coaches empower both roles in instructional decision making and guiding teachers toward school improvement.

Elementary Literacy Coaches

Growth in elementary literacy coaches' knowledge, skills, and dispositions was at the heart of this dissertation in practice. By utilizing the Framework, I expect elementary literacy coaches to benefit from collaborative relationships with coaches from other schools as well as with their principals and teachers. Because learning is a social event, these practices will help grow coaches' knowledge about literacy (Vygotsky, 1978). Improvement in both frequency and implementation of coaching cycles is also anticipated once the Framework is implemented. Additionally, as adult learners, I anticipate literacy coaches will approach professional learning

settings with more of an open mind and ownership, as much of it will be tailored to meet their needs (Knowles, 1978). Presented within the design is a means for coaches to receive feedback regarding their own practice from other coaches using the Coach-to-Coach Cycle (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Based on the pilot study data in which coaches repeatedly asked for feedback, I foresee them welcoming feedback, and readily using it to grow in their practice and reflect upon further needs. Components within the Framework identify elementary literacy coaches as a unique group of learners who can build capacity in their practice through feedback, data collection, and learning alongside other coaches (Aguilar, 2013). By incorporating these elements in the Framework design, a community of elementary literacy coaches who engage in more metacognitive thinking about their practices results.

Elementary Teachers and Students

The Framework design also targeted the overall goal of education: improved student learning. Its premise is that if literacy coaches experienced enhanced learning, teachers would experience enhanced coaching to further develop their teaching practices, and thus, lead to better quality learning opportunities for students. Reflective, in-depth conversations between literacy coaches and teachers would occur more frequently resulting in more of a partnership approach focused on student learning. I expect use of the Framework to create more opportunities for elementary literacy coaches to work in classrooms to benefit teachers, students, and their own practices.

Measures of Success/Evidence of Change

The Framework documented three key methods for transforming professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches. According to Aguilar (2013), “coaches clamor for

[their own professional learning] . . . but very few opportunities or structures exist for coaches in schools to develop their practices” (p. 268). According to the WCS Title 1 TOA, coaches regularly report the need for collaboration and feedback on their bi-annual needs assessment (Title 1 TOA1; Title 1 TOA 2). These results also coincide with the data collected from coaches in the pilot study focus groups. The methods presented in the Framework incorporated goals for an increase in coaching episodes that grow coaching skills and knowledge, elements of differentiated learning opportunities at coaches’ meetings, and the use of collaboration to build expertise and camaraderie among literacy coaches. Each goal aligned with specific measures and indicators to determine success. In addition to the needs assessment already provided by the district coaching initiative twice a year, other sources outlined in the following goals monitor success, or lack thereof, to provide a means to support the Framework, or adjust it accordingly.

Goal 1: Coaching Cycles

The inclusion of two types of coaching cycles within the Framework offers elementary literacy coaches choice in how they accomplish coaching episodes and provide the district with an accountability measure that documents coaches are working through coaching events. With Sweeney’s (2011) student-centered coaching cycle, the literacy coach collaborates with the classroom teacher in design and delivery of instruction that will positively impact student growth. In Burkins and Ritchie’s (2007) Coach-to-Coach Cycles, instructional coaches collaborate with one another as the Home Coach completes a coaching cycle with a classroom teacher. This model allows coaches to provide and receive feedback to one another regarding their coaching skills. Both models provide coaches the opportunity to build literacy content knowledge and coaching skills essential to coach learning (Aguilar, 2013).

Measures used to monitor success in this component of the Framework include monitoring coaches' monthly calendars for documentation of coaching episodes. Furthermore, brief, written reflections from these episodes submitted to the Coaching Initiative also signify success. If the documented episode uses the student-centered model, student data should also be considered as a success indicator (Sweeney, 2011). Other conditions that suggest success include (a) an increase in teachers asking for coaching assistance and (b) an increase in accessibility to coaching over time.

Goal 2: Differentiation Within Monthly Meetings

In order to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, the Framework delegated time during monthly meetings for fluid, small group, differentiated learning opportunities. These sessions allow for a broad range of topics and needs identified by elementary literacy coaches to be addressed. This component ensures learning opportunities for all participants, opens communication, and builds support among coaches (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012). Moreover, this component provides an outlet for coaches to shape their leadership skills by teaching other coaches about an area of expertise.

Agendas and minutes from each small group session provide documentation of the topics covered and the learning opportunities. Keeping these files electronically, with "sharing" capabilities such as Google Docs, would allow for ongoing documentation of these sessions to provide a clear history of the content covered and a running list of upcoming topics. Quick comparison of the topics covered during the first year of implementation should exceed those covered in previous years, as the differentiated component allows for learning to occur in multiple areas at once for those who need it most. Conversations and relationships among

coaches indicate success in this portion of the Framework and also reduce isolated learning experiences for coaches. High levels of coach engagement during these sessions should also confirm the importance of keeping topics relevant to their needs.

Goal 3: Collaboration via Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)/Mentorships

The Framework also contains an optional component of PLCs and/or mentorships organized by coaches themselves. Adding this component was a direct impact of the pilot study data analysis, in which coaches repeatedly indicated their need for feedback and a system of support in building both literacy content knowledge and coaching skills. These sessions provided another avenue to prevent elementary literacy coaches from isolated learning experiences and allowed for relationship building and communication across schools. Aguilar (2013) further supported the need for coaches to establish structures to support each other in improving and reflecting upon skills by stating that “in order for coaching to be maximized and to deliver on its potential, coaches will need formalized, systematized structures in which to learn together” (p. 268).

These sessions are monitored through coaches’ monthly calendars and a collection of meeting agendas and minutes. These measures of success also support accountability measures needed for the Coaching Initiative. Increased communication among elementary literacy coaches means shared experiences and opportunities to build capacity within the district.

Considerations for Implementation

Success of the Framework relies heavily on organizational resources and structures that are already in place as well as beliefs in the coaching model. Barriers, or contributing factors to

the problem, were identified in Chapter 1 and are further considered in this section. For instance, time dedicated to differentiation is needed during meetings that are already scheduled. The addition of the differentiated component requires that time during these meetings be allocated differently than in past years. In order to allocate time accordingly, communication among district departments (Title 1 and ELA) that impact the coaching initiative must occur. Regular communication ensures work toward a common goal and reduces competing initiatives.

Principals become the focus of the greatest considerations for implementation. First, principals must understand the knowledge literacy coaches require, the purpose of literacy coaching, and the demands placed upon literacy coaches as well as why collaboration with the role is so critical. In addition, principals must value the role enough to understand the importance of continuous learning for the literacy coach. This implies that principals will allow the literacy coach time either to host a PLC for literacy coaches, or to attend a similar session on another school campus. With considerations strongly dependent upon the principal, the district may find it valuable to develop learning sessions that help shift principals' knowledge, skills, and dispositions about coaching in order to build capacity. Doing so has the potential to improve the way in which principals evaluate their literacy coaches as well.

Another important consideration is that the Framework does not address the need for literacy coaches to establish and maintain trusting relationships with teachers and other colleagues. According to L'Allier and Elish-Piper (2012), informal activities such as conversing with teachers and sharing resources is a foundation to developing relationships that allow for more formal work such as facilitating professional learning and completing coaching cycles with individual teachers. Coaching requires cultural competence, empathy, and compassion to

develop, nurture, and sustain trusting relationships among teachers (Aguilar, 2013). Without these relationships, effective coaching cannot occur; therefore, it is an assumption that literacy coaches utilizing the Framework already have established relationships with teachers.

Last, considerations based on the aforementioned measures of success also inform users of additional needs, concerns, and adjustments. Important to note is that the Framework builds capacity from within the district. Once implementation successfully occurs for a period of time, considerations for involving outside consultants and or resources may be necessary for continuous growth.

Modifications of the Framework

By design, the Framework is meant to be adapted to meet the needs of the context in which it is used. Embedded within the first year of implementation is a review committee comprised of representatives from each stakeholder group. This committee is tasked with reflecting upon and analyzing implementation of the Framework and then recommending modifications deemed necessary. I recommend that the committee keep the number of required coaching cycles at the top of their regular discussions, as the increase from previous years (two per year) to the Framework (six per year) is significant and may be too drastic. Ongoing analysis may call for an immediate modification in reducing or quite possibly increasing the number of required coaching episodes.

Limitations

As in any action research study it was critical to identify limitations. Limitations served as opportunities to reflect upon the collection of data, development of solutions, and provide an

opportunity to determine how further research on the problem of practice could be designed to support additional analysis. In the following subsections, methodological limitations, as well as limitations within the scope of the Framework are identified.

Methodological Limitations

Qualitative methodologies, used to gather data from focus groups, interviews, and artifact analysis, supported the design of the Framework. These data sources helped to ensure information was obtained from those closest to the heart of the problem: actual elementary literacy coaches and representatives from their surrounding hierarchy. With data collection limited to the scope of one school district over a two-week time period, the pool of possible participants was minimal. Access to elementary level literacy coaches for voluntary participation in the study was limited to one day. This contributed to the problem, as this group met together only three days the entire school year. Though the data collected were comprehensive enough to develop solutions, only one third of the district's elementary literacy and literacy focused coaches participated. I recommend that future work involve more participants and additional districts. This would not only allow for a larger participant pool but would also test the adaptability of the Framework to meet the needs of other contexts.

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), researchers must reflect on their positionality or relationship to the study and question its impact. My positionality in relation to this research served as both an advantage and a limitation. It was advantageous because many participants knew me or my past work with the school district and willingly engaged in the focus groups and interviews. That personal connection also created a need for conscientious data collection. Use of a supporting moderator during data collection was implemented to reduce researcher bias and

provided added support. It is possible that bias impacted data analysis; therefore, results should be considered in conjunction with my past experiences as an elementary literacy coach and in relation to the problem. Admittedly, this study allowed me to illuminate facets of the problem supported by data and highlight research findings that I believed were most significant.

Last, this study, like many others focused on coaching, drew attention to the need to measure coach effectiveness beyond self-reported data. The student-centered coaching model provided within the Framework addressed a beginning step to move in this direction (Sweeney, 2011).

Framework Limitations

The Framework requires cycles of reflection. Implementation of it “as-is” is meant to provide the users with a starting point to transform professional learning for elementary level literacy coaches to include researched based best practices. Therefore, a limitation to the Framework is that it is not static, meaning that implementing it as-is will not provide an immediate solution. Continuous cycles of reflection and adjustment will be necessary. Use of a framework was selected because of its adaptability; thus, the user must recognize the power in that adaptability and make changes according to needs identified by stakeholders.

Anticipated Impact

Overall, the purpose of this dissertation in practice was to transform learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches to include best practices in professional learning. By shifting to professional learning, continuous cycles of embedded, learner directed, relevant opportunities are available to literacy coaches, a group that typically has participated in “sit and

get” workshops (Easton, 2008). On a broad scale, use of the Framework increases the amount of coaching that happens within the district’s elementary schools. Increased coaching practices lend themselves to collaboration and reflection that improve classroom instruction. I also anticipate that the inclusion of professional learning as an enhanced support for literacy coaches will reduce the amount of turnover related to the position. Additionally, by participating in professional learning themselves, I expect coaches will begin to design professional learning at their schools that mimic the Framework components. This shift in how literacy coaches learn should, in turn, create literacy coaches who better understand how teachers learn. Success with the Framework may also inform district policy in altering the approach to professional learning for all educators.

CHAPTER 5 IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Framework Summary

This dissertation in practice intended to transform learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches in a central Florida school district by utilizing a framework that adhered to best practices in professional learning. The Framework is meant to solidify learning experiences for elementary literacy coaches by enhancing coaching skills and literacy knowledge through ongoing, collaborative practices tailored to meet individual needs of coaches and the schools in which they work. These practices protect literacy coaches from isolated learning experiences, create access to varied types of learning opportunities, and stress the importance of the principal's actions in establishing a coaching community at each school. The motivation behind the design of this framework came from my past experiences as a literacy coach, a review of the literature surrounding learning opportunities for coaches, and a collection of pilot study data from current elementary literacy coaches and district leaders. These sources confirmed the need to cultivate quality learning opportunities for elementary literacy coaches as an avenue for strengthening the coaching component of the broader professional learning system available to teachers. By strengthening elementary literacy coaches, the Framework will positively impact learning for teachers and students concurrently.

Implications of The Framework

The design of the Framework encompassed several components to address the need to improve professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches identified in the pilot study and literature review. Both the sociocultural perspective and adult learning theory served

as guides for development and decision making surrounding the Framework by reinforcing choice and relevance. The following sections, organized by framework component, discuss the implications each component intended to have on elementary literacy coach learning and the overall organization. The components align with research, supporting a balance of whole group, small group, and individual learning opportunities that function to offer a well-rounded professional learning system for elementary literacy coaches (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Principal and Literacy Coach Collaboration

Utilization of the Framework recognized the importance of collaboration among school based leaders. Implied results of incorporating this collaboration to grow the learning culture within schools included unifying coaches and administrators in serving as change agents and improving the principal’s role as instructional leader. When principals value and endorse the literacy coach, teachers are more likely to access coaching for professional growth (Matsumura et al., 2009). Principals, too, should experience professional growth as result of the Framework.

Choice: Student-Centered and Coach-to-Coach Cycles

By participating in regular coaching cycles, the Framework paves the way for literacy coaches to spend more time on coaching and coaching related tasks. This component supports the role of the literacy coach for what it is intended to be while simultaneously filling a void in feedback that coaches identified during the pilot study. Implementation of this portion of the Framework improves and protects the role of the coach and offers a means for coaches to solicit feedback, collect data on their practice, and learn alongside others (Aguilar, 2013). Widespread, this means that throughout WCS coaches will have more opportunities and clearly identified

methods for improving their coaching practice. This leads to improvements in classroom instruction and student learning. Implications for the organization include improved perceptions of coaching and better consistency in the role as well as a community of literacy coaches who engage in metacognitive thinking about their work.

Differentiation

By providing differentiated instruction within monthly coaches' meetings, those involved benefit from collaborative learning and opportunities to build relationships. Using a differentiated format also allows for learning that is tailored to meet the needs of the literacy coach and honors professional learning practices that increase interest, motivation, and ownership of learning (Easton, 2008). Additionally, with constant changes in what is known about literacy learning, it is necessary for a literacy coach to constantly expand knowledge and keep abreast of the latest trends in research (Aguilar, 2013). Literacy coaches, as adult learners, likely identify their own learning needs, making differentiated learning opportunities critical for self-directed learning (Aguilar, 2013). From the organization standpoint, this component of the Framework offers a structure that creates unity among coaches and provides an opportunity to build expertise and capacity from within WCS. As result, the district benefits from more knowledgeable coaches.

Optional Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Mentorships

The PLC and Mentorship component of the Framework encourages WCS to provide structures for elementary literacy coaches to create a network or informal support system that includes working with literacy coaches from other schools (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2012).

Implications of this component include the use of collaboration to reduce isolated learning, increased learning in both literacy and coaching skills, and provides a means for communication across schools. Literacy coaches should deliberately establish opportunities to learn from and support one another (Aguilar, 2013). At the organization level, WCS benefits because this allows for schools to communicate and collaborate together. This provides a structure to build capacity within the district.

Recommendations Within the Framework

In order to support elementary literacy coaches' learning, and WCS in the overall performance of their coaching initiative, the Framework was designed to meet the needs identified by literacy coaches and research based best practices. Additionally, it enabled the identification of non-negotiable components needed for literacy coach learning: continuous opportunities for feedback, collaboration, and differentiation. The final Framework design focused on three key recommendations:

- Professional Learning--Structures that support elementary literacy coaches and apply research based best practices for professional learning are recommended.
- Collaboration--Learning occurs in collaboration with others; therefore, it is recommended that literacy coaches take a deliberate stance toward working together beyond their individual school sites.
- Feedback and Reflection--Growth occurs through regular cycles of feedback and reflection. Coaching cycles within the Framework offer a means for feedback and reflection.

Recommendations Beyond the Framework

The purpose of the Framework was to target professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches. While it could be functional in transforming learning for coaches in its present form, recommendations beyond the components identified in the Framework exist as a result of this study as well.

Job Descriptions and Qualifications for Literacy Coaches

The review of coaching related artifacts from WCS revealed dated job descriptions. This was evident across all coaching job descriptions: (e.g., literacy, academic, instructional). Specific to literacy coaches, the job description was created 16 years ago and was revised eight years ago. Similar patterns were noted for other coaching positions as well. It is recommended that these job descriptions be revised to meet the demands of the most recent standards to provide further clarity to the role of the coach. In addition, the Assurances artifact should mirror the job descriptions once revised. Updated job descriptions will assist in hiring coaches as well as informing stakeholders of the expectation for the position.

Furthermore, the first portion of the job description includes qualifications needed in order to be hired for a coaching position. Some of these qualifications include three years of successful classroom teaching experience, a preferred Master's degree in reading, and experience in mentoring and providing professional development. When comparing these qualifications alongside the self-reported data coaches shared during the pilot study, it is clear that these qualifications are not adhered to during the hiring process. Understandably, principals likely hire coaches based on what they know about them as teachers. The recommendation is not to change the way coaches are hired but to encourage adherence to qualifications. Data collected during

the pilot study addressed a lack of literacy content knowledge; thus, it is recommended that we consider how often literacy coaches are hired without the qualifying graduate degree or advanced literacy training. To alleviate this gap, it may be wise to provide newly hired literacy coaches, who do not meet the stated qualification, with contingent timelines to earn an advanced degree or endorsement.

Honor the Standards

The focus of this study was to explore professional learning practices for elementary literacy coaches and use data collected to inform the improvement of learning opportunities that enhance coaching skills and literacy content knowledge. Yet, as data were collected and literature reviewed, it was apparent that the ambiguity associated with the role of the literacy coach would impact the learning design. The aforementioned recommendation of revising job descriptions and adhering to qualifications during hiring would further support the Framework along with aligning the work of coaches to the *Standards 2010: Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach* developed by the International Literacy Association (ILA), formerly the International Reading Association (IRA). Adherence to these standards provides a foundation for the district to lean on for guidance in decision making about literacy coaches. Specific to professional learning, the sixth standard addresses the need for literacy coaches to be knowledgeable about adult learning and have a positive disposition regarding their own learning and development. This standard is defined by evidence of collaborative planning, design, facilitation, and participation (IRA, 2010). The remaining standards reiterate the need for strong foundational knowledge in literacy as well as in curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity, and the overall creation of a literate environment within a school (IRA, 2010). I

advocate the use of these standards as a reference and training tool for elementary literacy coaches and school administrators to reduce the ambiguity associated with the role.

Share the Journey

As implementation of the Framework occurs, I recommend that elementary literacy coaches, principals, and other involved stakeholders share their successes and failures. WCS should dedicate time for this to occur, as people relate to and value hearing how others navigated implementation. It is within these stories that others will reflect upon their own strengths and weaknesses and develop new ideas to pursue. By sharing the journey, we add another layer of collaborative practice and learning community that encourages collegiality and collective action to increase student learning within the district (Gulamhussein, 2013).

Program Impact

Over the course of the last three years, I have noticed significant changes in my stance as a practitioner. The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program introduced me to multiple lenses for addressing a problem of practice, ultimately allowing me to dissect a problem using multiple frames as a guide, and to develop reasonable solutions. I also learned how to identify and read scholarly writing and support a problem of practice with a literature review. Vast opportunities to write within the program also expanded my abilities; some even led to publications. Additionally, collaborating within the cohort, and networking at professional conferences assisted in my professional growth. One characteristic that I am most aware of is the shift I experienced in my reflective thoughts. When I step back and think about the changes to my inner dialogue, I identify that I am more research minded. I constantly think about situations,

problems, and interests with the lens of “How can I research and use what I know to build upon the identified concern?” These thoughts, along with the coursework and collaboration, helped guide me to complete the dissertation in practice.

The dissertation, on its own, is a true representation of my growth through the program. The research topic evolved from the onset of the program; I continually adjusted it as I learned more in courses. Ultimately, by working with the topic of literacy coaching, I was building on a self-identified strength. I used my experiences and knowledge surrounding the topic to delve deeper into designing a method for improvement. I learned how to define the problem of practice around the current trends and issues in literacy education in the concentration courses I took that were specific to literacy. I applied what I learned from core courses about using multiple lenses to explore and develop solutions for the problem. As a result, I am equipped with the skills needed to address a problem of practice using a multi-faceted approach, review literature to support a problem, and develop solutions accordingly.

Conclusion

The proposed Framework within this dissertation in practice intended to improve professional learning practices for elementary level literacy coaches. By improving their learning opportunities, elementary literacy coaches would be better equipped to support teachers and, ultimately, student learning. Within the United States, a significant need exists to change the way we prepare and develop teachers, and literacy coaches can play a pivotal role in providing opportunities for improved learning experiences. Consequently, in order to do so, literacy coaches must experience significant changes in the way they learn as outlined in the proposed Framework. In conclusion, the Framework created in this dissertation in practice

offers ways to improve learning for elementary literacy coaches, in contextually bound and adaptable ways, while recognizing the coaching role as a key component within a broader professional learning system for teachers.

APPENDIX A
APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Lenora Cunningham Forsythe

Date: October 09, 2015

Dear Researcher:

On 10/09/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Professional Learning for Elementary Literacy Coaches: Needs and Perspectives
Investigator: Lenora Cunningham Forsythe
IRB Number: SBE-15-11662
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 10/09/2015 04:04:31 PM EDT

IRB manager



Mr. James T. Russell
Superintendent of Schools

P.O. Box 2118
DeLand
(386) 734-7190

200 North Clara Avenue
Daytona Beach
(386) 255-6475

DeLand, Florida
New Smyrna Beach
(386) 427-5223

32721-2118
Osteen
(386) 860-3322

School Board of Volusia County

Mrs. Linda Costello, Chairman
Mrs. Ida D. Wright, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Linda Cuthbert
Dr. John Hill
Mrs. Melody Johnson

October 23, 2015

Ms. Lenora Forsythe
310 Churchill Blvd.
DeLand, FL 32724

Dear Ms. Forsythe,

I have received your request to conduct research in Volusia County on the topic of "Profession Learning for Elementary Literacy Coaches: Needs and Perspectives." After committee review, we are approving your request.

By copy of this letter, you may contact the elementary principals. Please keep in mind, participation in this study is at the sole discretion of the principals and coaches that may be involved.

We would very much appreciate receiving a copy of your findings upon the completion of the project.

Sincerely,

Alicia K. Parker, Ed.D
Assistant Director, Digital Learning & Assessment

cc: Leticia Roman, Director, Federal Programs & Grants Development Services

AKP/msc

APPENDIX B
THE FRAMEWORK AND PROTOCOLS

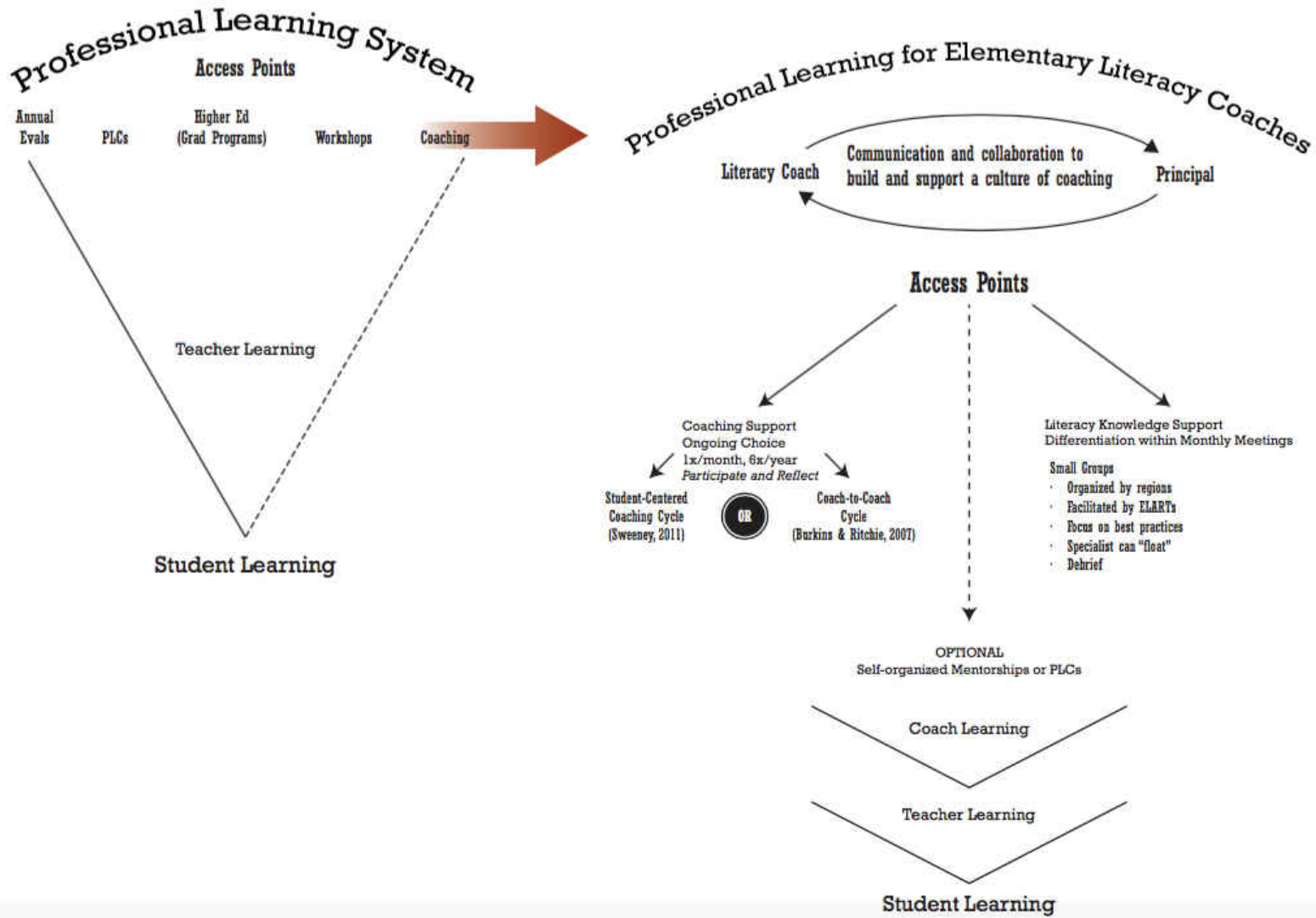


Figure 7. The Framework for Elementary Literacy Coaches' Professional Learning (Forsythe, 2016)

Training Guidelines for the Role(s) within the Moderating Team (Krueger & Casey, 2009)

Lead Moderator: Researcher **Supporting Moderator:** Elementary Ed. Undergraduate

Lead Moderator	Supporting Moderator
<p>Rationale: The full moderator must be fully grounded in the purpose of the study and understand enough about the topic to know what type of information will be most useful (p. 86). Must have the ability to listen and the self-discipline to control personal reactions (p. 87).</p>	<p>Rationale: Supporting moderators provide a second set of eyes and ears to increase the total accumulation of information and the validity of the analysis. Supporting moderators also prevent the lead moderator from being distracted (p. 89).</p> <p>Training to supporting moderators will be provided to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities in addition to the purpose of the research, as well as the purpose of the focus groups and the rules for the sessions (p.89).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Informed consent • Video/audio recording notification • Use of pseudonyms • 3-5 minute introduction/overview • Ground rules • Direct discussion, keep conversation flowing • Use wait time • Maintain a neutral stance • Use prompts such as “tell me more about that” or “what might others add to that” or “are there other points of view?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to audio/visual equipment • Post visual (RE: Prof. Learning) • Materials for participants: paper, pens • Monitor the lead moderators for bias • Handles environmental conditions and logistics (seating, lighting, refreshments) • Responds to unexpected interruptions • Takes notes • Does NOT participate in the conversation • Collect papers as participants exit • Debrief with the lead moderator following each session

Note-taking for Assistant Moderators (p. 109):

- Well said quotes
- Non verbal activity
- Sketch the seating arrangement
- Notes for EACH session should include:
 - Date, time, number of participants, and a diagram of seating arrangements

Establish Ground Rules

- There are no right or wrong answers. We expect differing points of view; that is ok, please share.
- You may choose to respond to me, or to each other. Have a conversation with one another. We’re interested in hearing from each of you, so I may call on some of you to make sure you have a chance to share your ideas. Please place your cell phones on silent.

Protocol: Focus Groups for Elementary Literacy Coaches

Format: If possible, the seating arrangement for the room will be in a circle, with the facilitator as part of the circle (on the same level as the coaches). A welcome and introductions will take place. The moderator will circulate the exterior of the circle and tend to audio/visual equipment. Preferably, the circle will be empty (no furniture). Coaches will be provided with a clipboard and paper for jotting down thoughts before engaging in conversation. With permission from each participant, the paper will be collected at the conclusion of the focus group meeting.

Materials needed: snacks, clipboards, pencils for each participant

Rationale: Participants will receive a brief overview of the study. IRB Exempt, Informed Consent, and use of pseudonyms will be explained so participants can opt to participate. Explain goals for the focus group meeting and establish norms and expectations, as well as the role of facilitator and moderator. Explain video/audio recording. A brief explanation of the differences between professional development and professional learning will also take place (and possibly a chart paper referencing the two will be posted).

Opening Question:

Tell me who you are, where you coach, and one thing you enjoy outside of work.

Introductory Question(s):

1. Tell me about how you currently participate in professional learning (how often, on what topics)?

Transition Questions:

2. How has professional learning informed your coaching practice? Can you provide an example?
3. What types of professional learning are most beneficial to you? Why? Who provides the types you prefer most?

Key Questions:

4. Please list/describe some of your greatest learning needs for improved literacy coaching. *(participants will list on paper prior to opening up for discussion; demographic info can be collected on this paper as well at the end of the session).*
5. How do you seek learning opportunities that will foster your growth as a coach?
6. In your opinion, what would be most helpful in supporting your work?
7. How do you stay informed of current research on best practices and trends in literacy education?

Ending Questions:

8. We want to know how to improve the professional learning you currently participate in. Do you have thoughts or suggestions about how your professional learning could be enhanced? What types of formats/practices are you in need of?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Focus Group Handout

Box 1	Box 2	Box 3	Box 4

Please indicate:

Number of years *teaching* & grade levels:

Number of years *coaching*: _____

Specific type of coach (Reading/literacy, Academic): _____

Level of education: _____

Areas of Certification: _____

Thank you for your participation in today's focus group!

Interview Protocol for the District English Language Arts Specialist

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to provide insight on the elementary literacy coach position, and to specifically highlight the current professional learning needs and practices from the perspective of the English Language Arts Specialist.

1- Demographics	Please tell me a little about your current position and past experiences in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been teaching? What grade levels? How many years did you spend coaching? What preparation do you have for coaching (certification, endorsements, experiences, etc.)? Current position?
2- Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please share the district’s current goals for the coaching initiative (2015-16 school year). • Please share the literacy goals for the 15-16 school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the coaching initiative support ELA goals? • What are the professional learning goals for literacy coaches? • What goals do you expect coaches to meet at each of their sites?
3- Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure or gauge the professional growth of coaches in the area of literacy? • How do you ensure that coaches have the knowledge to handle literacy trends and shifts that teachers and students are experiencing? • What are the current literacy plans for the district for teachers and students? How does this plan align with professional learning and support for coaches? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is coaches’ growth and effectiveness measured or gauged in the area of literacy? • How is professional growth in literacy monitored in coaches? • Who provides district literacy support to coaches? What type and how often? • How are professional learning goals for coaches communicated between you and school administrators?
4- Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel coaches respond to current professional learning sessions that are provided? • What seems to work for them? What does not work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role to school administrators play in the professional growth of the coach?

<p>5- Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific district needs do you have for the professional growth of coaches in the area of literacy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who provides input for the professional growth of coaches? • What are their needs specific to? (i.e. the coaching cycle, literacy, program development)
<p>6- Additional Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else you would like to share? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have additional thoughts or recommendations that could contribute to this study?

**Interview Protocol for the School District Supervisor of Elementary Literacy Coaches
Title 1 Coaching Initiative**

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to provide historical insight on the elementary literacy coach position, as well as provide future directions of the coaching program at a central Florida school district. Additionally, the interview will capture past and current professional development practices for elementary literacy coaches, as well as goals for the future.

1-Demographics	Please tell me a little about your current position and past experiences in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been teaching? What grade levels? How many years did you spend coaching? What preparation do you have for coaching (certification, endorsements, experiences, etc.)? Current position?
2- Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please share the district’s current goals for the coaching initiative (2015-16 school year). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the professional learning goals for literacy coaches? • What goals do you expect coaches to meet at each of their sites?
3- History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you provide/share a general, historical timeline of the district’s coaching initiative since the introduction of the program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of professional learning for coaches, decision making for coaches: Have PD plans for coaches changed over time? How? Why?
4- Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure or gauge the professional growth of coaches? • How do you ensure that coaches have the knowledge to handle literacy trends and shifts that teachers and students are experiencing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is coaches’ growth and effectiveness measured or gauged? • How is professional growth monitored in coaches? • Who provides district support to coaches? What type and how often?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current literacy plans for the district for teachers and students? How does this plan align with professional learning and support for coaches? • • Please explain the varying titles of Instructional Coaches and how/why the title is assigned to the coach (i.e. academic vs. literacy coach; reading vs. literacy coach). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are professional learning goals for coaches communicated between you and school administrators?
5- Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel coaches respond to current professional learning sessions that are provided? • What seems to work for them? What does not work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role to school administrators play in the professional growth of the coach?
6- Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific district needs do you have for the professional growth of coaches? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who provides input for the professional growth of coaches? School administrators? Content area specialists? • What are their needs specific to? (i.e. the coaching cycle, literacy, program development)
7- Additional Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else you would like to share? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have additional thoughts or recommendations that could contribute to this study?

APPENDIX C
TRANSCRIPTIONS

Literacy Coach Focus Group 1 Transcription
Participants: P1 & P2

During the explanation of PL vs PD:

P1: There is no coaching for the coaches.

I think this year what they've done with the coaches' meetings I feel that it is geared more toward PD

P2: Right

I feel there is lot of learning embedded in what we have to take back to our school and use... years ago it was more sit and get

P2: Right, right, I agree

P2: I think when I first started coaching a lot of it was the training to be a trainer

P1: Yes

P2: So here is what you need to understand about this... now go back train and follow up, thought I might not know. Sometimes I still feel that way especially with some of the new implementations.

How has professional learning informed your coaching practice? Can you provide an example?

P2: With the last one with Dr. Julie Smith with feedback I feel I can give better and more productive feedback. I wanted more from her so I could have a better grasp of how to give feedback to the teachers. So I don't just give a mix of praise and hurt somebody's feelings to actually helping them grow as a professional

(PROMPT) Then from that workshop, will somebody come in and coach you on your coaching or your ability to provide feedback? So will someone coach you on your coaching with feedback?

P1: I heard at some point that we would have somebody come in and observe us having a coaching session with a teacher I just heard it was going to happen but don't know when but it is already mid-way through the year and that has not happened, so I don't know when. I just had my first coaching cycle with a teacher... I am very nervous and not certain.

Greatest need for me as a coach- How do we coach- I am good at going into the rooms and finding things they are great in and pinpointing a few things. It's hard when you see something that needs to be tweaked.

P2: It's hard to keep that line from looking like you are more of an administrator than a coach especially when we are at a school for a long time. I struggle with that a little bit.

P1: Especially when we are their peers. We aren't getting paid any more than them.

P1: that's why I am working with a lot of the new teachers rather than the veteran teachers. I ask the veteran teachers if I can come in and see a specific area so that I can then send someone in to observe that area. Trying to get veteran teachers involved in a little bit.

(PROMPT) How would you feel about PL that included feedback from another coach or district?

P1: it would let me know if I am on the right track,

P2: Target

P1: It would help me hone in on what to improve or do different right, right, right

P1: same as the feedback we give to our students, how do we give feedback to our students and why

P2: Right

What types of professional learning are most beneficial to you? Why? Who provides the types you prefer most?

Please list/describe some of your greatest learning needs for improved literacy coaching. (*participants will list on paper prior to opening up for discussion; demographic info can be collected on this paper as well at the end of the session*).

P1: information, examples, and guidance on coaching teacher

How do you seek learning opportunities that will foster your growth as a coach? In your opinion, what would be most helpful in supporting your work?

How do you stay informed of current research on best practices and trends in literacy education?

Face/expressions

P2: A lot of journal reading (Ed Leadership, ASCD Newsletters, Reading Teacher, Twitter. It takes a lot to keep up with what's current. Because I don't feel that we're quite aware as coaches that we're quite aware as to the resources to be innovative to be able to implement within our schools (7:30secs).

P1: Twitter is very helpful, there is NEA, AFT magazines. And I think you know at some of our PL they do touch on the research.

Prompt: So might you say that a lot of your professional learning is done on your own time, independently, outside your paid time?

P2: Yes, mine is.

P1: Mine too, most definitely.

We want to know how to improve the professional learning you currently participate in. Do you have thoughts or suggestions about how your professional learning could be enhanced? What types of formats/practices are you in need of?

P1: I think going back to the feedback again. Feedback. Are we doing this properly? What can we do to improve? To become better coaches. There is a stigma, there was years ago, but there wasn't time to be a coach and it was just administrative. I think there has been a shift, and that may be partly because of my administrator, but I feel like I am able to do more coaching than I was years ago. Now it's like ok, am I doing this properly? Can I be better at it.

P2: And time, time is a huge issue. They want us in the classrooms 75% of the time, which is fine, but when you calculate that out it about 4.5 hours each day that leaves me an hour in my office to do follow up and that is incredibly hard when I am going into about 8 classrooms a day for 15-30 minutes.

P1: Are you really doing that?

P2: Yes, I really am. So like I might see something in your class that I might need to spend a good amount of time developing and having to take a lot of things home and I feel being realistic about the time and the percentage of time (10:02) and about having the time for us to develop as a coach, you know even maybe PLCs amongst each other. Because I know even some of the newer coaches have reached out to me when we did the learning walks at VP saying you know everything is

P1: Oh that's a really good idea

P2: Wrapped tight here can I come watch you, can I come talk with you? And you know that's a really good idea pairing up and having time to just have time to talk to see how do you do it at your school? I think that might be a good thing to have.

P1: Right

P1: Also time is a really huge factor as well with the coaching cycles we are supposed to be planning w/ teachers once a week, but they have meetings during their planning all the time and

P2: Contractually too

P1: I think PL; She made a great point with observing other coaches. We are both new coaches at my school so I don't have anyone to bounce ideas off of

P2: The idea of coaching continually changes, and I think that hinders us to develop professionally.

PROMPT: Say more about that.

P2: Because the expectation changes from year to year.

P1: You are absolutely right.

**Literacy Coach Focus Group 2 Transcription
8 Participants**

Tell me about how you currently participate in professional learning (how often, on what topics)?

Emails from the district on what we need to take for being a 1st year coach

(prompt) What might others add?

P6: This year we are doing learning walks, so site based, and then we do it on our campus
We have speakers come in to our meetings, on Fridays,

P2: Once a month, our coaches' meetings are once a month

P1: Yes, once a month, but some of those are sit and gets, so I would say that today is more of a PL because it includes Learning Walks. Last months was more of a PD, would you guys agree?

GROUP: right, YES, yes, yes

P1: So maybe every other month, cause that's how it's set up.

P2: Well the ones with the Learning Walks lady {last month} I am putting that in the PL category because we wouldn't be able to do that without her training and background without that. It was a sit and get, but we were getting to this point where we could actually do it.

Last year was all sit and get. This year, at least the ones that have been sit and get have lead us to what we did today.

GROUP Consensus

P5: For me the continuous learning falls under following through. We go back and share then implement and provide feedback (3:03)

(PROMPT) So that's how you coach that teacher, but who coaches you on that coaching?

P3: That's seems to me like there's a gap there

P7: Esp. for 1st year coaches.

We do have contacts

P6: Yes, our district Liaison, helps me quite a bit

P5: I think for me as a former PAR, so I lead the coaches at my school, I coach the coaches

How has professional learning informed your coaching practice? Can you provide an example?

For me, being self reflective, I have my own little checklist for when I am reflecting, then I collaborate with my admin when I am done to ensure that the goals for my coaching have been met. 4:32

What types of professional learning are most beneficial to you? Why? Who provides the types you prefer most?

P7: I'll be honest at my school I am the only coach with over 700 students and I have been at the school 20 years. IT's a lot to sort out and get into classrooms and makes sense of the whole thing. It's very overwhelming.

(Prompt) What do others have to say about that?

I think the first year is the hardest year, once you get through that. Once you get through that because a lot of that has to do with yourself. Once you can start prioritizing it falls on you. IN some schools it may be the principal

P8: Definitely the first year is the hardest. I remember thinking what am I supposed to do? Especially during preplanning when I usually would have been setting up a classroom. There's no schedule, you make the schedule.

P2: Going back to the PL, I think the hardest thing for us as coaches is when there is a new initiative from the district (like SIPPS, Ready Reading, Ready Writing) those things in ELA are very difficult for us because the district is just rolling it out and the teachers are coming to the coaches for support and we don't have the PL it seems like it would be best if there was a year wait or hold on it.

CONSENSUS

P2: I mean teachers are coming asking questions, and I'm like I'm not trained on it yet, I will walk through it with you but I don't have the proper training yet.

P6: It seems like it's been that way for 3 years now

P4: It's almost as if the teachers are implementing in the classroom and we're not {trained} yet, so we almost have to follow them.

P8: I had to do that with SIPPS. Had to ask a teacher can I teach a few lessons? I don't know something unless I use it.

P2: if we had a ½ year of time ahead to know what's coming, if we could have PL like that it would help because actually right now [this afternoon] we are just now getting background training on how to coach the Ready Writing that teachers had since August.

CONSENSUS

P8: The teachers are already working with the program and some of them are really frustrated and I don't know how to help them

CONSENSUS

P4: And then you have to correct things after you find out what the best practice is. After the teacher has already used it for months we come in and say that's not really the best practice, this is how it's supposed to be, then I get "well why didn't you tell me about that in august?"

P2: PL before implementation.

CONSENSUS

P7: IT would have been nice to have the training this year for Ready Reading/writing, and implement next year. That would make more sense and is more logical.

P5: But we're in VC and we don't do logical

P2: it would help make implementation smoother

P7: Better buy in and transition and we would have more credibility

P4: We have too many new resources this year. IT seems too overwhelming. Drowning in ELA resources.

CONSENSUS

And at my school I have brand new admin....

Please list/describe some of your greatest learning needs for improved literacy coaching. (participants will list on paper prior to opening up for discussion; demographic info can be collected on this paper as well at the end of the session).

PROMPT- think full scope beyond programs

P1: I think days like today are what we need, just more of them, for me the PL today is looking for opportunities to coach. For me it's different because it's my school today. But last time at the other school it was like "what would be the next steps" and what would be the coaching points to have those teachers and having the conversations with other coaches (veteran, new), seeing different things at their school and having face to face conversation (CONSENSUS, conversations) to about what your needs are with other coaches already doing it or have same needs. Which today it is split. The conversation and collaboration in the morning and the afternoon the content. Which is a little behind (the content) so we want that sooner but we are gaining content about literacy or literacy programs just need it to be in a timelier proactive fashion.

P7: I have all these intervention materials at my school and I would like to know how to use them and best practice to effectively help the teachers with them. I have no idea how to use them. I've also got book study- tons and tons of books study materials that since we are a title 1 school and I don't know what to do with them. Looks like they haven't been used. So I would like somebody to help me figure out what to do with them.

P3: So really, feedback.

P2: So, like coaches PLC

P4: We don't have PLC for coaches

CONSENSUS

P2: Time to sit down and talk. Like you said keeping us up to date, like you asked, we don't have research and are not kept up to date. That's something that we really need. And research on different programs. Keep us most up to date on what's relevant in literacy.

P6: Literacy, I feel like that's the key. I feel like we have had a lot of PL related to or on coaching.

P2: But literacy

P7: What resources are out there? What is the research?

P2: Right, we now have Common core, but we really haven't been trained any more as coaches in ELA common core, we have the programs we've been trained in, but specifically as common core training as coaches.

P1: like the background. We need to go back and build capacity in the ELA shifts

CONSENSUS

P2: But we haven't had that at this level.

How do you seek learning opportunities that will foster your growth as a coach?

P5: I have a coaching buddy whose been coaching for 8 years so I ask her, coaching is not new to me but a different format. So I ask her if she is willing to collaborate, so we do that about once a week.

PROMPT- and that's done on your own time?

P5: Yes

P8: books are helpful, Fountas and Pinnell continuum book is helpful. Also, I've mentioned before that my background is foundational (prek-2) so when I came out of the classroom to deal with needs of 3-5 is totally different. So I had to constantly research how to do things, like theme, help me with theme, well I have to figure out how to teach theme myself. Things like that, specific direction, or even a list of, we get all books about coaching, and they've given us a lot of management ideas, but they don't give us specific training. Even if there were books that were really good.

P6: I feel like we used to have that, I've been a coach a while, but we used to have that, and with all of this shift we've kind of lost that piece.

(Prompt) I know our histories are similar with coaching, so If you don't mind, I'd like you to say more about that and include the timeframe.

P6: Umm, about 6 or 7 years ago.

In your opinion, what would be most helpful in supporting your work?

P4: practical point, I think we need more time. Coaches used to come in a long time ago a week before the teachers. They took that away. So while their doing their thing, so are we, so we are neck and neck (with the teachers) and it would be nice to get ahead.

P7: I know what you are saying. I would love to get to have time to get with surrounding elementary coaches

P4: To make a plan before the teachers get there

P7: Exactly, I would love to collaborate. We want the teacher to collaborate, but you know, as coaches we need to and we only get together once a month now.

P4: if we could meet the week before and see what the teachers are about to see and the roll out maybe that would give us the time Instead of seeing it the same time they (the teachers) do.

Exactly, but we don't have time

Or we can email each other

P2: Another hard part about our job is our role. Because we all play a different role at our school all have different things to do that don't connect to our job as coaching that our admin put on us. That's always going to happen. But I think that makes it hard on the teachers because how are they supposed to know what is our role, we don't have it defined. But I think that is the next steps for where we want to go is to make it consistent for all coaches among schools and make it so we have to follow that. It looks bad when one coach does more for teachers and another does more for administration than others. Then admin likes the one that's helping them get things done, and the teachers like the one that is helping them in the classrooms more. Both are doing a good job that helps make the school run and are valuable.

YES.

P2: Clearly defined roles. One looks good to administrators; one looks good to teachers. Both are doing a good job to help make the school run, but it is a different job. And in case of one coach because sometimes the comparison is to a school where there is more than one coach.

P6: I think they have tried to do that this year

P6: It doesn't take away from the fact that those other jobs have to get done.

P8: It's very different depending on your administrator

How do you stay informed of current research on best practices and trends in literacy education?

P3: I am always watching videos, teaching channel, best practices on the internet, NEA, a lot of reading

Prompt: On own time?

Yes

P2: (attending) PLCs with grade levels, because they know more than us sometimes, so then I further research what they are discussing. Gaining and learning the content based research that they are learning.

I agree, as a new coach, I have really reached out to district staff and assigned personnel, so I utilize the resources we have with the specialists we have. It's not only helpful for the teachers, but for you as the coach as well. We already have so much to do, but they can come out and model something specific, and model and debrief so you know exactly what to do and look for different look-fors. Because you can't know everything to look for in ELA, so they can help.

(PROMPT): So you have benefitted with collaboration from district personnel.

Consensus.

We want to know how to improve the professional learning you currently participate in. Do you have thoughts or suggestions about how your professional learning could be enhanced?

P8: More specific training in our area (in reading). A lot of times we have meetings where all coaches are together, and if it's just reading, this year is a little different. I just never felt they ever really addressed specific components of reading.

P2: I think we haven't done it; this is the first time we've... it seems like we're heading in the right direction. This is the first time we've met at schools and gone into actual classrooms, seeing it being taught, then coming back and discussing. This does lead to PL, this is closer than.

P7: You do all these things and create all of these things, but I really need to know if I am heading in the right direction, but have someone else come in to give you feedback. I feel like that's really missing. What am I doing, this is where I could move, give me specific feedback to move forward.

P5: We have five coaches at my school... we shadow each other, script, and provide feedback based on something specific, so we kind of help each other stay focused on the topics and concerns to having that feedback is vitally important to improving our practice. We kind of help each other stay focused. We get to do that, but not everyone gets to

Prompt: a lot of head nodding, is that something that, or something similar to that? Would that potentially helpful to your practice?

P6: Yes, this is my first year having a second coach at my school. That has been tremendous having that ability to have that honest relationship to share and build your strengths.

P1: I think we have to be careful in a sense that it would need to be someone you are choosing in that you trust because if you have someone assigned to you to be your mentor, it's just like saying it's non-evaluative, but it still feels that way (compares to teachers) 2:03 left

Teachers that trust you ask for feedback and welcome you, but when you are asked to work with a teacher they are not as always accepting of the feedback.

As coaches we want the opportunity to form relationships with our peers and have those conversations. We want the time to work together inside and outside of your own school Going to another school give you a whole other perspective just the time to do it.

I think it would be great to shadow other coaches, that would be great.

CONSENSUS

We have got to think feasible. Shadowing might not be, but what about video? You know, videoing the lesson, and having us provide a coaching form on that, everyone, and then discuss what we got out of it. That's one way to accomplish that without having to all be in the same place.

P4: What can we do to make it happen in one place without judging?

ELART Focus Group Transcription
5 participants: ELART1, ELART2, ELART3, ELART4, ELART5

The first thing is to kind of explain where each of you coach. This is the only individual question. Just a quick intro: who you are and where you coach or what your region is. Who wants to go first?

I will. I'm ELART1 and I'm in southeast {district name} and I've got 9 schools.
I'm ELART2 and I have 8 schools; mostly in {city on east} and a couple in {city on east}.
I'm ELART3 and I work over in {city on west side of district}. I've got 8 schools.
I'm ELART4. I've got the west side from {cities}. I've got 9 schools; mostly {city}.
ELART5 has {cities, south east side}.
And she has....
9 schools.

And you guys all have about 8 or 9 schools.

And {The ELA/SS Specialist} has a handful, too.
She has 7 schools, also on the west side. {city}-ish area.

Explain your job role (and you can do this amongst yourselves), particularly in how you function alongside, next to, or in relation to the school based coaches.

ELART4: We go in at scheduled times to do classroom visits and try to have the coach go with us. We debrief with the coach after visiting each classroom. It might be small group, whole group, SIPPS, or writing and we will debrief with them so that they can then coach the teachers. At least in my role it's usually the coach that goes back to the teachers and does the follow up, not me.

ELART1: We communicate district initiatives because our lines of communication sometimes tend to be fuzzy. We're not always sure who's getting it and who's not. That's always been a concern. I've got coaches at all of my schools except 2, so even if I'm doubling up or tripling up, I'll let them know something if it's district wise going to impact their school.
We're talking about our job roles.

ELART2: I have 3 schools that don't have coaches, so I feel like I am more of a coach there (taking on any training or PLC things) and I try to get involved with the teachers as much as possible.

So my guess is that at the schools where you don't have coaches you guys almost are the coach and you directly communicate with the principal. And the teachers? Or just the principal?

ELART2: And the teachers.

ELART1: I usually get individual teachers. It's harder when there's not a coach, so what I do is answer the individual teacher and sometimes cc the principal; sometimes don't. If it's insignificant, I don't. If it is something that might impact the whole grade level, then I'll cc the principal. They told us not to send too much to the principals; to be judicious.

ELART2: As for those schools that don't have coaches, they have a teacher leader (either one major leader that does a lot of the trainings or one for each grade level) and you work with those people.

ELART5: At my school that doesn't have a coach (which is a high performing school) the principal meets with me once a month to kind of find out what's going on and the teachers just email me directly and I make plans to go into their PLCs – they invite me to those. They're not used to having people there, so they don't necessarily want me to come in and watch them teach, but they want me to come in and give them information.

ELART4: I have one school that doesn't have a coach and my main communication with them is either the principal or the Cadre members. It seems like the teachers at that school contact their Cadre members and then I get the emails from the Cadre members about questions they might have.

ELART1: I also think the schools with coaches aren't strong in everything just like we're not. We fill in where our area of expertise is, or we call on each other to do that, because you can't know everything.

I can't imagine the number of emails you all must receive from those schools without coaches. My sympathies. Tell me about how you all in your role currently participate in professional learning: And again, professional learning - embedded, site based, ongoing - relevant to your needs. How do you participate? How do you stay current with professional learning?

ELART2: I attended response to text, we are trying to marry the whole *Write from the Beginning* program and the *Ready Write* program together so we're working with that team. We went to the Module Writer's convention or conference in Orlando to try to keep up on modules and different ways to do modules. I think in general...

ELART4: *Collaborative Classroom* had 3 different trainings – some went to the *Making Meaning*, some went to the *Being a Writer* and some went to the *Being a Reader* up in St. Augustine.

ELART1: So we have to go to the 'sit and get' and then when we get back one of us naturally spearheads it. We decide how to best disperse it to the schools. We went to the *Response to Text* but we don't see each other very much. We don't know how we're going to roll it out. I like to be proactive because I like to do it my way, instead of letting somebody tell me how to do it. I like talking among us so we can come up with a plan that works for us. Instead of somebody from up high telling us how to do it that won't necessarily work.

So would it be appropriate to summarize and say you all try to take advantage of the collaborative nature among the five of you for professional...

ELART2: When we get time, yes.

Right, when you have time. That's always a barrier.

ELART2: We are always asking for more time so we can do that. When we are together we get a lot of good discussion, it's just we aren't together very often.

ELART4: But we do stay in touch through text and email all the time.

Yeah, was that Sunday you guys were texting like 5,000 times?

Sunday, when I was trying to read the paper!
Yes, it was about the food and clothing for the day!
Very important!

These next two questions I'm going to ask two fold. One for how you all handle and one for how coaches handle it. So one will just be your opinion, or your perspective on how coaches handle it.

What types of professional learning are most beneficial to you all? And you kind of just answered that a little bit.

ELART2: Collaborative...

ELART5: We try to keep on the latest trend and try to find things that are going to benefit our teachers. Especially with the *Write to Text* and the *Ready Writing*. They're really struggling with the *Ready Writing*, so we're trying to pull in something they're familiar with. Last year ELART1 PD'd the entire district and said they're all familiar with the *Write from the Beginning* stuff so to tie in what they've already been exposed to, already been practicing and they like into something that is new and is kind of overwhelming to them is our goal in that aspect of that we get our own pd. When we look at it we try to find how to make our teachers' lives easier. Same thing with the modules. They were created out of unravelling the common core and unpacking the standards and teachers not really knowing their standards and not really having time to delve into what the standards mean for them. And so that started as, *well, let's make these modules and let's go from there to figure out how do you create a lesson that teaches that both to the students and the teacher through the type of instruction that you give and the types of formatives that students do to see where the learning has gone*. And so everything that we do builds around how we make our lives easier and still get across the standards that they need to instruct and the type of instruction they need to provide to their students that's going to make them successful in daily writing, in FSA - whatever it might be. So really I think that's been our main goal whenever we try to put something together. It's trying not to load them up with one more thing, or one more *new* thing but to instead try to show them how it ties into things that they either have to know or have already done.

And your *them* and *they* is...

ELART5: Them and they... the teachers.

Just wanted to make sure.

ELART1: I think a really hurtful trend that has happened in the last 10 years is not letting people like us go to National PD. Like NCTE, IRA, Reading Recovery because you go for 4 days to a conference like that and you go with an open mind and it's just like wow. So we hear ourselves all the time but we can only get smarter if somebody smarter than us is in front of us, and we're all equally smart. So we're just missing that input. Looking at a panel...experts that are doing what you are doing right now. To help us understand the research, and the trends and the changes and I think that's a problem in our county (that they don't fund that). I mean you certainly go, and you go out to dinner and you have a good time but I've never been to a conference with a group of teachers where they haven't gone into every session they could

possibly get into. And I just think that's a bad thing. That we can't do that anymore. We can hardly get permission to go to Orlando anymore.

ELART2: We don't get hotels.

Yeah.

Sounds of agreement.

That barrier hasn't come up yet and I think it's really important. So I appreciate you sharing that.

This is very perspective based. Can you describe or list some of what you're seeing as the coaches' greatest learning needs right now?

ELART2: I think they need time just like we do. The trainings we've been to - unfortunately not all of the coaches get the opportunity to go to the types of trainings we do. We just went to *Response to Text* and there wasn't a coach from every school there.

ELART5: There was one. One or two.

ELART1: There were teachers, which is good for the teachers - but usually when a teacher comes it only stays in her classroom.

ELART2: I don't know if they're being kept up on everything that's new out there.

ELART3: I think some coaches went.

ELART2: Yes, there were a few but we have a ton of schools. It would have been nice to see more out there so that if we had wanted to team up with that coach to try to do that it would've been more smooth.

ELART1: It seems like some of the schools that aren't title 1 they should have a slush fund that they should get so the principal can send a teacher leader, because the Title 1 schools can't come. They don't have the money. That was \$650.

ELART4: Expensive.

Sounds of agreement.

ELART4: And the thing, too with coaches, is that they are pulled out of school not just for our coaches' meetings but they get out if they are testing coordinator. They have dates for that.

ELART1: PSTs.

ELART2: Yes, PSTs, and they manage behavior at schools sometimes.

ELART5: They get a lot of administrative work. More so than coaching.

So you see a lot of that?

Agreement.

ELART4: Right. And they get pulled to go to all of these other trainings that are not necessarily curriculum based to go into the classroom and implement.

Anybody have anything else to add?

Do you see coaches seeking learning opportunities that will foster their own growth? Do they ask you? Do you know if they are doing things independently?

ELART5: Typically, they just ask us to come and do it because we have already been trained or we already know. And they sit in. They don't just drop us and leave. They'll come in and they'll sit and listen, take notes because the conversation that I've had with coaches is, "*Listen I'm here one day. You're here every day. So you have to be the one to continue the support to*

the teachers because I can't be here every day.” So I think the mindset we've been trying to instill is that when we come and we come do a walk through, you have to walk with us. When we come to do PD, you need to sit in on that PD with us. Just so that they're getting something and so that they are able to continue to help their teachers.

Are they receptive to that for the most part?

ELART5: Usually.
Sounds of agreement.

They honor that?

ELAT5: Every once in a while you'll get an, *“Oh, I have to go to this meeting.”* Honestly, there are a few that have district liaisons that will cancel, like if the principal says, *“I can't, I have to do this...”* then they cancel that walk through or whatever and say this [walk through] isn't for me, it's for you and for your teachers. So, for me to know all the information and for you not to know anything really doesn't benefit anybody.

ELART2: I think there are times... There are a few schools where the coaches feel like our role and their role is a bit confusing. And there's a battle of who is going to take ownership over what and who's going to get the credit for it – that sort of thing. So I think that does happen at a few schools where they're just not quite sure of our role and we're just not quite sure of how far we should push in. And we don't want to offend them either because it is their school. But we have responsibilities too.

Correct me if I'm wrong... this is the second year for this model of you guys being the regional...

All: This is the first.

The first year.

ELART5: Last year we were TOAs and there were three of us and we had 15 schools a piece.

ELART4: It was pretty much the same.

ELART1: But we had reading and writing. You were reading, you were writing and then you two were added on.

Sounds of agreement.

This year is the first year you've been called Regional Resource Teachers/ ELA, Social Studies.

Agreement.

ELART1: Instructional Services.

And other duties as assigned.

Laughs, agreement.

In your opinion what would be most helpful in supporting the work of coaches (site based literacy coaches)?

ELART4: I think a lot of what we've already discussed is being there and having - like ELART5 said, having them go with us to those classroom visits. A couple of my coaches have even said

to the teachers when we do these classroom walk throughs - *it's not for {name} it's for me to grow and to know what the 'look fors' are from that.* So that's one thing that I can think of.

ELART5: Having time to collaborate with them - you know you typically schedule a date for us to come out and do something but there's really not any time for us to talk about what we just did. So I might go through and do a walk through. But then I might have to go to my next school or they have something else they have to go do so we quickly debrief and we're on our merry way and I never really know what happened after the fact until I come back and do another walk through or I do a PD or something.

ELART1: It could be a month later.

ELART5: It could be a month later, or two. It just depends, on which school it is on your list of needs.

ELART1: And the truth is if we're doing something important, like guided reading (say we're doing small group), we'd need to be at that school for four days in a row. And that's just not... Most of the ELA blocks are first thing in the morning. I've got one school that has one in the afternoon. {ELA Specialist} allows us flexibility in our calendar but the expectation is that about every 10 days we're back at a school and it doesn't always work quite that well. We can't stay out maybe 3 or 4 weeks from a school. Everybody has calendar issues. To be effective in something that we have to see in over three or four days, our hands are tied.

ELART2: It's not really feasible.

ALL- It's really difficult.

Go back to that expectation. Is it expected that you're in schools for 10 days in a row?

ELART1: No, no. If we have 9 schools...then we get to them about every 10 days.

ELART2: We must be visiting them equally.

Got it.

ELART1: But we have our district meetings ... automatically there's at least 6 things on our calendar every month that we have to schedule.

ELART2: I'm completely booked for January and I only have 6 days left for February, that aren't totally blacked out. And I go through my checklist of all my schools and I still cannot get to ... there's going to be some of my schools I can't get to for a month, month and a half...

ELART4: Some of them too – their needs. They are high performing schools, so their needs are different.

ELART2: We just got told last week about our tier 3 schools that are our biggest concern and we have to be there from here until FSA. We need to be there doing module pacing, doing writing rubrics, so for some of us (I have three schools on the list) it's going to take up a portion of my time. I feel like I'm not there to support my other schools.

ELART1: I think that one of our really big things is knowing how to manage our calendars. I'll look and I've gotten smart about it over the years and I'll go in and I'll call a coach and say "I'm blocking out December 12 for you; I'm putting you on my calendar." We don't have to decide what we're going to do yet. If we don't, somebody will come in and put something on the calendar

ELART2: Coaches are booked up too. They've got people from the district coming in to their schools. I'll ask are you available this day? How about this day? And they'll say, "No, that's PLC time, or no, somebody else is coming in..."

Are those tier 3 schools evenly distributed so you guys all have about the same amount?

No

ELART4: I have 3.

ELART5: She has 2.

ELART1: I have 1, but it's a really hard one!

Laughs

And the tier 3 schools are labeled as such based on what?

ELART4: There are 4 that are in the bottom 300.

Okay.

ELART4: And that was as of last year. They are currently still there.

ELART1: They're still there.

ELART4: Those are 4 of the schools. And then we kind of look at the VLT guide.

ELART2: How many of the schools are not meeting the average? Like 70% or below.

ELART5: My one that's not in the bottom 300...it's not good. And that's another barrier for us (and maybe it's just this particular school) is the principal support. I have been asking all year for time with teachers. Give me time to have a PD, give me time to pace. I've had {ELA Specialist} come in. This is the expectation of the District that you allow these teachers to pace. Look at your VLT scores. Data proves that they need something. And the principal is just so resistant to it that I don't know what I'm supposed to do with that. Like he wants me to come in and walk through with him so I can tell him what's wrong so that he can then zing the teacher and I'm not willing to do that. So that's a huge barrier.

ELART2: And I also think it's a role issue. I don't know that the principals even know our role either.

ELART5: They don't realize that we have no power. We're not that important.

Laughs

ELART2: Yes, unless the teachers are intimidated or whatever.

ELART1: And I think about ELART3.... With kids coming up through school and you see a grade level like my ...school. The third grade is just really struggling. And you think to yourself, *that's 6 teachers each with 20 children. Those children are going to miss out on good instruction in third grade and it could impact their life.*

Agreement.

ELART1: In fact, probably it will.

That's frightening.

ELART2: Yes, it's one devastating year. And that happens at schools. There will be a few grade levels and then there will be one and you're like oh my god...

ELART1: And it seems to me that principals seem to stick teachers in second grade all the time.

ELART2 & 5: I know.

Agreement.

ELART1: It's even more showing up.

ELART2: That's why they have so many problems when they get to third grade.

ELART1: And they've been doing it for years, but still...If you don't learn to read in first grade and you get a bad second grade teacher, you're sunk.

Agreement.

ELART4: Problem is that if you can't learn to read in first grade, then you should stay in first grade but that doesn't happen because...

ELART2: The statute is third grade.

ELART3: The research doesn't always support retention.

ELART1: But a good first grade and second grade teacher does.

Agreement

How do you guys stay informed on current research, best practices, or trends in literacy? We're almost done, by the way.

ELART2: ELART3 reads.

ELART3: I follow educational gurus on twitter. I ask them questions. I follow teacher podcasts, like Jennifer Serravallo – she has a teacher podcast that I listen to as I'm driving. I'm constantly reading.

ELART1: Me too.

ELART2: I did two book studies this year – Growth Mindset and UDL; Oh three; I also read Best Practices (the fourth edition). I didn't do that enough before, so I'm trying to keep current with stuff through reading.

That's one thing I'm trying to highlight with the literacy coaches right now. If they're doing it, they're doing it on their own – much like you guys are, too. It sounds like you guys also get to go to a few of those helpful PD conferences and stuff (nothing National, though). Do you see that with your coaches as well? Do you see that they're doing a lot of...

ELART1: I met once with the Southeast Volusia coaches and they had made their own little Cadre. {ELART5} came along, too. And they were trying to pick a book and they really couldn't come to a consensus because everyone had done different things at their school. I wrote to {PL district contact} and she gave some suggestions but I don't think they ever chose one.

ELART5: I don't think so either.

Two really good ones just came up – Serravallo has a really good one and the Best Practices, but I know that they have to decide, too.

ELART5: Well, Best Practices is what I was pushing with the one coach with that group because her second grade teachers insist that they should give a spelling test and that had some really good information.

Chatter (difficult to understand)

ELART4: From our writing, (*Being a Writer* workshop) remember that one slide she quoted from that. She had one chapter up there that talked about spelling.

ELART5: ELART4 and I went back and forth. They're not asking about the instruction of spelling. They're asking about how to get grades for spelling. The truth is, when they get down

and dirty on something like that, they want to know how I can get under the radar and get some grades. They're not asking for a philosophical discussion on best practices and spelling. No (agreement).

How do you feel about that? About overall (how do I word this; it wasn't one of my planned questions) overall understanding of literacy and things like spelling vs. time spent writing and looking at spelling that way and phonemic awareness and knowledge of the phonics continuum. What is your overall gut on how that is out there with coaches?

ELART3: I think it's pretty limited.

I do too.

ELART4: I think that there's so many that are still set in their ways.

Coaches, right?

ELART4: Well, coaches and teachers. But a lot of coaches have been teaching for many years and I don't think they know how to get around that weekly spelling test and how to get away from worksheets.

Agreement.

ELART5: A lot of teachers in general just in what I see have not made that shift. They're still stuck in skills, Florida Standards, the Sunshine State Standards... They're stuck in this is what I've always done, my scores have been fine, or this is what I've always done.

ELART2: It always comes back to quick easy grades, too.

Yes.

ELART5: This is what parents expect to see.

ELART1: Well, and coaches may have that deep knowledge, say, if they are older like me. But then when they adopt to *Ready Writing*, I spent hours and hours - nowhere even near so as {ELART3} - with my depth of knowledge trying to make that a more valuable program. But the truth is if a teacher just picks that book up they can do the surface stuff - but they can't adjust it to make it work. They don't have the knowledge. I'll give you another example - the *Ready Reading*. We've been talking with coaches about that and teachers want to do it from the beginning to the end. Well, it's in order from the standards, so they don't that range of knowledge until May. Ok, to anybody if you're handed program because the district adopts it, you have to think about it.

ELART2: You can't just throw it out there and start at page 1.

It's almost like a band aid right now.

Agreement.

ELART1: I think so. Teachers want it scripted out.

ELART5: Yes, and the modules are scripted out. *Ready Reading* - we've talked about that in a few places, and they want to use that as their core but like {ELART1} said, you have to know that you have to skip around in order to get to all of the standards. That's one of the first things we did when we gave them the modules. We didn't give them lesson 1, lesson 2, lesson 3... We gave them separate lessons because it followed the standards they were teaching in. I got a couple of emails, why are you skipping all over the place? They didn't know. When they were looking at it they didn't realize those are all of the key ideas. If I just do 1, 2, 3, and 4 then you've missed all of text structure, text integration.

ELART1: And you think a coach that is an academic coach... I go in thinking my subject is the most important, I guarantee they haven't had a chance to sit down with *Ready Reading, Ready Writing* to get a grasp of it. They've got the math; they've got everything else. If they're just a literacy coach it really is their job (to sit and spend more time with the new resources), but they came in October. Even they can't coach best practices with a new resource because they haven't had time to see the new resource. And they haven't been in the classroom and taught it, either.

That always made it challenging for the coach. So do you see a gap in literacy content knowledge and the coaches' ability to coach the teachers in those pieces? What I almost think I hear you saying is that we've got these programs here and we've got these coaches and teachers that maybe could be trained better in those things, but there's not thinking – almost full circle thinking including the students, and the programs and the standards.

ELART1: It really depends on the coach.

ELART5: Yes. You have some coaches that are powerhouses. They're going to go out there and they're going to figure it out. They're going to practice and they're going to call us if they don't know and they're going to make every effort to understand what they need to tell their teachers. And then you have some that are brand new and they have no idea what they should be asking. They're in with their head above water. And then you've got some that just don't. They just want to ride along and they just want to coast. And then they rely on us to come and do their PD, so they don't want to learn it but they need their teachers to learn it. So it's, "Hey, can you come to my school and spend four days in a row teaching my teachers this?" And so, that's where we come in and end up with not enough days for everybody.

ELART2: Newer coaches really work on building relationships, too.

So the whole purpose is for me to kind of capture your ideas, your voice, and your thoughts on professional learning for coaches and then turn around and make some suggestions. So, aligning your voice with what research says is best practice and spinning it back out into a professional framework for coaches. So, knowing that do you have any thoughts or suggestions about what could help or enhance professional learning for coaches? Some things you've already talked about so if you feel like you're being repetitive, it's fine.

ELART3: More trainings.

ELART1: It's time, we need more time. We need to be together more often.

ELART5: More collaboration. I really like the way the Southeast Volusia teachers have gotten themselves together and they meet with the coaches. They meet once a month and they talk about their schools, they talk about what's going on, they ask each other questions – because, you know one coach might be more knowledgeable in an area than another and so they kind of collaborate and talk about 'Well you know, I've done this, so maybe you can try that' and that's that whole being able to provide that feedback to each other. That's huge.

ELART1: And by the way, we invited ourselves.

ELART5: Yes, we did.

ELART1: We weren't invited.

But they let you. That's okay.

ELART5: We're not evaluating in any way. We want to be able to help them help their teachers and really the whole gist behind our job is to be support and they have to stop seeing us as district – you know big air quotes district and we're not evaluating in any way. I sit down with teachers and I tell them I am not an evaluator in any way. I'm just here to support you, to give you suggestions, to help you in any way you might need.

ELART1: That's something to think about for next year. If it's still done in regions. It would be a given. Every Friday or every third Friday or Wednesday of the month, or whatever – all the coaches meet with their Regional Resource Teacher.

That Southeast group that's doing that now, are they doing that during school time?

ELART1: Yes.

And so each of their administrators approved for them to do it?

ELART1: Yes, they do it from like 8 to 10 or 8 to 10:30. They have a host school and whoever is the host school takes the notes and provides the snacks.

ELART5: But they're able to use that also in their DPP.

ELART1: Yes. They probably line their DPPs up

ELART5: One of the biggest things is that collaboration piece. It doesn't happen often enough. It's something that when you look at research, it has a high effect size, and it's really important to do. So you want them to collaborate.

ELART1: And we collaborate a lot in two hours.

Do you all see more strength in the coaches that participate in that collaborative piece vs. those that don't. And I don't know if you have coaches from both groups.

ELART2: I think we have some that would be resistant to it. They would not be happy. Agreement.

ELART1: They did it themselves.

ELART5: They did it themselves, so they...

Do you see that that strengthens their practice?

ELART1: Absolutely.

ELART5: I think it does. I think it absolutely does.

ELART1: They were sharing resources, they were taking notes. Anything someone else wanted, they just shot it over to them in an email. I thought it was very... most of those people...it's very stable down in that part of the county. Most of them were teachers together at one time either at {school on east side}, or whatever. They all know each other.

ELART5: Even the Middle School coaches.

ELART1: Yes, they even brought in a Middle School coach. And I forgot, they have a Middle School coach that comes, too.

ELART2: I think just having that idea that they're investing their time for kids. I think the mentality needs to change in general for teachers or coaches. There are a few out there that just have to know it's about the kids. It's about affecting the kids in the best way and I think that's just the best...

ELART1: And we read a book a few years ago about student centered coaching and that was my DPP. I worked really closely with a coach and it made a difference to keep the student in mind always.

Agreement.

I know there's a big push for that right now – particularly with the coaches – so that they can show they are having an impact. It's not always that easy.

Agreement

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

ELART1: If there's something else that we'd like to change or prove...

ELART5: In our job?

ELART1: In our relationship with the coaches.

ELART5: With coaches.

ELART4: One thing I think is the coaches' meetings. Last year and for the last three years, there were coaches' meetings once a month and we were involved in them. This year we're not. We only get to go every other month.

So you only go to the ones that are literacy...

ELART4: Right. And a lot of the times we're just the participants as well. The last one was a learning walk in the morning and then *Ready Writing* in the afternoon, whereas last year we were involved in the planning and presenting with the coaches.

ELART1: But we don't have any impact on the agenda anymore.

No (agreement).

ELART5: We don't even know what the agenda is most of the time.

ELART1: It's run by title one. We have an advantage because we already know the coaches but they're new. I think spending time is the most important. And not trying to do too many things. Narrow our focus, we're like all over the place.

Yes.

That came up when I met with the coaches. I don't know if you were here, Stephanie, when I said it before but they called you District. They didn't call you Resource ... whatever your official title is.

ELART2: They called us District people...

And the word liaison did come up, but they did cite that as a helpful resource in moving them forward at their schools which I think is valuable. It's important, right. Time always comes up and a lot of what you guys talked about. Their roles are so different from school to school. Just like I feel like you guys are telling me the same thing depending on that principal and how that principal sees you all really impacts your ability to get into those schools and do what you need to do in addition to then, is the coach receptive.

Agreement

ELART1: The principal really does make the decision and you find out fast in this job that they have the most impact on us. We go in and we think we can fix something, but you just can't undermine a principal. You have to go through the principal.

ELART2: Right.

Yes, I see that.

ELART1: And a lot of our principals are not curriculum based. So one of two things – either we intimidate them (which is not the right word, but you know what I'm saying), OR they just let us go ahead and do our job.

ELART5: Or they don't want us to see what's really going on, so we get a dog and pony show. They take us to their very best teachers and you know wipe their hands of us. *See? I've shown you I'm good. Everything works perfectly here. No concerns.*

See you in 10 days. Right. Until

Until the scores come in.

And you've got children that didn't learn.

INTERVEIW WITH DISTRICT ELA SPECIALIST

First, tell me a little about your current position and past experiences in education.

I am currently the Reading/English/Language Arts/Social Studies Specialist for {name} County Schools. My past experience – I’ve been a classroom teacher, an intervention teacher, and a reading and academic coach for the last 10 years that I was school based which just previous to this year in July I was a reading/academic coach at an elementary school.

How many total years were you coaching?

10.

Do you know the District’s goals for the coaching initiative for this school year? For overall coaches?

Yes, and no. There’s 2 parallel tracks - if you want to call them tracks - and I don’t know if that makes sense, but that in terms of participating. Coaches are receiving training in coaching and they’re also receiving content support so they meet monthly and three of the months (I don’t know how many total - maybe 8) 3 of the 8 moths are focused on content training. For this school year I was not heavily involved in the plan for the content training so that has evolved into half day of learning walks where we are observing ELA instruction at a volunteer school and then debriefing. Then the second half of the day is providing ongoing coaching support in ELA so updating coaches on current resources, curriculum.

I’m going to segue to one of the questions that {Title 1} wasn’t – I’m not even sure if I asked her. Do you know how learning walks were selected? Or why learning walks were selected? Like I know Julie Smith came in and did that training on feedback, do you know where that came from? Do you know where that came from? Was that written into a goal somewhere?

{Consultant on how to provide feedback} has been working with the District for a couple of years. She has been working with administrators. I know last year, and it probably was prior to that to, but I’m not sure of the length of time, last year they started learning walks with administrators going to different sites and I think that the district team felt like that was something that would be beneficial to coaches and other school based people so that’s how it evolved. The curriculum specialists were not part of the decision that learning walks were rolled out into our content piece. We’ve embraced it. I’ve embraced it. I think it’s been a great opportunity for coaches to see what it looks like in other schools and to be able to have that ... conversation. In our first walk it was pretty rough and not so clear but the feedback from the second one was that they felt like they really got good information and were able to reflect on their own practices based on what happened.

Yes, they had shared that with me, too. That they were enjoying the learning walks. So I think you just answered – the professional coaching for the year is decided by who? Is that {Title 1}?

Yes, Title 1.

Title 1, okay. And then you guys kind of add in...

Because the coaches are either Title 1 or Title 2 funded, they are not funded through the curriculum department – that PD comes from Title 1.

Okay. So then, you're going to end up repeating yourself. How would you say or how does the coaching initiative the Title 1 piece support your ELA goals?

(hesitation)

It's just helping me contribute to the problem if it's very separate.

It is separate and it's hard because I am new to the position. That it's hard for me to really say how that contributes. As a coach, there have been pieces along the way that I felt like were really helpful. I mean we definitely -- coaches need to be trained on how to coach but once you're... we had the hardest time keeping up with the content. We have a lot of turnover in the coaches. And we have a lot of coaches who do not have a reading or ELA background that supports what they are trying to do in the classroom. To support teachers in the classroom. I'm not sure if that answers the question or not, I might have scooted around the question.

Some of the questions overlap, so I'm going to keep asking stuff. It's all helpful information. If you could say what your goals are for your literacy coaches what would you want them to spend their time on in regard to professional learning? So, what are your professional learning goals for literacy coaches?

My number one goal is to increase their knowledge of reading instruction. That is my number one goal. You know, best practices in reading, then reading and reading instruction. My number two goal which is really aligned to that – increasing their ability to support teachers in implementing that. You know we have a lot of coaches that aren't comfortable modeling or barely comfortable providing feedback. That kind of thing. That's where the collaboration with the coaching initiative comes up. I mean there's definitely a district driven coaching initiative and I know that that is about to change. I haven't been privy to all of that information yet, but I do know there are changes coming in that. There's been talk of a coaching Cadre - trying to create a pool of coaches.

I heard that too. It's nice to hear some sort ofthey said be happy that I'm doing all of this this year because it would really affect.... But yeah, it's coming.

Yeah, so that's... my goal coming into this because I know in the past 5 years reading coaches who are focusing on reading whether you want to call them reading coaches or academic coaches have not received content support.

And so what do you expect the coaches to do at each of their sites, which you've kind of already talked about a little, but...

I expect them to be able to know the best practices in reading instruction and communicate that effectively with their staff and I expect them to be willing to go in to model or co-teach with their teachers to support instruction. And I also expect them to provide professional development for their teachers based on professional development that we've provided to them. So I'd expect that we would present something to them and that they would in turn present that to their faculty because we have to build capacity within the schools and it is a struggle for us to get all of the information out and all of the training out with our district staff.

Ok. Do you know why some coaches go under the label of reading coach or ELA coach vs. academic?

I think it's funding.

Ok.

I'm not 100% sure. That's probably a Title 1 question.

And then another thing I'm going to have to explain in my piece that most of these coaches are called reading coaches or academic coaches or I guess you're actually calling them ELA coaches right now-- does that sound right?

We still call them reading coaches, or ELA coaches.

Because I'm going to call them literacy coaches. I'm saying that out loud. Because otherwise it won't be as recognized because the new term is literacy coaches. I was just wondering if you had anything to add as to why they are not called literacy coaches yet. {name} said to ask you, but she also gave me the names of a few other people (I think in Title 1) to ask because she wasn't sure either.

{name of district title 1 person}

I met with [her] too. I want to say {other Title 1 person} was one of the people she mentioned.

She's not really involved in the coaching anymore. She's doing the technology. {District personnel previously the ELA specialist} is doing intervention, though. You would remember that.

I don't know. I'll go back and look because I'm just curious too.

I don't know and I don't know why we haven't moved to that. I don't know if it's maybe Title 1 language. I don't know.

It could be.

How do you ensure or gauge the professional development of reading coaches in the area of literacy?

That's a good question. Coaches are doing a coaching cycle that is data driven. I have not been involved with the coaching cycles. That's more run by the Title 1 component. So I have not been involved with that and it's hard for me to measure what I've done when I've only seen them twice. And I'm only going to see them three times in the whole school year. So, I don't have a specific measure.

The other thing that's come up, too is that the school administrators are the ones that kind of evaluate them so that is another kind of barrier but apparently there was a time when the Title 1 office had control of that. I didn't know that. Maybe we were Reading First and that's how we were protected from that, but {Title 1 personnel} had shared that at one time they had tried to do it, and now Middle School coaches are evaluated by their specialists, but there are so many that

Really, I didn't know that.

Agreement. But there are so few Middle School content area coaches that it makes it more manageable. So, it's just interesting. So, a lot of these I don't expect you to have answers to, but... How do you ensure that coaches have the knowledge to handle literacy trends and shifts that teachers and students are experiencing?

In the times that I do meet with them I try to provide support and prioritize what are the most important pieces for the coaches to know. I do communicate and share any information that comes to me. Like the FSA sample papers were released and I automatically sent them to coaches right away and then also we have a group of teacher leaders, Cadre members. I share that information with them. And anything I share with the Cadre members I also share with the coaches because I know how important it is for the coaches to be informed but it is definitely still a concern of mine that coaches are not more informed than teachers unless they've taken it upon themselves to be informed.

Right. Who provides district literacy support to the coaches?

My team I would provide any support, especially if there is a topic. If it's in their area of expertise, then I let them present to that group as well.

So in your group you have five. Five of the ELAs or TOAs.

Resource teachers is their official title.

Ok. Are they responsible at all or is any of their job role responsible for talking with the coaches?

They do site based. Usually their main contact at the school is the coach. So when they're supporting teachers they go through the coach to schedule and support and as their leader I keep encouraging the resource teachers that they need to be working with the coach so if they're doing a training with one grade level that they're making sure the coach is able to replicate that training with the others.

What are your current literacy plans for the district for teachers and students? What is your...

What do you mean by literacy plans?

I guess your current goals for literacy for this school year for your students and your teachers.

Do we have a specific literacy goal? I don't know! That's a good question! Our goal is always to increase student achievement in literacy- reading and writing,

And the roll out of new materials.

Right. We've introduced the modules that have increased the rigor of instruction, the complexity of text. We've put into place the *Ready Writing*, which is a very structured writing program to support teachers in that instruction. So our goal this year in those is for our teachers to be implementing modules and the ready writing just for that basic core instruction. Thinking about that, I think that my goal is effective core instruction.

How are professional learning goals for coaches communicated between you and school administrators? Do principals even come with you for support with their coaches?

They do, sometimes. It depends on the school, like there is one school where the principal asked me to provide direct support to the coach. It's a second year coach that she feels like still needs some support. The principal just orally communicated to me that her goal for this coach was for her to be a more active presenter and professional development. So, just things like that. It's more informal. You know, if I'm meeting with a principal they'll tell me what direction they focus their coaches in; whether it's a specific target in literacy or a specific grade level or specific teachers. They do in conversations they share that but I don't think there's a formal communication. I think it is more in conversations.

But they do connect you with the literacy coaches' success.

Yes.

I guess they recognize the parallel. They see the coaching initiative and the content piece, right?

And I want to say that not a lot of principals will reach out for support for their coaches. That's less common.

How do you think the school administrators impact the success of the coach?

I think they have a direct impact on it. Depending on whether or not you're willing to allow your coach to attend outside professional development. Whether or not you're encouraging them to seek support from our department, you know all directly affects professional growth of a coach.

When I met with the coaches they talked a lot about the barrier of their role being so ambiguous from school to school and depending on how their administrator sees them. Do you have anything to share about that about how the administrator can impact the role and the professional growth of that?

I think that it almost seems like the more seasoned the coach, the more responsibilities they have outside of coaching because that role because when coaches were first made coaches back when we were coaches some of those came out of other positions that were quasi administrative positions. And then there were the *Reading First* coaches. We were pure coaches. Although we had other responsibilities, we were very protected. And able to provide and able to get the professional development we needed in order to support teachers. And I even feel like – this probably answers a different question, but it just guides me down the path of I feel like teachers who are getting their Master's in reading now have no more knowledge than teachers who don't have their Master's in reading.

Hmmm, tell me more.

And it also depends on how they've gotten their Master's. I think about one of our resource teachers who has her Master's in reading and it's evident that she has her Master's in reading. I think it's the rigor of the program. I think there are a lot of online programs that are doing a disservice to building the knowledge of reading professionals. It's not just one, it's multiple. I just don't see a change in practice. A lot of it is teachers getting their Master's in reading and it's about compliance - checking off what they need to do - and it's not about the learning. Because I...there are several teachers I've interacted with and they've gotten their Master's and I can't tell a difference. Except for I need to do this project with this group of students. I need to perform these activities or shadow you doing these activities but I don't see a difference in their understanding or a difference in their literacy instruction.

Interesting. Very interesting. No, it's good. That will help. This next part is perspectives and I promise we are more than half way done. I know you're busy. This next part is about how you feel about certain things so it should be easy to answer. How do you feel coaches respond to current learning sessions that are provided like in that format that you have now?

I feel like they respond positively. I do know that many of them are seeking more - like they want more professional learning, but there's just not the time. Or the avenue to do it and just to

be honest, being new to this position, I haven't had the opportunity to even develop something or think about how that might be different for next year. I came in having these grandiose ideas of what I wanted to do, but...

Right. You're adjusting in a lot of ways, too. Do you have anything that you feel works better with them or that definitely does not work for them?

Just trying to think about some of the things we've done in the past this year. I just feel like it's been so disjointed that I think that the learning walks are effective for them. I mean I feel like that gives them a different perspective. And a lot of collegial conversations and to be able to see what is happening outside of their own schools. To open up a vision of what can happen. I mean coaches in general are pretty receptive for the most part to you know, book studies and traditional professional development and I think for them it's really more about the application. Like how do we share that information with teachers beyond just to sit and get? How do we support teachers in making that happen? I don't even know if that answered the question.

It does, it does. You're fine. What specific district needs do you have for the professional growth of coaches? Like if you could do whatever you wanted, what would your direct needs be?

I need a designated time to meet with them to assess what they need -- you know I have such a big group, that it's really challenging because some of them just come. There are academic coaches and they come just to get information. But to be honest I just want to meet with the coaches that are true literacy coaches because they're the ones that I need to build the knowledge base because they're the ones that are going to focus on the literacy. And I need a designated time with them to first of all assess what their own knowledge is because they're all over the place and then how do I differentiate for them what they need because we have some coaches who've been coaching forever but still their literacy knowledge is basic. Then we have new coaches who have a lot of literacy background. So how do I meet all of those needs? It's not like ok, all of the literacy coaches come together and we... to me that does not meet their needs so we need a lot of things I think. I think we need designated groups of coaches and we need designated times to meet with each of these groups to move them forward in their content knowledge. Because the content is what's missing and replicate something I've shared with them but when they have questions they can't answer them. Like they can't answer because they're not confident enough in their knowledge. I want coaches to be able to answer questions about literacy. I want them to be confident in answering a question like, "Yes, this is best practices in reading!" This is what teachers should be doing or whatever question comes up that they feel confident to ask that question that they don't need to come and get my approval. I get a lot of emails about can you answer this question for me? When it's a question that I feel that they should have been able to answer. If they're given the right support -- the right professional support, I think they should be able to answer it.

So might you say that there's a gap in their expectations and job role in regards to literacy and what they're actually able to give because of content knowledge?

Yes, absolutely. And I don't know that all of them recognize that.

Right. The few that I worked with. The ones that volunteered their time...

Did they feel like they lacked?

Yes.

They felt like they lacked content knowledge.

Agreement. I think like they all felt like they had a foundation. But I don't think they felt like they were being kept up to date on what's most relevant. They felt like they were doing a lot of that on their own through journal reading, and like Twitter came up a lot. Which at least it's something and they're recognizing that they have to keep up with it on their own. But yeah, definitely that came up for sure. Which is good. It's good that it came up with those who volunteered to be with me. So that tells you something.

And that's where I think about that gap. That was with a small group. Think about the gap of everybody else. They're not focused on what is it that I need to know as a literacy coach to help support teachers and students.

Right. Interesting.

So will you have, and I think you've already answered this already, be able to put in input for how coaches receive professional growth. Who provides input for the professional growth of coaches? Will you be able to provide input for the professional growth of coaches?

I'm hoping to be able to for the upcoming year. I'm not sure how that is planned.

Yeah, I'm not sure, either.

It's tricky. I mean I've had the conversation with {head of K-5 curriculum} about the coaches but it's you know, there are just so many pieces going that it's definitely an area we are going to have to work towards.

And then this one is repetitive but I'm going to ask it anyway. What are their needs specific to: the coaching cycle, literacy, program development? Any of those more heavy than the others as far as the coaches' needs?

I feel like they're getting support with the coaching cycle. I think they understand how to coach a teacher for the most part. I'm speaking in pretty generic terms. I feel like when it comes to their coaching cycles I feel like they tend to choose their strengths. I mean yeah, you're going to do something that you're comfortable coaching in your coaching cycle, but I feel like there are lots of areas of weaknesses in ELA that coaches just aren't attacking because they're not sure themselves. You know, the writing piece is huge.

It's been vague, too.

Right, right. So that piece is huge. And I feel like it's a huge gap for coaches. But you know, we have some who are strong in writing; they are former writing teachers. They get it. But then we have some that have no knowledge, none. They just have minimal. And I think that part is challenging.

Sure. You said something earlier and I just want to make sure I have it right and that I'm understanding it correctly. You said that for the last 5 years your literacy coaches haven't had any content training –content specific to literacy training. Is that right?

Minimal.

I've been able to look back at the agendas that are online and it shows minimal. I just wanted to make sure I was...

Most of our content training has revolved around the changes in standards.

And new programs, right?

And new programs. That's been the majority. You know, adjustments in writing due to FSA, Common Core Standards, moving into Florida Standards. And I'm not saying that's not important.

No, of course not.

Knowing the standards is important, but knowing the standards and what the standards mean to the instruction and development of a reader are two different things.

And knowing that in 5 years that they haven't received a lot of content specific...that's a little concerning.

And I'm really thinking in the last 3 really since the change. I can't think of anything.

There's nothing listed. I've dug and dug through the public artifacts and there's nothing. Just a small chunk here or there. Exactly what you're talking about: FAIR Data Analysis, Florida Standards Assessment. I think I printed it out. But yeah, it is a lot of what you're saying.

I can't think of any. I'm trying to think if there's a book study we've done. Yeah, it's been pretty...I mean nothing remarkable enough for me to remember. The last couple of years it was set up differently where we would have half a day of coaching training and the second half of the day would be content. And it was mostly updates.

Agreement. And that's kind of what it looks like on paper, too. Which is helpful. Tomorrow I'm going to touch base with your ELA resource teachers (that's what they're

called). So I'm going to ask them similar questions about how they are seeing coaches in their school as a strength or weakness and what they think the coaches' professional needs are and I think I am going to ask them as well. Do they receive anything specific to literacy? Your group of 5.

We've purchased the best practices book and my plan is to do a mini book study.

{One of the Resource Teachers} has already read hers.

I know. In January we all just finished the UDL (I say all, I think 3 of our 5) did the UDL. It's not literacy based but it's Universal Design Learning. And I did that as well. So we waited and we purchased the best practice because {name of ELA resource teacher} and {name of ELA resource teacher} and I went to the best practices instruction so we that turned us on to the book and we shared that. And we'd really like to do a book study when things settle down in January. And {name of ELA resource teacher} actually had that book. {ELART} is totally self-driven, that's just her thing with the research in reading and she brings stuff to me. You know, she has her Master's in reading from {institution} and she could probably do my job. And then other opportunities like they went to the best practices for small group instruction that was just recent that came up. And we took a group to the literacy collaborative training. So, we do some, but there is not a specific plan.

And do you feel like there's time built into your schedule with them?

It's a challenge.

There's the time barrier.

Time is a barrier. And we have scheduled time now. It's not consistent, but I've set aside days where I've asked them not to schedule schools for us to be able to meet as a team. And you know, we review data, we go over expectations while we're out in schools, we talk about the status of the schools, where's everybody at, what's everybody doing, what do we need to do next? Those kind of things. But we haven't done a professional focused ... But {name of ELA resource teacher} has done things with us. She'll train us on the writing rubrics, she'll go through the materials and kind of give us the CLIFF notes of this is what I've found. {name of ELA resource teacher} will do the same thing. Their kind of driven by that sort of thing. It's not consistent or systematic. It's as the need arises or if we see there is something appropriate for us.

Do they all have about the same number of schools or are they all given a number of schools based on ...?

They all have about the same number. They are regionally located for the most part. It's definitely going have to be adjusted because right now I'm assigned 7 schools myself. It's been a challenge. And at the beginning I was kind of able to keep up but right now I'm having to farm out the professional development that comes up because I just can't—can't do it all. So, I try if it's writing related I ask {an ELA Resource Resource Teacher}. If it's SIPPS related, I'll ask

{an ELA Resource teacher}. If it's regional I'll ask – because most of my schools are in the {two city areas} (and those were pre-assigned before I came into the position), so for those I am definitely going to look at them with {the head of K-5 curriculum} next year. We do have another position that is available but I don't have anybody to hire.

For your Cadre?

Yes. I have a position open, but I can't.

Nobody is filling it.

And I just won't settle for mediocrity. I can't.

Right.

Nobody applied that I'm willing to hire at this time.

That's crazy. And then you have to do that interviewing.

I do all that. I'll select a couple that I feel like I want to interview. I'll ask them for input. And we look at the list of applicants and I'll ask do you know anybody, is there anybody who you would recommend and the list is not good.

And several of yours are new, too.

Two. {Names of two that} are new. I hired both of them this year.

Last year the team was even smaller?

It was actually larger. Was it larger? It was organized differently last year. They weren't all regional resource teachers. I know that {ELA resources teacher} and {ELA Resource teacher} (and they were called Teachers On Assignment last year) they were not assigned regions. {ELA resource teacher} and two other people were assigned as writing coaches and they were really separate from the other group that did all of the ELA support. I don't really know what happened. And this year it was all reorganized before I came onboard. Some of them left. Some of them chose not to stay onboard. {Head of K-5 curriculum} set the expectation and said this is what the expectations are. Are you onboard or not? If you are great, and if not...

Is there like a job roles and responsibilities for them?

Agreement. Do you want one? I'll just give you a copy. I have it in my file from when we interviewed.

And assuming that the expectations are that they are in schools most of the time?

Yes, the expectation is that they are in the schools.

If it's easier I can just take a picture of it, but I would like to see it.

I just have follow up questions. Is there anything else you want to share? Anything other recommendations for professional development for coaches?

That's really it. I'm just trying to think. It's hard because what I have my mind wrapped around right now is my current reality of what I can provide, so I haven't really thought this is what I have and this is what I can do. And really all I've had is three half days of any kind of content and it's been all directed toward program and new acclimation so I really haven't developed. I keep staring at that book. That's where we need to go. Those are the conversations we need to start having but I don't have a plan for that for coaches. That's probably an extra plan. How do I? I don't have my head wrapped around that. If I was given my dream what would I do? Right now I don't know. It's not available now, so I can't even think about it. So {head of K-5 curriculum} said to me all of the reading or literacy coaches are yours next year I think I would struggle to come up with the good systematic plan of this is where I want to start and this is where I want to go because there are so many different... That whole differentiating what they already know and what I need to do with them....I have a committee that I'm working on interventions and multi- tiered systematic (MTSS) and from that group we've talked about teachers. Phonemic awareness – teachers have no idea what the difference between phonemic awareness and phonics is. They don't have a clue. And we're talking about rolling out the PAST again. An amended version of the PAST. There's about to be a statute coming through about identifying students with dyslexia and all of the research on that right now is that the phonemic awareness is linked to dyslexia and then it comes back to what have we done as a school district to prevent and screen for that. In that whole convoluted like this committee which is basically PST driven {Name of psychologist}, from school psychology, {names of three others}, so you can see that team and it's so much bigger than that for all of us. So we started with the statute and here's what we need to do. We started by designing a paper with interventions and core and we've gone from that to we need to use the past with a group of students. We need to be administrating that to all of our kindergartners.

I think it's still used in places.

Ok, so now if we roll out this PAST we need to be providing professional learning for teachers and coaches on - here's this assessment tool what does that really mean? What does that mean you should be providing as a result of it? So it's kind of like this big.

**Interview with Title 1 District Personnel that oversee the Coaching Initiative
2 participants (1 is the current person responsible, but is retiring in June, so the
replacement participated as well).**

P1= current P2= replacing

So, the first thing is just a little background on both of you (on each of you). This is probably the only time it will only be an individual question and from there just whoever wants to answer or chooses to answer is fine. So, just a little bit about your current position and your past experiences.

P1: You just want to go back with coaching?

You've been teaching how long?

P1: Since 1971. But then I took a 10 year break and did other things: preschool, tutoring service, toy store, that sort of thing. When I came back into teaching it was 1988 and I was teaching kindergarten and I had already taught in middle school, fourth grade and second grade before that. Basically I thought that my experience with the toy store and doing PD and enrichment labs gave me a boost as far as background knowledge about things. From 1988 to 1991 I was teaching kindergarten at {name of school} with all my material all taken from Holland so all of my kids had all of these gorgeous \$200 puzzles to play with (it made them brilliant). And then after that I went to the district in the math department with {name} and {name} together with math and science. Each year we had a new title, we didn't know what we were called back then. Some years I was a TOA, and other years I was a specialist. I learned all about being in the district curriculum. We had ERTs at that time. I went away for summer break and when I got back there were no more ERTs. At that point I had just changed my job going from working in the classroom to the math department and now switching to title 1. The very first thing they had asked me to do (in Title 1) was to hire the first five lead teachers which were like coaches. They were going to change the mind set of coaching from being ERT (where you just did the assessments, passed a lot of paper, and people told you all the news about what was changing in the district and then they would meet with the principals and give them all the news). This was supposed to be different. Now you were supposed to be really working with teachers. There were five –{names}, and I forget the other three. There were five of them at that point and from there we grew. Each year I would get some more coaches, and that's how it all started. And I think probably the largest I had was 22 or 23 of them and I also had some TOAs. {Name} (I had her for a number of years), {Names} (3 different TOAs). And as that whole program grew and grew and grew so did the summer program. The summer program started in 2002. And also in 2000. And {P2} was involved in that way back then. She has always been involved in my summer program. Basically that's how it came to be, and now I'm working more on the summer program stuff helping {P1} with the coaching, kind of mentoring her so that as things go when I retire this summer and we can transition. And that's pretty much where I am.

Thank you. How about your background P2?

P2: I actually have a BA in business. And I went back and got my Master's in Education from UCF. I have been in for 17 years. I was an ISTOA and a coach in summer programs and all of

mine has been in elementary. My Master's was not in reading, it was actually in elementary education. So then I have been doing this job for 2 years.

So you will just transition into P1's role...Or you'll just take on...

P2: Well...

P1: Everybody is not real sure about...You just never really know. Everyday there is something surprising. They say "never going to" and then they do. Really? Really? There is a lot of change, a lot of change in the air.

P2: The district is in flux right now.

P1: We don't really know for sure what is happening. I would've thought I would have known, but that just isn't necessarily so. We are in a state of flux. That is a good way to put it.

So, I just want to back up. When you had the ERTs, and then the five lead teachers that was district based, right? Or were they school based?

P1: They were school based. And they grew from that. And I was the one that would always meet with them. And then we started with Steve Barkley, remember back then?

(Sounds of agreement)

P1: And that is really the first time we brought in a coaching trainer to talk about coaching training.

Ok, we will probably revisit that in a few minutes. We'll see. So, what are your current goals or the district's current goals for the coaching initiative for this year?

P2: What we wanted to tie into the district is working on this year, so one of the big things they were working on was what they call learning walks with {consultant} so we wanted to tie into that with Julie. And then we felt that a really big place where there was a gap was kind of that feedback piece so we wanted to make sure they were reaching people through not just doing that coaching piece, but then the feedback so we've had them that and then our model right now is student centered coaching which is Diane Sweeney's model.

Okay, good to know that.

P2: She pioneered that. Our other goal is to kind of move forward with that student centered coaching and the coaching that model and so we've had a speaker from her company coming in two times. So those were our big goals this year to increase student data driven model and then also to work on that working with the adult learner with the feedback and the Hattie research and all of that.

Just side note, I met with some of the coaches on Friday – the literacy and academic coaches that work on literacy most and they talked a lot about the {recent} training and how they've enjoyed that and they're I think it's working.

P1: Yeah, I think she's wonderful. Is she coming back with us?

P2: Not for the coaches this year.

P2: But there might be some of the goals next year. We might have her come again and go a little bit deeper with feedback.

P1: If that's the case I am thinking if she could just peek in and listen to her for a few minutes. Sometimes it's nice to put a face to a name.

P2: She'll be here in February working with the district and principals. She won't be working with the coaches.

Anything specific to literacy coaches? It might be something I should ask ELA Specialist.

P2: The way we've kind of got coaching broken up is we take care of the big picture coaching and then we let the curriculum specialists do the curriculums so that's really going to be more where {ELA Specialist} (I know some of the things she has been working on) but I'm going to leave that for her to answer.

That's what I assumed. Just making sure. And then what goals do you have for the coaches at their individual sites –what is the expectation once they meet with you? Like I've heard (I don't know how accurate what I have heard is or if I am even reporting correctly) they have a certain number of coaching episodes they are supposed to have per month or year.

P2: What we expect back from them is really accountability but it really is also to so they can work with the process. There's two coaching cycles in that model of student centered coaching.

P2: Have you seen that model?

I've read about all of the models, but I don't know enough.

P1: Before we leave we will get you some so you can see the visual.

Agreement. I would love that.

P2: Instead of making them fill out a log, we depend on the outlook calendar. And that's what I was just talking to Title 2 about. In that Outlook calendar we need to see coaching episodes, and with our assurances we are expecting like 75% of their time is spent not in just coaching, but working with teachers. And not working just on research but kind of that old ERT model we wanted that to be more interactive with coaching. And they also will have to have at least once a month either a PD or a PLT (professional learning training). And that's almost like a PLC, only they have to have an agenda. They have to have minutes. They have to have signatures. So that's a once a month. Their calendars are ongoing. We should be able to pull their calendars anytime.

P1: Like we have to do for the audit. I have to get the ones written for Sandy. And basically we have to see the PLTs, or we have to see on the early release PD we have to see the session number. Usually we want it to be in purple, just so that we are picking out the right things. And this is part of what they have to turn in. And this is like one month from one coach and one month from another one. But we're looking for things. They need to have coaching words on there so we can tell they are coaching. It doesn't just say "meeting." I've had one coach that wrote "coaching." Really? What are you doing? I don't know what you're doing.

P2: So, this kind of doubles as a log.

P1: They do. They keep it on their regular desktop calendar. And I just say put it on here. Write it down for an hour. It's ok. That's part of what you have to do. That's your job. Your J-O-B. But that's one of our accountability pieces.

Very good. Does the ERPD count as a PLT?

P2: It counts probably as a PD because usually they have the points for that. If they have been involved in the creation of the presentation for that, then they can use that. If they've called in someone, say from the math department, then it's different.

So, you're ensuring that they are designing and implementing training out of the school.

P2: Yes. Yes, because that is a big part of Title 2 - is the training of teachers. Because we were asked this year another big goal and for the past couple years we've done this anyway is that all coaches be treated the same, so there's a compliance piece for Title 1, every coach has to do it. And there is another compliance piece for Title 2. So we're not going, "You're a Title 2 coach, you have to do this."

P1: Coaches would always get mad at me. They would always say we don't have to do that because we are not Title 1. We're getting paid from another source.

P1: The fact that we had to get past all of that. The reading coaches it was really hard. Elementary, Middle and High - they are all in the same ways. Because they felt they had to do their documentation, then they felt they had to do this documentation (double) and that really got them crazy. And basically I said, "But guys, I don't know what you're doing. If you put down minutes, this I could look and see. You're doing research, you met with so and so, you went to classroom visits, you made meeting notes about somebody you met with, you had to plan and get ready for the ERPD, you're debriefing with somebody, you met with a first year teacher, I'd know what you're doing. And I could see that it filled up your day."

And that ties back to the funding... Is there ever a coach that is paid out of two different "pots"? Ok, so there's a mix there. And Title 1, I know is Federal funding. And I know Title 2 is Federal funding, what is the basis? You said teacher training

P2: Title 2 because Title 2 is teacher training. That is the Federal piece that is for teacher training. That's the piece where the PD has to be there. And if it's there for the people being funded by Title 2, then it's there for everybody. Most coaches are funded through some kind of Federal program. We only have a handful (and I mean on one hand) that are school funds.

P1: We have lists.

Right. I think you gave me one of these last time.

P2: Yes.

P1: I mean we know how they're paid and so. No, everybody is the same. Because you can't It's the same job.

P1: Same job description, you should all be doing the same thing. And there will be little nuances, but on the whole everything should be the same.

Is the job description still online somewhere?

P2: I can't find it online. I had to pull a hard copy. Because I've been asked for a job description a couple of different times, and it's really outdated.

P1: It has 2009 still on the top of it or something.

P2: I had to pull a hard copy.

And I guess starting back with the ERTs, what is the timeline of the coaching initiative? You mentioned Steve Barkley. I remember the Jim Knight and Chuck Yerger stuff.

P1: All in all {Name} used to write all that stuff down. I have it all written somewhere. I have it year by year. I have it all written because I had to present it when we did Jim Knight. Let me grab my notebook.

I was wondering if I could take a picture of it.

P2: That would help because we have the entire history of the coaching here. Let me grab that for you.

I was going to ask about based on that timeline how has the PD for coaches changed over time? But maybe we should come back to that. What do you think?

P2: Yeah, I mean like I say ... I can do the past two years, but....

Ok, so we'll come back to that. I just don't want to forget. How do you ensure or gauge that the coaches are growing from the professional development that you provide?

P2: I usually ask them for some kind of implementation or reflection that they do after they've done the PD, and that doesn't only come from us. It's kind of a request from the PD department, too. It changes with what the PD happens to be but I usually ask for a reflection and an implementation. It may not always be the same thing but they have to submit that back to us. Because with 127 we can't really go out and see it in action every time so we just kind of have to depend on the written back response that they're implementing the PD. And then we also have a mid and an end of the year survey to ask –instead of what specific are we doing so far, a what do you want. And it really comes down to PD. Each PD built into it has an evaluation that they answer. But they don't all have to do that.

I kind of remember living that.

P2: We ask them too. It would really help us, but you don't really know who has done it. The survey piece... They're pretty good about answering because they feel they're giving input. But those other onesevery workshop as its ownso that's just how we kind of try to keep track though.

And so, is that kind of how you would say you would measure their effectiveness as well?

P2: It's really hard to measure a coaches' effectiveness. And what we've tried to do this year, that's why we've gone so strongly with the student centered coaching because you have student data at the front and student data at the back. So even though coaches are working with teachers, and you are hoping they affect teacher practice, you're also hoping the ultimate is that you are trying to affect student achievement. So that's where we're going, that's what we're trying to use is because besides a survey, you know that you ask them, the only thing you can do is survey

the teachers they work with. Or look at that data that's coming from the students. Traditionally everything I read, like how do I do this? It is very difficult.

That's exactly what you're saying. The research supports that.

P2: It's hard to prove it's working.

It's so difficult. Also, I think you were leading into this a little bit but tell me how it is determined if coaches are effective (school base wise).

P2: And so, it's hard to because we are not evaluators of the coaches. Now the secondary coaches are. If they are not paid out of Title 1 (which most secondary coaches are not paid out of Title 1), their specialist actually is their evaluator. All elementary coaches are evaluated by their principals. So then their principals are seeing a lot more of that VSET rubric, because we have a coaches' VSET rubric, they have their own. And that is online, but I can pull a copy of that too. That one is (I don't know if you could get to it because you're not) but I can pull a copy of it for you. We have a coaches' VSET rubric which is not really that great because what they've done is taken the teachers' piece that we work with and tweaked it.

That must be fairly new because I don't remember that when I was here. And I remember being a little afraid about that.

P2: But it's still frustrating. And a lot of times principals don't know what they're looking for in the coaches. I think it would be easier to get in there and have a coach sit down with that rubric and talk to us to show us where growth and potential weaknesses might be.

P1: I can't find that one document.

P2: You gave me one that one time. You sent it to me, but I don't know if I still have it anymore.

P1: And I know it's on my computer but..... Send me an email I have it on my computer somewhere. Whenever we have to submit we always have to add the history and I know I have it. It has to be attached behind every year we've done before that. It's built upon. And I've got the history, it's just I don't know which file it's under. I have to go look. I have to go look back in my coaching files. A lot of times I can just find quick, and of course when I'm looking it's not there. Here's 12, 13, 13, 14, and I know we were doing it then.

Definitely, I know you were doing it then. I was here then.

P1: We had to do a comparison of all the PDs we did that year.... We did a lot of work on that is what I'm getting at, and we had our expectations. That's the year we really put it together beautifully. That was the year with Jim Knight, and from there on in we've kept it up. It must have been with one of your last ones. I think it was attached behind last year or the year before. In other words, we have just added to it.

P2: I've seen something that was tied to Jim Knight.

P1: It started with him that we had to go back all the years. So the history is there. In order to turn this in, I had to have all of the years before it. I know it's somewhere, someplace. It's probably with a budget.

If you don't mind I will email you for it. That would help me.

P1: Yeah, I know that it's there, I just don't see it and I know I have it.

P2: I think it would be easier if we were doing their evaluations to get in there and deeply talk with them about that rubric, and how they were doing on it. It's just hard because we are not that person. Basically, we almost have to go on paper accountability (whatever is submitted to us). I know Title 2 looks at test scores, but then that's hard too because then you don't know how many of those teachers that coach worked with. It is very difficult.

Absolutely. And so, there is no way for elementary coaches to be evaluated by you all anyhow...

P2: Not at this point. When I was an ISTOA, we were evaluated by the district.

But you were also district based, technically.

P1: I don't remember what year it was, but I remember {Former head of Title 1} gave you the choice. He said, "P1, you've got about 22 coaches now." And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Do you really think you can keep up with evaluating them?" And he says, "Because you know we can do that." Sometimes I was given a partial. I would work with a principal on some of that but... because in the beginning we hired them. Then they were kind of given away to their principal. And then I would have input a little bit but it really didn't amount to much because of the fact that I didn't see them enough. I wasn't there like every week. And he said, "So do you want them back?" And I remember I had a couple of coaches that were kind of interesting that I didn't want to give away and but... And I remember thinking do I really want to get in the middle of that evaluation? There were some of them that were just like very dicey. Do you know what I'm saying and I just didn't want to go there and I said "not really" because then I knew my whole life would be revolving around evaluation. And like right now I am starting the summer programs. And so I have to back out. She's doing And when I was by myself, no twenty two evaluation and plus then I would have to be there every week. And that was back when the number was small. But it grew after that. I'd need three more TOAs, and then they couldn't evaluate because they were TOAs and so that didn't help.

And so principals hire and assign the coaches? I knew they evaluated them, but I didn't know...

P2: Yes, in secondary there are some that are hired by the specialists. And evaluated by the specialists. I think if their general funds or if Title 1 they're not. Title 1 I know is evaluated by the principal. But...

P1: If they have the SAI funds

P2: And the FEFP, I think they are evaluated by the specialists.

P1: And I know {Name} used to evaluate some of them.

P2: Maybe

P1: They divvy them up a little differently. All I know is that I don't have to. She said, "I am evaluating this math coach at Mainland." I said, "You are? I didn't know you were evaluating." It's like if somebody couldn't take on one more person they'd give them to her because that was back when she was doing curriculum and not PD. And she would have someone because she was doing secondary. They had a big jump too. They were doing all of those trainings. If you

have 2, or 3, or 4 – I could see it, but when you get over the twenties and then into the fifties, and then a hundred and some odd... no, no, no.

And there's still that pull with school Administration, I'm sure...they want certain people in those jobs, too, right?

P1: You know until you have more control, they're going to be doing duties as assigned. Lunch duty, bus duty, testing all the time, put it down. Because when are you coaching? It doesn't do you any good to lie. Because if I go to your school and I can't find you it's because you're doing that.

And then eventually the data will never...

P1: Well, we finally got the principals in this year with a meeting with the coaches that Julie Smith presented. And that is the first time in how long? Ever? I don't know. The principals actually sat and heard how valuable coaching can be if the coaches can coach. We had principals say things like, "I have not been guarding your time..."

P1: She gave them a time on task. Here is a calendar of the week. An empty calendar. Put in the time they are coaching. What did the coach and the administrator write? It was the greatest thing I've ever seen. I sat there like whoa...because some principals were like...

P2: You can't be effective if you're not coaching.

Yes, of course.

P1: We've always tried to do that. With {consultant name}, we couldn't get it to work. We didn't really do it with Barkley's work so much.

P2: Jim Knight you invited the principals.

P1: Yes. But it was on a PD.

Agreement

P1: It was more on PD, but it wasn't optional. It was kind of like you need to be there. We were trying to get them (the principals) to see that if you really want to get your coach, then they need to be coaching. Otherwise you're not getting your money's worth out of them. I was very pleased with the ones, you know their heads were down and they were really thinking about it. I was hoping it made a difference to the principals.

Sure. It's at least a starting point.

P1: Well, and I think that because they already respected Dr. Julie Smith, it was a good thing to do. You can tell if it is an administrative workshop and you can tell they're all on their phones and they're just not paying attention. It's not being effective. At this one, the phones were shut off and they were all working with the teachers. That was the exciting piece. Listening!

Is it safe to assume that your office and the individual content area offices are the support systems for coaches?

Agreement.

And then, how often are you supporting coaches? Or do they appeal for help?

P2: There's some appeal for help. We'll get emails of phone calls or something like that. From the beginning of the year between {P1} and myself we try to get out to every single school and

talk with the coaches. And we're still not done. We hit the ones with new coaches first. And now I'm on the ones that do not have new coaches. So we try to go out...I would love to say we will try to get out twice, but at this point we are just trying to get out to every school. We've been to a couple schools that have said *please help us. Please come back*. And for those we will set a date. I don't want to step on a coaches' time. And some of these coaches really are busy. And to make time to sit down for an hour meeting. Unless they truly need us.... You can tell the ones that have got this, I've been doing this for a long time. But for some of them we will go back.

And when they're asking for help, what kinds of things are they asking for help with?

P2: A lot of times they feel it's a disconnect between what they want to do or have been doing and maybe the principal's vision. A lot of times, and we only have so much power there. Because the principal really is, I mean they're running the show. That's just it.

P1: And I've found with some of that--we're giving them strategies on how to deal with adult learners, even if it is with the administrators. Sometimes it's like *okay, we can't change that. Here are some things you might want to try*. And what's nice is when I give them some things to try and you know, you need to go in and talk to the principal like this. You need to get him alone at this part of the day, and dah dah dah dah. I really nail it, you know. It might have a chance of saying what's upsetting you. And so then they want feedback and they want to tell me how it went. So they'll either text me or call me. A lot of times I'll even say if there are a lot of things that are going on, if you don't really like the direction of the way things are going – invite me to come down on that day and I'll just happen to be there for the meeting. And sometimes that's kind of behind the scenes to support the coaches. And the principal is usually glad to see you, but you know it's kind of like last year I was brand new and this is the way I'm going to do things. I know you're here and you don't like that. I say no, no I'm here to support everybody. You do whatever you need. And so that they don't want to not have me be there. I want them to see that I try to give the coaches a platform on how to say things without making it worse. To deescalate the stress that they're feeling.

P2: Very rarely is it an issue with a teacher. It's usually more

So would you say it's more about roles and responsibilities

Agreement

P1: When I was at (SCHOOL NAME) the other day, it was more about the teachers for this one coach. And it was good because I was there for their liaison meeting (in another role). I knew the grade level and I just sat down and talked to her and she said, "Yes, that's the one." And I said, "Ok." So I patted her on the back and I said, "You're doing great!" Building up the coaches' rapport with her, because she was worried about that grade level. I will do behind the scenes things like that. She didn't know me and I didn't know her. But I was happy to see that she was the note taker for the liaison meeting. I can't believe you're doing so wonderful. And she was talking about her background and stuff. So I kind of try to help if I know the situation is a little rocky, if I know there is a grade level person there, and the coach is there then I. We had not planned this. I just thought this would be a good thing to do to help her cement the coaching relationship. Sometimes it just kind of happens if I'm there. That kind of made her feel good

about coaching. I'm here to represent coaching too. She didn't know that's what I do. She didn't know I was a district person. Who are you?

You get that one.

P1: There are many places that you input your knowledge about adult relationships. I've even said a couple times if you've got a really tough grade level invite me to the PLC and I'll sit there quiet as a stump. If you have a question I'll answer. Later on we can debrief about that meeting and what you could have possibly done a little differently or you might want to try this...

So that feedback is there.

P1: Feedback. It's all about the feedback. You're in sales... You're selling the idea of a coach. You're selling the idea of the fact that you are there to help them and will not tattle on them. And that is very hard for people to believe that is your job. They think that once you've become a coach you've gone to the dark side. That you're now in an administrative group, but you're not. So you have to kind of ... it's a very interesting role to play. To dance right on that fence. You just have to be sure that you keep that confidence. And when you meet with your administrators be sure that you don't give too many details. You just say I've been working on this, and I ... but you might be amazed. It could be positive or negative amazed, but you might be amazed. You don't say anything but you want to make sure that they get in the room to see it for themselves. And then they'll know why you need to be there a lot. And especially that they'll want you there. But you have to have that rapport, and they only time you get that is when you see them more. And then they build the trust with you as a coach, but also if you know some of the players in the grade levels they are struggling with. A couple of the schools that I used to even teach at ... they say okay, that grade. I say sure, I don't try to eat them for dinner. But they did, they tried. And I'd say "Why are you acting like this, guys? Are you going to argue forever? Leave that coach alone!" But I'm older, I can say this.

It depends on the context, too.

P2: You also have to be careful because things get back to principals. You can get into trouble. Agreement.

P1: And I've gotten into trouble for that before. It got all the way back to the teacher. Because I would go in, talk to the coach. She wasn't allowed to coach. And I would say to her, you know if you were coaching you could do this, this, this, and this. But you really are a good person to be coaching... She would run right in and say {P1} said I should be coaching. Even though she knows I am not coaching. And so that principal called to complain about me to my boss. I said, "It worked perfect, didn't it?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "That's what I wanted her to do. I knew that coach would run and tell her and it made her feel uncomfortable which is what I wanted her to do." Because she should be coaching. We are paying her to coach. Sometimes I did it deliberately because I would go in to see her. I just didn't want her to lie to me. I wanted her to tell the truth. I didn't want her to say "Oh, they're coaching all the time." I didn't want to have to say, "No, they're not." I'd rather just say "I know they're not. Let's go from there. What can we do?"

Awkward?

P1: Exactly, but I don't want to be lied to. I'd rather just say I already know.

For your professional learning goals for your coaches—how is that communicated with you and school administrators? Do they know ahead of time what the coaching initiative goals are, do they know...

P2: We send out the expectations. We send out the assurances. There is a PD plan for the year.

P1: There were really three things they got this year. The assurances, they have to sign off on them, the roles, the responsibilities are really spelled out there pretty nicely. And then the expectations like the amount of coaching cycles, coaching plans. We always Volusia-size things, like take away the names Sweeney gives them. That would help her just to see that.

I was going to say, is that something that I can have? Thanks. And that goes to principals. It's almost like a little contract?

P2: I don't think they've officially signed them yet. They're really for Title 1 principals, but we pass them along to all principals.

With that idea of keeping everything consistent...

P2: They got them at a principals' meeting and then they got them again at the Julie Smith.

P1: But until you ask for them by a due date...It's in that pile over there. You need to sign it.

I didn't know that existed, though. That's really cool.

P1: This came out last year and then this year. They were trying to make sure that everybody got to do their role, and this was another way that {Former head of curriculum} said, "Let's have an assurance." {District member} made one up for intervention teachers and I said, "Ok, well if that is the case, then we'll make one for this." So then we ended up having three or four of them when we only should've had one. But that's ok.

You have to start somewhere. This one I know that you all can definitely help me with. It is explaining the varying titles of coaches. And why are some of them academic, why are some literacy and who makes that decision?

P2: Title 1 used to tell principals, I don't know how long ago, but they would tell principals you have one math coach or you have one reading coach. You have one academic coach, the district told principals. Now, they are not told. They can make the choice. They have so many Title 1 dollars and they can make the choice. We do have 18 elementary people out there that were left over from the ISTOAs that were put into all of the tier 2 schools; they were put in as academic coaches. Now they can choose a focus. They can choose to focus on ELA or on math or whatever the principal feels...

I think that's similar to what you gave me last time.

P2: Now those are told they are academic. But they can use their Title 1 dollars and say however the application goes through {name} in the front. They can say I want a reading coach, or I want a math coach. I want an academic coach.

P1: I think over the years what's happened is that when you get too low, {former District Head of Elementary curriculum} would see you were low in math, so you need a math coach. It would

make no sense. They should have made that person academic. So we got knee jerked the other way. If you only have one coach in a school, you really need to make it academic.

P2: And in elementary, most are academic.

P1: Because of the fact that we've got to have. You may focus or your background may be in reading, which is fine. But you still need to know what is going on in those math classes. If you are the only coach. And we've run into that in some of our smaller schools. And even at the other schools we have people who are academic. People who are saying well I'm doing K-2, and I'm doing 3-5. And then people who are doing 2 grade levels. It isn't really weird, just for the district. When you think about elementary because of the fact that I may be really good about K and 1 because I taught there most of my time and I don't know nothing about 4th and 5th. And I don't care about that reading coach because I'll never know what they do. But do you see what I'm saying because we have people who specialize we have some grade bands. And if you have enough coaches it works. When it doesn't work is when you don't know which meeting to go to. Nothing is ever perfect with that situation but you know if you have a math contact, and so on.

And that information was delivered that way.

P1: So, you know, I'm just saying there's just. We've tried every form of everything and now this is just the latest version.

So funding doesn't necessarily determine the title of the coach. It's just a district slash principal decision.

P2: Now, secondary is different. Secondary they have specific... we only have about 4 academic coaches in secondary.

They are more subject area content based?

Agreement.

OK, so principals really decide the title. The name of the coach.

P2: At this point, a couple years ago – no. At this point, principals decide. We actually had a principal call and she was upset because of the math coach. And she really wanted this person to be a math/science coach. And so I asked Nicole and Nicole said we don't have such a thing as a math/science coach. The principal was upset. A couple years ago, I had a math/science coach and Nicole is like we don't have a math/science coach. This was in elementary. And Nicole said, "Why didn't she just make this person an academic coach?"

Agreement

P2: But you see, there are a few principals that were still tied into that. They said this is what that person is, and it was like {name} said she had the choice to make this person whatever she wanted. We don't have that designation to say she is math/science, but she can say it's academic. And then they can cover anything, so we still have principals who were around at that time who were kind of caught up in that, but I think most of them have gone academic because that gives them a little more freedom.

And then does funding impact the term reading vs. literacy for the reading coaches?

P2: I don't think so. {District ELA Specialist} may know that. You know they've gone really from calling it reading to calling it ELA, but I don't think funding has anything to do with that but I could be wrong.

P1: There is a (I don't remember what it is or how it works) but I know there is a thing where {former district ELA specialist} was concerned that all of the reading coaches were disappearing into the academic and she was supposed to have a certain number, amount, or percentage of her schools were supposed to say that they had reading coaches. Or from FEFP, if they were paid that way, they'd be called a reading coach.

P2: But since none of ours are paid that way (FEFP)...

P1: I think there is one at {school name}.

P2: No. Those are those ISTOAs that have been placed.

P1: Sometimes they move the person

P2: That is a slot.

P1: In other words if they had the money, they stuck the old reading coach in that slot. Or stuck the old academic coach who was in there. And took the money from the other. It's been very strange this year. This is almost anything goes...

P1: So, that could be out there somewhere and I'm just not aware of it.

P1: You can ask the reading department, but {district ELA specialist} may not know because she doesn't have the history. {Name} might know, possibly. {Name} might know too. She remembers things like that. Because she was my TOA and she remembered what year that happened. She knows for a number of years that we had that issue. They were supposed to have a certain number.

P1: Now they're ELA.

P2: I think the job description still may say reading.

This one says academic.

P2: That one is an academic, but we do have a reading coach one. I can try to pull it for you. And as far as I know I haven't seen a newer one but that doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

I've looked too.

P1: {Name} has the latest version. I remember asking. {Name} would have the last version.

P2: That's the one I got from {Name}

P1: Whenever we got them we had to make sure they match what the principals got, and we would get a copy.

I remember being given this when I applied. The next part is really thinking about your perspectives. How you feel things are happening so far with the current initiative. How do you think coaches are responding to the current professional learning that's being provided?

P2: I think they're responding better this year than they did last year. Last year the way we did it, every other month we did a split day and in the morning say we do coaching and in the afternoon math and then we would flip flop. And then ELA would do in the morning and coaching would do. The coaches really didn't love that format. So I would say compared to last

year, they are a lot more positive and we've had speakers come in. Which they really liked. This year, they have been very positive.

And it's once a month with you all?

P2: We have a month and then the next month is the content people. So instead of splitting the day we take a month because that way we can bring in a speaker. If you bring in a speaker, then they want to get paid a full day.

Agreement

P2: So we have a speaker, and then the next month content does it. The only problem like {P1} says, the academic people have to pick where they're going to go. They have to pick a focus. And it's very heavy ELA.

Agreement. I was with that group on Friday. It's a large group.

Agreement.

Can I assume that like Friday – it was an ELA day – can I assume that your math people were somewhere else?

P2: I was with math and then science was somewhere. Science only has 4.

P1: Just a handful.

Okay. And then they stay on that same kind of schedule. So December 4th was that day.

P2: Yes.

Got it. Makes sense. And, you think that schedule seems to work for them?

P2: It does. I have heard some feedback that there's some frustration with the learning walks. That type of the coaches and the curriculum specialists would like to have a day where they are just training, but now the math learning log where I was this time went very well. And the coaches seemed feel like they got a lot out of it. I was with ELA last time and it was such a big group there was some frustration there. But I haven't. I got a note from {District ELA specialist} that this time went much better. It may be just getting used to it. I think they're getting more used to that format. We're getting into the rooms and being able to

That's what they were saying. It was so nice to be able to talk with other coaches about it. That's exciting!

P1: All along we've always tried to listen. We sent out the surveys, asked them what they want. Even last year, we've always done that. And so we adjust.

There are some things that they brought up, like time. Well, time is always a barrier. Always. And the differing roles. Well, I don't know how to fix that.

P2: As long as their principal is their boss, it is what it is.

You've tried to modify it. I think about the ISTOAs and how that went down. I remember at {school name}– that was a unique place all of its own, but there was less respect for the ISTOAs.

P2: That was tough and part of it was that they were not embraced by the administrators. They weren't their people

What is your option? What specific needs do you think there are for the professional development of the coaches?

P2: I think that the coach/principal collaboration piece is huge. I read a lot of research on coaching and that is always one of the number one things – the coach/principal partnership and the school climate. I have to say this year it seems like coaches are getting in rooms more. That has (previously) been a problem. But because of all the changes, I think teachers are starting to open their doors and say *ok, I need help*. And I think even maybe with it being more student driven instead I'm coming to fix you, I am coming to help with your students, that has sort of helped open some doors. To me, I would just like to see more of that. I don't think coaching can grow.... If the principals or the instructional leaders at the schools are not growing, then I don't think the coaching can grow. I would like to see more of us bringing them in and training the principals that this is what coaching is, and this is what the expectations are...

P1: I think that's probably the number 1.

P2: I think that's the only way we're going to grow capacity. Is to

P1: The other area we've always asked for, but just haven't. They don't want them out of the schools anymore. But they would love to have more during the day PLCs. They've always asked me to do more east and west, more groupings just to talk. It's like when we get to the meetings all we really do is PD. So, when do we get to talk about support for each other? And we really do have one group of secondary coaches that are trying to do it on their own, but it's like to schedule it... They don't want us to take them out more than one time per month. But I know the coaches would love it. I know, it's just you're fighting that battle. You know, of what they want vs. what the administrators want. And because I know that feedback about how's it going it is very difficult to meet with that many coaches. This to me would be wonderful. If you could have four area meetings every other month, and take them out one morning or afternoon. Not even the whole day. Just part of a day. They'd be screaming at us (administrators). No, no you can't have them again. And then if you try to do it after school you run into the pay issue. So, it's always a situation but I know they would like to be met with more it is just difficult to find the right way to do it so everybody is okay with it.

Exactly. I appreciate you sharing it. What are their needs specific to? Is it more the coaching cycle? More student centered? More subject content specific?

P2: I haven't sent the mid-year survey yet this year, but I can tell you last year it was definitely the coaching cycle. And they had gotten iPads last year, and they wanted more iPad training. Those were the number one requests. And I'm so sorry I just haven't done that yet. I usually do it in January. I'm so sorry. I can base it off of last year, but that is just...

P1: And, you know, we've been having issues with funding, situations with iPads ... and they kind of know what to do with them, but as far as all of the apps that we put on them and stuff, it's been very much an issue of which apps and when. We try to be very accommodating. Not me, I mean {Name} and her staff. I can't do any of that, but I'm the list keeper and I support that. But as far as the training with all of that there are just some people that love technology. Then there are others that just don't care. They're never going to open it up, so why bother. You can't demand but the only thing is if you don't build capacity yourself as a coach, then those

teachers that don't want to do it either. So that teacher that doesn't want the iPads in her room might try a little too, for the kids.

Agreement.

P1: That to me is kind of an interesting year so far since we've had a time trying to get them out. You know who's paying for which ones, so it's a funding issue this year. To be sure that the funding is there if we have to buy new ones, but now we don't have to buy new ones if the people don't want them just because you waited so long. It's kind of crazy. So I finally just said. If you want them I'll put them on my tab. All that work, I'm just going to bring blank sheets. That way if you want one, you fill it in.

P2: With content, they do ask for different things with content but that usually goes to those specialists. Like last year I know they were frustrated over curriculum maps and pacing and math and they were frustrated with *SIPPS*, and now *SIPPS* has kind of seemed to settle down. Now they're trying to get the *iReading* and *iWriting* and that's a little more content specific. So that goes to them.

P1: And I think the Cadre situation has made that more interesting.

Tell me more about that. What's the Cadre?

P1: The Cadre is what in the old days we called contacts. But if they have a Cadre they are supposed to pay them.

P2: Not all the Cadres are getting their stipends from what I understand.

So it's not going to go over well?

P1: What is it, three per school? You might know

P2: There could be 2 ELA, but I'm not sure about that. There's one math and one science.

P1: And so they go to the meetings, but you know how that goes.

P2: And it's an all day. They get pulled out, like the contacts used to do.

P1: Some of them go right back to their coach and they plan together.

P2: But not many.

P1: But that's called the small group.

And it can't be the coach.

P2: No, it can't be the coach. In fact, people who were becoming the coaches if they were the Cadre Members, then they would have to give that up.

P1: We're always looking for ways to get information out, and I can understand that, but we're not in the old days the principal would hear it, the AP would hear it, and then the coach would hear it. Then I would have the specialists come and report out like they would to the principals. They would get that conversation, but now if they are going to hear Dr. Julie Smith, then nothing happens that month. Do you see what I mean? And then the next month, if they are out with their learning person, part of it might be learning logs, part of it might be section. It may be what the principal heard.

P2: And the problem is with being the coaches. There was some push back because some schools do not have coaches. We have 8 that do not have coaches.

P1: And so, they've been letting them come to our coach meetings to see what we do.

The contacts do?

P2: The principals of the schools that do not have coaches are now allowed to send a representative to the coaching meetings.

How do you feel about that?

P1: It's fine. I mean to me.

P2: I would think it would be hard for a teacher to come when your area is around coaching, but I feel like at most of our meetings there is good information. If somebody likes going to PDs, they will probably go back with good information. We're not doing anything that's secret, but... So we had some non-coaches come to Julie Smith, we had a non-coach at the math learning log and we had a non-coach at the science. The math one did fine. I have to talk to Laura to find out how science went. Most principals did not pick up on it, though. And I think most of the people that they sent were Cadre members.

Makes sense.

P2: The specialists were more upset about it than we were. I try to explain that I wasn't sure what somebody would get out of coaching meetings if they aren't a coach, but they wanted someone there because they actually get more training at the Cadre meetings, but the specialists were upset, because like I said, we're not doing anything secret. There aren't any secret handshakes or anything.

P1: I think if they wanted to be a coach in the future this would kind of give them an eyeful of what their future might be. If they don't have anything to compare it with then

P2: I think the specialists were more upset with it than we were.

P1: So we're sharing knowledge. And I remember working with {former head of Title 1}. And I would say they are not Title 1 people, can they still come to my workshop and he said of course. You just can't buy them something. I couldn't pay them a stipend. You can share whatever you do. It's for the sake of all kids. In my mind it works that way. A lot of times we have peer coaching happening. And they can use some of these skills. Training for your leadership, or if you want to move to be a coach someday. To me it's just finding out about what their world is like.

P1: I would've been exciting if it was in a non-Title 1 school and I was wondering what they do. ... to me it would have been... I was there three years. I was ready. Again, that was her goal - to promote leadership. ...distinguished on her evaluation, then you have to send them outside of there. They are looking for a place to send them and to get them real... because then you can say to your other teachers who think they are distinguished; why didn't you send me to those meetings. Well you didn't ask. I can hear that meeting going on between the administrators at evaluation time. You have to do stuff outside of what you are doing here.

Do you have any additional thoughts or recommendations that could contribute to your coaches or your coaches' recommendations about professional learning?

P1: How long are you going to be dealing this?

I am hoping to be done collecting data on this in January. And then I have to defend my dissertation in June.

P1: Don't even worry about it. If you think we're in a convoluted crazy world now, it's just the beginning.

Thank you.

P1: You don't want to get in the middle of that.

P2: Just roll with it.

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