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Latoya Doby-Holmes

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INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: PERCEPTIONS OF
PRINCIPALS, INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES, AND TEACHERS

by

LATOYA DOBY-HOLMES

(Under the direction of Hsiu-Lien Lu)

ABSTRACT

The political climate surrounding academic achievement and teacher accountability is more demanding than ever before. Administrators might be able to improve teacher quality and address teacher accountability with the use of instructional coaching. It is important for all stakeholders to have data on the effectiveness of instructional coaches to enhance teacher performance and student achievement.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student achievement through the perceptions of principals, instructional coaches, and teachers in Georgia elementary schools. A phenomenological research approach was designed for this purpose. In order to triangulate data, participants purposefully recruited for the study consisted of three types of stakeholders from a Northeastern Georgia school district: three principals, three instructional coaches, and three teachers. A semi-structured protocol, created based on literature and the researchers' professional experiences and judgment, was used throughout all interviews. This protocol helped ensure the consistency of all interviews and simultaneously allowed the interviewer to take notes along the interviews and probe for further explanations and clarifications. Data were verbatim transcribed and analyzed through the constant comparison and contrast approach based on grounded theory where after themes emerged.

The results of this study indicated that the instructional coach had a positive but indirect effect on student achievement. Specifically, the instructional coach helped teachers grow professionally in the following areas: a) by providing professional development; b) by providing specific feedback about their instructional strategies; c) by fostering teacher collaboration and improving teacher self-efficacy, therefore changing the culture of the faculty and school; d) by helping them analyze and understand student performance data; and e) by showing and teaching them how to modify and therefore improve their instructional practices.

INDEX WORDS: Instructional coaches, Teacher effectiveness, Student achievement

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LATOYA DOBY-HOLMES

B.A., University of South Carolina, 1998

M. Ed., Central Michigan University, 2004

Ed. S., Central Michigan University, 2006

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LATOYA DOBY-HOLMES

Major Professor: Hsiu-Lien Lu

Committee: Linda M. Arthur

Teri Denlea Melton

Electronic Version Approved:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband and son Moritz E. Holmes and Moritz DeMario Holmes. It was your uncompromising love and encouragement that enabled me to achieve this accomplishment. Thank you for your love, support, and patience. Your love was my strength to endure the rigors of this degree.

I also would like to dedicate this dissertation to my siblings, Monica, Ronald, Tijuana, QuoTrina, Shavone, Avonia, and Charmaine. You have been the driving force behind my desire to attain this degree. I also dedicate this dissertation to my lovely nephews and nieces, Marquel, Deven, Jamaree, Alexandria, Amaree, Armani, Brittany, Avonia, Aviyah, and Taylor. I would like to challenge all of you to equal and exceed anything that I have accomplished.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The emphasis on accountability has caused schools and districts throughout the nation to turn to alternative forms of professional development in an effort to impact teacher knowledge and improve student achievement (Alter, 2007; Ingersoll, 2007). In order to support student achievement and teacher training, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has significantly impacted teacher accountability, professional development, and student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003; Peterson & West, 2003). One such support is the emergence of instructional coaches as an improvement initiative in which the underlying principle is to improve student achievement through enhancing teacher practice (Driscoll, 2008; Knight, 2006).

Instructional coaching is a form of professional development that merges teachers' learning with their practices, gives teachers ongoing feedback, and involves collegial support. In addition, instructional coaching is experiencing significant growth relative to the challenges of producing highly qualified teachers while the implementation of its programs has surpassed research (Black, Mosleed, & Saylor, 2003; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Knight, 2006; Poglinco & Bach, 2005; Yerkes, 2001; Thompson, 1997). Instructional coaching has become a vital component for enhancing teacher practices because it strives to combine effective professional development with school-based and school-specific needs regarding both content and school climate. Many instructional coaches facilitate professional development for teachers to further their academic growth (Driscoll, 2008; Knight 2006).

The demand for academic excellence is rapidly increasing while, at the same time, funding has become limited (Ingersoll, 2007). Due to limited funding and NCLB mandates, principals are experiencing a great deal of pressure to deliver high quality education and are

expected to do more, with less (Kim & Sunderman, 2004). Many principals are realizing that teacher quality is positively related to student achievement (Driscoll, 2008; Fullan, 2001; Killion, 2002). “What a teacher knows and does are the strongest factors influencing student success” (Killion, 2006, p. 4). Hence, the solution to improving student achievement may lie within professional development that improves teacher content knowledge and provides research-based instructional strategies to assist students with meeting academic goals (Killion, 2002; Killion, 2006).

Research is prevalent on instructional coaching as a vehicle for professional development and enhancing teacher knowledge and skills (Cornett & Knight 2008; Deiger & Hurtig. 2009; Knight, 2007a; McGatha, 2008; University of Kansas Center for Research, 2004; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009; Veenman & Denessen; 2001). However, the research pertaining to the impact on teacher and student achievement has created a gap in the literature. This study will provide information pertaining to the lived experiences of principals, instructional coaches, and teachers who work collaboratively to impact teacher and student achievement. The review of literature for this study examined the evolution of instructional coaching, instructional coaching as a form of professional development, characteristics of instructional coaches, effects of instructional coaching, and principals’ roles in instructional coaching. The results of this study may provide insight into improving teacher professional development as related to student performance outcomes.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers related to the effectiveness of instructional coaching. A qualitative study was designed to answer the following overarching

question: What are the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers relating to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement? The following questions guided this study:

1. What do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive are the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches?
2. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional development?
3. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student achievement?

Significance of the Study

This study was conducted to address a gap found in the literature. After a thorough review of the literature, few phenomenological studies were found to examine the essence or actual lived experiences as told by elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional learning and student performance.

The study was significant for several reasons: First, the study can provide principals, teachers, and instructional coaches with pertinent information about coaching, its use, and how it benefits student achievement and teacher performance. This information can be utilized to determine if instructional coaching should be incorporated into a school's instructional plan. Second, this study will be able to contribute to the literature on educators' perceptions of instructional coaching. The review of literature that will be presented in Chapter Two identifies a

gap in the literature. There is a limited scope in the literature regarding the perceptions of elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers relative to instructional coaching. Although there has been research on instructional coaching, there are few studies related to the employment of instructional coaches working with teachers and student achievement. Finally, the study will enhance the knowledge base of the researcher. The study is important to the researcher because the researcher is an aspiring principal who wants to be knowledgeable of the techniques, strategies, and tools that impact teacher performance and student achievement.

Research Procedures

In order to address the questions of this study, a phenomenological, qualitative research design was utilized. A qualitative research design was selected because it allowed the participants to give more in-depth discussion of the research topic than could be obtained by use of a quantitative research instrument.

The selected population for this research study included principals, instructional coaches, and teachers from Northeastern Georgia elementary schools. These participants were employed in Georgia public schools that have grade levels that encompass pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The sample for the research study consisted of three principals, three instructional coaches, and three teachers representing Georgia Title I elementary schools.

The interview instrument for the study was developed based on the literature and researcher's professional judgment and experience. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. The purpose of the interview was to obtain principals', instructional coaches', and teachers' perceptions about instructional coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher performance and student achievement. The interviews allowed for the capturing of richer qualitative data as opposed to capturing random information of everyone's

thoughts and/or beliefs. The interview questions were created based on previous research identified in the literature that focused on the impact of instructional coaching in the classroom (see Appendix E and Appendix F).

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University was obtained to conduct the study. Upon receiving IRB approval, the Northeastern Georgia School District was contacted in writing to gain the district's approval to conduct the study. Following approval from the district, a letter of consent was mailed via the United States Postal Service to all participants requesting their participation first by introducing the researcher, then informing the participants about the study, while assuring confidentiality, and finally thanking them in advance for their participation.

Data were obtained through interviews. The interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to investigate the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivation of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Participants' responses were audio-taped, and notes were also taken during the interviews to maintain focus and probing.

In the research study, data analysis entailed comparing and contrasting responses to interview questions given by participants, then identifying reoccurring patterns/themes that emerge. These patterns/themes were used to draw connections and provide insight into perceptions in Northeastern Georgia elementary schools on the impact of instructional coaches on enhancing teacher performance and student achievement.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The study was limited by several factors. First, the culture and climate at each

school is different. School and classroom climate have an impact on the way that an instructional coach interacts with the principal and teachers. Second, the participants possessed unique skills, experiences, and interests. Prior experiences, background, and knowledge of the participants, as well as their personal preferences and dispositions influenced the ways in which they interact with one another. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative studies should have a limited number of participants in an effort to complete an in-depth study and interact with the participants in this study; therefore, the findings will not be generalizable to other populations.

Delimitations

The study was delimited by several factors. First, the results of the study will only be pertinent to elementary schools and its population. Second, the three elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers were employed in a selected Northeastern Georgia school district. Third, the schools participating in the study were Title I schools.

Definition of Terms

Coaching – Coaching is the communication and interactions between teachers to improve their teaching practice (Harwell-Kee, 1999). For the purpose of this study, coaching will be defined as ongoing collegiality and teacher support.

Instructional Coach – An instructional coach is an on-site professional developer who teaches educators how to use proven instructional methods (Knight, 2006).

Mentor – A mentor is a person who shares experiences, knowledge, and wisdom about a particular occupation, their occupation, or about the workplace in general (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

Professional Development – Professional development is a comprehensive, sustained, and

intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Chapter Summary

Studies on the importance of instructional coaches and how they impact teacher performance and student achievement may be an asset for educators. Studies have shown that few phenomenological studies were found to examine the essence or actual lived experiences as told by elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional learning and student performance. In order to support and enhance teacher performance and student achievement, principals, instructional coaches, and teachers detailed opinions or perceptions on how they believe instructional coaches impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement are needed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter was to identify research and literature specifically related to the study topic. The researcher identified key words associated with the study and utilized Galileo to find journals and books which were utilized as primary sources within a 10-year publication date to support current research and literature. However, a few sources that were included may have older publication dates because they contain classical works. The use of computerized databases such as ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest, PsychoINFO, and Sociological Collection were employed to obtain literature. The use of the above databases afforded the researcher venues for obtaining material that was relevant to the research topic.

Chapter Two provided a discussion of the literature relevant to this study. Major topic areas include the evolution of coaching, instructional coaching as a form of professional development, characteristics of instructional coaches, effects of instructional coaching, and principals' roles in instructional coaching.

Evolution of Instructional Coaching

Federal involvement in public education has generated a plethora of school reform efforts that are aimed at increasing student achievement. With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the former president of the United States, George W. Bush, declared that education should be a priority and has caused the nation to focus on the way teachers teach and students learn (Peterson & West, 2003). The pressure to improve instruction has forced educational leaders to pay close attention to the correlation between instructional practices and student achievement (Knight, 2007b). Educational leaders are seeking professional development strategies to impact students' performance in the classrooms. According to Black, Mosled, and

Sayler (2003), if stakeholders are seeking to improve the instructional practices of educators and eventually increase student achievement, educators need help in enhancing their techniques and skills. The emerging body of empirical research on coaching implies that instructional coaching has the potential to impact teacher practice and eventually student achievement (Knight, 2006). Therefore, many school districts are utilizing instructional coaches as an effective professional development strategy (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). To be effective, Poglinco and Bach (2005) stated that professional development must be ongoing, job-embedded in teachers' classrooms, student focused, specific to grade levels or academic content, and research-based. The utilization of instructional coaches provides opportunities for ongoing professional development.

Instructional coaching began in the early 1980s as a strategy to improve the quality of implementation of new curriculum and instructional strategies (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Coaching was first proposed as an alternative to traditional professional development after staff development evaluations revealed that fewer than 10 percent of teachers applied what they learned (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1996). Early research showed that teachers who had a coaching relationship practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more than those without coaching experience (Harwell-Kee, 1999).

There were several models of training for teachers in place before coaching. The first two were the industrial model and the clinical model. According to Glickman (1992), the industrial model was utilized between the 1940s-1960s in an effort to provide feedback to teachers from central office personnel. Teachers were trained as if they were in factories. They were taught to be efficient with time, produce results, and ensure quality control. The feedback was formal and tied to evaluations which were ineffective because they did not focus on teacher performance nor

student achievement (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Glickman, 1992). Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krajewski (1980) stated that the clinical model was utilized in the 1960s as a new model to provide training. The clinical model focused on three components: pre-conference, lesson observation, and post conference. The pre-conference was conducted to establish objectives and purpose of the lesson. The lesson observation was conducted by a trained observer to determine if the teacher was able to meet the set objectives. The post conference provided feedback to teachers (Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980).

After the models mentioned above were utilized, the traditional form of professional development evolved. The traditional form of professional development consisted of workshops without collaboration, feedback, reflection, or modeling (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Therefore, the traditional form of professional development was ineffective (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1996). In order for coaching to be effective, coaching must be a blend of the early models that allow for immediate transfer of learning from trainings into the classroom (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004). Coaching has typically functioned as a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback in order to increase the level of implementation of instructional strategies and techniques (Joyce & Showers, 1996).

In the United States, coaching started primarily in large districts like Boston and New York City's Community School District 2 and spread quickly around the nation, mainly in urban schools. Russo (2004) listed the following examples of these efforts in a paper he wrote which discussed different types of coaches utilized in professional development efforts.

First, New York City's public schools recently embarked on a large-scale staff development effort to support reading, writing, and math programs, assigning experienced coaches to schools throughout the city. "The coaches would not only work with small groups of

teachers during planning time but also set up demonstration classrooms where teachers could watch sample lessons that they could later replicate with their own students” (p. 1).

Then, in Philadelphia, a group of schools was selected to participate in a pilot coaching program during the 2002-2003 school year as part of a school restructuring effort. Each coach worked part-time at several schools, and first-year results were strong enough that, in August 2003, Philadelphia contracted with the Princeton Review to create and implement a professional development program for approximately 500 school-based instructional leaders and 130 coaching staff members (p. 2).

Next, in Dallas, former associate superintendent, Robert B. Cooter, Jr., emphasized the need for coaches as part of his district-wide Dallas Reading Plan to improve student performance. “By 2001, five years after the program began, all of the schools involved had been removed from the state's low-performing list and student reading performance had improved dramatically” (p. 2).

Finally, America's Choice, a school reform model being used in more than 600 schools in 15 states, includes a strong school-based coaching component. “Teachers worked with math and literacy coaches one-on-one and in small groups to develop instructional strategies and to build model classrooms for innovative language arts and mathematics programs” (p. 4).

The examples above show that coaching has been adopted by many school districts as a means for professional development (Driscoll, 2008). Coaching has become the means for striving school systems to provide training to improve instructional delivery. Districts are utilizing different coaching types to enhance teacher quality (Black, Mosleed, & Saylor, 2003; Knight, 2006).

Instructional coaching is being used to build communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their profession. They provide a formation for the follow-up to instruction that is essential for obtaining new teaching skills and strategies (Harwell-Kee, 1999). Coaching integrates a teacher's learning with the teacher's practice. It gives participants ongoing feedback and makes activities a whole-school, collegial endeavor (Harwell-Kee, 1999; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Coaching provides support and ways to improve each teacher's own professional development (Harwell-Kee, 1999; Poglinco & Bach, 2005).

Instructional Coaching as a Form of Professional Development

According to the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001), professional development is imperative in enhancing teacher quality and raising student achievement. Over the last 10 years, great importance has been placed on professional development because it is believed that student learning is directly linked to teachers' knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 1995; Guskey, 2003a; Killion, 2002). Professional development that assists teachers in obtaining new concepts and employing new strategies affects student learning and ultimately enhances student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Killion, 2002).

Teacher Professional Development

Currently, professional development has been a major element in school improvement plans and educational reforms due to NCLB, which stresses the significance of valuable professional development to guarantee that all teachers are highly-qualified and that all students attain high levels of success (Peterson & West, 2003). With this charge, principals are compelled to scrutinize their professional development to ensure its value, worth, and effect on student achievement (Guskey, 2003a).

High-quality professional development encompasses certain standards. In one study, Guskey (2003b) identified 21 characteristics that were deemed as essential for high-quality professional development. The most prominent and frequent characteristics were enhancement of teachers' content, pedagogical knowledge, resources, collegiality, and collaboration. These characteristics were noted as impacting professional development because they had an impact on instruction and teacher quality. Klinger (2004) stated that quality professional development offers primary training in small groups. It incorporates support and provides for modeling, feedback, and guidelines for implementation. According to the National Staff Development Council (2001), instructional coaching is effective professional development because it provides follow-up, supports and encourages the use of collaboration, and incorporates diversity.

The standards in education provide a goal which all educators should strive to attain. The Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with the National Staff Development Council, considers that professional development should be standards-based, results driven, and job-embedded (Georgia Department of Education & National Staff Development Council, 2005). Standards-based professional development sets rules and regulations that chart out expectations for teachers, state, and local professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

NSDC identified 12 standards for effective professional development (2001). The 12 standards are separated into three categories: context standard, process standard, and content standard. The context standard deals with organizational and leadership support. This standard focuses on creating learning communities, providing continuous instructional improvement through leadership and resources (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

The process standard centers on the development, implementation and delivery of the professional learning focus. This standard focuses on data, evaluation, research-based design, learning, and collaboration in an effort to provide professional learning that improves the learning for all students. Finally, the content standard entails the knowledge, skills, and disposition required to assist with student achievement. The content standard focuses on equity, quality teaching, and family involvement (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

In addition to the 12 NSDC standards for staff development, NSDC has also recognized certain traits of successful professional learning. These traits comprise a prominence on continuous improvement, knowledge of human development and learning, and time for educators to learn and work together (National Staff Development Council, 2001). Instructional coaching encompasses these major components of professional learning and can be utilized as a vehicle for professional development (Poglinco & Bach, 2005).

Coaching as Professional Development

Joyce and Showers (1996) believed that the most dynamic type of teacher training involved “modeling in the classroom and practice under simulated conditions in the classroom combined with feedback” (p. 16). They concluded that groups of teachers “...developed skills in collaboration and enjoyed the experience so much that they wanted to continue their collegial partnerships after they accomplished their initial goals” (p. 13).

Neufeld and Roper (2003) stated that “the need for professional development is obvious; many teachers are not prepared for the challenge of educating all students to high levels” (p. iii). Coaches try to ensure that teachers are prepared by facilitating opportunities for collaboration that expand the scholarly competence of the school. “The term coaching includes activities related to developing the organizational capacity of whole schools” (p. 4). Neufeld and Roper

(2003) classify coaching into two forms: content coaches and change coaches. Content coaches focus on improving teacher's instructional strategies in specific areas; for example mathematics or literacy. Change coaches address school wide organizational improvement, such as Professional Learning Communities. Wurtzel (2006) conducted a study that identified what high schools needed in order to transform teaching and the results focused on coaching, peer observation, and conversation as valuable techniques to improve instruction.

Research on professional development suggests that it is most effective when it includes components that are based in the school, embedded in the job, and increases teachers' academic understandings of their work (Driscoll, 2008). Supports for improved teaching and learning are also more effective when they are tailored to needs identified by teachers and when their approach to learning is collaborative and inquiry-based (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Coaches that are used for professional development increase collegial systems and collaboration. They act as change agents to advance student achievement (Driscoll, 2008). Coaches help to develop a community of learners that work collaboratively. Coaches and teachers work collaboratively to plan, enact, and reflect on lessons. They act as a resource for one another. In this role coaches work to establish, foster, and maintain a trusting relationship (Cornett & Knight, 2008).

In order to utilize coaches as a form of professional development, the coach must be trustworthy and honorable. Teachers must be able to rely on and confide in the coach. Coaches need to be amicable and act as facilitators. They must be enthusiastic about teaching and learning as well as committed to enhancing student learning (Cornett & Knight, 2008). In conclusion,

professional development can be enhanced by utilization of instructional coaches (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Poglinco & Bach, 2005).

Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches are on-site professional developers who teach educators how to use proven instructional methods (Knight, 2007a). Instructional coaches hold brief meetings with teams of teachers to explain their goals, philosophy, kinds of interventions available, and the support they can provide. They allow time for questions and provide a means for teachers to indicate what their needs or interests are while working with the coach. Instructional coaches meet with teachers individually at a convenient time so that teachers can identify the most important concerns and to discuss possible research-validated interventions that might address those needs (Knight, 2006). The instructional coach's goal is to make it as easy as possible for a teacher to successfully use a new instructional method. As teachers observe, instructional coaches teach their classes and demonstrate one way a new instructional method or intervention may be used. In some cases, instructional coaches provide checklists or some other form of observation tool so teachers can observe specific teaching behaviors. The nature of the instructional coaching process allows for continuous communication between instructional coaches and teachers (Knight, 2006; Richardson, 2006).

Characteristics of Instructional Coaches

A strategy to positively impact teachers' instruction and student achievement is for school districts to implement effective instructional coaching models. First, it is important for districts to identify that the coach's role must be clarified. It is equally important for the coach to possess a certain degree of knowledge, skills, and disposition to fulfill the requirements. Last, the coach must adhere to coaching standards in order to perform his or her duties.

Roles of Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches are job-embedded professional developers who teach educators how to utilize research-based instructional strategies. They operate as resources in schools to support principals and educators in their efforts to improve instructional practices. Their ultimate goal is to impact student achievement. The responsibilities and roles of instructional coaches, according to Killion and Harrison (2006) and Makibbin and Sprague (1993), are classroom supporters, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, professional developers, data analyzers, change agents, mentors and resource providers.

As a classroom supporter, an instructional coach improves the quality of classroom instruction through the modeling of lessons, co-planning, reflective conferences, follow-up, and identifying strengths and opportunities. In addition the instructional coach is also an instructional and curriculum specialist who has the responsibility of ensuring that the instruction and curriculum are aligned to meet the needs of all students by identifying activities that incorporate critical thinking skills and create a variety of assessments that identify students' mastery of content and standards. Instructional coaches also promote the implementation of adopted curriculum by providing content knowledge training and assisting with differentiated instruction. Therefore, instructional coaches have to be professional developers and create standards-based, job-embedded, professional learning by preparing, applying, and ensuring training for educators that address standards and content knowledge to impact student achievement (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Additionally, instructional coaches must be data analyzers who are able to analyze student data to ensure that the instruction is guided by student needs and assessments. They must also be change agents and work with school leaders to ensure that initiatives to promote

improvement are cultivated and trusting relationships are maintained through the change. Along with all of the above, instructional coaches must also be mentors who are able to enhance instructional abilities of teachers by conducting best practices observations, modeling, and providing feedback. Instructional coaches are also resource providers who give teachers a variety of tools and materials designed to improve instruction based on research-based strategies (Makibbin & Sprague, 1993).

Coaches appear to have a plethora of roles and responsibilities. However, the heart of their work is embedded in enhancing teacher quality to impact student achievement. On a daily basis they work collaboratively with teachers to accomplish this goal by co-teaching lessons, assisting with differentiated instruction, being a liaison, developing materials, assessing students, and observing and providing feedback to teachers (Killion, 2006).

Knowledge, Skills, and Disposition of Instructional Coaches

Studies conducted by Neufeld and Roper (2003) indicated that instructional coaching enhances professional development because it is targeted to support knowledge, improve practice, and promote student achievement. According to Knight (2007b), instructional coaches are full-time professional developers on-site in schools. They work with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices.

In order to be successful, Burkins and Ritchie (2007) and Ferger, Woleck, and Hickman (2004) have identified certain knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for instructional coaches. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions are interpersonal skills, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of the curriculum, awareness of coaching resources, and knowledge of the practice of coaching.

Knowledge. Content knowledge entails that instructional coaches have a deep understanding of all the subject areas in which they are providing coaching. It also requires that instructional coaches have an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, materials, and resources needed to impact teaching and learning of the content areas (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Ferger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004).

Pedagogical knowledge of an instructional coach is very important because the instructional coach must demonstrate proficiency as an effective classroom teacher. Efficient instructional coaches know how teaching takes place, can demonstrate effective approaches to teaching and learning, are able to deliver content, and are knowledgeable about how students learn. Instructional coaches are skilled in assisting teachers with developing and implementing effective instructional strategies that range from questioning strategies to classroom management to improving student learning (International Reading Association, 2004; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Wojtczak (2002) defined curriculum as an educational plan that spells out which goals and objectives should be achieved, which topics should be covered, and which methods are to be used for learning, teaching, and evaluation. Instructional coaches should possess knowledge of the curriculum in order to ensure that the instruction and curriculum are aligned to meet the needs of all students.

Knowledge of the practice of coaching is also a very valuable skill for instructional coaches. This encompasses knowledge of strategies and structures for coaching. Instructional coaches must know how to utilize conferences, observations, student work, and data to create dialogue that makes teachers reflective practitioners and improve their practice in an effort to ultimately increase student achievement (Ferger, Woleck, & Hickman 2004; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Skills. Interpersonal skills are the behaviors and feelings that exist within individuals who influence interactions with others. Instructional coaches must be able to communicate effectively with teachers with whom they work and create a trusting and credible relationship. They must be able to identify and respond to the individual needs, feelings, and abilities of the teachers with whom they work in a collaborative and respectful way. Instructional coaches must be tactful, compassionate, and sensitive in order to get teachers to change their practices (International Reading Association, 2004; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Dispositions. Dispositions refer to qualities that characterize a person as an individual. These qualities determine a person's way of thinking. The five dispositions that instructional coaches should encompass according to Ferger, Woleck, and Hickman (2004) are empathy, positive view of others, positive view of self, authenticity, and a meaningful purpose and vision. Empathy involves considering and accepting other individual's point of view. Positive view of others entails believing that others have worth, ability and potential to do. Positive view of self involves believing that you have worth, ability and potential to do. Authenticity entails having a sense of openness that enables an individual to be honest and genuine. Meaningful purpose and vision incorporates being committed to a purpose, centered, and determine to reach the goal at hand.

Standards for Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaching has been identified by America's Choice, High Performing Learning Communities, and Breaking Ranks Frameworks as high-quality professional development (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). The work of instructional coaches is structured in alignment with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards of context, process,

and content to ensure that teachers are provided with effective professional learning continuously to improve student learning (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

The International Reading Association (2004), in collaboration with other professional organizations, has recently developed Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches which outline key proficiencies needed by instructional coaches in secondary schools. These standards, according to the International Reading Association, are universal to coaches and directly tied to elementary school instructional coaches because they are a framework for ensuring that coaches impact school improvement. The standards are comprised of two major components, leadership and content area. The standards and elements are paraphrased below:

Leadership Standards

Standard 1: Skillful Collaborators – instructional coaches are skilled collaborators that function effectively in schools.

Element 1.1 – instructional coaches work with school’s leadership team to identify school’s strengths and opportunities in all content areas to improve students’ academic success.

Element 1.2 – instructional coaches encourage positive, respectful relationships with faculty and staff.

Element 1.3 - instructional coaches enhance their professional teaching knowledge, skills, and strategies.

Standard 2: Skillful Job Embedded Coaches – instructional coaches are competent in the core content areas.

Element 2.1 – instructional coaches work with teachers in a variety of ways (individually, grade level, and/or departments) to provide content area support.

Element 2.2 – instructional coaches provide constructive feedback based on instructional classroom observations.

Standard 3: Skillful Evaluators of Literacy Needs – instructional coaches are proficient evaluators and able to interpret data to impact instruction.

Element 3.1 – instructional coaches guide the options utilized for assessment to enhance curriculum and instruction.

Element 3.2 – instructional coaches administer meetings with teachers to analyze student work and monitor growth.

Content Area Standards

Standard 4: Skillful Instructional Strategists – instructional coaches are highly qualified educators with expertise in increasing and executing instructional strategies to enhance student achievement.

Element 4.1 – instructional coaches are familiar with Language Arts and Mathematics content.

Element 4.2 – instructional coaches demonstrate a variety of comprehension strategies.

These standards, like the Georgia Professional Standards for Educators, help to ensure that quality instructional coaches adhere to guidelines. The standards also make it possible for instructional coaches to provide high quality professional development that facilitates teaching and learning in a manner that produces positive results.

Effects of Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaches are proven forms of professional development that focus on quality teaching, while working collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into their classrooms (Knight, 2007b). School districts around the

nation have used instructional coaches in a variety of ways to support classroom teachers. This section of research explores studies on instructional coaching that have been conducted on links to student achievement and the impact of instructional coaching on teachers and principals.

Jim Knight, a research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, has spent more than a decade studying instructional coaching. Several research projects directed by Knight, which included qualitative and quantitative assessment of coaching, indicated that instructional coaching can be an effective method for ensuring implementation of interventions and teachers utilization of research-based practices to improve instruction (The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, 2007). The Topeka Kansas School District has employed a comprehensive, district-wide school reform known as Pathway to Success Project. One component of this project is aimed at using instructional coaches to advance teachers' skills and techniques to improve student achievement.

In addition, studies conducted by Knight (2007a) offered further support for the utilization of instructional coaches. In a variety of studies conducted by Knight which included phenomenological, case study, and experimental designs, he concluded that instructional coaching was an efficient technique for ensuring the execution of interventions, enhancing teacher commitment to research-based practices, and offering an opportunity for teachers to gain knowledge of additional teaching strategies. The phenomenological study consisted of 82 teachers. The case study consisted of 44 teachers who had been coached by instructional coaches and 19 teachers who had not been coached by instructional coaches. The experimental study consisted of 107 coached teachers.

Research funded by the PRAIRE (Primary, Action, Inquiry, and Reflection in Evaluation) Group sought to examine the impact of coaches. The results yielded that coached activities,

roles, and support impacted instruction. The case study was conducted by Deiger and Hurtig (2009) and consisted of eight coaches and three teachers.

Vanderburg and Stephens' (2009) study sought to find out what teachers thought about coaches. The study consisted of 35 teachers who worked with coaches for three years. The researchers surveyed the teachers in order to obtain data for the study. The study revealed that because of coaches, teachers were willing to adjust their beliefs and practices, were willing to incorporate new strategies into the classroom, and were cooperative in differentiating instruction to meet student needs.

Studies indicated that instructional coaches are effective in middle and high schools. In one experimental study which consisted of 50 teachers in six middle schools and two high schools in an urban school district, Cornett and Knight (2008) constructed an observational instrument to measure the quality of teacher implementation. The researchers concluded that teachers who were coached by instructional coaches were more likely than teachers who only attended workshops to use new teaching strategies inside of their classrooms and will more likely continue to use the new skills in the future.

Research by McGatha (2008) sought to examine the levels of engagement of each instructional coach as they worked to establish effective coaching relationships. The study consisted of a mixed-methods approach that utilized interviews and surveys to obtain data. The participants in the study consisted of two coaches and two teachers. The findings from the study concluded that modeling was an effective form of teaching and learning when it was a collaborative event where the teacher and coach were both involved in the planning. It also concluded that consulting and collaboration provided effective coaching relationships that enabled teachers to move forward in becoming self-directed professionals.

A study conducted by The University of Kansas Center of Research on Learning (2004) indicated that instructional coaches are helpful in providing continual support and promoting teaching and learning. In a quantitative study that consisted of eighty-seven teachers, The University of Kansas Center of Research on Learning conducted a survey to determine the effectiveness of instructional coaching. The results of the study indicated that 85 percent of those teachers who received ongoing support from instructional coaches implemented newly-learned instructional methods and enhanced teacher quality.

Another study conducted by Veenman and Denessen (2001) revealed that instructional coaching was effective in primary and secondary schools. In a qualitative study that consisted of 28 counselors, 33 principals, 22 mentors, 35 experienced teachers, and 20 secondary teachers, Veenman and Denessen sought to evaluate the effects of a coaching program for teachers in primary and secondary schools. The researchers concluded that a significant treatment effect was found for the coaching skills concerned with the development of empowerment, feedback, and business-like attitudes. It also divulged that teachers coached valued the coaching skills demonstrated significantly more than those teachers that had not been coached.

The few empirical researches on coaching indicate that instructional coaching has great potential to influence teacher practice and ultimately student achievement. Instructional coaching can afford the support and professional development essential to enhancing teaching skills (Knight, 2006).

Links to Student Achievement

There is limited research existing that links the employment of instructional coaching in schools with student achievement (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Most studies conducted discuss the impact of improving teaching practices. Various research results concluded that student

achievement increases when teachers assume shared responsibility for learning (Cushman, 1998; Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 2003). Additional studies pointed out that students are more conscientious and engaged in instruction in schools that utilize coaching as professional development (Bruner, 1996; Sparks, 2002).

In *How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back into Discussions of Teacher Quality*, Wenglinsky (2000) concluded, in his report, that professional development was important for teachers. Professional development is an important factor in predicting higher student achievement. Coaching provides teachers with professional development that “changes the nature of teaching and learning” (p. 11).

Truesdale’s (2003) study indicated that coaches enhanced professional development for teachers and enabled them to move their practice forward. This experimental study provided 10 teachers with a professional development workshop and 10 teachers with a professional development workshop and a coach. The study sought to determine the transferability of professional development to classroom practice within 15 weeks. The study revealed that teachers who only received the professional development workshop lost interest in the skills and knowledge presented at the workshop and did not apply them in their classrooms. However, the 10 teachers who were trained at the workshop and were provided with coaches utilized the skills and knowledge obtained in their classrooms and applied them to motivate teaching and learning.

Showers (1984) conducted a follow-up study with 21 teachers and 138 students to determine the impact of coaching on student achievement. The results concluded that coached teachers were more likely to transfer newly-acquired teaching strategies into the classroom and that coaching contributed to higher student achievement scores.

Sanders and Rivers' (1996) research revealed evidence supporting the link between instructional effectiveness and student achievement. In their research, they divided teachers in a large Tennessee district into five quintiles from Q1 teachers, which represented the least effective teachers to Q5 teachers, which represented the most effective teachers. Significant academic gains were found in students who received three years of instruction from Q5 teachers than from Q1 teachers. Students that received instruction from Q5 teachers scored in the 96th percentile, while students whom received instruction from Q1 teachers scored in the 44th percentile. Teacher quality contributed to the academic gains. "The single most dominating factor affecting student academic gains is teacher effect" (Sanders & Rivers, p. 6). Increasing instructional competence of teachers is deemed to be a prerequisite to impacting student achievement (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The notion is that student performance is enhanced by coaching because coaches enhance the skills and abilities of teachers (Kenny & Gavin, 2004; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003).

The Impact of Instructional Coaching on Teachers

Teachers believe that instructional coaches are the key to impacting instructional effectiveness. Instructional coaches have become vital to teachers because instructional coaches assist teachers with collaboration, instructional delivery, and the implementation of research-based practices to improve classroom instruction (Knight, 2007b).

Instructional coaches provided an opportunity for teachers to work with colleagues in small learning communities to focus on student learning. They assisted teachers with creating learning communities based on grade, content, vertical, and horizontal alignments (Driscoll, 2008). Teachers believed that instructional coaches provided them with consistent opportunities to work together, impart knowledge, plan, and reflect upon their practice. Through collaboration

and coaching, teachers were able to analyze data, create lesson plans, and conduct peer observations. Teachers believed that this helped them to stop teaching in isolation and meet the needs of their students because they shared ideas and learning experiences (Cameron, 2005; Knight, 2007b). Furthermore, teachers became more satisfied with their positions and with their choice of teaching as a profession once they worked with a coach and collaborated with team members. Teachers also believed that collaboration helped build capacity and teacher empowerment (Showers; 1984; Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

Teachers also believe that instructional coaches assisted them with seeing instructional delivery from a different viewpoint (Reiss, 2003). Instructional coaches provided teachers with the knowledge to differentiate instruction based on the multiple intelligences of their students. Working with instructional coaches afforded teachers the opportunity to identify students' weaknesses and strengths, then deliver instruction that was appropriate. Instructional coaches assisted teachers with identifying different instructional delivery models such as lectures, discussions, guided discussions, and group learning to meet the needs of their students. According to Norton (2000), teachers believed that these instructional delivery models helped them to create lessons that engaged students, met the needs of students, and promoted learning.

Finally, research conducted by Vanerburg and Stephens (2009) suggested that teachers who were coached implemented a variety of strategies and techniques and utilized best-practices. Teachers credited instructional coaches with identifying and modeling research-best practices, engagement, essential question, vocabulary, graphic organizer, co-teaching, scaffolding, chunking, and classroom management that helped them enhance their practice (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). The modeling also afforded the teachers the opportunity to have reflective dialogue about their practice. Teachers deemed modeling as one of the most impactful coaching techniques

because modeling granted teachers the opportunity to learn and practice new strategies more frequently and develop greater skills. Therefore, teachers used the new strategies more appropriately in terms of their own instructional objectives and specific models of teaching to address the needs of their students (Black, Mosleed, & Sayler, 2003).

Marsh et al. (2008) reported that instructional coaching had a constructive effect on enhancing instructional practices, encouraged teachers to collaborate, and provided continuous support. The overall appreciation of instructional coaches by teachers is that they enable them to build competences to execute effective instructional practices that engage students and improve student learning and performance (Cameron, 2005).

The Impact of Instructional Coaching on Principals

Instructional coaches have become increasingly important to principals because of the mandates of NCLB which requires that principals take a greater role in instruction and become instructional leaders. Instructional leadership entails “those actions that principals take, or delegate to others, to promote growth in student learning” (Debevoise, 1984, p. 14). Instructional leadership encompasses setting clear goals, allocating resources needed for learning to occur, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, supervising and evaluating teachers, coordinating professional development, and creating collegial relationships with and among teachers (Flath, 1989; Wildy & Dimmock, 1993).

Principals are realizing that traditional forms of training teachers to utilize effective methods of teaching and learning are not beneficial to teachers nor their students. Therefore, principals have begun to employ the use of instructional coaches to help meet the demands of quality professional development to promote teacher and student development and growth (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Instructional coaches assist principals with professional development,

observations, incorporating best practices, promoting a collaborative culture, and data assessment. Principals are beginning to utilize instructional coaches because instructional coaches provide site-based, content-specific knowledge to teachers that provide opportunities for enhancements in the curriculum and instruction (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

Research indicates that principals consider instructional coaches beneficial and that instructional coaches positively affect instructional practices. Feldman and Tung's research (2002) analyzed teachers' and administrators' perceptions of coaching practices in their schools. It revealed that principals believed that coaches were beneficial. Principals viewed coaches as conductors or directors. Instructional coaches helped principals to implement change and focus on improving teachers' instructional practices to improve students' learning. Marsh et al's (2008) research concluded that coaches had a positive effect on instructional practices. According to Steiner and Kowal (2007), principals set the tone for coaching to be effective, and they must work collaboratively with the coach to impact instruction to improve student achievement.

Principals' Role in Instructional Coaching

The primary function of the principal is to synergize a vision and goals for the implementation of instructional coaching (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). The principal must not only create a vision for the teachers but must also adequately communicate the vision to all stakeholders (Fullan, 2001). The principal must be committed to supporting teachers and instructional coaches while shaping a positive culture with high expectations (Fullan, 2001; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). The role of the principal in the coaching process is to "get the right people on the bus and in the right seat" (Collins, 2001, p. 44). This means that principals must hire instructional coaches who are passionate and driven to improve teacher quality and student achievement. Principals must also be able to identify where and how they will utilize their

instructional coaches. The principal is also responsible for supporting change, actively participating, and modeling collaboration (Garmston, 1997; Sparks, 2002).

Principals and school district personnel believe that instructional coaching is an effective strategy for supporting classroom teachers. Once principals have implemented and established instructional coaching, it must be supported from the top down (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). To facilitate this, school district personnel and principals must embrace and support instructional coaching throughout the schools. Support must start with the superintendent who, in turn, encourages principals to support instructional coaching. To ensure that coaching is supported, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004) and Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) suggested the following:

Coaching must be filtered through all levels of the district. Embedding coaching in the district's larger professional development system would allow the stakeholders at various levels of the system to engage in learning and allocate resources in coherent ways. Coaches themselves need professional learning opportunities to refine their practice, understand district initiatives and goals more deeply, and design plans for their specific contexts. District office staffs need learning opportunities that help them understand the realities of strategies and practices in the classroom. They must assess existing practices and match needs with appropriate support. School districts engaged in coaching should map existing learning networks, professional development opportunities, district office policies, and structures to determine whether coaching is an appropriate strategy to accomplish improvement goals. The district needs to also keep the focus on rigorous content-based experiences for everyone. School districts should ensure that coaching impacts teaching practices and ultimately, student learning (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Documentation is also key in coaching. This evidence can be used as content and also to rethink how principals allocate human resources to support documentation. District office personnel can provide essential support to schools by generating data to inform teachers, schools, instructional coaches, and the district office itself of key turning points or changes in practice. School district personnel will need to provide documentation processes, content, and evidence of improvement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004).

Refining the coaching model in response to experience is vital. Coaching holds promise for building instructional capacity. Existing practice and policy, as well as documentation of the local work and its impact, can be used as learning opportunities to refine the work in ways that address specific issues of a system or school. School district staff should seek locally appropriate approaches to issues of equity, opportunity, and differentiated instruction.

To maintain an unwavering focus on improving student learning and achievement through building teacher efficacy, districts and principals should utilize research-based professional development that instructional coaching offers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, coaching has become a prevalent method of assisting teachers with job-embedded professional development. It has been used to provide teachers with modeling and demonstrating of best-practices, support, and collaboration. Research findings suggested that coaching plays an important part in improving teachers' abilities. However, there was little research regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaches in elementary schools as it relates to increasing teacher performance and student achievement. Principals are charged with ensuring that they have the right people on the bus to produce the best results. Therefore, principals',

instructional coaches', and teachers' perceptions of coaches in the classroom should be analyzed to determine if coaches are being utilized as ongoing professional developers to help teachers enhance their practices and increase student achievement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the research methodology. This chapter presents the research questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection and data analysis.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Georgia elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers as it relates to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools. A qualitative study was designed to answer the following overarching question: What are the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers relating to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement? The following questions guided this study:

1. What do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive are the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches?
2. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional development?
3. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student achievement?

Research Design

The research design for the study was a phenomenological, qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research is an inquest into fully understanding an individual's impressions, behaviors, and attitudes, due to their lived experiences. The participants in this study had the professional background, knowledge base, and educational experience to give vivid accounts of their daily instructional coaching experiences and perceptions. The qualitative research design is described as an investigative method to be utilized within the context of educational arenas to obtain a deep understanding of a certain event (Creswell, 2009; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A qualitative research design was selected because it allowed for the use of open-ended interview questions to gather more information from participants, and it provided insight about the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of principals, instructional coaches and teachers (Creswell, 2005; Glense, 2006; Patton, 2002). The open-ended interview questions were expounded from the review of literature. The information extracted from the participants revealed a detailed picture of their perceptions, based on their professional background and knowledge. The one-on-one interviews, confidentiality assurance, and unthreatening manner of the interviews afforded the participants the opportunity to be candid and honest about their occurrences and insights.

Support for utilizing qualitative research is presented. As Janesick (2000) stated, "The qualitative researcher prefers to capture the lived experiences of participants in order to understand their meaning perspectives, case by case" (p. 395). Qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate and gather vital information that is pertinent to the understanding of shared experiences from the participants involved in the research. Therefore, a phenomenological design of qualitative research is applicable for this study (Creswell, 2009).

The history of phenomenological research is linked to the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). The history of phenomenological assumes the premise of certainty of how things appear or how things present themselves. Husserl examined and rejected the notion that things in the outside world exist independently and the data about things are dependable. He argued that people can be sure about how things appear in, or present themselves to, their perception (Eagleton, 1983; Fouche, 1993). To arrive at certainty, anything outside immediate experience must be disregarded, and in this way the outside world is diminished to the contents of personal awareness. In phenomenology research, realities are thought to be authentic phenomena and the only absolute where data originate. A researcher using phenomenology is concerned with the retrospective analytical view of ones lived experiences (Holloway, 1997).

The phenomenological design was developed to highlight the specific, the recognition of phenomena through the perception of individual in a situation. Phenomenological research is the examination of lived experiences and the way we understand those experiences to developed a worldview. It rests on the premise that there is an organized structure of shared experiences that can be narrated (Creswell, 2009).

Participants

The selected population for this research study included principals, instructional coaches, and teachers employed in one Northeastern Georgia public school district that has grade levels that encompass pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The participants for the research study consisted of three principals, three instructional coaches, and three teachers all from different schools. A small number of participants were selected because, as Maxwell (2005) stated, “Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations, and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses” (p. 22). The selection of

principals and instructional coaches was determined by the selection of the school since there was only one of each at each of the nine schools. The general criterion that was used for selection of teacher participants consisted of the following:

1. Participants work a Title I elementary school.
2. Participants have been at Title I elementary school for a minimum of three years.
3. Participants have been in education for a minimum of six years.

The participants in this study are currently employed in ABC School District in elementary Title I schools. The nine participants work in a Title I elementary schools and are either a principal, instructional coach, or teacher. In order to protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Participants Profiles

Participant	Gender	Race	Educational Experience	Educational Degree
Principal Black	Male	Black	14 Years	Educational Specialist-L6
Principal Flay	Female	Black	29 Years	Masters-L5
Principal Doe	Male	Black	27 Years	Educational Specialist-L6
Instructional Coach Hane	Female	Black	13 Years	Educational Specialist-L6
Instructional Coach Jane	Female	Black	18 Years	Masters-L5
Instructional Coach Que	Female	Black	16 Years	Educational Specialist-L6
Teacher Rob	Female	Black	7 Years	Masters-L5

Teacher Swan	Female	Black	23 Years	Educational Specialist-L6
Teacher Lare	Female	Black	15 Years	Educational Specialist-L6

Principals

Principal Black has been the instructional leader at Blackbird Elementary School for about three years. He has been very instrumental in ensuring that he and his staff are equipped in educating their diverse population of students. He and over 50% of his staff are all English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certified. Principal Black has been in education for over 14 years and has a specialist degree in Educational Leadership. Before becoming a principal, he was an elementary teacher and assistant principal.

Principal Flay has served as the principal at Flamingo Elementary School for approximately seven years. Principal Flay is considered a true instructional leader, because she is hands on and involved with every aspect of teaching and learning in her building. Principal Flay has been a principal for over 15 years and has a total of almost thirty years in education. She has a masters degree in education with an add-on in leadership. Previously, she served as assistant principal, instructional lead teacher, and teacher in elementary and middle school in varies grades and content areas.

Principal Doe has been the principal at Dove Elementary School for over six years. He is responsible for the school's overall operations and ensuring that teaching and learning is taking place daily. Before becoming the principal at Dove, Principal Doe was an assistant principal at a high school, taught health and physical education. He has a specialist degree in Educational Leadership and has been in education for over 29 years.

Instructional Coaches

Instructional Coach Hane has been an instructional coach for over seven years. She has been at Hawk Elementary School since it opened. She has a specialist degree in Educational Leadership and has been in education for over 12 years. Before becoming an instructional coach, Hane taught third and fifth grade. She has served as grade level chair, Teacher Support Specialist (TSS), chaired various committees, and mentored students.

Instructional Coach Jane has been in education for over 18 years. She has been an instructional coach for eight years. During her time in education, she has been a kindergarten and fifth grade teacher. She has her endorsement in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Teacher Support Specialist (TSS). She holds a specialist degree in Educational Leadership. She is currently the instructional coach at Jay Elementary School.

Instructional Coach Que has been in the field of education for over 16 years and has a specialist degree in Educational Leadership. She has been an instructional coach for five years at Quail Elementary School. Instructional Coach Que has taught kindergarten through fifth grade. She has also been a Reading Specialist and holds an endorsement in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Teacher Support Specialist (TSS).

Teachers

Teacher Rob teaches at Robin Elementary School. She has taught kindergarten through third grade. She holds a Masters degree in Elementary Education and has been teaching for seven years. She is currently working on her gifted endorsement and specialist degree.

Teacher Swan is a veteran educator with over 20 years of educational experience in the classroom. Teacher Malibu has taught first and second grade. She has a specialist degree in

Educational Leadership and has enjoyed teaching at Swain Elementary School for over fifteen years.

Teacher Lare has been teaching at Lark Elementary School for over seven years. She has taught grades first through fifth within her 15 years in education. Teacher Silverado has a Masters degree in Elementary Education. She has an endorsement for Teacher Support Specialist (TSS) and serves as one of the school's professional learning liaison.

Study Setting

The school district, ABC School District (pseudonym), is located east of Atlanta, Georgia. There are nine participating schools. The schools are a representation of Georgia Title I elementary schools that employ instructional coaches and represent a diverse population. The Georgia Title I elementary schools were identified using data from the Georgia Department of Education (2008). Title I is a part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This act provides federal funds through the Department of Education to local educational agencies and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards (Ewen & Matthews, 2007).

Georgia Title I elementary schools utilize instructional coaches to support teachers as they improve their content knowledge and understanding of what is effective instruction and how children learn. In order to maximize the effectiveness of this initiative, instructional coaches work directly with teachers in the classroom, analyze teachers' needs, observe classes, collaborate on interventions, and build a network for change resulting in improving student achievement (Kim & Sunderman, 2004).

Two schools had a population of more than 500 students, two schools had a population of less than 500 students, one school had an 80 percent student body of ELL students, one school had a student body of at least 80 percent African-American, one school had a 33 percent spread of racial diversity, one school was demographically in the north region of the district and one school was demographically in the south region, one school had a principal who has been the leader for three or more years, while one school had a principal with less than three years.

ABC School District has 83 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, and 21 high schools. Within the school district there are 14 magnet programs, seven theme schools, three Montessori programs, one alternative school, three vocational/technical schools, and one international center. Participants in the study are from the following nine schools (all pseudonyms), (see Table 3.2). Blackbird Elementary School, Flamingo Elementary School, Dove Elementary School, Hawk Elementary School, Jay Elementary School, Quail Elementary School, Robin Elementary School, Swain Elementary School, and Lark Elementary School.

Table 3.2

Participating Schools Demographics

School	Number of Students	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi-Racial
Blackbird Elem. School	800	28%	64%	4%	3%	1%
Flamingo Elem. School	775	0%	97%	2%	1%	0%
Dove Elem. School	280	0%	98%	0%	2%	0%
Hawk Elem. School	1180	0%	99%	1%	0%	0%
Jay Elem. School	350	0%	98%	2%	0%	0%
Quail Elem. School	450	2%	93%	2%	2%	1%

Robin Elem. School	730	0%	99%	1%	0%	0%
Swain Elem. School	330	1%	92%	5%	2%	0%
Lark Elem. School	770	0%	86%	11%	0%	5%

Blackbird Elementary School is one of the oldest elementary schools in the district. It serves a diverse student population with students who were born in the United States and around the world. The school houses over 800 students that represent Asian (28%), Black (64%), Hispanic (4%), White (3%), and Multi-racial (1%). Blackbird Elementary School has about 72 faculty and staff members, which include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers. Blackbird Elementary School received recognition as a Title I Distinguished School for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four consecutive years.

Flamingo Elementary School is one of the newest and largest elementary school in the district. The school has a total student enrollment of over 775. The population represents 97% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 1% White. Flamingo Elementary School has approximately eight-five faculty and staff members. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) twice since it has been opened in 2005.

Dove Elementary School is located in a transient suburban community that serves about 280 students. The school has a population of 98% Black and 2% White. The school has about 66 faculty and staff members. Dove Elementary School received recognition as a Title I Distinguished School for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for six consecutive years.

Hawk Elementary School is also one of the newest elementary schools in the district that is state-of-the-art with over 1,180 students. The school has a population of 99% Black and 1% Hispanic. The school has approximately 101 faculty and staff members, which includes administrators, counselors, teachers, specialists, auxiliary staff, certified technology support

specialist, paraprofessionals, media specialist, instructional coach, nurse, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff. Hawk Elementary School has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) once since they opened.

Jay Elementary School has been serving the community and students for over 40 years. The school has a population of over 350 students. They are 98 % Black and 2% Hispanic. The school has a faculty and staff of about 55 members. Jay Elementary School has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) six times within the last seven years.

Quail Elementary School is one out of the seven theme schools in the district. The school focuses on a comprehensive and interdisciplinary education program for the over 450 students they serve. The school has a population of 2% Asian, 93% Black, 2% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Multi-racial. The school has approximately 73 staff and faculty members. Parental involvement is a crucial component of the school's educational program. Quail Elementary School has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last seven years.

Robin Elementary School opened over 40 years ago in the district. The school received recognition in 2002 by the Governor and State Board of Education for Exemplary Educational Achievement. The school has over 730 students enrolled. The school's population is 99% Black and 1% Hispanic. The school has about 68 faculty and staff members. Robin Elementary School received recognition as a Title I Distinguished School for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for seven consecutive years.

Swain Elementary School is a small neighborhood school with less than 330 students. The school has a population of 1% Asian, 92% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 2% White. There are approximately 36 faculty and staff members at the school. Swain Elementary School has made

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for over nine years. They have been awarded the National Title I Distinguished School Award and the Georgia Title I Distinguished School Award.

Lark Elementary School opened in 1963 and has a student population of approximately 770 students. The students represent 86% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 5% Multi-racial. The school has a faculty and staff of about 91 members. Lark Elementary School received recognition as a Title I Distinguished School for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for over seven consecutive years.

Instrumentation

A self-designed instrument was used. According to Creswell (2009), “The researcher is the key instrument. In qualitative research, the researchers collect data themselves through interviewing participants” (p. 175). The interviewing process was utilized that consists of semi-structured, open-ended questions that were created based on previous research identified in the literature that focused on the impact of instructional coaching in the classroom (see Appendix F and Appendix G).

Interviewing is a method aimed to extract a vivid picture of the participants’ perspective on the research topic. During the interviews, researchers engage with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants’ responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on their responses (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) stated that “interviews are used extensively in educational research to collect data about phenomena that are not directly observable: inner experience, opinions, values, and interests” (p. 222). Thought provoking questions are questions that move their spirit and arouse insight. (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Marsh et al., 2008). They were asked to obtain the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches,

and teachers about coaching in elementary schools. Interview questions were assessed to ensure that they are related to the literature review, research questions, probing to ensure that valid and rich data will be collected.

Data Collection

The participating district, ABC School District (pseudonym), was supplied with an overview of the study and a letter explaining the process. The district office provided the researcher with a potential list of schools in which to conduct the study. A letter detailing the study, requesting the participation of the principals, instructional coaches, and teachers, and ensuring confidentiality was prepared and mailed via the United States Postal Service (USPS). The participants selected for the study represented a purposeful sampling. “The logic of purposeful sampling is based on a sample of information-rich cases that is studied in depth” (Wiersma, 2000, p. 285). Purposeful sampling was employed to allow for the gathering of more in-depth information about the research topic.

A proposal for approval to utilize human subjects in the research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Southern University. Upon receiving IRB consent, the ABC School District (pseudonym) was contacted in writing to gain district approval to conduct the study. The school district was supplied with an overview of the study and a letter explaining the process. Once authorization was obtained from the district, a letter of consent was mailed via the United States Postal Service (USPS) to all participants requesting their participation, introducing the researcher, informing the participants about the study, assuring confidentiality, and thanking them in advance for their participation.

Once consent forms were received, principals were contacted to request a list of teachers with a minimum of three years in the school who have worked with an instructional coach, been

at a Title I school for at least three years, and had been in education for at least six years. After all of the signed consent forms were received by the researcher electronically via participants' personal email (Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.) or by mail via the United States Postal Service (USPS), a designated time and place for the interviews was selected that was convenient for the participants. Interviews were conducted at the participant's school or local library during non-instructional and non-contractual time for participants between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday for two weeks. Interviews were also scheduled on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. during the two-week interview timeframe at the local library. The environment for the interviews reflected an atmosphere that was quiet, comfortable, and private. Before the interviews began, the consent form was reviewed with each participant to assure him or her of confidentiality. The interviews lasted between 45 to 90 minutes.

For this study, the researcher utilized individual interviews to produce narrative data in the form of verbatim transcriptions. The data collection process consisted of interviews being recorded through the use of a digital recorder. The interviews allowed for the investigation of views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Maxwell, 2005). During the interviews, notes were also taken. The notes were used to document participants' reactions and reflections of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This protocol helped ensure the consistency of all interviews and simultaneously allowed the interviewer to take notes along the interviews and probe for further explanations and clarifications.

Data Analysis

Wiersma (2000) described data analysis in qualitative research as "a process of categorization, description, and synthesis" (p. 204). Yin (1989) defined data analysis as a process

of examining, categorizing, and tabulating evidence, which is then presented in a meaningful format. Data analysis for this study was done by utilizing the constant comparison data analysis method.

Each interview was transcribed upon completion of each individual interview by the researcher within 24 hours. The transcribed data functioned as correction for the next interview. Second, data were organized using Microsoft Word. Next, the researcher gave the transcribed data to participants to review for accuracy. Then, all transcriptions were divided into three areas: principals, instructional coaches, and teachers. Next, the researcher read the transcriptions repeatedly to grasp an understanding of the information. Then, the researcher reviewed the data to identify recurring categories, patterns, or divided into themes (Airasian & Gay, 2000). Finally, the recurring categories, patterns, and themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were coded and categorized in relation to the research questions.

In order to maintain collected data the researcher utilized excel. Transcribed data was stored on a jump drive, locked in a file drawer at the researcher's home, and will be maintained for five years.

Validity

In qualitative research, "validity does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative research" (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). Creswell offered eight possible strategies from which a researcher could choose. Triangulation is one of the strategies.

This study used the strategy of data triangulation to address validity concerns. Data triangulation involves time, space, and persons (Denzin, 1989). Interviews for this study took place at different times, at more than one site, and involved more than one level of individuals. Marshall and Rossman (1999) defined triangulation simplistically as "the act of bringing more

than one source of data to bear on a single point” (p. 194). The purpose of using triangulation, as described by Maxwell (2005), is that “it reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating” (p. 93).

In an effort not to lead or bias the interview, the questions were open-ended and neutral. Neutral questions reduce question bias and were simple, clear, and concrete questions that reduced misunderstanding. The interviewer limited the use of "yes" or "no" questions because they tend to suppress details. In the instance where "yes" or "no" questions were utilized, the interviewer asked follow-up questions to gain more information. During the interview, the interviewer remained as neutral as possible in dress, tone, and body language. Also, the interviewer refrained from giving opinions while conducting the interview so as not to bias the interview (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glense 2006).

Researcher Profile

The following is a journey into the researcher’s educational experiences from a teacher to a coach. The researcher’s experience began 13 years ago at an elementary school district in Northeastern Georgia as a third grade teacher. At the onset of her career, she was not afforded the opportunity to work with a coach; however, she was assigned a mentor teacher. About four years into her teaching career, her school employed a site-based coach. The experience was amazing because the coach provided ideas and strategies to make a difference in her classroom. The coach was an active listener who provided student centered teaching and learning. In 2005, the researcher was promoted to a district level position as an Itinerant Coach. This job afforded her the opportunity to work with a variety of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The researcher is passionate about this topic because, as an educator, she realizes the importance of providing support for teachers to meet the academic needs of students. This topic is important to her because she works with a plethora of teachers and wants to ensure that she is providing them the necessary skills and strategies to promote student achievement.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers of coaching in elementary schools and its impact on teacher instructional practice and student achievement. The research design for the proposed study was a phenomenological, qualitative research design. The nine selected participants for the research were three principals, three instructional coaches, and three teachers from Northeastern Georgia elementary schools. The interview instrument for the study was developed by the researcher. The researcher obtained data through interviews. The data were analyzed through constant comparison analysis. The results of the study will contribute to the knowledge in the professional field as it relates to the improvement of instructional practices of educators and increased student performance through the use of elementary instructional coaching.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Georgia elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers as it relates to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools. This chapter presents the data analysis findings from the qualitative interviews in order to address the following overarching question: What are the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers relating to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement? The following questions guided this study:

1. What do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive are the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches?
2. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional development?
3. How do principals, instructional coaches, and teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student achievement?

The perceptions of the principals are presented first by themes for each question, followed by the instructional coaches, the teachers, and finally overall results. The coded responses and the emergent themes for each research question are presented and supporting quotes are used to provide rich description and in-depth information, which helps to increase the credibility of the study. The chapter, concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Roles and Responsibilities of Instructional Coaches

Research question one addresses the participants' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches. The results are presented by themes in the following order; principals, instructional coaches, teachers, and finally the overall results.

Principals' Perceptions

The seven themes that emerged from the principals' responses are provided in Table 4.1. The results indicated that all three of the principals believe that the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coach include serving as an instructional expert, serving as an observer, providing professional development training, and analyzing data. Two of the three principals indicated that instructional coaches should serve as mentors, a liaison between teachers and administration, and should assist administrators with various academic functions.

Table 4.1

Principals' Perceptions of Instructional Coaches Roles and Responsibilities Themes

Principals' Themes	P Black	P Doe	P Flay	Total
Instructional expert	X	X	X	3
Observer	X	X	X	3
Professional development trainer	X	X	X	3
Data analyst	X	X	X	3
Mentor	X	X		2
Liaison	X	X		2
Assistant to administrators/principal	X		X	2

Note. P = principal.

Instructional Expert. The principals all perceived that the instructional coach is a valued and respected instructional expert who provides support and professional development to teachers and continuously monitors student achievement in order to remain data informed. Furthermore, Principal Black explained the following:

Instructional delivery and strategies were conducted by our in-house instructional guru. We view her as the instructional expert because she knows everything that deals with instructional delivery and makes sure the teachers are informed. Last year, my coach attended training on using Professional Learning Communities to drive instruction and meet individual student needs. She formed grade levels into collaborative teams to meet biweekly to analyze data, review student work, create lesson plans, conduct peer observations, and research best-practices utilizing protocols.

In addition, the instructional coach has the responsibility of ensuring that the instruction and curriculum are aligned to meet the needs of all students. Principal Doe indicated that the instructional coach serves as an instructional expert in her school by:

Leading, assisting, supporting, observing, providing feedback, and obtaining information to communicate back to the teachers when necessary, collaborating with teachers, serving as a liaison between teachers and administration, analyzing student achievement data, providing recommendations for improved instruction, and facilitating instructionally-related activities such as professional development and collaborative meetings. My instructional coach assists teachers with designing instruction to meet the needs of all students, share multiple instructional processes/strategies, and helps teachers manage the

pacing and rigor of instruction. She stays abreast of the current and most effective instructional practices to impact student achievement.

Also, Principal Flay's response also indicated that the instructional coach is an instructional expert, she is able to identify activities that incorporate critical thinking skills and differentiate instruction.

Our instructional coach has knowledge and expertise on a plethora of instructional strategies and methods. She has led a colleague of teachers to utilize effective and research-based strategies, such as direct instruction, indirect instruction, independent study, experimental learning, and instructional skills. She provides detailed knowledge, modeling, and follow-up to ensure that teachers are effectively utilizing instructional strategies correctly. Because of her, teachers are providing students with instruction that is meaningful and relevant. The coach observes teachers, gives advice, and provides professional learning in-services. The coach models effective teaching strategies for teachers. The coach assists administrators with creating a data room, helping teachers to look at the data, and help teachers to use data to guide their instruction. The instructional coach supports the teaching and learning program at the school.

Observer. Observing is the process of studying classroom activities to determine effective instructional strategies and student awareness. According to the principals' responses, it has been beneficial in impacting both teacher and student performances. Principal Flay response indicated that at her school:

Classroom observations are conducted three times a week and biweekly. Mondays are for grades Pre-K through first. Tuesdays are for grades second through third. Wednesdays are for grades fourth through fifth. Observations are conducted for about 10-15 minutes. After she

conducts observations, she meets with teachers to provide them cool and warm feedback.

The warm feedback is usual the positive things that were viewed and the cool are areas for improvement. The observations have assisted with making my teachers reflective practitioners. They think about what went well in their lessons and what didn't go so well.

Principal Black agrees that observations conduct by the instructional coach impact teaching and learning for the administrators, teachers, and students. Principal Black stated:

The instructional coach assists me with observing classrooms to ensure that teachers are utilizing high yield strategies, differentiating instruction, and addressing students' learning styles to ensure they are engaged and learning. We meet together to discuss the academic needs of the students and teacher performances that impact learning and debrief with teachers to provide feedback and additional training if needed.

According to Principal Doe, observations drive instruction, provide teachers with feedback, and assist principals with making sure teachers are utilizing data to drive instruction.

On the days where there are no instructional meetings, usually Wednesdays, the instructional coach visits classrooms on each grade level to ensure that the instructional plans are being implemented. She acts as an additional pair of eyes and ears to make certain that teachers are addressing the needs of all students.

Professional Development Trainer. In many cases the instructional coach designs, facilitates, and monitor job embedded, professional development in schools. They assist teachers with training to identify effective instructional learning to promote and encourage teaching and learning. Principal Flay stated:

This year she has held sessions from classroom management, effective instructional strategies, multiple intelligences, literacy centers, effective communication, cooperative

learning....just to name a few....She has been quite creative in getting the teachers to actively participate because the sessions have been differentiated, trainings have been offered on-line, face-to-face, afterschool, and on Saturdays with stipends. All of her professional development includes delivery, practice, modeling, and follow-up. The teachers really seem to like that she comes back to see if they are utilizing what they learn and how it is impacting instruction.

According to Principal Black, the instructional coach created standards-based, job-embedded professional learning by preparing, applying, and ensuring training for teachers addressed standards and content knowledge to impact student achievement. This role helped us to individualize instruction. Principal Black stated:

Our instructional coach helps me as the instructional leader enhance teaching and learning by serving as a professional development training by attending best practices training and redelivering the sessions back to the teachers and ensuring that the administrators have the same knowledge base. As the professional development trainer, our instructional coach was instrumental in making sure our entire staff received SIOP Training to meet the needs of our diverse population, she provides the teachers with professional development that meets the needs of the students we service.

Principal Doe echoed the other two principals and added that:

As a professional development trainer the coach coordinates and facilitates learning experiences for school staff; coordinates peer observations; organizing professional learning communities; manage study groups; designs professional development opportunities; arranges lesson studies; and examines student work.

Data Analyst. As a data analyst the instructional coaches are able to analyze teacher and student data to ensure that the instruction is guided by student needs and assessments. According to the principals' responses the instructional coaches are instrumental in utilizing data to inform and drive instruction. Principal Black mentioned that his instructional coach has not only been influential in assisting his teachers with data, but also the administrative team.

We meet together to discuss the academic needs of the students and teacher performances that impact learning. She assists me with creating and reviewing professional growth plans for teachers and plans and carry out teaching and learning for teachers based on their identified strengths and weakness and student performance.

Our instructional coach has a classroom and in that room, she has put up all of the schools' data. And in addition to the CRCT data she keeps the benchmark data there and she is constantly watching to see if the data.....if it is showing that the initiatives or strategies that she is helping the teachers with are making a difference. So she is definitely paying attention to that. She leads data talks with grade levels, were they sit down in their PLCs to discuss students' strengths and weaknesses and strategies to assist students with teaching and learning.

In addition Principal Doe believed that the role of data analyst performed by the instructional coach provides a foundation for continuous school improvement and makes the entire staff aware of and able to examine data to make improvements. Principal Doe stated:

The instructional coach serves as data coach and monitors the progress of the school through the organizing and analyzing the school's data, facilitating data conversations among faculty and supporting teachers in using data to improve instruction.

Principal Flay also echoed the other two principals and believes that having someone in the school that is able to read, interpret, and break down the data has been helpful in assisting our school with making gains. Principal Flay stated:

The instructional coach has data talks with grade levels and utilizes a variety of protocols to assist teachers with meeting school goals. Our instructional coach has also set up a data room and assisted teachers with creating classroom data notebooks to monitor process on weekly basis. And of course grade level meetings are held with each grade level on Thursdays to review data, discuss instructional strategies, create lesson plans, and monitor student progress.

Mentor. Instructional coaches act as mentors by increasing the instructional skills of teacher and supporting school wide best practices. Two of the principals revealed their coaches mentored teachers by listening, modeling, and providing feedback.

Principal Black stated:

My instructional coach encourages and supports instructional practices to meet the needs of the diverse population of students at our school. She starts the day off with warm and fuzzes to encourage and uplift the teachers. She has established a level of mutual trust and understanding by respecting and acknowledging others point of views, feeling, and opinions. She has the ability to listen empathically and she connects with the staff emotionally and mentally. We all trust and respect her, so that has made it easy for her to mentor to everyone.

As a mentor, instructional coaches help mentor teachers by giving ongoing guidance on areas of lesson planning, classroom management and classroom organization. According to Principal

Doe:

The instructional coach supports all teachers, novice and experienced. She provides guidance and structure after observations and during grade level meetings. She creates professional learning opportunities that are meaningful and promote growth. She encourages relationship building among colleagues and focus on teachers' strengths.

Liaison. As a liaison, the instructional coach serves as a line of communication and resource for the school, teachers, and administrators. Two of the principals indicated that the instructional coaches' role here provides these schools with proactive support by creating bridges with teachers and administrators and open lines of effective communication. Principal Doe stated:

Many times directives and initiatives come down from the district and we just have to do them. At times there are no settle way in saying, it has to be done, but many times as a liaison the instructional coach does just that by compiling and disseminating information in ways that are practical and meaningful to the teachers. For instance, the district facilitated a district-wide HYS Training. It was not clearly explained and the teachers felt like it was just more busy work. Seeing the frustration, the instructional coach quickly jumped in and acted as a liaison between teachers and the principal. She addressed both of our concerns and provided the teachers and administrators with pros and cons. She also

communicated what the HYS was, provided examples, personalized it for the teachers, and provided feedback to administrators.

According to Principal Black teachers see the instructional coach as a liaison because she addresses their concerns in a nonthreatening manner and ensures that there is open communication between the principal and teachers. We may not see eye to eye on everything, but the instructional coach works hard as a liaison to make sure we maintain mutual respect. Principal Black noted that:

The other impact of having her support the teachers as a liaison at our school is that sometimes teachers openly ask for support or help from her, because they view her more as someone there to help as oppose to this is going to get me in trouble. Many times she is the referee; she keeps us all cool and level headed.

Assistant to Principal. As assistant to the principal, the principals' responses indicated that the instructional coach assists and serves on leadership teams, data team, design team, bridges gaps between instructional delivery, and remains focused on school goals, teacher performance, and student performance. Both principals point out that their instructional coach is their "right hand". Principal Black stated:

As an instructional leader the instructional coach ensures that the teachers and administrative staff are kept abreast of the most effective strategies to meet the academic needs of the students. She makes sure that data is pulled and posted monthly and analyzed to assess the impact of student achievement. She assists me with observing classrooms to ensure that teachers are utilizing high yield strategies, differentiating instruction, and addressing students' learning styles to ensure they are engaged and learning.

Principal Flay also believed that the instructional coach's role as an assistance to the principal provides her with opportunities to enhance teaching and learning. She states:

The coach assists administrators with creating a data room, helping teachers to look at the data, and help teachers to use data to guide their instruction. The instructional coach supports the teaching and learning program at the school. The instructional coach enables me to focus on research-based strategies. Our instructional focused conversations help me to be an instructional principal. The instructional coach is my right hand. She directs everything to teaching and learning and helps me to focus on, on-going learning for the teachers to support and encourage student achievement.

Dissenting Viewpoints. Although the instructional coach provides valuable support, guidance, and coaching to teachers, one of the principals interviewed (Principal Flay) indicated that not all of the teachers easily accepted or bought into the role of the instructional coach. For example, a few of the veteran teachers were "stuck with doing things their way" and they would not change despite the fact that they received feedback from the instructional coach and feedback from their peers indicating that they needed to make a change. Instead, the teachers applied for a transfer to another school. Principal Flay provided a rich and articulate description of the problem. Her response was:

Getting all teachers to buy-in and accept assistance from the instructional coach. There were a few veteran teachers who were stuck with doing things their way.....whole group.....worksheets.....etc. It was nerve reckoning because data showed their students were not making the mark and these for a lack of a better word....veterans, refused to budge. Even after several not so good evaluations

from the instructional coach and administrative team they were adamant about doing things their way. Well finally enough was enough and the instructional coach suggested teachers do peer observations and video tape their lessons and critique them. Needless to say.....they still didn't budge and students suffered.

Problems Found. In addition to teacher buy-in and acceptance of the instructional coach, one obstacle that may hinder instructional coaches from assuming their roles and responsibilities in an effective manner is a lack of sufficient time, and another obstacle is a lack of expertise on the part of the instructional coach. For example, Principal Flay indicated that that there “is not enough time in the day for her [the instructional coach] to be everywhere that she needs to be to monitor instructional delivery and assist teachers.”

Instructional Coaches' Perceptions

The eight themes that emerged from the instructional coaches' responses are provided in Table 4.2. The results indicated that the seven themes that emerged from the principals' responses also emerged from the instructional coaches' responses. For example, the themes based on the instructional coaches also indicated that the instructional coach is an instructional expert, a mentor, a liaison, a professional development trainer, an assistant to the principal, and a data analyst. However, the new theme that emerged indicated that instructional coaches also help teachers to become more reflective practitioners.

Table 4.2

Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Instructional Coaches Roles and Responsibilities Themes

Instructional Coaches' Themes	IC Hane	IC Jane	IC Que	Total
Instructional expert	X	X	X	3

Mentor	X	X	X	3
Observer	X	X	X	3
Liaison	X	X	X	3
Professional development trainer	X	X	X	3
Data analyst	X	X	X	3
Assistant to administrators/principal		X	X	2
Reflective practitioner		X	X	2

Note. IC = instructional coach.

The instructional coaches' results suggested that the role of the instructional coach is to support the needs of the teachers by securing and analyzing information such as data, by teaching and modeling best instructional practices, by observing teachers and providing concrete feedback, and by mentoring teachers. This process is cyclical and continuous so that continual instructional improvements can be made.

Instructional Expert. One of the reasons that the instructional coaches are respected as experts in their field is because they are highly qualified and extensively trained for their position, which makes their role more powerful and their actions more effective. They receive a broad range of formal instruction, and they receive hands-on experience through mentoring from veteran coaches. A detailed example of the extensive training and experience that Instructional Coach Jane experiences are provided in the quote below:

I was a Class Size Reduction Coach and within that role I received extensive training on Cognitive Coaching, Peer Coaching, Critical Friends, and Santa Cruz Mentor Institution. As an instructional coach I have attended training and received certification as a Teacher Support Specialist, Teacher Leader, Gifted, and ESOL. I have also been trained and certified through Metro Resa in Best Practices. I am a

Georgia certified GTEP evaluator. I have shadowed and conducted peer observations with other veteran instructional coaches. I have CLASS and Leader Keys training. I have also had extensive training in Thinking Maps, Marzano's High Yield Strategies, High Order Thinking, Depth of Knowledge, Mathematics that Works In addition, instructional coaches receive weekly Friday trainings on a variety of different topics to enhance and impact instruction. I have also taught a variety of professional development courses for adult learners. When I first took this job, I was paired with a veteran coach, that helped but there was no reflection time.....I didn't know how I was doing. If I could change anything, it would be to have time to debrief and reflect upon the guidance and support I was giving my teachers.

In addition, one of the instructional coaches has conducted extensive research on the topic of coaching and has received extensive training. Instructional Coach Hane explained:

My thesis when obtaining my masters degree was about Peer Coaching, my research was extensive and very in-depth. In addition, I am a district trainer for effective instructional strategies Also; I completed a 2 year coaching course by Santa Cruz Teaching Center offered through my school system. My trainings afford me the opportunity to provide teachers with a plethora of suggestions and recommendations to improve their instructional delivery and drive instruction.

Finally when asked what makes her an instructional expert, Instructional Coach Que responded with the following:

As a classroom teacher I did a lot of things then to support teachers in my school, even though I wasn't an instructional coach, I was a teacher support specialist and as a veteran

teacher I was use to basically helping teachers, supporting them in the classroom, providing resources. That was one way I was prepared and a lot of things I took upon myself to take like different programs and endorsements. I took certain classes and once I took the position after a few months my department offered different classes and things of that nature to support my role as an instructional coach. I have certifications in effective classroom management, effective instructional practices, and effective coaching practices.

Mentor. In addition to the expert support that the instructional coach provides the teachers, it is important to note that the instructional coaches feel as if their professional role is appreciated and that they are respected and valued. They have been able to establish trusting relationships with teachers by listening to them and as serving as “cheerleaders, friends, mentors, and counselors”. These positive relationships help to foster the effectiveness of the professional development process. For example, Instructional Coach Que indicated that instructional coaches should be a “supporter in the classroom, where the coach is available for conference, modeling, one-on-one support, someone to listen, bounce ideas off of, and provide professional development”. In addition, Instructional Coach Jane stated:

As a mentor I provide help and guidance to teachers to help them be successful. I have provided them guidance on lesson planning, classroom management, and classroom organization. I listen to them and assist them based on the data. I work with them to foster rapport and instruction and delivery.

Instructional Coach Hane explained:

As a mentor I listen to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses, and then cross reference my analysis with data to support or dispute. Then, I help move the teachers

forward towards improvement in their weaknesses by using their strengths as a means to improve. A teacher's strengths provide a foundation to build upon. I always provide encourage and positivity.

Observer. As an observer, the instructional coaches indicated that classroom observations provide them with an effective form of professional development to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. On a typical day, all of the instructional coaches generally conduct observations to ensure that teachers are actively engaged students, utilizing critical thinking skills, and using a variety of instructional strategies to promote learning. Instructional Coach Hane indicated that she observed teachers or model a lesson. Then she provides time for conferencing and follow- up. Many times teachers ask me to come into their classrooms to ensure that they are implementing strategies correctly.

According to Instructional Coach Que:

As an observer it is really good to go into classrooms and see what's going on, and to see what's working well and to see what needs to be worked on. Then having conversation with the teacher and briefing with the principal to recommend professional development based on the observations.

Instructional Coach Jane echoed the other two instructional coaches and indicated that:

As I go into the classroom and observe, I am looking for classroom implementation and continuously monitor for student effectiveness. The observations help to make sure that lessons are focused, differentiated, student-centered, incorporate high-order thinking, and instructional sound. They also provide a means for further professional development.

Liaison. Furthermore, instructional coaches serve as a liaison between teachers and the administration. For example, Instructional Coach Jane also said "I am the liaison between the

professional learning and the school, so I receive training and come back to the school and re-deliver components, model, co-teach, observe for classroom implementation and continuously monitor for student effectiveness.” Instructional Coach Hane stated:

As a liaison I support the administrators in the professional growth of their teachers while assisting the teachers by being a resource to promote growth. I act as the middle man and ensure that district initiatives and school initiatives marry and become one.

As a liaison Instructional Coach Que indicated that she provides communication between the principal and teachers that enable them to maintain a positive working relationship. She explained the following:

I go back and forth between the administrators and teachers to bridge instructional gaps to support the instruction and improve teaching and learning for all stakeholders.

Professional Development Trainer. The responses from the instructional coach indicated that they are responsible for providing job embedded, professional development in the schools they work in. As a professional development trainer, Instructional Coach Jane responded as follows:

As a pd trainer I help them to come up with authentic assessment, informal and formal, test, quizzes, journals, projects. I help them disaggregating the data in order to see what study groups or teacher meetings we need to have. I am like the liaison for the instruction between classroom and the administrators. Let them know what type of strategies teachers need support with. If they are using all their best practices in the classroom, if the students are really learning, if the teachers need to go back and re-teach something different and help them with

differentiated instruction, help fulfill the goals of the principal to see the vision throughout the school. Provide teachers with research-based instructional strategies, like flexible grouping, higher order thinking, time management, vocabulary strategies, reading comprehension strategies, etc.

Additional support comes from Instructional Coach Que, she stated:

By providing one-on-one and small group professional development based on the data. I differentiate professional development based on teacher and grade level needs.

Sometimes one teacher may need help on classroom management, while one grade level may need professional development of flexible grouping or math strategies. I also encourage students to look through the professional development catalog and take classes and courses based on their needs. I also provide them information with endorsement programs that the county offers. I also seek conferences or trainings for teachers to take off campus to enhance their practice.

Additionally, Instructional Coach Hane response echoed much of the other two instructional coaches. As a professional development trainer she believes her major role is to ensure that teachers are employing research based instructional strategies. Instructional Coach Hane stated:

I work closely with the classroom teachers to provide them with district level training, school wide training, and individualized training based on their professional needs. I work really hard to make sure that the training is job-embedded, is ongoing, aligned with state standards, and improves instructional practice and student learning.

Data Analyst. The instructional coaches are data driven and data informed. They collect multiple data sources, analyze the data, and interpret data to ensure that all students are learning to their fullest potential. For example, Instructional Coach Que explained the following:

Also really important is helping them look at that data, delving into that data, teaching teachers how to analyze, how to form their lessons, how to instruct based on the data, because all the lessons should be data driven, support them with differentiated instruction for the students.

After data has been collected and analyzed, the instructional coach disseminates the information to teachers in a collaborative and professional manner. For example, Instructional Coach Jane said that she has helped teachers utilize data to enhance teaching and learning “by having teachers meet biweekly in vertical and horizontal alignments.” She further explained that “teachers meet by grade level and content to analyze student work, pre-test, post-test, and benchmark test in order to design, and implement lessons collaboratively to impact instruction.”

Additionally, Instructional Coach Hane added:

I assist teachers with data by collecting, organizing, analyzing, displaying, and explaining student achievement data to them. I assist them with understanding the data, identifying strengths, weakness, and interventions.

Assistant to the Principal. As an assistant to the principal the instructional coach works collaboratively with the principal to ensure that teachers work on curriculum design and implementation to impact student achievement. Instructional Coach Jane stated:

I believe as an assistant I have made the principal instructionally focused and a data expert. He is now able to walk into a classroom and identify effective instructional practices that teachers are or aren't utilizing. For example last week we were conducting a classroom observation with a few teachers who he first identified as having classroom management issues, however after several trainings, he was now able to see that the issue was not with classroom management, but with the instructional delivery.

In addition, Instructional Coach Que added:

Many times, I assist the principal by keeping them informed on what's going on in the classroom. I assist with focus walks, monitoring data, leading grade level meetings, and scheduling.

Reflective Practitioner. Reflection is essential in improving educational practices and move teachers forward. Instructional Coach Jane said "I would like to think that I have made teachers more reflective about their practice and continuously strive to enhance it." Instructional Coach Que also echoed the importance of reflection, she stated:

Getting teachers to think about their teaching is key. I think I have changed the way a lot of the teachers think about teaching. I think the way I delivery professional learning has made teachers think about how they teach, also by me sitting with them and really looking at data, I think that has really opened their eyes for teachers and the way they teach. I think they realize that it doesn't matter if it worked two years ago, they have a different set of children and looking at the data and looking at how they teach certain skills, how they can do it differently, thinking about how they are teaching.

Dissenting Viewpoints. Although two of the instructional coaches indicated that they were valued, respected, had a good rapport with the principals and teachers, and were having a positive impact on teacher professional development and student learning, Instructional Coach Que had a slightly more negative tone in the interview given that she had experienced more resistance from teachers. For example, she explained the following:

Well I think with all the changes in education and in the district teachers feel like anything you ask them to do, even though our role is to support them to support instruction to raise student achievement, it always seems as though we are giving

them something extra to do, when all we are really doing is fostering their practice in the classroom. But they feel like it's extra work so as result of it they don't want to do it. Then they resist and put up a fight about why they need to do it. You just get a lot of complaints from teachers about everything. Well this feels like something new, when it's nothing new at all, it's just best practices. It's what they should be doing anyway.

Problems Found. According to Instructional Coach Jane, there were some challenges.

For example, when asked what didn't go well, she responded as follows:

High yield strategies training sessions. This was a district initiative of research-based instructional strategies to improve student achievement. Teachers were not happy with the timing of the training, length, and demands it placed on them. It required them to be trained on the nine strategies, redelivery them, utilize them in their classrooms, conduct walk throughs on them, and continue training online. It was time consuming and in the mist of so much that was going on.

Similarly, Instructional Coach Que stated that there were “so many initiatives and mandates from the district at the beginning of the year, I think it really made things more coactive then they had to be and it had teachers not feeling good, the morale was low.”

Therefore teacher dissatisfaction with training, high demands placed on teachers, and time consuming training may be challenges faced by instructional coaches when fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. In addition, Instructional Coach Hane indicated that sometimes “principals do not have the time to follow up due to their busy schedules,” which results in teachers not receiving feedback in a “timely manner”.

Teachers' Perceptions

The seven themes that emerged from the teachers' responses are provided in Table 4.3. The teachers focused more heavily on the soft skills such as listening to teachers and building positive relationships and they focused slightly less on data-related issues. Specifically, the themes that emerged based on the teachers' responses indicate that the instructional coach is or should be a well trained instructional expert, a mentor, a good listener, a professional development trainer, a relationship builder, a collaborator, and a data analyst.

Table 4.3

Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Coaches Roles and Responsibilities Themes

Teachers' Themes	T Rob	T Lare	T Swan	Total
Mentor	X	X	X	3
Professional development trainer	X	X	X	3
Collaborator	X	X	X	3
Data analyst	X	X	X	3
Good listener	X	X		2
Instructional expert	X	X		2
Relationship builder		X	X	2

Note. T = teacher.

Since having teacher buy-in and acceptance of the instructional coach is critical to the success of the instructional coach, the teachers' perceptions and expectations are a critical component with regard to the effectiveness of an instructional coach. The teachers' interview results were highly consistent with the other two groups except that the teachers focused more heavily on the soft skills and the relationship building aspects, such as instructional coaches

being emotionally supportive by being “empathic” listeners and establishing a very good rapport with teachers by building mutual respect and trust.

Mentor. The teachers’ responses indicated that the instructional coaches serve as a mentor because they provide encouragement and support. For example, Teacher Rob indicated that the instructional coach “mentors” her by “providing feedback and giving helpful hints to better develop my teaching.” In addition Teacher Swan stated, “The instructional coach helps the teacher out in anyway that she cans. She is in the hallway smiling and asking if we need anything. She provides guidance when you need it.”

Additionally Teacher Lare explained, “As a mentor, the instructional coach is someone I feel like I can lean on and trust. She listens to our concerns and provides encouragement. She is our rock because she is nonjudgmental and guides us along the way to improvement.”

Professional Developer Trainer. The teachers indicated that the instructional coach fosters professional development by modeling and monitoring it. Teacher Lare stated:

She makes it meaningful to our teachers and students. She provides us for a rationale on why and how the professional development can enhance teachers and students. Again we are engaged in active participation, with jigsaw, carousel, think-pair-share, group activities, etc. She conducts surveys and utilizes class observation data to plan personalized professional development for the teachers.

When she has to redelivery district mandated trainings, she does it with a twist, she provides us with the information and gives us time to absorb the information, attain more research on the item and as a grade level redeliver it back to staff and identify how we would use it in our classroom. When time permits, she really tries to do pop in visits to see how we use the new strategies and skills in our classroom.

The other two teachers had similar responses to Teacher Lare, however Teacher Swan's responses indicated that she would like for the instructional coach to do some of the same things as Teacher Rob explains below that her coach does. Teacher Rob revealed:

My instructional coach fosters teacher professional development through the implementation of Professional Learning Communities and Grade Level Breakout sessions that I spoke about Earlier. She also differentiates professional development for us.....trainings are not a one size fits all. We get to recommend and select the professional development that we have. She also provides professional development in different ways, for example face-to-face, book studies, on-line, PLCs, and Grade Level Breakout Sessions.

Collaborator. The teachers' responses revealed that collaboration was necessary in order to move students forward. The teachers felt like the instructional coach had fostered a spirit of collaboration in their schools. For example Teacher Swan indicated that "we work as a team to monitor student progress. Now I am concerned with how each first grade student is progressing. I used to be just concerned with the 23 students in my class." With regard to the collaborative nature of the instructional coach, Teacher Rob provided the following supporting quote:

Since the instructional coach has been at our school and through the collaboration with the instructional coach, teachers are more willing to collaborate with their grade levels on different things and impact instructional delivery. Also we would not be reflective on our practice and seek to do better for ourselves and students.

In addition, Teacher Lare stated:

The teachers and administrative team now function as a team. Everyone is involved with decision making and moving students forward. In our PLCs we

rotate roles and responsibilities and make sure that everyone has equity in voice.

Our instructional coach has given us protocols to us so that the collaboration is nonthreatening and encourages teamwork.

Data Analyst. Based on teacher responses the instructional coach serves as data analyst by assisting them with collecting, organizing, and analyzing various forms of resources. Teacher Rob stated, “The instructional coach trains us on how to analyze data to identify areas of weakness and strengths. We then collaborate to create an action plan to effectively implement goals and impact instruction.” In addition Teacher Lare added, “She helps us to disaggregated student data individually, by grade level, and school wide, this helps us to target in on specific needs and plan accordingly.”

Instructional Expert. The teachers revealed that the instructional coach assists them with aligning instruction with the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Teacher Rob stated:

Our instructional coach knows what works. She can tell you what strategy to use to use from motivating students to effective writing skills. She can not only tell you what to do, but she also shows you and checks on you to see the outcome.

Another example of the instructional coaches’ instructional expertise and use of best practices was explained by Teacher Lare, “I trust her judgment and her expertise because her focus is on proven research best practices to promote student achievement. She truly makes us focus on the big picture, the students.” In addition Teacher Lare revealed:

She receives a lot of training; she is quite knowledgeable and keeps us abreast on the latest research based instructional strategies. She can walk into a classroom and if the students are actively engage and if they are not she can make suggestions on what

instructional strategies you can try to increase student engagement. For me she suggested that I utilize choice boards and centers to engage students more.

Good Listener. Two of the three teachers indicated that the instructional coaches' communication begins with having good listening skills. The responses also indicated that the instructional coaches are empathic and good with problem solving. Teacher Rob explained that the instructional coach was a good listener and prepared her to be a good listener by; being attentive, reflecting on what the speaker has to say, accepting differences of opinions, being open minded, accepting feedback, remaining calm, and always being concise and clear. I also learn to be an empathic listener, make positive calls to parents, and communicate effectively through email.

Teacher Lare explained the following about the instructional coach:

She is an empathic listener and has established great rapport with the teachers. When she conducts observations, trainings, or models a lesson she is very nonjudgmental and nonthreatening. She puts everything back on the teacher to think about and solve. She gives suggestions, not demands. She makes us feel valued, this has allowed her to build relationships, mutual respect, and trust.

Relationship Builder. The teachers indicated that in order for instructional coaches to build positive relationships and rapport with them, they need to listen and be nonjudgmental. Furthermore, the rapport that instructional coaches establish with teachers directly relates to their own success, the success of the teachers, and ultimately the success of the students. For example, Teacher Swan explained the following:

Well I think establishing rapport will help the coach, because like I said she has to work with these teachers, and so if you have a good rapport, with your colleagues

that makes your job easier when it is time for you to redeliver the workshops the people will be more apt to listen and receive what you are saying to them as oppose to you coming in there as a dictator and making people think that you are the boss of them, then you aren't going to get anything out of them. Right then and there you put up a wall between the people that you have to work with everyday. That's why it is very important that you establish a working rapport with people in your building, no they don't have to like you and you don't have to like them, you still need to establish a working relationship with your people.

Teacher Lare added, "the instructional coach builds relationships around being a friend, setting realistic goals, providing us with choices in professional development, being positive, and listening. She supports me and other teachers at all times. As teachers we have a lot on our plates. I feel overwhelmed a lot of the time and just need someone to say hey can I help you with something or do you need anything, and she does that."

Dissenting Viewpoints. Teacher Swan actually presented a dissenting viewpoint that ran counter to the emerging themes in the sense that there was not a good rapport established, and the instructional coach did not approach the situation as a source of support but rather an intimidating judge. For example, when asked if she ever felt intimidated by the instructional coach, one of the teachers explained the following:

Yes that clip board thing that she use to do really got to me and just shut it down completely. I felt like she was walking around judging us, without knowing her own stuff. She would say you don't got this up, you are not doing this. I would say whatever, because you haven't showed me how to do one darn thing. She

would walk around peeping in room trying to catch you off guard or something she can criticize you on without providing you with any assistance.

Problems Found. Similar to the other participants' responses, one of the obstacles associated with having an instructional coach is getting teachers to trust the instructional coach and buy-into the process. For example, Teacher Lare explained "Well at first a lot of teachers were resistant and didn't want her in our rooms because we thought she was coming to spy on us." In addition, Teacher Swan indicated that one of the things that did not go well was that the instructional coach was "not available for the teachers."

Overall Results. Table 4.4 shows the overall themes that emerged from the three different types of participants, the frequencies, and the percentages associated with each theme. The themes were ranked from most common to least common. The results indicated that all nine participants viewed instructional coaches as instructional expert, professional development trainers, and data analysts. Participants were least likely to refer to instructional coaches as reflective practitioners or relationship builders.

Table 4.4

Overall Thematic Results for Perceptions of Instructional Coaches Roles and Responsibilities

Overall Themes	Total	Percent
Professional development trainer	9	100.0
Data analyst	9	100.0
Instructional expert	8	88.9
Mentor	8	88.9
Observer	6	66.7
Liaison	5	55.6

Assistant to administration/principal	4	44.4
Collaborator	3	33.3
Reflective practitioner	2	22.2
Relationship builder	2	22.2

When triangulating the results from the principals, instructional coaches, and the teachers, the common and overarching themes indicated that the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach include the following: (1) Support teachers by providing professional development; (2) Support teachers by mentoring them and by modeling best instructional practices that are research-based as instructional experts; (3) Support teachers by helping them analyze and understand student performance data; (4) Support teachers by helping them modify their instructional practices based on the instructional coaches' observations and feedback (classroom observations, peer reports, teacher-generated questions, etc.) as well as based on the results of the data; and (5) Support teachers by being a voice for teachers and a liaison.

The Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Teacher Professional Development

Research question two addresses the participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaches as it pertains to teacher professional development. The principals' results are presented first by themes followed by the results from the instructional coaches, the teachers, and finally the overall results.

Principals' Perceptions

The three themes that emerged from the principals' responses are provided in Table 4.5. The results indicated that the instructional coach is effective in providing teachers with professional development given that she supports and encourages the professional development

of teachers through collaboration, modeling of effective and research-based instructional strategies, and she provides teachers with resources that they can immediately use to improve their instructional strategies.

Table 4.5

Principals' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Teacher Professional Development

Principals' themes	P Black	P Doe	P Flay	Total
Collaborator	X	X	X	3
Modeler	X	X	X	3
Provider of Resources	X	X	X	3

Note. P = principal.

Collaborator. The principals indicated that collaboration involves teachers with diverse backgrounds and experiences working together on one accord to engage in conversation to reach decisions that will impact school wide goals. Principal Black explained the impact that the instructional coach has had on her teachers from a collaborative perspective. Her response is provided below:

Last year, my coach attended training on using Professional Learning Communities to drive instruction and meet individual student needs. She formed grade levels into collaborative teams to meet biweekly to analyze data, review student work, create lesson plans, conduct peer observations, and research best-practices utilizing protocols. It is time for teachers to look at what is going on in their classrooms and their co-workers classrooms and reflect upon what's working and what's not working.

The instructional coach manages to provide support and professional development training to teachers through collaboration, which takes place during grade level meetings, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), as well as other formal and informal collaborative meetings. A supporting example of the way in which the instructional coach promotes and encourages collaboration and professional development is provided by Principal Doe. Her descriptive response is as follows:

My instructional coach typically meets with grade levels every week in small professional learning communities to disaggregate data, and to plan at least 6 weeks of math instruction. She does this through instructional meetings every Tuesday. For example, the instructional coach will meet with 3rd grade teachers during the first week of the first 6 weeks of school. They will bring data from a pre-assessment, which typically is a benchmark assessment that has at least 10 questions. There is an item analysis that shows which students missed certain questions. The coach will then instruct the teachers to group the children according to the standards that were missed. The teachers will then pull out the standards that are to be taught during the 6 week period. They complete a KWL chart which identifies the standards, what/who we are teaching and the learning experiences that we are using. This provides the teachers with a road map of learning for 6 weeks at a time.

In addition Principal Flay stated:

Collaboration between the teachers, administrators, and instructional coach has been great. The instructional coach has been instrumental in making sure teachers on each grade level have common planning time to review data, create lesson plans, conduct peer observations,

receive training, and reflect on their practice. It was a struggle tweaking the master schedule to accommodate common planning time, but our instructional coach worked closely with the assistance principal to ensure it happened. This allowed the grade levels to work in professional learning communities to analyze student work, plans, and learn together.

Modeler. An example of modeling that the instructional coach provides to the teachers relative to instructional strategies was provided by one of the principals. Principal Black stated that the instructional coach “assisted with ensuring the entire staff receives SIOP Training to meet the needs of our diverse population.” According to Principal Black,

SIOP is an acronym for “Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol” and it is an instructional strategy to effectively teach ESOL students.” The protocol contains eight components that range from lesson preparation to reviewing of assessments. The principal further explained that “this modeling has helped the teachers ensure that they are providing explicit instruction to students that don’t speak English fluently”.

Principal Flay stated that “modeling is so effective; teachers are shown what is expected of them.” The instructional coach does an awesome job at providing teachers with modeling of best practices. For example, Principal Flay explained the following:

Teachers at the school were struggling with setting up their reading and writing workshops. I had provided them with a workshop and literature on it and expected them to get to it, well needless to say that didn’t work. The instructional coach saw that they were struggling and offered to model a lesson for reading and writing workshop on each grade level. She arranged for subs to come in on a Tuesday to model a lesson in three different grade levels, while the teachers observed and took notes. She even videoed the modeled lessons just in case someone was absent or needed additional support. She met

with the teachers the next day in their grade level meetings to debrief and plan their next steps.

According to Principal Doe the instructional coach at school not only provides modeling for teachers, but students and parents. Principal Doe stated:

On the days where there are no instructional meetings, usually Wednesdays, the instructional coach visits classrooms on each grade level to ensure that the instructional plans are being implemented. When teachers need additional assistance, she models best practices, such as cooperative grouping and how to utilize thinking maps. She often goes in and models various performance tasks in math and works with groups of students on specific mathematical concepts during their lunchtime. This process is called “lunch and learn.” In addition, the instructional coach participates in lunch and learns with the parents each month to provide them with various instructional strategies that can be utilized at home.

Resource Provider. The principals’ responses were highly favorable regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaches as a resource provider, specifically with regard to professional development. According to the principals’ responses, the instructional coaches provide a substantial amount of continuous professional development to teachers. The instructional coach does this by attending professional development workshops, conferences, etc. and relaying the information back to teachers through direct communication and modeling of the research-based strategies. All three principals indicated that the instructional coach assists in finding resources to support planning, often providing access to resources with which teachers may not have been familiar. Principal Flay explained:

The instructional coach provides the teacher with whatever they need, whether it is tools, websites, assessment tools, kid friendly websites, games, curriculum maps, strategies, lesson plans, etc.

According to Principal Doe:

Our instructional coach assists teachers with materials, tools, and information to support instruction. She ensures that they have websites, books, file folder games, literature, and etc. to make learning fun and interesting.

It is important to note that as a consequence of these thematic outcomes, another subtheme that emerged pertains to the continuous nature of the professional development in that the instructional coach is constantly observing, evaluating, educating, and providing substantive feedback to teachers relative to their use of instructional strategies and classroom practices in general. For example, Principal Doe indicated “She keeps me focused on the data. Constantly looking at the data to see what’s working well and not working well. Because of her, I am in the classroom more conducting focus walks and providing teachers with suggestions.”

Instructional Coaches’ Perceptions

The four emergent themes from the instructional coaches’ are featured in Table 4.6. The themes suggested that instructional coaches serve as mentors for teachers by providing teachers with useful and actionable professional development. The results indicated that instructional coaches are effective in providing professional development to teachers because they provide resources such as information and materials to teachers, they model best instructional practices that are research based, they help teachers analyze and understand student data to improve instructional strategies, and they provide constructive feedback.

Table 4.6

Instructional Coaches' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Teacher Professional Development

Instructional Coaches' Themes	IC Hane	IC Jane	IC Que	Total
Resource Provider	X	X	X	3
Modeler	X	X	X	3
Analyzer of data	X	X	X	3
Provider of Constructive feedback	X	X	X	3

Note. IC = instructional coach.

In general, the instructional coaches provided similar responses as the principals, indicating that there is relative agreement between principals and instructional coaches with regard to their effectiveness as it relates to providing teachers with professional development. According to the instructional coaches, some of the most effective professional development strategies include modeling best instructional practices, observing teachers and providing them with timely feedback, following up with teachers to see how things are going, helping teachers learn how to use and understand data to drive instructional practices, and getting teachers the content and pedagogy related information that they need to be successful teachers.

Resource Provider. The instructional coaches revealed that they provide teachers with resources to improve instruction. Many times they are a teacher's toolbox. The coaches indicated that they provide teachers with a variety of resources ranging from classroom instructional kits to websites. Instructional Coach Que stated:

I provide resources for the teachers; sometimes teachers may come to me and tell me they are having a difficult time finding materials, content, for a specific skill. I have given them websites, manipulatives, games, etc. to enhancing their lessons and engage students.

In addition Instructional Coach Hane and Jane also provide teachers with resources to impact teaching and learning. Instructional Coach Jane indicated:

Many times I have materials in my basement that I no longer and give them to teachers, like file folder games, reading comprehension games, and calculators. I also send out weekly buzzes that provide teachers with different instructional websites and strategies.

An example of providing resources was also give by Instructional Coach Hane. She stated:

The third grade team was reading *How my Parents Learned to Eat*, and they were having trouble getting manipulatives for the students. I went around to different Chinese restaurants and was able to get enough chop sticks for five classes. I also brought in noodles so the students could eat with the chop sticks. In addition I provided the teachers with menus so that students could see a variety of menus. The teachers were delighted because the materials helped the students connect the learning experience with real-life.

Modeler. As the instructional coaches model lessons, teachers observe them as they demonstrate instructional strategies and inventions. A specific example of how instructional coaches have modeled instructional strategies in order to facilitate the professional growth of teachers was provided by Instructional Coach Hane. This particular coach stated “I have modeled lessons about guided reading and how to implement reading centers. I have also modeled lessons which include implementing State Framework tasks within math lessons.”

Instructional Coach Que indicated:

A big thing this year for my teachers was the use of cooperative grouping. I modeled for teachers how to set-up their cooperative learning groups and assignments for each group member. The modeling of the cooperative learning helped the teachers to promote student learning, enhance learning experiences, and enhance student academics.

Instructional Coach Jane stated:

I model new instructional strategies for teachers in small groups or in a classroom and meet with teachers to discuss any concerns that they may have. This year a lot of modeling was done on Marzano's High Yield Strategies.

Analyzer of Data. The instructional coaches all indicated that assisting teachers with analyzing data was key to improving instructional practices and student learning. Instructional Coach Hane revealed:

By analyzing data I help teachers be informed on how their students are performing. By working with them, they are now able to disaggregate all of their school data and make instructional decisions that will impact student achievement. Teachers appreciate knowing how students are progressing and having the ability to make interventions to assist students that are not making gains.

In addition, Instructional Coach Que stated that her presence "has helped the teachers take the initiative to review data and make sound instructional decisions to meet the needs of their students by adjusting lesson plans and instructional delivery."

Instructional Coach Jane indicated:

It is important to help teachers disaggregate data in order to enhance the content and assessment. We pull testing data, review data notebooks, and CSIP plans to ensure that instruction meets the academic needs of students. We utilize the data to create flexible

and collaborative groups. Looking at the data affords teachers the opportunity to see the progression or regression of their students.

Provider of Constructive Feedback. According to the instructional coaches, feedback is a useful tool for providing teachers with information about their performance. The instructional coaches indicated that they always focus on instruction and remain descriptive rather than judgmental. For instance Instructional Jane stated:

After I conduct observations, I sit down with the teacher and give them instructional glows and grows, this provides the teacher with a balance of positive and negative feedback. I base everything around instruction, I start the conversation off with asking the teacher what did he/she think went well in the lesson, and what challenges did they encounter. I provide a suggestions for and recommendations for teachers to enhance their practice to improve student learning.

In her experience, Instructional Coach Hane believe teachers appreciate having conversations about their instruction when it is constructive and nonjudgmental. Teachers usually receive constructive feedback without fear of it being evaluative. They see it as an opportunity for growth. In addition Instructional Coach Que stated:

Feedback is essential and helps teachers maximize their practices by raising their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. As I provide constructive feedback to teachers I make sure I identify was to enhance their practices. I never down a teacher, I also try to uplift them and encourage them with the feedback I offer them.

Teachers' Perceptions

Table 4.7 provides the six emergent themes from the teachers' responses. The results indicated that instructional coaches are effective in providing professional development to

teachers when they provide resources such as information and materials to teachers, they have good people skills, they model best instructional practices that are research based, they help teachers analyze and understand student data to improve instructional strategies, they help teachers to become reflective practitioners, and they provide constructive feedback. The results also indicated that Teacher Swan did not share the same viewpoints as the other two teachers, which will be discussed later in this section.

Table 4.7

Teachers' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Teacher Professional Development

Teachers' Themes	T Rob	T Lare	T Swan	Total
Resource provider	X	X		2
Good people skill developer	X	X		2
Modeler		X	X	2
Analyzer of data	X	X		2
Provider of reflective practices	X	X		2
Provider of constructive feedback	X	X		2

Note. T = teacher.

Resource Provider. Two of the teachers interviewed indicated that the instructional coach provided them factors necessary to assist with instruction and enhance them professional. For example, Teacher Rob explained that “the role of the instructional coach is truly valued because she provides us with resources and strategies to support teaching and learning.” Additionally, Teacher Rob explained the following:

She has opened my eyes to a plethora of instructional strategies to meet the needs of my students. Like differentiated instruction, choice boards, and learning centers. She has always provided me with different ways of effective communication to utilize with my students, parents, and teachers. She has helped me to be a more effective planner. She has built my confidence level.

Another example of how a mixture of personal skills and instructional skills work together to foster teacher professional growth is also provided. When Teacher Lare was asked how the instructional coach supports her, she provided the following response:

She listens when I have concerns or issues about classroom instruction, or parental communication issues. She has provided me with resources to enhance my lessons like websites, interactive games, file folder games, reading list, and instructional strategies to help my ESOL and gifted students. She observes my lessons and provides me with warm and cold feedback for potential growth. She also researches concepts and emails me related lessons, activities, and skill builders to enhance my instruction.

Good People Skills Developer. In addition to the instructional skills of the instructional coach, two of the teachers in this study also focused on the soft skills of the instructional coach. In other words, the two teachers talked about how the instructional coach has helped them grow professionally, not just by teaching them, showing them things, or providing resources, but through her personal skills and by being a positive and emotionally supporting figure. For example, Teacher Lare explained the following:

In my experience of working with an instructional coach, her ability to have and demonstrate good communication skills went well. She is an empathic listener

and has established great rapport with the teachers. When she conducts observations, trainings, or models a lesson she is very nonjudgmental and nonthreatening. She puts everything back on the teacher to think about and solve. She gives suggestions, not demands. She makes us feel valued; this has allowed her to build relationships, mutual respect, and trust.

Teacher Rob indicated that her instructional coach demonstrate good people skills and has taught her through professional development how to improve her own people skills.

The instructional coach demonstrates good people skills by:

Being prepared to listen, reflect on what the speaker has to say, accept differences of opinions, be open minded, accept feedback, remain calm, and always be concise and clear. I also learn to be an empathic listener, make positive calls to parents, and communicate through email.

Modeler. The teacher responses indicated that modeling in the classroom was an important form of professional development for them. The teacher responses suggest that modeling provides them with a visual to effectively implement instructional strategies. Teacher Swan stated,

“The instructional would be helpful in modeling effective strategies and assisting me with providing differentiated instruction.” Teacher Swan added, “Our instructional coach providing grade level modeling for cooperative and flexible groups for reading and math.

In addition, Teacher Lare described in vivid detail how modeling provided her with an instructional strategy to assist her students with solving word problems.

My principal kept telling us that we needed to use graphic organizers in math, but she never provided the teachers with training. During one of our collaborative meetings with

our instructional coach, I voiced my concern about using graphic organizers in math. The instructional coach could sense my frustration and asked if she could come by and model a quick QDPAC lesson. I said yes. The next day she came in and I was wowed. She provided my student the graphic organizer QDPAC to solve math word problems. She explained to them that Q = what was the question in the word problem, D = data found in word problem, P = plan or operation to solve word problem, A = answer in complete sentence, and C = check...work problem backwards or solve in a different way. She model two word problems with the students and walk around to monitor their progress. Students were encouraged to use the QDPAC graphic organizer to solve each problem, along with manipulatives. Because of this modeled lesson, my students are now independently solving the math word problems and using math talk successfully.

Analyzer of Data. Two of the teachers indicated that the instructional coach provides professional development with data analysis by helping them dissect and transform the data to bring order and understanding of it to move students forward. Teacher Lare explained the following:

Well as I stated before she works with us individually, by grade level, and school wide to create SMART goals to drive our instruction and improve student achievement based on specific data, like CRCT, or benchmark test, or six week assessments. She utilizes this data to help us create lesson plans, and model effective instructional strategies to ensure we are utilizing cooperative grouping, flexible grouping, and differentiated the instruction. By doing this she helps the teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies to meet the academic needs of students.

In addition Teacher Rob stated:

The instructional coach pulls benchmark tests and end of unit tests for the teachers to dissect. This is done every six weeks and we sit down and discuss what the data is saying. She has also helped each teacher create benchmark data walls in their classroom. The instructional coach works with the teachers on what needs to be re-taught. The instructional coach meets with each grade level and shares what worked and what didn't work. The coach also shares additional strategies with the teachers whose students didn't do quite well.

Provider of Reflective Practices. A reflective practitioner is someone who looks back at their work and reflects on what went well and what needs to be adjusted. Reflection helps us improve and reach our full potential by applying knowledge about our learning experiences.

Teacher Lare stated:

Using reflective conferences helped me to determine my strengths and weaknesses in my practices and lessons. Taking time to reflect like my instructional taught me to do has helped me to become more effective with my instructional delivery. Our instructional gave training on teachers as reflective practitioners and encourages us to use our journals daily to reflect on our practices.

Teacher Rob had a similar response about how the instructional coach has enhanced student achievement by assisting her with being a reflective practitioner. She stated;

As a reflective practitioner the instructional coach has help me self-evaluate to identify the strengths and weaknesses in my instruction, lessons, and students. It is away for me and the other teachers to make improvements to impact instruction and student achievement

Provider of Constructive Feedback. The teacher responses indicated that the constructive feedback that they received from their instructional coach was always open and continuous. The feedback that the instructional coach provides is timely, honest, and provides useful comments and suggestions that contribute to professional growth. Teacher Rob stated, “By providing constructive feedback, the instructional coach lets me know how well I am doing and also lets me know what I need to work on.” Teacher Rob explained:

Doing individual conferences she gives “grows” and “glows”. She lets me know what I could improve on and what I was doing great! I can remember on day when she observed me and we sat down for the conference and she said, well when you teach that lesson again, what you will do differently. She is so great that even when she communicates something negatively, it is not offensive or puts you on the defense. As I improved she gave me specific feedback.

Teacher Lare response also supports that constructive feedback received from the instructional coach provided encouragement. Teacher Lare stated:

She reassures me and provides positive feedback along with negative. Her comments and feedback are always clear and concise. During an observation she noticed that students were off task, and I hadn’t redirected them, she walked past me and whispered how they are learning if they are not paying attention. My response was maybe today they didn’t come to learn. She then said, maybe you ought to try something else to spark their attentions, maybe an interactive learning website. She is always supportive and kind. She encourages collaboration and active learning.

Dissenting Viewpoints. Although, two of the teachers indicated that the instructional coaches were effective in regard to providing professional development to teachers or supporting

teachers with their instruction, Teacher Swan reflections represent her concerns. One concern was that she felt as if the instructional coach was trying to judge her and tell her what to do without having the sufficient training and knowledge. For example, Teacher Swan stated the following:

Like I said before the instructional coach that we had before use to come into the classroom with a clipboard and a checklist....I don't know who gave her the checklist but if you weren't doing what was on the checklist, she would right it up and put it in your mailbox and then she would come into the classroom. Well at first the county was really big on these instructional boards and she would yell, you don't have this on your instructional board; you don't have that up on your instructional board. You know, I was like, well hold on a minute now, I got 25 kids, and do you want me to teach or put up an instructional board, which it is. And then two, you are not qualified, you have had no training, in observing me, like the principals have to go through GTEP Training, you had no prior training in observing any teacher, so I had a problem with that a real big problem with that and putting checklists in my boxes. I didn't like that at all.

The second concern was that the teacher felt as if the instructional coach did not do anything to support the teachers. For example, when asked if there was anything else that she wanted to share with the interviewer, this particular teacher explained the following:

Well to be honest with you, I think instructional coaches are paid a lot of money and they are doing absolutely nothing and here teachers are in the trenches with these children day in and day out and we have absolutely no support at all because the principal and assistant principals can't be there all the time. Neither can the

instructional coach, but when they are there just let us know you are there to help us.

Overall Results. Table 4.8 shows the overall themes that emerged from the three different types of participants, the frequencies, and the percentages associated with each theme. The themes were ranked from most common to least common. The results indicated that participants were most likely to say that the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of teacher professional development depends on the extent to which the instructional coach provides resources and models lessons or best instructional practices. Participants were least likely to mention the supportiveness of the instructional coach or the degree to which the instructional coach fosters reflection in teachers.

Table 4.8

Overall Thematic Results for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Teacher Professional Development

Overall themes	Total	Percent
Resource Provider	8	88.9
Modeler	8	88.9
Provider of constructive feedback	5	55.6
Analyzer of data	5	55.6
Collaborator	3	33.3
Supporter	2	22.2
Provider of reflective practices	2	22.2

Based on the triangulation of the participants' responses (principals, instructional coaches and principals) the consistent and overarching themes that emerged relative to the effectiveness

of the instructional coach in terms of teacher professional development include the following: (1) Helped teachers grow professionally by providing information and resources; (2) Helped teachers grow professionally by modeling best instructional practices that are research-based; (3) Helped teachers grow professionally by providing constructive feedback; and (4) Helped teachers grow professionally by helping them analyze and understand student performance data. Therefore the instructional coaches *tended to be* perceived as effective (one teacher dissented) due to the fact that they strictly adhered to their roles and responsibilities.

The Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Student Achievement

Research question three addresses the participants' perceptions of instructional coaches' effectiveness regarding student achievement. The principals' results are presented first by themes followed by the results from the instructional coaches, the teachers, and finally the overall results.

Principals' Perceptions

Three themes emerged from the principals' responses, which are provided in Table 4.9. Specifically, the results indicate that the professional development that instructional coaches provide to teachers helps to improve teachers' instructional strategies, student learning, and ultimately student achievement. Therefore the instructional coach is directly related to improved teaching which is directly related to improved learning and student achievement. In addition, the analysis of student achievement data helps teachers to monitor student performance, address strengths and weaknesses, and modify their instruction and instructional delivery accordingly.

Table 4.9

Principals' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Student Achievement

Principals' Themes	P Black	P Doe	P Flay	Total
Analyzer of student achievement data	X	X	X	3
Provider of professional development	X	X	X	3
School culture changer		X	X	2

Note. P = principal.

Analyzer of Student Achievement Data. According to the principals' responses, the instructional coach indirectly impacts student learning through their teacher professional development efforts. The instructional coaches provide teachers with materials, information, feedback, and concrete examples of how to instruct all students and meet the learning needs of all students which directly translates into improved student performance. For example, Principal Flay indicated that without the instructional coach “teachers would not have the highest level of support that they need, and in turn students would not have access to the highest level of instruction”. For example Principal Flay indicated:

The instructional coach pulls CRCT data and identifies the areas of weakness by each grade level and teacher.a plan of action is put in place for the next school year to work on those deficiencies. Throughout the year those students are monitored through their performances on benchmark test and classroom performances of meeting standards. The administrative team along with the instructional coach conduct bi-weekly classroom observations to ensure that teachers have adjust learning strategies to meet the learning needs of their students based on research-based evidence on effective strategies. Everything she does is focused around teacher or student achievement. All of the training she provides the teachers with assist with student achievement.modeling effective best practices, leading book studies, assisting teachers with disaggregating data to plan for instruction, working with students

in the small group study skills, and creating and executing weekly test prep rallies.

Conducting classroom observations and providing reflective feedback on the teacher's performance helps with improving instructional deliver to meet the needs and increase student achievement.

Similarly, Principal Doe explained the following:

If there were not an instructional coach then the focus on identifying student needs' and enhancing teacher practice to promote student academic performance would suffer. Without the instructional coach, we would not have the focus on instructional practices, classroom walk troughs, and data conversations about student performance.

In addition Principal Doe stated:

The instructional coach assists with student achievement by helping to improve student learning and classroom instruction by focusing on student needs, curriculum objectives, instructional strategies, assessment technique, by promoting novice teacher's cognitive development by guiding teachers' goal setting, self-assessment and self-monitoring. The instructional coach often visits classrooms and observes the level of instruction. This is very instrumental in identifying the needs of the teacher and students as well as identifying potential needs for professional development.

Principal Black provided a comment about how student achievement would suffer without the presence of an instructional coach due to the instructional coach's focus on using data to drive instruction. For example, Principal Black explained "If there were not an

instructional coach at our school, teachers would not be using data to drive their instruction and student academic performance would not be impacted.” Principal Black stated:

She pulls benchmark data every six weeks and assist teachers with identifying students that need additional support and leads study groups on how to assist teachers. She looks at data every day and works hard to ensure that teachers are equipped with the instructional strategies and resources to move students forward.

Provider of Professional Development. The principals’ responses indicated that in terms of student achievement, the instructional coaches provide teachers with professional development that improves teachers’ effectiveness in raising student achievement. For example, Principal Flay explained the following:

This year she has held sessions from classroom management, effective instructional strategies, multiple intelligences, literacy centers, effective communication, cooperative learning....just to name a few....She has been quite creative in getting the teachers to actively participate because the sessions have been differentiate, trainings have been offered on-line, face-to-face, afterschool, and on Saturdays with stipends. All of her professional development includes delivery, practice, modeling, and follow-up. The teachers really seem to like that she comes back to see if they are utilizing what they learn and how is it impacting instruction.

In addition both principal Black and Doe discussed that their coach facilitates and monitors majority of the professional development at their schools. Principal Black stated:

My instructional coach fosters teacher professional development. She makes suggestions about professional development and leads local school in-services

and professional development. She is the foremost expert in the school when it comes to instruction and curriculum, because she is constantly going to meetings, and finding out the new initiatives, new strategies, and the various things that the district wants us to implement. She is our go to person as far as that is concerned. Again the PLCs have made professional learning a collaborative spirit for everyone, because again teachers see it as non-threatening, because the focus is on student achievement and not what teachers are and aren't doing. Along with PLCs and high yield strategies the instructional coach fosters teacher professional development by addressing the teachers' weaknesses and enhancing their strengths.

School Culture Changer. In addition to positively impacting student achievement through professional development, the instructional coach also improves student learning by changing the culture and the climate of the school. As previously mentioned for research question two, Principal Doe provided a very in-depth and well articulated response regarding how the instructional coach has improved the culture of the faculty and the school. However, it is important to note that not only does the professional development improve the culture of the school, but the improved school culture leads to increased student performance. Principal Doe stated:

The instructional coach has worked hard to model and facilitate continuous improvement. By providing this support to teachers, they begin to see that their actions do count. This leads them to be more willing to try new things and to implement new research-based teaching strategies. All of this increases the school's collective efficacy which is described as the faculty's belief in its

collective ability to carry out teaching tasks that promote student achievement. Thus coaching not only increases an individual teacher's content expertise, it also increases the teacher's self-confidence and willingness to use those skills to increase student learning. When all the individual teachers in a school begin to feel this way, the whole school experiences an increase in its collective efficacy which can lead to greater student achievement. Instructional coaching is an indispensable tool in our quest to raise student achievement.

The instructional coach has truly changed the school culture to one of collaboration, support, and success. Principal Flay response indicated that at his school:

The instructional coach has changed my role as the instructional leader by having me use research-based strategies and data to drive instructional decisions in our school. I use to allow teachers to go into their rooms and teach and the results were all over the place. With the guidance and training from the instructional coach, I am instructional focused. I meet with grade levels and assist them with disaggregating the data, having courteous conversations about what went well and what needs to be tweaked to meet students' needs. I am out and about, in classrooms, I have the knowledge base to even model lessons and provide teachers with alternative ways to teach. I no longer rely on my assistances to tell me what's going on in classrooms, I know.....I am out there in the trenches so I can let teachers know what's not working and celebrate their successes.

Instructional Coaches' Perceptions

The three themes that emerged from the instructional coaches' responses are provided in Table 4.10. The results indicated that the primary way in which instructional coaches positively impact student achievement is through the analysis of data, and by helping teachers understand

how the data analysis findings relate to their instructional strategies so that they may modify their instructional strategies to improve student learning and ultimately student achievement. Similar to helping teachers with data, a second theme that emerged pertained to the professional development of teachers, whereby the instructional coaches provide instructional support to teachers, which in turn improves student learning and academic achievement. For example, instructional coaches might model best practices, teach teachers how to differentiate instruction, and/or provide them with research-based instructional strategies. A final theme that emerged pertained to the direct effect that instructional coaches have on student achievement by co-teaching or directly working with students in some way.

Table 4.10

Instructional Coaches' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Student Achievement

Instructional Coaches' Themes	IC Hane	IC Jane	IC Swan	Total
Analyzer of student data	X	X	X	3
Provider of professional development	X	X	X	3
Co-teacher	X	X	X	3

Note. IC = instructional coach.

The results from the instructional coach interview responses indicated that without the instructional coaches, teachers would be less focused on instruction, less reflective and therefore teachers would be less effective in the classroom resulting in stagnant or regressive student achievement.

Analyzer of Student Data. The heavy focus on assessment and data analysis was evident in all three of the instructional coaches' interviews. For example, Instructional Coach Que provided the following detailed response:

Well I am mainly involved with monitoring the progress of school goals through data, tests that are given CRCT, benchmarks, individual assessments. I monitor school progress by looking at the data. We, when I say we I mean the administrative team, teachers, and specialist we look at data to see where the kids are, we look at where we want them to be and we come back after the next assessment and analyze what has went well and what still needs to be worked on. And that's how I monitor the progress of the school because I am always looking at data and keeping the teachers abreast of the data and talking about new things that we need to do and having those conversations about what can we do it improve student achievement.

Another example from Instructional Coach Hane indicated that in addition to the fact that she collects and analyzes data herself, she also helps" teachers to collect and analyze their data and we collaborate to determine what next steps need to be made to improve student achievement."

Instructional Coach Jane added:

I meet with teachers biweekly in vertical and horizontal alignments. Teachers also meet by grade level and content to analyze student work, pre-test, post-test, and benchmark test in order to design, and implement lessons collaboratively to impact instruction.

Provider of Professional Development. Instructional Coach Hane indicated that professional development is essential to enhancing teacher growth and development. She stated:

I try to ensure that the professional learning I provide to the teachers is an ongoing learning process. For example, I connect prior learning to new learning and make a connection for teachers. I conducted professional development on DOK, which is high order thinking, then I conducted training on the multiple intelligences. I had teachers discuss some of the things they are doing in their classroom, then I presented, when we came back to the think-pair-share part of the training, teachers were able to say, “I do that, and I just didn’t know it was called that.”

In addition, I try to make sure that the professional development is researched based, student centered. I believe that what really makes the professional development effective at my schools is that teachers know that I am checking for implementation and I monitor.

Another concrete example of how instructional coaches have provided customized professional development to teachers was given by Instructional Coach Jane. This particular coach explained the following:

I noticed several opportunities where the teacher could and should have utilized graphic organizers to teach the concept of main idea, and because she didn’t several students were completely lost and didn’t grasp the standard....well when we sat down to conference, she was unaware of what graphic organizers were. I had to revisit the training and conduct it appropriately. I conducted drive-by training because I was limited on time and caused students academics to suffer.

Finally, Instructional Coach Que provided an excellent account of how the professional development that she provides, in addition to data analysis and co-teaching, help to improve student achievement. For example, Instructional Coach Que explained the following:

I provide professional development, conduct classroom observations, provide feedback, work on the data together, scan lessons, model lessons, sometimes we team teach with them as well. I roll district initiatives out, school initiatives, provide resources for the teachers, sometimes teachers may come to me and tell me they are having a difficult time finding materials, content, for a specific skill, I am a resource for them in that way. If I cannot find it, I find someone who can. I find professional development from them outside of the school.

Co-Teacher. In terms of student achievement the instructional coaches all indicated that their roles strictly relate to assisting teachers with enhancing their practices and in turn improving student achievement. Instructional Coach Jane stated:

I sit down and help teachers look at their lesson plans and we try to come up with different strategies for the students. I may go in and model a lesson or I may go in and co-teach, or I may go in and pull a small group of students according to the data. I am working with those students based on what the data is saying. I am pulling them from a heterogeneous group to form a homogenous group according to the data. For instance if these particular students are still have problems with multiplying and the other students have mastered that concept, I would pull those students and try to give them additional support.

In addition, when Instructional Coach Hane was asked how she assists with student achievement, she explained that she “provides students with hallway activities, State Framework Fair, Lunch and Learn activities, etc.” Similarly, Instructional Coach Jane mentioned that in addition to modeling best instructional practices, sometimes she may actually co-teach in the classroom.

Teachers' Perceptions

The three themes that emerged from teachers' responses are provided in Table 4.11. The results indicated that the instructional coaches can positively impact student achievement indirectly by providing professional development, mentoring teachers where they model best instructional strategies that are diverse and effective in terms of meeting the needs of all students, providing teachers with concrete feedback in order to improve their instruction so that they can meet the needs of all students, and helping teachers analyze and understand data so that they can monitor student performance and adjust their instructional strategies accordingly.

Table 4.11

Teachers' Coded Responses for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Student Achievement

Teachers' Themes	T Rob	T Lare	T Swan	Total
Provider of professional development	X	X		2
Improver of teacher instruction	X	X		2
Analyzer of data	X	X		2

Note. T = teacher.

Again, the teachers' results were very consistent with the results from the instructional coaches and the principals. However, while Teachers Rob and Lare provided very favorable responses regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student achievement, Teacher Rob provided very negative or unfavorable responses.

The teachers who provided favorable responses indicated that the professional development, support, and assistance that they received helped them to become better teachers which ultimately resulted in improved student learning and achievement. Therefore the teachers

were most consistent with the principals in that the teachers focused on the indirect effect of the instructional coach on student achievement while the instructional coaches focused both on their indirect effect and their direct effect.

Provider of Professional Development. Two of the teachers indicated that factors that contributed to the enhancement of professional development was that their instructional coach made it meaningful for teachers. We did not have drive by professional developments; we had professional development that was well planned, engaging, and meaningful. Teacher Lare explained:

Our instructional coach ensured that the professional development included research based, modeling, and follow-up, ongoing, monitored, and evaluated. As stated before, she delivered the material, gave grade levels sections to continue researching and evaluating. Then each grade level would have to redelivery to the staff, and again when time permits, our instructional coach would conduct observations to see how we were using the strategies, and if we were using them correctly. She would also let teachers conduct peer observations. In our grade levels meetings we would debrief on the training and discuss how it has enhanced our practice or altered it.

Additionally, Teacher Rob stated:

Our instructional coach is instrumental in enhancing our professional development. We meet and discuss topics and issues that make a difference. For example we are struggling with motivating unmotivated students, and our instructional coach leads book studies and activities to help us meet these students.

Improver of Teacher Instruction. According to Teachers Rob and Lare, the instructional coach helped to improve student learning and student achievement by providing

direct instructional support, modeling best instructional practices, assisting with the analysis and interpretation of assessment data, identifying both teacher and student strengths and weaknesses and then providing concrete resources, materials, and/or suggestions for improvements, and listening to teachers' needs and then getting the information for teachers through research, etc. For example, Teacher Rob explained "I have been taught to utilize metacognition and active student engagement by using higher-order thinking, cooperative learning and independent practice."

A specific example of how the instructional coach has assisted Teacher Lare to improve her instructional practices is provided below:

Well let's see, at the beginning of the school year, I had a huge issue with classroom management, differentiated instruction, and summative and formative assessment. My students were off the chain and I yelled all day and quite frankly used a lot of sarcasm in my classroom. I blamed my students for not doing well because of their behavior. Well, I guess I was targeted by my principal and received several observations from the instructional coach. She would sit down and ask what went well? Nothing, the kids are off the chain and not learning would be my reply. Then she would say, if you could teach this lesson again, what would you change, and my reply would be teach it to kids that knew how to behave and wanted to learn. This went on for about four weeks and then one day she videotaped my lesson and asked me to look at it. I was appalled at my tone and poor instruction. There I was walking around lecturing and belittling students about how they were doing poorly because they don't put forth effort, and when the truth was they were misbehaving and not doing well because my instructional

delivery was horrible. Looking at that videotaped lesson and having a reflective conference with my instructional coach made me reflect on what went well in the lesson, what were my challenges, and how did it impact my students? She helped me to identify my strengths and areas of growth. By helping me be reflective it helped my teaching and learning because I now was able to sit down and assess the students' needs, create lesson plans that meet the students needs, and continuously adjust instruction and instructional delivery.

Teacher Lare could have been offended and could have perceived the instructional coach as an intimidating and judgmental person. However, this teacher was able to open her mind and see her faults, and then make the necessary changes to her instructional strategies through reflection and collaboration with the instructional coach.

Analyzer of Data. Teacher responses revealed that instructional coaches assist them with student achievement by helping them analyze and interpret data. Reviewing the data helps teachers direct their instructional focus. Teacher Rob stated, “She assists teachers with analyzing data to differentiate instruction and form collaborative groups to meet the different learning styles of students. She also works with students in small groups to work on targeted identified weak areas based on CRCT and Benchmark Test data. Also during classroom observations she pulls individual students who are struggling with the concept and provide them with cues to assist in the learning process.”

A specific and concrete example of how Teacher Lare was able to improve student learning and achievement with the help of the instructional coach is provided below:

For example data revealed that grade levels weakness was reading comprehension.....recalling facts. As a grade level we devised a plan that would

assist our students with improving reading comprehension by 10% within 6 weeks, that is realistic, timely, and specific. We held morning, evening, and online tutorial for students three times a week and at the end of the week utilized questioning, discussion, exit slips, graphic organizers, etc. to assess their progress. We did the same thing for school wide identified weaknesses and provided students with remediation throughout the day and in Tuesday and Thursday tutorial. At the end of the six weeks our instructional coach created formative assessments to track and analyze student progress, this information was discussed and reviewed with grade levels, along with the 6 week Benchmark Tests. The disaggregated data is always posted in our data room and tracked by the instructional coach; also we keep data in our classrooms in our data notebooks. Our instructional coach uses this data to not only track and monitor student progress, but as dialogue for teachers to share with one another what's working in their classes. This allows us to learn from each other through peer observations.

Dissenting Viewpoints. Teacher Swan was asked how the instructional coach assists with student achievement, her response was “No she doesn't, not at our school.” This teacher also stated the following:

It would have been different if the instructional coach would have assisted with instruction to meet individual student needs. Effective modeling would have helped student academic performance. Modeling of in math lessons, CRCT test prep, Storytown....anything would have been beneficial.

Overall Results. Table 4.12 shows the overall themes that emerged from the three different types of participants, the frequencies, and the percentages associated with each theme.

The themes were ranked from most common to least common. The results indicated that participants were most likely to say that the effectiveness of instructional coaches in terms of student academic achievement is due to the analysis of student achievement and due to the professional development that teachers receive from the instructional coach. Less dominant themes include changing the culture of the school (Principal Themes), co-teaching or working directly with students (Instructional Coach Themes), and providing feedback thus improving teacher instruction (Teacher Themes).

Table 4.12

Overall Thematic Results for the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches in Terms of Student Achievement

Overall Themes	Total	Percent
Analyzer of student achievement data	8	88.9
Provider of professional development	8	88.9
Changer of school culture	2	22.2
Co-teacher	2	22.2
Provider of feedback	2	22.2
Improver of teacher instruction	2	22.2

Based on the triangulation of the participants data, the consistent and overarching themes that emerged regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coach in terms of student achievement include the following: (1) providing professional development and specific feedback about their instructional strategies; (2) fostering teacher collaboration and improving teacher self-efficacy; (3) helping them analyze and understand student performance data and improve their instructional practices based on the instructional coaches' feedback (classroom

observations, peer reports, teacher-generated questions, etc.) and based on the results of the data; and (4) working directly with students either by co-teaching in the classroom or findings other ways to interact instructionally with the students (e.g., Lunch and Learn, hallway activities).

Therefore the instructional coaches were perceived as indirectly effective (although Teacher Swan dissented) due to the fact that they provided teachers with meaningful and practical support and professional development. This resulted in better instructional practices and ultimately better student learning and achievement. In other words, the instructional coaches had a positive (favorable) indirect effect on student achievement through their support of the teachers. A consensus of the study yielded the following five themes pertaining to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools. They, (a) support teachers by providing resources; (b) support teachers by modeling best instructional practices that are research-based; (c) support teachers by fostering teacher collaboration; (d) support teachers by helping them analyze and understand student performance data; and (e) support teachers with professional development that helped them modify their instructional practices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the data analysis results which addressed the three research questions associated with the study. The overall results of the study indicated that the principals, instructional coaches and the teachers (with the exception of one teacher) were highly consistent in their responses pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches, and their level of effectiveness in terms of providing professional development to teachers, and in terms of student achievement.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter offers a summary, discussions, and implications. It includes a summary of the results to the research questions, discussions of key points and the results, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Research question one addressed the participants' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches. The results indicated that principals, instructional coaches, and teachers agreed that instructional coaches' roles and responsibilities are to support the needs of teachers and ensure implementation of instructional strategies to enhance student achievement. The results suggested professional development trainer, data analyst, instructional expert, mentor, observer, liaison, assistant to the principal, collaborator, reflective practitioner, and relationship builder are the roles and responsibilities that were beneficial to the educational profession.

Research question two addressed the participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaches as it pertains to teacher professional development. The results indicated that instructional coaches are effective in providing teachers with professional development through collaboration, modeling of effective and research-based instructional strategies, and providing teachers with resources that they can immediately use to improve their instructional strategies.

Research question three addressed the participants' perceptions of instructional coaches' effectiveness regarding student achievement. The results indicated that the primary way in which instructional coaches positively impact student achievement was through the analysis of data, and by helping teachers understand how the data analysis findings relate to their

instructional strategies so that they may modify their instructional strategies to improve student learning. In addition the professional development that instructional coaches provided to teachers helped to improve teachers' instructional strategies, student learning, and ultimately student achievement.

Discussions

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of Georgia elementary principals, instructional coaches, and teachers as it relates to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools. This section entails the five major themes resulting from the study. They include: (a) Support teachers by providing resources; (b) Support teachers by modeling best instructional practices that are research-based; (c) Support teachers by fostering teacher collaboration; (d) Support teachers by helping them analyze and understand student performance data; and (e) Support teachers with professional development that helped them modify their instructional practices.

Support teachers by providing resources

The role of the instructional coach as a resource provider was noted as valuable. The results stated that instructional coaches made sure that teachers had the necessary resources such as books, manipulatives, and boards to impact teaching and learning. According to the results, the instructional coaches not only made sure teachers had resources but demonstrated how to utilize the resources effectively. Makibbin and Sprague (1993) research supports the findings of this study by stating that instructional coaches are also resource providers who give teachers a variety of tools and materials designed to improve instruction based on research-based strategies.

Support teachers by modeling best instructional practices that are research-based

The study indicated that the modeling of research best-practices were effective forms of professional development that assisted teacher with collaboration and effective implementation of instructional strategies. The results demonstrated that the professional development that the teachers received was broken up and presented through a variety of methods and modeled. According to Russo (2004), modeling is a beneficial means of professional development to improve instructional delivery. The results showed that modeling provided differentiated professional development for the teachers. Modeling afforded teachers the opportunity to observe instructional coaches implementing research best-practices in their classrooms to promote teaching and learning. After the modeling sessions, the results from the study indicated that implementation and fidelity of classroom management, instructional practices, differentiated instruction, and assessing students' needs were carried out. In addition, Richardson (2006) noted that these processes allow for continuous growth for the teacher and student. Joyce and Showers (1996) concurred that the most dynamic type of teacher training involved "modeling in the classroom and practice under simulated conditions in the classroom combined with feedback" (p.16).

The results recognized how the role of the instructional coaches helped teachers utilize a variety of teaching strategies. Harwell-Kee (1999) suggested that teachers employ instructional strategies in their classroom more when they are supported and modeled. Results recognized that teachers use the instructional strategies correctly because the instructional coach provided them with research, rationale, visuals, and modeled the strategy in teachers' classrooms and showed teachers how to modify variety strategies to meet specific student needs.

Additionally, Knight (2007b), indicated that modeling of lessons provided instructional support to classroom teachers. Instructional coaches help teachers build capacity for effective instructional practices.

Support teachers by fostering teacher collaboration

The results showed that instructional coaches provided teachers with effective professional development by providing them standards. For example, the results indicated that instructional coaches provide teacher with organizational and leadership support by providing professional development that improved the learning of all students by organizing adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. The results indicated that instructional coaches did this by creating Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLCs focus on learning rather than teaching, working collaboratively, and holding educators accountable. Through the use of PLCs, teachers meet in small groups to analyze student work and data, identify needs, and assess instructional practices to increase student achievement.

In addition, the results demonstrated that the work done with instructional coaches in PLCs and grade level meetings had been instrumental in student academic levels. According to the results, teachers and principals indicated that working with instructional coaches in PLCs, grade level meetings, and individual conferences helped teachers to plan and reflect on teaching and learning. Killion and Harrison (2006) suggested that instructional coaches work collaboratively with teachers to create standards-based, job-embedded, professional learning by preparing, applying, and ensuring training for educators that address standards and content knowledge to impact student achievement.

Support teachers by helping them analyze and understand student performance data

The results indicated that instructional coaches assisted teachers and principals with analyzing student data to identify strengths and weaknesses. Instructional coaches worked with teachers to modify instruction to meet the needs of all students and provided teachers with instructional materials to foster learning. They helped teachers utilize research-based instructional strategies to positively impact student achievement.

In addition, the results showed that teachers were able to read and interpret data better to drive instruction to meet the academic needs of their students. Instructional coaches assisted teachers with gathering, reading, analyzing, and interpreting student data individually, as a grade level, and school wide to determine areas of improvement.

Results specified that instructional coaches set up and maintained data rooms and data notebooks which assisted teachers with instructional delivery and assessing student progress. Teachers utilized the data rooms and notebooks to create lessons, adjust lessons, differentiate lessons, and incorporate a variety of instructional strategies to meet student needs. According to Killion and Harrison (2006), instructional coaches must be data analyzers in order to ensure that the instruction is guided by student needs and assessments.

Support teachers with professional development that helped them modify their instructional practices

The results specified that teachers benefited greatly from the professional development that was given by the instructional coaches. The results concluded that the professional development assisted the teachers in attaining new concepts and utilizing new strategies that they felt enhanced their learning and students. Knight (2007a) supported the findings of previous research by adding that instructional coaches utilized efficient professional development

techniques for ensuring the execution of interventions, enhanced teacher commitment to research-based practices, and offered an opportunity for teachers to gain knowledge of additional teaching strategies. The findings in this study supported the idea that instructional coaches move and enhance teacher professional development in a positive manner that impacts their practice and in turn students (Knight, 2007a; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). In addition, Killon (2002) suggested that professional development that assists teachers in obtaining new concepts and employing new strategies affects student learning and ultimately enhances student achievement.

There are various ways that instructional coaches provide professional development to teachers. These ways consisted of workshops, collaboration, feedback, reflection, or modeling (Knight, 2006). In addition, the findings indicated that instructional coaches enhanced teachers' professional development by modeling research best-practices, fostering teacher collaboration, classroom observations, and analyzing student data. This evidence correlates with research conducted by Vanderburg and Stephens (2009) which found that the professional development provided by instructional coaches enabled teachers to incorporate new strategies into the classroom to meet student needs.

As a professional developer, the results stated that the instructional coaches were vital in creating standards-based, job-embedded professional learning that focused on teacher and student development. The instructional coaches were noted for not only designing and delivering professional development but also for monitoring it. According to Poglinco and Bach (2005), professional development must be ongoing and job-embedded in teachers' classrooms, student focused, specific to grade levels or academic content, and research-based. The results showed that the instructional coaches' role as a professional developer enhanced teachers' techniques and skills.

The results also revealed that teachers and principals perceived that instructional coaches positively impact teacher professional development by utilizing observations to evaluate instructional practices in the classroom. Instructional coaches observed teachers and provide specific feedback and recommendations for instructional and student improvement. NSDC (2001) supports the use of observations because they provide evaluation of acquisition of knowledge, how learning affects teaching, and how changes in practice affect student learning. In agreement with the results of the study, Neufeld and Roper (2003) stated that “the need for professional development is obvious; many teachers are not prepared for the challenge of educating all students to high levels” (p. iii). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC; 2001), believe that professional development is imperative in enhancing teacher quality and raising student achievement. The literature supported the findings of this study that instructional coaches provide support and ways to improve each teacher’s own professional development (Harwell-Kee, 1999; Poglinco & Bach, 2005).

Furthermore, research concludes that instructional coaches provide a powerful form of job-embedded professional development that helps teachers strengthen teaching and learning. In addition, the use of instructional coaches can be a powerful tool to improve teacher performance and raise academic achievement (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Knight, 2007b; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Discussion of Participants’ Viewpoints

The three groups of participants shared many commonalities in their responses; however there were some discrepancies among them. One of the key differences between the responses of the principles and those of the instructional coaches and teachers was the fact that instructional coaches and teachers mentioned the need for instructional coaches to possess soft skills too, such

as being a good listener. In addition, teachers were even more likely to focus on the soft skills given that they specifically mentioned the need for instructional coaches to be relationship builders. In contrast, principals focused more on the hard skills and the concrete outcomes rather than soft skills, which tended to relate to the processes in which instructional coaches helped teachers to become effective. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that the principals tend to be more directly accountable for meeting quantifiable outcomes and may therefore be more aware of and/or concerned about the actual outcomes and less aware of and/or concerned about the processes that take place in order to achieve those outcomes. Furthermore, principals may be more likely to believe that it is the role of the instructional coach to be educated on processes that impact teachers' professional development leading to more effective teaching. Finally, teachers may be most aware of the need for instructional coaches to possess the soft skills because of their direct experiences with instructional coaches and the positive experiences that result from good and supportive relationships. Teachers are aware of the fact that in order to buy into the process, they must trust and respect their instructional coach and vice versa.

The next, key difference between the three groups, whereby instructional coaches and teachers were aligned but different from the principal, pertained to the role of the instructional coach in terms of helping teachers become reflective practitioners. Again, this role relates to the process in which teachers become better teachers. Both instructional coaches and teachers were aware of the importance of being a reflective practitioner, which may be due to the fact that teacher professional development tends to focus on reflection of one's practice in the attempt to improve one's practice.

Another key difference between the principal and the other two groups was the fact that the principals mentioned that the role of the instructional coach is to change the school culture,

whereas instructional coaches and teachers did not mention this particular outcome. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that the principal is responsible for the school as a whole while the instructional coaches are working with teachers on a one-on-one and individualized basis. Therefore the instructional coaches and the teachers may experience individual level interventions and teacher specific changes or outcomes while the principal may be assessing the effectiveness of the instructional coach from a more holistic or comprehensive perspective.

Contribution to Literature

This study contributes to the knowledge base of educational administration by documenting the experiences of principals, instructional coaches, and teachers. The results found that it was important to utilize teacher reflections as a form of professional development. Communication skills helped teachers grow professionally, and the nonjudgmental and nonthreatening matter in which the instructional coach made teachers reflect on their practice allowed teachers to build a relationship that consisted of mutual respect and trust. The reflections were directed to make teachers think about the learning. For example, what went well, and were there any challenges, if you teach this lesson again, what would you do differently? Responses indicated that this made the teachers feel valued and truly analyzed their teaching and learning.

The results supported Dewey's (1933) concept of reflection in education which stated the importance of teacher reflection as it relates to enhancing teacher practice. Teachers must inspect their beliefs, assumptions, and biases concerning teaching and learning and decide how those beliefs influence or impact instructional practices. Additionally, Richert (1990) brought a renewed importance on teachers being reflective practitioners. He stated, "the ability to think about what one does and why - assessing past actions, current situations, and intended outcomes - is vital to intelligent practice, practice that is reflective rather than routine. As the time in the

teaching process when teachers stop to think about their work and make sense of it, reflection influences how one grows as a professional by influencing how successfully one is able to learn from one's experiences" (p. 512).

In essence, this study validates instructional coaches because the study results revealed that professional development provided by instructional coaches is effective because it consists of constant observing, evaluating, collaborating, modeling, analyzing, and providing substantive feedback to teachers relative to their use of instructional strategies and classroom practices to promote and encourage both teacher and student performance (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Limitations

The study was limited by several factors. First, the culture and climate at each school was different. School and classroom climate had an impact on the way that an instructional coach interacts with the principal and teachers. Second, the participants possessed unique skills, experiences, and interests. Prior experiences, background, and knowledge of the participants, as well as their personal preferences and dispositions influenced the ways in which they interact with one another. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative studies should have a limited number of participants in an effort to complete an in-depth study and interact with the participants in this study; therefore, the findings will not be generalizable to other populations.

Conclusions

The findings of this study helped address the overarching research question: What are the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers relating to the impact of instructional coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement? The results illustrated that instructional coaches had a

profound impact on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. It is important to note that in this study 1/3 of the teacher participants did not agree with the major of the findings. Even though the results were favorable, there are still resistant groups.

The professional development, support, and collaboration received from the instructional coaches were vital in ensuring that teachers enhanced their teaching practices and student achievement. Not many qualitative studies have been conducted that correlate the use of instructional coaches in elementary schools with teacher performance and achievement.

First, instructional coaches have great potential for enhancing school-wide achievement for students and teachers. Utilizing instructional coaches provide job-embedded professional development for teachers that are ongoing and reflective. In this study, the instructional coaches provided the teachers with professional development through collaboration, constructive feedback, modeling in the classroom, analyzing data, and varied research practices.

Instructional coaches make teaching and learning a school-wide focus by collectively planning for instructional improvement with respect to creating and planning strategies for instructional improvement. Instructional coaches in this study utilize the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan and district goals and objectives to focus on curriculum, instruction, and research best-practices to address student achievement. Teachers were able to meet with instructional coaches to share ideas, ask questions, and receive non-judgmental feedback. The participants in this study worked with instructional coaches individually, in small groups, and as a faculty to determine individual, class, grade level, and school-wide needs to increase student achievement.

Implications for Practices

Identifying effective ways to impact teacher performance as it relates to student achievement is essential to educational leaders. Furthermore, it is important when the impact is gathered from the perceptions of principals, instructional coaches, and teachers who work with students on a daily basis. Instructional coaches work collaboratively with teachers to guide and implement data driven instruction. The results of this study can provide principals, instructional coaches, and teachers with pertinent ways to enhance teacher performance and student achievement. Instructional coaches' effectiveness can be influenced by other factors such as training, time at school, principal support, and school climate. However, the roles, responsibilities, and professional development identified by principals, instructional coaches, and teachers may be helpful in identifying effective employment and utilization for instructional coaches in order to enhance teacher performance and student achievement. In times of economic crisis, it is important for administrators to know the value instructional coaches add.

In addition, teachers value and appreciate time to collaborate and learn from someone they view as their peer. Teachers need someone to support and encourage them. They need someone to provide them with opportunities to interact and engage in learning. Instructional coaches provide teachers with an opportunity to collaborate and reflect on their teaching and learning in a non-threatening and supportive manner. Teachers in this study appreciated the teacher study groups, modeling of best practices and reflective conferences because they provided them with clarity and solutions. Although the majority of the teachers benefited from the instructional coach, it is important to note that 1/3 of the teacher participants did not agree with the study. Additionally, it is important to note that there are still some resistant groups.

Truly, the principal and district should provide support and resources for instructional coaches to be effective. Principals should meet regularly with the instructional coaches to ensure that curriculum and instruction in the school are supported and enhanced. Districts should also ensure that instructional coaches have support and training to meet school and district mandates. Principals in the study met regularly with the instructional coaches to stay abreast of instructional focus and school data.

In fact, classroom modeling was one of the most beneficial forms of professional development that the instructional coach provided. The results indicated that the demonstrations were key in helping them transform their teaching to impact student achievement. The teacher observed the instructional coach implementing an instructional strategy. The teacher then applied the instructional strategy in the classroom while the instructional coach observed to determine the level of implementation and impact on students' achievement.

Additionally, it is imperative that instructional coaches be instructional and data specialist to drive teaching and learning. Reason being, a big part of impacting instruction is looking at data. In order to impact instruction and ultimately student achievement, instructional coaches should be able to read and analyze data to identify strengths and weaknesses of teachers and students. They should also be able to use data to determine what interventions are needed to bring about positive change in instructional delivery.

Lastly, NCLB has made it possible for instructional coaches to be utilized in ABC School District. Participants in this study utilize instructional coaches in Title I elementary schools to enhance teacher quality, enhance, and meet academic requirements for students.

The findings from this study will be advantageous to school districts. First, principals will be provided with valuable insight to assist them with identifying additional professional

development resources to enhance and impact teaching and learning. Second, the findings may also give teachers an opportunity to enhance their professional practice by working with instructional coaches by having in-house professional development so that teachers would continuously have a chance to learn and practice best practices in their classroom. When teachers' skills and abilities are enhanced, they are able to know and develop techniques to improve student achievement. Lastly, the findings of this study can serve as a resource tool for educators to make them knowledgeable of the techniques, strategies, and tools that impact teacher performance and student achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions of Georgia elementary school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers of coaching in elementary schools and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Conduct a follow-up study to track student achievement data pre and post instructional coaching intervention. This will determine the impact on student achievement before and after intervention with instructional coaches.
2. Conduct a study that explore the perceptions of middle and high school principals, instructional coaches, and teachers of coaching and its impact on enhancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Additional research is needed to determine if the findings of this study transfer to other cases.
3. Conduct a teacher focus group to gather a wider view point of teacher's perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaches.

4. More research is needed to determine the training and qualification of instructional coaches to ensure that they are well rounded and providing the necessary assistance needed by teachers.

Dissemination

The researcher feels that it is particularly important for principals, instructional coaches, and teachers to understand the significance of the findings of this study. In order to raise awareness and inform those concerned with the effectiveness of instructional coaches the results of this study will be distributed throughout the participating school district. One requirement of access being granted to the researcher by the superintendent was that all results be shared with the department of research and evaluation. The researcher also plans to disseminate findings from this study by the publishing of several related articles. The findings will aid teachers, instructional coaches, and principals with utilizing instructional coaches to promote teacher and student growth. In addition, the researcher would like to present at state conferences for administrators to submit findings of the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a summary, discussions, and implications. It includes a summary of the results to the research questions, discussions of key points and the results, implications for research and practice, and recommendations for future research. This research study broadens the knowledge base of instructional coaches as professional developers. Federal and state mandates have significantly impacted teacher accountability and student achievement. Instructional coaches are emerging as improvement initiatives to enhance teacher practice and improve student achievement. Instructional coaches are becoming effective venues for principals to

provide training, feedback, monitoring, and support to teachers that consist of job-embedded training.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

To: LaToya T. Doby-Holmes
130 Surge Stone Lane
Stockbridge, GA 30281

Hsiu-Lien Lu
P.O. Box 8134

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: October 29, 2010

Expiration Date: February 1, 2011

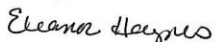
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H11095** and titled "**Instructional Coaching in Elementary Schools: Perceptions of Principles, Instructional Coaches, and Teachers.**" it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect until February 1, 2011. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant: _____

Place: _____

Date: _____

Time of Interview _____

Introductory Comments: I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

The purpose of this interview is to identify the impact that instructional coaches have in elementary schools. The interview will last approximately 45-90 minutes and will be taped for accuracy. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain confidential as well as your identity, school, principal, and school district. Please elaborate on specific details during the course of the interview. Please be candid, honest and accurate in your responses. Are there any questions?

Interview Questions:

1. What is the role of the instructional coach?
2. How do you support your instructional coach?
3. How has the instructional coach changed your role as a principal?
4. Describe the impact of having an instructional coach at the elementary level has had on the school?
5. How involved is the instructional coach in monitoring the progress of school goals?
6. How does the instructional coach assist with the academic performance of students?
7. What impact has the instructional coach had on fostering professional development?
8. What would be different if there was not an instructional coach at your school?

9. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaches in general or specifically about your instructional coach and the impact he/she has had on your school or district?

APPENDIX C
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant: _____

Place: _____

Date: _____

Time of Interview _____

Introductory Comments: I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

The purpose of this interview is to identify the impact that instructional coaches have in elementary schools. The interview will last approximately 45-90 minutes and will be taped for accuracy. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain confidential as well as your identity, school, principal, and school district. Please elaborate on specific details during the course of the interview. Please be candid, honest and accurate in your responses. Are there any questions?

Interview Questions:

1. What is the role of the instructional coach?
2. How do you provide support?
3. What has been your impact on the principal?
4. Describe the impact of having an instructional coach at the elementary level has had on the school?
5. How involved are you in monitoring the progress of school goals?
6. How do you assist with the academic performance of students?
7. What impact have you had on fostering professional development?
8. What would be different if there was not an instructional coach at your school?

9. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaches in general or specifically about the instructional coach's role and the impact it has had on your school or district?

APPENDIX D
TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant: _____

Place: _____

Date: _____

Time of Interview _____

Introductory Comments: I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

The purpose of this interview is to identify the impact that instructional coaches have in elementary schools. The interview will last approximately 45-90 minutes and will be taped for accuracy. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain confidential as well as your identity, school, principal, and school district. Please elaborate on specific details during the course of the interview. Please be candid, honest and accurate in your responses. Are there any questions?

Interview Questions:

1. What is the role of the instructional coach?
2. How does your instructional coach support you?
3. How has the instructional coach changed your role as a teacher?
4. Describe the impact of having an instructional coach at the elementary level has had on the school?
5. How involved is the instructional coach in monitoring the progress of school goals?
6. How does the instructional coach assist with the academic performance of students?
7. What impact has the instructional coach had on fostering professional development?
8. What would be different if there was not an instructional coach at your school?

9. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaches in general or specifically about your instructional coach and the impact he/she has had on your school or district?

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH DATA ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Vanderburg & Stephens (2009)	<p>To find out what teachers thought about coaches. The actions coaches carry out that teachers consider helpful.</p> <p>What specific coach-initiated changes teachers make in their beliefs and practices.</p>	35 teachers	Quantitative Survey	<p>Teachers were willing to try more things in their classroom.</p> <p>Teachers used more authentic means of assessing student needs.</p> <p>Teachers modified instruction based on students' needs.</p> <p>Teachers changed their beliefs and philosophies based on the educational theory and research they learned.</p>
PRAIRIE Group, UIC College of Education Deiger & Hurtig (2009)	Examine coaches' impact.	8 coaches 3 teachers	Qualitative Case Study	Coaches' activities and roles support impact instruction.
Cornett & Knight (2008)	Study the impact of instructional coaching. Designed to deepen our understanding of the potential impact of one particular approach	50 teachers	Quantitative Experimental Study	<p>Teachers who were coached were likely than teachers who only attended workshops to use new teaching practice inside the classroom.</p> <p>Will use new practices in the future.</p>
McGatha (2008)	Examine the levels of engagement of each coach as they work to establish effective coaching relationships	2 coaches 2 teachers	Mix Methods Case Study Interviews Surveys	<p>Provide insight into the specific interactions and engagement coaches have with teachers.</p> <p>Modeling teaching was effective when it was a collaborative event in which the teacher and coach were both involved in the planning.</p>

Knight (2007a)	To determine if instructional coaches advance teachers skills and technique to improve student achievement.	82 teachers 63 teachers 107 teachers	Mix Methods	Coaching supports functions of consulting, collaboration, and enable teachers to move toward becoming self-directed professionals. Instructional coaching can be an efficient technique for ensuring execution of interventions, enhance teacher commitment to research-based practices, and offer an opportunity for teachers to gain knowledge of additional teaching strategies.
University of Kansas Center for Research (2004)	To determine the effectiveness of instructional coaches.	87 teachers	Quantitative Study Survey	Indicates that 85% of those teachers who receive ongoing support from instructional coaches implement newly learned instructional methods, a factor that enhances teacher quality.
Veenman & Denessen (2001)	Evaluate the effects of a coaching program for teachers in Dutch primary and secondary schools.	28 counselors 33 principals 22 mentors 35 experienced teachers 20 secondary teachers	Qualitative Study Case study	A significant treatment effect was found for the coaching skills concerned with the development of empowerment, feedback, and business-like attitudes. Teachers coached by trained coaches valued the coaching skills demonstrated significantly more than those teachers coached by untrained coaches.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RELATED LITERATURE MATRIX

Principal Interview Questions	Literature	Research Questions
1. What is the role of the instructional coach?	Georgia Department of Education and National Staff Development Council (2005); Harwell-Kee (1999); International Reading Association (2004); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006).	1
2. How do you support your instructional coach?	DeBevoise (1984); Flath (1989); Glickman (1992); Joyce and Showers (1996); Reiss (2003); Steiner and Kowal (2007); Wildy and Dimmock (1993); Wren and Vallejo (2009).	1
3. How has the instructional coach changed your role as a principal	DeBevoise (1984); Flath (1989); Glickman (1992); Ingersoll (2007); International Reading Association (2004); Reiss (2003); Steiner and Kowal (2007); Wildy and Dimmock (1993); Wren and Vallejo (2009).	1,2,3
4. Describe the impact of having an instructional coach at the elementary level has had on the school?	Feger, et al. (2004); Feldman and Tung (2002); Kenny and Gavin (2004); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006); Neufeld and Roper (2003); Veenman and Denessen (2001); Wenglinsky (2000).	1,2,3
5. How involved is the instructional coach in monitoring the progress of school goals?	Black et al. (2003); Burkins and Ritchie (2007); Feldman and Tung (2002); Hopkins-Thompson (2000); Kenny and Gavin (2004); Killion (2006); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006); McGatha (2008).	2,3
6. How does the instructional coach assist with the academic performance of students?	Black et al. (2003); Burkins and Ritchie (2007); Deiger and Hurtig (2009); Harwell-Kee (1999); Hopkins-Thompson (2000).	3

<p>7. What impact has the instructional coach had on fostering professional development?</p>	<p>Black et al. (2003); Burkins and Ritchie (2007); Feldman and Tung (2002); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006); Makibbin and Sprague (1993); Neufeld and Roper (2003); Poglinco and Bach (2005).</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>8. What would be different if there was not an instructional coach at your school?</p>	<p>Darling-Hammond (1998); Driscoll (2008); Feger, et al. (2004); Gareth et al. (2001); Kenny and Gavin (2004); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006); Makibbin and Sprague (1993); Neufeld and Roper (2003); Poglinco and Bach (2005); Russo (2004); Veenman and Denessen (2001); Yerkes (2001).</p>	<p>1,2,3</p>
<p>9. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaches in general or specifically about your instructional coach and the impact he/she has had on your school or district?</p>	<p>Darling-Hammond (1998); Driscoll (2008); Feger, et al. (2004); Gareth et al. (2001); Kenny and Gavin (2004); Knight (2007a); Knight (2007b); Knight (2006); Makibbin and Sprague (1993); Neufeld and Roper (2003); Poglinco and Bach (2005); Russo (2004); Veenman and Denessen (2001); Yerkes (2001).</p>	<p>1,2,3</p>