A Study of Literacy Coaches in an Urban School District

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

by

Ana Laura Aguilar

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Abstract

Background: Educators are under mounting pressure to address increasing standards for student performance, which includes meeting the needs of an equally increasing diverse student population. Building educators' capacity to respond to these growing demands necessitates a professional development model that will address individual teacher's needs and have them prepared to facilitate students' learning to meet academic performance standards. **Purpose:** There are numerous professional development models and this was a study of one model's use and implementation, the Teacher Development Specialist, as adopted for use in a large urban school district in Texas. This model had not previously been studied and the results of are intended to serve as a tool for decision making in the district as to its use. **Methods:** The study followed a qualitative research design. A grounded theory evaluation methodology was utilized to ascertain if the Teacher Development Specialist model is being implemented with fidelity and the effects of the model on individual practice, as perceived by the participants. Six teacher development specialists, commonly referred to as instructional coaches, who specialize in literacy coaching, were selected to participate in the study. A focus group was utilized to gather participants' responses. The responses were transcribed and analyzed to identify themes, and draw conclusions and their implications for educational practice. **Results:** The study revealed six emergent themes: continuous professional development, collaboration among colleagues, research in best practices, principal buy-in and support, teacher buy-in and collaboration, and time spent coaching teachers; all of which can be found in the extant literature. **Conclusions:** The study revealed the Teacher Development Specialist model is in place and utilized; however, it is not being

implemented consistently and with fidelity. Further research is needed, related to

improving the use and fidelity of implementation of the coaching style.

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Chapter One

Introduction

There is a current crisis with public school funds as they are diminishing more each year, yet expectations for quality teaching and learning continue to rise (Shanklin, 2009). Educators are under increasing pressure to address increasing standards, while meeting the needs of an equally increasing diverse student population. In Texas the continuous improvement and revisions of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), is representative of a shift in efforts made by the state to require more rigorous standards for all student achievement. At the same time, the state as well as many districts, have taken teacher accountability to an all new level, adding a component to link student achievement on standardized tests to teacher evaluations, this in turn has gross implications for the future of teacher compensation as well as teacher job security (Aronwitz, 2014). In the world in which we live, where there is an emphasis placed on the measuring and improving of student achievement, there is a great imperative that teachers be given access to high-quality professional development that allows them to obtain the knowledge, skills, and support required to ensure their students are successful.

One approach to high-quality professional development, that has been recognized as a successful means of improving teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement, is instructional coaching (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Elish-Piper & Allier, 2011; Sanklin, 2009; Toll, 2008). Instructional coaching is defined as an approach to professional development where teacher leaders serve as peer coaches, "providing school and central office personnel with sustained, targeted supports to build knowledge, improve practice and promote achievement" (Annenberg Institute, 2004, p. 1). The International Literacy

Association (ILA, 2011) defined the role of the instructional coach as that of a facilitator of professional development as opposed to a supervisor or evaluator. The goal of instructional coaches is to provide their colleagues with supportive, nonthreatening assistance and guidance to meet the needs of the students and schools which they serve.

A few approaches to instructional coaching include technical coaching, problem-solving coaching, reflective practice coaching, team-building coaching, and reform coaching (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The different approaches to instructional coaching include duties such as: planning and facilitating professional development sessions for classroom teachers; assisting teachers in analyzing student data; co-planning; modeling instruction; co-teaching; observing teachers; offering constructive feedback; and promoting collaboration and reflection among teams of teachers by facilitating professional learning communities (Denton & Hasbrouch, 2009; Shanklin, 2009). Through these duties, the instructional coach is able to provide school communities with sustained, collaborative, contextually-relevant professional development that is specifically targeted at advancing teacher effectiveness and student achievement (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010).

Throughout the literature there is a large and increasing amount of research on the use of instructional coaching as a method of improving teacher practice and raising student achievement at all levels (Biancarosa et al, 2008; Shanklin, 2009; Teemant, Wink, & Tyra, 2011). Vanderburg and Stephens (2009) found that teachers who had been coached by an instructional coach for three consecutive years indicated they had acquired new strategies and practices, were willing to take more risks with new approaches, better understood the needs of their students, and felt more capable overall of

adjusting their practice to meet the needs of their students. While these results are impressive, they are not unique to these researchers; there is evidence that continuous collaboration with an instructional coach gives teachers the support they need to make modifications and continuously refine and perfect their practice as they are exposed to new information, materials, and approaches (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). This approach to professional development is unlike the isolated, workshop professional development practices traditionally used in the past; instructional coaching provides teachers with ongoing learning opportunities that are reflective and relevant to the needs of the students, teachers, and school community (Musanti & Pence, 2010; Rose, 2009).

Background

There is a significant amount of research that suggests that the influence teachers have is the greatest variable in explaining student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Nye, Konstantopoulous, & Hedges, 2004; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). The research includes evidence, which suggests teachers' content knowledge and their ability to teach using good research based instructional practices have a great impact on student achievement. (Allington, 2010; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004; Pressley, Allington, Wharton, McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). As a result of this extensive research, there has been a great focus on teacher professional development as a manner for addressing teachers' content knowledge as well as their instructional practices. There is astounding evidence of a relationship between high learning standards and improving student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Effective professional development is considered by many as

an instrumental approach strategy for accomplishing today's ambitious student achievement goals (Odden, 2012). There is also ample evidence that raising teacher quality through professional development can be key to improving student outcomes (Rockoff, J. E., 2004).

Coaching experts claim that there is evidence that coaching can improve both teacher performance and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Studies have shown that teachers who have engaged in coaching practices are more likely to implement changes, practice new strategies, and try new instructional strategies (Knight, 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Contrasting to the professional development opportunities and practices that were previously seen as the only way to develop teachers, instructional coaching provides teachers with learning opportunities that are not taught in insolation and that are ongoing and tailored to meet the needs of the particular teacher and students (Musanti & Pence, 2010; Rose, 2009).

Due to the existence of poor teaching there is a need for instructional coaching and the role of the Teacher Development Specialist (TDS). While TDS can also support teachers who are not struggling, the main focus of their work is to assist struggling teachers. (Fidler & Atton, 1999) have identified the causes of poor performance as being rooted in either management, the actual job, or the individual, and suggest that any attempt to address poor performance should look at these causes in that particular order. Instructional coaching requires that the partnership between the coach and the teacher be founded on trust, support, and mutual respect (Harris, 2015). Further evidence

establishes that teacher collaboration is required for professional learning to take place (Harris, 2015).

There are teachers who are resistant to collaborating with instructional coaches and do not necessarily see the value to the work they do (Jay, 2009; Jay & Strong, 2008; McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Shanklin, 2009). While the issue of teacher resistance is not new or different it is key to understanding why and how instructional coaching does work with teachers who are open to being coached (Jay, 2009; Knight, 2011). Knight (2009) emphasized this sense of gaining teachers' trust, in order to have the ability to coach them by asserting that coaches need to convey a sincere respect for teachers' knowledge and experience by adopting the stance of a partner rather than an expert. Knight stated, "If teachers feel that their identity (their own sense of how good, competent or talented they are) is under attack, their most frequent reaction is to resist" (p. 511). As Bean (2009) mentioned, "Unless teachers believe that coaching is effective and follow through on various ideas, little will change in the classroom" (p. 142). Adults are sensible learners; they are more likely to want to work with a coach to adopt a new practice or refine their current practices if they feel it will be of benefit to them either personally or professionally. Instructional coaching provides schools with continuous, collaborative, and relevant professional development that is aimed at advancing teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The literature that suggests the influence teachers have as the greatest variable in explaining student achievement is substantial, there is a gap in the literature that explores instructional coaches' perceptions towards their work, and factors that contribute to the

success or failure of their work with teachers. This study was situated to address the gap in the literature. The study employed a grounded theory evaluation of the Teacher Development Specialist model as used in a large urban school district located in Texas. The Teacher Development Specialist model is concerned with differentiated strategies that reflect the best practices in adult learning, a fidelity to implementation of the model, and student outcomes effected by the model.

Teacher development specialists in this study are instructional coaches whose goal is to provide support to teachers in order to provide them with opportunities to grow as teachers and professionals. They provide job-embedded professional development and coaching that is aligned with the teacher appraisal system, and the curriculum in order to develop teacher capacity. Teacher capacity is further built through collaborative planning sessions, on site professional development, and goal setting with the teacher development specialist. As part of the coaching model, teacher development specialists are typically tasked with planning and facilitating professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff, working with teachers to analyze student data, planning with teachers, modeling effective instructional practice, co-teaching, observing teachers in their classrooms, offering effective and constructive feedback, and promoting teacher collaboration through the work of professional learning communities (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Shanklin, 2009).

Teacher development specialists serve as facilitators of learning, not instructors. This distinction is important as it shifts the control of the learning to the teachers, which is in itself an important criterion for adult learning (Knowles et al., 2011). Instructional coaching gives the teachers the opportunity to determine what, when, and how the

learning will take place and also gives them the ability to set their own personal goals and monitor their progress and next steps (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011). The various approaches to instructional coaching also serve as an occasion for educational leaders to differentiate their approach when working with teachers to address the varied learning styles, needs, and interests of teachers (Stover et al., 2011), which in turn takes into consideration the teachers' desire to receive professional development that is relevant and tailored to their individual needs (Bean & Isler, 2008). Instructional coaching is also well-suited to adult learners who tend to be practical in their approach to professional development, as it provides them with a way to address their own professional difficulties and obstacles as they come up and not have to wait until an upcoming professional development opportunity presents itself (Rose, 2009).

Teacher development specialists are essential members of campuses as they provide much needed support to teachers who are struggling and also those who are teaching students who are sometimes several grade levels behind. The Teacher Development Specialist is not a campus administrator and is not responsible for appraising teachers, campus discipline, or day to day operations of the campus; this allows them to focus solely on instruction with teachers. They are also content experts who have extensive experience with curriculum and are able to assist teachers and administrators with the implementation of the curriculum and standards. While the goal of teacher development specialist is to support and grow teachers, the ultimate goal is to positively affect student achievement. There is also evidence that coached teachers use strategies that they learn from working with their coaches more appropriately and experiment with new instructional strategies in their own curriculum areas quicker than

teachers who were not coached and demonstrated better long-term retention of knowledge (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Unlike the isolated, professional development practices of the past, instructional coaching offers schools the opportunity for continuous learning that is applicable to the demands and needs of the students, the teachers, and the entire community (Musanti & Pence, 2010; Rose, 2009).

In order to be considered successful the coaching and developing process must be executed with fidelity. The results of this can be seen with improvements in teacher appraisal scores, as well as an increase in student achievement. There should also be a certain amount of teacher satisfaction from what they are receiving from their teacher development specialist, how they are able to turn the learning around, apply it in their work immediately, and see a difference in their practice. The teacher development specialist model brings about changes to practice by focusing on coaching and developing teachers through the use of on the spot professional development and coaching with best practices as well as content development. The model was developed in 2011 and has had great success in assisting schools to achieve academic improvement. There is a total of 37 teacher development specialist that serve the participating district's elementary schools as instructional coaches for literacy, (time, talent, equipment, information, money and other assets available to conduct program activities).

While the campuses being served by teacher development specialists are all elementary schools within the district, they vary in their performance as well as demographics and socio-economic status of their students. The focus of the work for teacher development specialists is at Improvement Required (IR) campuses, these are schools that have fallen below standard according to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

TEA (2015) lists the four categories or indicators that are used to rate schools, these include: (a) student achievement; (b) student progress; (c) closing performance gaps; and (d) postsecondary readiness. The student achievement indicator provides a snapshot of student performance across all of the content areas. The student progress indicator is a measure of year-to-year student progress by subject and by student group. The third indicator, closing performance gaps, places emphasis on the academic achievement of students who are considered economically disadvantaged and those racial/ethnic student groups that are the lowest performing. The last indicator, postsecondary readiness, refers to the importance of earning a high school diploma. There are numerous potential influences that can affect the work of the teacher development specialist and how effective they can be in coaching. Some of these include the campus leadership, teacher turnover, and student mobility. While these things do not necessarily change the work of the teacher development specialist they do impact their work and the data when looking at the effectiveness of the program.

Need for the study

The people that are directly affected and have something to gain from the work of this evaluation are district personnel in the department of Curriculum and Development as they are the ones who oversee the teacher development specialist budget and position. Evaluating the implementation of the teacher development specialist model will be beneficial in that it will give insight to the district as to how to further improve the work of the teacher development specialist or if any changes are in order with how the work and department are currently being structured.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following questions:

(a) How does the coaching program support the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches in an urban school setting?

(b) What factors challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches?

Theoretical Framework

The Teacher Development Specialist (TDS) model employed by the district is based on the work of Jim Knight. The model includes seven components: (a) Establish and maintain a positive teacher-coach relationship; (b) Conduct a formative observation; (c) facilitate a teacher-coach conversation to identify teachers goal; (d) Select a high-leverage instructional strategy and co-plan; (e) Model and practice the strategy; (f) Observe and generate rubric-aligned feedback; and, (g) Collaboratively reflect, debrief, and re-examine goal.

Through this model the Teacher Development Specialist begins by establishing and thus maintaining a positive relationship with the teacher, this is an integral part of the model as in order for instructional coaching to be effective for teachers they must be willing to accept the feedback and coaching to improve their practice. From there the teacher development specialist conducts a formative observation of the teacher during their classroom instruction, during this time the teacher development specialist takes notes and makes observations of instructional practice as well as the curriculum that is delivered to the students. The next step in the cycle is the teacher development specialist selecting a high leverage instructional strategy and to co-planning with the teacher.

During this part of the cycle the teacher development specialist coaches the teacher by explaining the strategy, possibly watching a video of the strategy being used, and going through planning a lesson using the strategy. Following the planning piece, the Teacher development specialist models the strategy for the teacher, this can either be done during the planning session one on one or in the classroom with the students while the teacher observes and takes notes as to how they are then going to implement the strategy. The teacher and teacher development specialist then debrief the modeling and the teacher has the opportunity to practice the strategy without students through role play. Following the modeling and practicing the teacher development specialist sets a time to return to the classroom to observe the teacher implementing the strategy with their students and then gives the teacher precise rubric aligned feedback about only the strategy that was being addressed. During this period of feedback, the teacher development specialist and teacher reflect, debrief, and reexamine the goal. If the goal was met and the strategy was implemented successfully the teacher development specialist and teacher can repeat the cycle and process with different skills. If the goal was not met, the teacher development specialist can model again, they can plan again with the teacher using different strategies and trouble shooting in order to assist the teacher in being successful to achieve their goal.

Research Design

The study followed a qualitative research design. A grounded theory evaluation methodology was utilized to ascertain if the Teacher Development Specialist model is being implemented with fidelity and the effects of the model of individual practice, as perceived by the participants, who are teacher development specialist.

Research Methods

The evaluation was conducted to inform decisions about the use of teacher development specialists in the school district. It is important to keep in mind the work that is being done by the teacher development specialist and the fidelity in which the coaching model is being implemented. In order to determine the fidelity of the implementation of the program, focus groups were conducted gathering feedback from teacher development specialists. The focus groups were comprised of six teacher development specialists that were selected due to their success as instructional coaches in the district. Each of the teacher development specialists have served in their role for a minimum of 4 years, and they are all rated as highly effective by their supervisors. Five of the six teacher development specialists were linked to campuses that with their support came out of IR status according to TEA. The data was grouped into themes using the constant comparative method to determine the effectiveness of the use of the coaching model in the school district. The focus groups were analyzed individually, in order to compare them to each other with the goal of revealing similarities and differences.

Limitations

The teacher development specialists that were selected were from a small group that work throughout the district in different elementary campuses. However, due to this small sample size, this does not allow for more broad generalizations as with a larger sample. This evaluation is limited to the work of teacher development specialists at hard to staff and low performing campuses, this could cause the results to not be comparable to other circumstances where the work of instructional coaches could look different.

Analytical Techniques

Information and data was analyzed using the constant comparative method, which is a method for analyzing data in order to develop a grounded theory, this theory can be applied to social units of any size (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the process as first identifying a phenomenon, object, event or setting of interest; identifying a few local concepts, principles, structural or process features of the experience or phenomenon of interest; making decisions regarding initial collection of data based on one's initial understanding of the phenomenon, engaging in theoretical sampling, and selecting a rationale for the comparison of groups for fostering the development of emerging categories. Open coding was utilized to break down, examine, compare, conceptualize, and compare data in order to develop themes and subthemes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Data

Data was collected through focus groups with teacher development specialists. Through this data the evaluation was conducted with the goal to observe the fidelity of the application of the coaching model on the part of the teacher development specialist as well as the fidelity of the learning and application on the part of the teacher that is being coached. Collecting this data and using the constant comparative method to create constructs and themes allowed this evaluation to present the stakeholders with pertinent information as to the usefulness and effectiveness of the use of the coaching model by teacher development specialist.

Summary

There is an abundance of literature that addresses the association between teaching and student achievement, and related requisite professional development. One model of professional development is the Teacher Development Specialist. What is lacking is literature that addresses the perceptions of teacher development specialists regarding fidelity to implementation of the teacher development specialist model, and the models effect on their work. The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction and overall general overview of the study. Chapter two, is composed of a literature review that will present the research that is relevant to instructional coaching and the background of the coaching model. In Chapter three, the methodology of the evaluation is laid out; describing the research design, data collection and further analysis of the data. Chapter four is a presentation of the results of the data analysis. Tying up the evaluation and thesis is Chapter five, which includes a summary of the research findings, the conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Throughout the literature of K-12 education, there is an understanding and acceptance that teacher professional development is an important instrument for increasing student academic achievement. The literature on K-12 education is filled with information that suggests that the most effective methods of improving teacher quality, teacher practice, and student learning is through professional development (Birman, et al., 2000; Colbert et al., 2008; Desimone, 2011; Eun, 2008; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Mundry, 2005; Oja, 1990; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). Of significant concern, however, is that professional development of teachers is often not implemented in school districts the way in which the programs or research suggests they should be (Hill, 2009; Jaquith, Mindich, & Wei, 2011; Kelleher, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Teacher professional development is known to be the most impactful instrument to impact student learning. However, not all professional development programs or practices are considered equal, nor are they all considered effective when evaluated for results in raising student achievement. The trajectory of the various ideas regarding effective professional development, includes the increasing awareness and shift to professional development practices that are more individualized and differentiated. One model of individualized and differentiated teacher professional development is the Teacher Development Specialist (TDS) coaching program. This chapter examines the literature available concerning the professional development of teachers in order to assist with building a framework to better understand how coaching,

specifically the Teacher Development Specialist model, can be an effective tool for teacher professional development.

Current Features of Professional Development

One of the leaders in the professional development of teachers is the Learning Forward organization, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council. This organization has established standards for effective professional development, which recommend the use of learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and learning outcomes (Hirsh, 2009b; Learning Forward, 2011). These standards are explored more in-depth in the Learning Forward's twelve common pathways for professional development policy making (Killion & Davin, 2009). According to Killion and Davin (2009), these pathways are:

> Standards-based professional development; time dedicated to professional development; budget that supports professional development; state policy/professional development for licensure/relicensure; teacher decision making about professional development; flexible designs for professional development; professional learning communities; support for National Board Certification; mentoring/induction; individual professional development plans; career paths/teacher leadership; and compensation/recognition for professional development, (p. 20)

The major components suggested by Learning Forward are in line with those of other experts in the field.

From the literature surrounding effective professional development, one of the most heavily cited studies is a study of a national probability sample of 1,027 teachers in

358 school districts conducted by Garet et al. (2001) and Porter et al. (2000). This study examined the impact of the funding provided by the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. Gathered from the data that was collected, there were three "structural" features and three "core" features found to be apparent in practices of effective professional development. According to Porter et al., the effect is stronger if the professional development has these six dimensions of quality: The professional development is a reform rather than traditional type, is sustained over time, involves groups of teachers from the same school, provides opportunities for active learning, is coherent with other reforms and teachers' activities, and is focused on specific content and teaching strategies, (p. ES-10). This study of the impact of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program is referenced abundantly in articles within the literature on professional development for teachers. Quick et al. (2009) used the six dimensions of Garet et al. and Porter et al. as a framework for a professional development study in the San Diego City Schools district. In this study, there was case studies of nine elementary schools conducted through interviews with teachers and administrators and the analysis of professional development logs. Quick et al. also found major components for effective professional development similar to those of Garet et al. and Porter et al. Included in their findings were collaboration, time, modeling opportunities, safe environment, focus on content, and coherence to school goals and teacher needs. A further examination of the literature is needed around these major components in order to form better comprehension about what exactly constitutes effective professional development as well as to understand the placement of

instructional leader/teacher coaching relationships as a means of professional development.

The following sections will examine professional development through the components suggested by the previous articles - Garet et al., 2001; Learning Forward, 2011; Porter et al., 2000; Quick et al., 2009 - and other literature within the field. The components examined are: (a) the structure of professional development programs, (b) the planning process for professional development, (c) time, duration and follow-up in professional development, (d) the coherence of professional development to school and district needs and goals, (e) collaboration within professional development, and (f) the evaluation of professional development.

The structure of professional development. There is no one collective structure for professional development programs. There exist two general categories of structure within professional development: traditional and reform (Colbert et al., 2008; Garet et al., 2001; Lee, 2005; Porter et al., 2000; Sparks, 2004). Traditional forms of professional development include the more common 'one-size-fits-all approaches (Colbert et al., 2008; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Lee, 2005; Little, 1993; Marsh & Jordan-Marsh, 1985), beginning-of-the-year motivational speakers (Hirsh, 2009a; Kelleher, 2003), short workshops (Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Hirsh, 2009a; Kelleher, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lester, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000), bringing in outside experts (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Hirsh, 2009b; Little, 1993; Sparks, et al., 1985), and skill training (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Little, 1993). On the contrary, reform style professional development includes partnerships with universities (Engstrom & Danielson, 2006;

Hirsh, 2009b; Lee, 2005; Little, 1993; Sparks et al., 1985), study groups (Dufour &

Marzano, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Lee, 2005; Zepeda, 2008), networking (Darling-

Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Lee, 2005; Zepeda, 2008), collaborations between

teachers (Dufour, 2004; Dufour et al., 2004; Zepeda, 2008), job embedded practices

(Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Zepeda, 2008), coaching/mentoring

(Dantonio, 2001; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Hanson & Moir, 2008; Lee,

2005; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Zepeda, 2008), and active learning approaches (Birman et

al, 2009).

These traditional forms of professional development are the most common

structure and are also the least expensive and most popular when choosing professional

development of teachers. Colbert et al. (2008) suggest that before the implementation of

the No Child Left Behind legislation, districts were beginning to change their

professional practices from traditional to reform structures. However, Colbert et al.

point out that "the 'sit and get' model, which imposes professional development on

teachers in a top-down, non-collaborative manner" (p. 136) has returned due to the focus

on standardization in NCLB. Further research from Darling-Hammond et al. (2009b)

found that "more than 9 out of 10 U.S. teachers have participated in professional

learning consisting of short-term conferences or workshops" (p. 5). In a study, Birman

et al. (2009) analyzed the results of the Study of State Implementation of Accountability

and Teacher Quality Under NCLB. Here the performance data and documents along with

interviews with administrators across all fifty states, and the National Longitudinal Study

of NCLB, which surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,500 schools across 300

school districts were analyzed. This analysis by Birman et al. found that 82% of teachers

noted they had participated in "at least one formal, course like professional development activity (e.g., conferences, institutes, series of connected workshops, courses, and internships)" (p. 107). A main reason for the surplus of traditional forms of professional development is that compared to reform styles they tend to be more cost-effective (Birman et al., 2000; Little, 1993).

In order to provide more individualized professional development programs or even long-term professional development for teachers requires more resources, which is problematic, especially for school districts that struggle with financial constraints. Little (1993) explains that a further concern with reform style professional development is that in general they "are conceptually and pragmatically messier" (p. 142). Knowing this, it is more reasonable for school districts to plan and implement a 'one-size-fits-all' professional development program for its teachers. The traditional structure of professional development, and particularly the 'one-size-fits-all' short workshop, is severely criticized in the literature on professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b; Garet et al., 2001; Hirsh, 2009a; Kelleher, 2003; Knight, 2007; Lester, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). Watts (1980) paralleled this to a generic antibiotic that is prescribed to all patients no matter their illness or even if they are sick at all. This blanket method does not address the needs of the individual, their learning processes, or their developmental levels and experience. Little (1993) critiques traditional professional development as it "introduces largely standardized content to individuals whose teaching experience, expertise, and settings vary widely" (p. 138). Knight (2007) cautions that "the worst consequence of an overreliance on traditional forms of professional

development may be that poorly designed training can erode teachers' willingness to embrace any new ideas" (p. 2). The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to professional development has the potential to leave teachers with the feeling that the professional development is not intended for them or does not meet their individual needs.

In spite of the criticism of these traditional forms of professional development, Penuel et al. (2007) and Guskey and Yoon (2009) maintain that effectiveness should not be based exclusively on the type of professional development (i.e., traditional vs. reform), but rather on the actual activities carried out within each type. Both Penuel et al. and Guskey and Yoon advocate that there is a place for traditional structures of professional development and that they can be effective if they are deliberately delivered with reform-style techniques and activities. Sparks (2004) proposes that it is less about whether a professional development program follows a traditional or reform format, but instead, he focuses on the prospective learning opportunities and activities within the program. Sparks suggests that there are two tiers of professional development: "the first tier is an emerging system that advocates the development of professional community and the exercise of professional judgment" (p. 304). Included in the first tier is an emphasis on goals, use of data, and collective work, while the second tier "is built on mandates, scripted teaching, and careful monitoring for compliance" (p. 304). According to Sparks, the professional development framework should include both of these tiers, and the use of either tier should be based on the individual needs of the school and the teachers.

The process for planning professional development. The planning process for professional development for teachers has a great influence on the effectiveness of the

professional development (Allen, 2006; Berg, Miller, & Souvanna, 2011; Birman et al, 2009; Colbert et al., 2008; Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006; Eun, 2008; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Hargreaves, 2007; Hirsh, 2009a, 2009b; Hohenbrink, Stauffer, Zigler, & Uhlenhale, 2011; Kelleher, 2003; Lawler, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lester, 2003; Man gin & Stoelinga, 2011; Porter, et al., 2000; Slavit, Nelson, & Kennedy, 2011; Sparks, 2004; Sparks et al., 1985; Trotter, 2006; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Hargreaves (2007) posits that there are five flaws that are related to the design and planning of professional development that limit its effectiveness. These flaws are:

> (a) 'presentism,' which is the attention on short term solutions to problems in the education system; (b) 'authoritarianism,' which is the top-down planning of professional development that does not consist of any teacher contribution; (c) 'commercialism,' which is the when school districts rely on the 'big names' in professional development; (d) 'evangelism,' which gives emphases on the emotions of teachers by telling them that they are not teaching correctly and thus need experts to fix them; and (e) 'narcissism,' which suggests that the method in which professional development is conducted is actually more important than what the content that is being taught or learned in the training. (page 38)

The top-down, authoritative planning process is the most common and traditional method of planning professional development for teachers (Colbert et al, 2008; Hirsh, 2009a 2009b; Sparks, 2004). Most often, either district or campus administrators are charged with the task of deciding what professional development their teacher need. In a study of the 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009b)

found this was to be expected. Less than half of the teachers who were surveyed felt they had any say or were part of the planning process for their own professional development. As Hirsh (2009b) indicates, there are limitations to this approach of top-down professional development design as there tends to be a separation of administrators from the context of the school and its needs, especially at the district level. Sparks (2004) hypothesizes that when a top-down approach is used when planning professional development, programs "begin and end with top-down, highly prescriptive approaches, leaving the culture of schools untouched and teachers and students ill prepared to function much beyond the most rudimentary levels of performance" (p. 305).

In the wording of U.S. government legislation on the Eisenhower Professional Development Program within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it is recommended that professional development decisions are "best made by individuals in the schools closest to the classroom and most knowledgeable about the needs of schools and students" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). To circumvent the consequences of top-down decision making in the planning processes of professional development teachers need to be active participants in the planning process. This participation of teachers in the planning and decision-making process will then assist in ensuring professional development will be more effective for teachers (Allen, 2006; Berg et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006; Eun, 2008; Hargreaves, 2007; Hirsh, 2009a; Hohenbrink et al., 2011; Lawler, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lester, 2003; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011; Porter et al., 2000; Slavit et al., 2011; Sparks et al., 1985; Trotter, 2006). When teachers are given the opportunity to be active participants in the planning of their own professional development, there is more likely a

coherence to school, student, and teacher needs (Colbert et al., 2008; Porter et al., 2000).

Additionally, as Porter et al. (2000) claim, allowing teacher involvement in the planning

and decision-making process "increases teachers' investment in their professional

development program" (p. ES-11). If this is done, there is more of a connection between

the needs of the teacher, student, and the school and the professional development.

Teachers are then able to bring their own knowledge and expertise of school and student

needs to the planning process in order to achieve the goals needed from the professional

development.

Nevertheless, as Little (1993) suggests, the responsibility of planning professional

development is not for teachers alone because "teachers are typically less well positioned

than district specialists or outside consultants to invoke research (or challenge it) as a

warrant for action" (p. 142). Therefore, there must be a contribution between both

teachers and district administrators in order to ensure that the planning for professional

development is meeting the needs of all parties involved, including students, teachers, as

well as the district in terms of budget, resources, and overall goals.

The overall effectiveness of any professional development is ensuring that the

needs and goals of students, teachers, and the schools are taken into account in the

planning process. In order for this to be done, it is necessary for there to be a

collaboration between both student data and school needs in order to inform decisions

that are made in regards to the goals and needs that are to be addressed in the professional

development program (Croft et al., 2010; Eun, 2008; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Hirsh,

2009b; Kelleher, 2003; Lee, 2005; Porter et al., 2000; Wei et al., 2010). There is a focus

in this era of NCLB on quantifiable data and test scores, because of this a similar trend

should be present in the planning of professional development. Lee (2005) appeals for

the use of teacher surveys to collect data in order to determine teacher needs and

deficiencies for planning effective professional development that meets those needs.

Kelleher (2003), prescribes a six step professional development process in which there is

a place for setting goals for professional development based on data as the initial step in

the planning process. Irrespective of who uses the data in the planning process for

professional development, teachers or administrators, it is a critical component of

ensuring that the needs of students, teachers, and schools are being addressed in the

professional development of teachers.

   Coherence to school goals, needs, programs, and contexts. An important

construct that must be considered for effective professional development is the

connection between the goals and needs of students, teachers, and schools (Birman et al.,

2000; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 2011; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree,

Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009a, 2009b; Davidovich, 2011; Desimone, 2011; Dufour,

2004; Dufour et al., 2004; Eun, 2008; Guskey, 1991; Kelleher, 2003; Lawler, 2003;

Lieberman, 1995; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; Little, 1993; Mundry, 2005;

Murphy, 2010; Porter et al., 2000; Penuel et al., 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000;

Richardson, 2003; Quick et al., 2009; Slavit et al., 2011; Sparks, 2004; Wei et al., 2010).

   As mentioned previously, the literature delineates that the coherence of student,

teacher, and school needs and goals with the professional development programs

provided to teachers is prominent in the overall effectiveness of the professional

development. Birman et al. (2000) suggests that "an activity is more likely to be

effective in improving teachers' knowledge and skills if it forms a coherent part of a

wider set of opportunities for teacher learning and development" (p. 31). Included in their study of 454 teachers in the GLOBE professional development program, Penuel et al. (2007) found that teachers were more likely to change their classroom practice if there was consistency between their job and the professional development they were receiving. However, despite the need for consistency, the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) found that only 56% of surveyed teachers in their study felt that the professional development they had received had a moderate to great connection to other programs within their school. Birman et al. (2009) found comparable results in their analysis of two national studies, as 67% of surveyed teachers felt their professional development was connected to state or district standards, and 60% thought their professional development was connected to their school improvement plan and goals. When there is a lack of consistency in professional development programs, Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) propose that they are "often perceived by teachers as fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to the real problems of classroom practice" (p. 226).

The planning process is one method of providing consistency between professional development and school contexts as previously noted. A second method to provide this consistency is to design professional development that is intended to be specific to a particular subject (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009a; Desimone, 2011; Hirsh, 2009a; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei et al., 2010). According to results of the 2008 SASS, 70% of teachers who participated in content or subject-specific professional development found it to be either useful or very useful (Wei et al., 2010). Subject specificity is a common, more recurring method that is being seen with a greater frequency recently.

The analysis of the national School and Staffing Survey (SASS) results by Wei et al. (2010) found that 24 teachers who had participated in professional development directly related to their content or subject had increased from 59% in 2000 to 88% in 2008. These statistics propose that there has in fact been an increased focus on subject-specificity within professional development over the last decade.

Embedding professional development in the teacher's job is yet an additional method in which there can be a connection of student, teacher, and school needs with the professional development of teachers (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Desimone, 2011; Hirsh, 2009b; Kelleher, 2003; Lester, 2003; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wei et al., 2009). Some examples of job-embedded professional development can include action research, case studies, coaching, analysis of school data and student work, mentoring, portfolios, learning communities, and study groups (Croft et al., 2010). The embedding of professional development into teachers' jobs assists to eliminate the common complaint shared by teachers that what they are being given in their professional development does not connect to the realities of their jobs. Putnam and Borko (2000) further explain this issue by stating that "learning experiences outside the classroom are too removed from the day-to-day work of teaching to have a meaningful impact" (p. 5). Embedding professional development opportunities within the context of teachers' jobs provides them with the immediate connection needed between what they are learning and the actual work they are doing on a regular basis.

Teacher collaboration during professional development. A method of increasing effectiveness in professional development that is offered to teachers is the

collaboration and collective work within a district, school, grade level, or subject area (Birman et al., 2000; Colbert et al., 2008; Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009a; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b; Davidovich, 2011; Desimone, 2011; Dufour, 2004; Dufour et al., 2004; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006; Eun, 2008; Guskey, 1991; Hirsh, 2009b; Hohenbrink et al., 2011; Lawler, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993; Mundry, 2005; Murphy, 2010; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007; Penuel et al., 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richardson, 2003; Quick et al., 2009; Sparks, 2004; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000).

Throughout the history of the American education system there has been a basis of individual teachers doing their jobs within the setting of their own individual classroom. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) state that due to this traditional structure of the school system "teachers are inclined to think in terms of 'my classroom,' 'my subject,' or 'my kids'" (p. 87). As Darling-Hammond (2010) writes, teachers in the U.S. normally get "about 3 to 5 hours weekly in which to plan by themselves, and they get a few 'hit-and-run' workshops after school, with little opportunity to share knowledge or improve their practice" (p. 201). Additionally, teachers are not provided with many structured opportunities to work with and converse with their colleagues about effective teaching practices (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; National Council on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). This independence can be extremely limiting to the effectiveness of professional development programs that are meant to transform schools, teachers, and student learning outcomes. Despite this innate independence of teachers and structures in the U.S., movements towards more collaborative efforts for professional

development are beginning to build a foundation in the modem education system. In the examination of a nationally representative sample survey of teachers in 1,500 schools across 300 school districts, Birman et al. (2009) found that 52% of surveyed teachers "often participated collectively in professional development" (p. 109). The research team also discovered that the collective participation was highest at the elementary level (56%), followed by middle school (50%) and high school (41%). In the data presented by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001), 69% of teachers participated regularly in collaborations at their school site, but only 31% of these collaborations were conducted on a weekly basis. In addition, 53% of teachers reported being able to participate in a common planning period, with 60% of those planning periods occurring at least once per week. Contrary to these studies that reported growing rates of collaboration, Wei et al. (2010) found in their examination of the 2000, 2004 and 2008 SASS, that 34% of teachers in 2000 felt there was a cooperative effort in their school, however these percentages dropped to 17% in 2004 and 16% in 2008.

Time, duration, and follow-up in professional development

In addition to planning, coherence, and collaboration, time spent in and duration of professional development is an important component to effective professional development. In accordance with the literature in this field, professional development that is continuous over a longer period of time is more effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b; Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Eun, 2008; Kelleher, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lieberman, 1995; Porter et al., 2000; Penuel et al., 2007; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei et al., 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). Included in their meta-analysis of studies on the impact professional development has on student achievement, Yoon et al. (2007) found that

professional development that lasted more than 14 hours had a significant positive impact

on student achievement. Contained within a nationally representative sample study

conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001), teachers reported

higher rates of improvement in their teaching due to the professional development they

received if they participated in the professional development form more than eight hours

(one day). Likewise, the National Center for Education Statistics study found that

teachers were more likely to note improvement of their teaching if professional

development opportunities were held at least once a week rather than if they were held

two to three times per month, once a month, or a few times a year.

Despite the literature informing of these statistics, short term professional

development continues to be a common practice for teachers and districts. (Birman et al.,

2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b;

Wei et al., 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (2001) found that 73% of

the teachers who participated in professional development on classroom management,

57% of the teachers who participated in professional development on curriculum and

standards, and 59% of the teachers who participated in professional development on new

teaching methods, spent between one and eight hours (or one day) actively participating

in the professional development. Porter et al. (2000) discovered that the teachers that

were surveyed reported the average time spent in professional development as 25 hours

over the course of the previous year, with 50% of the teachers reporting they spent less

than 15 hours in professional development over that same time period. These statistics

validate the theory that the time that is spent participating in professional development is

often short, which in turn limits the opportunity for the learning to transfer and take hold

in a teacher's instructional practice. It is evident that despite the literature clarifying the effectiveness of long term professional development, the duration of professional development opportunities as a whole has not shown an increase to the extent necessary. Birman et al. (2009) found that during 2005-06, professional development participation in the content area of reading for more than 24 hours was 14% for elementary school teachers and 16% for secondary teachers. The percentages decreased significantly in the content area of mathematics as only 6% of elementary teachers and 15% of secondary teachers had participated in professional development for more than 24 hours. Worse yet, this lack of increase in the duration of professional development can be found in the Darling-Hammond et al. (2009b) and Wei et al. (2010) analyses of the nationally representative SASS in 2004 and 2008. There they discovered that in 2003-04, 57% of teachers had less than 16 hours of professional development in the previous year and within that only 23% had professional development that lasted more than four days.

Some literature surrounding effective professional development activities identifies certain methods that can lead to a longer period within an individual professional development opportunity. The call for long-term goals for professional development is one method that is suggested (Guskey, 1991; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006; Porter et al., 2000). Included in a study by Birman et al. (2009), only 17% of the surveyed teachers sensed that their professional development was "based explicitly on what teachers had learned in earlier professional development experiences" (p. 103). This is a problem of practice; if the focus of the professional development in which teachers participate is constantly changing year to year or even throughout the same school year, the teachers are not able to explore deeper into the new learning and skills

that are being introduced. In an attempt to offset the incidence of constantly changing

professional development, Guskey (1991) suggests that results be assessed according to

three- to five-year goals, taking into consideration that change should be incremental.

This contradicts the constant changes to professional development activities that is

evident when programs are quickly thrown out if they do not produce immediate results.

Long-term goals not only provide coherence and consistency to the needs and goals of

the school, but also gives a sense of stability in the plan for professional development.

Additionally, providing time for the implementation of professional development

learning in the classroom is another method to ensure that professional development

opportunities have a longer duration and effect (Albritton, Morganti-Fisher, O'Neill, &

Yates, 2011; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009a;

Guskey, 2002b; Hargreaves, 2007; Hubbard et al., 2006). Guskey (2002b) explains that

professional development is "designed to initiate change in teachers' attitudes, beliefs,

and perceptions" (p. 382). Guskey maintains that this change is not brought on by the

actual professional development, but rather by the successful implementation of the new

learning within their classroom setting. In Guskey's proposed Model of Teacher Change,

this process of change initiates with the professional development that promotes changes

in the classroom practice of the teacher. In accordance with the model, the learning

outcomes of the students in the classroom is directly affected by the change in the

classroom practice. Guskey maintains that if the teacher's perspective can be

transformed if there are successful changes in the learning outcomes.

In order to enhance the implementation of professional development learning,

follow-up activities must be implemented after the professional development learning has

taken place (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009b; Guskey, 1991; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Kelleher, 2003; Knight, 2007; Little, 1993; Penuel et al., 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richardson, 2003; Sparks, 1983; Yoon et al. 2007). As Knight (2007) suggests, "a great deal of professional development occurs with little follow-up, and teachers often have few, if any, opportunities to see the new practice performed in their classrooms with their 30 students" (p. 110). The implementation of follow-up activities provides necessary support for teachers attempting to implement the new learning in their classroom practices, as well as ensures that the professional development will extend throughout the entire school year.

An issue of importance in professional development is that opportunities for learning are often accepted as stand-alone days of training that will have little to no impact on classroom practices. This is supported in the Hubbard et al. (2006) study that found San Diego City Schools' "teachers and principals showed up at their respective professional development sessions, listened respectfully, did the activities required of them during these sessions, and then returned to their sites to continue doing much as they had always done" (p. 130). This lack of implementation and disregard for change is quite common in traditional forms of professional development such as "sit and get" models. Of further interest are the findings of the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) that further illustrate the lack of follow-up activities in professional development for teachers. This study stated that only 35% of teachers reported there to be a moderate to great extent of follow-up activities in their professional development, and 43% of the teachers reported there to be moderate to great support from their school administration to apply what they had learned in their professional development. These

discoveries propose that follow-up activities and support in the implementation process of professional development learning is necessary in order to better support the effectiveness of professional development.

In order to provide opportunities for follow-up as well as support of professional development learning, there is a need for time to be set aside either within the school day or week for regular professional development (Albritton et al., 2011; Birman et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006; Hirsh, 2009b; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei et al., 2009). Furthermore, Wei et al. (2009) state: "when time for professional development is built into teachers' working time, their learning activities can be ongoing and sustained and can focus on particular issues over time" (p. 30). Guskey and Yoon (2009) advise that it is not solely important to consider the quantity of time provided for regular professional development, but rather the quality of the time.

Evaluating, assessing, and judging professional development. An important aspect of the professional development process is the evaluation and assessment of learning that exists within a professional development program (Desimone, 2011; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Guskey, 2002a; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Lester, 2003; Sparks et al., 1985). Despite this being an important aspect, it is one step that is often overlooked or misconstrued when looking at the professional development process. Grossman and Hirsch (2009) determine that, "most states do not collect or maintain information on the professional development teachers complete beyond ensuring sufficient clock hours are taken for recertification" (p. 4). Many of the evaluations that are given in regard to professional development consist of satisfaction surveys, with

questions focusing on how teachers 'felt' about the program (Desimone, 2011; Guskey, 2002a; Kelleher, 2003; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). Guskey (2002a) refers to this focus on "participant reactions" (p. 46) as only the first level in a larger five level evaluation system used for determining the effectiveness of professional development. According to Guskey (2002a), this commonly used first level of evaluation is closely followed by the second level that focuses on actual "participant learning," or more precisely, what new learning occurred for teachers. Level three addresses "organizational support and change" (p. 47) and its goal is to determine whether the professional development provided led to changes in policies and practices at the school or district level. Level four assesses the "participants' use of new knowledge and skills" (p. 47) in relation with how this new knowledge is being implemented in the classroom by teachers. Level five concludes effectiveness through the analysis of "student learning outcomes" (p. 49), which he states, is "the bottom line" (p. 49). According to Guskey, levels three through five are not commonly practiced, as they cannot be directly assessed at the completion of the professional development event. This fifth level is where the professional development program can truly be deemed as effective or not.

In order to determine the effectiveness of a professional development program, hard data in the form of student scores and learning needs to be connected to the learning that takes place in the program (Desimone, 2011; Dufour, 2004; Dufour et al., 2004; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Guskey, 2002a; Hirsh, 2009b; Kelleher, 2003; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei et al., 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). As Desimone (2011) proposes, "the final test of the effectiveness of professional development is whether it has led to improved student learning" (p. 71). Penuel et al. (2007) state that it is common practice

that school districts and administrators expect professional development programs to come into a school and provide evidence as to the effectiveness of their program in regard to documented increases in student achievement levels. If the main goal for professional development of teachers is an increase in student achievement then the evaluation and assessment of the professional development should mirror those goals to determine its effectiveness. Nevertheless, as Hubbard et al. (2006) suggest, direct cause and effect relationships from professional development to increased student achievement are difficult to prove taking into consideration the numerous school, social, and individual factors that have the potential to influence student achievement.

The Teacher as a Diverse and Developing Adult Learner

The six components of effective professional development addressed in the previous section focus primarily on attempting to avoid the "one-size-fits-all" forms of professional development. The components focus on the idea that teachers are unique individuals with unique needs, goals, practices, and belief systems all needing professional development that is personalized to them. However, what is greatly supported in the literature in regard to the need for individualization in professional development practices is not what is commonly implemented throughout professional development. Lieberman (1995) makes this point with the following, "What everyone appears to want for students - a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiences, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others - is for some reason denied to teachers when they are learners" (p. 591). As Lieberman suggests, it is well accepted that in education student diversity is recognized in terms of their individual learning processes, developmental levels, and

previous knowledge and this diversity is addressed through differentiated instruction. The same does not however reflect in professional development practices in regard to the diversity of the adult learning processes.

The majority of adult learning, in which professional development is included, is treated like "empty bottles on the assembly line, passing us by as each of us drops in a few bits of our specialty" (Gates, 1982, p. 93). The difficulty with this tactic is that all teachers, as learners in a professional development setting, are in fact not carbon copies of each other, nor should they all be expected to teach the same subject to the same students in the same manner. Teachers are representative of a diverse spectrum of adult developmental levels (Beck & Cowan, 2006; Erikson, 1980; Kegan, 1982; Wilber, 2000; 2001) and teacher developmental levels (Fuller, 1969; Burden, 1982; Burke et al., 1984; Christensen et al., 1983; Dubble, 1998; Katz, 1972; Watts, 1980).

The literature that is found on professional development supports the parallel between professional development and the individual developmental stages of teachers (Burden, 1982; Burke et al., 1984; Christensen et al. 1983; Daley, 2003; Drago-Severson, 2004; Dubble, 1998; Eun, 2008; Grossman & Hirsch, 2009; Guskey, 1991; Helsing et al., 2008; Lawler, 2003; Lynn, 2002; McDonnell et al., 1989; Oja, 1990; Quick et al., 2009; Sheerer, 1997; Trotter, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2011; Watts, 1980). Teachers must be accepted and acknowledged as diverse learners with individual sets of learning needs and processes by professional development programs (Chickering, 2006; Cranton & King, 2003; Daley, 2003; Grow, 1994; Lawler, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; Merriam et al., 2007; Quick et al., 2009; Trotter, 2006). This section will provide the foundation for the use of coaching as a professional development method

and how it can be utilized to individualize and differentiate the learning process for teachers.

Theories of teacher development. The literature found on theories that are teacher-specific in regard to development, centers on the early work of Frances Fuller (1969). Fuller developed a theory based on the stages of concern in a teacher's career, this theory has served as a foundation for many researchers who have then followed her in this field. According to Watske (2002), Fuller theorized that teachers proceed through three stages of concerns: self (survival, self-adequacy, and acceptance), task (student performance and teacher duties), and impact (social and educational impact on the system). Similar to Erikson's (1980) crisis resolution as the means to psychosocial development, Fuller theorized that in order for a teacher to move to the next stage of concern they must first solve the concern of the previous stage (Watske, 2002). As a teacher is able to solve their concerns at each recognizable level of development, the teacher begins to proceed from self-centered concerns to impact concerns within the larger system.

There are other theories of teacher development that closely resemble a similar pattern to Fuller's influential theory. Comparable to Fuller's (1969) theory, the widely held theories of teacher development begin with a stage that is focused on survival (Burden, 1982; Burke et al., 1984; Dubble, 1998; Katz, 1972; Watts, 1980). In teacher development theories, survival is a period where teachers are focused on "maintaining classroom control, mastering content, and inspiring the admiration of supervisors" (Christensen et al. 1983, p. 4). According to Watts (1980), teachers that are in this particular developmental level are "rigid, insecure, anxious, and intimidated by students,

other teachers, and their own expectations for themselves" (p. 3). Dubble (1998) speaks of this stage of development as the "neonate" stage, where the teacher is compared to a newborn that has just been thrust into an unfamiliar environment that lacks the comfort, safety, and familiarity of the womb, which for the teacher is their teacher preparation program at the university level. This is a point in their development where they are simply in search of technical skills, instructional strategies, and content knowledge that can assist them to simply survive in the classroom (Burden, 1982; Christensen et al., 1983; Dubble, 1998; Katz, 1972; Watts, 1980).

The theorists suggest that nearing the end of the first year, teachers begin to conclude with the survival stage as they come to realize that they can in fact survive. The theories of teacher development suggest that as teachers begin to move out of the survival stage, their concerns shift from a self-centered state to concerns about their students (Burden, 1982; Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972). Both Katz (1972) and Dubble (1998) mention this stage and refer to is as 'consolidation' as it involves the integration of various skills and knowledge into a consistent whole to be applied by the teacher in the classroom. As Dubble asserts, "the result is an integration of practice that is manifested as a natural flow in the classroom" (p. 6). Within this stage is where theorists suggest that teachers begin to be open to trying new methods and strategies as they are no longer focused on survival.

Moving into the third stage of development is where some of the teacher-specific developmental theories begin to not mirror each other so closely. For some of the theorists, including Fuller (1969), Burden (1982), and Watts (1980), the third stage is considered a stage of mastery where the developmental process is fulfilled and reaches its

culmination. These theories each suggest that this mastery level occurs around the fifth

year of teaching.

In Fuller's stages of concern theory, teachers in this stage find themselves

concerned with the overall impact of their career as their focus shifts to their impact on

the larger school system (Watske, 2002). In the theories of Burden and Watts, this stage

for teachers is a period when they find comfort in their role, confidence in their abilities,

and command of their classroom environment. As opposed to the theories of Burden

(1982), Fuller (1969), and Watts (1980) where they view this stage as an ending stage of

mastery, the theories of Dubble (1998), Katz (1972), and Burke et al. (1984) do not

finish their theories in the third stage. Both Dubble and Katz refer to this stage in

development as the renewal stage, while Burke et al. refers to it as the "career

frustration" stage, which he calls a crucial point along the developmental process. All

three theories suggest that this is where teachers often become tired, bored, "burned out,"

and according to Dubble (1998), are apt to teaching in a "mode of automatic pilot" (p. 6).

In order to progress past this stage in their development without burning out, there must

be a renewal process where new challenges and fresh perspectives are afforded to the

teacher.

In the various theories of teacher development, the authentic development process

encompasses a teacher having the opportunity to solve certain fears and crises in order to

develop (Dubble, 1998; Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972; Watts, 1980). Development in the

theories of Burden (1982) and Christensen et al. (1983) offer a slightly different version

of this development. Both Burden and Christensen et al. theorized that development

came through subsequent changes in a teacher's job skills, knowledge, behaviors,

attitudes, outlooks, and job events. This idea theorized that as they mastered these areas

or acquired new perspectives from them, a developmental shift occurred. Each new stage

then was built from both the experiences and the quality of the experiences the teacher

participated in during the earlier developmental stages (Dubble, 1998). Watts (1980)

suggests that "any teacher can 'get stuck' at a given stage for a time, and some teachers

can get stuck indefinitely" (p. 6). This is further explained by the idea that teacher

development theories suggest that movement through these stages is not a linear process.

According to teacher development theories, teachers have the ability to move up and

down the developmental spectrum depending on their situations and experiences, which

they encounter during their careers (Burke et al, 1984; McDonnell et al., 1989; Watts,

1980). Some examples of the situations or experiences that might possibly move a

teacher back down on the developmental spectrum could be a move to a new school, a

move to new grade level or content area, as well as what could be considered a career

crisis.

     Addressing differences in adult learning processes. The literature about adult

learning processes is clear in its description of the differences in the developmental levels

of teachers as well as the differences in their roles as adult learners in the professional

development process. Merriam et al. (2007) writes, "just as there is no single theory that

explains all of human learning, there is no single theory of adult learning" (p. 83).

Teachers each have an individual set of learning needs and processes as diverse adult

learners (Cranton & King, 2003; Daley, 2003; Grow, 1994; Lawler, 2003; Merriam et al.,

2007; Quick et al., 2009; Trotter, 2006). Grow (1994) suggests "there is no one way to

teach or learn well... different styles work for different learners in different situations"

(p. 113). Further illustrating this point, Chickering (2006) claims that adult learning processes need to "recognize, respect, and respond to the wide-ranging individual differences among our diverse learners" (p. 11).

Despite the literature that identifies the individual needs and learning processes of adult learners, professional development for teachers is many times not connected to the ways in which adults learn (Cranton & King, 2003; Daley, 2003; Lieberman, 1995). Although teachers are knowledgeable in the pedagogy of differentiation in order to meet the needs of their students and their individual learning processes, insufficient attention is paid to what Knowles (1978) termed as "andragogy," or the ways in which adults learn. Knowles (1978) suggests that the belief system about adult learning has been largely based on the ways in which children learn. Knowles argues that early theorists on adult learning had "theories about the ends of adult education but none about the means of adult learning" (p. 27). He described andragogy as "a unified theory of adult learning" (p. 48), which was based on four basic assumptions that would in turn change the way that adult learning processes were addressed. The first assumption is founded on 'changes in self-concept' which concluded that the learner moved from a state of dependency to "one of increasing self-directedness" (p. 55). This concept conflicts directly with the dependent states of learning in childhood. Knowles' second assumption is founded on 'the role of experience' where an adult learner "accumulates an expanding reservoir of experience that causes him to become an increasingly rich resource for learning, and at the same time provides him with a broadening base to to relate new learning" (p. 56). The third assumption is founded on 'readiness to learn' and proposes that adult learners will be intrinsically motivated to learn based on their individual needs

in order to perform successfully in life. Knowles' last assumption is founded on an adult

learner's 'orientation to learning' where adult learners "tend to have a problem-centered

orientation to learning" (p. 58) contrasting with the preference of subject-centered

learning that typically takes place in childhood. A vast amount of literature that is based

largely on the early work of Knowles (1978), addresses the current state of adult learning

processes.

Merriam et al. (2007) have discovered five main approaches to adult learning that

aim to address the individual learning processes of adults. These approaches to learning

are 'behaviorist,' 'cognitivist,' 'humanist,' 'social cognitivist,' and 'constructivist.' The

behaviorist approach is based on the simple acts of reinforcing good behavior as well as

changing bad behavior, and is mainly found within organizations where quantifiable

measures are used for evaluation (Akdere & Conceicao, 2006). This approach is realized

through a process in which "the external environment can be arranged to produce

behavioral change through the use of reinforcements that reward learners for what the

teacher wants them to continue doing" (Daley, 2003, p. 24). According to Merriam et

al., the behaviorist approach is the most commonly used approach found in education as

it is the favored method that is used to teach the skills, techniques, and instructional

strategies that teachers use in the classroom. While the behaviorist approach concentrates

on behaviors, the cognitivist approach concentrates on the cognitive development of the

individual learner. In the cognitive approach, "learning involves the reorganization of

experiences in order to make sense of stimuli from the environment" (Merriam et al.,

2007, p. 285). The focus is entirely on the cognitive growth of the learner; however, it

fails to address other aspects of the individual. The cognitivist approach can be observed

in the professional development of teachers through the teaching of content knowledge. In the professional development of teachers, this approach is further explored and explained with the idea that the more a teacher learns and knows about the content they are teaching, the more effective their teaching will be. The behaviorist and cognitivist approaches both deserve recognition in professional development practices due to the fact that they both allow for teachers to develop through the use of learning instructional practices and necessary content knowledge. This particular form of professional development is particularly effective for teachers who are in the survival stages of development, however this does not meet the needs of teachers who are already at higher developmental levels (Burden, 1982; Burke et al., 1984; Katz, 1972; Watts, 1980). Cranton and King (2003) suggest that professional development cannot solely be comprised of learning new skills, "it must involve educators as whole persons - their values, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching and their ways of seeing the world" (p. 33).

Teachers who are at higher levels of development are searching for learning towards mastery of their profession and professional development that will have a greater impact, as they are already competent in the basic survival needs of their profession. Professional development depending on the behaviorist and cognitivist approaches do not assist with addressing teacher needs for those teachers that are at higher developmental levels. Rogers (1974) suggests: "there should be a place for learning by the whole person, with feelings and ideas merged" (p. 103). The humanist approach emerged from his work, which revolves around the idea that each learner has control of their own growth potential and has the ability to address their own needs in the learning process

(Merriam et al, 2007). As an alternative to focusing only on attempting to acquire new skills and behaviors, the humanist approach affords the possibility for learning by the entire being.

In contrast to the humanist approach, the social cognitivist approach includes both the environment and the individual learner when describing the learning process. Included in the social cognitivist approach is the idea that knowledge is built from the interaction between the individual and their surrounding environment (Merriam et al., 2007). The social cognitivist approach stresses "how a person learns a particular set of knowledge and skills, and the situation in which a person learns, become a fundamental part of what is learned" (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 4). A few of the primary components of the social cognitivist approach are social interaction, observational learning, and social modeling (Bandura, 2002). Bandura (2000) proposes that in this approach the adult learner is supported through three different forms of agency: personal (leaner alone), proxy (instructor to learner), and collective (social environment). Bandura (2000) clarifies that while personal agency is perceived as effective means to development, it does have its limits as individuals cannot control their surroundings and environment, thus requiring a need for collaboration with the collective.

The final approach used by Merriam et al. (2007) in reference to adult learning is constructivism. Through this approach "learners make new knowledge meaningful by linking it to previous experience and their changing environment" (Daley, 2003, p. 25). Therefore knowledge is fashioned through the experiences that are internalized from the environment and then rearranged and reassessed with the previous knowledge of the particular individual. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development

goes one step further by combining the social aspect of learning with the constructivist approach. While Vygotsky's work dealt solely with the cognitive development of children, his work, including the theory behind it can be applied to adult learning (Eun, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) is best known for his 'zone of proximal development' which is "the distance between the actual level of development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). The crucial component to the zone was to provide the learner with tasks that were neither too easy nor too difficult, but that the best learning took place in the interaction between the learner and the person providing guidance. Eun (2008) claims that by concentrating adult learning on the zone of proximal development: Not only does the less competent learner reach their potential development with the support of the more competent learner, but the latter also changes in their exchanges with the former within the [zone of proximal development], (p. 142). These interactions allow the adult learner to access and continue to build off of previous knowledge. This particular form of adult learning shapes the development of the teacher as a learner via collaboration with other learners as well integration of their own previous experiences, skills, and knowledge.

Coaching

Coaching when used as an individualized and differentiated professional development practice, is widely recognized and accepted as an avenue to raising teacher effectiveness (Dantonio, 2001; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2007; Reiss, 2007; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). Reiss (2007) defines coaching as a "change process" which encompasses "a person being moved to a

higher level of competence, confidence, performance, or insight" (p. 11). Reiss utilizes the term "process" as a way to refer to coaching resounds throughout the literature, as coaching is truly a process that takes time to cultivate (Dantonio, 2001; Guskey, 2000; Reiss, 2007; Witherspoon & White, 1996/2007). Robertson (2008) defines coaching as "a learning relationship, where participants are open to new learning, engage together as professionals equally committed to facilitating each other's leadership learning development and wellbeing (both cognitive and affective" (p. 4). Grant (2006) offers a comparable definition,

> Coaching is a goal-oriented, solution-focused process in which the coach works with the coachee to help identify and construct possible solutions, delineate a range of goals and options, and then facilitate the development and enactment of action plans to achieve those goals" (p. 156).

It is because of this individualized nature of coaching that it becomes an intriguing professional development practice.

The foundation of coaching as a means to support the coachee's individual needs is according to Berger (2006) "one of the most exciting elements of coaching" (p. 77). The base for coaching in the workplace is constructed on the expectation for improvement with tasks associated with the coachee's performance (Reiss, 2007; Stern, 2004/2007; Tyson & Bimbrauer, 1983; Witherspoon & White, 1996/2007). Coaching in the workplace originated mainly as a punishment for those that required assistance to improve their performance in their jobs (Kouzes, Posner, & Biech, 2010; Western, 2008). According to Western (2008), when coaching was first used in the workplace, "the perception was that if you were recommended, or instructed, to see a coach, you were in

trouble, your performance was not up to scratch, you needed 'fixing'" (p. 99). Western determines that because of this role as a punishing action, there was a struggle to accept coaching as an overall developmental tool in the workplace. Although disciplinary coaching that is often based on performance or skill training continue to exist in modern society, the discipline of coaching has now diverged into more forms that are focus less on being punitive and more on developing individuals. Western emphasizes that skills associated with coaching are now "essential for today's managers and leaders" (p. 101). These adjustments to the perceptions of what coaching entails have provided the drive for coaching to become an effective tool used for developing the capacity of individuals and organizations.

The literature proposes multiple forms of coaching. The original forms of coaching were focused on skill/behavior change (Reiss, 2007; Stem, 2004/2007; Witherspoon & White, 1996/2007) as well as performance coaching (Reiss, 2007; Stem, 2004; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983; Western, 2008; Witherspoon & White, 1996/2007). Western (2008) suggests that both forms "focus on work-based performance and often very short-term interventions. The aim is to change behavior and enhance workplace performance" (p. 99). While these forms of coaching are no longer in the punitive stance where they began, they are still associated with the idea of "fixing" the individual in terms of very specific skills and behaviors to improve their performance.

There is a second form of coaching present in the literature, which is executive/leadership coaching (Kilburg, 2001/2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Levinson, 1996/2007; Peterson, 1996/2007; Reiss, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Stem, 2004/2007; Western, 2008; Witherspoon & White, 1996/2007). Stem (2004/2007) defines executive

coaching as "an experiential, individualized, leadership development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short- and long-term organizational goals" (p. 31). Crane (2002) provides a slightly different approach referred to as transformational coaching, which relies on a more humanistic approach to coaching. Crane describes this form of coaching as "the art of assisting people enhance their effectiveness, in a way they feel helped" (p. 31). According to Crane, transformational coaching "creates egalitarian, mutually supportive partnerships between people that transcend the traditional boss/subordinate relationship" (p. 32).

Three other forms of coaching are often cited throughout the literature, including peer coaching (Dantonio, 2001; Glickman, 2002; Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996), formative coaching (Nidus & Sadder, 2011), and cognitive coaching (Auerbach, 2006; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). These forms of coaching significantly influence coaching within the education system. Showers (1985) described peer coaching as "a cyclical process designed as an extension of training" (p. 44). This process of peer coaching is conducted between teachers in a collaborative relationship that is focused on improving instruction (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Showers and Joyce (1996) establish that teachers who partake in peer coaching relationships "practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires" (p. 14). Coaching that focuses on student achievement as the center of the coaching relationship is known as formative coaching and is defined by Nidus and Sadder (2011) as "built on deep analysis of teaching and learning - and on the assumption that the ultimate purpose of improving instructional practice is to improve student achievement" (p. 31). Cognitive coaching

(Auerbach, 2006; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000) is an extensively prevalent type of coaching developed with the goal of being used in the education system. Costa and Garmston (1994), the earliest theorists on cognitive coaching, advise that the objective in this particular form of coaching is to "attend to the internal thought processes of teaching as a way of improving instruction; coaches do not work to change overt behaviors. These behaviors change as a result of refined perceptions and cognitive processes" (p. 5). This form of coaching rather than focus on the skills and behaviors shown by the coachee in practice tackles the deeper meanings and perspectives of the coach and coachee. Costa and Garmston (1994) have established that this form of coaching supports the need to individualize coaching for teachers in order to,

> Understand the diverse stages in which each staff member is currently operating; to assist people in understanding their own and others' differences and stages of development; to accept staff members at their present moral, social, cognitive, and ego state; and to act in a nonjudgmental manner, (p. 7)

It is through this quote from Costa and Garmston that the advantages of coaching used as a professional development tool can be recognized. The key to coaching being a developmental tool to grow teachers is the idea that coaching can be individualized and differentiated not only for the organization, but for the individual as well.

The Constructs of Effective Coaching

Throughout the many forms of coaching, there are some principal elements that exist that identify coaching as a developmental tool. The principal elements are: (a) building a relationship between coach and coachee; (b) dialogue between coach and coachee; (c) asking questions to the coachee; (d) providing feedback to the coachee; and,

(e) development of the coachee's self-reflectiveness. These constructs of effectiveness

for coaching will be further examined in the following sections.

Building a relationship between coach and coachee. The first construct of

effectiveness relates to the relationship building between the coach and coachee (Crane,

2002; Dantonio, 2001; Kilburg, 2001/2007; Knight, 2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Peterson,

1996/2007; Portner, 2008; Stober, 2006; Stowell, 1988; Tyson & Bimbrauer, 1983). The

literature advocates that relationship building between the coach and the coachee is of

fundamental importance for coaching to be effective. Portner (2008) posits that for a

coachee to agree to enter into a coaching situation, "it takes trust to ask for help, to

expose your insecurities and inexperience to a coworker, and to leave yourself vulnerable

and open to ridicule" (p. 16). This becomes even more important when the coaching

relationship is between a supervisor and an employee. Lacking this trusting relationship,

the employee (in this situation the coachee) will not trust that they can be open about

their deficiencies for fear of it being used in evaluation.

Dialogue between coach and coachee. This need for having an established

relationship is further explored in the second construct of effectiveness; the effective use

of dialogue between the coach and coachee (Crane, 2002; Guskey, 2000; Drago-

Severson, 2004; Knight, 2007; Kouzes et al., 2010; Stowell, 1988; Tyson & Bimbrauer,

1983). True dialogue is demonstrated within a trusting relationship between two

individuals who respect each other as both professionals and people. Drago-Severson

(2004) describes this form of dialogue as a 'collegial inquiry' or "a shared dialogue in a

reflective context that involves reflecting on one's assumptions, convictions, and values

as part of the learning process" (p. 103). In direct opposition to dialogue is the

relationship where one person dominates the conversation and tells the other person what they are doing wrong along with what they need to do to fix it. Crane (2002) describes this as a 'command-and-control style' which "may create stability, predictability, and uniformity, but they do not bring about deeper commitment and creative problem solving" (p. 101). On the contrary, Acheson and Gall (1997) propose, in a coaching situation, the supervisor should "listen more, talk less" (p. 161). Effective dialogue is a committed conversation between two people who share goals for the conversation and is not a one-sided affair.

      Asking questions to the coachee. The coach's action of asking questions rather than telling the coachee what to do is an additional key construct of effective coaching (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008). Crane (2002) suggests that when a coach participates in the conversation by telling the coachee what they did right or wrong, or what they should to do fix issues, they "tends to control conversation, shuts off the flow of ideas and may trigger combativeness or other forms of self-protection" (p. 100). Crane ascertains that asking questions does the complete opposite as it gives the coachee the opportunity to open up and be reflective about their practice. However according to Crane it is not solely about asking questions in general, he offers the condition that the questions should be asked in a method that is "specifically designed to elicit [the] coachee's points of view" (p. 80). This indication of encouraging reflectiveness in the coachee resonates throughout the literature as a key component of asking questions during the coaching process (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Portner, 2008). According to Costa & Garmston (1994), the capacity of the coach to ask direct questions about the decisions, actions, and perspectives of the coachee allows for the coachee to ask

themselves the same questions and examining their own work, outside of the coaching process.

        Providing feedback to the coachee. Another key construct of effectiveness in coaching is providing feedback to the coachee (Crane, 2002; Kouzes et al., 2010; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Stowell, 1988; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Zepeda, 2005). Crane (2002) describes feedback as an act that "provides information from the environment about how the individuals and groups are performing in terms of their goals" (p. 67). According to the literature, effective feedback from the coach should be timely (Crane, 2002; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). This is in reference to the idea that feedback should follow up soon after the observation of the coachee's behaviors or actions. In addition in order for feedback to be effective feedback it should be concrete and specific concerning observable behaviors and actions (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zepeda, 2005). The feedback should also be limited to a small amount of matters (Veenman & Denessen, 2001) and it should be about matters that the coachee can actually address in future behavior and actions (Portner, 2008). The final feature of effective feedback is that it should be descriptive rather than evaluative in nature (Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008). Furthermore, a coach's feedback and actions must not be judgmental in regards to the coachee's performance (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Crane, 2002; Portner, 2008; Reiss, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Stowell, 1988; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). According to Crane this element of coaching is critical for the coaching to be effective. Costa & Garmston (1994) argue that the coaching process "is not one which the 'superior' does to the 'inferior'; rather they are two dedicated professionals striving to solve problems, improve learning, and make curriculum more vibrant" (p. 50). Costa

and Garmston solidify this argument by suggesting that the teacher should be the judge of their own behaviors, actions, and perspectives rather than having it judged them judged by another person.

      Development of the coachee's self-reflectiveness. Costa and Garmston (1994) attempt to make a point in their argument that the ultimate goal of the coaching process should for the coachee to develop self-reflectiveness, which is strengthened throughout the literature on essential constructs of coaching (Crane, 2002; Dantonio, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004; Knight, 2007; Portner, 2008; Robertson, 2008). Portner (2008) suggests that coaching should be about building the 'self-reliant' teacher "who is willing and able to "(a) generate and choose purposefully from among viable alternatives, (b) act upon those choices, (c) monitor and reflect upon the consequences of applying those choices, and (d) modify and adjust in order to enhance student learning" (p. 45). Dantonio (2001) reflects that this act of allows for the teacher to reflect on his or her own behaviors, actions, plans, and practices in relationship of their impact on students. Stober (2006) claims that it is the push for what he refers to as 'self-actualization' or movement through a 'growth process' that distinguishes coaching apart from other relationships that only offer "general encouragement and advice giving" (p. 18). It is about gradually pushing the coachee away from being dependent on others and into the ability to self-reflect and grow as an individual, which then follows the ideals set forth by Knowles' (1978) andragogy.

Literacy Coaching Defined

      A thorough review of the literature shows that campuses and districts define literacy coaching in a variety of ways. However, there are some core beliefs about

literacy coaching that seem to remain constant: (a) coaches primary goal is to support

teacher learning, and (b) coaches are to provide support with a focus on student learning.

An instrumental component to the responsibility of a literacy coach is to support the

professional growth of teachers, and to build their instructional capacity. The

International Literacy Association (ILA) (2011) defines a literacy coach as "a reading

specialist who focuses on providing professional development for teachers by providing

them with the additional support needed to implement various instructional programs and

practices" (p. 7). Additionally, it denotes the literacy coach as the leader of a particular

campus' literacy plan, which necessitates that the coach has experience in providing

effective professional development to teachers.

Along with the idea of support for teachers, the literacy coach assists teachers to

identify what they already know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their

ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as

they learn more and do more. (Toll, 2005, p. 4) In this regard, teachers receive support

from a literacy coach and are encouraged to contemplate on their practice and be

responsible for their own. The crucial component that differentiates literacy coaching

from traditional professional development is its emphasis on student learning. Often,

professional development does not occur within the contexts of the classroom, making it

challenging to connect the theory with practice and thus student learning.

In order to respond to this acceptance that professional development it not

effective unless it is making a positive impact on student achievement, literacy coaches

and teachers look at the work they partake in through the lens of student learning. While

there are a variety of definitions of literacy coaching, the research indicates and is clear

that literacy coaching is an ongoing, job-embedded professional development process with a strong emphasis on student achievement.

Effective Literacy Coaches: Characteristics and Actions

Prior to exploring the literature that informs about the characteristics of effective literacy coaches, it is pertinent to completely understand the requirements for effective coaching. The International Literacy Association (2011) indicates that it is essential that coaches have experience as classroom teachers, with understanding of the grade levels of the teachers they will coach. Second, it is imperative that coaches have broad knowledge about the process of learning how to read, language acquisition, literacy assessments, and effective instructional practices. A further requirement is that coaches must have experience providing professional development, as well as knowledge of how to effectively work with teachers in order to improve practice. Yet another quality is that literacy coaches should possess excellent presentation and facilitation skills. As a final prerequisite, literacy coaches must have a solid understanding of the coaching cycle (planning, observing, modeling, and reflecting), as well as the capacity to effectively implement each element with teachers (Toll, 2009). To accompany the coaching cycle, Blachowicz et al. (2005) suggested, "The gradual release of responsibility—from the coach to the teacher—is key to effective coaching" (p. 58).

There are multiple important studies that support the International Literacy Association's definition of effective literacy coaches. Shanklin (2006) described six characteristics that define effective literacy coaching, which were recommended by the advisory board of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse. First, in order to practice effective literacy coaching there must be collaborative dialogue with teachers who are at

different stages of understanding and practice. The mindfulness that solid communication skills are vital for literacy coaches to effectively perform their role is confirmed by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2009). Second, a coach is influential in the development and improvement of the literacy vision of the school. Yet another quality of an effective literacy coach is their ability to focus on data-centered student and teacher learning. Effective coaches make data informed decisions that lead them to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development designed to meet the precise needs of the teachers, thus improving student learning by increasing teacher capacity. Moreover, coaches participate in a series of classroom observations, reflections, and implementation that builds teacher knowledge over time. The last feature of a successful literacy coach is their capability to be supportive and reflective rather than evaluative in nature. Shanklin went on to suggest that understanding these individual qualities of effective literacy coaches helps to establish the role of a literacy coach with in the constructs of a campus. In addition to understanding the importance of the qualifications and responsibilities of coaches, it is imperative for the coach to have the opportunity to develop the expertise required to properly execute these responsibilities.

An effective coach must hold individual conferences, facilitate small-group discussions, and demonstrate lessons that all result in new learning and development for teachers. Lieberman (1995) suggested that our understanding of how students learn should apply to how adults learn as well. Teachers should provide students with wide-ranging learning opportunities by encouraging them to have a variety of experiences, problem-solve, and create. In this same manner literacy coaches want to support teachers to learn and engage I this same manner. Additionally, effective literacy coaches are

guided by the principles of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) discussed earlier. Literacy coaches assist teachers to improve their practice through directing their focus on student learning. Using evidence of student learning, or lack thereof, could potentially demonstrate to teachers the need to obtain further professional knowledge in specific areas. Moreover, as part of the coaching cycle, data-driven decisions are made in collaboration with teachers about their work and student achievement.

Through research there is a clear understanding of effective literacy coaches in terms of what is required for their expertise and practice. Research has also shown the method in which literacy coaches are currently working in schools. Although there is research showing the most effective ways to conduct coaching, numerous roles and responsibilities are given to literacy coaches as part of their work.

Literacy Coaching Roles and Responsibilities

Walpole and McKenna (2004) equated the various roles a literacy coach plays to the peddler who wears many caps. On any given day, a literacy coach could potentially play the part of an administrator, an interventionist, a data-entry specialist, an assessment proctor, a bookkeeper, a teacher, the list is endless. Walpole and McKenna went on to further recommend that it is truly time for the literacy coach to flaunt a new hat, one that requires more specificity and is responsive to the needs of the teachers with whom they work. The subsequent discussion reveals some of the current research pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of coaches. It is pertinent to examine this research closely if there is ever to be a true definition of for the role of an effective literacy coach.

A recent study by Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) examined the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading achievement in Grades K-1 in a Reading

First school district. The study explored multiple aspects of literacy coaching including how literacy coaches' time was spent, the researchers then analyzed the relationship between coaching (type, amount, and content) and student reading achievement, using weekly coaching logs as data sources as well as test scores. The coaching logs were used to demonstrate multiple types of data; they documented all of the interactions between the coach and the teacher, categorizing each interaction by type of coaching activity (e.g., demonstration lesson, teacher observation, one-on-one conference, co-planning meeting). The coaching logs also served as a record for the content of each activity (e.g. guided reading, assessment, fluency) along with the context in which it took place (e.g., grade-level meeting, professional development session). They coaching logs also documented additional coaching activities that fell outside of the realm of working with teachers, which included some administrative tasks (e.g., data input, ordering literacy materials, attending meetings). The findings from this study demonstrate that, on average, 53% of the coaches time was spent working directly with teachers, and about 47% of their time was occupied with additional coaching activities.

Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis' (2002) study also explored how the role of reading specialists was performed in combination with the Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist, appointed by the International Reading Association in 1996. A survey was conducted with school reading specialists to conclude how they function within the schools. The purpose of the study was to investigate the roles and responsibilities of the reading specialists with the intention of coming to a better understanding of how they provide support to students and teachers. A random sample of 4,452 members of the International Literacy Association of whom were self-identified as

reading specialists received the survey. The survey had a return rate of 38%, or 1,517 completed surveys that were returned. The results showed that the respondents were teachers with experience who had transferred out of the classroom into this specialized role.

Additionally, the data revealed that reading specialists are given a tremendous amount of different responsibilities, which include providing specialized instruction to students, providing resources to teachers, participating as parts of various school teams, assisting with curriculum development activities, as well as performing administrative tasks. While overall participants were understanding of the importance of taking on multiple responsibilities, the pressure of not having enough time to effectively handle all of the required tasks was their most pressing concern.

Through their examination of the roles of literacy coaches, Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) drafted a report for the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES). Contained within in the report was a study involving teachers and coaches at 203 Reading First schools located in five northwestern states (Alaska, Arizona, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming). Data were collected via surveys that were administered to a variety of literacy coaches as well as teachers who taught Kindergarten through Third grade at all of the participating schools. One of the survey questions focused on how coaches spent their time. As part of the findings from the 190 coaches about whom complete data were collected, Deussen et al. (2007) reported that coaches spent only 26% of their time actually coaching teachers (e.g., demonstrating, observing, providing feedback, or conducting professional development activities), this despite state expectations that 60%-80% of their time was to be spent working directly with teachers.

Data- and assessment-related work took 25% of their time, trailed by planning for and attending meetings (14%), paperwork duties (11%), and intervention work with students (10%).

A further exploration of the data in relation to how coaches time was spent in their work generated five separate categories of coaches based on the percentage of time they spent on particular tasks. Coaches that were data-oriented focused almost half of their work on data and assessment tasks. Student-oriented coaches spent a larger amount of their time working directly with students through providing interventions and direct instruction. The third category was deemed as the managerial coaches due to the considerable amount of time (35%) spent on paperwork and attending meetings. The fourth and fifth categories of coaches allotted the majority of their time working with teachers in a coaching capacity. The differentiating factor between the last two groups was mainly the means in which the coaching was delivered. Coaches falling in the fourth category were classified as being teacher-oriented (group), as they spent more time working with teachers in groups. The fifth category was characterized as being teacher-oriented (individual), due to the fact that the majority of their coaching time was spent working with individual teachers.

This study, along with quite a few others, accentuates the idea that coaches have a variety of roles and responsibilities. On average, coaches spent nearly the same amount of time on data- and assessment-related work as they did participating in the actual coaching of teachers. Moreover, it corroborated the variation that exists throughout the coach participants in regard to the tasks that the performed and the time that was allocated for each task.

While it continues to be one of the main beliefs that the primary role of the literacy coach is to provide teachers with professional development as well support with the intention of improving classroom instruction (Blachowicz et al., 2005), the research indicates that this is not always the reality. Subsequent is a discussion of how the research maintenances the claim that literacy coaching has the potential to create a positive impact on teacher practice as well as student achievement when conducted effectively.

A Case for Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching has the potential to dramatically change the landscape of literacy instruction in schools, and there is mounting research indicating that literacy coaching is effective. (Burkins, 2007, p. 26) In the current stage and age of accountability that is the school system at this time there is an intense focus on student achievement. Knowing this it is imperative to consider that there is no variable greater in explaining student reading achievement than the influence of the teacher (Nye et al., 2004). Throughout the literature, there is abundant evidence to suggest that teacher knowledge and practice play a decisive role in the reading achievement of students (Allington, 2010; Mosenthal et al., 2004; Pressley et al., 2001). Thus, literacy coaching has come to the forefront as a prevalent method for providing the job-embedded professional development that teachers need. This is done with the assumption that teachers will gain deeper knowledge in the area of effective reading and writing instruction as a result of working with literacy coaches, thus improving student reading achievement (Burkins, 2007; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011;

Hindman & Wasik, 2012; International Literacy Association, 2011; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Lyons & Pinnell, 1999; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

The research that has been conducted about literacy coaches show its effectiveness and capacity to make a significant transformation in the way that literacy is taught in schools (Burkins, 2007). Instructional coaching has been proven to improve teacher capacity in how they instruct, something that is necessary for improving student learning and achievement (Blachowicz et al. 2005; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). There has been a shift to research the effects that literacy coaching has on student achievement in reading (Bean et al., 2002, Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2008; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2007; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2009). Biancarosa et al. (2008) directed a study in which they evaluate the value-added effects of literacy coaching on student learning after two years within a 4-year longitudinal study about the effectiveness of the literacy collaborative (LC) program. The LC is a comprehensive school reform program that was established in 1993 with the intention of improving student achievement in both reading and writing through the use of school-based coaching. Through the LC, coaches are provided with rigorous training about the theory, research, and content relating to literacy learning along with how to instruct students within the framework of an LC. As the ultimate goal of the LC was to improve students' reading and writing achievement, the literacy coaches provide teacher with continuous school-based professional development.

In the first year of the study, literacy coaches participated in training for their new roles and thus did not provide professional development activities at their schools. During this year no treatment was provided, and baseline student achievement data were gathered for the schools. There were approximately 1,300 students assessed in grades K-

3 during each year of the study, representing 90% student participation. Within the student same, 40% were considered low income, 16% were African American, 7% were Latino, 4% were Asian, and less than 1% was Native American. Among these students 4% of them were limited English proficient (LEP). During the first year of the study, the literacy coaches were in training for their new positions and did not provide professional development activities at their schools. Approximately 250 K-3 teachers out of a total of 366 K-3 teachers in the study schools had some form of participation in the professional development conducted by LC throughout the study. The students' literacy was measured over time with an assortment of reading assessments including subtests from DIBELS along with the reading comprehension subtest from the Terra Nova Multiple Assessments of Reading. The study results suggest that the professional development that was provided by the LC was associated with a 16%-29% improvement in student literacy learning rates within the initial two years of the study. While the findings are preliminary, there are indications of considerable effects of the LC professional development on student learning.

Another study demonstrating the relationship between literacy coaching and improvement in reading ability for students in grades K-3 was conducted by Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011). This research was designed to study whether student reading gains could be linked and predicted as a direct result of literacy coaching certification, time spent by the literacy coach working directly with teachers, and specific literacy coaching activities and content conducted with teachers. In this study, twelve literacy coaches from a large, diverse, Reading First school district participated. The research determined that although the type of literacy coaching reading credential did not predict gains in

reading, there was increasing evidence that there were gains in student reading that were positively related to the amount of time spent by literacy coaches working directly with teachers. Additionally, the findings identified four specific coaching activities that served as predictors of gains in student reading at one or more of the tested grade levels: conferencing, administering assessments, modeling lessons, and observing teachers. Within these four reading instruction content components, comprehension was the one found in which the coaches focused the majority of their time and also served as a significant content area for predicting reading gains. This study by Elish-Piper and L'Allier was one of the first pieces of research set to establish and begin to explain the connection between literacy coaching and student reading achievement.

Summary

The literature about the professional development of teachers suggests that in order to increase the effectiveness of developmental opportunities, these opportunities must be designed and implemented with the intention of meeting teachers' individualized and differentiated needs, developmental levels, learning processes, and previous experiences. Nonetheless, this individualization and differentiation according to Watts (1980), can lead to planning concerns in terms of "how to help the beginning teacher, the 'experienced teacher' (a euphemism for good), and the in-betweener: how to minimize the sense of being overwhelmed for one, and keep the challenge for the other" (p. 3). Watts argues that providing individualized and differentiated professional development can be a challenge for those designing and implementing professional development programs. This becomes one of the fundamental factors leading to the traditional forms of professional development, the one-size-fits-all model. The principal is often tasked

with the design and development of professional development for teachers as the instructional leader for his or her campus and staff (Blase & Blase, 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Helsing et al., 2008; Lynch, 2012). In spite of the literature on the concepts of effective professional development that discuss teachers as individuals who require differentiation, the actual charge of designing and implementing appropriate individualized professional development is a challenge for even the most experienced school leaders. The coaching model exists to respond to this challenge.

<center>**Chapter Three**</center>

<center>**Methodology**</center>

This chapter describes the methodology that addressed the research questions presented in the study. There is a review of the research questions, the setting of the research, the participant selection, data collection methods and analysis, as well as reflexivity and positionality, trustworthiness, potential limitations of this study, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Need for the study

The people that are directly affected and have something to gain from the work of this evaluation are the personnel who facilitate the department of Curriculum and Development as they are the ones who monitor the performance and budget of the teacher development specialist position. Evaluating the implementation of the teacher development specialist model will be beneficial in that it will give insight to the district as to how to further improve the work of the teacher development specialist or if any changes are in order with how the work and department are currently being structured.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following questions:

(a) How does the coaching program support the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches in an urban school setting?

(b) What factors challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches?

Research Design

This study is a qualitative research project. "Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products" (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003, p. 6). In general, qualitative research is descriptive and inductive, and focuses on meaning making and understanding of social phenomena (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998). I was interested to ascertain how the Teacher Development Specialist coaching model is perceived by the participants. This was best done with grounded theory methods.

Grounded theory research is research that emerges as the researchers begin their investigation and inquiry, it is best utilized to highlight the truths and intricacies of the dynamic of people's perceptions of their work, in this case the work of literacy coaches. Quantitative inquiry on the other hand interprets data and research via numbers and statistics, whereas qualitative research pursues understanding and interprets research and data through words and representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Stake, 1995). Quantitative studies deduct and operationalize theoretical relationships, whereas qualitative studies induct and generalize findings (Merriam, 2002). A qualitative paradigm places the researcher in a position as "the primary instrument of inquiry for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). The rich data and intricate descriptions, commonly seen in qualitative research data collection methods, demonstrate participants' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions, along with the contexts and structures of their lives (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, qualitative data, gives participants' voices and are most appropriate to meet the objectives of this study (Creswell, 2012; Hatch, 2002).

There are a multitude of ways to ask questions and to attempt to comprehend reality; therefore, there exists a multitude of different approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2012; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002). Conducting grounded theory research with literacy coaches enabled me to understand the coaches' beliefs, as well as their perceptions about coaching skills, and the coaching program in order to further inform the field of education on the impact of coaching on teacher development and student achievement. Grounded theory protocols enabled me to seek out and conceptualize patterns from the participants' responses.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

The purpose of choosing a qualitative grounded theory approach for this study was to be able to come up with theories and propositions pertaining to coaches' perceptions of the development of coaching skills and their effectiveness in the work they do with their schools and teachers. The grounded theory method begins to formulate a theory by use of induction as well as comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2002). As the data is explored, the theory must fit the data without being forced (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This design of qualitative grounded theory has its origins with Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later evolved into two different approaches, the classic systematic approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006). While the there are two different approaches to grounded theory, they both agree that the study must be iterative and requires flexibility, beginning the study with no preconceived hypotheses (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Therefore, by using the grounded theory

methodology the hypothesis was able to be constructed based on the experiences of the participants of the study.

Constructivist grounded theory places an emphasis on having a more flexible attitude and moving away from the positivist influence of classic grounded theory. With this methodology, theories are constructed rather than discovered through the researcher's immersion into and constant comparative analysis of the collected data. When conducting a study using a grounded theory methodology, researchers are in constant interaction with the data and are simultaneously immersed in the analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2006). The research tools, for this study included in depth, face-to-face focus groups. This was be followed by the use of a constant comparative method of analysis, where data was coded, codes were categorized, and theoretical themes were evoked, these themes in turn provided responses to the research questions of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that in order to establish trustworthiness in a qualitative research study, there must be credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Setting

This study was conducted in a large urban school district in Texas; the district serves students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. There was an enrollment of 215,000 students in the school district in the 2016-2017 school year. Of the students enrolled in the district 62.1% of the identified as Hispanic, 24.5% as African American, 8.4% as White and 3.7% as Asian. The district serves a student population in which 75.5% of the student population identified as economically disadvantaged. The decision to select this district for the study was twofold. First, the level of professional

development and the investment the district has dedicated to the role of the Teacher

Development Specialist and the coaching program in general is vast and worth further

investigating its role in positively influencing teacher performance and student

achievement. Secondly, convenience also played a role in the decision, as the researcher

is both currently employed by the district and also resides in the district.

Participant Selection

Six Teacher Development Specialists were selected for this study. The specialists

are literacy coaches and currently employed by the district. Focus groups were

conducted with the group of Teacher Development Specialists identified. The focus

groups were comprised of six teacher development specialists that were selected due to

their success as instructional coaches in the district. Each of the teacher development

specialists have served in their role for a minimum of 4 years, and they are all rated as

highly effective by their supervisors. Five of the six teacher development specialists

were linked to campuses that with their support came out of IR status according to TEA.

Upon receipt of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district research

request approval, the researcher identified the individuals that participated in the focus

groups. The researcher contacted the individuals via email to schedule the focus groups.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2012), "interview plays a central role in the data

collection process" (p. 162). I chose questions to be asked during the focus groups that

were answered by all participants. The questions that were selected for the focus groups

were open-ended, and specifically chosen to inform the researcher about the topic of the

study and the research questions. Purposeful sampling was conducted in order to ensure

participants' willingness to participate in the study (Miles and Huberman, 1984). I determined that the most appropriate manner in which to gather the data necessary for the study is by conducting focus groups. Focus groups were conducted once approval was granted by the IRB and the school district in which the study took place. Each focus group lasted between 45-90 minutes. Questions were formulated with the assistance of related empirical literature to elicit information about the coaching program and the development of coaching skills within the role of the Teacher Development Specialist. An IRB study protocol was followed (Creswell, 2012) and will subsequently be discussed in further detail.

In preparation to conduct the focus groups, proper audio recording procedures were researched (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), and the focus groups were audio recorded. After the focus groups were conducted, the audio recordings were transcribed by an outside third party. I was able to have an accurate and precise recollection of the focus group conversations through the use of audio taping. In addition, I used the audio recordings to refer to when analyzing the data to ensure accuracy. I designed a guide for the focus groups (Kyale and Brinkmann, 2008) that organized each of the questions with sufficient space for the researcher to take field notes as the participants responded to the questions during the focus groups. I collected anecdotal notes to best capture the message and perceptions of the participants. The method that was employed was active recording, where the notes serve as an active reconstruction of the information being given rather than a passive recording of the information (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

I selected a location for the focus groups based on a comfortable geographic location best serving all of the participants. During the focus groups, I maintained focus

on the questions, was mindful of non-verbal cues such as body language and eye contact to ensure the participants were at ease and were comfortable answering the questions and sharing their perspectives (Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

The nature of the grounded theory research approach to uncover themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) followed the focus groups and analysis of the transcripts and notes. An outside third party transcribed the focus groups, and focus groups were reviewed multiple times as the researcher "moves from reading to describing, classifying and interpreting" (Creswell, 2012, p. 184).

I employed the use of open coding as the transcripts were reviewed, tagging any unit of data that appeared relevant to the research question (Merrian, 2009). Through the use of open coding, I uncovered themes that were both a part of the initial literature review and focus group questions. By reviewing the data in this manner, I was able to understand the experience from the perspective of the insider (Merrian, 2009). Focus group transcripts were analyzed to identify emerging themes. I was the collector and manager of data. The data is being stored both electronically and in hard copy formats. Data is being secured by storing hard copies in a locked cabinet and electronic data is being secured through a password-protected computer. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for the district, schools and participants.

Trustworthiness

Merriam (2009) states that in order to maintain credibility and objectivity in qualitative research, trustworthiness must be maintained. Trustworthiness must be ensured in order for the research to be of value to the field. Qualitative researchers must

be mindful of attending to issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba, 1981). I implemented strategies to validate the study in order to ensure trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability.

According to Merriam (2009), credibility is the degree to which results are seen as believable to the participants involved in a particular study. I reviewed multiple data points, as well as uncovered and organized themes into categories that lead to answering the research questions in order to build credibility. The use of this strategy is known as triangulation. Triangulation includes the use of varying sources of data and methods of collection to gather a more robust understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell 2012). Triangulation is proposed to be accomplished by gathering and analyzing data from focus groups and my notes based on their experiences.

Credibility was ensured through the use of member checking. A comprehensive description is provided by Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007) of how this strategy is to be used to ensure credibility,

> Ensure representation of the emic perspective by member checking, which involves having research participants review statements in the report for accuracy and completeness to correct factual errors, and, if necessary, collect more data to reconcile disparities, rewrite the report, or include contrasting views. (p. 475)

This study employed the use of member checking to increase credibility and thus ensure trustworthiness.

Dependability is the assurance that were the same study to be conducted again, the results would prove similar. In this study, dependability was built through the process

of data collection and analysis. Dependability was ensured through the secure storage of data, with clearly stated protocols for the focus groups, as well as with the use of triangulation so as to avoid the possibility of any participant's experience to overshadow those of the group as a whole (Merriam, 2009).

Merriam (2009) defines transferability as the degree to which one set of findings may be generalized into other settings. Trochim (2006) describes adding transferability to a story "by doing a thorough job of describing the research context" (p.1). A comprehensive description of the study context is provided in chapter one. The researcher also strengthened transferability by utilizing purposeful sampling. The purposeful selection of teacher development specialists who have had success in coaching using the studied coaching model will allow for direct transferability to other literacy coaches who are serve in a similar context.

Trochim (2006) states, "conformability refers to the degree to which results could be confirmed or corroborated by others" (p.1). Conformability of this study is being added by ensuring that communication procedures for member checking are clear and concise.

Delimitations & Limitations

Despite the significance of this study for literacy coaches and school districts who employ them, there are limitations in the research design that will be addressed. The delimitation is the context of the study in one large urban school district and only six of its literacy coaches are participating in the study. Limitations of the study include that while it may be generalizable to other large urban school districts, it may not be applicable to all. To address this limitation, the researcher discussed specific

recommendations and results, which have the potential to be generalizable to coaches and districts in other contexts.

A second limitation of this study is the anticipated level of bias present on the part of the researcher. Trochim (2006), states "Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study" (p.1). I, too, am a Teacher Development Specialist in the district, although with another specialty other than literacy. I remained aware of this potential bias, paid close attention to the focus group questions, potential bias by member checking, and allowing for a third party to transcribe and be present in the focus groups. While bias may still occur, I ensured careful observation, methodical questioning and data collection methods in order to assist with offsetting the bias within the research process (Merriam, 2009).

Summary

This chapter reviewed the methods I utlized to examine and analyze the participants' experiences with their work as teacher development specialists. Strategic sampling was employed as a method of recruiting participants to participate in focus groups. Following the focus group protocol, I collected notes as well as audio-recording of the focus groups, detailing the participants' experience. I then used coding to discover themes, which gave insight to the coaching model utilized by teacher development specialists in the district. I thoroughly outlined data management procedures, and any potential issues of trustworthiness were addressed.

Chapter Four

Results

This research investigation was a qualitative study that employed the use of focus groups to discover information about the quality and fidelity of the Teacher Development Specialist model being used in a large urban school district. Participants of the focus groups were teacher development specialists who were current employees of the school district and were selected due to their success as instructional coaches during multiple years. As previously mentioned in the study, the participants were strategically selected due to their success and their ability to positively impact student achievement in the schools they supported. Teacher development specialists who had not been successful in their work were excluded from the participant pool.

Two focus groups were conducted, each one comprised of three participants. The participants were all asked the same twelve questions in sequential order, the sessions were both audio recorded, and I took field notes as the participants responded to the questions. The questions that were selected and asked were utilized to assist in answering the research questions of this study. The audio recordings were transcribed by an outside third party and data were analyzed with the purpose of finding emerging themes, through these emerging themes the research questions were then answered.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the implementation of the Teacher Development Specialist model and investigate its use within the context of the school district, which was the setting of the study. The school district employs these instructional coaches with the purpose of improving student achievement in TEA rated

Improvement Required (IR) schools throughout the district. This study will help to give insight to the work of the teacher development specialists and the fidelity to which they are following the model set out for the work.

In order to fulfill this purpose and answer the research questions, focus groups were conducted that included questions for the teacher development specialists about their experiences as coaches in the district, use of the coaching model, and potential factors that impact their work. A qualitative approach was used in this study to conduct the research. Teacher development specialists met with the researcher for roughly one hour at a selected location that was convenient for the participants. The sample of teacher development specialists was a purposeful sample that was selected due to their success in their work as coaches in hard to staff, low performing campuses.

The information that was needed to answer the research questions was obtained through the use of the focus group questions that assisted in guiding the discussion during the focus groups. The purpose of the study was to be provide the school district with information about the successes of the model that is currently in use as well as to provide insight into some potential improvements that could be made to further perfect the model. Teacher development specialists provided insight as to the parameters of their work as well as successes and difficulties they encountered.

Findings from the Research Questions

In the first set of questions, the research question, how does the coaching program support the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches in an urban school setting was addressed. In the second set of questions, the focus shifted to what factors challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches. The research

questions served as my guide to determine both the effectiveness and fidelity of the coaches to the coaching model as well as the challenges that the coaches faced in implementing the coaching model and working with teachers in the district. Through the use of focus groups and the analysis of the participants' responses I was able to identify common and emerging themes as well as answer the research questions.

Research Question One: How does the coaching program support the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches in an urban school setting?

The participants shared multiple things that the coaching programs does to support their development of coaching skills, however there was several recurring themes as the responses were similar from participant to participant. This first research question was answered by the responses in the following sections.

What types of support most benefits coaches?

Participants expressed that professional development provided from experts in their content area was pivotal to their continuous growth and ensured that they were continuously growing and "caught up" on all the latest trends and research in the field. One participant shared, "We coach such a wide group of teachers from Pre-kindergarten to 5th grade, if we don't receive continuous professional development around best practices for all of the grade levels we support, it is hard to know everything about every grade level in order to best support our teachers". Another reason participants shared they needed continuous professional development was to ensure that they always knew information that was up and coming before the teachers did to be able to best support them in the work. Yet another method of support participants expressed most benefited them was the opportunities to collaborate with other coaches that share the same content

area. This work allows the coaches to share ideas, work together, come up with strategies and suggestions to continue pushing the work forward, and practice both instructional strategies and coaching strategies on each other before putting them into practice with the teachers they coach.

Is the coaching program being implemented with fidelity?

This question brought some initial hesitation from the participants; however, as soon as one participant began to open up in answering the question, the others followed. The participants shared that the coaching program is being implemented with fidelity as much as they can; however, many times the coaching model is not necessarily followed the way it is intended to be followed. One participant expressed, "It is really hard to get to all of the components of the coaching model and do them in order when we are not at the same campus consecutive days. For example, the model calls for immediate feedback, but if I'm only at a campus one time a week it may be an entire week before I can give feedback and move on to the next part of the cycle". The participants all agreed that they are implementing components of the coaching model, and they all also agreed that it is not necessarily the way it is supposed to be. Participants also shared their desire for delving deeper into working with the coaching model and the continuous development that is needed to hone their craft and learn how to best implement the model. They expressed that they were trained in the model when they were first hired as TDS, however there had not been much if any follow up to the training or to the continuous development of the TDS to continue improving on their use of the model and the way they are coaching teachers.

What coaching behaviors contribute to improved teaching and student learning?

During this question participants shared that one of the coaching behaviors that most contributed to improved teaching and student learning was modeling for teachers in their classrooms. One participant shared, "What gets said sometimes gets lost in translation, we can say the same thing until we are blue in the face, but once we show them a strategy or a technique in their classroom with their students, many are then able to have an 'ah-ha' moment because they saw it live for themselves". Several of the participants followed up to this comment by agreeing and mentioning that it was very powerful for teachers to see strategies and best practices in person modeled by their coach.

Another behavior that the participants attributed to improved teaching and student learning was the follow up by the TDS. The participants shared that once they are able to model for the teacher, the biggest impact to whether it will actually make a difference and change their practice is if the TDS then follows up and sits down with the teacher to plan how they will implement the particular strategy in their classroom. This alleviates the excuses that the teacher could potentially give that they didn't know what to do, or that they were still confused as to how it should look in their classroom.

Do teachers benefit from coaching support?

With this question, there was an immediate and resounding "yes" from all the participants as soon as the question was asked. The participants agreed that if the teacher is open and receptive to coaching they benefit from the support. One participant noted that "the benefit of coaching is visible in many different areas: the student scores improve, data improves, teacher planning gets better; overall the teacher grows and becomes more effective when they receive coaching support". Another participant

shared, "Teachers who were just checking boxes are now owning the process after being coached, they can go from ineffective to highly effective".

Do students benefit when teachers have coaching support?

On this particular question participants also were very passionate in their initial response of "yes," students benefit when teachers receive coaching support. Many of the participants followed up on comments they made in the previous question noting that if teachers were benefiting from the support, students in turn were also benefiting. One participant noted, "we know that an effective teacher has a positive impact on students in their classroom, so how could students not benefit when a teacher is improving their craft due to coaching support." The participants also shared that enabling teachers to provide quality instruction and higher-level thinking results in students benefiting from their work. They also noted that the coaching process allows the teacher to be reflective of their practice which then trickles down to more effective lessons for the student. Another participant stated that "the purpose of coaching is to bring effective practices to teachers in order to lead to better student mastery of the content, if the coaching is working, we should absolutely see improvement and benefits to the student."

What support do coaches most need in order to be effective?

This question brought both some positive and negative comments from the participants, I am going to begin by sharing the positive. Participants shared that they needed more support with learning best practices and further developing their knowledge in their particular content area. One participant shared, "I think we all learn so much when we research best practices, participate in book studies with colleagues, and overall keep with new information that is up and coming in the field, at the end of the day the

more I know the better I can help my teachers." The participants shared that in their roles they felt the need to learn new techniques, strategies, and practices constantly to stay relevant and best be able to hone their craft and help their teachers continue to improve theirs.

There were also some responses that went slightly negative when thinking about what support they needed, the participants answered the question by explaining some of the supports they felt they were lacking, and thus negatively impacting their work. The participants shared their frustration that when they do not receive support from the administrative team on the campus they support, it really hinders their work. They noted that administrative support was absolutely necessary in order to move the work forward and work with all teachers, both those who were willing to be coached and those who were more reluctant. They shared that this was extremely important as "teachers need to know that we are all on the same page, that the administrative team has the same expectations as the coaches and that they are going to follow up as well." Participants also mentioned that they needed opportunities to collaborate with the campus administrative teams by participating in collaborative and calibrated campus walks to gain ensure that everyone is on the same page. They noted that having these key elements in place really helped with making the work of the coach more effective as it gave the teachers the impression that everyone was working together to help the teachers and improve student achievement.

Research Question Two: What factors challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches?

After asking multiple questions to the focus groups that were centered on support needed and conditions that lead to effective coaching, the focus shifted to factors that

challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches. It was important not only to gather information in regard to what coaches needed to be more effective, but also it is equally critical to explore the challenges that coaches face that potentially hinders their work.

What is effective about the coaching at an individual building? What are the coaching challenges at an individual building?

For this set of questions, I will begin by describing what the participants found to be effective at an individual building. The participants shared that when they were given the time and space to sit and plan with teachers in order to show them what effective teaching was it made their work more cohesive and allowed them to have the opportunities to share and collaborate with teachers to improve their practice. One participant noted, "Teachers appreciate having an effective exemplar to bounce ideas off of, or have a model, they want to have someone there as they plan to share ideas with and say, 'what do you think?' and that way we can all learn and grow together." The participants shared that these opportunities are only available if the principals carve out time and make it a priority to give the teachers the time and space to do this work with the coaches.

Some of the challenges that were mentioned by participants were when they encounter teachers who are not committed to the work, by not wanting to put in the time or effort that is required to truly see improvement. Another challenge that was brought up by all of the participants was the need for buy in and accountability from campus administrators. There was a consensus among participants that there was a need for campus administrators to assist with follow up and accountability for teachers in order for

some of them to comply and want to work with coaches. One participant noted, "when teachers know that the campus administrators are going to follow up and have the same expectations as us, then they tend to be more responsive and willing to work with us; otherwise, unless they are super motivated, there is no real incentive to work with a coach." Yet another challenge that was mentioned was that at times the TDS are the only content experts on the campus, this becomes a real challenge when the TDS is only on the campus once or twice a week as there are not as many opportunities for follow up and there may not be anyone available at the campus that can assist with questions specifically regarding content.

How does the building principal's support of the coaching program affect its success?

During this question, the participants shared some of the same concerns that were previously mentioned as well as some manners in which the building principal is very supportive of the coaching program. The participants shared that when the principal is able to support the work, or is able to share about the work that is happening at their campus, teachers have someone who is holding them accountable for the work they are doing with their TDS. The participants also noted that the principal sets the tone for the coaching work at their campus as they can lay the expectations of how the collaboration with the coach will look like, as well as the expectations for the result of the collaboration. One participant mentioned, "The principal has to set the groundwork and set the expectations for the teachers and then provide the follow up; the principal has a large role in setting the stage for the coaching, if the expectations are clearly set with both the teacher and the coach, there is little to no margin for miscommunication from either

party." Participants also noted that at times the building principal is unaware of the role of the coach on their campus, as well as occasions where the principal was unsure of the duties of the coach and how to align them with their expectations. There was a suggestion from one of the participants that "principals receive professional development on what coaches do and don't do on their campus, and how to best utilize a coach to foster teachers' growth."

As a coach are you differentiating support to meet individual and teaching team needs?

The participants were very eager to respond and share their thoughts when asked this question. They compared the need for differentiating support for teachers to that of differentiating support for students. One participant shared, "We expect teachers to meet their students where they are and teach to their individual learning styles and needs, our work is no different; the teachers have different personalities and learning styles and as coaches we have to adapt and tailor our support to best meet their needs." Participants shared that all teachers have different strengths and weaknesses, therefore coaching must be differentiated to help teachers grow based on their individual areas of need. A particular participant shared,

> Some teachers need a bit more hand holding, they need to feel that you've built a
> relationship first in order to get past their initial resistance. Also, some teachers
> are more open to certain types of coaching such as recording or coaching on the
> spot while others are not, as a coach you have to adapt to the needs or styles of the
> individual teachers and what they are comfortable with.

In addition, participants shared that there was enormous power in developing teachers through working with teams; while coaching and supporting individual teachers is critical work; much can be learned from collaborating and working within teams. This strategy is two-fold as it allows the coach to work with multiple teachers at the same time and is a great use of time management; and it also allows the team to begin relying more on each other and less on the coach for team support. One participant shared, "Our ultimate goal should be to coach ourselves out of a job, we want to build enough capacity in our individual teachers and teams that they no longer need our support and are able to improve their craft through reflection without the intervention of a coach."

Do effects vary when more time is spent with individual teachers than with teaching teams?

For this question, participants shared some of the same sentiments as had been shared with the previous question. While participants thought there was value in spending time working with teams, there is also much to be said about being able to work one on one with individual teachers, and it is apparent when seeing how teachers improve their practice after the one on one coaching. One participant shared,

> While there are things that can be done as a team, there are others that really require individual support; as a coach, you can give support to teams with planning and sharing best practices and resources; however, in order to coach deeply and give more individualized support work needs to be done with individual teachers outside of team time.

The participants also shared that there is a need for both types of coaching interchangeably depending on what the coach is trying to accomplish. An example of this was provided by a participant,

> Long range planning needs to be done with teams of teachers in order to provide a richer experience; however, individual teachers may need more one to one instruction when it comes to implementing a particular strategy or learning something new to them, certain learners thrive with that structure and as coaches we have to adapt to the individual needs of the teachers.

How often do teachers follow through with the strategies that you discuss?

For this question, the answers from the participants varied in that there seemed to be many outside factors that influence teachers' follow through of strategies discussed. The participants shared that this depended greatly on how self-motivated the teachers were with wanting to improve their teaching. One participant shared, "in some instances teachers give one-hundred percent and the follow through is amazing, and then in others they have to be reminded multiple times and even though they don't follow through." The participants shared that there were so many factors that affected follow through, varying for the teacher's willingness to improve, to campus support, motivation for the need for improvement, and many other things. Participants shared that there are times when even their most motivated teachers struggle to follow through,

> sometimes you'll have a teacher who you know wants to get better, who is highly motivated and enthusiastic, but still struggles to follow through because of being busy, or being given other priorities by an administrator. You just never know what you are going to get even with your high fliers.

In addition, participants also shared that teachers tended to be more compliant after the coach was able to build a relationship and had been working with the teacher for some time. They also shared that the follow through also becomes a bigger challenge when they don't see their teachers daily. One participant shared,

> Sometimes you give them [the teachers] information but then you don't see them for a few days and it makes it harder to follow through because it may have been something they should have done in their lesson the next day, if I was there every day I could follow-up quicker and provide more on the spot coaching to ensure follow through is more successful.

Analysis of the Data

Upon analysis of the participants' responses from the focus groups, themes began to emerge through the data analysis. These emerging themes were then further divided into two distinct categories: (a) what support coaches required in order to perform their jobs successfully; and (b) challenges that coaches faced when doing their work that hinders their progress when coaching teachers. The first group of emerging themes were: (a) continuous professional development; (b) collaboration with colleagues; and (c) research into best practices. These themes were based on the perception of what the participants felt they needed in order to be effective coaches. The second group of emerging themes: (a) principal buy in; (b) teacher buy in and collaboration; and (c) time on campus. This second group of themes were based on the perception of what the participants felt were challenges they faced in their role as coaches and that hindered their work.

Theme: Professional Development

All of the participants shared their thoughts on the needs of continuing professional development for coaches. Participants recalled multiple opportunities they have had to attend professional development both in and outside of the school district to further their content knowledge and continue to stay in front of current research and best practices. Participants were not only provided these opportunities but some of them also noted they were encouraged to participate in these activities by their supervisors or their campuses as a method to gain more knowledge and better support their teachers. Participants were also aware of the fact that this practice was required to continue growing and developing as content experts; that for them there was no such thing as too much professional development, it is all welcomed and appreciated in order to turn it around and advance the learning on their campuses.

Theme: Collaboration with Colleagues

The participants all agreed on the effectiveness and continued need of collaborating with colleagues as a form of brainstorming, planning, and learning from each other. Participants expressed a genuine appreciation in having the opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues weekly and having the space and time to communicate and work alongside one another to continue pushing the work forward. Teacher development specialists all have unique strengths and possess a wealth of knowledge they are always willing to share; knowing this information it seems logical that they are given this space and time to work collaboratively to achieve the best results for their teachers and students. The participants shared their methods of collaboration are not limited to in person meetings or trainings, they also work together through online communities as well

as through social media. This time along with the in-person meetings allows teacher development specialists to continue improving their craft and work towards being able to better support their teachers and campuses. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to learn from their colleagues and grow together as a team.

Theme: Research into Best Practices

Along the same lines as the above two themes that lead to continuous development for the teacher development specialist, the participants also felt it was their responsibility along with their teams and director to continue to research best practices and actively participate in researching and reflecting to continuously improve their practice. The participants felt that this continuing education through research is what allows them to be on the cutting edge of what is happening in their field and content area, acquiring this information is according to the participants an essential part of the role and work of the teacher development specialist. The participants expressed how participating in this type of work is what sets them apart and validates their extensive content knowledge.

Theme: Principal Buy-in

During the focus groups, many positive things were noted about the support that teacher development specialists receive as well as their opportunities for growth within their role; however, there were some themes that emerged that were concerns and challenges that impede the coaching work. The first of these emerging themes was principal buy-in. All of the participants communicated their experience at one point or another with a campus principal who was not supportive of the coaching program and was not knowledgeable about the work of the teacher development specialist. The

participants all experienced moments of frustration where they have been working with teachers, but with little to no principal or campus buy in there was a poor response from the teachers due to the lack of accountability from the campus administration. This lack of accountability and follow through from the campus administration resulted in frustration from the part of the teacher development specialists as they felt as if they were spinning their wheels coaching teachers and not seeing much progress. Participants did not expect the campus principal to agree with everything they did or said; however, they expressed that their desire was just to make sure everyone was on the same page and for there to be an accountability system in place from the campus and not just the coach. The desire was simply for there to be cohesiveness and follow through in order to get the best results from teachers and in turn positively affect student performance. The effectiveness of the principal and the role they play in establishing and fostering a coaching culture on their campus is critical in terms of supporting the work of the teacher development specialist.

Theme: Teacher Buy-in and Collaboration

In addition to principal buy-in at campuses there is a critical need for teacher buy in and collaboration that is necessary for the coaching relationship to be most effective. The participants noted that without a willing teacher who is ready to learn and grow coaching becomes virtually impossible; they did reiterate that this does not mean that every teacher has to be willing and ready to be coached initially, but that they have to be at least open to suggestions and keep an open mind. The participants shared this information with no prompting from the facilitator, it was something that simply came up and was recurring when addressing potential pitfalls and challenges to the coaching work.

The participants also noted that teacher buy in is something that has to be earned and must start with relationship building and creating a community of collaboration along with having a growth mindset. It was mentioned by all of the participants that for the coaching relationship to work and for there to be true growth on the part of the teacher they have to buy in to what the teacher development specialist is "selling"; teachers have to want the information and the knowledge, there must be a desire to collaborate, learn, and grow. The participants also tied this back to the principal buy-in noting that many times if there was principal buy in and strong culture of collaboration at the campus, the teachers followed their lead and were open and receptive to the coaching.

Theme: Time on Campus

In addition to the challenges of having principal and teacher buy-in and collaboration one of the biggest challenges faced by teacher development specialists according to the participants was the lack of time spent on any particular campus. Participants shared their concern and struggle with going through the coaching cycle and being able to follow-up with teachers in a timely manner when they were not on the campus every day, or consecutive days. This was a common theme that was brought up multiple times and in different contexts; while in education there we will always hear "there just isn't enough time", this appeared to be a challenge that could have the potential of strongly hindering the coaching work. The participants shared that they had to split their time between multiple campuses and sometimes additional department projects that took them away from coaching and working with teachers.

Summary

In conclusion, the most effective component of ensuring the coaching model is being executed to its fullest potential is the continuous professional development that is provided and encouraged for teacher development specialists. Participants in the focus groups offered multiple perspectives and valuable information about their role and the work they do, however, all of the information came back to the role of professional development for the coaches. If the coaches are able to continuously learn and grow in their knowledge of their content and in effective coaching strategies, then they can improve their work and thus positively influence teacher capacity and effectiveness. The need for this type of support and the desire of the participants to receive this type of learning is crucial to the continuous improvement of the model.

In addition, the most critical challenge that is being faced by teacher development specialists in their roles is that of buy-in both by principals and teachers. Participants in the focus groups shared a multitude of examples and reasons why this is essential to the work they do at schools. If a teacher development specialist has buy-in from their teachers and principals, then there will be more opportunities for growth for both the teachers and the students on that campus. The influence of these factors on the coaching model is great, and it is imperative that school districts further examine this factor as an important element in the role of the coach. Chapter Five will provides a discussion of the findings along with conclusions and recommendations for further inquiry.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Education is a driving force in the lives of all of our students. Decisions that are made at schools in classrooms and in meetings, or at the district level in board meetings and cabinet decisions should begin by asking, What is best for kids? This question should remain at the center of all conversations and should drive the work of all educators, including literacy coaches, teachers, administrators, and all other school staff. As educators, the primary goal should be to ensure the most effective instruction in the best learning environment possible with the end of providing all students the best opportunities for future success.

However, achieving these goals are not easy tasks. Today's educators are being challenged with high demands to guarantee that all students are achieving elevated levels of success. In order to reach this goal, educators are constantly searching for methods to improve their work and hone their craft to be able to provide effective instruction that meets the needs of all their students. With the intent to address this critical need facing educators, there has been a number of reform movements that have developed. The literacy coaching movement is one that has emerged as an effective method of providing professional development with the goal of impacting teacher effectiveness; therefore, improving student achievement (Bean, Belcastro, et al., 2008; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Hough et al., 2008; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Reeves, 2007; Shanklin & Rainville, 2007; Taylor et al., 2005). Through literacy coaching, teachers are able to further their knowledge base and improve their instructional practices as they work with coaches via ongoing, job-embedded professional development. While

there have been many studies focused on the impact of literacy coaching, this study examined the perceptions of the literacy coach in the Teacher Development Specialist coaching model, regarding the support needed and challenges faced by the literacy coaches.

This chapter begins with an overview of the study. Next a brief summary of the results of the study is presented followed by the findings of the six themes about coaching that emerged from the focus groups conducted. The chapter concludes with recommendations of the study and conclusions.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the implementation of the Teacher Development Specialist model and its use within the context of the school district where it is practiced. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions: (a) How does the coaching program support the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches in an urban school setting? and (b) What factors challenged the development of coaching skills for literacy coaches?

The conceptual framework that grounded this study supports the claim that literacy coaching when carried out with fidelity has a positive impact on teacher knowledge and practice with regard to instruction (Knowles et al., 1978). As discussed in depth in Chapters One and Two, research suggests the greatest variable in predicting and explaining student achievement is the influence of the teacher, along with teacher knowledge and practice (Allington, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Mosenthal et al., 2004; Nye et al., 2004; Pressley et al., 2001; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Research also indicates that teachers are more likely to adjust their practice or

implement new strategies if they have been coached, resulting in improvement of teacher

practice and student achievement (Knight, 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Showers &

Joyce, 1996)

Summary of Results

The Teacher Development Specialist coaching model encourages collaboration

between the literacy coach and the teacher much in the same way that PLC members

work collaboratively to problem solve and learn from one another. During this study, the

principal researcher met with the participants in focus groups, guided with questions in

order to answer the research questions. The audio recordings from the focus groups were

transcribed, after which the data that was generated from the focus groups were analyzed

for common themes. The common themes found are a direct representation of the

responses given by many and sometimes all of the participants when asked the targeted

questions. These emerging themes were then further divided into two distinct categories:

(a) what support coaches required in order to perform their jobs successfully; and (b)

challenges that coaches faced when doing their work that hinders their progress when

coaching teachers. The first group of emerging themes were: (a) continuous professional

development; (b) collaboration with colleagues; and (c) research into best practices.

These themes were based on the perception of what the participants felt they needed in

order to be effective coaches. The second group of emerging themes were: (a) principal

buy in; (b) teacher buy in and collaboration; and (c) time on campus. This second group

of themes were based on the perception of what the participants felt were challenges they

faced in their role as coaches and that hindered their work. This would imply that with

these three areas being addressed and present the teacher development specialists will be

well equipped to carry out their duties and be effective; also from the data generated, there were three common responses linked to challenges faced by the teacher development specialist that impeded their success. This would also imply that with these three areas of concerns being addressed and things being modified to diminish these challenges the teacher development specialist would likely be more successful in their work. Following, the six themes are explored.

Professional Development. The participants all communicated their desire and need for continuing professional development in regard to their content knowledge as well as coaching. The participants felt that their continuous professional development and their growth in both content and coaching was imperative to the work they do as they must stay on the cutting edge of what is happening with best practice, instruction, and accountability. Having these opportunities for professional development according to the participants is an essential component in being and remaining an expert in their field.

Continuous professional development is already being implemented within the Teacher Development Specialist model; however, there is always room for improvement. While there are many opportunities for teacher development specialists to participate in professional development within the school district, it is also important to recognize that there is much to be said about learning from other professional organizations or outside agencies to gain new knowledge and apply new techniques to their practice.

Collaboration with Colleagues. In addition to professional development opportunities, participants also noted their desire and need for time to collaborate with colleagues. The participants noted that they learned so much from their colleagues when given the opportunity to collaborate; they also noted that this collaboration was a way for

them to share ideas and not work in isolation in order to continue growing and learning from each other. It was mentioned in multiple instances that as teacher development specialists they have a wealth of knowledge and resources among themselves that given the opportunity to collaborate they can share with each other and work smarter.

These opportunities for collaboration among teacher development specialists is present in their work on weekly basis through their Friday meetings. This is something that would be wise to continue as the participants felt this was integral to the success of their work as well as their professional growth. While these opportunities are currently present in the Teacher Development Specialist model, it does not imply that this process could not be improved; some participants did note that they felt the time in their Friday meetings could sometimes be used more efficiently to allow for more collaboration, or for cross-curricular collaboration with other teams.

Research into Best Practices. Along with participation in professional development and collaboration with colleagues the participants shared their need for conducting research and remaining in the know with new and upcoming best practices. The participants felt that their being involved with research into developments in the field was imperative to their continuous development and professional growth. All the participants mentioned their numerous opportunities as a department to participate in book studies and research through articles as part of the work they did with their teams. They noted that this work played a big role in their professional growth and how they viewed their work and their area of expertise.

The idea of providing an opportunity for individuals and teams is not a new or novel one as it has been done before; however, it was brought up by participants and said

to be significant in their own professional development. While the participants noted that they are already participating in opportunities to research and delve deeper into their content, it goes without saying that there are always opportunities to improve the process and at the very least ensure the practice is continued as it is valued.

Principal Buy-In. One of the main challenges that was presented by the participants as something that at times hinders their work and success on campuses is that of principal buy-in. All of the participants shared how at one point they had to work with a campus leader who either was not familiar with the role of the teacher development specialist, or did not believe in the process enough to support the work on their campus. Participants experienced working on campuses where their work was stagnant due to the lack of follow through and accountability from the principal for the teachers. As was noted in the literature, follow through and accountability for teachers is one of the main factors in whether a coaching program succeeds. The role of the coach is a challenging one as they have to juggle department expectations and yet meet the needs of the campus; at times these expectations do not align and decisions have to be made as to what they are to do to continue moving the work forward. If there were a better alignment with the principals and the department expectations of the teacher development specialist, the coaching work would have a better opportunity to thrive and be successful.

Teacher Buy-in and Collaboration. In addition to principal buy-in, participants also shared the need for teacher buy-in and collaboration in their work. The participants noted that the willingness of a teacher to be coached and to buy-in to the process was essential in helping them grow. This teacher buy-in is crucial, allowing the coach to share best practices with the teacher, observe, give feedback, model, plan, etc.; when the

teacher is open and receptive to this process the relationship strengthens and teacher improvement is evident. The participants shared that as important as principal buy-in was, as mentioned above, teacher buy-in was even more imperative to the work. As such, teachers who do not buy-in and choose not to be receptive and open to the process do not improve their practice through coaching; this behavior impedes the learning of the teacher and thus the students. Teacher buy-in is a crucial component to the Teacher Development Specialist coaching model and goes hand in hand with principal buy-in. Participants shared that when there was no principal buy-in many times the teachers followed their lead and the coach struggled to work and develop the teacher.

Time on Campus. The last emerging theme that will be discussed is that of the time that is spent by the teacher development specialists on each campus. The participants shared the challenges they faced when supporting multiple campuses and what that meant for their own follow-through and coaching work with teachers. As previously noted, teacher development specialists at times work at several different campuses, and do not go to campuses on consecutive days; while this is a wonderful way for them to support more schools, it does tend to slow down the work. The participants noted that time was one of the major challenges in not following the coaching cycle with fidelity. The coaching cycle that is used in this district is research based and there is substantial evidence to support its effectiveness; however, if teacher development specialists are not following the cycle, one cannot guarantee the effectiveness of the coaching. Participants were very candid with their desire to be faithful to the model, but not one participant said they were; they shared how they do all of the components of the cycle, but not necessarily in order or in a timely fashion. The school district must

consider this approach when placing teacher development specialists and designating their time on campuses.

Recommendations

In the beginning of this study the research questions intended to guide me in investigating the supports needed and the challenges faced by teacher development specialists in the large urban district being studied. The research questions were formulated with the direct intention of ensuring all possible supports and challenges would be captured through the research and focus group questions. From those questions, six common themes were identified; professional development, collaboration with colleagues, research into best practices, principal buy-in, teacher buy-in and collaboration, and time on campus. Since these emerging themes play a vital role in the success of the teacher development specialist model, researchers are encouraged to examine the factors more closely. It is not enough to simply state that these factors are important in the work of the teacher development specialist, but it would be of great benefit to school districts to understand the influence these factors have on the model and what can be done to take this information to make improvements on the model. If there were to be additional research studies conducted in this area, the resulting information has the potential to make an already effective model and program even stronger.

Conclusions

Literacy coaching is viewed by some school districts as a luxury rather than a necessity; therefore, it is often found on the short list when making necessary budget cuts. All the while, school districts are facing increasing pressure to improve student achievement and increase test scores. Evidence is provided in this study that literacy

coaching is an effective practice, impacting both teacher knowledge and performance. However, it is important to note not all literacy coaching is created equal. It is imperative that literacy coaches own their craft and content and continue to develop and grow themselves in order to maintain their high levels of effectiveness and therefore provide evidence their work is valuable.

It is known that schools with high achieving students begin with great teachers in the classrooms. Student achievement is influenced by teachers more than any other school component (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014). As such, it is imperative to continue working to coach and develop teachers to perform at their greatest potential. Students deserve the very best and it is educators' responsibility to ensure they are being given high quality instruction from effective teachers.

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Appendix A

HISD IRB Approval Letter

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
4400 West 18th Street · Houston, Texas 77092-8501

Richard A. Carranza
Superintendent of Schools

Carla J. Stevens
Assistant Superintendent
Research and Accountability Department
Tel: 713-556-6700 • Fax: 713-556-6730

www.HoustonISD.org
www.twitter.com/HoustonISD

August 24, 2017

Ana L. Aguilar
8134 Niles St
Houston, TX 77017

Dear Ms. Aguilar,

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is pleased to approve the research study "A Case Study of Literacy Coaches in an Urban School District". The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree requirement at the University of Houston. The purpose of the study is to investigate how the coaching program supports the development of coaching skills for Teacher Development Specialists (TDS) and the factors that challenge the development of these skills in an urban school setting. The projected date of study completion is December 31, 2017.

Approval to conduct the study in HISD is contingent on your meeting the following conditions:

- The target population is six elementary school Teacher Development Specialists in HISD.
- Data collection involves a focus group interviews with six elementary school Teacher Development Specialists.
- Informed consent is required for the Teacher Development Specialists to participate in this study.
- This project does not interfere with the District's instructional/testing program.
- The researcher is responsible for data collection. A fee may be assessed if the HISD Department of Research and Accountability assists in the data collection process.
- The researcher must follow the guidelines of HISD and University of Houston regarding the protection of human subjects and confidentiality of data. The HISD signed letter of agreement must be submitted prior to initiating the program.
- While the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university/organization is responsible for oversight of the study, the HISD Department of Research and Accountability will also monitor the study to ensure compliance to ethical conduct guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) as well as the disclosure of student records outlined in Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Data will only be reported in statistical summaries that preclude the identification of the district or any school participating in the study.
- In order to eliminate potential risks to study participants, the reporting of proposed changes in research activities must be promptly submitted to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability for approval prior to implementing changes. Non-compliance with this guideline could affect the approval of future research studies in HISD.
- The final report must be submitted to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability within 30 days of completion.

Appendix B

UH IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

August 3, 2017

Ana Aguilar

alaguilar2@uh.edu

Dear Ana Aguilar:

On August 3, 2017, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	A CASE STUDY OF LITERACY COACHES IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Investigator:	Ana Aguilar
IRB ID:	STUDY00000384
Funding/ Proposed Funding:	Name: Unfunded
Award ID:	
Award Title:	
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Recruitment Letter, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Literacy Coach Case Study, Category: IRB Protocol; • ISD Department Approval, Category: Additional IRB approval letters; • Consent Document HRP-502a, Category: Consent Form; • Questions , Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);
Review Category:	Expedited
Committee Name:	Not Applicable
IRB Coordinator:	Danielle Griffin

The IRB approved the study from August 3, 2017 to August 2, 2018, inclusive.

To ensure continuous approval for studies with a review category of "Committee Review" in the above table, you must submit a continuing review with required explanations by the deadline for the July 2018 meeting. These deadlines may be found on the compliance website (http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/). You can submit a