

THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACH AND PRINCIPAL
IN SUPPORT OF COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS IN
HIGH SCHOOL WRITING: A CASE STUDY

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

by

Nancy Fitzgerald

May 2012

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Abstract

Writing is the gatekeeper for college readiness. It is critical to marry the relationship of writing to the processes of analysis and synthesis, the levels at which college readiness is assessed. As more and more teachers enter the teaching field needing systemic support during their first years of teaching, instructional coaching provides that specific content knowledge. The differentiated support that instructional coaching offers teachers is viewed as the single most powerful answer to the question of what policies and procedures a school leader needs to put in place in order to develop and retain teachers and address the college readiness standards. Researchers have identified four cornerstones necessary to every teacher's repertoire: classroom behavior, content knowledge, instruction, and formative assessment. These cornerstones of professional development define an instructional coach's workspace and provide a school leader's framework for organizing, communicating, and implementing learning goals. One high school instructional coach, purposefully selected to participate in this case study, illustrates how a job-embedded model of professional development implemented with fidelity to Jim Knight's *The Big Four* principles and supported by campus leadership impacts college readiness standards in writing. The instructional coach's impact strengthens when campus administration supports instruction with the constructs of a professional learning community. The foundation of the work is a focus interview and surveys with the 9th grade English language arts teachers and their interactions with the instructional coach and campus administration in one suburban high school.

Observations, instructional coaching interviews, campus administration interviews, and archival records gathered throughout the school year reinforce the data collection process and provide substantial documentation for the case study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	9
Considerations.....	11
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
Enhanced College Readiness Standards.....	12
Job-embedded Professional Development.....	17
Instructional Coaches as Content Specialists.....	24
Principal Leadership and Instructional Coaching.....	30
Summary of Findings.....	32
III. METHODOLOGY.....	35
Rationale.....	35
Research Design.....	37
Case Study Protocol.....	38
Participants.....	44
Site Visits.....	47
Limitations.....	47
Summary.....	48
IV. RESULTS.....	49
Introduction.....	49
The Associate Principal Supported, Sustained, and Developed Learning.....	50
Instructional Support in Content Area.....	57
Site Visits.....	60
Providing a Context for Professional Development	
Site Visit 1 – Video Club.....	61
Providing a Context for Professional Development	
Site Visit 2 – Modeling Argument Writing.....	65
Providing a Procedure for Professional Development	
Site Visit 3 – Creating a Protocol for Analyzing Student Writing.....	67
Teacher Perceptions.....	68
Partnership Domains of Instructional Coaching.....	76
Category 1: Equality.....	77
Category 2: Choice.....	78
Category 3: Voice.....	78
Category 4: Reflection.....	79
Category 5: Dialogue.....	81
Category 6: Praxis.....	81

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Chapter	Page
IV.	Category 7: Reciprocity82
	Theories About Writing82
V.	DISCUSSION86
	Instructional Gaps Created by TAKS87
	High School and College Readiness Standards89
	Instructional Coach Elevated Teachers' Content Knowledge90
	Associate Principal Put in Place Constructs That Supported Professional Learning91
	Teachers Enrolled in the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaching92
	Implications93
	Limitations95
	Future Studies95
	REFERENCES102

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE OF TEACHER FOCUS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ASSOCIATED RUBRICS FOR RESPONSES.....112

APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTIONAL COACH DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT.....114

APPENDIX C: EXCERPTS FROM ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW CATEGORIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK.....116

APPENDIX D: SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT FORM FOR TEACHER SUPPORT CATEGORIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK.....118

APPENDIX E: SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL FEEDBACK FORM CHARACTERIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK120

APPENDIX F: INSTRUCTIONAL COACH QUALITY RUBRIC FOR CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT122

APPENDIX G: PROTOCOL: TEAM ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK.....124

APPENDIX H: UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH127

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1	Criteria of the College Board SAT 6-Point Rubric.....36
2	The Big Four Principles Aligned with Focus Interview Questions42
3	Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Concepts for Professional Learning53
4	Suburban High School Instructional Improvement Targets55
5	Alignment of Associate Principal’s Espoused Focus with IC’s Enacted PD59
6	Content – Learning Environment for Teacher #163
7	Content – Learning Environment for Teacher #264
8	Content – Learning Environment for Teacher #364
9	Descriptor Codes for 9 th Grade English Language Arts Teachers69
10	Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Content Planning71
11	Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Environment72
12	Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Instruction74
13	Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Assessment76
14	Categories of Domain Analysis77
15	Teacher/Coach Alignment Organized by Domain Statements84
16	Campus Leadership Action Plan at College Readiness Level100

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Target Centered Professional Development	92

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Retention of a competent teaching force is a growing concern among the nation's educators and policy makers. Statistical information on the plight of new teachers indicates that nearly one-fourth of them will leave the profession after two years of service, and a staggering one-third will leave after three years (Rebore, 2011). The exit of teachers from the profession and the movement of teachers away from low-performing schools are costly. Students lose the value of being taught by an experienced teacher, and schools and districts must recruit and train their replacements. Current teacher retention research estimates that the cumulative costs for all schools and districts across the country to hire, recruit, and train replacement teachers are close to \$7.34 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Educational leaders would agree that the most important factor for determining student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. Nothing is more critical than what occurs behind the closed classroom door between teacher and student. Retaining high-quality teachers is necessary in order to provide an equitable education to students across the nation. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing *and retaining* high-quality teachers in every community and at every grade level (2008).

Study after study over the past 25 years points to the campus principal as key to building the environment in which teachers flourish or perish. A strong and supportive principal enables a faculty to succeed in the most challenging conditions; a weak or authoritarian principal undermines the work of even the most able and committed teacher

(Drago-Severson, 2004). Professional learning is what centers a teacher to the school; thus, the building principal who reorganizes and responds to teachers as a divergent group of learners at different stages of readiness meets their informational as well as transformational (Drago-Severson, 2004) adult development needs. A principal must heed research findings that there are specific practices that support effective differentiated approaches to adult learning and professional development in schools. The effective principal, research shows, establishes teams, provides leadership roles for teachers, promotes collegial inquiry, and relies on mentoring for induction of new teachers and the further learning of experienced teachers (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Drago-Severson, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimore, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Sparks, 1994).

The effective building leader knows that teacher development does not track neatly into years of experience in the classroom. Principals must acknowledge the need for professional development that creates opportunities for interaction among teachers at different development levels in order to stem the exit of teachers from the profession and away from low-performing schools. As opportunities increase for professional learning that moves away from the traditional inservice training mode and toward long-term, continuous learning in the context of school and classroom and with the support of colleagues, the idea of professional development takes on even greater importance. If teacher learning takes place within the context of a professional community that is nurtured and developed both within and outside the school (Lieberman, 1995) then the effects may be more than just an expanded conception of teacher development. Indeed, such teacher learning can result in significant and lasting school change.

The effective principal is guided by the standards for staff development set forth by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). The principal secures NSDC *context standards* (Easton, 2008) by organizing staff into learning communities and leading that staff toward continuous improvement. A principal implements *process standards* (Easton, 2008) by making data-driven decisions and collaborating with staff to design best-practice instruction from their evaluation of research-based information. Finally, the effective principal is guided by *content standards* (Easton, 2008). Content standards hold high expectations for academic achievement by preparing educators to understand and appreciate all students and by creating safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments. Content standards in professional learning environments also deepen educators' content knowledge by providing research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards and various assessments.

Statement of the Problem

How does a leader implement the context, process, and content standards for professional development in order to meet the needs of staff? A one-size-fits-all model will not suffice. But there is one promising model of professional development that does provide differentiation for adult learning needs as well as addressing the context, process, and content standards espoused by the NSDC: a mentoring program. Mentoring is the systematic support for orienting new teachers to the school district, policies and services, as well as, providing support for understanding the teacher's role and function on campus.

In 2003, six district partners in the Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP) engaged in various teacher induction activities. To learn what was working

best, the GSTEP partners conducted surveys and collected data on focus groups (Gilbert, 2005). With 140 teachers responding to the survey, the five most valued strategies were: observing other teachers; assigning mentors to new teachers; providing new teachers with feedback on classroom observations; providing new teachers with co-planning time with other teachers; and assigning new teachers to smaller classes.

The researchers in GSTEP, however, discovered that new teachers did not view mentoring as the most valuable component of induction. Rather, *opportunities for working with more experienced teachers* were most critical to a new teacher. Interest in the form of job-embedded professional learning described as instructional coaching has grown dramatically in the past 10 years and answers the need for sustained and supportive opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively with experienced teachers. The differentiated support that instructional coaching offers teachers is viewed as the single most powerful answer to the question of what policies and procedures a school leader needs to put in place in order to develop and retain high quality teachers (Barth, 2001; Borko, Liston & Whitcomb, 2009; Kinsey, 2006).

Instructional coaches are onsite professional developers who work collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into their classrooms. Instructional coaching is an approach to professional learning that involves practices or the components of coaching. These components are dedicated to supporting teachers in a job-embedded professional development model. Research on induction and professional development shows organizational contexts vary, and some are much better places for new teachers to continue their development than others (Darling-Hammond, 1995). It is always the degree of support from the principal that

drives the implementation of a successful job-embedded model of professional development called instructional coaching.

Because the classroom serves as the laboratory for current research on the job-embedded model of instructional coaching, researchers have identified four vital cornerstones necessary to every new teacher's repertoire: classroom behavior, content knowledge, instruction, and formative assessment (Knight, 2007). Named *The Big Four* (Knight, 2007), these cornerstones of professional development frame the instructional coach's workspace. Together, the instructional coach and the teacher identify the proven practices necessary to implement *The Big Four*. The instructional coach's role is to place the interventions in teacher-friendly language and in a context outside of the control group in research settings. Translating research into practice involves identifying the essence of a work created by researchers in a clinical setting and then reconstructing it so that it can be appreciated and implemented by teachers in the classroom.

If *The Big Four* is the "what" for the instructional coach, then modeling, observing, and collaboratively exploring data are the "how" for the coach. Modeling makes instructional strategies concrete and real for teachers. Modeling takes the learning from the pages of research documents and puts it squarely in the classroom. Through modeling, the instructional coach ingrains teaching experience into the teacher's repertoire. Observation and conversation provide feedback to teachers in specific, direct, and non-attributive formats. During the collaborative exploration of data, coaches and teachers work together as partners to interpret the data gathered by coaches during teachers' lessons (Knight, 2007).

This is the landscape of job-embedded professional development, and much depends on the expertise of an instructional coach and the leadership role of the principal. As more and more teachers enter the teaching field needing sustained and systemic support their first years of teaching, who will provide the often very specific content knowledge necessary to support them as more and more district and campus initiatives and high stakes testing continue to accumulate?

The growing demand for higher levels of education and literacy skills places new pressures on American schools. High schools must do more than graduate students; they must also prepare students for higher education and satisfying employment. Students must be able, not only to formulate spontaneous concepts, but also to remove themselves from a concept, step back, and abstract from and define understanding into new conceptual patterns necessary for successful college work. Working at what Vygotsky calls the “true-concept formation stage of learning,” a student is enabled to form the scientific concepts which are basic to mastery of almost all college material (Daniels, 1996). The major theme of Vygotsky’s theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (Newman & Holzman, 1993) believes every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

A second aspect of Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), a level of

development attained when children engage in social behavior (Newman & Holzman, 1993). Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone. The questions are:

1. Do all beginning teachers have Vygotsky's level of conceptual learning and the ability to recognize its patterns and then impart such concept attaining knowledge, scaffolded no less for differentiation, to an overloaded classroom?
2. Do all beginning teachers have the opportunity to operate within their ZPD, and are they afforded the support of an instructional coach who provides the scaffolding necessary for their learning just as they are called to provide it for the students?
3. Do all campus instructional leaders recognize the need for such differentiated content knowledge necessary for teachers to teach at such high levels of instruction?
4. Do campus leaders provide the daily support necessary for teachers to implement instruction at high cognitive levels?

No other area reveals the necessity of content knowledge more overtly than in the content area of writing instruction. This is the area for which great expertise is required of the instructional coaching model for professional development. A teacher may be an excellent writer but that does not transfer automatically to being a great teacher of writing.

Research on the composing process indicates that writing is an enormously complex task, demanding the use of at least four types of knowledge: knowledge of content to be written about, procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content, knowledge of discourse structures, and the procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type (Hillocks, 1986). The act of writing any set of words in a composition requires the student to review what he/she has already written and synthesize to create new or continuing thinking. A new teacher must receive very specific content knowledge, extensive modeling, and collaborative dialogue in order to feel supported in teaching the writing process.

Researchers have long lamented that writing is poorly taught. The reality is that writing instruction is perfunctory, and perfunctory writing instruction will not lead to college readiness (Emig, 1977). The medium of writing requires the establishment of systematic connections and relationships. Writing is the gatekeeper for college readiness and without excellent writing instruction, the gate closes on most students once they enter ninth grade. It is critical to marry the relationship of writing to the processes of analysis and synthesis, the levels at which state standards are written for all content areas and the level at which college readiness is assessed.

Purpose of the Study

The research on the subject of teachers and professional development remains one of the more difficult and least understood roles in organizations. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of one promising model of instructional coaching used in a large, suburban high school and its impact on teacher proficiency with the teaching of college readiness writing standards.

Research Questions

Using a case study analysis, the researcher documented answers to the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and limitations of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching in addressing college readiness writing standards?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching model for professional development in the area of college readiness standards in writing?
3. What do principals do to support, develop, and sustain the instructional coach in addressing student achievement in college readiness standards in writing?

Given the keen interest in coaching and the limited rigorous study of this approach to professional learning, further study of coaching is certainly needed. This study was designed to deepen understanding of the potential impact of one particular approach to instructional coaching and the role of principal leadership in supporting and sustaining it. Answers to these questions provided a better understanding of what professional development model was necessary for beginning teachers so that teacher retention rates will increase, district and campus initiatives can be met, and students will achieve.

Definition of Terms

1. *Instructional coaching* is an approach to professional learning that involves the practices between coach and teacher of building rapport, collaboratively planning and observing lessons, modeling lessons, conferencing,

collaboratively exploring data, and continuation of support.

2. *Job-embedded professional development* is learning that occurs as educators engage in their daily work activities. It can be both formal and informal and includes, but is not limited to, discussion with others, coaching, mentoring, study groups, and action research.
3. *The Big Four* is a comprehensive approach to improving instruction based on the research from Jim Knight's Kansas Coaching Project. *The Big Four* is built around four critical instructional areas: classroom environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment.
4. *Mentoring* is an approach to professional learning built on trust with a primary goal of making a teacher new to the field of teaching more confident in abilities and talents. Rather than focus on particular skills, tasks or goals, mentoring is a long-term, ongoing process.
5. *College readiness* is what students need to know and be able to do in order to be successful in either entry-level college courses or the skilled workplace.
6. *Modeling* is used to facilitate learning skills by demonstrating in the classroom setting or simulated settings such as film or videotape. Demonstrations are mixed with explanation and theory and illustrate teacher actions.
7. *Synthesis writing* is the process of drawing together particular themes or traits observed in printed texts and to organize the material from each text according to those themes or traits. Synthesis writing involves accurate summaries of original information organized in such a way that it makes sense of the

sources and helps the reader understand in greater depth because of the synthesis.

8. *Argument writing* is a process used to persuade the audience that ideas are valid based on the Greek philosopher Aristotle's means of persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.

Considerations

This case study involved a study of a single instructional coach and extensive data collection from teachers and campus leadership. Because this qualitative research was dependent on the researcher in collecting and interpreting information, an important consideration was researcher bias. The researcher was a nonparticipant observer, but the researcher was also a district administrator who was known to the participants and held an authoritative, supervisory role over the teachers and instructional coach. The role of the researcher was overt, and the teachers knew what was being observed and what data was being collected by the researcher. Interviewing and surveying served as important methods for the researcher to check the accuracy of the impressions gained through observations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature concerning the impacts of instructional coaching provided the background for this study. This review was focused on researching the following areas as each relates to the instructional coaching model for professional development: enhanced college readiness standards, job-embedded professional development, instructional coaches as content specialists, and the principal's leadership role in systemic support of instructional coaching.

Enhanced College Readiness Standards

A recurring criticism of tests used in high-stakes decision making is that they distort instruction and force teachers to "teach to the test." The criticism is not without merit. The public pressure on students, teachers, principals, and school superintendents to raise scores on high-stakes tests is tremendous, and the temptation to tailor and restrict instruction to only that which will be tested is almost irresistible. Former Microsoft Chairman, Bill Gates, told a congressional committee in 2008,

Too many of our students fail to graduate from high school with the basic skills they will need to succeed in the 21st-century economy, much less prepared for the rigors of college and career. Our record on high school math and science education is particularly troubling. (Testimony to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science and Technology)

States are responding to the criticism by beginning to require students to take algebra, geometry, and laboratory science in order to graduate from high school. According to the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, in 2009, five states said explicitly that

those classes had to be rigorous – although they didn't define the term. By 2015, policies in 17 states will call for rigor. The State Scholars Initiative, a program that started in Longview, Texas, in 1989, (Allan, 2005) recommends that high school students take 16 yearlong courses in English, math, social studies, science, and foreign language. Students in 24 states who take and pass those courses are eligible for a federal scholarship (Hechinger, 2009). Advanced Placement classes, which once catered only to the most elite students, are now ubiquitous and the de facto college preparatory curriculum in many urban high schools. Most states now let high school students take community college classes for credit. But *saying* a program or curriculum is rigorous does not automatically make it rigorous.

In 2006, the 79th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1, the Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum. Texas Education Code 28.008 was enacted to ensure that students are able to perform college-level coursework at institutions of higher education by creating the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop College Readiness Standards in English/language arts, social sciences, mathematics, and science in direct collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). These standards were developed by the THECB with vertical teams composed of public school educators and institutions of higher education faculty and adopted as the Texas College Readiness Standards in January, 2008. These standards were not based upon the idea that every child needs to go to college; rather, these are the skills that most students entering the workforce will need to possess to be successful as well as meeting the demands for entry level college classes.

The TEA and THECB set out to determine what scale score on the exit level TAKS test in 11th grade English/language arts and math would be the best indicator for a student to be successful in college and the workplace. Additionally, the standards included a cut score to identify whether students had acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to enter a Texas higher education institution without enrolling in a remedial course (Fuller, 2009). According to Fuller (2009), TEA and THECB set the cut score at a scale score of 2200 for both exams. In 2006, the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) reviewed the findings and determined that the 2200 scale score was not an adequate indicator of college readiness and proposed a cut score of 2300 for English/language arts and math, and it should be used to measure college readiness. In the study, Dougherty, Mellor, & Smith (2006), found that students who scored a 2300 had a much higher probability of scoring higher on the ACT, SAT, and THEA, a measure of college readiness that would require less remediation in English and college algebra classes. The authors found a staggering difference in college readiness between the 2200 and 2300 scale score. In math, a scale score of 2200 on the exit level TAKS test was associated with only a 26% probability of not needing remediation while a score of 2300 was associated with a 77% probability of not needing remediation. In English/language arts, the difference was not as great but still indicated a 77% probability of not needing remediation with a scale score of 2200 and a 90% probability of not needing remediation with a 2300 scale score. At this time, the THECB has adopted the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) with the lower scale score but is changing this for ninth graders entering Texas high schools in 2011. With the adoption of the new CCRS,

these students will be taking end-of-course assessments instead of the TAKS assessments. Two of the end-of-course exams will have a greater impact on college readiness. English III and algebra II assessments will include a college readiness component and performance expectations that must be used by Texas public higher education institutions as the measure of eligibility for entry-level college courses.

The Texas CCRS standards are an attempt to define college readiness based on assessment results. The disconnect between rigor and results appears starkly, however, when high school students matriculate to college and meet the college expectations for reading and writing.

Technological innovations, globalization, and changes in the workplace have increased the need for young people to obtain some form of higher education, whether it is in a two or four-year college or involves technical or career coursework. Although progress has been made in improving the literacy achievement of students in American schools, the majority of students still do not read or write well enough to meet grade-level demands, not to mention, college or career readiness standards. According to *The Nation's Report Card: Writing, 2008*, only one out of four 12th grade students is a proficient writer (Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008). Poor literacy skills play a role in why many students do not complete high school. Over half of the adults scoring at the lowest literacy levels are dropouts (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Among those who do graduate, many will not be ready for college or a career where reading and writing are required. The threat to a democracy due to the financial and social costs of substandard literacy has been documented. The lack of basic skills costs universities and businesses as much as \$16 billion annually (Greene, 2000). Poor

writing skills cost businesses \$3.1 billion annually and 40% of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek (National Commission on Writing, 2004). Because reading and writing skills are now essential to almost all white- and blue-collar jobs, students who cannot compete will fall further and further behind, and the division between the rich and the poor will continue to increase. The inability to read, comprehend, write, and organize information into knowledge limits job choice, higher education opportunities, wage increases, and full participation in a democratic lifestyle.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) establishes a very high threshold for national writing standards. NAEP reports that students can “write.” They “know” language, in some sense. The difficulty, according to NAEP, is that students cannot systematically produce writing at the high levels of skill, maturity, and sophistication required in a complex, modern economy. Vygotsky would point out that the students lack the ability to infer principles from their own experience; they are not forming the “scientific concepts” (Newman & Holzman, 1993).

The National Commission on Writing (2006) documents the inability of almost all students to create prose that is precise, engaging, and coherent. That is a sort of shorthand for the “proficient” standards set by NAEP at grade 12. These are standards that encourage first-rate organization, convincing and elaborated responses to the tasks assigned, and the use of rich, evocative and compelling language. Those standards set a very high bar. Only about one-quarter (22%) of all high school seniors are able to meet it (2006). The NAEP data indicate that when asked to think on paper, most students produce rudimentary and fairly run-of-the-mill prose. Writing at the basic level demonstrates only a limited grasp of the importance of extended or complex thoughts.

Student responses are acceptable in the fundamentals of form, content, and language. These students are able to organize their thoughts and provide some supporting details. Their grammar, spelling, and punctuation are fair. On the whole, readers are able to understand what these students are trying to say. Unfortunately, about three-quarters of students at all grade levels are unable to go much beyond that. By grade 12, most students are producing relatively immature and unsophisticated writing. Indeed, more than one in five continues to produce prose with a substantial number of errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation (2006).

Currently, there is a strong argument for developing curriculum aligned with standards, assessments, and teacher development that specify sequences of learning and provide much more guidance than standards alone (Hechinger Institute, 2010). Subject matter must be organized according to learning and developmental theory about how students understand increasingly complex concepts. Standards must serve to locate students on a spectrum of understanding and development, facilitate assessments that are diagnostic, and shape personalized teaching (Hechinger Institute, 2010).

Job-embedded Professional Development

A rigorous education results from rigorous teaching, and rigorous teaching is precise pedagogy designed to produce precise thinkers. A number of large scale studies of effective literacy pedagogy in the United States and the United Kingdom (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Raphael, Bogner, & Roehrig, 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003; Wray, Medwell, Poulson, & Fox, 2002) have highlighted the characteristics of teachers who succeed in helping their students perform better in literacy than the more typical peers. These teachers often have excellent classroom management

skills, implement a balanced literacy framework, take a metacognitive approach to instruction, emphasize higher order thinking skills, teach basic skills in meaningful context, and use a range of formative assessment tools. Research suggests that this kind of approach to instruction is not the norm, however, (Pressley, 2001) and is less likely to be encountered by students who struggle with literacy (Allington, 1983) or attend high-poverty schools (Duke, 2000).

In one study of a high-poverty school, a multilevel research design was implemented to address the complex problem of underachievement in literacy (Kennedy, 2010). A key feature of the research design was the collaborative nature of the intervention. The effects of the change process on participating teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, classroom program for literacy, and ability to sustain the change process into the future were documented. Customized, on-site, job-embedded professional development was provided to teachers as they continued implementing change. The professional development program sought to enhance teachers' content knowledge in essential literacy skills. It sought to equip teachers with a range of pedagogical content strategies. By the end of the intervention, the participating students had significantly higher achievement in reading, writing, and spelling than would be expected on the basis of their pretest scores (Kennedy, 2010).

Provision of a multifaceted professional development program for teachers is essential in addressing underachievement in literacy. When professional development is customized rather than prepackaged and takes place over an extended period of time and uses a range of research-based approaches (including a strong, ongoing focus on student achievement), it can have a major impact on student achievement, motivation, and

engagement (Kennedy, 2010).

Districts that believe the quality of student learning is highly dependent on the quality of instruction organize themselves to support instructionally-focused professional learning for teachers. Learning experiences go beyond the workshop format to include teacher inter-visitations, demonstration lessons, in-class coaching and teams of teachers doing lesson study, curriculum planning, and analysis of assessment data (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2010).

Districts that develop and implement a collaborative nature of professional development through the job-embedded model of instructional coaching uphold Vygotsky's (1993) belief that the relationship between instruction and development is neither a single process nor an independent process. Rather, the unity of learning and development has complex interrelationships which can be explained in the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1993) states: "Instruction is useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it impels or wakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the zone of proximal development" (p. 106). Here is the key thought for district and campus leaders: *Instruction would be completely unnecessary if it merely utilized what had already matured in the developmental process, if it were not itself a source of development* (Vygotsky, 1993). If a district and/or campus principal does not understand Vygotsky's theory, then instruction will never attain the levels necessary to address college readiness standards. Once again, what beginning year teacher has the capacity to embrace and embed this level of instructional pedagogy into every lesson plan design? Vygotsky challenges the traditional understanding of motivation as being internal and prerequisite *for*, rather than an outcome *of*, learning.

Educators and parents often believe that children must be motivated in order to learn. However, according to Vygotsky, children must learn in order to be motivated. Learning, he believes, leads to development. If a teacher fails to embed Vygotsky's theory in his/her teaching repertoire, the level of instruction in the classroom may descend to the level of teaching and rewarding students for what they already know in an attempt to motivate them to strive for higher learning goals. Thus, the teacher in a good faith effort to motivate students reduces content to low-level skills. An instructional coach's responsibility as a content specialist is to help teachers avoid the pitfalls of low-level skills through collaborative discussions, analysis of student products, modeling in the classroom, and descriptive and timely feedback.

Not every initiative that contains research-based content will increase student learning because, to do so, several conditions must be met (Joyce & Showers, 2002). First, the content needs to elevate what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school. Second, the content needs to significantly affect what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate in the clinical sense that student behavior changes to a considerable degree. A school where writing occurs regularly (thereby affecting *what* is taught) can make a considerable difference to the quality of writing. Where teachers need to study the teaching of writing, a model of instruction (the *how*) can make a noticeable difference. An increase in the quantity of writing, combined with a good model for teaching writing, will probably make a larger difference than either of these two initiatives implemented without the other (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Finally, student learning must be studied continuously and diagnostically. For example, teachers who study weekly samples of their students' writing with an eye to modulating instruction

based on student ability create more energy in the teaching/learning environment. And the students, knowing their progress, are likely to become more motivated compared to situations where teachers use only end-of-term assessments. A curriculum and instructional change, mediated through well-designed staff development, can have a major and rapid effect on student learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002). The research question continues to point toward instructional coaching as the best model for delivering the continuous and targeted focus required to help teachers create classroom contexts that best support learning at a college readiness level for writing.

Conceptions of writing to learn have evolved considerably in the past two decades (Newell, 2006). Early authors assumed that the use of the technology of writing was sufficient for learning and that writing was unique in this respect (Odell, 1980). These beliefs were challenged by subsequent research showing that the effects of writing on learning are inconsistent and that the symbol systems other than print can also serve as media for thinking and learning (Akerman, 1993; Smagorinsky, 1995).

The first meta-analysis of writing-intensive curriculum units showed that the effects of writing on content area learning were significant but small, and they varied from study to study (Bangert-Downs et al., 2004). The most recent meta-analysis (Graham & Hebert, 2010) to examine the effects of different writing practices on students' reading performance differs from previous studies in that previous analyses focused only on single practices, such as the impact of sentence combining on reading comprehension (Neville & Searls, 1991), aggregated reading measures with other types of outcome measures (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004), or did not isolate the effect of the writing practice (Moore & Readence, 1984).

Collecting, categorizing, and analyzing experimental and quasi-experimental data on the effectiveness of writing practices for improving students' reading skills and comprehension resulted in identification of research-supported writing practices for improving students' reading (Graham & Hebert, 2010). The research suggests that having students write about the texts they read, teaching students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text, and increasing how much students write (Graham & Hebert, 2010) strengthen critical reading skills and positively impact student achievement. However, the research brings to light how very targeted and focused the instruction must be in order to observe the impact on student achievement. Newer and better understanding of textual material is likely to occur when students write about text in extended ways involving analysis, interpretation, or personalization (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

All nine of the comparisons of student groups in the most current meta-analysis research on writing produced a positive outcome. Extended writing produced greater comprehension gains than simply reading the text, reading and rereading it, reading and studying it, reading and discussing it, and receiving reading instruction (Graham & Hebert, 2010). The writing about the text was essential for the transfer of knowledge. These reading activities served as the control conditions in all nine studies. Students in the control groups were expressly taught how to write extended analytical responses over a three to four month period.

A recent project on the theory of cognitive processes in writing to learn that was initially conceived as an effort to implement Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) knowledge transforming model of writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2005) developed

initially to explain the process of skilled writing. Instead, it evolved to influence contemporary research on writing and writing to learn. Its research beginnings focused on reviewing students' existing writing abilities but evolved into creating classroom contexts that would develop students' abilities to use writing as a tool for learning and generated theoretical insights and an instructional model (Klein & Rose, 2010). This model is based on the metaphor of two mental spaces. One is the content space, in which writers think about the question, "What do I mean?" The other is the rhetorical space, in which they think about the question, "What do I say?" Reflective thought during writing involves an interaction between these two spaces (Klein & Rose, 2010), thus, the researchers' emphasis on a theory or cognitive process in writing to learn.

In summary, the researchers outline the cognitive process as first, the writer pursues a goal in the rhetorical space. If the writer has content knowledge to meet the goal, then writing proceeds smoothly. If the writer does not have content knowledge available, he may set the subgoal of developing this content. The writer works on this problem in the content space, retrieving knowledge from long-term memory and derives new inferences from it. These inferences result in a transformation of the writer's knowledge. The writer may then translate this back to the rhetorical space, composing new text. Other research supports the hypothesis that the pursuit of rhetorical goals can lead students to transform knowledge through writing (Klein, Boman, & Prince, 2007; Piacente-Cimini & Williams, 2007).

The researchers, Klein and Rose (2010), hypothesized that the knowledge transforming process begins with rhetorical goals of the two genre writings of argumentation and explanation (synthesis). Argumentation has the rhetorical purpose of

deliberation or persuasion; it invites students to think critically about subject matter. Explanation or synthesis has the rhetorical purpose of telling how or why phenomena occur, so it invites writers to understand processes and theories. Argumentation and synthesis writing then allow for the best landscape of exploration of knowledge transfer and form the foundational skills necessary for college readiness standards.

Thus, learning is conceived of in this research study as the result of the students' construction of relationships among ideas, and knowledge comprises the relationships among these ideas. Previous research concurs that including a variety of argument moves in writing and incorporating information from source texts into these moves contribute substantially to learning during writing (Klein & Samuels, 2010). Learning is conceived as a result of the students' construction of inferences and comprises new relationships among ideas. The writer would then try to translate these new inferences into well-formed text comprising the core of college readiness standards: critical reading and writing.

A teacher learns and embeds these very content-specific instructional strategies into the classroom with the help and support of a content specialist who models the *how* of instruction, coordinates continuous analysis of student writing samples for data, and provides feedback and support to the teacher over a sustained period of time.

Instructional Coaches as Content Specialists

Research on teacher training suggests that fully elaborated training systems, including theory study, demonstrations of a model or strategy to be learned, and practice and feedback in relatively protected conditions (such as modeling or peer teaching), are sufficient for skill development (Joyce, 1981). However, the concern is for transfer of

training. The attainment of skill is not a sufficient condition to bring about transfer of that skill into the workplace. Once a teaching skill has been attained, it needs to be transformed during the process when it is transferred into the active teaching repertoire. The conditions of the classroom are sufficiently different from training situations in that a teacher cannot walk away from the training setting into the classroom with the skill completely ready for use. The training will change to fit classroom conditions. The role of the instructional coach as a content specialist is to help with the mastery of a teaching approach which is not in the naturally developed repertoire of a teacher. The instructional coach helps the teacher think differently, organize instruction in fresh ways, and adapt to new approaches to teaching.

An early study of teacher training and transfer (Showers, 1982) identified two levels of outcomes from teacher training: horizontal (lateral and fine tuning of teaching repertoires), and vertical (development of a new teaching style). Transfer is horizontal when a teacher generalizes learning to a new task of the same complexity. Vertical is the condition in which knowledge and abilities acquired in performing one task facilitate the learning of higher-order tasks. Showers' research highlighted the need for expanded training in order to acquire more vertical outcomes from teachers. She used the term "coaching" in her description of what expanded training for vertical outcomes looks like. Her study drew upon the foundational work of others before her who also called upon the need for coaching as support to teacher training. McKibbin and Joyce (1980), in their study of teacher personality dimensions and the ability to acquire and use various models of teaching, provided long-term consultant services to teachers in training. The procedures they developed provided a useful model for the development of coaching

techniques. Good and Brophy (1974) demonstrated the power of intensive observations and feedback for assisting teachers to alter their teaching repertoire. Sharan and Hertz-Lazarowitz (1982) provided extensive initial training (52 hours) to teachers learning a new teaching strategy (small group teaching) and followed the initial training with consultant-assisted self-help teams composed of three or four teachers. The teams engaged in teaching and feedback by teammates to the teacher being observed. Sixty-five percent of the regular classroom teachers who took part in the project were observed to implement small group teaching on a fairly high level.

The studies reported have emphasized obvious changes taking place in the classrooms. There is another perspective, however, to look at more closely. That perspective is to look at the teachers themselves as individual professionals in the midst of changing their approaches to teaching, specifically in writing instruction. Surveys of instructional practices in writing indicate clearly that the vast majority of teachers do not have the most effective teaching strategies in their repertoires (Hillocks, 1986). Nor will simply hearing about writing strategies help much. To learn the strategies, teachers must learn the theories underlying them, discuss the strategies, develop their own materials for use in their own classrooms, attempt to use those strategies and materials, discuss the results with others, use them again, and recycle through the process. Realistically, how could this level of teacher transformation occur without support from a content specialist working side-by-side with them?

The belief that the effective teaching of writing is an essential component of school programs (Langer & Applebee, 1987) and essential for college and career readiness (Hillocks, 2010) leads to the conclusion that writing supports more complex

thinking and learning about the subjects that students are expected to learn. For a student to think on a more complex level, teachers must orchestrate a more complex classroom environment for that thinking to occur. One such study developed a series of detailed case studies that served as models for successfully implementing a broader range of writing-to-learn activities in subject-area classrooms (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Eighteen teachers were interviewed and observed over the course of two years. Planning meetings were held regularly and focused on the goals for lessons and on the ways that writing activities might be used to further the goals. University-based team members served as a resources or “coaches” that the teachers could collaborate with as they brainstormed new approaches and how to implement them. Classroom observations were scheduled regularly in each classroom and focused on lessons when writing activities were planned. Writing samples were collected at regular intervals. Wrap-up sessions were held at the end of each year, during which the participating teachers discussed the project with one another as well as with the project team. What was originally conceived as a series of studies as analyses of the problems and benefits that subject-area teachers could expect in the course of broadening the uses of writing in the classroom expanded to teacher transformation. The teachers found that changes in classroom activities led to a fundamental change in what counted as “knowing” a subject. It also resulted in the reassessment of the role of the teacher and the role of the student in the whole pattern of classroom interaction (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

What do teachers need to “know” in terms of subject knowledge and subject application knowledge with regard to argumentative non-fiction writing? There remains uncertainty and lack of confidence among many new writing teachers as to how to teach

argumentative writing, partly because more of them are trained in the literary tradition and mainly because state assessments have traditionally assessed a student's narrative writing ability and not persuasive or analytical abilities. Cognitively, argumentative writing remains difficult because it includes the operation and application of ideas, whereas one could argue that narrative or descriptive writing deals with particularities.

In the past two or three decades, colleges and universities have based writing courses on the theories of Stephen E. Toulmin. Toulmin's basic conception of argument includes several elements: a *claim* based on evidence of some sort, a *warrant* that explains how the evidence supports the claim, the *backing* supporting the warrant, *qualifications*, and *rebuttals* or *counterarguments* that refute competing claims (Toulmin, 1958). When it comes to writing, the most advanced secondary textbooks for English and most state rubrics for evaluating writing do not address Toulmin's conception of an argument nor what is involved in argumentative writing. One significant text of over 1,100 pages devotes only 45 pages to persuasive writing and only 1½ pages to "logical appeals" (Kinneavy, 1993), which are the essence of argument. The text continues to distinguish the difference between persuasion and argument. Basically, the difference is that persuasion does not necessitate proof by logic but rather by favorable evidence. There is no explanation as to what logic is or any examples of logic that a teacher might distinguish for herself. Yet, in 2009, the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers put a document on the Internet entitled *College and Career Ready: Standards for Reading, Writing, and Communication*. It states that the ability to frame and defend an argument is particularly important to students' readiness for college and careers and that students must be able to

frame a debate over a claim, presenting the evidence for the argument and acknowledging and addressing its limitations (2B). If a teacher does not have knowledge about Toulmin's construction of an argument or access to resources so that she may self-teach, then the presence of an instructional coach, who is a content specialist, is imperative if the nation, state, and district are serious about students achieving a college readiness standard in critical reading, writing, and thinking.

Writing connects the three major tenses (present, past, future) of our experiences to make meaning. The two major modes by which these three aspects are united are the processes of analysis and synthesis: analysis, the breaking of entities into their constituent parts; and synthesis, combining or fusing these, often into fresh arrangements (Emig, 1977). Basic writers struggle to attain a level of cognitive development which would allow them to form abstractions or conceptions (Lunsford, 1979). They are unable to practice analysis and synthesis and to apply successfully the principles derived to college tasks. Students may perform well on a given task in a specific situation, but they have great difficulty abstracting from it or replicating it in another context. Vygotsky (1962) distinguished this as "spontaneous" concepts, those which are formed as a result of ordinary, day-to-day experiences, and "scientific" concepts, which are formed largely in conjunction with instruction. Piaget described a similar process he called the "de-centering," a process of stepping outside the self and understanding the thoughts, values, and feelings of others (i.e., synthesis). Basic writing students are able to formulate spontaneous concepts and write narrative or descriptive essays of various interests, but they are not able to remove themselves from such concepts, to abstract from them, or to define them into the scientific concepts necessary for successful college work. The

danger would be for a teacher to settle for writing products at the spontaneous concept stage rather than at the true concept formation stage. The role of the instructional coach is to scaffold the teacher's concept formation stage as well. As the teacher scaffolds the student to higher levels of cognitive attainment, the coach scaffolds the teacher to what "knowing" a subject means. We learn by doing with a recognized "master" or "connoisseur" better than by studying or reading about abstract principles. Vygotsky put it quite succinctly:

What a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions.

(Thought and Language, p. 104)

The job-embedded model of professional development that is called instructional coaching makes use of a content specialist to deliver focused and targeted support to teachers on a daily basis. The coach, supported by a campus instructional leader who understands the need for differentiated professional learning, enables the "ripening function." The understanding of a theory of an approach to teaching contributes to the development of skill and ultimately to its use. The more thoroughly a teacher understands a concept, the more likely the teacher is able to learn how to use it and be committed to using it, thereby, positively impacting student achievement.

Principal Leadership and Instructional Coaching

The experiences of educators across the nation provide ample evidence that all educational systems are not created equal concerning supporting coaching. Researchers provide a great service by identifying the systemic supports that are most important. If a

principal does not vocally, symbolically, and authentically stress the importance of instructional improvement, then it most likely will not happen (Collins & Porras, 1994). In particular, the principal's role in providing systematic support for instructional coaches must emanate from three deliberate actions: to meet and collaboratively plan with coaches, to participate in professional development, and to attend and assist in facilitating workshops (Knight, 2011). Knight emphasizes the principal's role in selecting trained coaches, developing a targeted coaching strategy, and evaluating whether coaches are having the desired impact on teaching and learning (2011). Senge (2006) metaphorically describes the principal's leadership role in terms of a ship.

The principal is not the "captain" or the "navigator," or the "engineer" who provides the energy, or even the "social director." The principal is the designer of the ship. No one has a more sweeping influence on the ship than the designer.

...it's fruitless to be the leader in an organization that is poorly designed. (p. 321)

A primary task for principals is to design opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning that has an unmistakable impact on the way they teach and the way students learn.

The research suggests that an effective professional development program should have the following design characteristics: focused on subject matter content, aligned with other reform efforts and focused on how students learn academic content, ongoing rather than short-term, with opportunities for feedback and reflection (Steiner and Kowal, 2007). Knight's research at the University of Kansas Coaching Project is based on research literature and working with numerous districts across Canada and the United States. He calls his model, *The Big Four* because it is built around four critical

instructional areas: planning content, developing and using formative assessments, delivering instruction, and community building. According to Knight, the systemic use of *The Big Four* provides the foundational design for developing the instructional targets that will be the shared focus of the principal and the instructional coach. Even though a staggering amount of evidence suggests that schools are not as effective as they should be, the majority of schools are working toward improvement. The foundational design of *The Big Four* helps the principal attain that improvement by developing targeted, consistent professional learning that is done with teachers rather than to teachers. *The Big Four* landscape translates staff members' learning into high-leverage practices that achieves dramatic student outcomes. Principals who maintain a laser-like focus on a clearly defined improvement plan that takes into account the complexity of teaching and learning relationships create effective schools. However, the most highly effective principals also encourage a school culture that sustains ongoing professional development and alignment of purpose and actions among all staff members.

Summary of Findings

Principal leadership has an enormous impact on this initiative. Pierce and Fenwick (2002) claim that “the contemporary principal must simultaneously be a visionary, servant-leader, child advocate, community activist, politically astute bureaucrat, and instructional leader who promotes teacher development, raises students' standardized test scores, and is able to acquire and equitably allocate resources” (p. 31). As if that mission is not enough, add to the principal's charge the formation of college-ready campuses. The charge of a high school principal to provide development opportunities for teachers that deepen knowledge of skills, strategies, and academic

content to better prepare students for the rigors of college can not be shelved in the overcrowded bookcase of a principal's responsibilities.

As research continues to reinforce, only 45% of American students who enroll in post-secondary education will ultimately earn a bachelor's degree, in part because many find it necessary to take developmental courses during their first two years (The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems Progress and Completion Data, 2008). The landscape of job-embedded professional development targeted, sustained, and reinforced by the principal's leadership cannot occur without the help of content specialists in the form of instructional coaches. Much depends on the expertise of an instructional coach and the leadership of the principal. As more teachers enter the teaching field needing sustained and systemic support their first years of teaching, who will provide the often very specific content knowledge necessary to support them as more district and campus initiatives and high stakes testing continue to accumulate? The principal may know what to target, but does the principal have the content knowledge necessary to go beyond the workshop format to include such things as demonstration lessons, in-class coaching, lesson study, curriculum planning, and analysis of assessment data? And the rigors of college readiness skills go beyond the lesson planning. The key to transformative professional development is to view teachers as individual professionals in the midst of changing their approaches to teaching, specifically in writing instruction. Surveys of instructional practices in writing indicate clearly that the vast majority of teachers do not have the most effective teaching strategies in their repertoires (Hillocks, 1986). Nor will simply hearing about writing strategies help much. To learn the strategies, teachers must learn the theories underlying them, discuss the strategies,

develop their own materials for use in their own classrooms, implement those strategies and materials, discuss the results with others, try them again, and recycle through the process.

The belief that the effective teaching of writing is an essential component of school programs (Langer and Applebee, 1987) and essential for college and career readiness (Hillocks, 2010) leads to the conclusion that writing supports more complex thinking and learning about the subjects that students are expected to learn. For a student to think on a more complex level, teachers must orchestrate a more complex classroom environment for that thinking to occur. Now more than ever campuses need the presence of an instructional coach who is a content specialist in order to address the seriousness of students achieving a college readiness standard in critical reading, writing, and thinking.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

The ability to frame and defend an argument is one of the key cognitive strategies particularly important to students' readiness for college and careers. Students must be able to frame a debate over a claim, presenting the evidence for the argument and acknowledging and addressing its limitations. This foundational cognitive ability of breaking ideas into constituent parts and synthesizing or combining and fusing these parts into fresh arrangements results in making meaning.

In one suburban district, the rationale for studying the necessary constructs that campus leadership must put in place to support teachers in their teaching of college readiness level writing standards was in direct response to the collection and analysis of 334 student persuasive writing samples from six 9th grade teachers from one of the district's high schools. The writing samples were analyzed using the College Board SAT 6-point rubric. Every attempt was made to triangulate the scoring. No less than two of the 9th grade teachers scored each essay, and the researcher used an impartial scorer from outside the district to provide a third score for the essays. The writing samples were pulled randomly from grade level classes. No Pre-AP or above grade level writing samples were analyzed. The student writing samples served as a needs assessment for a district-wide writing initiative directed at college readiness writing standards and what campus leadership must put in place as direct support in order to positively impact student achievement.

Of the 334 student essays scored, 299 of them received a score of *Below Target*;

33 essays received a score of *On Target*; and 2 essays received a score of *Above Target*. This deficit in student achievement was an alarming wake up call for the district. The overwhelming majority of the writing samples were from the lowest score range and were often incomplete and incoherent. The 33 samples from the mid-range demonstrated organization, transition, and evidence to support a thesis idea, but they did it in a predictable and formulaic format. The two essays that were *Above Target* were not at the 6-point standard but were generally effective in organization, conventions, and ideas.

Table 1 organizes the analysis of the student writing samples aligned to the criteria of the SAT rubric.

Table 1

Criteria of the College Board SAT 6-Point Rubric

Below Target SAT Score Range 1-2 points (299 essays)	Position on topic is unclear or extremely limited; inappropriate examples of reasons; insufficient evidence	Poorly organized; lacks focus; problems with coherence or flow of ideas	Poor use of language; indicated very limited vocabulary and poor word choice	Good sentence structure; demonstrates some variety of sentence structure	Grammar and word usage mistakes are frequent and interfere with meaning; poor mechanics
On Target SAT Score Range 3-4 points (33 essays)	Position on topic demonstrates competent critical thinking skills; examples, reasons and evidence are adequate	Generally organized and focused; demonstrates some coherence and attention to the flow of ideas	Displays adequate, but inconsistent, use of language; vocabulary used is generally appropriate	Good sentence structure; demonstrates some variety of sentence structure	Contains some mistakes in grammar, word usage and mechanics
Above Target SAT Score Range 5-6 points (2 essays)	Position is effectively developed through strong critical thinking skill; examples, reasons and evidence are generally appropriate	Well organized and focused; demonstrates coherence and ideas flow well	Displays competent use of language; uses appropriate vocabulary	Good sentence structure; demonstrates variety in sentence structure	Generally free of mistakes in grammar, word usage and mechanics

A district initiative in partnership with a university and two College Board consultants was launched and provided 30 hours of initial training in college readiness standards in the area of argument and synthesis to instructional coaches and other teacher leaders in the content area of English language arts at the middle and high school levels. As a result of that initial training, a 12-hour course of study was designed and delivered in a job-embedded professional development format by the campus instructional coach as continuous support for teachers in the area of writing throughout the year. The course of study included modeled lessons, protocols for scoring student writing samples, and protocols for data analysis of student writing results.

Research Design

This research project documented answers to the following questions in a case study format:

1. What are the strengths and limitations of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching in addressing college readiness writing standards?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching model for professional development in the area of college readiness standards in writing?
3. What do principals do to support, develop, and sustain the instructional coach in addressing student achievement in college readiness standards in writing?

Methods within this study were based upon grounded theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). According to theorists, researchers work to derive theory from observations rather than make observations based on theory. Chamaz (2006)

further describes this mode of analysis as “a set of inductive steps that successfully lead the researcher from studying concrete realities to rendering a conceptual understanding” (p. 78).

Case study is ideal for holistic and thorough investigations (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). While the data collection and analysis methods of either experimental or quasi-experimental studies might hide underlying details, the case study encourages rich description, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants and contexts (Stake, 1995). Munhall and Boyd (1993) describe the value of qualitative research as a form of scientific inquiry in the following way:

Qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studies through sustained contact with persons in their natural environments, and producing rich, descriptive data that help us to understand those persons’ experiences. The emphasis is on achieving understanding that will, in turn, open up new options for action and new perspectives that can change people’s worlds. (pp. 69-70)

Case Study Protocol

The protocol included multiple means of data collection. The foundation of the study was a set of interviews conducted with an associate principal, an instructional coach, and six 9th grade English language arts (ELA) teachers. Additionally, based on participants’ comments, archived records relative to instructional coaching were examined. In her peripheral membership role, the researcher had access to electronic communications regarding the actions of the participants. Utilizing these means of data collection allowed for methodological triangulation.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The questions were designed to generate answers that facilitated a description of the professional learning context of instructional coaching and its impact, when supported and sustained by campus leadership, on college readiness standards in writing. Constructs determined by data analysis were connected to the literature base.

The primary unit of analysis in this case study was the instructional coach and the associate principal. The coach was selected based on her self-reported commitment to framing her campus work on the Jim Knight model of instructional coaching. She was supported by the associate principal's commitment as well as to *The Big Four* principles that serve as the cornerstone of the coaching model: environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment. The framework of *The Big Four* provided the canvas for analyzing and identifying patterns in the work of the campus administrator and the instructional coach. An educational leader who understands and works with *The Big Four* as a framework for assisting coaches in their mentorship role with teachers also creates an environment for professional learning and discussion of best practices. Professional development is even more important when viewed in the context of long-term, continuous learning embedded in the working day of school and classroom. If teacher learning takes place within the context of a professional community that is nurtured and developed within and outside the school (Lieberman, 1995), the effects may be more than just an expanded conception of teacher development. Indeed, such teacher learning can bring about significant and lasting school change.

A focus interview with six 9th grade English language arts teachers served

as a frame to answer the research question of, “What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching model for professional development in the area of college readiness standards in writing?” The interview questions had specific wording and occurred in a predetermined sequence in an effort to minimize bias. The focus interview questions included:

1. Describe how you set up your coaching sessions. Who initiates the meeting? How do you decide on a focus for the session?
2. Describe a typical coaching session. How do you and the coach work together? How do you debrief? Is there follow up? If so, how is that decided?
3. Talk about the collaboration logs. How do you and your coach use them in your sessions? Is the log helpful to you? How or how not? Do you have suggestions for how it could be improved?
4. Does your coach use other documentation or assessment tools in your coaching sessions?
5. Tell me how you came to work with your particular coach.
6. How often do you meet with your coach? Are there other kinds of supports your coach provides besides one-on-one meetings?
7. In what way(s) has your teaching changed as a result of the assistance from your coach?
8. What do you see as the major kinds of supports that you obtain from your coach in the area of writing instruction? What has been most useful to you about the coaching sessions in the area of writing instruction? How would you estimate your current mastery of teaching argumentative writing? How

would you estimate your students' current mastery of writing arguments?

9. As you learned new teaching strategies this year and began to think of how to use them with students, what problems did you encounter? What kinds of support did you get from your coach? Are there other kinds of supports you would like to receive?

10. In general, how do you and your colleagues feel about having in-school coaches?

11. Do you feel your coach is supported by the school administration? How?

Table 2 aligns the focus interview questions to *The Big Four* principles of instructional coaching. The teacher responses were categorized and emerging patterns were analyzed as to their perceptions of instructional coaching in the context of *The Big Four* principles. A parallel process also consisted of writing notes about insights that guided subsequent gathering and close examination of archival data, documents, or communications.

Table 2

The Big Four Principles Aligned with Focus Interview Questions

The Big Four	Content Planning	Instruction	Assessments	Community
Focus Interview Questions	Who sets up coaching sessions? How is focus established? What does a typical coaching session look like?	What are ways in which your teaching has changed as a result of coaching?	How would you estimate your current mastery of teaching argument? How would you estimate your students' current mastery of writing arguments?	How are collaboration logs used? What kinds of support do you receive from your coach? Is the coach supported by school administration?

Once educational leaders embrace being an instructional leader, they must develop the self- and project-management strategies that allow them to make instruction their top priority. This particular campus associate principal was purposefully selected for participation in the research study because of his reputation across the district as an instructional leader. An open-ended interview was conducted with him at the beginning of the research study. In order to provide an update to the district curriculum coordinator, every secondary campus submitted learning targets and other documentation of

instructional support of the instructional coaching model. These one-page learning targets became school district archived documents. The researcher then used interview questions patterned after Jim Knight's *Core Questions for Impact Schools* (2010) to examine the specific self- and project-management strategies the associate principal put in place to support instructional coaching on his campus. Research bias was minimized by using the questions established in the research of Jim Knight. The interview questions included:

1. Does the school have a one-page instructional improvement plan that clearly describes the critical teaching behaviors that are most important for our students and teachers in the area of college readiness standards?
2. Do I know precisely what it looks like when the teaching practices on the instructional improvement plan for college readiness standards are used effectively by teachers?
3. Do I know how to prompt teachers to use the school's instructional coach and other professional learning opportunities to master the teaching practices necessary for college readiness?
4. Do I know how to communicate clearly and positively so that the instructional coach is motivated to implement the learning targets of college readiness?

In order to determine the strengths and limitations of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching, site visits were conducted at the school for the purpose of observing instructional coaching behaviors and accessing documents and archival records of interest (e.g., coaching activity logs and reflective self-appraisal rubrics). An interview with the instructional coach also served to collect

data on her depth of understanding of the teaching practices necessary to support teachers in the area of college readiness standards in writing and the delivery methods of that support (e.g., precise explanations, modeling, observation, feedback, and questioning).

Participants

The primary participants worked at the same suburban school district in the southwestern United States. This high school campus was the newest of the six high schools in the district. It opened in 2009 with grades 9 and 10. Currently, it houses grades 9 through 12 and will graduate its first class in 2012. It holds an “academically acceptable” rating for its state assessment performance on TAKS for the 2010-2011 school year. The scores for the 9th grade reading component of TAKS were 94% for all students, but the Commended Performance for 9th grade reading was only 19%. The latest PSAT data for the high school unveiled how disconnected a strong TAKS score on reading was from signifying college readiness. The campus 10th grade PSAT scores carried a college readiness benchmark score that represented the score that students should have met or exceeded to be considered on track for college. The percentage of 10th grade students at the campus who met the college ready benchmark was 8.9%. Too many high school campuses are unaware of the lack of alignment between strong TAKS scores for their language arts programs and college readiness benchmarks.

The six 9th grade English language arts teachers who participated in the study had varying degrees and backgrounds. The majority of them had a B.A. in English and had taught 8-9 years. The group was a balance of experienced teachers with degrees in the field they teach. Another thread was the number who taught English language arts sections balanced against coaching duties. In addition to their teaching duties, three of

the six held head coaching positions. Two of the teachers earned certifications through an alternative certification program (ACP). None earned a Master's in English, but four did have advanced degrees. The focus interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The questions were designed to generate answers that facilitated a thick description of the teachers' perceptions and responses to the instructional coaching routines. Constructs determined by data analysis were connected to *The Big Four* framework for instructional coaching. Prior to analysis, the interview transcripts were provided to the teachers to review. Each was given the opportunity to clarify any thread he/she did not believe accurately conveyed the intended response. Consent for use of their responses in the focus interview and their surveys was documented through verbal and written formats.

The focus interview was analyzed for themes that aligned to *The Big Four* framework (see Appendix A). The analysis was conducted in a physical manner. The transcribed interview responses from each of the six teachers were copied on a different colored piece of paper. The interview questions were cut into pieces, one portion for each question and its answer, and then the colored pieces of paper representing each teacher's response was correlated to *The Big Four* framework. Responses were positioned alongside each other in categories that allowed visual patterns and themes to emerge.

Once emergent themes arose from the focus interview with teachers, those themes were compared to the actual instructional coaching routines. A parallel process consisted of writing notes about insights that guided subsequent gathering and close examination of archival data, documents, or communications with the instructional coach (see Appendix

B). As data were displayed and reduced into categories of meaning and relations among the categories were identified, hypotheses were formulated about instructional coaching practices and teacher perceptions.

The instructional coach was an experienced teacher leader and a content specialist in reading and writing. She held a Master's degree in English and over 15 years of teaching experience. She had extensive training on the College Board in Advanced Placement curriculum and strategies. She was trained in ABYDOS (formerly known as New Jersey Writing Project), and in AVID's Critical Reading and Writing program. She had been an instructional coach for two years and had experience teaching and leading teachers in several districts. The close relationship between the instructional coach and the associate principal arose from a common dedication to instructional integrity.

The associate principal was a campus instructional coach at one time in a neighboring district. His administrative background included district coordinator for secondary science and associate principal for the high school. He supervised a staff of over 100 secondary teachers, and his primary responsibilities included alignment of instruction and assessment. He directly supervised the instructional coaching staff on his campus. An interview with the associate principal revealed themes that could have been categorized in *The Big Four* framework, but domains determined from the associate principal interview established his espoused and his enacted theories that prompted the self- and project-management strategies he implemented to support instructional coaching on his campus (see Appendix C).

The teacher focus interviews, the instructional coach's documents and archival record data sources, and the associate principal's interview served to triangulate the case

study and provided answers to the research questions concerning the strengths and limitations of instructional coaching, teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaching, and the principal's actions and beliefs that supported, developed, and sustained instructional coaching.

Site Visits

In order to establish theories of actions, five site visits were conducted at the school for the purpose of observing instructional coaching behaviors, departmental climate, access of documents and archival records of interest, and behaviors with accompanying stories that exemplified the characteristics of instructional coaches who set high expectations for professional learning and provided opportunities for meaningful teacher participation. These were insights that the survey data could not adequately provide the researcher.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were obvious. As with any case study, the attributes of the participants were specific to those individuals who were purposefully selected. In this instance, the characteristics of the instructional coach could not be generalized to the general instructional coaching population. However, documented behaviors and attitudes may be emulated by others seeking to establish content specific practices impacted by implementation of the coaching model espoused by Jim Knight.

In qualitative research, the researcher is personally involved; this researcher was in a peripheral participant-observer role. The researcher was the coordinator of secondary English language arts for the school district and had no direct supervision over campus administrators or instructional coaches or teachers. However, the interpretation

of the data was subject to the researcher's own personal meanings derived from the literature and her experiences as a member of the central office staff which allows multiple, informal observations of instructional coaches working with teachers across the district. As much as possible, vivid descriptions and direct quotes were utilized to ground the researcher's interpretations. Nonetheless, the likelihood of comparable replication of understandings was limited.

Though the methods of interviewing, observation with appropriate instruments, and analyses of aggregate student data and archived documents may be replicated, the findings may vary and are dependent upon individuals, demographics, and sets of circumstances relative to the multiplicity of variables in existence within human systems. Every effort was made to triangulate findings to lend credibility to any conclusions drawn by the researcher.

Summary

One high school instructional coach was purposefully selected to participate in this case study. The intent of the study was to determine how a job-embedded model of professional development implemented with fidelity to Jim Knight's *The Big Four* principles and supported by campus leadership could impact college readiness standards in writing. The effects are magnified when the instructional coach is simultaneously supported by the constructs of a professional learning community. The foundation of the work was a focus interview and surveys with the 9th grade English language arts teachers in one suburban high school. These were coupled with observations, instructional coaching interviews, campus administration interviews, and archival records gathered during the school year.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to establish what an associate principal at a suburban high school did to support, develop, and sustain an instructional coach in addressing college readiness standards in writing. In addition, the case study analyzed the 9th grade English language arts teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching at the same suburban high school.

The study was initially informed by a focus interview with the 9th grade team of English language arts teachers at a suburban high school. Two surveys followed the focus interview to offer additional opportunities for the teachers to communicate their beliefs about instructional coaching on their campus in a confidential format. An interview with the campus associate principal and the collection and analysis of documents and resources used by the administrative team to operationalize the support of instructional coaching and the implementation of campus learning targets followed the interview with the teachers. Finally, district archived data from monthly meetings with the instructional coach, documents collected from five site visits to the campus, and multiple one-on-one conversations over the course of a year between the instructional coach and the researcher, who was the district administrator for secondary English language arts, served to triangulate the research.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face within the confines of school conference rooms and/or principal offices on the high school campus where all

participants worked. Teacher and associate principal interviews lasted approximately one hour. Notes were taken during the interviews, and transcripts were prepared utilizing tape recordings of the interviews.

The transcripts of the interviews with teachers and associate principal were analyzed in the context of *The Big Four* – the cornerstones necessary to every teacher’s repertoire: classroom environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment. *The Big Four* (Knight, 2010) defined for this research the instructional coach’s workspace and provided the framework for examining how the school leaders organized, communicated, and implemented learning targets for college readiness standards. By studying the context, process, and content standards espoused as standards for effective professional development by the NSDC and the implementation of those standards at one suburban high school by the associate principal through the framework of *The Big Four*, the degree of support provided to the instructional coach and teachers and the articulation of the campus learning targets in the area of college readiness standards were examined.

The Associate Principal Supported, Sustained, and Developed Learning

What do principals do to support, develop, and sustain the instructional coach in addressing student achievement in college readiness standards in writing?

The single most important factor in moving schools forward, according to research, is that the principal is also a learner (Fullan, 2010a). The following statements made by the associate principal revealed his humility as a leader and one who was not afraid to learn as he led. He described the flexibility of the campus plan for professional development and the involvement of the instructional coaches:

We’re following this plan with the instructional improvement targets,

but the instructional coaches are great because they are in the trenches working with the teachers every day. They can gauge the readiness. Do we need to move forward with this or do we need to back off? We have adjusted our plan for professional development all semester. Their [coaches'] buy-in comes from being involved. It comes from us having the discussion of what are we going to talk about. What should I say as the administrator with the whole faculty? What should they follow up with in small group session? And that has been very powerful because it makes sure we are on the same page. We communicate. There is no time where I'm in my office and closing the door, and I design the whole thing alone.

The researcher spent many hours interviewing, collecting data, and discussing professional development with the associate principal at one suburban high school. Because this associate principal supervised the campus team of instructional coaches, he was the administrator most responsible for implementing the campus instructional plan and working with district coordinators in the content areas. The researcher spent additional time at district vertical and horizontal planning meetings and met on a regular basis with him on campus. His background included being the district science curriculum coordinator for three years. Prior to this, he was a science teacher and instructional coach in another district. His resume firmly grounded his expertise in curriculum and instruction. His primary job function was to supervise and support the work on campus of the five instructional coaches. Indirectly, he supervised the 100 teachers on his staff.

The researcher followed a simplistic plan of color coding comments so that themes and patterns emerged from the interview with the campus associate principal and

defined his operational focus. The associate principal's responses to the four interview questions were organized into one of the following *Big Four* categories: learning environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment (see Appendix C). The associate principal was asked to respond to the following questions in the interview:

1. Does the school have a one-page instructional improvement plan that clearly describes the critical teaching behaviors that are most important for our students and teachers in the area of college readiness standards?
2. Do I know precisely what it looks like when the teaching practices on the instructional improvement plan for college readiness standards are used effectively by teachers?
3. Do I know how to prompt teachers to use the school's instructional coach and other professional learning opportunities to master the teaching practices necessary for college readiness?
4. Do I know how to communicate clearly and positively so that the instructional coach is motivated to implement the learning targets of college readiness?

The researcher then used a domain analysis process (Spradley & McCurdy, 1989) to identify five descriptors that identified the associate principal's core concepts for professional learning on his campus. The five descriptors were humanity, focus, leverage, simplicity, and precision. Table 3 captures the core concepts in alignment with the associate principal's narrative responses in the interview.

Table 3

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Concepts for Professional Learning

	Concept Descriptor	Narrative Response
Humanity	Recognize inherent value of others and celebrate positive human values	Philosophically, you can't do anything in the classroom unless the culture of the classroom is there. We went with community building as one of the big pillars, the foundational piece of professional learning.
Focus	Support and implement change by aligning professional learning with resources in schools	We have a list of targets. We broke them down into four categories. One is community building. That one is basically the classroom culture, classroom management, things like that. The second area is instructional planning. And with that we tried to capture everything that we wanted our teachers to be doing with regard to and planning of instruction, any unit planning. The third one would be instruction itself. Finally assessment for learning.
Leverage	Focus on a few vital behaviors	The first one is that all of our campus professional development is aligned to targets. So whenever we get together for PLC time, we will show which target or targets we are teaching today. We will present some content on it. We will have breakout sessions related to it.
Simplicity	Push for clear goals, clear action plans, and clear methods	Kids are actually doing a lot of the work in the classroom. That is one thing we were talking philosophically about as a campus. I throw this saying around a lot, 'The one who is working is the one who is doing the learning.' Our teachers are starting to adopt that, and we're really trying to make that shift from the teacher doing so much of the work and so much of the thinking instead of the student doing it.
Precision	Provide explicit descriptions of practices to produce a greater likelihood of widespread, shared understanding	The first one is that all of our campus professional development is aligned to targets, these 17 things.

The associate principal embodied “walk the talk” theories of leadership (Senge, 1999). He communicated commitment to the goals of a change initiative. He was viewed as credible and highly respected by the staff. According to Senge in *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (1999),

If managers are not authentic in their convictions and sincere in their behavior, there will be little trust, and consequently little safety for the reflection that leads to authentic change. . . People do expect perfection, but they recognize sincerity and openness- and their absences. (pp. 194-195)

Not only did the associate principal espouse instructional practices and then support and lead the professional learning to make an impact, he enacted those principles in the campus checklists that he created to communicate expectations and goals for the staff. Table 4 lists 17 instructional improvement targets identified and communicated to staff in a one-page tool format. The associate principal’s one-page tools and checklists gathered by the researcher limited the number of pages his staff had to interpret in order to understand campus goals and targets. He directed the staff to reflect first and then think about what they were being asked to do (Jensen, 2000).

Table 4

Suburban High School Instructional Improvement Targets

Big Four Frame	Teachers
Learning Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Posts social contract on the wall and ensures those expectations are being followed by students. 2. Builds relationships with students by informal conversation, greeting students at the door, good things affirmation, and/or attending student events. 3. Interacts with 3:1 ration of interaction. 4. Implements classroom management plan effectively, efficiently, and consistently leading to fewer than 3 class disruptions in a 15 minute period.
Content Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Creates a unit plan for each unit of instruction and shares it with students before instruction begins. 6. Develops essential questions and learning targets for each unit and shares them with students. 7. Creates stock questions that will be asked during instruction and writes them into the lesson plan. 8. Instructional activities align with the TEKS verb. 9. Creates lesson plans that include enough details so that another person can teach the lesson.
Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Utilizes a variety of instructional strategies effectively that targets diverse learners. 11. Utilizes instructional practice that is student-centered for the majority of class time. 12. Refers to unit plan each day before instruction begins. 13. Utilizes technology effectively to engage students.
Assessment for Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Can site evidence of learning progress for each student. 15. Creates summative assessment prior to the delivery of any instruction for a unit. 16. Utilizes a variety of formative assessment strategies that are aligned with the unit plan. 17. Creates a test blueprint for each summative assessment.

The associate principal explained the context for the 17 instructional improvement targets: “The instructional coaches model best practice. They lead discussions. . . . But in general, they are trying to prompt . . . the teachers to adopt. . . these practices.” He explained the use of an “enrollment form” (see Appendix D) that the teachers “check off particular things” they are interested in learning more about. “This is one way the coaches enroll people and get people to respond.” The associate principal defined the role of the coach in partnership with the administrators,

I have told my coaches they are not to go in and do classroom observations unless they are asked to by the teacher. If they [coaches] walk in with a form, they are suddenly seen as an administrator. Since we are not having them do that, the administrator should do that. We have a form we use and we [administrators] do walkthroughs. We will go in for 5 to 10 minutes. We will measure what is going on in regard to the instructional improvement targets (see Figure 3), and we will give the teacher some feedback within 24 hours usually.

The feedback teachers received from the administrative staff was also organized inside the frame of *The Big Four* (see Appendix E). In addition to giving teachers feedback on instruction, feedback was also documented for the teachers on how well the students in the classroom could describe the lesson plan and what the level of student engagement and modality of learning was (e.g., discussion, hands-on, independent and guided practice, etc.).

Not only was the associate principal’s intent to communicate learning targets clearly and efficiently to students and teachers, he also communicated accountability measures to the instructional coach. He created a one-page coaching rubric (see

Appendix F) that communicated the curriculum and instruction focus for evaluation of quality coaching. The indicators on the rubric evaluated the coach's performance as ranging from *Satisfactory* to *Exceeds Expectations*. He achieved a trifecta of sorts by aligning what was targeted and communicated by campus leadership as most important for teachers to implement as well as how instructional coaches were to develop professional development. Embedded in the language of the *Quality Coaching Rubric* was the same language of the *Instructional Feedback Form* for teachers. The associate principal did not mix the messages. The primary goal of the work of the coach was to support implementation of the targets. The coach modeled practices, observed teachers, and engaged in supportive, dialogical conversations with teachers in a reflective, constructive manner. Because of the partnership with teachers in respectful and humane conversations, the teachers chose to implement research-based teaching practices that helped students learn more effectively. The coach improved the quality of teaching; however, the coach operated in a landscape of support and direction provided by the associate principal.

Instructional Support in Content Area

What are the strengths and limitations of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching in addressing college readiness writing standards?

What the associate principal espoused as the campus leader was triangulated by what the instructional coach and the teachers did in the classroom. The instructional coach, supported by the operationalizing practices of the associate principal, scaffolded the teachers' true-concept formation stages (Vygotsky, 1962). As the teachers

scaffolded the students to higher levels of cognitive attainment, the coach scaffolded the teachers to “knowing” what college readiness standards in writing meant and what those standards looked like in instructional practice and design. Transfer is horizontal when a teacher generalizes learning to a new task of the same complexity. Vertical is the condition in which knowledge and abilities acquired in performing one task facilitate the learning of higher-order tasks (Showers, 1981).

Based on analysis of the *Instructional Coach Data Collection Instrument* (see Appendix B), the researcher categorized the instructional coach’s professional development into context, content, or procedural to study the impact of professional development on writing instruction for the 9th grade teachers. Research on the composing process indicates that writing is an enormously complex task, demanding the use of at least four types of knowledge: knowledge of content to be written about, procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content, knowledge of discourse structures, and the procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type (Hillocks, 1986). The act of writing any set of words in a composition requires students to review what they had written and synthesized to create new or continuing thinking. Teachers must receive very specific content knowledge, extensive modeling, and collaborative dialogue in order to feel supported in teaching the writing process at the level of college readiness complexity.

An analysis of the documentation gathered from the monthly conversations with the instructional coach and an examination of the course of study she put in place to elevate the writing process for the 9th grade students, revealed alignment of the associate

principal's instructional focus for the campus and the instructional coach's landscape of professional development for teaching argument and synthesis writing skills.

Table 5

Alignment of Associate Principal's Espoused Focus with IC's Enacted PD

College Level Complexity of Instruction	What Associate Principal Espoused In Instructional Targets	What IC Enacted In Professional Development
Knowledge of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a unit plan for each unit of instruction and shares it with students before instruction begins. • Develops essential questions and learning targets for each unit and shares them with students. • Instructional activities align with TEKS verb. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created research-based protocols for lesson planning and team meetings. • Collected evidence of level of content knowledge based on team planning logs. • Attended 90% of 9th grade team level meetings to provide resources and feedback.
Manipulation of Procedural Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes a variety of instructional strategies effectively that target diverse learners. • Utilizes instructional practice that is student-centered for the majority of class time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeled monthly at department PLC meetings. • Required each teacher to video own classroom instruction and analyze strengths and weaknesses. • Offered enrollment opportunity for one-on-one coaching support focused on teacher's identified learning targets.
Knowledge of Discourse Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a test blueprint for each summative assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided PD on argument and synthesis by modeling with and by teacher created essays.
Production of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cite evidence of learning progress for each student. • Creates summative assessment prior to the delivery of any instruction for a unit. • Creates a test blueprint for each summative assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created scoring protocols for calibrating teacher scoring practices. • Created rubrics for scoring argument essays. • Created protocols for analyzing student essays. • Designed interventions based on data collected.

The instructional coach and the other English language arts teachers spent time before school commenced discussing and then creating a mission statement for their department that aligned to the campus targets. The mission statement appeared on 95% of the documents the researcher examined and collected. It provided further evidence of how educators on the campus understood what the campus targets meant and the teaching practices it embodied. The ELA mission statement:

We are a community of educators committed to empowering students to take ownership of their literacy; *cultivating* warm, supportive learning environments where students feel valued, respected, and accepted; *creating* a ‘buzz’ of productivity in the classrooms through learning experiences that are engaging, collaborative, and relevant; *equipping* students for post-secondary education and the workforce by teaching and modeling skills for self-management, critical thinking, and group problem-solving.

Site Visits

Campus site visits enabled the researcher to observe first hand the actual practice of the ELA mission statement by the 9th grade team. The observation of five instructional practices by the 9th grade team revealed to the researcher the aligned focus of the associate principal and instructional coach. The researcher visited the campus over the course of the teaching year in five staggered visits either during the campus scheduled time for professional learning communities (PLC) or during a 9th grade team planning meeting. The first visit was early in August. The second visit was early in the fall, and the third and fourth visits followed before December. The fifth visit was in early February. The researcher’s visits were in line with her district responsibility as

Coordinator for Secondary English Language Arts. The intent was to capture practices aligned to campus targets as they addressed college readiness standards in writing. Not all site visits captured college readiness standards in writing, but all captured the essence of the instructional coach's commitment to modeling as the primary modality for professional development delivery.

The researcher chose three of the five sites visits for deeper annotation to illustrate how the instructional coach was guided by the standards for staff development set forth by the NSDC and implemented by her campus administration. The coach secured NSCD *context standards* by working through the PLC structured by campus administration for leading teachers toward continuous improvement. The coach carried forth the *process standards* put in place by campus administration for making data-driven decisions and collaborating to design best-practice instruction from evaluation of research-based information. Finally, the coach was guided by *content standards*. Content standards in professional learning environments deepen teachers' content knowledge by providing research-based instructional strategies to assist students with meeting rigorous academic standards and various assessments.

Providing a Context for Professional Development

Site Visit 1 – Video Club

Video club provided an opportunity for teachers to review and reflect on what actually occurred in their classrooms. The stated objective was for teachers to identify two sections of the teaching video – one they liked and one for further exploration. The instructional coach used the enrollment form (see Appendix D) as a way to open further exploration of instructional practice. The enrollment form opened the door for further

discussion in a non-threatening way between coach and teacher. Flip® cameras were used to capture each teacher teaching. Teachers observed themselves on campus computers or at home and selected 10-minute observation sections for analysis. The Flip® camera software was easily installed on any computer. The instructional coach asked the teachers to set aside a block of time to watch the video uninterrupted and to reflect upon the Campus Instructional Targets throughout as a focus. The instructional coach provided a one-page video self-evaluation form for the teachers to rank themselves from *Not Close* to *Right On* for eight of the instructional targets. The value was that the teachers did not have to concentrate on a full lesson (90 minutes) but only on the dynamics that were taking place during the 10-minute sections. The intent was to provide an opportunity for the teachers to reflect on how they responded to students, why they responded the way they did, and what they might want to alter in the future. It also provided an opportunity for teachers to concentrate on student responses during instruction (York-Barr, J., Sommers, W. A., Ghore, G. S., & Montie, J. K., 2006).

In a follow-up conversation with the instructional coach, the researcher asked if Video Club was successful. The coach replied,

It offered me an immediate method for prioritizing which teacher needed the most support in terms of learning environment early in the year. The administrative staff wanted to know which teachers were struggling with classroom management issues. I needed to provide that support but at the same time enroll the teachers into partnership relationships with me. Video Club was a way to search out areas of instructional need but still put asking for that need in the control of the teacher.

The teacher dignity was honored because the teacher was the one evaluating and narrating the instructional events based on observations and then conversing with me about next steps.

Three examples of how the instructional coach organized discussion and analysis of three 9th grade teachers and their Video Club are captured in Tables 6, 7, 8. The Teacher Analysis was the summation of what the teacher observed about the classroom learning environment using the Campus Instructional Targets as criteria and the coach's self-evaluation form. The "teacher plan of action" resulted from conversations with the instructional coach about the video. The researcher observed and took notes during the review of the three videos. All notes are in the context of what the teacher said regarding evaluation of their observed behaviors and what the coach and teacher worked out together as a plan of action.

Table 6

Context – Learning Environment for Teacher #1

Teacher Analysis	Teacher Plan of Action
You usually do well with affirming students in the classroom (e.g., good job, way to go, etc.).	Interact more with three top talkers in 4 th period three times more than you correct their behavior.
You sometimes find yourself saying, "shhh" to redirect talkative students.	Circulate the room more in order to give feedback and increase opportunities for positive interactions.
Your desire for positive interactions during <i>Good Things</i> causes it to take too long sometimes.	Explain the time frame for each segment of instruction so that students know how long they need to focus on instructions and how long they will have an opportunity to work. (e.g., "Give me your attention for three minutes while I explain the activity." "I need all eyes and ears on me for three minutes. Then you will have 10 minutes to practice it on your own.")
Your lower level kids prefer to work instead of listening to you talk or explain an activity.	
Your top three talkers are in 4 th period.	

Table 7

Context – Learning Environment for Teacher #2

Teacher Analysis	Teacher Plan of Action
You generally redirect students in a positive tone without much sarcasm or negativity.	Identify one student in each class period who has a problem following behavioral expectations.
You see a greater need to interact positively with key students in each class period who have problems following behavioral expectations.	Interact more with these students when they are following expectations than when they are not, but continue to redirect their misbehavior as needed.
You feel somewhat overwhelmed with the need to increase positive interactions when the practice is still so different from how you parent and generally interact with students.	Place a sticker, smiley face, or colored dot next to these students' names on your roster or seating chart as a reminder to interact with them more when they are following your expectations.

Table 8

Context – Learning Environment for Teacher #3

Teacher Analysis	Teacher Plan of Action
Although you rarely compliment students in a whole group setting, you seem to have more positive interactions when working individually with students. You redirected two students who were talking or off-task.	Identify five students (one in each class period) with whom you can increase positive interactions. These students will be those who are socially immature—highly talkative, attention grabbers, etc. that you usually only speak to when they are misbehaving.
You were lecturing during the video, which seemed to limit opportunities to positively interact with students.	Increase positive interactions with these five students (e.g., shaking their hands at the door, asking them about their day or weekend, focusing on what they are doing well).
The video was from a lesson in September when you were more focused on learning targets and unit plans than interactions with students.	Visually remind yourself of this goal by placing a sticker, note, or sign near your presentation station.
Although you rarely compliment students in a whole group setting, you seem to have more positive interactions when working individually with students.	
Your ratio of interactions was 0:2.	

Providing a Content for Professional Development

Site Visit 2 – Modeling Argument Writing

In early fall, the researcher made a second campus visit to observe the instructional coach lay the foundation for the 9th grade writing unit on argument. The unit would culminate with students composing an argument essay. First, however, the coach wanted to model the actual content of writing an argument with the teachers. She was alarmed by the following statement made by one of the 9th grade teachers during a team meeting: “I went to school to learn how to write literary analysis, not arguments.” The teacher’s statement was not an uncommon one voiced many times to the researcher in the context of the researcher’s job as District Coordinator for Secondary English Language Arts programs. The teacher’s statement, affirming her lack of content knowledge about composing arguments, echoed the researcher’s affirmation that writing is the gatekeeper for college readiness and without excellent writing instruction, the gate closes on most students once they enter 9th grade. It is critical to marry the relationship of writing to the processes of analysis and synthesis, the level at which state standards are written for all content areas and most certainly the level at which college readiness is assessed. The presence of an instructional coach, who is a content specialist, is imperative if the nation, state, and district are serious about students achieving a college readiness standard in critical reading, writing, and thinking.

The coach met the teachers in their area of comfort. She did not launch immediately into how to write an argument; rather, she led the teachers from a horizontal understanding of what they were currently teaching (book reviews) to a vertical understanding of something more difficult—argument. Instructing students on how to

write a book review was an easier instructional practice for an English language arts teacher than teaching students how to compose an argument. An argument is much more technical and requires logic and precision of idea. There are basic structures to composing arguments (e.g., attention to pros and cons and counter-arguments and rebuttals). Students must balance an assertion with a claim and avoid faulty logic in developing their support. When asked, not a single one of the 9th grade teachers had ever composed an argument in college preparation classes. All were familiar with writing book reviews and analyzing a piece of literature, but composing an argument was uncharted territory. If a student's ability to read and analyze arguments and to compose one is indeed a foundational skill of college readiness, the researcher understood how the gap widens between student and skill if the student's teacher is unclear about instruction at that level. The instructional coach, therefore, modeled instruction from what the teachers were comfortable with—the book review. She had the teachers find statements in book reviews that they could agree with. From there, she modeled how to teach students the difference between a factual statement and an opinion. Once they mastered this strategy, it was easier to move to agreeing and disagreeing and how to gather evidence based on logical reasons, not personal experience. The coach accomplished the content goal by choosing a context that was familiar to the teachers.

Professional development that encourages teachers to apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning is called *praxis*. The coach used praxis to teach more difficult content standards to the teachers. What the coach also did is make use of the campus constructs for professional development established by the administrative team. She worked within the PLC and daily communal planning

meetings. The campus established the sacredness of professional development and collaborated with the content specialist to address the gaps in instruction with the teachers through the model of job-embedded professional development.

Providing a Procedure for Professional Development

Site Visit 3 – Creating a Protocol for Analyzing Student Writing

Student learning must be studied continuously and diagnostically. Teachers who study weekly samples of their students' writing with eyes open to addressing instruction based on students' ability create more energy in the teaching/learning environment compared to situations where teachers use only end-of-term assessments (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

In late fall, the researcher observed the 9th grade team's protocol for calibrating the scoring of student essays and analyzing the results of the scoring over the course of one PLC session and two follow-up team meetings. The teachers followed a two-step process put in place by their instructional coach.

Step one involved preparation for calibrating teacher scoring practices before any student essays were scored. The 9th grade team met over the course of two common planning work sessions and reviewed the rubric to ensure that all critical attributes were clearly understood by each team member. The team reached consensus on what critical attributes mandated an *Above Standard*, *On-Target*, and *Below Standard* score (see Table 1). The teachers practiced by randomly selecting essays from the generic stack formed from all 9th grade classrooms. What the researcher observed was total collaboration of teachers seeking support from one another in order to clarify grading standards. If a teacher read an essay and could not decide which pile to place it in, the entire team read

that essay, discussed the criteria, and decided collaboratively on the score. This process mirrored the calibration models set in place for both state and national readings of student essays.

Step two pulled the teachers together again to analyze the scored essays.

Teachers placed all scored essays into appropriate stacks: *Below Standard*, *On-Target*, or *Above Standard*. The team analyzed the essays and recorded student data on the Team Analysis worksheet (see Appendix G).

Teacher Perceptions

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching model for professional development in the area of college readiness standards in writing?

The final level of data analysis focused on the interview with the 9th grade English language arts teachers. The intent was to provide evidence that what the associate principal established as campus targets and what the instructional coach embodied in job-embedded professional development were mirrored in the teachers' verbalizations and actions.

The researcher followed the same color-coding procedures she did with the associate principal's interview. She color-coded the transcripts, cut them apart, and placed the responses to questions side-by-side for comparison purposes. The researcher created a spreadsheet as a way to search for larger units of cultural knowledge in a domain analysis format to categorize which teacher answered which question. Coded descriptors were added to the spreadsheet to maintain confidentiality and provide additional information about each teacher. The descriptive codes identified each teacher

by a number and a series of letters indicated length of teaching experience, whether or not the teacher was degreed in English, if the teacher was alternatively certified and/or had an advanced degree, and if the teacher carried coaching duties in addition to teaching duties (see Table 9). Finally, each interview question was coded to align to one of *The Big Four* frameworks used to describe the teaching repertoires necessary for every teacher to master—classroom environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment.

Table 9

Descriptor Codes for 9th Grade English Language Arts Teachers

ID	Category of Question	Code
Teacher Number 1-6	Classroom Environment	N = New (1-7 years teaching)
	Content Planning	E = Experienced (8+ years teaching)
	Instruction	C = Athletic Coach (½ day)
	Assessment	D = B.A. in English
		M = Advanced Degree
		TL = Team Leader
		ACP = Alternatively Certified

Once the questions and teacher responses were aligned, the spreadsheet enabled the researcher to analyze the narratives for emergent themes and patterns that defined teacher perceptions of instructional coaching in a context of years of teaching experience, educational background, and weight of teaching responsibilities. Once this cursory analysis was completed, participants were asked to do a member check on the contents of their interviews and respond to some suggested emergent themes and possible categories for deeper analysis of instructional coaching and its support. Summative feedback

statements from participants indicated that the years of teaching experience, the degrees attained, and the weight of additional teaching responsibilities had little to do with the teacher perceptions of the instructional coach. Overwhelmingly, the teachers indicated that regardless of the descriptor code information, each valued the partnership approach that the instructional coach maintained in relationship with them. Several selected narrative responses were recorded on the following tables, organized by *The Big Four* frame, to capture the pattern of partnership relationships described by the teachers for the instructional coach.

Table 10

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Content Planning

Interview Question	Narrative Response
Describe a coaching session.	<p>We meet almost everyday as a team at the designated, scheduled common planning time for our grade level team. It is a priority over most other things with exception of called ARD meetings. The IC attends our team meetings, listens, and always returns to the next meeting with materials to help us with whatever she heard from our previous conversation was our greatest need.</p> <p>The IC filtered our discussion by bringing our attention back to instructional focus of the writing outcome. She helped us pull in the same direction.</p>
How do you decide on a focus for the session?	<p>Generally, it is based off of what we are following on our scope and sequence what our plan is with that lesson. The IC is there to help guide us if we are stumped on something or with an idea or thought that we are not quite getting instructionally.</p>

Table 11

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Environment

Interview Question	Narrative Response
What paperwork provides feedback to you from the IC?	It is informal. We talk; we have conversations. We are a group of colleagues working together in discussion. She operates as a peer, but she takes notes so there is a journal of our conversations.
What other kinds of support does your coach provide in addition to team planning meetings?	She provides resources, texts—sources that we can go to for information. I have never had that before. She is a resource for materials I need in the classroom. I am thinking of all the vocabulary resources we are currently using for instruction with students.
	The IC is there to make sure that what is being adapted or modified for special ed. students is still going along with the subject and the lesson plans.
	<i>The RELA Report</i> is a weekly online newsletter that the IC writes and it contains random topics that are always based in classroom instruction—always to help growth—growth as a teacher. <i>The RELA Report</i> reminds us to keep improving in the classroom—don't settle for the way you have always taught it—explore to make it better.

Table 11 (continued)

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Environment

Interview Question	Narrative Response
How has your teaching changed because of campus goals?	We have a mission statement, vision statement that we created our first month here at the high school. We worked together developing a vision for our department of what we wanted our classrooms to look like, to sound like, to feel like. And we practiced those buds of learning. I can't imagine a better formula to come into as a first year teacher than the whole setup we have here with the IC and the team leadership I have experienced at this high school.
How do you feel about having an instructional coach?	For me it is that support of knowing someone has your back. She is a kind of bumper between teachers and administrators. She can translate what admin wants or come back to us and say this is what we need to do or these changes must be made. IC has been a lifesaver especially since I moved in from out-of-state. Things were very different—no TAKS. I never had an IC when I taught in another state. I know she is trying to make me a better teacher. I think as an IC it's her job to coach us to make us better teachers. She accommodates our needs. She provides feedback. She follows up with questions like, 'How did it work?' 'How did you like this?' She lets us have a voice in our own classroom.

Table 11 (continued)

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Environment

Interview Question	Narrative Response
Do you feel your coach is supported by the school administration?	She is part of the leadership team. She is the leader of our department so that we can all be on the same page. We are shooting for those goals that we have as a campus and as a district.

Table 12

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Instruction

Interview Question	Narrative Response
What about the design of your lesson plans? Did you come up with the format that aligns your TEKS?	We had options presented at the beginning of the year by the principal; we decided as a team which one worked best for us. We write our lesson plans together as a team using that format and it is available to us on the common drive in the RELA folder. It identifies that objective, the TEKS, the opener, the guided questions, closer, the lesson format. The template guides us as to how much time to spend on writing, warm-ups, quick writes, etc.
In what ways has your teaching changed because of the assistance from your instructional coach?	For me, it is not getting complacent. The IC never comes into my classroom in the role of the admin. Her role is always to help improve my teaching. So for me, it is about not settling but rather to continue to grow and try new things and be better.

Table 12 (continued)

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Instruction

Interview Question	Narrative Response
<p>In what ways has your teaching changed because of the assistance from your instructional coach?</p>	<p>She makes me think about what I want kids to do, what I want them to know. She inspires me to be better every day. She was the first one who started to show me that you design the assessment first. It is so much easier to help kids get to where they need to be. You already have the end in mind.</p>
<p>How would you estimate your current level of knowledge of teaching argumentative writing?</p>	<p>If we are talking about our mastery based on what our students do, I think they can write an effective argument. Kids know they have to provide support and not just because I said so or because this is what I think. They dig down. They look through it. They find the support for their argument.</p>
	<p>The IC actually had us go through writing an argument ourselves. Again that is the IC's thing—if you are going to expect kids to do it, then you need to do it first. As a team, we talked through what obstacles the kids might have. Where might they struggle? What problems might they have if your terminology is not aligned? So we wrote arguments and went through each step. The IC took us through steps that we could replicate in the classroom. She provided an outline of the steps and modeled how we could go from an expository essay to a position statement to an essay.</p>

Table 13

Selected Narrative Responses Categorized by Big Four Frame of Assessment

Interview Question	Narrative Response
How do you decide about assessments?	<p>We put our heads together and depending upon where the level of instruction is for the students [co-teach, Pre-AP, ELS, on-level], we sit down and map everything out. Everyone puts their two cents in.</p> <p>We refer to our maps often. We have writing outcomes and reading outcomes for each unit. We know ahead of time what kids are going to be expected to know at the end. This guides our assessments. There is not a guessing game about assessments. If I feel they have not learned what they need, there is some adjustment. For example, if our kids are writing an analysis and once we start teaching it, we realize that our co-students may not be ready, we will adapt the outcome.</p>

Partnership Domains of Instructional Coaching

A domain analysis (Spradley & McCurdy, 1989) of data obtained during the focus interview with the team of 9th grade teachers was aligned to the seven domains of partnership established in instructional coaching research (Knight, 2007). The seven domains of partnership organized the perceptions of the six teachers (see Table 14): (1) *equality* – professional learning is done with teachers rather than training done to teachers; (2) *choice* – teachers have choice regarding what and how they learn; (3) *voice* – professional learning empowers and respects the voices of teachers; (4) *reflection* – reflection is an integral part of professional learning; (5) *dialogue* – professional learning

enables authentic dialogue; (6) *praxis* – teachers apply their learning to real-life practice as they are learning; and (7) *reciprocity* – teachers get as much as they give.

Table 14

Categories of Domain Analysis

Domains of Partnership	Teacher Perceptions
Equality	Professional learning is done with teachers rather than training done to teachers.
Choice	Teachers have choices regarding what and how they learn.
Voice	Professional learning empowers and respects the voice of teachers.
Reflection	Reflection is an integral part of professional learning.
Dialogue	Professional learning enables authentic learning.
Praxis	Teachers apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning.
Reciprocity	Teachers get as much as they give.

Category 1: Equality

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Professional learning is done with teachers rather than training done to teachers.

Seven of the teacher responses in the focus interview indicated the strength of the instructional coach to view them as equals. She did not decide for the teachers; she did

not tell the teachers what they were to do. Rather, in partnership, they decided together. According to a first year teacher, “She is collaborative and non-threatening. She is never condescending. Her approach is so professional but compassionate and sympathetic. She is a teacher. She thinks like a teacher.”

Category 2: Choice

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn.

Professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers. In a partnership, one individual does not make decisions for another. Because partners are equal, they make their own choices and make decisions collaboratively. One teacher response described one example of choice:

We had options presented at the beginning of the year by the principal [for lesson plan template]; we decided as a team which one worked best for us. We write our lesson plans together as team using that format, and it is available to us on the common drive in the *RELA* folder.

Category 3: Voice

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Professional learning empowers and respects the voice of teachers.

Empowered teacher voice emerged as the second most important category for teacher perceptions of the instructional coach. Eight of the teacher responses documented that these 9th grade teachers felt empowered to accept or reject what they were learning from the job-embedded model of instructional coaching. Several responses

indicated teachers were making decisions about what the best method might be for going forward in instruction:

We were discussing the writing outcome for this unit we were doing, *The Odyssey*, and trying to really nail down the objective we wanted our kids to accomplish in the writing assignment. We were struggling. Our IC helped with guiding questions and then came back to the next meeting with resources for a prewriting assignment that was more challenging to our students because it asked the students to look at the word *courage* as a abstract idea and then develop a criteria for evaluating their opinion on whether Odysseus was courageous or not. She clarified for us and made the topic more accessible for the students.

And another statement from a teacher during the focus interview documented voice as a powerful perception of teachers about the instructional coach:

She taught me how to use a document camera as a tool of instruction. I can project a digital picture of text so students have a visual of a process or a model of how to write a thesis. I can model as I go rather than just talk about how to write a thesis. I like how she moves us to change instructional practice – not in a bossy way or by walking in and saying do it this way. She guides us and directs us in a researched way.

Category 4: Reflection

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Reflection is an integral part of professional learning.

Knight's (2011) research on instructional coaching revealed three ways of viewing reflection: *looking back*, *looking at*, and *looking ahead*. When teachers *look back* at a lesson, they explore what worked and what did not work. A *look back* prompts

a plan to teach differently in the future. An example of a reflective *look back* from a teacher response on the focus interview: “Students were not connecting support with their reasoning so as a team of ninth grade teachers we went back to fix it with students.”

When teachers *look at* instruction in a reflective way, they are thinking about what is being done in the midst of the act of teaching itself. “When we were teaching OERs (Open-Ended Response), I discovered that I was out of alignment with the way others were teaching. I was actually confusing students.”

Looking ahead is thinking about how to use an idea, practice, or plan in the future:

We come together with the essays and score together. I see the same strengths and weaknesses and that we are on the same page because we are scoring together. We are commenting about the great structure of this essay or what they can do now that they couldn't do before. We see what instructional gaps exist by scoring their writing together.

Looking ahead is thinking about how to use an idea, practice, or plan in the future. To *look ahead* in the context of teaching is to plan for success based on experience of failure in the past. For example,

We worked as a group collaborating on our results in teaching students how to write a stronger thesis. The thesis is the basis for the argument and now teaching a thesis is a lot easier and less painful. I have a better grasp on how to teach a thesis to the kids so that they understand it and what its purpose is to the essay.

Category 5: Dialogue

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue.

The word *dialogue* has its origins in the Greek *logos* or “meaning.” The original Greek meaning of *dia* is “through.” Thus, dialogue is a form of communication where meaning moves back and forth between and through people. When the researcher asked the teachers during the interview to describe the feedback they received from the instructional coach, one teacher responded, “It is informal. We talk; we have conversations. We are a group of colleagues working together in discussion. She operates as a peer, but she takes notes, and there is a journal of our conversations.” Another teacher responded this way when asked about communication of campus goals: “Coming from a different campus in this district, I think it is more visible what we are shooting for since coming to this campus and teaching English. It is more visible what our goals are. It is more talked about.” The authentic dialogue documented in the interview responses indicated a deep respect held for the instructional coach as well as respect held by the coach for the team of teachers.

Category 6: Praxis

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning.

The IC actually had us go through writing an argument ourselves. Again, that is the IC’s thing – if you are going to expect kids to do it, then you need to do it first. As a team, we talked through what obstacles the kids might have. Where might they struggle? What problems might they have if our terminology is not

aligned? So we wrote arguments and went through each step. The IC took us through the steps that we could replicate in the classroom. She provided an outline of the steps and modeled how we could go from an expository essay to a position statement to an essay.

Simply put, praxis describes the act of applying new ideas to our lives. When the instructional coach required the 9th grade team of teachers to write an argument before assigning students to write an argument, she documented a tenet of instructional coaching at its highest level – praxis. Praxis is impossible without a partnership level of trust between teacher and coach. Praxis resulted in reshaped instruction.

Category 7: Reciprocity

DOMAIN STATEMENT: Teachers get as much as they give.

Reciprocity is the inevitable outcome of true partnerships. These 9th grade teachers revealed in the interview that their hard work paid off when they earned the highest district results on the TAKS Reading Open-Ended Response section of the state TAKS assessment. One teacher exclaimed, “Our proof [of the hard work aligning instruction] on OER was in the OER scores on TAKS. We killed it as a campus!” Reciprocity showed up in the enthusiasm the teachers held for learning and their love of growth and development in their students and in themselves.

Theories About Writing

The research established that the 9th grade teachers had a positive perception of the work that the instructional coach did. The coach laid a foundation of partnership principles upon which the team built its instructional repertoire. However, as data from the teacher interviews were more extensively analyzed, sub-categories emerged within

three of the domains and served to contextualize teachers' espoused theories about college level writing skills. Established from the teacher focus interview, structures and systems necessary for the writing process were grouped with their accompanying domain statements. The graphic organizer in Table 15 displays the domain analysis conceptual framework; X is a kind of Y (Spradley, 1989). It enabled the researcher to align what the teachers said (espoused theory) in the focus interview with what the instructional coach did (enacted theory) as evidenced in the *Instructional Coach Data Collection Instrument* (Appendix B) and the *Instructional Coach Quality Rubric* (Appendix F).

Table 15

Teacher/Coach Alignment Organized by Domain Statements

What Teachers Said They Did	Domain Statement	What the IC Did
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calibrated with each other when scoring student essays • Wrote their own argument essay before beginning instruction to students • Developed common writing rubrics 	Professional learning is done with teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEKS guided all lesson planning • Modeled lessons in classrooms as a result of an agreement with teachers • Modeled lessons as a part of a larger collaborative plan for improving instruction in an individual teacher's classroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed writing instruction during common planning period • Collaborated while scoring student writing • Identified instructional gaps in writing 	Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended all team meetings and acted as a guide and a resource • Worked with all struggling teachers on issues that the teacher needs help with and did so in a partnership role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeled writing for students • Differentiated instruction for argument and synthesis level writing 	Professional learning empowers and respects teacher voice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated team to reflect on instructional practice from the week and adjust instruction appropriately

Basic writers struggle to attain a level of cognitive development which would allow them to form abstractions or conceptions (Lunsford, 1979). They are unable to practice analysis and synthesis and to apply successfully the principles to college tasks. Students might perform a given task well in a specific situation, but they have great difficulty abstracting from it or replicating it in another context. To address the level of college readiness, content needs to elevate what is taught, how it is taught, and the social

climate of the school. Vygotsky (1962) distinguishes this as “spontaneous” concepts—those which are formed as a result of ordinary, day-to-day experiences and “scientific” concepts which are formed largely in conjunction with instruction. Basic writing students are able to formulate spontaneous concepts and write narrative or descriptive essays of various particular interests, but they are not able to remove themselves from such concepts, to abstract from them, or to define them into the scientific concepts necessary for successful college work.

Without the support and resources of the instructional coach, the 9th grade team of English language arts teachers would have been more instructionally comfortable helping students produce writing products at the spontaneous-concept stage rather than at the true-concept formation stage of argument and synthesis. However, without the administrative focus on clear goals, clear action plans, and clear methods, the instructional coach’s partnership with the teachers would have operated in a vacuum and outside of any real and lasting change for the campus.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

“The/readiness is all. . .” (Hamlet, V. ii. 237).

In Shakespeare’s famous play, Hamlet’s primary inner conflict throughout the play was based on his inability to act firmly and resolutely to address his conflicts; thus, he delayed the entire play. Hamlet claimed that whatever is destined to happen will happen soon enough, and that for those on Earth, “the readiness is all.”

It is not absurd to parallel Hamlet’s literary inaction to many campus leaders’ educational inaction across the state of Texas concerning college readiness. Hamlet was referencing taking action against those duplicitous in the murder of his father. To extend the metaphor, campus leadership cannot continue to be duplicitous in denying college access to students due to lack of campus organizational infrastructure. Research demonstrates that the effective principal establishes teams, provides leadership roles for teachers, promotes collegial inquiry, and relies on mentoring for induction of new teachers and the further learning of experienced teachers (Barth, 1990, Darling-Hammond, 1997; Drago-Severson, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimore, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Sparks, 1994). Campus principals who believe the quality of student learning is highly dependent on the quality of instruction organize themselves to support instructionally-focused professional learning for teachers. Learning experiences extend beyond the workshop format to include teacher inter-visitations, demonstration lessons, in-class coaching, teams of teachers doing lesson study, curriculum planning, and analysis of assessment data. (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2010). Campus leadership cannot be paralyzed by inaction when it comes to laying the

foundation for strong instructional content that elevates the level of student engagement. The readiness is the all, indeed.

Instructional Gaps Created by TAKS

The state of Texas has not made it easy for teachers to teach writing at college readiness standards. In fact, the lack of “readiness” is rooted in the TAKS, the state assessment that has been in existence since 2003 but will cease in 2012 for all but exit level grades. Passing, which was called “met standard” on TAKS, did not mean the student was ready to move to the next grade level. It just meant the student “passed” TAKS. An example of the gap is best understood in the frame of research conducted by the University of Texas (Fuller, 2009). The researchers determined what scale score on the exit level TAKS test in 11th grade English language arts and math would be the best indicator for a student to be successful in college and the workplace. Additionally, the standards included a cut score to identify whether students had acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to enter a Texas higher education institution without enrolling in a remedial course (Fuller, 2009). According to Fuller (2009), TEA and THECB set the cut score at a scale score of 2200 for both exams. In 2006, the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) reviewed the findings and determined that the 2200 scale score was not an adequate indicator of college readiness and proposed that a cut score of 2300 for English language arts and math should be used to measure college readiness. In the study, Dougherty, Mellor, & Smith (2006) found that students who scored a 2300 had a much higher probability of scoring higher on the ACT, SAT, and THEA, a measure of college readiness that would require less remediation in English and college algebra classes. The authors found a staggering difference in college readiness

between the 2200 and 2300 scale score. In math, a scale score of 2200 on the exit level TAKS test was associated with only a 26% probability of not needing remediation while a score of 2300 was associated with a 77% probability of not needing remediation. In English language arts, the difference was not as great but still indicated a 77% probability of not needing remediation with a scale score of 2200, and a 90% probability of not needing remediation with a 2300 scale score.

In the TAKS system, students had to score a higher number of correct answers to earn a performance level called “commended.” But the “passing” standard was set at a minimum score of 2100 for TAKS, and at some grade levels that 2100 score did not include writing on the assessment. A student could “pass” TAKS and the parent and student would feel confident that the student was ready for the next level of study. But “passing” TAKS was a false sense of readiness. It did not necessarily mean the student was ready for 10th grade reading and writing.

The state of Texas has instituted a new assessment that begins in 2012 for all current 9th grade students and those students in grade levels below. This assessment is a four-hour time limited assessment that asks, for example, a 9th grader to read and comprehend up to nine different genres, pair those genres in order to comprehend controlling or main ideas, and to write two essays. The essays are literary and expository. This is the foundational level of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). By the time 9th graders pass through 10th, they will have written persuasive and expository essays, and their 11th grade assessment will demand proficiency in persuasive and analytical forms of composition. These end-of-course exams (EOCs) are currently tied to the students’ final grade for the classroom, and students must accrue a

certain overall score on their EOC exams before they graduate high school. The state of Texas has designed an assessment that is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the English language arts content. “Passing,” which was called “met standard” in the former TAKS system, will now be labeled “satisfactory performance” in the new STAAR system.

Eight years of TAKS accountability has wrecked havoc on college readiness standards at high schools, particularly in the area of writing. The state of Texas assessment system has created an eight year gap between where a 9th grade student should be performing in writing (college readiness level) and where that student actually is performing (upper elementary/middle school level). For the past eight years, students have been accountable on a state exam for writing personal narratives and nothing more. Teachers have become very comfortable teaching students how to write a personal narrative. It has become the realm of the comfortable for teachers. It will take a tremendous instructional shift for teachers to learn how and become comfortable with teaching writing at a college level of readiness.

High School and College Readiness Standards

High schools designed to prepare all students for college success appear dramatically different from those that prepare only a portion of students. These high schools have certain key characteristics. The most important and perhaps the most often overlooked is an,

“ . . . intellectually coherent program of study based on a curriculum that grows progressively more challenging over the years. . . Key skills, such as writing are . . . nurtured with progressively more challenging assignments tied to a common

scoring system to ensure that the same skills are developed and new skills are mastered and that students mature intellectually.” (Conley, 2005, p. 73)

The researcher found that writing and learning in collaborative classroom settings, with teachers working closely with the instructional coach to find new ways in which extended writing could be integrated into their ongoing classroom activities, was foundational to the 9th grade team at the sample high school. Teachers found it was relatively easy to modify the pattern of activities in their classrooms, broadening the uses of writing in which their students engaged. However, in some cases the teachers found that such changes in classroom activities also led to a fundamental change in what counted as “knowing” a subject (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Thus, a reassessment of the role of the teacher and the role of the student in the whole pattern of classroom interaction shifted. The goal of professional development at the high school was to transform the conception of the nature of teaching and the nature of learning in school contexts. That goal was espoused by the campus leadership, developed by the instructional coach, and enacted by the teachers in the classroom.

Instructional Coach Elevated Teachers’ Content Knowledge

Research Question 1: What are the strengths and limitations of the job-embedded model of professional development offered by instructional coaching in addressing college readiness writing standards?

First and foremost, when instructional coaching elevates what is taught and how it is taught, the social climate of the school changes to a considerable degree. According to the research of Joyce and Showers (2002), a school where writing occurs regularly (thereby affecting what is taught) makes a considerable difference to the quality of

writing. When teachers study the teaching of writing, a model of instruction (the how) can make a big difference. Modeling, as a form of professional development, used by the instructional coach at the high school was affirmed over and over by the 9th grade team of teachers. When student learning is studied continuously and diagnostically, modulating instruction based on student ability occurs. For example, teachers who study weekly samples of their students' writing with an eye to modulating instruction based on student ability create more energy in the teaching and learning environment (Joyce & Showers, 2002). The 9th grade teachers documented continuously that this was occurring in its daily team planning meetings.

Associate Principal Put in Place Constructs That Supported Professional Learning

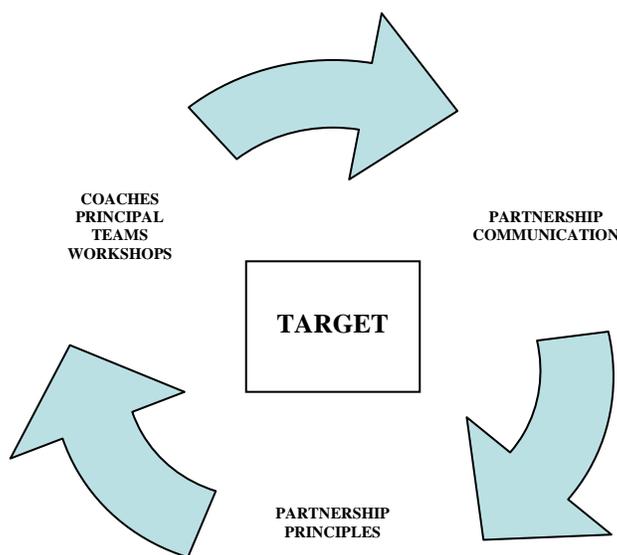
Research Question 2: What do principals do to support, develop, and sustain the instructional coach in addressing student achievement in college readiness standards in writing?

The researcher found that the associate principal performed everything correctly according to current literature on effective professional development. To summarize his actions, he identified and “targeted” the work of the campus. He put those targets into one-page tools that kept the language high and visible in front of the staff at all times. He used consistency of language. *The Big Four* reminded staff that learning environment, content planning, instruction, and assessment were foundations upon which all learning occurred—for students and teachers (Knight, 2010). He consistently embodied humanity, focus, leverage, simplicity, and precision. He put humanity at the center by recognizing and celebrating the professionalism of teachers; he achieved results by focusing the instructional coach, workshops, and teams on achieving instructional

improvement targets; he sought out and implemented high-leverage teaching practices and high-leverage professional learning practices; he addressed the complexity of school improvement by refining plans to be as clear, actionable, and simple as possible; and he achieved improvement through precise explanations of practices (Knight, 2010).

Figure 1

Target Centered Professional Development



Teachers Enrolled in the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaching

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching model for professional development in the area of college readiness standards in writing?

The instructional coach held true to three powerful behaviors paramount to enrolling teachers into the context, content, and procedures for professional development (Joyce & Showers, 2002). The coach believed professional learning is done *with* teachers; professional learning *enables* authentic *dialogue*; and professional learning *empowers*

and *respects teacher voice*. As a result, the teachers “enrolled” in the model for professional development offered by the instructional coach (Knight, 2007). In other words, the teachers recognized their coach as a partner who could help them become better teachers.

Helping teachers focus on the right target is what the associate principal managed for the campus. He put the learning targets in place in the context of *The Big Four*; he operationalized those targets in the one-page tool, the *Instructional Feedback Instrument*, as a way to provide teachers feedback and hold them accountable for the targets; and he developed the *Instructional Coach Quality Rubric* to provide feedback to the coach and evaluate her professional development plan. The instructional coach aligned her work to the associate principal’s campus plan. She enrolled teachers into communal learning during team planning time and PLC; she communicated *The Big Four* at every professional development level of context, content, and procedure; and she sought to move teachers from a knowledge level of comfortability with writing instruction to a “knowing” the content level of instruction (Hillocks, 2010), particularly in the area of constructing an argument.

Implications

Three actions must take place in order to build partnerships among the campus leaders, the instructional coach, and the teachers. First, a framework must be established that frames the campus work and is communicated as signage (Fullen, 2010a) throughout the organization constantly. Second, the seven principles of partnership (Knight, 2007) must guide all interaction between coach and teacher, principal and coach, and principal

and teacher. Third, the principal must elevate the content of what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school itself (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Elevating the content of what is taught is a difficult undertaking of campus leadership (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The associate principal can demand teachers teach to higher standards. The most important partnership is the bond between principal and instructional coach. How can a principal be a content expert to the degree that a coach can be? The campus English language arts instructional coach had extensive training writing. Many summers were spent in advanced placement, week-long institutes and with the New Jersey Writing Project learning best practices and studying the research. How would teachers know how to elevate writing instruction if they had not had elevated instruction? By its own admission, the 9th grade team had received no formal training in the foundational writing instruction of constructing an argument even though constructing an argument is basic to college readiness (Hillocks, 2010).

College readiness is one of the most pressing issues facing campus administrators. With so much attention given to high stakes testing, principals are continuously assessing the college readiness of their students. Equally powerful questions for principals should be:

1. Are the teachers able to teach at college readiness standards?
2. Do the teachers have the skills?
3. As the campus leader, what professional development do I need to put in place to provide them with the skills?

Limitations

The limitations of this study are fundamentally those associated with qualitative studies. The method of domain analysis can be replicated in subsequent studies; however, outcomes may not be predictable from case study to case study. The methods of interviewing, observation with appropriate instruments, and analyses of data and archived documents may be replicated, although the findings will vary dependent upon individuals, demographics, and sets of circumstances relative to the multiplicity of variables in existence within human systems. A replication of results would be tentative, at best. Though this work is a case study of the alignment of practices at one suburban high school and how those practices can be replicated at other high schools, the findings remain those associated with the one researched high school and its associate principal, instructional coach, and the 9th grade team of teachers.

Additionally, the role of the researcher as a peripheral participant-observer provided her greater access than those who were not as intimately involved with the system. By the same token, her role also shaped the lens through which she examined the unit of analysis, the associate high school principal's operationalizing of campus instructional learning targets. The researcher's association with the campus most likely contributed to a degree of subjectivity, even as she tried to be deliberate about objectively collecting data.

Future Studies

Numerous extensive and comprehensive studies of the U.S. school system make it clear that schools are not preparing our high school students to graduate and succeed. Research findings give grave warnings to principals: Only 29% of America's 8th grade

public school students meet the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standard of reading proficiency for their grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Fourteen percent of new teachers leave by the end of their first year; 30% leave within three years; and nearly 50% leave by the end of their fifth year of teaching and nationwide, only about 70% of students earn their high school diplomas (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

If campus leadership is to operationalize an impact school, a school that is indeed a “readiness is all” campus, then that leadership must accept the fact that it probably does not have an English Department that is itself ready to teach college readiness writing skills to students. Is campus leadership itself prepared to teach those skills? This disconnect between the language of what a high school proclaims in the verbage of its goals and mission statements is not always the reality of what a staff can do, particularly in the area of writing. By their own accounts, high school teachers proclaim a lack of knowledge and preparedness for teaching logic-based writing skills such as argument and synthesis. Blame the colleges for not preparing teachers in teacher-prep methodology courses; blame the teachers for not teaching themselves the necessary skills; blame districts for not recognizing and addressing the deficiencies in the teacher tool box; blame the state for holding students to such low accountability measures in writing for the past eight years. The blame game will not do a single student a bit of good. But a strong professional development program embedded into the context of the campus and supported by a skilled content specialist who aligns instruction to campus targets and goals of college readiness will make significant difference in teacher behaviors. The

campus administrator who fails to act on that need for teachers is the campus leader who espouses college readiness rhetoric but fails to enact it.

The field of study in the area of writing research is ripe with opportunity. The new state assessment, STAAR, provides a landscape for longitudinal studies of student writing skills alongside teacher classroom behaviors toward the instruction of writing. STAAR will allow collection of writing data in incremental growth from 4th to 7th to three years of high school, and the growth can be studied in a continuum of progressively more difficult stages. The student's writing skills can be measured quantitatively in narrative modes, expository modes, and ultimately persuasive and analytical modes. With the TAKS system of assessment, the only writing data collected on students was the narrative mode from 4th to 11th grade. In fact, the scoring rubric for writing for TAKS did not change significantly from 4th to 11th grades. No college readiness standards for writing were set in place and very small opportunity for analysis of student data in the area of college readiness was available under the TAKS system of accountability.

Campus administrators must not be Hamlet-like in their actions for college readiness standards for their schools. Too many campuses proclaim college ready yet fail to act beyond putting up college posters and wearing college sweatshirts once every six weeks. The administrator must recognize and fight for the staffing that puts in place a content specialist who has the instructional skills to teach teachers the specialized skills necessary to equip students for writing logically and reasonably at the standards of SAT/ACT and AP. Unfortunately at present, too many teachers are not themselves knowledgeable about teaching at this level without extensive follow-up at the campus level. The principal must embed college readiness skills into the rhetoric and operations

of the campus (Fuller, 2009). Teacher evaluations, rubrics, instructional targets must include the specific cognitive skills for accountability in the area of college readiness.

The researcher documented evidence of the campus commitment to academic behaviors ascribed in Knight's (2010) research in the campus *Instructional Targets*, the *Instructional Feedback Form* to the teachers, and the *Instructional Coach Quality Rubric*. The alignment of *The Big Four* from associate principal to instructional coach and to teachers personified non-negotiable academic behaviors for the campus. There was no doubt that the language of the campus administration about academic behaviors echoed throughout the staff.

Perhaps as the campus continues to build its teacher repertoire and the professional development course of study, then more of the language of the *skills* in terms of *student outcomes* at this level will be emphasized. Academic behaviors tended to supersede key content knowledge and key cognitive strategies as the campus's *Instructional Targets*. Academic behaviors are more easily documented in observation. Documenting student mastery of key cognitive skills such as synthesis and analysis is much more complicated. Documenting student outcomes means setting up norming situations for calibrating teacher scoring of writing and critical thinking. Although the campus instructional coach did create a protocol for analyzing student writing with her team of teachers, the researcher was unable to document evidence that the associate principal ever examined the process or student outcomes. In other words, the coach knew how important the process of norming and calibrating scoring processes for writing was, but the associate principal was not a participant in the process. Too often the interpretation of what the key cognitive strategies are was left to the interpretation of the

instructional coach. Herein is the weak link. If the coach is a strong content specialist and can communicate and design a strong professional development course of study side-by-side with campus administration, then campus leadership and campus targets are all the stronger. However, if there is not a content specialist or if the content specialist is not strong, then the campus administration is missing a critical component. The administration can design and put in place instructional targets all day long. But if those targets never align the rhetoric of college readiness to the actual accountability of student outcomes at the college readiness level, then it is indeed Hamlet-like – all talk and no action.

Table 16 exemplifies a level of specificity necessary for the campus leadership to undertake as it addresses college readiness levels in critical reading and writing. The instructional coach and the teachers are not left to interpret the student learning outcomes but rather, with the guidance of campus leadership, skills are identified, targeted, and incorporated into campus learning targets, rubrics, and instructional feedback sheets that hold teachers and ICs accountable for student outcomes at the argument and synthesis levels (Conely, 2005). This would require that less objective methods of collecting data be employed by campus leaders. Instead of checklists that speak to teacher and coach accountability for student behaviors, norming practices that substantiate the level of student proficiency in writing in more complicated data collection formats would emerge (Hillocks, 2010; Graham & Hebert, 2010). If campus leadership hopes to impact student outcomes at the level of college readiness, then campus leadership must act to make norming practices a key component of data collection, particularly in the areas of writing.

Table 16

Campus Leadership Action Plan at College Readiness Level

College Level Complexity of Instruction	What Campus Leadership Must Espouse to Teachers In Instructional Targets	What Campus Leadership Must Enact with Teachers In Professional Development
Knowledge of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a unit plan for each unit of instruction at college readiness levels of synthesis and argument and share it with students before instruction begins. • Develop essential questions and learning targets for each writing outcome and share them with students. • Align instructional activities at college readiness level of content standards of TEKS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create research-based protocols for lesson planning and team meetings. • Collect evidence of level of content knowledge based on team planning logs. • Attend 90% of grade team level meetings to provide resources and feedback.
Manipulation of Procedural Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a variety of instructional strategies that target synthesize and argument. • Utilize instructional practice that is student-centered for the majority of class time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure that modeling by content specialist of writing skills at college readiness skill levels occur at department PLC meetings. • Assure that teachers receive a course of study that targets current writing research. • Offer enrollment opportunities for one-on-one coaching support focused on teacher's identified learning targets.
Knowledge of Discourse Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create writing prompts at synthesis and argument levels as summative assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided PD on argument and synthesis by modeling with and by teacher created essays.
Production of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cite evidence of learning progress for each student based on norming protocols for writing outcomes at argument and synthesis levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create norming protocols for calibrating teacher scoring practices. • Create rubrics for scoring argument and synthesis essays. • Create norming protocols for analyzing student essays. • Design interventions based on data collected.

Student outcomes need to reside side-by-side with teacher behaviors. Those student outcomes must be documented in the instructional targets. The language of college readiness is clear - a campus must open pathways and tear down barriers, but it must also hold students accountable for producing work at the college readiness level (Conely, 2005). Too many campus leaders look only to state assessment results to document the level of student accountability. What if the campus leadership looked at student writing and evaluated student readiness for college with that documentation? That is the data that speaks volumes about a campus commitment to college readiness. If campus administrators can not look at a fair sample of essays by students at every grade level and discern clear progress in student ability to present a sustained case, free of mechanical error, in a readable style, then how could that leadership begin to justify college readiness for the campus?

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APPENDIX A:
SAMPLE OF TEACHER FOCUS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND
ASSOCIATED RUBRICS FOR RESPONSES

Appendix A

Sample of Teacher Focus Interview Questions and Associated Rubrics for Responses

Question #1 – Describe how you set up for a coaching session.			
ID	Category	Code	Narrative
T1	Content Planning Dialogue	E, D, TL	We meet almost everyday as a team at the designated, scheduled common planning time for our grade level team. It is a priority over most other things with exception of called ARD meetings. The IC attends our team meetings, listens and always returns to the next meeting with materials to help us in whatever she heard from our previous conversation was our greatest need.
Question #2 – How do you decide on a focus for the session?			
T3	Content Planning Equality	E, D, C, M	Generally, it is based off of what we are following our scope and sequence and what our plan is to do with that lesson. The IC is there to help guide us if we are stumped on something or with an idea or thought that we are not quite getting instructionally.
Question #3 – Could you describe a typical coaching session with your coach and what role she plays?			
T1	Content Planning Voice	E, D, TL	We were discussing the writing outcome for this unit we are doing, The Odyssey, and trying to really nail down the objective we wanted our kids to accomplish in the writing assignment. We were struggling. Our IC helped with guiding questions and the came back to the next meeting with resources for prewriting assignment that was more challenging to our students because it asked the students to look at the word courage as a abstract idea and then develop a criteria for evaluating their opinion on whether Odysseus was courageous or not. She clarified for us and made the topic more accessible for the students.

The complete teacher Focus Interview process includes a total of 11 questions and a scoring summary categorizing responses within The Big Four framework.

APPENDIX B:
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Appendix B

Instructional Coach Data Collection Instrument

Big Four Focus	Observational Data	Documents/Archival Record Data Sources
Content	Researcher's journal notes	Weekly RELA Reports cut apart and organized by content District Agendas for Instructional Coaches' Meetings
Instructional Strategies	Scripted PLC lessons on argument and synthesis PowerPoints of PLC presentations Conversations with IC Coach's Planning Log	Weekly RELA Reports
Assessment	District CBA/DBA data results	Weekly RELA Reports
Learning Environment	3 Video Club Analysis/Plan of Action Summary Sheets	Weekly RELA Reports

Categories determined from Literature Review, Chapter 2

APPENDIX C:
EXCERPTS FROM ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW
CATEGORIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK

Appendix C

Excerpts from Associate Principal Interview Categorized in Big Four Framework

<p>Interview Question: Describe how you prompt teachers to use the school’s instructional coach and other professional learning opportunities to master the teaching practices necessary for college readiness?</p>	
<p>Big Four Focus</p>	
Content	Whenever we get together for PLC time, we will show which target or targets we are teaching today. We will present some content on it. We will have breakout sessions related to it. The breakouts are being led by our instructional coaches. The coaches will model best practice. They will lead discussions about some of these things.
Instructional Strategies	The ICs are trying to prompt some of the teachers to adopt some of these practices. The ICs are “enrolling” teachers with these forms that serve to “invite” the coach into the teacher’s classroom to partner/model strategies of interest to the teacher. Teachers watch the IC model a lesson and at the end of the time together, the IC will give me [teacher] this form and it will have a bunch of things on there that the IC modeled. They are specific things such as a <i>Teach Like a Champion</i> strategy or a good transition strategy or perhaps another instructional strategy. As a teacher, I can check off particular things I am more interested in learning about and I turn it in to communicate my interest to the IC.
Assessment	The campus target right now is 90% minimum student engagement at any time. That’s a lofty target and that is something we’re going to be working towards for a long time. But ultimately, I believe we are not going to make many gains until we can get our students doing that level of work. I am thinking of assessment for learning right now. A student should be able to, at any given moment, generally tell you where they stand in the learning for a particular unit. Are they on target or are they missing the target right now? And they should have something in place, the teacher should, the classroom should, for remediation and getting the kid back on track for that particular thing.
Learning Environment	We [Admin] note proficient performance on teacher’s appraisal domains. So the teachers are receiving this feedback and that adds a little bit of pressure to them because suddenly if we see a few good things, but there are some areas they need to address, then we can have a conversation with them. We will send them the feedback and sometimes we will sit down with them and say, “Look, I saw this and this was good. This still needed some work. Why don’t you work with your IC? So we are kind of pushing it that way.

Categories determined from Literature Review, Chapter 2

APPENDIX D:
SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT FORM
FOR TEACHER SUPPORT
CATEGORIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK

Appendix D

Enrollment Form

SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Colleague:

Below you will find a menu of services or possible ways that I can help you in your efforts to achieve the instructional Improvement Targets for our campus. After viewing yourself teaching and filling out the self-evaluation form, consider which of these services would be most helpful to you and what timeline would work best for you. Please place a check (**√**) before the "menu items" you are definitely interested in and a question mark (**?**) before those that you would like to preview.

I look forward to working with you!

Name: _____ Date: _____

Community Building

Providing support/assistance with:

- establishing classroom procedures
- redirecting student behavior
- managing activities and transitions
- room arrangement/organization
- Other:

Instruction

Implementing the following research-based strategies in the classroom to improve student engagement:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New American Lecture/Interactive Lecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Inductive Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Instruction/IMSCI | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated Difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> Mind's Eye |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Socratic Seminar | <input type="checkbox"/> Jigsaw |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

I would like support:

- Immediately Within the next 2 months Let's meet to plan a time

The best time for me to meet with you is

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before school | Time: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After school | Time: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference period | Time: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | Time: _____ |

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO ME BY: _____

APPENDIX E:
SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL
INSTRUCTIONAL FEEDBACK FORM
CATEGORIZED IN BIG FOUR FRAMEWORK

Appendix E

Instructional Feedback Form

SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Instructional Feedback form	Teacher Name	Period	Time
Community Building			
Social Contract Posted	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Behavioral Expectations Enforced	<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes or Inconsistently	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Never
Builds Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Things	<input type="checkbox"/> Informal Conversation	<input type="checkbox"/> Door <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Positive Interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
Student Disruptions (Tally)			
Instructional Planning			
Unit Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Learning Targets and/or Essential Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:
Stock Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:
TEK Alignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Define, describe, ID, label, name, recognize	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Interpret, compare, contrast, distinguish, interpret, recognize	<input type="checkbox"/> Application Apply, calculate, classify, demonstrate, examine, experiment, interpret, modify	<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis Analyze, calculate, compare, contrast, explain, experiment, infer
<input type="checkbox"/> Synthesis Arrange, compose, construct, develop, formulate, generalize	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Appraise, argue, conclude, convince, defend, judge, rank, recommend, select	Notes	
Students can Describe Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:
Instruction			
Direct Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> Modeling	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Directed Q and A	<input type="checkbox"/> Lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Guided Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-Centered	<input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered	Notes:
Unit Plan Referenced	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobi <input type="checkbox"/> Poll Everywhere	<input type="checkbox"/> E-Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Smart Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Document Camera <input type="checkbox"/> Website <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Level of Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> 90-100%	<input type="checkbox"/> 80-89%	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-79% <input type="checkbox"/> Below 50%
Engagement Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Authentic	<input type="checkbox"/> Ritual	<input type="checkbox"/> Passive <input type="checkbox"/> Retreatism/Rebellion
Students Working to Learn	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Answering Questions <input type="checkbox"/> Asking Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Formative Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Group Work <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-On Activity <input type="checkbox"/> Correcting Mistakes <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Guided Practice
Assessment for Learning			
Formative Assessment Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand Signals	<input type="checkbox"/> Clickers	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Exit Ticket
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Practice with Feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Anticipation Guides	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Assessment with Feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Understands Learning Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:
Strengths and Weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes:

APPENDIX F:
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH QUALITY RUBRIC
FOR CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Appendix F

Instructional Coach Quality Rubric

Instructional Coach Quality Rubric		
Characteristic	Proficient	Exceeds Expectations
TEKS in instruction	Utilizes TEKS as a guide in instruction. May go too far with a topic because of personal knowledge.	TEKS guide all lesson planning.
Modeling Lessons	Models lessons in classrooms as a result of an agreement with a teacher. Models lessons in all grade levels/subjects for the entire year.	Models lessons in classrooms as a result of an agreement with a teacher. Models lessons at all grade levels/subjects throughout the year. Models lessons as a part of a larger collaborative plan for improving instruction in an individual teacher's classroom.
Assessment Practice	Works with a limited number of teachers and teams in developing test blueprints, formative assessments, aligned instruction, and test before instruction is delivered.	Works with teachers, teams, and district coordinators in developing test blueprints, learning targets, formative assessments, aligned instruction, and tests before instruction is delivered. Backward design philosophy is fully integrated into the practice of the entire department.
Technology Integration	Works with limited number of teachers or teams on developing instructional products involving technology.	Promotes the use of technology for differentiated products in the classroom with all teams. Regularly models this in the classroom and facilitates teacher use of technology in instruction. Regularly works on lesson planning with teachers with technology as a focus.
Support for Teachers and Teams	Works with certain teams and acts as a guide or resource. Works infrequently with struggling teachers.	Regularly attends ALL team meetings and acts as a guide and a resource. Regularly works with all struggling teachers on issues that the teacher needs help with and does so in a partnership role.
Instructional Practice	Promotes student-centered instruction, strategies that boost academic engagement, and utilizes effective assessment practice to drive planning. Works with some teachers consistently to increase these practices in their classroom.	Reads several books each year on instruction and is a learner when it comes to increasing engagement and varying instructional practice. Constantly promotes student-centered instruction and partners with many teachers to assure that instruction assures that the student works and learns.
Lesson Observations	Observes classrooms at the request of teachers in the department. Gives specific feedback related to items that were agreed upon for observation.	Observes classrooms at the request of teachers in the department. Partners with the teacher to determine classroom attributes that will be observed. Facilitates conversation about the data collected and partners with the observed teacher on next steps. Follows through on next steps with teacher, but always in a partnership role.
Facilitates Reflective Practice	Facilitates teams to reflect on instruction, but only as an initiative or several times a year.	Facilitates teams to reflect on instructional practice from the week and adjust instruction appropriately. This practice becomes part of the culture of the department.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

APPENDIX G:

PROTOCOL: TEAM ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK

Appendix G

PROTOCOL: TEAM ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK

ANALYZE		
What strengths do you see in each group? Identify examples.		
ABOVE STANDARD	ON-TARGET	BELOW STANDARD
What are the areas that are challenging for them? Identify examples.		
ABOVE STANDARD	ON-TARGET	BELOW STANDARD

PLAN		
Based on your discussions, what type of instruction does each group of students need?		
Based on your discussions, what revisions should be made in your instructional design?		
ABOVE STANDARD	ON-TARGET	BELOW STANDARD
REFLECT		
Was this diagnostic assessment a good way of evaluating student skills?		
How did you determine which products were above standard/on-target/below standard?		

Adapted by Daphne Henderson from *The Literacy Coach's Game Plan*
by Maya Sadder and Gabriella Nidus

APPENDIX H:
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Appendix H

University of Houston Approval Letter to Conduct Research

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

January 23, 2012

Ms. Nancy Fitzgerald
c/o Dr. Angus MacNeil
Dean, Education

Dear Ms. Nancy Fitzgerald,

The University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1) reviewed your research proposal entitled "THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACH AND PRINCIPAL IN SUPPORT OF COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS IN HIGH SCHOOL WRITING: A CASE STUDY" on December 16, 2011, according to institutional guidelines.

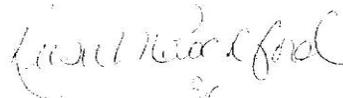
At that time, your project was granted approval contingent upon your agreement to modify your proposal protocol as stipulated by the Committee. The changes you have made adequately respond to those contingencies made by the Committee, and your project has been approved. However reapplication will be required:

1. Annually
2. Prior to any change in the approved protocol
3. Upon development of the unexpected problems or unusual complications

Thus, if you will be still collecting data under this project on **November 1, 2012** you must reapply to this Committee for approval before this date if you wish to prevent an interruption of your data collection procedures.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Scott B. Stevenson, Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1)

PLEASE NOTE: (1) All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document. If you are using a consent document that requires subject signatures, remember that signed copies must be retained for a minimum of 3 years, or 5 years for externally supported projects. Signed consents from student projects will be retained by the faculty sponsor. Faculty is responsible for retaining signed consents for their own projects; however, if the faculty leaves the university, access must be possible for UH in the event of an agency audit. (2) Research investigators will promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

Protocol Number: 12184-01

Full Review:

Expedited Review:

