2010

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Sara Elizabeth Miller

College of William & Mary - School of Education

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Literacy Coaching and Teachers' Instructional Practices: The Impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by

Sara Elizabeth Miller

Spring 2010
Literacy Coaching and Teachers’ Instructional Practices: The Impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model

by

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Approved April 15, 2010

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Dedication

To the teachers who have come before
and those who will come after
who understand that educating both children and adults
requires an acknowledgement
of the greatness within the learner
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Acknowledgements

There are so many individuals who have profoundly impacted my life and the completion of this study. A few I must thank directly:

- My Mom and Dad for instilling in me a love of learning and an unwavering belief in my ability to be and do whatever I set my mind to
- The many teachers I have had throughout the years who kindled my love of learning and made my parent’s belief a reality
- The professors at William and Mary who made me a better educator, writer, and thinker
- Those who helped me edit and revise this work to make the study stronger and the message clearer: Dr. Beers, Dr. Tschannen-Moran, Dr. Gareis, Joshua, Jan, and Angela
- The educators I have been blessed to work with who have inspired me to keep searching for answers so we can one day reach every child: Ed, Joshua, Marianne, and Marci—the world is a better place for kids because of you
- My colleagues in the Language Arts Department: Johanna—your vision for literacy coaching changed my career path and made this study happen...for this I will be forever grateful; Angela—without your hard work and support this study would not have been nearly as rich...you have made the coaching model better and made me a better coach
- My amazing husband who supported my work in a million tangible and intangible ways: Stephen—you make me a better person everyday
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Abstract

Literacy Coaching and Teachers’ Instructional Practices: The Impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model

The purpose of this study was to understand the effect of literacy coaching as a vehicle for professional development and growth by describing the impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model on teachers’ instructional literacy practices. Using a qualitative case study design, four questions were answered pertaining to participants’ feelings and perceptions about the coaching model, how their experience impacted their knowledge and skills about literacy as well as the instruction in their classroom, and the impact their learning had on their students. Four cohorts of teachers in two schools from a large suburban district were used to complete the study. Data were collected at the end of the coaching cycle through the use of panel interviews, individual interviews, a questionnaire, and the collection of artifacts. The analysis of these data found that most participants felt positively about working in a coaching cohort because their learning was applicable and useful, the experience was personalized to their needs, and the model fostered collaboration among their colleagues. Participants also reported numerous ways their knowledge about literacy was expanded and discussed many examples of how their classroom instruction was impacted. These teachers also discussed evidence of student learning in specific aspects of literacy. The results of this study indicate that the Community Coaching Cohort Model was an effective form of professional development for these participants because it was a clearly defined model that was delivered by highly-qualified coaches with a neutral, supportive stance toward teachers.
CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM

The state of literacy learning in American public schools reflects the paradox of education in the 21st century. Well into the standards movement, the era of scientifically-based practices, and the age of accountability, schools, teachers, and students have been under the microscope for many years with little transformation in student reading performance (Romano, 2005). As the clock ticks toward 2014, the stated goal of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—100 percent of students reading proficiently (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)—seems unattainable. Politicians, policy groups, and newspaper articles examine any slight change, for better or worse, but this increased attention and focus on educational achievement has borne little fruit, especially in the most high-risk urban areas (Chilla, Waff, & Cook, 2007; Romano, 2005).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that in 2007, “Reading skills are improving for both fourth- and eighth-graders, particularly among lower- and middle-performing students.” (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007, p. 2). While NAEP’s statement seems to contradict the scenario described above, a closer look at the data reveal that although some students are scoring higher, much more improvement is needed. The percentage of fourth graders who were reading at a basic level or above was 67 percent. This is an improvement from 62 percent in 1992, but clearly not the drastic change one would expect after fifteen years of reform. This improvement also includes accommodations for some students that were not provided in the earlier years of the assessment. In addition, the gains that
have been seen in reading scores have not significantly closed the achievement gap between Caucasians and other ethnic groups, such as African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and American Indians (Lee et al., 2007). While the achievement gap between Caucasians and other minorities has narrowed in recent years, there is still as much as a 27-point disparity in performance.

With such intense national focus on student achievement, it is difficult to accept the disheartening pace of progress in literacy learning. Although it is apparent that some improvement has been made over the past few decades, the rate of change is falling short of the government's timeline and the public's expectations. Clearly, there are many factors impacting students' ability to demonstrate adequate levels of literacy proficiency. Those within the educational field as well as the general citizenry have noted many of the confounding variables that impact student learning such as poverty, limited English proficiency, and learning disabilities (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Romano, 2005). While these student factors and others cannot be ignored, they can no longer serve to excuse minimal progress in literacy.

Significance of the Problem

Much of the heightened expectation for literacy learning has been catapulted by the NCLB legislation requiring all students, regardless of income level, first language, or special education designation, to demonstrate proficiency. However, the research community has learned a great deal about literacy development over the years and has also contributed to this movement (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). These research findings have fueled the belief that almost all students can be taught to be literate. Researchers estimate that if
appropriate practices were used with students, the illiteracy rate could be reduced to 2
to 10 percent (Moats, 1999; Walsh, Glaser, & Wilcox, 2006).

However, it seems that while much more is known about how children learn
to read and write, the gap between theory and practice has grown wider in recent
years (Moats, 1999). The International Reading Association (IRA) (2003) states,
"Only if teachers are well prepared to implement research-based practices and have
the professional knowledge and skill to alter those practices when they are not
appropriate for particular children will every child learn to read" (p. 2). Some
researchers postulate that the slow rate of improvement in student literacy learning is
due to a gap in teacher knowledge, among other factors (Moats, 1999).

If literacy experts are correct and almost all students can become literate with
the right teaching techniques, it begs the question: How can we improve teachers’
literacy instruction to meet this goal? NCLB attempted to address this issue by
creating standards for teacher proficiency. Under the law, schools are now required
to staff highly qualified teachers in every classroom (U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Postsecondary Education, 2006). This mandate has not been met in all
schools, and there are still approximately 2.5 percent of teachers who remain in the
classroom without the proper qualifications. A higher percentage of these teachers
are clustered in high-poverty school districts (U.S. Department of Education, Office
of Postsecondary Education, 2006). However, even if teachers become "highly
qualified" by obtaining a teaching license or taking certification classes, many teacher
education programs arguably have not prepared teachers to teach reading and writing
effectively.
The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) recently completed a study on what elementary teachers were learning about reading in schools of education across the country. They analyzed the course syllabi and assigned texts of 72 randomly selected college and university education programs. They found that only 15 percent of the institutions in the study taught all the components of the science of reading (Walsh et al., 2006). This conclusion was drawn from an examination of whether the syllabi referenced all the components of reading recognized by the National Reading Panel as necessary aspects of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The researchers also gave institutions credit if the assigned texts at least mentioned all the components, knowing that this fact did not guarantee that the professor would devote learning time to each aspect.

While this study sheds light on some apparent discrepancies in what our institutions of higher learning are teaching when it comes to reading instruction, it is important to recognize that, while science has helped educators understand the complex process of reading, there is not complete agreement in the field that there is a science of reading. This split in opinion can be seen in Joanne Yatvin’s minority view in the National Reading Panel’s final report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Only empirical studies were included in the National Reading Panel’s review and not all aspects of literacy could be thoroughly addressed. Yatvin suggests that due to these factors, aspects of literacy learning were disregarded, and these may be elements that professors and education schools deem
important. However, NCTQ's study does point to the disparities between education programs and the inadequate training that some teachers receive to teach reading.

Another issue with teacher preparation documented in the literature is the amount of coursework in reading required for elementary teachers to be certified. While Walsh et al. (2006) found that some institutions in their study required up to four reading courses, Moats (1999) reported that many teachers only took one reading course in their undergraduate teaching program. Additionally, only 29 states require specific reading courses for teachers to be certified, and most states do not delineate what content should be taught in these classes (Walsh et al., 2006). This variability in teacher preparation is working against the national objectives of increasing the qualifications of teachers and closing the achievement gap for all students (International Reading Association, 2003). While professional organizations, such as the IRA, have not made specific recommendations about the number of courses that teachers should receive in preparation programs, they have outlined the knowledge, dispositions, and understanding about reading that all teachers should acquire from their education program. By any measure, these objectives would be difficult to cover thoroughly in three credit hours.

This inconsistent and inadequate preparation has left many practicing teachers as well as newly-trained teachers without the knowledge base that is needed to effectively teach all students to be literate. Quatroche, Bean, and Hamilton (2001) state that in the realm of reading "the literature seems clear that instruction, to be effective, must be delivered by well-prepared professionals" (p. 292). While the issue of improving teacher preparation is a pressing one, there are over 3.2 million teachers...
currently practicing in the field who have had varying degrees of training to effectively teach students to become competent readers and writers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2006). As teachers struggle to help their students meet the increasing standards of NCLB, states, districts, and schools are desperately looking for ways to increase the knowledge base of teachers regarding best literacy practices (Moran, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

As the stakes have increased for student learning, many school systems have hired literacy coaches to support the work of the classroom teacher (Hall, 2004; Moran, 2007; Toll, 2005). The role of the literacy coach is to improve teachers’ instructional practices and, in turn, help students make greater gains on measures of literacy proficiency. Although there is little conclusive research on the effectiveness of literacy coaching, its use has expanded nationwide as a means of promoting teacher learning (Marsh et al., 2008; Moran, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Of the research that has been done on literacy coaching, most has been completed in the past ten years. Investigators have addressed issues such as the qualifications for coaching (Frost & Bean, 2006; Roller, 2005), the way coaches spend their time and the tasks they complete (Deussen et al., 2007; Dole et al., 2006; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008), and how teachers respond to coaching initiatives, in terms of the impact on instructional practices and student learning (Garet et al., 2008; Marsh et al., 2008; Schwartz, McCarthy, Gould, Politziner, & Enyeart, 2003). Additionally, a number of states and local districts have completed evaluative reports and published texts on the impact of their literacy initiatives, which included the use
of coaching (Brown et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2007; Moran, 2007; Moscovitch, 2006; Moxley & Taylor, 2006; Neufeld, Roper, & Baldassari, 2003; Rosemary, Roskos, & Landreth, 2007; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; University of Arkansas at Little Rock, n.d.).

While these studies have begun the task of documenting the impact of literacy coaching in education, many questions remain. Even though the research base for literacy coaching does not yet show conclusive evidence about the effects of coaching on teaching and learning, supporters of the coaching movement have turned to the professional development literature for support of this practice. Because the purpose of literacy coaching is so closely aligned to the goal of professional development, to increase teachers' knowledge about instructional practices, coaching has been considered a form of professional development (Dole, 2004; Easton, 2008; Frost & Bean, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This has led proponents to argue that, while the research base for coaching is in the initial stages, its use is clearly grounded in the research on effective professional development (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007; Russo, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2003).

The purpose of this study was to describe the effect of literacy coaching as a vehicle for professional development and growth. While there are many coaching models used throughout the country, this study observed the impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model (CCCM) on the instructional practices of elementary teachers (see Appendix A). This model was selected because it utilizes the effective elements of professional development research as well as the common elements of coaching. CCCM was also designed to circumvent some of the prevalent
issues of coaching such as the lack of a clear job description, the difficulty in reaching teachers quickly, and the length of time typically required to build trust between teachers and a coach. To describe the effects of CCCM, this study aimed to address how the coaching model influenced teacher perceptions and feelings about professional development, what teachers learned as a result of participating in a coaching cohort, and how it changed teaching and learning in participants' classrooms. The logic model below describes how the use of the CCCM was used to observe the desired student and teacher outcomes of literacy coaching. This study adds to the growing research on coaching, addressing the need for more conclusive findings on the use of literacy coaching as a means for professional development.

Figure 1

*Logic Model- CCCM*
Research Questions

In this study on the impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model to improve teachers' instructional literacy practices, a number of questions were addressed. Namely:

1. What are participants' perceptions and feelings about using this literacy coaching model as a vehicle for professional development?

2. How does this literacy coaching model influence participants' perceived gains in knowledge and skills about literacy?

3. How are participants implementing what they learn in the literacy coaching model within their classroom instruction?

4. What do participants observe with regard to student learning as a result of participating in this literacy coaching model?

Definition of Terms

In this study on the impact of literacy coaching on teachers' instructional practices, many terms are used to describe previous research and the proposed study. Some of these terms are defined below:

**Literacy coaching**—the act of collaborating with teachers about their instructional literacy practices with the goal of teacher growth and improvement in student learning (Toll, 2006; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). This includes supporting teachers as they implement new literacy practices, shift their knowledge and understanding, and address issues surrounding student learning (Buly, Coskie, Robinson, & Egawa, 2006; International Reading Association, 2004).
Coaching—the relationship between educational professionals who are learning together. Deussen et al. (2007) define this relationship as occurring when “a more knowledgeable professional works closely with another professional to increase productivity or meet some predetermined outcome” (p. 5).

Literacy—the ability to adequately read, write, and communicate within a given language system.

Professional development—increasing teachers’ knowledge about effective instruction through opportunities to actively learn new skills based on research theory (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). These opportunities help teachers become more aware of their practices and capable of adapting instructional strategies to benefit student learning (Joyce & Showers, 1980). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) defines this process as “a comprehensive, substantiated, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (2009, Definition of Professional Development section, ¶ 3).

Research Limitations

The data collected in this research study, documented teachers’ perceptions of literacy coaching as a means for professional development. While there are many formats and models for coaching, this study only addressed the impact of the CCCM. Additionally, the study was limited to teachers’ self reports about their feelings, beliefs, and perceptions. The accuracy of the data collected was contingent upon teachers honestly sharing with the researcher. The study was further delimited to a sample from a suburban district outside a southern city. While the demographics of
the schools and the teachers involved in the study are provided, the conclusions of this study are generalizable only to this sample.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The need to impact teachers’ literacy instruction and the pressure to make significant increases in student literacy achievement has created a demand for literacy coaching in schools across the country (Deussen et al., 2007; Hall, 2004; Russo, 2004). As No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation requires a higher percentage of students to be reading proficiently on state tests, literacy coaching has expanded exponentially as a solution for improving teachers’ understanding of literacy instruction, since the law was authorized in 2001 (Moxley & Taylor, 2006). While coaching is not a new concept in education, it is a relatively new innovation in the field of reading; hence, there is some inconsistency in the literature on the definition of literacy coaching (Dole et al., 2006). For the purpose of this review, literacy coaching is defined as the act of collaborating with teachers about their instructional literacy practices with the goal of improving student learning. A literacy coach is synonymous with other terms such as reading coach and literacy specialist, when the focus of these jobs is the development of teachers through professional growth opportunities.

There is a distinction, however, between literacy coaching and the traditional concept of mentoring. While these terms overlap in many ways, literacy coaching is for all teachers, veteran and novice. Mentoring, on the other hand, has traditionally been used to define the relationship between an experienced teacher who is guiding the transition of a new teacher into the education profession (Poglinco et al., 2003).
The difference between the two roles can be described by how learning takes place.
In a mentoring relationship a teacher is learning from an experienced teacher and in a coaching relationship a teacher is learning with an experienced teacher (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits, & Kenter, 2001). However, not all references to mentoring distinguish the concept in this way, as some mentors may function more within the definition of a coach.

Regardless of the specific terms used, literacy coaching’s focus on helping all teachers learn reflects the paradigm shift that has occurred in the field. Ball and Cohen (1999) foreshadowed the state of education today by saying that, “A great deal of learning would be required for most teachers to be able to do the kind of teaching and produce the kind of student learning that reformers envision, for none of it is simple.” (p. 4). The National Center for Educational Statistics’ report on improving teaching cites the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future as stating:

After a decade of reform, we have finally learned in hindsight what should have been clear from the start: most schools and teachers cannot produce the kind of learning demanded by the new reforms, not because they do not want to, but because they do not know how, and the systems in which they work do not support them in doing so. (Choy & Chen, 1998, p. 3)

As this era of reform continues, it is imperative that all teachers see themselves as continual learners if all students are to become literate. Teaching, even at the elementary level, can no longer be seen as a common sense activity that one is prepared for in college and can successfully engage in for a lifetime without continual learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Easton,
Because helping all teachers learn more about literacy instruction is such as massive task, literacy coaching, while costly, has become a popular method of engaging teachers in opportunities to foster literacy learning (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007).

Many national and state initiatives aimed at improving students’ literacy proficiency have instigated the proliferation of literacy coaching in schools (International Reading Association, 2004). The Reading Excellence Act (REA) of 1998 set the stage for the widespread use of coaching, as it allowed participating schools to use federal money for reading coaches (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007). REA was aimed at teaching every child to read by third grade through scientifically-based reading instruction and early intervention for struggling readers. Even though REA-funded coaches often provided remediation for students as well as support for teachers, it was an important first step in the promotion of literacy coaching as a means of professional development for teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007). More recently, the Reading First provision of NCLB directly recommended the use of literacy coaching as a part of the professional development plan for struggling schools (Deussen et al., 2007). In states that receive Reading First funding, low-performing schools are awarded grants to help improve the reading performance of primary students. Reading First schools are required to devote significant time to the professional development of teachers, including the use of literacy coaches. This initiative has directly led to the hiring of over 5,200 coaches (Deussen et al., 2007). It has also prompted some districts with Reading First schools to expand their literacy coaching initiatives to other non-Reading First schools.
In addition to federal programs suggesting the use of literacy coaches, some states such as Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, and Arkansas have developed reading initiatives that promote the use of coaches to support and improve literacy instruction (Moran, 2007). Each of these initiatives is designed to increase student achievement by providing traditional professional development opportunities for teachers, intervention for students who are struggling with reading, and hiring literacy coaches to provide on-the-job support. Alabama, South Carolina, and Arkansas target school reform at the primary level to ensure appropriate literacy skills are in place by third grade (Moran, 2007; Moscovitch, 2006; University of Arkansas at Little Rock, n.d.). Other states such as Florida have broader programs, which address literacy proficiency across all grade levels and provide funding for full-time, sited based reading coaches in elementary, middle, and high schools (Marsh et al., 2008; Moxley & Taylor, 2006).

At the local level, school systems across the country have invested time, resources, and personnel into literacy coaching initiatives. Districts such as Boston Public Schools have spent as much as seven million dollars per year to support their coaching program, placing a coach in almost every school at least part-time with some schools having a full-time coach (Richardson, 2004). Other larger city school systems like New York, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, and Philadelphia have funded literacy coaching projects as well (National Council of Teachers of English, n.d.; Toll, 2005). Coaches in New York City work with small groups of teachers and set up demonstration classrooms for teachers to observe lessons (Russo, 2004). Dallas Public Schools began using literacy coaches to help improve instruction in the lowest-
performing schools in the late 1990s and expanded the program to almost 200 coaches in multiple content areas, costing approximately 14 million dollars in 2007 (Keller, 2007; Russo, 2004).

But investments in coaching do not end with large, urban districts. County systems have also embraced coaching and have expanded their coaching programs throughout their schools. Lake County Public Schools in Florida developed a comprehensive literacy plan, which recommended that a literacy coach position be created in each elementary school to impact literacy instruction and student learning (Moxley & Taylor, 2006). Waterloo Community Schools in Iowa piloted reading coaches in the lowest performing schools from 2001-2005 and then, due to the success of the model, expanded their coaching program to all K-8 schools (Sandvold & Baxter, 2008).

These are just a few examples of the numerous national, state, and local literacy coaching initiatives that have begun over the past decade. While these initiatives vary greatly, they all focus on teachers’ literacy instruction and students’ literacy learning. The pervasiveness of these initiatives throughout the country, illuminate the reach that literacy coaching has had in education in recent years (Buly et al., 2006; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007); however, there is limited research on the effectiveness of literacy coaching as a tool to improve literacy learning (Deussen et al., 2007; Dole, 2004). Despite inconclusive research, this practice has flourished because many believe that “coaching holds promise as a tool to increase teachers’ content knowledge” (Moran, 2007, p. 3). The driving assumption behind the literacy coaching movement is that it will lead to expert teaching, which will result in
improved student achievement (International Reading Association, 2004; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008).

While there may be only scarce amounts of research directly linking the work of a literacy coach to improved student achievement, there is a growing body of evidence that supports the first part of the equation, that coaching can lead to expert teaching (Marsh et al., 2008; Poglinco et al., 2003; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996). This review of the literature will analyze the rationale behind this connection by documenting how literacy coaching:

• facilitates teacher learning,
• develops a professional community,
• and builds a knowledge base about literacy.

First, looking broadly at the research, this analysis will discuss why literacy coaching is being touted as a viable form of professional development. Then the issues surrounding how coaching has evolved in education will be addressed as well as the research that sustained and propelled the movement into literacy. Finally, a synthesis of the common elements of literacy coaching models will be presented along with initial findings about the models' impact on teacher learning and instructional practices. Findings suggesting a connection between coaching and student achievement will also be discussed.

Facilitating Teacher Learning

In recent years, an increased focus has been placed on facilitating teacher learning, not just student learning. Experts in the field argue that changes in education are putting an increased focus on the need for continuous teacher learning
(Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993). Sykes (1999) states that “policymakers are aware that to effect significant changes in student academic learning will require substantial learning by teachers” (p. 152). This emphasis on teacher learning is imperative because the kind of teaching needed to meet the demands of reform efforts require teachers to select and modify instructional strategies flexibly to meet the needs of their students. Teachers must reflect, question, and contribute to the broader challenges of educational reform (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993).

This change in teacher expectation reflects the sharp differences in the field from earlier decades when education was based on an industrial model (Richardson, 1998). In this period, teachers were required to implement a set of tasks in the classroom, but now teachers need “an orientation that suggests that constant reflection, evaluation, and experimentation are integral elements of the teaching role” (Richardson, 1998, p. 3). These changes in teachers’ responsibilities have led to a paradigm shift in professional development, requiring new structures be put in place to help teachers grow in this way.

The shift in professional development can be seen in the terms used to describe these activities. As is evidenced in the titles of published writing on the topic, prior to the 1980s teachers were “trained” for certain aspects of their work. The pervasive use of this word often aligned with the philosophy of the experience as teachers were given information about what they needed to know and do with their students (Easton, 2008). In the 1980s the terms began to shift from “inservice training” and then to “staff development.” In the 1990s, the term again changed to
“professional development” which is still the most common term used today. However, some within the field are pushing for yet another shift to describe the desired outcome of the process more accurately. Terms such as “professional learning” and “professional study” are becoming increasingly common as they more directly imply the need for teachers to be actively involved in constructing new knowledge (Easton, 2008; Robb, 2000; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Because professional development is still the most commonly understood term in the field, it will be used for the purpose of this review with the understanding that professional development encompasses opportunities for teachers to learn and grow to increase their effectiveness with students.

**Traditional Models of Professional Development**

Over the past 50 years, there has been a great deal of study about the types of professional development that improve teaching and learning (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Little, 1993; Richardson, 2003; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987). Much of what has been revealed about teacher learning is not reflected in traditional forms of professional development (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Lieberman, 1995; Tate, 2004). Researchers such as Guskey (1986) state that “nearly every major work on the topic of staff development has emphasized the failings of these efforts” (p. 5). More recently the National Staff Development Council released a technical report on the state of teacher development in the United States and abroad. The authors state:

Our review of the literature on high quality professional development and our analysis of the current status of teacher professional development in the United States reveal that U.S. public schools have a long way to go in terms of
practicing what are known to be effective designs for powerful professional learning. (Wei et al., 2009, p. 59)

Even though these sentiments are reiterated time and again in the literature, this model for professional development prevails in school districts across the country (Richardson, 2003).

Traditional models of professional development usually contain many of the same elements. They are often defined as one-day trainings that are led by an outside expert with minimal opportunities for follow-up support and continued learning. This model is otherwise known as the short-term transition or the training model (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Richardson, 2003). While this model is not inherently ineffective, the finite nature of this form of professional development and the one-size-fits-all presentations are often disconnected from school or classroom initiatives and designed without input from participants (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Robb, 2000). This often leaves a disconnection between what the participants need and what the presenter delivers (Lieberman, 1995).

The combination of these elements leads to one of the greatest problems noted about traditional forms of professional development: a lack of implementation. Fullan and Pomfret (1977) define implementation as “the actual use of an innovation or what an innovation consists of in practice” (p. 336). In reviewing 13 case studies on implementation in the field of education, they found that for change to occur, professional development needed to involve extensive personal support (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). This support could take many forms, but required continuous contact between facilitators and teachers throughout the implementation of a new innovation.
Joyce and Showers (1982) noted similar findings in their work with teachers within various professional development settings and concluded that the traditional training model contained a massive flaw in implementation because there was very little transfer to classroom practices. They stated:

Unfortunately, the development of skill by itself does not ensure transfer, relatively few teachers, having obtained skill in a new approach, will then transfer that skill into their active repertoire and use the new approach regularly and sensibly unless they receive additional information. (p. 5)

Many other researchers and educational leaders have also argued that conventional professional development opportunities may expose teachers to new knowledge, but these experiences alone often do not impact classroom instruction (Knight, 2006; Robb, 2000). Some have estimated that only 15 percent of teachers implement new ideas learned in traditional professional development models (Richardson, 1998). Additionally, even if teachers implement new learning from professional development opportunities, researchers such as Stallings and Krasavage, as cited in Richardson (1998), have found that teachers implemented new learning much less often two-three years after they were trained.

Part of the reason for this divide is that the concept of implementation, or transfer, requires professional development experiences to help teachers obtain new skills, but then also requires further growth opportunities to help teachers learn how to apply these skills in appropriate ways within the classroom. The ability to transfer new ideas requires extensive and continual teacher learning within the classroom over time (Joyce & Showers, 1981). Hence, the more teachers know and have had a
chance to experiment with an innovation, the higher the degree of implementation (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). However, these further opportunities are often not part of the traditional model of professional development (Wei et al., 2009).

**Elements of Effective Professional Development**

The limitations of the traditional model of professional development as well as increased standards for student learning have led researchers in the field to form a new consensus on what aspects of professional development will foster teacher learning (Choy & Chen, 1998; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000). Not all researchers agree about the forms that professional development should take, but there are a number of elements that researchers have found facilitate teacher learning (Choy & Chen, 1998). While these elements are well documented, it is important to note that there is not a great deal of conclusive evidence on the extent that each element has on teacher learning and student achievement (Porter et al., 2000).

What is known about the aspects of effective professional development will be presented within five broad categories or descriptors: ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based. When these elements are discussed collectively, it becomes clear that a new framework is needed within the educational system to find ways for teachers to continue learning about literacy instruction. This framework will not only look and feel different from the traditional training model, but its intended outcome will be different as well. Although the end goal of all professional development is teacher learning as a means to student learning, the purpose of reform models of professional development is not to have teachers merely
implement specific procedures, but to create a new ecology where teachers take risks and experiment with their craft (Richardson, 1998).

Legislators recognized the need in the field for new models of professional development and began to address the importance of this issue when they crafted NCLB, including specific information about professional development opportunities within portions of the law (Garet et al., 2008). This is not the first federal initiative to fund professional development; however, the extensive monetary commitment to professional development in NCLB shows the importance placed on increasing opportunities for teacher learning. For instance, the Title II component of NCLB has provided over $500 million per year to states and districts to fund professional development activities (Garet et al., 2008). This initiative in combination with other federal, state, and local efforts has brought attention to the research on professional development’s impact on teacher learning. The elements of effective professional development that have been highlighted in this research will be addressed in isolation and within integrated study examples to show why each element has become a vital component in teacher learning as well as to show different ways that the elements can be combined.

**Ongoing.** In order to help teachers apply new knowledge and transfer learning, professional development must go beyond the traditional one-shot trainings that have permeated the educational system (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Professional development that is ongoing provides continuous support through numerous avenues to assist teachers as they incorporate new ideas into their work. This follow-up allows teachers’ learning to extend beyond the knowledge and ideas presented in a
workshop or inservice format and it gives teachers feedback as they implement new strategies into their practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1981). This ongoing aspect of effective professional development is included in the National Staff Development Council’s (NSDC) standards. NSDC standards (2001) state that effective staff development “requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement” (p. 1). Because teachers’ needs are different, it is important that the sustained support that leaders provide be varied to offer a range of options (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). The expectations are that teachers will be continuously learning and that school leaders will offer ongoing and differentiated professional development opportunities (Lieberman, 1995).

One of most pressing reasons for ongoing professional development is the research suggesting that significant change in teacher practices takes time, approximately three to five years (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Additionally, in order to promote successful implementation to the classroom, Hawley and Valli (1999) note that continuous support over the first two years is imperative. Guskey (1986) discusses some of the reasons for the extended time needed for teacher learning by synthesizing the research on the process of teacher change and its impact on professional development. He theorizes that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about teaching usually change only after improvement in student learning outcomes can be observed. Building on other studies of this model of teacher change, Guskey selected 117 teacher volunteers from two metropolitan school districts. Of the 117 teachers, 52 teachers received training in the use of a research-based instructional strategy. The other teachers were used as the control group. The teachers were then compared
using a pretest and a posttest on their change in beliefs and attitudes. Teachers who saw evidence of the instructional strategy improving student performance changed their attitude about teaching and took greater responsibility for student learning. Hence, Guskey found that many teachers will change their behavior after new learning, but this will not translate into sustained change until student learning improves.

Although this study has a limited generalizability due to the lack of random sampling and small subgroups, it confirms what previous studies have suggested about teacher change. If Guskey and other researchers are correct, many teachers will be unconvinced about the possibilities of a new initiative after only one professional development opportunity; therefore, continual learning situations are warranted.

Other researchers such as Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) have also found that continuous professional development is important for teachers' instruction. The 1,027 mathematics and science teachers surveyed in a nationally representative sample indicated that continuous professional development including a significant number of hours is more effective than short, one-time learning opportunities. Although teachers reported that this aspect of professional development did not have the greatest impact on their instructional practice, the time span and the contact hours of professional development did influence their learning (Garet et al., 2001).

Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) reviewed nine studies on how teacher professional development impacts student achievement. They concluded that teachers who received extended hours of professional development were able to
affect student achievement significantly in multiple content areas. The teachers in the studies that were reviewed received an average of 49 hours of professional development that combined both traditional forms of professional development and follow-up support. Researchers also found that professional development opportunities that lasted less than 14 hours showed no statistically significant effects on student achievement.

**Job-embedded.** As discussed above, one of the fallacies of the traditional professional development model is the disconnection between what teachers need and what is presented in one-day inservice trainings. Because these trainings are often designed similarly for all participants, regardless of the group’s needs, they have a limited effect on long-term change in teacher learning. In order for professional development opportunities to be connected to teachers’ work experiences and the context of their practice, they need to be job-embedded (Easton, 2008; Little, 1993). Professional development that is job-embedded is in clear alignment to district and school goals and provides coherence between teachers’ current practices and new learning. NSDC (2001) discusses the need for goal alignment in their standards noting that staff development should provide teachers the opportunity to be part of a community with goals that are tied to the school and district.

These qualities of professional development experiences require that teacher learning take place in the work setting, over a period of time. Although some professional development experiences may be held outside of the workplace, follow-up activities need to be school-based (Easton, 2008; Hawley & Valli, 1999). One of the prime reasons that researchers support the use of job-embedded professional
development is to improve the transfer of teacher learning to the classroom (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Richardson, 1998). This type of professional development allows teachers to become personally invested in learning because it is directly tied to their work environment and the students that they serve. Job-embedded professional development centers on authentic issues and valid problems that relate to identified school issues (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Joyce and Showers' (1980) analysis of over 200 studies on the effectiveness of certain components of professional development led them to conclude that teachers learned new skills and strategies when they were provided opportunities for modeling, practice, or feedback. These opportunities correlate with the first element of professional development, providing ongoing support, but also align with the concept of job-embedded experiences. After a presentation of theory, or the basis for a new approach to teaching, Joyce and Showers found that professional development needed to include sustained professional development at the school level, often within the classroom setting. The studies that demonstrated the greatest levels of transfer to the classroom included a combination of the previous components (Joyce & Showers, 1980). In this review, transfer was defined as the highest level of impact, or the evidence of application and problem solving, with the previous levels being awareness, concepts and organized knowledge, and principles and skills. While the issue of transfer was usually not directly measured in the studies reviewed by Joyce and Showers, hypotheses were developed about possible transfer based on the results of the impact on teacher behavior.
Teachers surveyed in the previously mentioned study by Garet et al. (2001) agree with the conclusions of the research base on job-embedded learning. These researchers found that of all the features measured in the study, the two that have the greatest impact on teachers' learning and instructional practices are coherence and content knowledge, .42 and .33 respectively. The study indicates professional development that is integrated into the context of teaching and tied to content that teachers are responsible for covering is more likely to increase teacher learning.

**Collaborative.** Researchers have gone to great lengths in the professional development literature to explain thoroughly the need for teachers to be involved in their learning. The aspect of collaboration is discussed using many terms, such as collective participation, collegial support, and problem solving (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Lieberman, 1995; Valencia & Killion, 1988). These terms all imply some sort of teacher involvement in the process of professional development. Collaborative professional development provides teachers with input into what is to be learned, an active role in the engagement of ideas, and a network of colleagues to both challenge and support their thinking (Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993). This form of professional development stands in stark contrast with the traditional model described above. Reform models require that professional development activities no longer be solely top-down mandates; teachers need to be involved in the learning process, not merely recipients of knowledge from a presenter (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Easton, 2008).

Part of the widespread support of this element of professional development is that active, collaborative learning does not just improve teacher buy-in or investment,
but also impacts implementation. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) explain that collaborative professional development helps teachers move from a basic understanding of theory to a working knowledge of how to use that understanding in practice. The engagement in learning and the support of peers in collaborate settings appears to impact the degree to which professional development affects classroom instruction (Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O’Connell, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2003). NSDC (2001) standards also speak to the importance of collaboration within their context and process standards. They found that effective staff development uses resources to support collaboration and prepares teachers with the knowledge and skills to collaborate effectively within group settings (National Staff Development Council, 2001). The rationale for the inclusion of collaboration, in part, is that, “Organized groups provide the social interaction that often deepens learning and the interpersonal support and synergy necessary for creatively solving the complex problems of teaching and learning” (National Staff Development Council, 2001, Collaboration Skills section, ¶ 2). 

The National Center for Education Statistics' report on the data from the 1993-1994 Schools and Staffing Survey discusses the impact of professional development on teaching practices. The report describes the professional development practices of the mid-1990s by examining what teachers were learning, who was participating, what support they received from their schools, and what impact the experiences had. While teachers in this survey had generally positive views about the professional development experiences they had during the year, the authors note that participation and engagement was a factor (Choy & Chen, 1998).
The researchers found that the higher the intensity of teacher participation in professional development, the more likely teachers felt that it had an impact on their learning. They also saw an association in the survey results between teacher participation in professional development and the topics that were discussed. The more relevant and effective the topic was, the more teachers participated (Choy & Chen, 1998). Similar findings were demonstrated in Garet et al.’s study on effective components of professional development. These researchers also saw a connection between collaboration and active learning. Teachers’ ability to collectively participate in professional development led to more active engagement, which had an effect on teachers’ learning (Garet et al., 2001).

**Reflective.** For professional development to provoke deeper levels of learning, it must provide teachers with opportunities “to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 597). Reflection is an important element in teacher growth, partly because it is a critical way to involve teachers in the learning process (Lieberman, 1995). Ball and Cohen (1999) refer to this element of professional development as the “investigation of practice” because it allows teachers the freedom to engage with new ideas, analyze how they can be implemented, and reflect on the results. However, creating the environment for reflective learning requires different approaches to and settings for professional development. This type of learning expands the definition of how teachers can develop professionally, not just by hearing about new ideas, but by implementing them and reflecting on those actions (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).
Other researchers have echoed these sentiments through their work with teachers and schools, noting the importance of reflective thought that leads to self-evaluation and informed positions (Little, 1993; Robb, 2000).

A recent push in schools, reinforcing the view that reflection is important to teacher learning, is the emphasis on data collection and analysis (Easton, 2008). Many schools require teacher teams to meet regularly to look at records of student performance and use the data to drive reflective decision-making. This type of analysis has traditionally been outside the realm of teacher responsibility with a district representative or administrator analyzing the data and then presenting it to teachers. By encouraging teachers to reflect on student performance collectively, these opportunities become examples of effective professional development experiences. NSDC (2001) addresses this issue by including a standard for staff development, which directly requires the use of “disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement” (p.1). These reflections on data can then prompt new avenues for learning and help teachers establish areas in which to build their knowledge base.

Some researchers have attempted to create professional development models around the concept of teacher reflection. One example is a program created by Richardson and Anders in which they met with teachers both in groups and as individuals to help them explore their practice (Richardson, 1998). Through videotaping participating teachers as they instructed students in the classroom, the researchers were then able to engage teachers in discussions about their work. These conversations led teachers to determine what aspects of their instruction they would
like to change or learn more about. After working with teachers for three years using this model, the project was evaluated and students in the participating teachers’ classes were found to have made greater gains in certain aspects of reading comprehension (Richardson, 1998). A follow-up study also verified that teachers continued, up to two years later, to reflect on their practices and make changes to improve their teaching.

Inquiry-based. The element of inquiry is closely tied to that of reflection, as well as the other elements discussed above, leading some to label inquiry as an approach or model that utilizes all the characteristics of effective professional development (Richardson, 2003). While a valid argument can be made for using inquiry in this way, for the purpose of this review it will be individually discussed as an element of professional development because it is most commonly referred to in this manner within the literature (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993). Inquiry is deemed to be an important element because it cultivates a questioning disposition in teachers, causing them to look continually for more than one way to understand or solve a problem (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Little, 1993). This self-directed approach allows teachers to reflect on their personal beliefs and their practice to discover ways they need to improve (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993). Rosemary et al. (2007) state that one of the critical components of professional development must be “an inquiry approach to professional learning that engages processes of analysis, giving and receiving constructive feedback, and reflection” (pp.141-142). They argue
that this requires relationship building among colleagues, but creates an environment for teachers to learn and grow.

Creating a culture of inquiry can be a challenging task, but many have found it to be worthwhile (Richardson, 2003; Rosemary et al., 2007; Schwartz et al., 2003). Richardson (2003) documented that participants have changed their practices, but also their beliefs and understandings about teaching and learning, after participating in inquiry groups. She also found that this learning extended to the students of the teachers in the study, who made gains in their reading achievement. Another study done on the impact of inquiry in professional development attempted to ascertain what type of activities fostered questions that caused teachers to reconsider their beliefs and practices (Crockett, 2002). The four teachers in the group were all volunteers who wanted to improve their mathematics instruction and agreed to meet once a week for approximately 90 minutes. After following the group for one year, Crockett found that assessing student work had the greatest impact on teachers’ thinking about mathematics, in comparison to discussing open-ended problems, watching a video vignette, or planning a lesson collectively, although these activities did have value. While this study is not generalizable to the greater population due to the small sample size, it does demonstrate the impact of inquiry-based discussions on teachers.

In addition to the findings mentioned above, three studies demonstrate ways that all five of the elements of effective professional development can be used to foster learning scenarios for teachers. These studies investigated different aspects of professional development while incorporating all the elements in unique ways. The
first study looked at the effectiveness of different types of professional development activities by measuring how the trainings on effective-use-of-time changed teacher behavior (Sparks, 1986). The sample included 19 middle school teachers from various content areas teaching at one of seven socio-economically similar schools. Teachers were placed into three groups based on school location. Group 1 received workshops only, Group 2 received workshops plus peer observation, and Group 3 received workshops plus coach observation. The researcher used pre and post observations as well as questionnaires and interviews to assess behavior change and attitudes about effectively interacting with students during instruction.

Using a scatterplot to demonstrate the criterion level of 70 percent on academic interactions between teacher and student, Sparks observed that the peer observation group showed the greatest number of teachers making improvement. In both the workshop only group and the coach observation group, a few teachers changed their behaviors but a few did not. Although this was not a true experiment, the author theorized why the peer observation group showed the greatest gains by discussing many of the elements mentioned above. First, the peer observation group had an opportunity to collaborate with peers on a regular basis within the context of their classrooms. After observing each other, they provided feedback and discussed new ways to engage students. The researcher observed that through this analysis and reflection, the group began to show a sense of trust and comradery that seemed to further their learning. In comparison, Group 1 attended only workshop training together and were not provided time to learn from each other. Group 3 did receive
feedback from a coach, but they were not provided time to observe other teachers or
time to collaborate with peers.

The second study was designed to overcome some of the obstacles to teacher
change presented in traditional professional development (Valencia & Killion, 1988).
After identifying a need in a district’s middle school remedial classes, a program was
designed to address this need using effective methods of professional development.
Of the six middle schools in the district, four added an additional class period for
remedial students while the two other schools, out of necessity, were the control
groups. In order to implement the curriculum modifications, the district offered 30-
hours of professional development to teachers at the four schools. The workshops
were designed so that teachers worked in groups during each session, had
opportunities to reflect and share with colleagues, and engaged in inquiry tasks to
solve problems relating to their instruction. The instructors also offered coaching to
the teachers by providing demonstrations, observations, consultation, and peer
observations. This collective professional development experience lasted from
September until February of the next year.

Looking at both qualitative and quantitative data, researchers documented
student growth in the remedial classes as well as teacher growth. Students were
randomly selected from both the experimental and control groups for analysis. Using
pre and post testing on reading and writing measures, it was determined that students
in the new remedial program made significantly greater gains in writing, and small,
but insignificant gains in reading. The researchers theorized that students’ strong
growth in writing was due to a greater emphasis on the subject in the workshops.
Data were also collected from the teachers, which indicated that they felt they had learned a great deal about effective writing instruction and gained some understanding about the connection between reading and writing. The teachers also reported that the workshop formats had a great deal of value in that they allowed them to network with colleagues.

The third study had a similar focus as the previous two in that it addressed how professional development affects classroom teaching practices (Porter et al., 2000). However, this study was done on a national scale and used longitudinal data on about 300 teachers throughout the country. The teachers included in the study were science or mathematics teachers in 30 elementary, middle, and high schools who participated in the study from 1996-1999. Teachers were surveyed three times, once each school year. This design was used so that researchers could document teaching practices before and after engaging in professional development activities as well as examine what changes in teaching practices could be credited to the professional development activities. Among their many findings, researchers documented that professional development, which focuses on higher-order teaching strategies, was most effective. Teachers reported that if they were learning about these strategies in a reform type activity instead of a traditional inservice model, they learned even more. These findings were coupled with the teachers' report that they are more likely to change when they have opportunities for active learning, collaboration with other teachers, and see coherence between what is being taught and their personal goals.
Literacy Coaching and Professional Development

Even though the research on literacy coaching is in the initial stages, proponents of the practice have supported coaching's effectiveness by drawing from the research base on teacher learning. Advocates for coaching have claimed that it is clearly grounded in the elements of effective professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1983; Russo, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). These elements, described above, frame the practice of literacy coaching in an effort to facilitate teacher learning and improve literacy instruction.

The most obvious of these connections is in the first two elements: ongoing and job-embedded. Because coaches work with teachers in their classrooms on a continual basis, they can provide follow-up for teachers within the context of practice. In this regard, literacy coaches are closely tied to teachers' experiences and can more easily connect school goals with teacher goals, providing coherence between initiatives (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005). Literacy coaches also serve as a mediator for effective implementation, providing teachers feedback and support as they try new techniques or address issues in literacy instruction (Brown et al., 2007; National Council of Teachers of English, n.d.).

Additionally, literacy coaching is often used as a vehicle to promote collaboration between teacher teams (Neufeld et al., 2003). By engaging teachers in study groups, coplanning opportunities, and peer observations, literacy coaches attempt to develop a culture of collaboration (Moran, 2007). Teaching has traditionally been practiced as an isolated, solitary activity with teachers only having brief amounts of time to discuss collaboratively. Coaching helps break this tradition.
of isolation by helping teachers begin to learn from and with other colleagues (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Ideally, the literacy coach is developing generative coaching practices within a school so that eventually teachers collaborate about their learning with or without a coach present (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Richardson, 2004; Robb, 2000).

The elements of reflection and inquiry are also encouraged and facilitated through literacy coaching. These elements work in tandem, within an on-going and job-embedded framework for professional development, to expand and deepen teachers’ knowledge through collaborative discussion (Little, 1993; Rosemary et al., 2007). Literacy coaching has capitalized on this element of professional development by incorporating teacher reflection within many aspects of the coaching relationship (Hasbrouck et al., 2005; Toll, 2006; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008). Coaches can reflect with teachers in a post-observation conference after a demonstration lesson (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Richardson, 2004). They can also encourage reflection when planning with a team or addressing the learning issues of a student (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007; Moran, 2007). Using inquiry-based discussion groups, coaches can promote reflective thinking that is teacher-directed (Lieberman, 1995). Inquiry discussions align with the coaching philosophy of supporting teachers’ needs, not telling teachers what they need to change (Toll, 2006). Because literacy coaching is so closely tied to teachers’ daily practice, coaches can regularly use inquiry and reflection as tools to deepen understanding.
Developing a Professional Community

In addition to facilitating teacher learning through effective principles of professional development, coaching can also impact literacy instruction by developing a professional learning community. Walpole and McKenna (2004) state, "Literacy coaches can create real and sustainable learning communities—communities with the knowledge and skills to continue to develop and refine their practice." (p. 188). A professional learning community is a group or team of teachers that meet regularly to discuss ways to improve teaching and learning (National Staff Development Council, 2001). These groups tackle issues surrounding student learning, ways to improve instruction, and how to work more efficiently. Because learning is a complex social process and student differences add an infinite number of confounding variables, the act of teaching must change and evolve to meet the needs of students (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). The collective process of problem-solving involved in learning communities is imperative in the field in order to bring all students to high levels of proficiency, and it requires schools to work collaboratively to find solutions to challenging issues (Lieberman, 1995).

Even though the necessity of professional learning communities has been established in education (Hord, 1997), developing these communities can be a difficult task, as many teachers are more comfortable working independently (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This type of community is in stark contrast to the traditional view of teaching as an isolated profession. Once established, these communities "create new capacity for professionals to learn from one another, capitalize on existing capability,
and thus break down the traditional isolation of teachers' work and broaden their opportunities to learn.” (Richardson, 2003, p. 17). Because the transition from individual practice to communities of practice can be challenging, coaching has been seen as a way to bridge this new culture in schools (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993; Moran, 2007; Richardson, 2004). Coaches can help incorporate all of the elements of effective professional development within professional communities—this being the strength of the practice when developed adequately. Only recently has coaching been specifically used to improve literacy instruction through communities of practice; however, literacy coaching builds on concepts of the broader coaching movement, which has demonstrated some success with engaging teachers' needs and problems within a professional community (Lewis et al., 2006; Poglinco et al., 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sparks & Bruder, 1987).

Evolution of Coaching in Education

The concept of coaching in education is not new (Deussen et al., 2007). Its resurgence in recent years can be traced back to a movement in the 1980s. Much of the findings on the ineffective outcomes of traditional professional development at the time led to the beginnings of the coaching movement (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Joyce and Showers have been widely credited as the first to focus on coaching in education as a means for teacher development (Ackland, 1991; Brandt, 1987; International Reading Association, 2004). The term was defined as “a collegial approach to the analysis of teaching” within “an observation and feedback cycle in an ongoing instructional or clinical situation” (Joyce & Showers, 1981, p. 170). Joyce and Showers (1982) went on to demarcate five major functions of coaching in
education: provision of companionship, giving of technical feedback, analysis of application, adaptation to the students, and personal facilitation (p. 6).

Within these boundaries, Joyce and Showers developed a model where teachers would meet in coaching sessions to discuss issues of implementation and student learning. This added component of professional development was hypothesized to further increase transfer after a presentation of theory and opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback were provided (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Their later work confirmed this theory, finding that teachers working in coaching situations used new strategies more regularly and correctly than their colleagues who worked independently (Showers & Joyce, 1996). It was also documented that almost all the teachers in the study who received coaching implemented the new teaching strategies, thus improving the traditional rate of transfer, merely 10 percent, with a training-only model.

Coaching’s popularity waned since its initial insurgence in the 1980s, but in the intervening years it expanded and diversified. Hall (2004) states, “Like other educational innovations, literacy coaching is protean, varying from venue to venue and even described by different terms in various regions of the country” (p. 13). Now that coaching has reemerged on the educational agenda, there is a great deal of confusion surrounding what the term means and the complexities of the job. Researchers’ and practitioners’ concepts of coaching have varied from Joyce and Showers’ original definition, which focused on the process. Now, coaching is commonly defined by the person who engages in a learning process with teachers. Typically coaching is identified as the work of an expert or more knowledgeable
professional who helps teachers learn and grow as they implement new practices (Deussen et al., 2007; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Russo, 2004).

The differing concepts of coaching have led to many varying coaching initiatives over the years. One common dichotomy that has been created as coaching has evolved is between expert and reciprocal coaching (Ackland, 1991). Some coaching models use experts, or highly trained teachers, to serve as coaches for their colleagues. This focus can be seen in the more recent definition of what coaching entails. Other models use reciprocal coaching to have teachers coach each other, which was the common form when Joyce and Showers introduced coaching as a viable method of professional learning. Both of these forms of coaching can be organized at the school level or the district level, adding to the complexity and distinction between models. For instance, some initiatives select a staff member at the school to serve as the coach part-time or full-time, while other models have a group of coaches hired by a district or school system who then work at many different schools within the system.

Purposes and Models of Coaching

To understand accurately the evolution of coaching in education, it is important to look at the purposes for the practice. While the ultimate goal of most coaching initiatives is to improve teachers’ instruction, there is more than one way to achieve this outcome. Both Toll (2006) and Ackland (1991) have compiled some of the most common purposes for coaching in education. One purpose is remediation or challenge coaching. This type of coaching is designed to address a problem in teacher delivery or student learning. Ackland (1991) cites Garmston’s use of this
type of coaching as a vehicle for teacher teams to solve persistent problems. Without careful implementation, however, remedial coaching can be perceived as a punitive or corrective step to improve inadequate teacher performance (Toll, 2006). A second major purpose for coaching is program implementation or technical coaching. This type of coaching focuses on helping teachers implement a program or a specific teaching method that is required by a school or district. The role of the coach is to ensure that teachers are implementing the program or method with fidelity. This purpose has also come under increased scrutiny because of the emphasis on top-down mandates. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) state that technical coaching works against the goal of developing a learning community, fostering “contrived collegiality rather than collaborative culture” (p. 227). The third purpose is teacher growth or collegial coaching. This form of coaching begins with teachers’ goals and helps provide time for reflection and dialogue. Collegial coaching is focused on the teacher’s needs and the areas in which they desire to see growth in their own practice (Toll, 2006).

Although there are other purposes for coaching, these three—or a combination—encompass most of the coaching initiatives in education. There is not complete agreement about which purpose is most effective, but many advocates of coaching feel that focusing on teacher growth through reflection is the most authentic form of coaching, because it builds generative practices; therefore, teachers are self-directing their growth (Knight, 2007; Sparks, 1990; Toll, 2006). These proponents believe that coaching should not be directive but collaborative, allowing teachers to be equal stakeholders in the coaching process.
There are numerous models that have been mentioned in the literature, using either the expert or the reciprocal form, that achieve the above-mentioned purposes. For this review, four of the most universal models will be discussed.

**Peer Coaching.** The first and most prevalent model is Joyce and Shower’s peer coaching. Some essential principles of this model are that teachers agree to be a part of a peer coaching group, pairs of teachers observe each other without evaluative feedback, and teachers learn from planning, observing, and discussing together (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Typically, this model uses the reciprocal format, but studies have been done using expert forms as well (Ackland, 1991).

In addition to being the most commonly referenced coaching model, peer coaching is also one of the most researched. During the late 1980s many school systems instituted a variation of peer coaching with some or all of their schools. One example of such programs is in Ann Arbor Public Schools in Michigan (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). In this district a staff development consultant worked with two schools that volunteered to use peer coaching during the subsequent school year. School A had 24 teacher volunteers and School B had 17. These teachers were trained on specific elements of effective teaching practices, paired with a teacher at their school, and expected to participate in four to six observations during the year. The teachers were also videotaped to analyze their own teaching before and after peer coaching. Sparks and Bruder (1987) report that, after completing a pre and post questionnaire and being interviewed by outside evaluators, teachers felt they had more opportunities for observation and feedback using the peer coaching model. They also found a greater level of collegiality, jumping from 25 percent before peer
coaching to 40 percent after. The increased levels of collegiality lead to higher amounts of experimentation by teachers and a feeling that students were learning more.

The Central School in Larchmont, New York also used peer coaching to improve their professional community, calling their program Collegial Interaction Process (Anastos & Ancowitz, 1987). This process includes a discussion of background reading, preconference about observation, observation and videotaping, self-analysis, peer-analysis, and practice (Anastos & Ancowitz, 1987, p. 41). The model was evaluated using panel interviews as well as individual interviews. Teachers reported that peer coaching met their personal learning needs and motivated them to examine their teaching. The self-report data also suggest that this process can counteract the isolation that many teachers feel by increasing opportunities for collective dialogue and enhancing teachers’ self-esteem.

Two other studies used quantitative data to measure the impact of peer coaching on teachers and students. The first was a multiple-baseline single case design that compared three experimental conditions (Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 2001). The four elementary teachers in this study independently implemented an instructional innovation, creating the initial baseline. The implementation was repeated with a peer coach, and then it was repeated independently for a final time. Four dependent measures were collected throughout the study: organization and conduct of integrated activities, teachers’ and children’s instructional processes, focus of teachers’ coaching interactions, and teachers’ satisfaction and concern with the integrated approach (Kohler et al., 2001, p. 243). From an analysis of these measures,
researchers found that teachers made more procedural changes in their practice during the coaching phase. The researchers note that while this study looks at the impact of peer coaching, the procedures used do not follow Joyce and Shower's model, as the teachers in the study worked with a trained coach and did not have the opportunity to observe each other. Hence, these findings lend support for the use of an expertly trained coach.

The second study using quantitative methods focused on the learning processes of teachers engaged in peer coaching (Zwart, Wubbels, Bolhuis, & Bergen, 2008). Researchers looked at what and how teachers learned by examining their learning activities and outcomes. In this one-year study, eight high school teachers in the Netherlands received training on coaching and being coached. Data were collected through audiotapes of coaching conferences, interviews, and digital diaries and coded using quantitative methods. The identified learning activities were: acting, thinking, wanting, feeling, and interacting. These learning activities were then analyzed for frequency of use in different learning situations. Researchers found that teachers reported more learning activities within the teaching situation. The learning that teachers reported outside of the classroom was most often in a coaching conference. Overall, it was clear that teachers gained in their personal learning from peer coaching.

Cognitive Coaching. Another model that has been well established in the coaching literature is Cognitive Coaching. This model was developed by Costa and Garmston and is based on the belief that teachers can change by working with other colleagues and examining their decision-making skills (Sparks, 1990). Cognitive
Coaching relies on teacher reflection and encourages teachers to be metacognitive about their teaching practices. The purpose of this coaching model is clearly defined as a vehicle to promote a professional learning community. Ellison and Hayes (2003) state:

Schools often focus on innovations, that is, programs and practices rather than student learning. Our contention is that to impact student learning, the culture should be the focus of leadership. A culture is, metaphorically, much like a woven fabric. Each and every human interaction adds a thread to the fabric of the culture. Cognitive Coaching is a process that provides threads for weaving a culture of reflective practice and enhanced learning for all members of an organization. (p. xiii)

In this model, many different people can serve as the coach, including administrators and fellow teachers who have been trained in Cognitive Coaching techniques. It is based on a three-phase cycle of preconference, observation, and postconference (Garmston et al., 1993). Other coaching models have been based on the premise of Cognitive Coaching, focusing on reflection and self-assessment but with modifications to the three-phase cycle and the preparation of the coaches (Vidmar, 2006). Researchers looking at the outcomes of Cognitive Coaching techniques often discuss how the model helps teachers see their teaching in a new light, giving them new ways to think about their practice (Garmston et al., 1993; Vidmar, 2006). Also, implementers of the model feel that it is a one-on-one form of professional development that impacts the way the entire professional community works together (Sparks, 1990).
Instructional Coaching. The third model is instructional coaching, which has been implemented and refined by the researchers at the Kansas University Center for Research on Learning (Knight, 2006). This model is based on the development of trusting relationships. Instructional coaching uses an expert form; however, coaches in this model see themselves as equals to the teachers with whom they coach. The coach’s job is to converse with teachers to identify their goals to improve instructional practices. Then the coach models lessons, observes, and reflects with teachers. Effective instructional coaches need to be knowledgeable in their field, but must also have excellent interpersonal skills.

The research team at Kansas University has worked with 14 states throughout the country to help them develop instructional coaching programs (Knight, 2006). They found many factors that improve the outcomes of coaching initiatives such as: sufficient time to work with teachers, proven research-based interventions, professional development for instructional coaches, protecting the coaching relationship, ensuring principals and coaches work together, and hiring the right instructional coaches (Knight, 2006). Additionally, a study done by the Center found that after having teachers at one school engage in summer workshops and instructional coaching, 85 percent of teachers were implementing at least one teaching practice they had learned over the summer. This was compared to earlier research, which suggested that a typical implementation rate with only inservice training did not exceed 10 percent (Knight, 2006). This led researchers to state, “coaching does lead to successful adoption and effective use of proven instructional
methods, with one crucial caveat: The right conditions—in the form of administrative support and qualified coaches—must be in place” (University of Kansas, 2007, ¶ 1).

The Center completed another study on instructional coaching, which surveyed 107 teachers in Topeka. The study attempted to examine when coaches should or should not model lessons in the classroom. The teachers in the survey study watched a coach demonstrate model lessons and “strongly agreed” that watching an instructional coach was a helpful form of professional learning (University of Kansas, 2007). They also reported that demonstration lessons by the coach made it easier to implement a new technique and increased their confidence. However, the teachers did not feel that it would be helpful to watch the coach teach all the grade-level content.

The Research for Action organization completed an evaluation study on the high school coaching initiative in Pennsylvania, which utilized instructional coaches in high-need schools. The study included ninth and tenth grade math and English teachers and collected qualitative data through the use of observations, interviews, and surveys. Researchers found that instructional coaching, in conjunction with other opportunities for professional development, helped teachers adopt new teaching practices (Brown et al., 2007). Over 50 percent of teachers reported that they learned about new ideas and strategies to incorporate into their teaching and increased the amount of time that they collaborated with other teachers. Additionally, participants noted an improvement in student engagement with 74 percent of English teachers noticing a change and 47 percent of math teachers. The researchers also found that
teachers who worked one-on-one with the instructional coach were more likely to implement new strategies they had learned.

Lesson Study. Another model for coaching that develops communities of practice is lesson study. This form of professional development was developed and implemented in Japan, but has recently become popular in American schools. Credited as a model that transformed Japan’s science and mathematics instruction, lesson study is now a documented practice in 250 schools in 29 states (Lewis, Perry, & Hurd, 2004). The premise behind the design is that teacher teams work together to plan, observe, and analyze classroom instruction as a method to improve both teaching and learning outcomes (Lewis et al., 2006). The first step in lesson study is to focus on the curriculum by attempting to address a big question about students’ development. Lewis et al. (2004) state, “Teachers discuss the essential concepts and skills that their students need to learn, compare the concepts’ treatment in existing curriculums, and consider what the students currently know and how they will respond to the planned lesson” (p. 19). This investigation leads to the observation and reflection on a research lesson. One member of the study team teaches the research lesson, while the other members observe and document student learning. The teachers’ observations can be focused on many aspects of the lesson, but often they collect data on how the lesson impacts students who are not making progress or who do not typify the norm. After the lesson, all the team members collectively discuss the impact and the need for revisions to improve student learning. This coaching model appears most often in the reciprocal form, but it has been adapted for use with trained coaches as well.
One example of the use of lesson study is at Highlands Elementary where the practice is in its sixth year (Lewis et al., 2006). A district leader, who extended an open invitation for teachers to try lesson study, initiated the use of the model. After an initial pilot with 27 teacher volunteers across the district, almost the entire faculty at Highlands implemented lesson study the following year. Now all teachers at the school work in lesson study groups of three to six members in the same or adjacent grade levels two times per year in multiple content areas. Lewis et al. (2006) have found that lesson study has changed Highlands Elementary School in a number of ways. The teachers report that they are learning more about improving their practice and it has changed the culture of their school. They find that now there is more collaboration to solve problems as a community. Teachers have also noticed improvement in student learning. Researchers have documented that mathematics scores, the first area of study at the school, have increased every year since the implementation of lesson study and they are higher than the scores of other schools in the district and the state (Lewis et al., 2006). While researchers are careful not to purport a causal relationship between lesson study and the improvement in test scores, they are encouraged by the positive growth in the school.

These four models for coaching are just a few of the methods designed and described in books, articles, and reports on coaching. While each model has unique features, the forms and the purposes discussed above can help describe the similarities and differences between each model.
Common Elements of Coaching

Researchers and practitioners have developed countless coaching initiatives that stem from the four models shared above as well as other lesser-known designs. While there is wide variance in the literature about what coaching entails, due to the unique features of individual initiatives, some common elements can be distinguished: non-evaluative design, theoretical basis, and observation and feedback. Each of these elements impacts the structure of coaches’ work and helps develop a professional community focused on teaching and learning.

Non-evaluative Design. One of the most pervasive elements in most coaching models is the non-evaluative design (Ackland, 1991; International Reading Association, 2004; Munro & Elliott, 1987). Coaching has emerged in education as a way to help teachers improve their practice, aside from formal evaluation. Joyce and Showers greatly contributed to the development of coaching as a form of professional development, not teacher appraisal (Ackland, 1991). Munro and Elliott (1987) used the research of Joyce and Showers to develop a coaching model at their school stating, “It was necessary to divorce peer coaching from the contractual evaluation process,” and instead, “promote shared responsibility for professional growth by establishing a collegial atmosphere to improve instruction and student learning” (p. 25).

The International Reading Association reiterated these sentiments in their position statement titled, The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States (2004). Within this document, the role of a coach is defined as a reading professional who is not responsible for evaluating or supervising teachers.
Joyce and Showers, the International Reading Association, and others in the field have found it critical to emphasize what coaching is not, to delineate clearly what it should be and its potential when implemented as a means for collaboration not assessment. Keeping evaluation and coaching as separate entities helps develop trusting relationships within a community of practice (Dantonio, 1995; Knight, 2006; Toll, 2004).

**Theoretical Basis.** A second common element of most coaching models is the focus on implementing best practices identified through research-based approaches (Russo, 2004). Joyce and Showers (1982) emphasize that studying the theoretical base for teaching is one of the aspects that leads to transfer. This concept has been reiterated by other researchers advocating for effective coaching applications (Dole, 2004). Knight (2006) emphasizes the importance of instructional coaches having a thorough understanding of researched-based interventions so that they can share effective suggestions with teachers in various coaching situations. Garmston agrees that coaches need to be knowledgeable about research on teaching practices, but cautions that much of the research is not definitive or applicable for every teaching situation (Sparks, 1990). It is equally important that coaches can knowledgeably help teachers think about best practices within the context of their specific teaching setting. Some models include the study of best practices as a step in the process of coaching (Blachowicz et al., 2005; Richardson, 2004), while others focus on the coach having an in-depth understanding of the theoretical basis for effective instruction, which would be shared with teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007;
Walpole & McKenna, 2004). In either format, coaching has evolved as a means to help teachers apply what is known about effective teaching and learning practices.

Observation and Feedback. In addition to a non-evaluative design and a focus on the theory behind practice, most coaching models include observation and feedback as an essential element in their design. Different models look at who is doing the observation and how feedback is given in different ways, but these two components are commonly used to help teachers improve their instruction (Ackland, 1991). Some models, such as Cognitive Coaching, have the coach in the role of observer, while others use the coach in the role of demonstrator with the teacher observing (Dantonio, 1995; Sparks, 1990). Models such as instructional coaching and lesson study commonly use the coach in both regards, as observer and demonstrator in different coaching settings. After the observation, most models incorporate feedback or constructive response (Ackland, 1991; Garmston et al., 1993; Keller, 2007;). In some models these dialogues take the form of structured feedback, while others use fluid conversational techniques (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Either method should prompt teachers to reflect on instructional practices and student learning. A few models incorporate technology by having teachers videotape a lesson, and then the coach or coaching team can observe and give feedback after the lesson (Ackland, 1991; Blachowicz et al., 2005).

Many researchers have documented that allowing time for teachers to observe other teachers and get feedback on their own instruction helped them experiment with new techniques (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Munro & Elliott, 1987; Poglinco et al., 2003; Sparks & Bruder, 1987). In their study of 27 randomly sampled America's
Choice elementary, middle, and high schools, Poglinco et al. (2003) found that having teachers observe a coach demonstrate in classrooms had an effect on teachers' practice. This study used technical coaching techniques, focusing on the implementation of specific teaching methods, and measured, via surveys, observations, interviews, and document reviews, teachers' ability to implement the new literacy structures into their practice. The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze the data into themes. At the end of the study, researchers found that 62 percent of the teachers were implementing the writer's workshop structure, and this was attributed to the coach's ability to model the new practice for teachers. While this study only represented one purpose for coaching (technical), feedback and observation have become a central component of almost all types of coaching models.

As coaching has evolved in education, it has become more complex, but also more clearly understood (Sandvold & Baxter, 2008). The research on coaching has helped clarify common components and distinguish differences between models. The purposes, forms, and elements of coaching models discussed above play an important role in defining the way coaching has been implemented as a means for improving literacy instruction within a professional community.

**Building a Knowledge Base**

Although coaching emerged in education as a general practice to improve teacher instruction and student learning, it has become increasingly content specific (Dole et al., 2006). One of the reasons for the proliferation of content-specific coaching, such as literacy coaching, is the need to increase teachers' knowledge base
(International Reading Association, 2004; Moran, 2007; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Literacy coaching addresses the knowledge gap between best practices in literacy and common practices in the classroom. Bridging the distance between research and practice can be a difficult task in education, but many localities have found it necessary to meet the goal of literacy proficiency for all students (Marsh et al., 2008; Moxley & Taylor, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2003). By using content-specific coaching, the most effective elements of professional development can be utilized within a learning community to increase teacher knowledge. Literacy coaching provides an avenue for teachers to learn together within their teaching environment as they make changes and begin implementing new literacy practices.

Even though content-specific coaching is a relatively new innovation, the need to provide support for teachers' literacy learning has been around for quite some time. Hall (2004) traced the beginnings of this work to the 1930s, when reading specialists were hired as supervisors to work with teachers as they implemented the reading program within their school. However, not long after, the focus of this role shifted to remediation as criticism mounted about the number of students who were not reading proficiently. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which was the first federal funding source for compensatory reading education (Dole, 2004), furthered this emphasis on student remediation. The ESEA established the use of reading teachers, through Title I funding, to work with struggling readers in high-poverty schools. The reading professionals in this model provided supplementary instruction for students, but not support for the classroom teacher.
Dole (2004) states, "this model of intervention and the billions of dollars that went into it have not delivered the anticipated significant improvement in academic learning of at-risk students" (p. 463). This conclusion led the ESEA of 2000, also known as NCLB, to focus on improving the qualifications of teachers and the literacy practices that they are using in the classroom. This focus on teacher knowledge opened the door for literacy professionals to hold positions exclusively tied to teacher learning.

In actuality, NCLB acknowledged a shift that was already happening within the field. Alongside the role of student remediation, the reading specialist position had, over the course of many years, extended into a resource role. Research reviews from the 1960s to the 1980s document an increasing emphasis on reading professionals' ability to collaborate with other teachers, administrators, and parents (Hall, 2004). In the 1990s, reading specialists began working more closely with teachers, as the federal guidelines for Title I emphasized improving students' classroom performance, not isolated pullout programs. Quatroche et al. (2001) found, in their review of the literature on the role of the reading specialist after 1990, that there were six major responsibilities that these professionals held. The categories were instruction, assessment, leadership, resource/consultant, collaborator, and student advocate (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 291). Clearly, reading professionals have impacted teachers' knowledge base in many ways over the years; however, to some degree the focus on student remediation has been primary, as reading specialists still report that the majority of their time is spent working with students (Dole et al., 2006; Quatroche et al., 2001).
Now many in the field are calling for this role to focus more heavily on developing the knowledge base of teachers (Dole, 2004; International Reading Association, 2004). While reading specialists still work with struggling students, IRA states, “The balance of their activities has shifted away from direct teaching and toward leadership and professional development roles.” (p. 1). Even though the role of reading specialists is changing, the field still chose to use a new term to describe the importance of a position, which focuses exclusively on teacher development. The term literacy coach or reading coach has been widely used to distinguish this role from the traditional label of reading specialist (Dole et al., 2006; International Reading Association, 2004). Coaching is now understood as a position that focuses on helping teachers extend their knowledge of best literacy practices.

**Qualifications for Literacy Coaching**

While the need for literacy professionals to assist teachers in their knowledge development has been documented from the federal government, the IRA, and countless school systems, it is clear that coaching requires certain qualifications. Because literacy coaching is a relatively new innovation, there is not a great deal of empirical evidence about what makes an effective coach (Dole, 2004). But those in the field, who have worked extensively with other coaches or as a coach themselves, have found that successful literacy coaches hold many of the same qualifications. In her book on literacy coaching, Toll (2005) states pointedly, “Not everyone can be a literacy coach.” (p. 4). She goes on to say that literacy coaches need to have a thorough understanding of the research on literacy, as well as knowledge and experience in effective teaching practices, in combination with excellent
communication skills and an ability to work with adult learners. The IRA position statement on *The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States* (2004) also requires that coaches have established themselves as excellent classroom teachers, knowledgeable literacy professionals, and effective presenters and leaders. In addition, IRA suggests that literacy coaches obtain a masters degree in reading or literacy.

In Moxley and Taylor's (2006) work with literacy coaches in Florida, they found many important qualities for literacy coaching. Although these qualities overlap with those previously mentioned, Moxley and Taylor uniquely organize them into three categories: knowledge, skills, and dispositions. They state that coaches need knowledge of adult learning, literacy, and assessment, skills in leadership and communication, and dispositions of learning and collaboration (Moxley & Taylor, 2006, p. 11). In their book, Moxley and Taylor elaborate on how coaches can use their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be successful as a coach. Dole (2004) reiterates many of these sentiments, but also adds some nuanced qualities that literacy coaches need to be successful, such as the ability to reflect on their practice, think quickly and flexibly, and validate teachers while pushing them outside of their comfort zone.

Although the previous qualities and characteristics have been used to define excellent literacy coaching candidates, currently many practicing coaches do not meet all of these criteria. Because the demand for literacy coaches expanded so quickly, many districts hired coaches of varying levels of qualification (Frost & Bean, 2006). The IRA completed a nationwide survey of elementary, middle, and high school
coaches to see what the requirements were at the time they were hired (Roller, 2005). Of the 140 completed surveys, researchers found that a bachelor’s degree and a teaching certificate were the only universal requirements for the coaching position. Three-fourths of the respondents said that teaching experience was required for their job, but only 37 percent were required to have a master’s degree and only 19 percent indicated that they needed a master’s degree in literacy.

Additionally, Deussen et al. (2007) completed a study on Reading First coaches from five northwestern states. Part of the purpose of the study was to determine who the Reading First coaches are in these states and more specifically what qualifications they have for the job. After obtaining demographic information on coaches in all five states, the researchers found that most reading coaches were former teachers with an average of 17 years experience, but 70 percent had no previous experience with coaching. This is partly due to the fact that literacy coaching was propagated by NCLB legislation and the use of coaches in Reading First schools. Only 38 percent of the coaches had a master’s degree in literacy, but over half had advanced degrees in other areas. Deussen et al. (2007) compared these findings to a similar study of Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania where half the coaches were certified reading specialists and 79 percent of the coaches held a master’s degree. This led the researchers to suggest that regional differences may affect the needs of coaches to perform their jobs adequately.

As literacy coaching is becoming more well defined and the qualifications more clearly delineated, many have noted that in order for all coaches to become and remain highly qualified and impact teacher knowledge, they must receive continual
support and training (Buly et al., 2006; International Reading Association, 2004; Rainville & Jones, 2008). Some initial work has been done to show the importance of ongoing training and support for coaches. Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits, and Kenter (2001) completed a study on the effects of training cooperating teachers in the use of coaching skills. The researchers used pre- and post-training ratings of the cooperating teachers’ coaching conferences to measure the effectiveness of the coaching techniques. The two expert raters used the Scale for Coaching Skills and the teachers being coached used the Teacher Scale for Coaching Skills to document the results. While the teachers being coached did not necessarily rate the cooperating teachers who had the coaching training as more effective, the researchers did find a significant treatment effect with the experimental group who had received training with effect sizes on different coaching subscores ranging from .90-1.44 (Veenman et al., 2001).

Additional, Poglinco et al. (2003) found, in their study of coaching in America’s Choice Schools, that the quality of the coach mattered in terms of teachers’ ability to implement new literacy structures with fidelity. While 90 percent of the observed lessons in the study showed adequate levels of implementation, they found a high correlation between the literacy coaches’ ability to model new routines and teachers’ ability to implement the routines. These results led the researchers to conclude that the coach’s role is very important to help facilitate teacher learning, but also that coaches need adequate training to impact teacher knowledge and practice. Surveys of currently practicing literacy coaches found that they too recognized the need for additional training. Using self-report data from coaches in 113 middles
schools, researchers reported that coaches wanted additional professional
development to help them work more effectively with adult learners (Marsh et al.,
2008).

Approaches to Literacy Coaching

As there are many variations of coaching models, there are also many
different approaches to literacy coaching. Now that literacy coaching has become
more established in the field and organizations are beginning to understand what
qualifications coaches should possess, researchers are examining literacy coaches’
roles and what impact these roles have on developing teachers’ knowledge. Many
have discussed the importance of coaches having clearly defined roles and job
descriptions within schools in order for literacy coaches to most effectively impact
teacher knowledge (Buly et al., 2006; Mraz et al., 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008).

Research on the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches has shown some
key ways that coaches approach their work (Deussen et al., 2007; Hasbrouck &
Denton, 2007; Toll, 2006). By design, most literacy coaches are focused on teachers,
not students. Toll (2005) defines a literacy coach as:

One who helps teachers to recognize what they 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. (p. 4)

Although all literacy coaches may not define themselves in this way, the focus on
teachers in this definition is a universal principle for coaching. The IRA survey of
practicing literacy coaches backs up this claim, with 67 percent of the respondents
stating that they work exclusively with teachers (Roller, 2005). In their survey on reading professionals, Dole et al. (2006) also found that of the 20 state departments reporting the use of reading coaches, almost all used coaches for a variety of jobs that assist and support teachers.

While the intention of literacy coaching is teacher-focused, many studies have shown that the roles and responsibilities of coaches are quite complex and often require tasks not directly working with teachers. In Marsh et al.'s (2008) survey of Florida's middle school coaching initiative, they found that coaches engaged in both formal and informal work with teachers, but also completed administrative duties, data analysis, and noncoaching duties. While the state requires that coaches spend 50 percent of their time working one-on-one with teachers, many fell short of this expectation.

Mraz et al. (2008) completed another study, which looked at the perceptions of school personnel on how literacy coaching can be most effective. Six high-risk elementary schools were included in this study. Data were collected from principals, teachers, and literacy coaches at each school, in addition to semi-structured interviews with one randomly selected person from each of the above categories at each school. Using a mixed-methods approach, researchers collected quantitative data from the surveys and qualitative data from the interviews looking at the difference between groups and between what staff members stated was currently a role of the coach and what they felt should be a role of the coach. The roles were: resource to classroom teacher, resource to professionals and parents, coordinator of the reading program, contributor to assessment, and instructor to students (Mraz et al.,
Researchers discovered that there were only small differences in perceptions between principals, teachers, and coaches. All groups felt that coordinating the reading program and serving as a resource to teachers was highly important. There was some disagreement about instructing students with principals strongly against it and some teachers in support of it. Assessment had the most significant area of difference between current practices and participants' expectations. All groups saw assessment as a large role for coaches, but none of the groups thought this was positive and felt that this time should be spent working with teachers.

Deussen et al. (2007) also found that literacy coaches in Reading First schools were not always oriented exclusively toward teachers. In their study of five northwestern states, researchers came to the conclusion that "the reality of how coaches perform their jobs was more complex and varied than anticipated" (p. iv). They discovered that in some states literacy coaches spent large amounts of time attending to analysis of student data and the completion of managerial tasks, in addition to working with teachers. Even though coaches reported dedicating long hours to their work, they only spent an average of 28 percent of their time with teachers. The researchers used a cluster analysis of the survey data collected as well as a qualitative analysis of interview data to distinguish five categories of coaches: data-oriented, student-oriented, managerial, and two teacher-oriented categories (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 13). When divided into categories, it is easy to see that the focus of coaching in all localities is not the same. When looking at the two teacher-oriented groups, the percentage of time spent working with teachers jumps to 50 percent. The researchers found that the variability of Reading First coaching
responsibilities was largely due to the way individual states and schools defined the role. This is true of all coaching initiatives, which some researchers have noted is one reason that coaching has been difficult to study conclusively (Dole et al., 2006).

A two-year multiple-case study also looked at how coaches spend their time and what roles they are asked to hold (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). This study reinforced previous findings that coaches serve many roles within a school, but the researchers also looked more closely at these roles within categories. Semi-structured interviews of 31 participants, both principals and coaches, were used to determine the roles of coaches. The researchers organized these roles into two categories: coach as mentor and coach as director. These broad categories served to group roles as teacher-focused (coach as mentor) or leadership-focused (coach as director). Within the categories they discovered six roles: curriculum manager, trainer, assessor, formative observer, teacher, and modeler. While different coaches saw themselves holding various roles, there was general support within this sample for the importance of each role, leading the researchers to discuss the significance of defining appropriate and realistic roles for literacy coaches.

Even though the roles that coaches hold appears to widely vary within different states, initiatives, and schools, when coaches are working with teachers, both individually and in group settings, researchers have documented that they are commonly doing one of three tasks: modeling good instructional practices, collaborating to solve problems, or supporting teacher learning (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007; Toll, 2006; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009). Modeling is one of the critical approaches that literacy coaches employ to help teachers embrace new
pedagogical practices (Dole, 2004; Toll, 2006). This approach builds on the key elements of observation and feedback that most coaching models utilize. Modeling a demonstration lesson in the classroom helps teachers to see theory in action, and it provides the scaffolding that some teachers need to be able to implement instructional literacy practices (Sandvold & Baxter, 2008). Moran (2007) states, “Demonstration lessons offer teachers the opportunity to see a literacy coach deliver a lesson and to reflect on how they might apply what they see to their own practice” (p. 75). After modeling for teachers, many coaches allow time for post-observation feedback and, at a later date, observe the teacher doing a similar lesson.

The second approach commonly noted in the research on literacy coaching is collaborating with teachers to solve problems (Shanklin, 2006; Toll, 2006). Collaboration among teachers is one of the main goals of some literacy coaching models (Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2003). This emphasis on collaboration is designed to address issues of student learning by identifying ways to improve instructional literacy practices. Student data can be used to focus these discussions as well as teacher observation of student performance. Through structured conversations, teachers gain insight into ways that they can adjust their practice to teach more effectively and reach more students (Buly et al., 2006). The literacy coach functions as a sounding board in these discussions to help teachers use what they know and learn from each other (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007).

Supporting teacher learning is the third approach that literacy coaches use to encourage teacher growth (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). This can happen during modeling or collaborative discussions, but it can also take other forms. Moran (2007)
elaborates on many ways that literacy coaches can support teacher learning, such as through classroom visits, co-planning opportunities, and study groups. This approach requires the coach to help teachers reflect on their practice and to gain new knowledge about literacy learning. Effectively facilitating teacher learning also necessitates that the coach has good communication skills and has developed trusting relationships with teachers (Moran, 2007; Toll, 2005).

The approaches or tasks used for literacy coaching are framed within the common coaching elements and the aspects of effective professional development. The following diagram graphically shows the relationship between each component to impact teacher learning.

Figure 2

*Relationship between Teacher Learning, Coaching, and Professional Development*
Using these approaches, literacy coaches can potentially help teachers build their knowledge base about literacy and improve their instruction. Some research studies are beginning to show that literacy coaching can be effective to this end. For instance, a study was done to analyze teachers’ perceptions of how coaching impacted their beliefs and practices. Vanderburg and Stephens (2009) interviewed 35 teachers who had worked with a literacy coach for three years as a part of the South Carolina Reading Initiative. Over the course of the three years, the teachers met with the coach bimonthly in study group sessions as well as in their classrooms. The researchers found four specific outcomes of working with the coach: a willingness to try new things, using more authentic assessments, modifying instruction for students’ needs, and changing beliefs about instruction based on theory and research. The researchers note how the teachers’ responses in this study were focused on “the shifts coaches had helped them make in how they thought and acted as teachers” as opposed to “new practices they tried in their classrooms” (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009, p. 1). This finding led the researchers to mention the importance of coaching’s ability to increase teacher agency in addition to implementing specific practices that are observable in the classroom.

In contrast, another study looked to measure the effect of varying professional development models on teachers’ knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction (Garet et al., 2008). This experimental study included 270 second grade teachers in 90 schools. Equal numbers of schools were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups: teacher institute series, institute series plus coaching, and a
control group. The researchers compared teachers’ knowledge base in each group as well as their implementation of research-based practices and student outcomes. Teachers in the first two treatment groups scored significantly higher on measures of teacher knowledge with an effect size of .37 for the first group and .38 for the second. Coaching had an added effect on teachers’ implementation, but it was not statistically significant. The study also found that there was no significant impact on student reading achievement. While this study was specifically looking at the impact of professional development on student learning, it has important implications for literacy coaching’s impact on teachers. It was apparent in this study that building a knowledge base for literacy is not enough to impact student achievement. The findings of the previous study, in conjunction with Garet et al.’s results, lends credence to the fact that impacting how teachers think about their work is as important as their knowledge about specific practices.

A number of evaluative studies have also looked at the outcomes of state and local coaching initiatives. The first looked at the results of the Alabama Reading Initiative (Moscovitch, 2006). The state initiative was revamped in 2003 and this evaluation measured the impact of these changes. The original initiative involved summer training for teachers on literacy instruction followed by school and district level reading coaching. Regional coaches were also hired to provide ongoing training to the in-school coaches. This strategy was effective for some schools, but other schools were not showing changes in student performance. Many additional elements were added to the initiative to increase school leadership, teacher knowledge, and student outcomes. The researcher used DIBELS test results to measure student
growth from kindergarten through third grade. Major improvements were seen, especially in kindergarten and first grade, with the data showing that students in all grades were improving.

Arkansas also developed a school reform model, which was evaluated in 2001-2002 (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, n. d.). One of the ten features in this model is the use of coaching and mentoring to support teachers’ implementation of the literacy curriculum. In 1999, the Arkansas Comprehensive School Reform Model was expanded to include literacy coaches in seven of the most high-risk schools. After one pilot year, researchers found gains in student performance. Over the course of the 2001-2002 school year, 80 percent of first graders met or exceeded the standard in reading, and second graders were at similar levels (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, n. d.). This model has now multiplied and there are 55 schools in Arkansas which are using the literacy coaching model with primary teachers.

A third study examined the impact of a literacy coaching model used in Boston Public Schools (Schwartz et al., 2003). This model employs an inquiry approach by having groups of teachers work together over an eight-week cycle. During this time the group researches an aspect of reading or writing workshop instruction and develops lessons that are then demonstrated in a lab classroom. The group debriefs after the lesson and discusses the lesson’s effectiveness. Using interviews and observations of four coaches and eight teachers involved in the Collaborative Coaching and Learning model, researchers gathered qualitative data about the impact of coaching in four elementary schools. Teachers in this evaluation
reported that coaching increased collaboration among their colleagues and improved their ability to implement effective practices. Researchers also found that coaches were a critical aspect in the dynamic of the teacher teams, promoting reflection and problem solving. While each of these studies and many others found initial positive influences of coaching, they noted that more research is needed to make firm conclusions about coaching's impact on teaching and student learning.

**Discussion**

Drawing from the research base on effective professional development as well as initial studies on literacy coaching's impact, many districts are forging ahead with their coaching initiatives, hoping that future research will confirm the practicality of its use (Moran, 2007). Educational researchers and practitioners alike point to many recent studies that have shown ways coaching can positively impact teacher behaviors. However, Poglinco et al. (2003) state, "Most studies reinforce the notion that coaching is a promising strategy for instructional improvement," but continue on to say, "we could find no research that provided evidence of the relationship between coaching and student learning" (p. 2). Clearly, more research is needed on the impact of coaching on students' literacy learning. In order to sustain the costly practice of coaching, policy makers, school boards members, and administrators will need to see an impact in their bottom-line: more students reading proficiently and scoring well on standardized reading tests. However, many researchers argue that, in order to assess the impact of literacy coaching on students, it will be imperative that we first adequately measure coaching's impact on teachers (Deussen et al., 2007). This will require a determination of what coaching elements help teachers modify their
practices the most, a comparison of different literacy coaching models, and an
evaluation of what qualities effective coaches must possess to successfully implement
proven literacy coaching models.

Addressing all of the lingering questions about coaching seems like a daunting
task, but many say that it is a worthy endeavor (Hall, 2004; International Reading
Association, 2004; Poglinco & Bach, 2004). With approximately one-third of our
population’s children not reading at proficient levels, and much higher percentages
among minority and poor children, we must find new ways to help teachers reach
these students. As traditional professional development has been deemed largely
ineffective, coaching has emerged as a viable way to educate teachers about best
practices in literacy (Deussen et al., 2007). Time will tell if the assumption behind
coaching is correct and the dots can be decisively connected. The most that research
can claim to date is “perhaps”: perhaps coaching leads to expert literacy instruction;
perhaps expert literacy instruction will lead to increased student learning.

Unfortunately, the educational community will have to wait for further
research to clarify these ambiguous findings. In the meantime “perhaps” has been a
strong enough conclusion for federal, state, and local initiatives as they stare down
the mandates of No Child Left Behind. The final verdict is still out on the impact of
coaching in education, but with the complicated nature of literacy learning, the
increased standards for all students, and the progress that is still be made, coaching
seems to have all the right components of a viable solution for the present and future
challenges in literacy education.
CHAPTER THREE
PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study on the impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model (CCCM) on teacher’s instructional practices employed qualitative research methods. Glesne (2006) defines qualitative research as the “intention of making generalizations about some social phenomena, creating predictions concerning those phenomena, and providing causal explanations” (p. 4). Rossman and Rallis (2003) add to this definition by stating that the ultimate goal of qualitative research is learning. The present study attempted to learn about the social phenomena of literacy coaching by documenting teachers’ experiences with the CCCM. This descriptive case study utilized interviews, a questionnaire, and artifacts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are participants’ perceptions and feelings about using this literacy coaching model as a vehicle for professional development?
2. How does this literacy coaching model influence participants’ perceived gains in knowledge and skills about literacy?
3. How are participants implementing what they learn in the literacy coaching model within their classroom instruction?
4. What do participants observe with regard to student learning as a result of participating in this literacy coaching model?

Descriptive studies “depict complex social processes and understandings through detailed description” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A descriptive design was
selected to better understand how coaching impacts teachers and their students within the CCCM. This model used the expert form, employing highly trained literacy coaches to work with groups of teachers to improve their literacy practices. By focusing on teacher growth, the CCCM had a collegial purpose and aligned with the five aspects of professional development—providing ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative, and reflective opportunities for learning in an inquiry-based model. In addition, the CCCM incorporated the common elements of most coaching models with a non-evaluative design, a focus on the theoretical basis of instructional practices, and the use of observation and feedback. By focusing on the lived experiences of particular teachers with the CCCM, this study aimed to contextualize the phenomena of literacy coaching within the natural setting of schools and classrooms. In this study, specific cases were identified where the coaching model could be used, which allowed the researcher to document the impact on teachers and students using thick description to identify common themes and characteristics of each case (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

**Participants**

The participants for this study were selected from two elementary schools within a suburban school system outside a southern city. The school system is one of the 100 largest districts in the country and serves over 58,000 students in 64 schools. There are 38 elementary schools, 14 middle schools, 11 high schools, and 1 technical center with over 7,000 employees. The student demographics in the district are 59 percent White, 28 percent Black, 8 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan native, and 1 percent unspecified. Approximately
24 percent of students in the district qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The district made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the past three years.

Two schools from the district were chosen based on criterion sampling techniques. This sampling strategy allowed the researcher to purposefully select schools that were targeted for coaching initiatives according to specific conditions or needs. The researcher used available test data, principal feedback, and school observations to confirm that the conditions had been met. The schools exemplified the following criteria:

- A documented need to improve student performance in literacy on measures of standardized reading or writing tests or on progress monitoring tools, such as the Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) or the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
- Noticeable gaps in student performance between sub-groups, such as minority students, students with disabilities, and students from poverty
- An established collegial atmosphere within the school that supports and advocates teacher learning
- Administrator support for the literacy coaching model

School A had approximately 600 students in kindergarten through grade five. This school did not qualify for Title I funds, as less than a third of the students were below the poverty level. The student body was composed of 53 percent White students, 24 percent Black students, 16 percent Hispanic students, 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 3 percent unspecified. School A did not make AYP in the 2008-2009 school year for the first time. A number of subgroups
including Hispanic students, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English proficiency all scored significantly lower than their peers on the state accreditation test for reading. The teaching staff at School A all met the criteria for being highly qualified under No Child Left Behind during 2009-2010 school year; however, as many as seven teachers did not meet this qualification the previous year. Approximately half of the teachers at this school acquired bachelor’s degrees, while the other half also received master’s degrees. These numbers are similar for both the district and the state average.

School B had approximately 750 students in kindergarten through grade five. This school did not qualify for Title I funds, although approximately 37 percent of students received free or reduced lunch. The student body was composed of 39 percent White students, 50 percent Black students, 7 percent Hispanic students, and 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students. School B did not make AYP in the 2008-2009 school year for the first time. A number of subgroups including Black students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students all scored significantly lower than their peers on the state accreditation test for reading. These same subgroups also scored poorly on the state writing test. The teaching staff at School B had met the criteria for being highly qualified under No Child Left Behind for the past three years. Over half of the teachers at this school acquired bachelor’s degrees and remaining 40 percent also received master’s degrees.

Two groups of teachers from School A and two groups of teachers from School B were selected to work with a literacy coach for this study. A total of 22 teachers participated, with 12 teachers from School A and 10 teachers from School B.
The groups were composed of like-grade level teachers and other professionals who collaborated with the grade level, such as special education teachers and English Language Learner (ELL) teachers. The grade levels represented in this study are second, third, fourth, and fifth. The administrator in each school, along with the coach and the researcher, decided which grade levels participated in the coaching cohort during the time of the study.

The tables below show demographic information as well as the levels of experience and education of the participants in each cohort.
Table 1

*Demographic Information of Participants by Cohort*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (n=6)</td>
<td>2 (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Teachers</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Experience and Education of Participants by Cohort*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (n=6)</td>
<td>2 (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice- 5 years or less</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran- 6 years or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Grade Level- 3 years or less</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience at Grade Level- 4 years or more</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Education- 3 classes or more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Classes in Literacy- 2 or less</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Sources

Groups of teachers were identified to participate in the CCCM in the spring and summer of 2009. These teachers worked with one of the two literacy coaches in the fall of 2009 for a complete cycle in the CCCM, lasting eight to nine weeks (see Appendix A). At the conclusion of this cycle, the teachers completed a questionnaire and participated in a panel interview with their cohort group. When teachers came to the panel interview, they were asked to bring an artifact, which represented the impact that coaching has had on student learning or growth. In addition, the researcher also conducted individual interviews with purposefully selected participants from the cohort groups.

The researcher attempted to understand teachers' experiences with this literacy coaching model by integrating the data from all sources. Both panel and individual interview conversations were carefully transcribed and coded with emerging codes. These codes helped to find similarities and recurrent themes among participants. The artifacts that participants submitted were coded as a part of the panel interviews and then analyzed collectively. Participants' responses to the questionnaire also served to provide a more complete picture of the teachers' background, experience, and knowledge about literacy instruction prior to the coaching experience.

The three data sources that were used in this study to answer the four major research questions have been summarized in the following table.
Table 3

*Table of Specifications for Data Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Panel Interview- questions 7, 8, and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview- questions 5, 6, and 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Panel Interview- questions 1, 2, and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview- questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire- questions 5, 6, and 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Panel Interview- questions 4 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview- questions 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire- questions 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Artifact- discussions and visual representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel Interview- questions 5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview- question 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was an active participant within this study, serving as one of the two literacy coaches as well as collecting and analyzing the data. The researcher ensured fidelity of the CCCM between coaches by communicating weekly with the second literacy coach. Through these continual conversations, the researcher assured that teachers in all cohorts experienced the same structure of the coaching model.

Although the structure of the coaching model was the same for all participants, each cohort discussed different aspects of literacy and designed specific lessons that matched the topic and the needs of the group. Because of the inquiry-
based design of the model, the number of observations and the duration of the lessons varied depending on the material to be presented. These variances are a normal part of the CCCM and what makes it an experience that is co-designed by the participants. However, a few deviations from the structure of the model were necessary to accommodate participants’ schedules and needs. For instance, two cohorts had to condense the mid-cycle reflection and lesson planning sessions into one meeting. In both instances, the cohorts were able to accomplish both goals, but did not take the usually allotted time. Additionally, one cohort chose to modify the second round of observations to have a sharing session where each participant and the coach brought ideas for teaching students about the focus topic. The researcher and the coach both agreed that these modifications did not substantially change the participants’ experience with the model, nor did they alter the intent of the coaching process.

**Data Collection**

In order to fully understand how the CCCM impacts teachers, multiple forms of data were collected to triangulate the results. After a coach worked with each cohort of teachers for the eight to nine week cycle, the researcher met with each group in a panel interview that was digitally recorded. The standardized open-ended panel interview lasted between 30-45 minutes, with each teacher having an opportunity to participate in the discussion. The interview questions were designed to elicit information regarding the four major research questions surrounding teachers’ feelings about literacy coaching, their learning, and the application of their learning to students’ literacy development (see Appendix B). During the panel interview, participants were also prompted to discuss the significance of their artifact,
representing the impact that coaching had on student learning or growth, which they brought to share with the researcher.

During the course of the coaching cycle, all teacher participants were requested to complete a confidential, short questionnaire. This questionnaire provided the researcher with background information about the teachers in each cohort group. It asked questions about years in the profession, years on the grade level, courses in literacy, etc. (see Appendix C). These specific demographic and background questions were chosen because they provided insight into this study by addressing issues surrounding teachers' preparedness and experience as literacy instructors. The information collected from the questionnaire allowed the researcher to make comparisons between cases and observe similarities and differences in teachers' responses to literacy coaching. The researcher concealed participants' identities after the questionnaire was given by using a code for each participant. This code was kept in a secure location. Any reference to the participants within the study was done using a pseudonym to further protect participants' identities.

Because all teachers might not have felt comfortable being forthcoming in a panel interview and because equal time might not have be given for each participant to share, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants from each cohort group for individual interviews. Teachers were selected for individual interviews based on intensity sampling procedures. After analyzing the questionnaire data, the researcher selected teachers who presented extreme differences: a teacher with extensive training in literacy and a teacher with minimal training in literacy, a veteran teacher and a novice teacher, a teacher new to the current grade level and a
teacher with many years experience at the current grade level. During the individual interviews the researcher was looking to corroborate or disconfirm data from other sources. The questions addressed similar issues as the panel interview questions, but were worded more personally to allow teachers to share their experience with the literacy coaching model (see Appendix D). These interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the data analyzed. The researcher secured the audiotapes from the individual interviews as well as the panel interviews during the course of the study and erased all recordings after the study was complete.

**Data Analysis**

All data collected through interviews and artifact analysis were transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to determine specific categories of data. Each individual and panel interview was coded by the researcher for similarities and differences in patterns of information. Constant comparative coding was used to stay close to the data while analyzing the information. The transcripts were examined as small units of thought, and then short codes were applied that reflected the content. This method allowed the researcher to get an accurate idea of emerging categories. Emerging categories were used to allow the participants’ responses to focus the organization of data. However, the researcher looked for instances where codes naturally aligned with the elements of professional development and coaching. Axial coding was then used to create categories of information and smaller subcategories to determine patterns and to help disaggregate specific information that emerged from the data.
Axial coding helped unify the information gathered from multiple sources by looking at how the data connected as a whole.

Once the data from the panel and individual interviews were coded and summarized, the codes were organized by research question. Most codes directly aligned with one of the four questions, but some of the codes contained data that fell across questions. This was most prevalent in codes addressing how participants felt about using the CCCM as a vehicle for professional development and how they felt the model impacted their knowledge and skills about literacy. In these instances, the researcher kept the codes under each research question, but then went back into the data and subdivided the participants’ responses within that code to identify which units of information supported each question. The research codes were then used to develop major themes for each question. The themes evolved from ideas that were present throughout the different interviews. Once the data were organized by research question, consistent codes, and major themes, it was compared against questionnaire information to see if any themes or patterns were consistent among demographic variables.

The artifacts in this study were looked at individually and as a collective aspect of the interviews. Discussions about the artifacts were coded as a part of the interview, but the researcher also looked at the artifacts comparatively as a separate entity of data. The artifacts were coded similarly to other sources of data by using the teachers’ descriptions of the artifacts and what they represented as well as photographs of the artifacts themselves. The researcher analyzed the data using
holistic coding and then connected these codes to themes that were already identified through interview transcripts.

To increase the credibility or the belief that the data collected in this study were truthful and accurate, methodological triangulation was obtained from conducting two types of interviews, utilizing a survey, and collecting artifacts for analysis. Member checking was also used throughout the data collection and data analysis process to augment credibility and to ensure the fairness and correct representation of the data being collected. The researcher used member checking during interviews to ensure accuracy in relaying what teachers were trying to portray. This was accomplished by asking participants clarifying or follow-up questions and by summarizing participants’ thoughts verbally and in writing. The teachers were given an opportunity to revise or add to the data collected from the interviews by reviewing a written summary of the interview transcripts.

The use of thick description allowed readers to fully understand the context of the research and to determine the extent to which the findings could be applied in other contexts (Glesne, 2006). The researcher used criterion sampling and a reflexive journal to improve the transferability of the findings. Using a reflexive journal also improved the confirmability and dependability of the findings, ensuring that any data collected were the perceptions of the participants and not the researcher’s beliefs and expectations.

Additionally, the authenticity of the study’s findings were demonstrated by helping participants’ increase their understanding of their beliefs and perceptions as well as their potential for growth. To ensure ontological authenticity, the researcher
used follow-up questions during the interviews to ensure participants were providing accurate responses to the questions and that the information recorded reflected a complete and thorough response. The results of the research were also shared with all participants at the conclusion of the study. The researcher provided the participants with a copy of the final report to ensure educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity (Schwandt, 2007).

**Resources**

In order to complete this study, two knowledgeable and qualified literacy coaches were needed who were familiar with the CCCM. The researcher served as one of the coaches, and a second literacy coach from the school system included in this study was selected. Both coaches had previous teaching experience, a degree in literacy, and had worked with teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The coaches had both formal and informal training in literacy coaching and had previous experience using the model. In addition to the coaches, approximately 20-25 teachers were needed to hold four coaching cohorts. These teachers were selected from two schools within the school system selected for the study. Permission was obtained from the Language Arts Specialist and the administrator at each school before the coaching cohorts began. Also, the teachers in each cohort were asked to give their consent to participate in the data collection process (see Appendix E). In addition to these human resources, the researcher also needed at least two months to collect data once the coaching cycle began. Because the purpose of the study was to describe the effect of the coaching model as a form of professional development, no data were collected until the cycle was nearly completed.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the effect of literacy coaching as a vehicle for professional development and growth by describing the impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model (CCCM) on teachers' instructional literacy practices. The study was carried out with four cohorts of teachers in two schools. Data were collected at the end of the coaching cycle through the use of panel interviews, individual interviews, a survey, and the collection of artifacts. These data were then analyzed to document teachers' experiences with the CCCM.

The results of the analysis presented in this chapter answer each of the four research questions. The analysis of the data collected from all sources is discussed as it pertains to each question. Data collected from interviews and artifacts were used to answer each of the four research questions directly, while results from the survey helped interpret and categorize responses from participants with specific backgrounds and experiences. All sources of data were clearly identified and tagged as originating from a participant in one of the four cohorts, labeled with the teacher's grade designation, such as “Gr.3.” Data collected from panel interviews were denoted with “P.I.” at the beginning of the tag, while data from individual interviews were marked with “I.I.” Any references to teacher or student names within the data were replaced with a pseudonym. In this analysis, distinctions were made when data from multiple cohorts or participants supports a claim versus when a single participant or cohort expressed a certain viewpoint. This chapter also provides a description of the
structure of the CCCM as well as each cohort’s literacy focus areas to better understand the participants’ responses that follow.

Structure of the Model

All the cohorts in this study followed the structural design of the CCCM (see Appendix A). This literacy coaching model was created as a nine week cycle, where teams of teachers worked with a literacy coach to analyze, reflect, and improve their literacy instruction. In the first phase of the model, the teachers decided on an inquiry topic in literacy, researched the topic, and developed lessons about the topic. During the second phase, teachers observed the coach delivering the lessons in one of the teachers’ classroom. After the observation and debriefing, teachers reflected on their learning and then choose another inquiry topic to research and discuss. The third and final phase of the model provided time for the group to develop another set of lessons around the new literacy topic and then observe the coach modeling in a different teacher’s classroom. The last meeting of the CCCM allowed teachers to reflect on their learning and how they felt about working in a coaching cohort.

A parallel element was also included in the design of the CCCM. While the previously described structure included all members of the team and required the group to work collaboratively throughout each stage of the cycle, the model also included time for individual coaching. This element gave teachers the flexibility to focus their learning on aspects other than the cohort’s two inquiry topics. These parallel structures, weekly group meetings and individual coaching opportunities, supported the model’s two goals of helping teachers develop communities of practice while also individualizing learning to each participant.
Literacy Focus Topics

Due to the inquiry nature of the CCCM, each cohort experienced the same coaching structure, but studied different aspects of literacy. Each cohort selected two literacy focus topics to address in the coaching cycle. Additionally, each participant selected personal learning goals that aligned with one of the two focus topics and/or another area they were interested in pursuing with the literacy coach. How the individual cohorts selected their focus topics is discussed below.

Cohort One. This cohort consisted of five third grade teachers and one special education collaboration teacher. These teachers went into the coaching experience knowing they would like to select literature circles as one of their focus topics. They had thought about trying literature circles the previous school year, but were not able to find time to do the research and pull together the needed resources. After the first inquiry meeting in the CCCM, where they discussed student observations and prioritized areas of need, the teachers agreed it would be necessary to help students work independently and apply their learning in a self-directed fashion before beginning literature circles. They decided to first focus on metacognition to make students more aware of their reading behaviors and then study how to best implement literature circles as the second focus area.

Cohort Two. The second cohort was a group of four fourth grade teachers, one special education collaboration teacher, and one English Language Learner (ELL) teacher. This cohort had a more difficult time deciding what aspects of literacy they wanted to focus on in the CCCM. After the first inquiry meeting, the teachers agreed that writing and comprehension were the greatest areas of need for
their students. Five of the six teachers wanted to focus on writing first, so the group agreed that the first topic would be writing and the second focus topic would pertain to reading. However, once this decision was made, the group was torn about which aspect of writing to focus on. Because many of the teachers felt that their students' basic writing abilities were low (difficultly writing more than a few sentences, sentences that did not make sense or were not grammatically accurate, etc.), they choose to research editing and revising. After reading about editing and revising during the research meeting, the group changed their plan because they felt their students needed to learn to develop and refine their ideas. Everyone agreed that focusing on ideas would motivate their students to write and then they could focus on helping students edit and revise their writing. The second focus was on reading comprehension. The group decided they would like to learn more about the reading workshop model and how they can best improve their students' comprehension in shared and guided reading. Through this research they selected the strategy of questioning to guide lesson planning in the reading workshop.

Cohort Three. This group was comprised of four second grade teachers and one special education teacher. They were unsure about what topics they wanted to focus on and some of the participants did not speak readily. Eventually, two of the teachers expressed concern that their students were lacking some basic writing skills, such as using punctuation and capitalization. The group agreed that they would first focus on editing writing and incorporating resources given by their district the previous year. During the second half of the coaching cycle, they decided to switch their focus to strategy instruction, specifically looking at how they could teach
students to draw inferences while reading. The group wanted students to focus on
discussing and answering open-ended questions as well as motivate students to read.

*Cohort Four.* This group of five fifth grade teachers felt strongly that reading
should be the primary focus of their inquiry. They used disaggregated data from
student reading test scores as well as their classroom observations to identify that
students' lack of metacognition was impacting their reading performance. After the
research meeting, the group decided they wanted to use the strategy of inferencing to
help students become more metacognitive. Then they chose to shift their focus to
another aspect of reading, by learning about ways to engage students in meaningful
literacy stations. They opted to have a share session, as opposed to another
demonstration lesson, so they could discuss numerous ideas for literacy stations and
devise a plan to implement the best ideas during the reading workshop.

The table below summarizes the focus topics addressed in each cohort.
Table 4

*Literacy Focus Topics by Cohort*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Group Literacy Focus Area #1</th>
<th>Group Literacy Focus Area #2</th>
<th>Personal Literacy Focus Areas</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Metacognition (R)</td>
<td>Literature Circles (R)</td>
<td>Literacy Stations</td>
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<td>Word Study</td>
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<td>Ideas for Writing</td>
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<td>Reading Assessments</td>
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<td>Planning Shared Reading</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Developing Ideas (W)</td>
<td>Reading Workshop (R)</td>
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<td>Independent Reading</td>
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<td>Revising and Editing</td>
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<td>Guided Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Capitalization and Punctuation (W)</td>
<td>Inferencing (R)</td>
<td>Word Study</td>
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<td>Managing Writing Workshop</td>
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<td>Writing Process</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Metacognition and Inferencing (R)</td>
<td>Literacy Stations (R)</td>
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<td>Word Study</td>
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(R)= Reading Focus  (W)= Writing Focus
Summary of Findings for Question One

Research Question 1- What are participants’ perceptions and feelings about using this literacy coaching model as a vehicle for professional development?

Applicable and Useful Learning

There are definitely benefits to working in a coaching cohort versus traditional professional development...this was real; this is what is happening in our room. [P.I.Gr.3]

A large part of the criticism of traditional professional development is the top down approach that often excludes teachers in the learning process (Brown, 2008; Lieberman, 1995). This exclusion stems from the fact that traditional professional development is typically designed without teacher input, implemented outside the context of teachers’ practice, and delivered without time for collaboration or follow-up support (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Robb, 2000). These factors influence the negative perception that professional development has among many educators in the field. In their study on professional development’s impact on teacher development in the United States and abroad, Wei et al. (2009) found that most U.S. teachers “were not enormously enthusiastic about the usefulness of the professional development they received” with only 59 percent stating that their content-learning opportunities were useful (p.34). The first research question in this study attempted to address the issue of teacher perception about professional development by looking at what teachers thought and felt about learning in a coaching cohort.

One finding from this study was participants, regardless of experience in the classroom or knowledge of literacy, generally expressed positive feelings about working in a coaching cohort. Unlike the findings of teachers’ perceptions of
traditional professional development, the teachers in this study often noted that they saw the experience as both applicable and useful to their practice. In all four panel interviews, participants discussed an aspect of the CCCM they saw as helpful. Individual interviews also confirmed this finding. One teacher stated:

I think it was a great experience. It really helped me as much as anything ever has. [I.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher shared her initial feelings about working in the coaching cohort and then how her and her team’s feeling changed:

I think for myself personally and for the team as well, we looked at it at first as, ‘Ughhh. More meetings during planning time.’ But it really was planning. It forced us to sit down together and really take a look at what we were teaching and doing and I think it was very beneficial. [I.I.Gr.3]

A third participant noted how it was not only helpful to her, but also to her students:

I think it was very worthwhile. I feel like I got a lot out of it and my kids got a lot out of it...I do feel like the kids are benefiting because it has changed my perspective and the way that I am thinking and listening to them. [I.I.Gr.5]

Other teachers went on to express that they were disappointed when the cohort ended and they wished it could have continued longer. One participant mentioned she felt the experience was “worth the time and a lot was being accomplished” [I.I.Gr.5]. Teachers described the experience as “a breath of fresh air” [I.I.Gr.5] and “having a lot of positives” [P.I.Gr.3]. Other participants stated that working in the CCCM “is like having someone on your side” [I.I.Gr.3] and the cohort “pushed me to take more of a risk in my classroom” [I.I.Gr.5].
Although all cohorts discussed aspects of the CCCM that were useful to them, one participant’s feelings differed from the others. While this teacher agreed that the literacy topics were applicable and useful, she stated:

I have taught 27 years so I didn’t impact me a great deal. I mean I’ve seen it, done it, tried it, retried it. I enjoyed the lessons but I can’t say it was a ‘wow.’ It might have been for someone who hasn’t taught as long. [P.I.Gr.2]

This viewpoint was not reflective of other veteran teachers, however. Experienced teachers in the study shared that the CCCM helped them make connections with previous learning, answered questions that they had, and helped them grow professionally.

Both veteran and novice teachers shared specifically why the CCCM was applicable and useful to their practice. These responses fell into three categories: gaining new ideas, receiving follow-up, and ownership of learning. Each category is expounded on below.

**New Ideas.** Participants from each cohort mentioned that the CCCM was useful to them because they acquired new ideas to use in their teaching. The participants in cohort three all agreed this was one of the most beneficial aspects of the model stating:

We got some new ideas and saw a different approach or a different method. [P.I.Gr.2]

Individual participants agreed they gained new ideas in the CCCM. One novice teacher mentioned that:

Doing this at the beginning of the year has been good for me because now I have my ideas. Now I can see how they actually flow out. [I.I.Gr.4]
Two veteran teachers shared their perspectives stating:

I thought it gave me another person's viewpoint, which is important. I also got fresh ideas about how to approach things—even just how to use tone of voice and dialogue when teaching. [P.I.Gr.4]

I thought it was going to be a rehash of things we had already done, but it wasn't. They were all new strategies, new ways to think about reading, which was great. It helped me understand what the county expects and what reading has become. It was all new things that helped us to teach reading in a different and kind of a unique way. [I.I.Gr.3]

Many participants made comparisons between their experiences with other forms of professional development and their experiences with the CCCM. Some teachers discussed the fact that, contrary to their experiences in the CCCM, traditional professional development often does not give them new ideas or apply to what they need to learn. Many teachers in cohort four expressed this belief. One participant explained by saying:

When we sometimes go to a county workshop it's like, 'Well, I already do this. Why do I need to sit in this workshop? You haven't given me anything new.' [P.I.Gr.5]

Another participant from cohort four elaborated on this belief by discussing other professional development at the school level:

Our other meetings are just, 'Here are the new ideas. Here are the new strategies.' I'm like, 'Well, I'm not there yet.' so it didn't benefit me. The meeting didn't benefit me. [I.I.Gr.5]

Other participants discussed times when they attended traditional professional development and they did get new ideas, but admitted that, unlike with the CCCM, they rarely used these new ideas. Cohort one seemed to agree this happens to them stating:
The county gives you good stuff, but we usually go to an all-day thing where they give you a binder and you don’t have time to go through it and it gets shoved on a shelf somewhere and you do nothing else with it. [P.I.Gr.3]

Both veteran and novice teachers mentioned that time to process the new ideas seemed to be part of the issue with traditional forms of professional development. One teacher mentioned that:

A lot of times you go to the county workshops and things and you get that 45 minutes and you say, ‘Oh, that’s cool. That’s an interesting idea.’ But it’s not something that you tend to bring back and start using. Somehow once you get back into the hustle and bustle of your day it gets lost—an awful lot of the time. [I.I.Gr.5]

Another teacher corroborated this experience:

Because so many times I do have ideas when we’re doing professional development. I’m often idea-driven, but by the time I actually get to the classroom I have usually lost those ideas. [I.I.Gr.4]

*Follow-up.* The comparisons between the CCCM and traditional professional development led to the second category of receiving follow-up. This aspect of the coaching model seemed to make a big difference in many teachers’ perceptions of the experience. In both the panel interviews as well as some individual interviews, participants discussed the importance of learning about a new topic or idea and then being able to go back into their classroom and immediately try it out. A number of participants spoke passionately about why follow-up was so critical to their professional learning. An experienced teacher explained the group’s thinking:

When the coach gave us an idea, she knew she was going to have to show us or go through with it in a classroom setting. Because it is easy to say, ‘Pull your group over here and do this.’ But to actually do it is a completely different thing. So it was nice to see it followed through with. [P.I.Gr.2]

A teacher new to the grade level said:
For me personally, it motivated me to try new things. Having someone follow-up with you was probably one of the most important things because I can try it, but if I don’t have anyone to follow-up or ask me how it is going or anything like that it is like, ‘What’s the point in trying it.’ because you don’t know if you are doing it right. This allowed me to say, ‘I tried this…it didn’t work.’ So then it was, ‘Here’s plan B then.’ That was good thing. [I.I.Gr.5]

A number of the novice teachers or those new to their current grade level discussed how follow-up helped them learn more than they would have if the ideas had been presented in a traditional professional development format. These teachers found it helpful to have a coach to discuss how to adjust things that were not working or to discuss alternative ways to implement an idea.

Ownership of Learning. In three of the four panel interviews, participants discussed the importance of having input in the CCCM. Teachers in these three cohorts were acutely aware that many of their professional development opportunities happened to them instead of being created with and by them. Cohort two felt very strongly that having ownership was the key to making the learning applicable and useful to them. One participant in the group explained:

It was what we were looking for. We did the research part. We did the planning. We thought about what we wanted to see and the areas of weakness. I feel like we had so much more ownership—we had our hands on the whole thing rather than [the coach] just saying, ‘This is what I am going to show you’ or ‘This is what we are going to do.’ I felt that we had some control or power. [P.I.Gr.4]

Cohort one agreed stating:

We sat down on day one and talked about what goals we wanted to accomplish with our group and our grade, and that was crucial. [P.I.Gr.3]

Some of the participants in cohort four elaborated on this idea of ownership by discussing the personal nature of learning in a coaching cohort. One participant
discussed how the CCCM allowed her to create personal learning goals for her teaching. She felt that this was different from much of the professional development that she received at her school, because usually it was focused on the needs of specific students—not her needs. She felt that the personal focus on her teaching helped her learn more and be more effective in the classroom. Another teacher in cohort four discussed the personal nature of the CCCM in another way. She stated that:

This makes you actually look at yourself, which is not always easy. You are asked some pretty tough questions, and you have to really reflect on what you are doing and ways that maybe you could improve. It starts as a challenge, and it turns into a benefit because the more you look at what you are doing and reflect on the way you are teaching, the more the kids benefit. [I.I.Gr.5]

It is important to note that it did not seem to make a difference if participants had an extensive literacy education or a limited literacy background. Regardless of previous literacy knowledge, participants who expressed the viewpoints above made it clear that they wanted to participate in making decisions about their learning. Even some of the novice teachers clearly expressed this desire with one participant stating that in the coaching cohort, “I had a voice.” [I.I.Gr.4].

**Personalized Learning**

*I think it always depends on the children and the school—on their needs. Not every school is going to have the same needs, and not every classroom is going to have the same needs, and so I think coaching is more individualized. It was not generic.* [P.I.Gr.3]

The literature on effective professional development has established the need for teachers’ learning to be connected to their work experiences and the context of their practice (Easton, 2008; Little, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2003). This type of job-
embedded learning requires a differentiated approach to professional development, which individualizes the learning within the job setting. A second finding in this study regarding teachers’ perceptions about learning in the CCCM was that many participants felt coaching was a more personalized form of professional development. Teachers in all of the cohorts discussed the value of the CCCM addressing their needs through multiple aspects of the coaching experience. Some teachers discussed the importance of working with their grade level team:

You get a chance to sit with your group and talk and it just made it more personalized than you being out in a big old workshop and you are just sitting there listening...rather than just sitting in a big workshop where you are listening and taking notes. So it is just more personalized. [P.I.Gr.2]

Other teachers reflected on the impact of the one-on-one meetings with the literacy coach stating:

It was nice to meet as a whole group, but then with the coach individually, because all of us have different strengths and weaknesses or concerns that we wanted to talk about that the whole group didn’t need to discuss. [P.I.Gr.3]

And still other teachers commented on the fact that the experience took place within their school environment:

I think it was definitely the engagement piece that made it more beneficial than other professional development. That it was on site, with your own kids, with a collaborative team, in your building. Not somewhere away from what the real world is for you. [P.I.Gr.4]

While participants in each cohort discussed different structural aspects of the CCCM that made the experience more personalized to their team or themselves, they also attributed their positive feelings to three more subtle elements of the model:
responsive coaching, focused learning, and teaching in action. How each of these elements impacted their perceptions is discussed below.

Responsive Coaching. All types of teachers in this study discussed the attitude and demeanor of the coach as impacting their feelings about learning in a coaching cohort. Teachers in every category: novice, veteran, new to the grade level, experienced at the grade level, limited literacy background, and extensive literacy learning all commented on the responsive nature of the coach. Some participants focused on the role the coach played in helping the group work together. Cohort four felt strongly about this stating:

The coach was the facilitator. She would begin a conversation and kind of keep it going in a particular direction. [I.I.Gr.5]

Another participant in this cohort discussed how the coach accomplished this and why this was important to their learning:

We are a very talkative team, so we easily get off track, and she was very patient with us and very kindly brought us back. She didn’t get angry, and she probably had the right to, because sometimes we would really get off track...but she was always able to bring us back to the topic, and she did it in a very pleasant way. [P.I.Gr.5]

Cohort one also discussed the important role the coach had in facilitating the group’s discussion and learning. This group had a clearly defined goal before the coaching cycle began, but they were having trouble finding time to implement it on their own. They felt that working in the CCCM allowed them to meet their goal with the coach’s help. One participant summarized this feeling saying:

Working with the coach was such an ease. I mean it was looking at what we really needed to focus on and what it was that we really wanted to work on this year and taking one perspective and one goal and meeting that. And I think that was huge. [I.I.Gr.3]
Another participant in cohort two discussed how the coach’s role impacted her personally as well as her team’s ability to work together. She stated:

In the past I have always been the one that kind of gets talked over. And I think in the beginning the coach saw that, and there was one day that I was trying to say something, and I was trying to say something, and everybody else kept saying it, and the coach was like, ‘I would like to hear from Mary.’ I think that actually just helped our team, and it helped us work better together, and that helped me get along better in my head with everything. [I.I.Gr.4]

Another aspect of responsive coaching that participants mentioned was the support the coach provided. Some teachers felt this support came in the form of resources from the coach. One participant explained:

The book that the coach gave us all copies of was short enough, easy enough of a read. I mean I haven’t read everything in it, but I really have read it, and if the coach had given me something that was this big [using hands], honestly, it would have sat there just because I don’t have the time. But that was a great resource and easy enough that I could do it. [P.I.Gr.3]

Another participant discussed the coach’s response to their requests for materials:

Whenever I would say, ‘I need…’ there was somebody to help. Even when I didn’t have time during the week to do it, I could say, ‘I have really been trying to find…’ and before the week was out I would get an email from the coach saying, ‘I found these things. Maybe you would like to take a look at them and see if you could use them.’ So it was somebody else to kind of help me a little bit. [I.I.Gr.5]

Cohort one reverberated the importance of the coach’s support in finding resources:

And it was nice to have the coach say, ‘Here’s what we are thinking, and here’s our ideas’ and then say, ‘Ok. I’ll go pull stuff for you, and I will provide you with what you need to get started.’ I mean that is so nice. [P.I.Gr.3]

Other teachers noted that the feedback the coach provided was the most helpful form of support. Many participants in cohort four discussed how the feedback they received from the coach impacted them. One teacher mentioned that:
The coach was so quick about getting us ideas and feedback…it was like, ‘Whatever you need…I’m at your service kind of thing.’ She would say, ‘You mentioned you were looking for…so here is this!’ That was a huge benefit. [P.I.Gr.5]

Another member of the team stated:

I think it was very helpful, especially the individual meeting with the coach. She really helped me look at the centers that I was thinking about using. We talked a lot. It was somebody to bounce ideas off of and to encourage as well as give me some other ideas. It was, ‘If that’s not working, maybe you could try…’ or ‘Have you thought about this…’ [I.I.Gr.5]

Cohort one also mentioned the importance of feedback from the coach. One participant explained her viewpoint:

I have quite a bit of background in reading, but what I found as a frustration was going to a new county, and expectations being different, and trying to adjust to the way that I want to teach reading with the way they want reading to be, and just making sure I’m doing everything right. I appreciated being able to voice concerns with the coach and her give feedback on how we can make it all go together. I really appreciated that. [P.I.Gr.3]

For many of the participants, the fact that their learning was personalized and mediated by a responsive coach seemed to greatly impact their feelings about the CCCM. Although most of these participants admitted that they were unenthusiastic about the coaching cohort at the beginning, they were pleasantly surprised by the end of the cycle. Many participants stated that their expectation was that “somebody else is going to tell us what we are doing wrong” [I.I.Gr.5]. Instead, they found the coach’s role was focused on helping them meet their learning goals.

Focused Learning. Another way participants felt their learning was personalized was the focus on a specific aspect of one content area. Many participants expressed the fragmented nature of much of their professional
development, with goals continually changing and only short periods of time devoted to a specific topic. One teacher stated:

I think because this is a smaller group, and it is intensely focused on one thing, and it lasts for a longer period of time. It's not one 45 minute or hour-long class, and then that's it. You do a little bit each week and through the weeks. It gives you a lot more time to learn more. [I.I.Gr.5]

Other teachers noted that their team is rarely able to learn exclusively about a singular topic:

It is kind of nice to sit down and make a point to focus on something. Because we meet together as a team, but you can’t focus on anything. So this was nice to have time to focus on one subject. [P.I.Gr.3]

Some teachers, especially those new to the grade level or in their first few years of teaching, found it helpful to be able to focus on one aspect of literacy:

I liked being able to focus on one thing. I think a lot of times I am so overwhelmed because I am trying to learn to do all of these things, but with this you could just focus on one thing. Once I feel comfortable with that, I am going to try this. It was nice not to feel the pressure that I had to implement everything at once...that I could just focus. [P.I.Gr.4]

Teaching in Action. In addition to responsive coaching behaviors and the ability to focus exclusively on one aspect of literacy, all cohorts discussed the importance of modeling. Many participants noted that this was the missing piece of most traditional professional development. One teacher stated that:

So often we sit in a chair in an auditorium and listen to theory, but we don’t see it in action. It really is important to see it happening. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher reiterated the importance modeling has on the personalization of teacher learning:
When you are just sitting there listening to information just thrown at you, you aren't going to retain it as well as if you are talking specifically about what is going on, you are watching it, you are modeling it. [P.I.Gr.3]

Participants in each panel interview discussed why seeing the coach teach the lesson impacted their feelings about working in the CCCM. Cohort one felt that seeing how the coach adapted the lesson with the students was key:

Seeing the lesson with Kim’s class—sure, some of them were not interested, but it was real. Like when the coach said, ‘Now who can tell me what you learned about book clubs?’ and they all just sat there and stared. But on a video some kid would just have this perfect answer, and it was so much better to see what a good teacher would do in that situation as opposed to watching this little model classroom. [P.I.Gr.3]

Participants from cohort two believed observing the lesson with students in their school gave them richer insights, because they knew the students intimately. This was an important factor in their learning:

The observation is great—to be able to see it. And I think it was good seeing it with our students. Not seeing it with a group of students that are nothing like our students. And we noticed things that we wouldn’t have seen otherwise since we know the kids. [P.I.Gr.4]

Cohort three remarked about the benefits of observing different teaching styles:

I think it was nice just to see someone else model and see how they do it. You know, because we all have our own teaching styles and how we do things, so it was nice to see someone else do it. We never get the opportunity in the classroom to ever see another teacher teach. So that was a good thing to see the coach model that. [P.I.Gr.2]

A participant in cohort four expressed that having the coach model the lesson to see how it would look in practice was extremely helpful, and most of the other teachers in the group agreed. The participant said:

Going in and watching the coach model the lesson and watching Valenta’s class do the stations—for me it was the most helpful. We
don’t get a chance to go into each other’s classrooms. We might pop in to get this or that, but not really seeing it in action. [P.I.Gr.5]

Although all cohorts seemed to agree that seeing teaching in action was very beneficial, a few participants in cohort three felt having the coach model in their own classroom was more distracting, because they were overly focused on their students’ behavior. Not all teachers in the cohort felt this was true for them, but they validated their colleagues’ opinion that it can be hard to focus on the students’ learning when you are instinctively monitoring their behavior.

*Facilitating Peer Collaboration*

*I feel that it has been a non-judgmental experience. Everyone has been very open-minded and receptive. It has been an open dialogue—just as kids’ weaknesses should be discussed without penalty, and I liked that.* [P.I.Gr.4]

While professional development has been shown to be most effective when it is ongoing and job-embedded in nature, the literature also details the impact of having teachers work collaboratively with their peers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Rosemary, Roskos, & Landreth, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2003). Another finding in this study was participants perceived the coaching experience positively because they were actively engaged in their learning. This finding supports the work of Choy and Chen (1998) and Garet et al. (2001) who documented a connection between collaboration and learning. One participant reflected on her experience in the CCCM in this way:

I really do feel that it was a great experience, and I think it would be more beneficial for the county to work in this way as far as teacher training and learning new things, as opposed to the traditional ‘Everyone look and listen and I’ll show you what I do and take what you like.’ There is more interaction, and it is more focused on what is working in your own classroom. It is more personal. [I.I.Gr.5]
Other teachers also noted the importance of interacting with their peers in the CCCM and how working together allowed them to feel more comfortable sharing openly and honestly. One participant explained how this outcome of the coaching experience affected her team:

I think it was building more community, especially with two of us being new this year, just being able to hear other ideas. [I.I.Gr.5]

Participants in this study discussed the ways that the CCCM facilitated peer collaboration and why they felt this impacted their learning. Their thoughts were generally focused around the categories of purposeful talk, working together with colleagues, and sharing ideas.

*Purposeful Talk.* One group in particular felt strongly that working in the coaching cohort changed the dynamic of their team and increased purposeful talk about their practice. During the panel interview and both individual interviews with participants from cohort four, the discussion turned to the types of conversations they were having. One teacher explained:

The benefit is that it definitely encourages us to talk to each other about what we are doing in the classroom a lot more than we normally do. [P.I.Gr.5]

Another teacher elaborated on this idea stating:

It is nice having that conversation that sometimes as teachers we don’t always get to have. You assume that *you* are doing what I’m doing, and *you* are doing what I’m doing, and *you* know everything that I know anyway, so there is no need for me to share. So it was nice to have those conversations. [P.I.Gr.5]

In an individual interview, a veteran member of the group elaborated on the impact she felt that purposeful talk was having on her team:
To be really honest, our team has always been a team of individuals. We talk about the things that have to be done. We talk about the [testing] data and what we need to do to do better, but as far as actually sitting down and taking time to discuss teaching and learning—we haven’t spent a lot of time doing that. And this kind of got us started. I see a closeness with the team, which is kind of an important thing, which I hadn’t seen before. [I.I.Gr.5]

A new member of the team agreed that their conversations were changing stating:

I know that it allowed us to hear what everyone is doing in their classrooms. We really don’t know what so-and-so is doing in her classroom, because we don’t have the opportunity to go and see, because we are teaching at the same time. So coming together to talk about it, I think it allowed us to communicate more. [I.I.Gr.5]

Although members of cohort one mentioned that one of the benefits of the CCCM was time to discuss and talk with their peers, cohort four in particular expressed the significant impact purposeful talk had on their learning.

Working Together with Colleagues. Another aspect of peer collaboration some participants valued was working with colleagues on their own team. This seemed to be most important to teachers at school A. Both cohorts one and two discussed the value of the CCCM allowing them to learn in this way. Some of the participants in cohort one felt they “worked really well as a team” [P.I.Gr.3] and that, although they have different teaching styles, it was helpful to hear they “all have different opinions” [I.I.Gr.3]. Another participant from this group also mentioned that she appreciated meeting in the CCCM as a team and then working with her colleagues to “take back what the coach brought to the table” [I.I.Gr.3], incorporating new learning into their classroom practice.
The participants in cohort two all agreed that working with their team and discussing their own students was a beneficial aspect of the model. One participant explained it this way:

I think we were all really supportive of each other, because we are all on the same playing field. In other words, we have similar students and similar difficulties, and so we understand what each other is going through. It was kind of nice that we were all in it together. [P.I.Gr.4]

Both participants who were individually interviewed from cohort two also commented on their feelings about working with their colleagues. Both participants acknowledged that they didn’t always agree with the members of their team, but that working together “helps you to see different perspectives” [I.I. Gr.4] and brought the new member of the team into the group. One participant also shared that due to her social anxiety disorder, it is usually difficult for her to open up with her team. She felt that the CCCM impacted her ability to work productively with the group:

I think over time it helped me express myself better to my team and everybody in general. I don’t feel as scared to open my mouth as I used to. And even now, I say what I want to say, and I’m not as afraid to speak up. [I.I.Gr.4]

**Sharing Ideas.** While working together with their colleagues was an important part of peer collaboration for School A, having an opportunity to share ideas was a central component for School B. Both cohort three and four discussed that having the opportunity to share ideas impacted their perception of working in the CCCM. One veteran teacher from cohort three stated that:

You get to hear Pam’s ideas and Ralph’s ideas and what they are really thinking, and it is an exchange. [P.I.Gr.2]

Participants in cohort four found that the CCCM helped them realize they all had ideas to share with their colleagues. One participant explained, “everybody has
something new to offer that somebody else hasn’t tried.” [P.I.Gr.5]. Another teacher shared that the CCCM “brought us closer together as far as sharing ideas” [I.I.Gr.5]. After working in the cohort, participants reported that they began sharing ideas with each other more freely. One participant described how this impacted her:

I liked the feeling when someone needed to borrow something. They could come see if maybe I have something they could use, ‘Go right ahead...please do!’ It might mean that I have something, I used it at one point in time, and it worked for me, so maybe someone else can make it work for them. [P.I.Gr.5]

Another participant from this cohort explained the coach’s role in helping the group begin to share ideas:

What the coach and I talked about was very specific to my classroom, but then she also had that insight into what was going on in everybody’s classroom. So when we were all together, she would say, ‘Would you mind sharing what happened in your room or what you told me?’ and so she facilitated a lot of good ideas that came from the classroom, the fifth grade classrooms. [I.I.Gr.5]

Finding Time for Learning

Time is always the issue. [P.I.Gr.3]

Although the vast majority of the participants in this study had positive feelings about working in the CCCM, the issue of time for learning was discussed in each cohort interview. This finding confirms Wei et al.’s (2009) research on the allocation of time for teacher professional learning and collaboration. They found, on average, U.S. teachers spend about 80 percent of their contract time teaching students compared to teachers in other countries that averaged only 60 percent of their time teaching. Because teachers in American schools spend so much of their time with students, it becomes difficult to find appropriate amounts of time for professional development. All four groups in this study noted that finding time to meet in the
coaching cohort was challenging, but some participants felt this was minimized by the benefit that they got out of participating. One member of cohort one explained it this way:

And even though this took up some of our time, our planning time, which was a drawback for sure, I think it was also a benefit. Kathleen had seen and mentioned book clubs last year, but it is just impossible to do everything. If it hadn’t been for the coach, we wouldn’t have gotten it started. [P.I.Gr.3]

Another participant stated:

I think initially it was the thought of, ‘Oh my gosh...time.’ You know, time to plan and meet is always a challenge. But then in the long run, it was purposeful. [I.I.Gr.3]

Other participants felt that “always having to meet” [P.I.Gr.2] was difficult or consistently finding the time was the “most difficult challenge” [I.I.Gr.5]. Another participant explained that “the only drawback was time” [P.I.Gr.5]. Some participants felt that time was an issue because the cohort did not last as long as they wanted it to. One teacher mentioned that “being able to do it longer would be better.” [P.I.Gr.4]. Another teacher stated:

Part of me is saying, ‘I’m going to get my planning time back on Thursdays.’ But then part of me is saying, ‘It would be beneficial if we continued.’ And I don’t always feel like that. [P.I.Gr.3]

It seemed that regardless of how beneficial participants felt the CCCM was to their professional development, most expressed that finding time for learning is always a difficult challenge due to the structure of their workday.

Competing Commitments. Participants in all four cohorts clearly expressed frustration with the time constraints imposed on them. Teachers in both School A and School B felt that their “planning time has been cut a lot shorter this year”
[P.I.Gr.3] due to meetings and other obligations during the week. One teacher explained:

We meet Monday. We meet Tuesday. We meet Wednesday. And Thursday meetings in the morning. [I.I.Gr.5]

Each cohort had different types of scheduling issues, but they seemed to have the same effect on the teachers' attitudes and their stress level. The participants in cohort two were in agreement that they were under a lot of pressure to find time for everything:

The scheduling was crazy with the [holiday] play and the interruptions and the other coaches that we are meeting with. It has been very exhausting. [P.I.Gr.4]

Participants in cohort 4 also felt this time pressure:

There were times where we were overwhelmed with other meetings so it was like, "Oh. Great. We have another meeting." [I.I.Gr.5]

In addition to the pressure that many participants felt due to time constraints, some participants were also frustrated because they were not able to participate as fully as they would have liked in the CCCM. Both cohorts at School B expressed this sentiment. A participant from cohort four stated:

This year our time was so encroached upon. It was very hard to always get us all together because of the other things that we are required to do...we couldn’t always be here. There were a couple of times where I couldn’t be here or Melanie couldn’t be here, and that wasn’t anything that we could have changed. So that was a drawback...not having the time to utilize it maybe more than we actually did this year. [P.I.Gr.5]

A participant from cohort three stated:

This was not the only thing that we were being asked to do, so to focus all of our energy into this was kind of hard. We’re also focusing on math. Two of our planning days are taken during the week. So we
were not as excited about it as we might have been if we weren’t being asked to do all these other things. [P.I.Gr.2]

The limitations placed on teachers’ time seemed to significantly impact, not only their perceptions of the CCCM, but their feelings about professional learning. Most teachers did not feel they had enough time in their workday to fulfill their teaching obligations as well as continue to grow professionally. The feeling that they were being asked to learn in many areas at the same time compounded this problem.

*Coaching Modifications.* The issues surrounding time for learning led to many of the suggestions participants made about modifying the CCCM. Most teachers stated that they would not change anything about the model, but a few shared ideas they thought might improve teacher learning. One participant mentioned that she would like to see the CCCM offered over the summer in conjunction with summer school programs. She felt participants would have more time to observe and discuss without having to rush back to the classroom. Other participants from cohort two noted that they liked the current structure of the model, but would like to see a few more weeks included in the design so teachers had more time to implement and reflect on the lessons they observed. One participant explained it this way:

> I feel like we could have gotten even more out of it if we had the reflection time to take it and plan with it. We planned with the coach, but then we had to plan for us...maybe spreading the meetings out over two or three weeks. When we came back we could say, ‘Ok. We tried this.’ and ‘I bombed that.’ [P.I.Gr.4]

A participant in cohort three suggested having teachers from two different schools work together in the model. Although a few participants agreed that they liked the idea, most decided that it would not be cost effective or improve time limitations. Another teacher mentioned an additional component that could be added
to the model. She suggested having the coach work with each teacher in the cohort for an entire week so there was more time for in-depth learning.

Participants in cohort one, two, and four all expressed interest in the CCCM lasting longer than nine weeks. While most teachers felt that the time they spent in the cohort was beneficial, many felt that there was more to learn. Participants made comments such as, “I would have liked to have gone on farther.” [I.I.Gr.4] and, “It would be nice to have year after year.” [I.I. Gr.3] and, “Can we make it last longer?” [I.I.Gr.5].

Summary of Findings for Question Two

Research Question 2- How does this literacy coaching model influence participants’ perceived gains in knowledge and skills about literacy?

Expanding Teacher Understanding

It was unexpected learning! I thought it was going to be more of a review, but there were a lot of new skills there—new aspects that I hadn’t heard of. [I.I.Gr.3]

One of the goals of the literacy coaching movement has clearly been to increase teachers’ knowledge about effective literacy practices (International Reading Association, 2004; Moran, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Over the past ten years many states, districts, and local schools have begun documenting the impact of their coaching initiatives on teachers’ literacy learning (Brown et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2007; Rand, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2003; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009). These initiatives have shown mixed results depending on the structure of the coaching model and the way literacy coaches spent their time; however, the coaching movement has thrived based on the assumption that coaching will lead to expert
teaching, which in turn will improve students' literacy achievement (International Reading Association, 2004; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008).

The second question in this study addressed the implicit first step in the assumption about coaching's impact on teachers: that literacy coaching must first expand teachers' knowledge and skills about literacy before impacting their teaching. Participants in this study spoke at length about the impact that the CCCM had on their knowledge of specific aspects of literacy. One consistent finding among all cohorts and teachers was that this model indeed impacted teachers' understanding about literacy in numerous ways and on a wide range of topics. Participants' explanation of the ways that the CCCM expanded their understanding is discussed through the following categories: rethinking beliefs, developing new insight, making connections, and gathering ideas.

**Rethinking Beliefs.** Teachers in each cohort discussed how their beliefs about teaching and learning changed. This was especially true for some of the veteran teachers with limited literacy education. One veteran teacher in cohort four gave an example of how she shifted one of her beliefs about teaching reading:

> For me the coaching helped me focus on the kids and listening to their reasons behind things. As opposed to, 'Here is the answer.' Now it's, 'Why did you get that answer?' And listening to their thoughts because sometimes they can give a really rational explanation for the wrong answer. Listening to them—because sometimes the difference is schema. [I.I.Gr.5]

She explained how the CCCM helped her examine her previous beliefs:

> I think it made me take a closer look at the way I was teaching reading, especially because that was our focus as a group and my focus with the individual meetings with the coach. I think it made me take a hard look at what I was doing and things that I could do a little better—
things that were working and maybe the courage to try a few new things that I hadn’t tried before. [I.I.Gr.5]

A veteran teacher in cohort one reflected on her previous belief that since she had been teaching for so long, she was aware of all of the best ways to teach her students to be good readers. She realized:

I haven’t taken that many classes in the past with reading, and I have taught reading all different ways, but I realize now that there are new strategies out there. Even though we are still teaching reading 36 years later, there are different ways to teach it through the research they have done on it. [I.I.Gr.3]

A veteran participant in cohort two explained how her thinking about teaching writing has changed because she stopped assuming that students should already have certain capabilities when they entered fourth grade. She explained it this way:

By fourth grade we have the assumption that things [about writing] have been drilled into them all along, and I think we are rethinking our assumptions about everything now, which is good. We are trying ultimately to go back and start from square one and show vulnerability with our kids—that the teacher didn’t do it perfectly the first time. I think it is really important to show weakness and to show that it is not perfect the first time. [P.I.Gr.4]

In addition to the veteran participants with limited literacy education, some participants with an extensive literacy background found they rethought some of their beliefs. A teacher in cohort one explained how this impacted her understanding of teaching reading:

It made me realize that you can’t just assume that they are aware of their thinking. They have to be shown. [P.I.Gr.3]

Another teacher with an extensive literacy background in cohort two explained how she began to rethink the way she teaches writing:

Most of my focus, when we did this initially, was on the writing. It was funny, because when we first started talking I put areas of need:
conventions and spelling and academic vocabulary. But what I liked was the fact that the coach helped us to see that it can come later...it was more about the ideas and the scaffolding of the lessons and helping them start with the ideas and building on that. The conventions can come later. There is more to writing than just the finished product. I think we get so focused on the assessment and the grading part and the final product that we forget about all the other parts about writing. [I.I.Gr.4]

This participant also described a new way that she has begun to think about introducing comprehension strategies:

I liked starting with the unknown object and then going into the picture book. I had never thought about bringing in an object to start discussing questioning. It made me look at the strategies differently. You don’t just have to center it around reading. You can still make observations and inferences and questions with just a simple object. [P.I.Gr.4]

One of the novice teachers also found that she changed some of her beliefs after her experiences in the CCCM. She expressed her initial frustration when the group wanted to focus on writing, instead of reading. She felt that reading was more important, because her students take the state reading test in fourth grade. She described how she rethought her beliefs about reading and writing in this way:

I think my whole viewpoint has just changed on how I view writing and reading and their importance to one another. I really saw that if you are a better reader, it helps your writing. And if you are a better writer, I think, it in turn helps your reading and your understanding. [I.I.Gr.4]

Developing New Insight. Some participants found that by rethinking their beliefs about literacy learning, they developed new insights into their practice. Other participants built on their previous beliefs to develop new insights into a particular aspect of literacy. Teachers in each panel interview as well as all the teachers interviewed individually mentioned some area of literacy they had begun to think
about in a new way. The topics they discussed varied based on the aspects of literacy their group had focused on or topics they had individually worked on with the coach.

Many of the participants’ insights centered on reading instruction. One reading topic that teachers discussed was comprehension. A number of teachers expressed they had never thought about teaching their students to be metacognitive or aware of their thinking while reading. A participant in cohort four thought this was “probably the biggest change in my instruction” [I.I.Gr.5]. Another participant realized how important it is for students to be aware of their thinking, because so often they are “just reading the words on the page” [P.I.Gr.3]. One teacher explained:

The metacognition activities give the kids something to grab a hold of instead of just talking about it hypothetically. You need to be thinking about your thinking, actually using something real that you can see. [P.I.Gr.3]

Other teachers talked about the reading strategy of inferring. Many of the teachers had taught their students about this strategy before, but perceived it differently after their experiences in the CCCM. One teacher in cohort three mentioned the importance of using concrete objects when teaching this and other comprehension strategies. She stated:

I have introduced inferencing before, but I hadn’t covered it like I should have because apparently they have got it down now. Before I had just breezed over it comparing it to a prediction, but after you have got some information. Now nobody seemed confused about it. [P.I.Gr.2]

Another teacher found that creating charts with the students when discussing inferencing helped them remember the strategy and how to use it when reading:

I learned about the value of making the anchor chart with the kids because usually I already write it out. But now I actually try to make it with them. [P.I.Gr.2]
Teachers in cohort one agreed with the previous teachers’ insights that making strategy instruction more concrete and using visual cues helped to increase participation and understanding with their students. One teacher explained her insight this way:

I think any time that you have visual cues and you are actively participating in your learning not just sitting at the tables, they are up and down and discussing it with each other, then they are learning from each other. It’s not just from me. [I.I.Gr.3]

A teacher in cohort four found her learning about strategy instruction changed the way she introduced lessons to her students. She also realized she needed to integrate her shared reading instruction into the work her students were doing in small groups:

I’m thinking more about the way I’m introducing new things and the way I’m following up. When we introduce something in shared reading then they are coming to the small group with something that is actually on their level. I reinforce the same thing that we have been talking about. [I.I.Gr.5]

Another teacher in cohort four developed a new insight about the importance of having guided reading groups to reinforce her teaching. She found this time allowed her to “figure out how students are thinking or why they are thinking a certain way” as well as “identify their weaknesses or their strengths” [P.I.Gr.5]. She also felt that small group reading instruction made her students more willing to take risks with their learning.

In addition to insights about reading instruction, some teachers also talked about how their understanding of writing instruction changed. Whereas participants’ insights about reading overlapped and in many cases were very similar, participants’
thoughts about writing were more individualized. Teachers mentioned things such as
“[I learned to break writing down into smaller, more manageable pieces]” [P.I.Gr.4] and, “the more ways that we can find to [teach aspects of writing] the better so we are not doing the same thing every time” [P.I.Gr.2]. Another teacher noted that she is “trying to get into students’ minds more with writing…to help me instruct them better” [I.I.Gr.4]. Yet another participant began to understand how to manage all of her students’ writing when they are not working at the same pace. She realized:

You don’t get everyone’s writing back around the same time, which is okay because they are all different. I have some who finished yesterday and some who are finishing today...some are still on rough drafts, but it is okay! [I.I.Gr.5]

A participant from cohort two discussed her realization about how she can help her students feel more comfortable with the process of writing. She noted at the beginning of the cohort that many of her students disliked writing and felt overwhelmed by the task. Some other participants in this cohort agreed with her insight. She explained it this way:

Thinking about writing in smaller increments can take some of the pressure off the children, because they see it as a big monster thing. They have to get all of these stages done. I think sometimes when you say, ‘You have a certain number of minutes to jot down the ideas that you think you might want to use in your writing.’ I think sometimes that helps free them a little bit from the problem of thinking of the huge idea with a huge amount of effort required. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher from this cohort shared her insight about writing and vocabulary development. She felt that vocabulary was a big concern for her students, and this was one reason she wanted to focus more heavily on reading in the CCCM. However, she discovered how she could improve her students’ vocabulary through her writing instruction as well:
So I realized writing can help build vocabulary, because we are looking for better word choices. We are looking for variety. And I see how if I focus on writing a little more than I have in the past, that it can help build vocabulary. [I.I.Gr.4]

Making Connections. Some teachers found that their understanding about literacy grew because they were able to make connections with things they had previously learned or implemented. One participant found this to be true with word study. Having been introduced to this approach in college and in student teaching, this participant found his work with the coach “to be a reminder for word study” [P.I.Gr.3], and a review of some of the things he had learned in the past.

An experienced teacher who was just returning to the classroom found that working in the CCCM “was helpful to revisit some of the parts about literacy that are important” [I.I.Gr.4]. While this participant had an extensive background in literacy, she felt that the topics discussed in the cohort helped her think more intentionally about her lessons and reminded her about some aspects of teaching reading and writing that she had forgotten about.

Many of the participants in cohort four discussed how their learning about comprehension strategies impacted their instruction in other content areas. All of the teachers seemed to agree that integrating what they were teaching in reading with their science or social studies standards helped their students. A teacher explained, “When you integrate it, it makes a world of difference because they can pull out prior knowledge or schema” [P.I.Gr.5]. She continued stating, “You are getting those sidebar conversations that are probably more valuable than what you had originally planned.” [P.I.Gr.5]. Another teacher added:
I think it is less work too, if you do a theme. It just makes it easier for you as the teacher instead of teaching it in isolation. ‘What...you brought reading into science?’ kind of thing but when you have a topic and just run with it in science or writing or reading or...it’s amazing. And the kids love it too, because we are not just teaching it to waste time! [P.I.Gr.5]

A number of teachers in cohort one attended a reading conference while participating in the CCCM. They expressed how these two experiences helped them better understand reading instruction. One veteran teacher who was just beginning to learn about strategy instruction felt that “between the coaching and the conference—that helped” [I.I.Gr.3]. She expressed the fact that she was not entirely comfortable with all the strategies, but she had a much better understanding by connecting her learning from the two professional development experiences.

Gathering Ideas. At least one participant in each cohort discussed how the CCCM expanded their understanding of literacy by helping them gather new ideas for teaching. Participants from cohort three mentioned how they gained new ideas for using literature in their writing lessons as well as finding ideas for using anchor charts with reading instruction.

Participants from cohort one focused mostly on the new ideas they acquired for literature circles. Many teachers expressed that having the coach share different ideas about how they could implement literature circles helped them better understand the concept. One teacher explained:

I’m excited to start literature circles. I feel like I’m ready to go, and I know where to begin. I learned a lot just from watching, from us talking about it—talking about ways to keep them accountable for what they are reading inside of the groups. I really like what we did with that because I feel like I can start next week. [P.I.Gr.3]
A participant in cohort four talked at length about the importance of the coach providing ideas for structuring and managing guided reading groups. She expressed her frustration at first because, "I wasn’t sure how to go about it—how to put them together." [I.I.Gr.5]. But after working with the coach she gained many new ideas, which deepened her understanding of guided reading and helped her feel successful working with her students in this format. Another teacher in this cohort discussed the new ideas she learned to introduce strategies such as inferencing. She shared:

I think sometimes we get in a rut, and you do it the same way, and the same thing doesn’t always reach all of the kids...so coming up with some creative ways to introduce the lessons. I enjoyed seeing that and having someone say, ‘Here is another way to do it.’ [I.I.Gr.5]

During the panel interview with cohort two, one participant shared that “the biggest impact on me has been having new ideas and having a better understanding of writing” [P.I.Gr.4]. She brought the book that the coach had given the group during the research session as her artifact. Although the artifacts were intended to be representations of student learning, she felt that the book represented the impact having new ideas had on her learning. She also discussed her belief that the new ideas she had gained would impact her students’ attitudes and abilities as writers.

**Understanding through Observation**

*The impact of the modeling was huge. As the coach modeled we got a lot of different ideas.* [P.I.Gr.3]

As in most coaching models, the CCCM relies heavily on observation as a tool for teacher growth. The participants in this study were able to observe lessons they helped create, which were delivered by the coach in classrooms at their school. The teachers also met with their cohort post-demonstration to discuss their
observations about the inquiry topic and students' learning. Another finding of this study was that observation promoted understanding of literacy for some participants. This finding substantiates Poglinco et al.'s (2003) study, which found that having teachers observe a coach demonstrate in classrooms had an effect on teachers' practices. While not all participants in the cohorts felt the aspect of modeling was the most influential on their learning, many teachers noted its profound impact on their understanding of literacy practices.

**Impact of Modeling.** At least one participant in each of the four cohorts mentioned the impact of the coach modeling lessons; however, the cohorts at School A felt strongly about the important role that it played in their learning. Cohort one noted that the opportunity to observe helped them feel comfortable trying the lessons in their classrooms and gave them new ideas. One participant put it this way:

> We are pulled in so many directions and having the coach model for us so that we can see, especially with all of the reading strategies that have been in place...so being able to see it put in place and actually done provides a huge comfort level. [P.I.Gr.3]

Another teacher elaborated on the new ideas she gained from watching the lesson:

> When the coach taught the lesson on the salad, I thought, 'Wow. What an interesting idea! I have never taught that to kids.' Teaching kids about their thinking and how you should think during reading. I think the kids really enjoyed that because we all go through that as adults even. [I.I.Gr.3]

Participants in cohort two were even more passionate about the impact of the coach modeling. A number of the teachers discussed how they never had the opportunity to observe certain aspects of literacy instruction. One teacher explained:

> The modeling helped me the most—that is what I have been missing I feel like. I've seen reading, but with writing I have always expected
too much. And it is because I’ve never seen anybody do writing at this age level. [I.I.Gr.4]

Another participant felt similarly, but with a different aspect of literacy:

I had never seen what other people were doing in shared reading. To see a model and to know that that’s what we’re doing makes me feel better about teaching the strategies and the components of balanced literacy. [P.I.Gr.4]

The participants also discussed aspects of the coach’s teaching style, which they felt impacted the lesson, such as a positive demeanor and use of dialogue to relate and engage students in learning. But the participants in cohort two mostly talked about the deeper impact observing had on their understanding of the inquiry topic. For instance, one participant shared her insight during the writing observation:

Something that I learned from the coach with the writing was the model. I have always done a model of the finished product. And when I saw the writing lesson, I realized that I needed to show them a model through the whole process. I need to do the whole model and not have it so good and go through the revision and doing the thinking aloud so that they see that there is a process. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another participant explained her insight this way:

I think the lesson that the coach did in here just completely opened my eyes to how I wasn’t doing enough modeling. I’m just thinking, ‘They are fourth graders. They can write. Give them a topic and they should be able to do it.’ But that is not what it is, and I have realized that now. [I.I.Gr.4]

A number of the teachers shared how the reading observation also helped them understand the inquiry topic at a deeper level. One teacher said:

I liked being able to see the shared reading lesson in a way that is manageable with our time constraints—how we would be able to fit that in with our schedules, and what it would look like. [P.I.Gr.4]

Many of the participants in cohort two and some participants in the other cohorts discussed how observation fits the way they learn. Even though all the
participants read and discussed the research and then helped develop the lessons, for some teachers they did not feel that they truly understood the topic until they observed the lessons with their peers. A participant from cohort two explained:

And how cool to watch the coach first. That was so cool to watch the coach first. I mean I learned. That is just my style of learning. We all picked up something different too, which I thought was interesting and then being able to share that and say, ‘Oh yeah...’ because we were all kind of looking for something different. [P.I.Gr.4]

**Collaborative Learning**

_I think we all learned something from everybody else. I really do. And I feel like the things going on in my classroom have changed for the better._ [P.I.Gr.5]

In addition to providing opportunities for teachers to observe, the CCCM was also structured to maximize teacher collaboration. The coach’s role in this model was to help facilitate learning between members of the group not merely between coach and teacher. The research of Vanderburg and Stephens (2009) as well as Schwartz et al. (2003) found that working in collaborative settings with their peers impacted teachers’ learning. This study also provides evidence that some teachers perceive this to be a factor in the knowledge they gained in the CCCM.

Participants in cohorts two and four discussed the importance of collaborative learning in both the panel interview and individual interviews. One veteran teacher from cohort one, with a limited literacy background, also commented on the importance of working with her team. She noted that “it was nice to hear other people’s opinions” [I.I.Gr.3] and went on to explain that the younger teachers on her team have more training with teaching reading, and she enjoyed learning from them.
One teacher in cohort two, who was new to the school, explained the reason this format was helpful for her:

They [the team] are more familiar with the balanced literacy model, so I thought it was helpful to be working with other teachers, even though they have only done it a little bit. They still had more background than I did. [I.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher in this cohort discussed the importance of learning with colleagues in this way:

I think it was so much more effective working together as a group rather than having it just be one-on-one. I felt that I was learning from everyone else, not just from the literature and not just from the modeling, but hearing the experiences and the ideas from my team, I thought was really effective. [P.I.Gr.4]

Participants in cohort four also expressed some of the same ideas, noting the importance of helping teachers new to the team and developing ideas through collaborative discussions and sharing. A new member of the team stated:

I think the plus for Melanie and I, since we are both new to fifth grade this year, it has been a huge plus because I could come and ask all of you, ‘Ok. How do I do it? How do you do language arts? How do you do language arts?’ And what was interesting was that they all do it a little differently, and I liked that because it gave me a lot of options to pick from to take what I did in fourth grade and incorporate a little bit of what they do to make it my own and make it work. We are talking more, because of that fact. [P.I.Gr.5]

A veteran member of the team elaborated on how collaboration helped both the new members of the team and the experienced members learn from each other:

It was in the conversation then that you are going, ‘Oh, you are doing centers.’ And then we started to feel free, with Melanie and Randy being new this year, to just walk into a room and look around and see, ‘What do you have that I want to use.’ So we have started sharing more and just going in to see what is going on, ‘I’m doing this!’ and ‘Have you tried this?’ The coach started the conversations that have continued because we are leaning on each other more as opposed to—you’re in your own room and doing it your own way. [I.I.Gr.5]
Another member of cohort four likened what happened to their team in the CCCM to a tree “growing and branching out” [P.I.Gr.5]. This participant felt the team worked together and shared ideas, which impacted everyone’s learning and in turn was helping their students do better. The other participants agreed that this outcome was due to the opportunity to collaborate as a team with the coach.

Affirming Teaching

I thought that the coaching experience validated that what I am doing is on the right track. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another finding in this study was that for some teachers the model affirmed their previous knowledge, which they had doubted or questioned. While the previous findings on how the CCCM impacted participants’ knowledge about literacy instruction have all been documented in the emerging research on literacy coaching, this finding has not. In this study, at least one teacher in each cohort mentioned that an aspect of the CCCM confirmed or validated his or her literacy instruction in some way. These teachers felt this affirmation impacted their confidence as well as their understanding of effective literacy practices.

Many teachers in cohort two discussed how they felt the coach affirmed their teaching. They shared that their experience in the CCCM helped them realize they can stop doubting themselves in many areas of their instruction. One participant explained:

I think that I felt more comfortable after having the coach come. More comfortable that we were actually doing the right thing. In the guided reading lesson, it was exactly what we were doing. I was feeling like I wasn’t doing the right thing, but it was the right thing! And that sort of confirmed or made me feel more comfortable with what I was doing
and not feeling like, 'What else should I be doing—I should be doing something different.' I think it calmed that fear. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher confirmed this opinion:

I think we never know if we are doing it right. When you see someone else doing it you think, 'Well, I could do that.' or 'I could do it better.' So I think that it helps to know that what we are doing is right on. [P.I.Gr.4]

Participants in the other cohorts also commented that they felt less alone in their struggle to teach literacy effectively. One participant stated, “I’m not the only one trying to figure it out.” [P.I.Gr.5]. Another participant found that some of the ideas she learned were concepts that she was familiar with, but “just another way of doing it” [P.I.Gr.2]. A teacher in cohort one noted that some of the learning was new to her, but she realized that it was “not as much of a challenge as when it is first laid in your lap” [P.I.Gr.3] because it built on things that they had already been doing. A veteran teacher in cohort four summarized the thinking of her team stating:

It is sort of confirming the things that we are doing in our classroom, and we don’t feel like we are all starting at ground zero. What we are doing is working, and we can tweak it and add to it or change to see what else we can do to help the students. [P.I.Gr.5]

Summary of Findings for Question Three

Research Question 3- How are participants implementing what they learn in the literacy coaching model within their classroom instruction?

Influencing Teacher Application

The cohort definitely impacted my instruction more than I thought it would. [I.I.Gr.5]

With the literature strongly indicating that traditional professional development has only minimal effects on teacher’s instructional practices (Guskey,
1986; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2006), the third research question attempted to ascertain how teachers' classroom instruction was impacted after participating in the CCCM. For coaching to live up to its goal of increasing teachers' expertise, it must not merely influence teachers' skills and knowledge about literacy, but also their classroom instruction. Although teacher observations were not included in this study, participants were asked to discuss, in both panel and individual interviews, how the CCCM impacted instruction in their classrooms. An analysis of this data found that teachers in each cohort could identify areas of their literacy instruction that had been impacted by their experiences in the CCCM. Some participants reflected on how they adjusted previous instruction, others shared that they changed the way they teach completely, and some discussed future plans that they have made for instruction.

Adjusting Previous Instruction. Members of each group shared ways they adjusted their instruction after working in the coaching cohort. A participant in cohort one discussed how she is using the comprehension strategies more specifically in her instruction and is finding more time for her students to read. Another participant in the first cohort discussed how she began implementing literature circles by modifying the structure of her typical guided reading groups:

I actually did literature circles for two weeks, and the kids did great and loved it. And we sat down and did it in guided reading groups so I could sort of guide them through with each of the roles, and they really did well. [I.I.Gr.3]

Many of the participants in cohort two discussed how they began to do more modeling for students as a result of their learning in the CCCM. One participant explained:
I have made a big effort to do a lot more modeling with writing, a lot more thinking out loud, a lot more saying, 'Gee, this sentence is really boring. Can anyone help me fix it up?' and 'Oh, does this sound like it belongs here?' [P.I.Gr.4]

Two participants in this cohort used their artifacts to show how teacher modeling impacted their students' learning. One participant brought her sample story and explained how she modified the lesson:

I have my model of the rag coat story, and then the children wrote their rag coat story. I made a transparency of my story, and I typed it up, which I don’t normally do. I modeled what I expected them to write. [P.I.Gr.4]

The other teacher explained how she decided to create her first draft with the students to show them how to go through the writing process and to help them see that everyone needs to revise and edit their work:

The other piece that I have is my model, but it was my draft not the finished product. I realized that I needed to change that in my writing, so I was showing them how I was going through the process. [P.I.Gr.4]

One participant in cohort two realized she was not giving students enough time to write within the school day. She stated that one change she made to her instruction was using journals because, "I feel like I wasn’t giving them enough time to just express themselves through writing." [I.I.Gr.4]. This participant felt she needed to adjust the amount of time that she gave her students to write as well as provide more time for students to free write. Another teacher in this cohort discussed adjustments she made to her reading workshop. She explained how she modified her guided reading groups:

I'm feeling much more competent in my guided reading groups and planning. I did what the coach suggested, and I went to three guided reading groups, and it's a lot easier to manage. With four, we were just not getting into it—I wasn’t getting to them. I’m much happier
with it now, and it's going faster so it's not taking so long. My books aren't being stretched out. We go two weeks at the most. [I.I.Gr.4]

Participants in cohort three discussed a number of different aspects of their instruction that they adjusted. One participant discussed how she was introducing strategies in shared reading in a more concrete way, while another participant discussed making learning more active. A third participant discussed changes that he made to both his word study and guided reading groups. He shared that after meeting with the coach, he began differentiating word study instruction instead of having all the students study the same words. This teacher also mentioned how he modified the types of response questions students answer in guided reading groups. He explained that:

Last year I wrote questions that went with the book. This year it is more like, 'Write your prediction.' And for the second nine weeks it has been generating questions, so now each week they have to generate at least two questions about the book. I have changed it so we are doing the reading and the talking, and then the questions are more...open-ended, as opposed to me sitting there and writing very specific questions for them. [P.I.Gr.2]

Many teachers in cohort four felt they began to integrate reading and content learning more seamlessly as a result of their experience in the cohort. The participants gave many examples of how they have incorporated reading into science, social studies, and math lessons. One teacher explained the approach this way:

I am trying to use the common language that they have learned in reading, and I made sure that I took that into when I am asking them questions in social studies or when we are talking about a topic in social studies. Then we can use that same language, and they are like, 'Oh, yeah. We know how to do that because we were doing it in reading.' I think I have done that more this year than I have before, and they are understanding. [P.I.Gr.5]
Other teachers in this group also mentioned how the CCCM helped them refine their guided reading instruction. One teacher mentioned that, with the coach’s help, she had finally established a rotation system that was working well in her classroom. Another teacher discussed the way she was grouping her students during guided reading this year:

Last year I did the groups and even though those groups are supposed to be fluid, I found that most of the time the small groups were the same people put together because they fell in the same reading level. This year I find myself actually pulling different groups together because that is where I see a weakness—those people need to get together. Or maybe there are a couple people who are kind of stronger with the weaker kids so that they can hear that conversation, and then in a small group they actually begin to take part in that conversation...they start becoming part of the conversation. [I.I.Gr.5]

Another participant in this cohort discussed how her learning impacted the focus of her reading lessons. She explained how she is paying more attention to her students’ thinking:

We have been talking about that conversation that you have with yourself when you are reading and thinking about this and trying to answer this question. So I think I focused more on that this time rather than just answering a question—actually focusing on the conversation that is going on, the thoughts. [P.I.Gr.5]

*Changing the Way I Teach.* Although most teachers identified aspects of their instruction they adjusted because of their learning in the CCCM, some teachers indicated that it changed the way they teach. Almost all of the participants who expressed this level of change did so in an individual interview. An example of how participants felt their teaching changed was in the way they planned and evaluated their instruction. One experienced teacher in cohort one discussed the impact of
meeting with the coach one-on-one and finding new resources to plan her shared reading instruction. She stated:

Being able to break it down and look at the strategies individually helped my instruction. It impacted the way I plan...one hundred percent. [I.I.Exp.Gr.3]

This participant felt that her learning changed the way she teaches on a regular basis:

I am doing more modeling at the beginning, letting children take time to think on their own before having to participate, making sure anchor charts and visual cues are used. [I.I.Gr.3]

A new teacher in cohort two felt that the cohort impacted her teaching in a similar way. She expressed how her planning for both reading and writing had changed. With writing she noted:

It is about planning differently. I'm breaking it down. Like my plans this week—having different models, getting them engaged and then doing the brainstorming, the prewriting, and doing some drafting together. [I.I.Gr.4]

She also noticed this change with reading:

The cohort helped me create more cohesive language arts units where I was connecting shared reading with guided reading. Even though they are separated in the day, I am able to connect it more. It just seems to flow better. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another experienced teacher in cohort four also shared that her planning has changed because she is more aware of her students' strengths and weaknesses. She expressed that because she is planning with her students in mind, she is addressing their needs, and her teaching is more effective. She felt this change was accomplished because the CCCM encouraged her to reflect on and evaluate her instruction:

Sometimes it is like, 'Yeah. The lesson was fine.' But what about the kids? What did they take away from the lesson? Are they really
getting anything from it? When we discuss it again with another story, am I seeing them holding onto what we talked about before? Or is it like introducing it again completely...a second time? This helped me focus on the kids.

In addition to changing the way she plans and evaluates her teaching, this participant also felt that the support she received from the coach allowed her to implement literacy stations. She discussed her previously unsuccessful attempts to do so in the past because “letting go and not having that control of what they were doing—that was really hard for me” [I.I.Gr.5]. After trying some different techniques and getting feedback from the coach and her team, she finally found a system that held the students accountable for meaningful literacy practice.

Another participant in cohort four also felt that she made a change in the way that she taught reading. Being new to the grade level and uncomfortable with guided reading groups, she discussed how she wouldn’t have been able to differentiate her reading instruction without the help of the coach. She explained:

If I didn’t have the cohort, I wouldn’t have pushed my guided reading groups, honestly. I probably wouldn’t have done it, because I didn’t have anyone to follow-up with or check in with so, I hate to say this, but I probably wouldn’t have done them or taken that risk. [I.I.Gr.5]

This participant felt that the change in her instruction helped her teach more effectively to all of her students—both the high achievers and the weak readers.

A novice teacher in cohort two discussed how she changed her writing instruction by reevaluating how she allocated time during the writing workshop. She felt that this was just a first step, but a critical piece to helping her students improve as writers:
I have changed because I am giving them more time to write, and that is one big step for me because I am not getting up there talking as much, and I am letting them write. [I.I.Gr.4]

Future Plans. A smaller percentage of participants discussed aspects of their learning that they have not yet implemented, but plan to in the future. One participant from cohort three mentioned that she was interested in using anchor charts with students during shared reading, but had not yet done so. Another teacher in this cohort discussed how she plans to use some of the new resources that the district purchased to teach writing. She felt that because she was more familiar with the resources, especially the picture books for writing lessons, she would be using them for future lessons.

Two teachers in the second cohort expressed that they have not had enough time to implement all the ideas that they gained from the cohort. One participant specifically discussed how she planned to use more concrete objects during her reading lessons, but stated, “That’s something I haven’t really delved into that I’d like to.” [I.I.Gr.4]. The other participant explained that while she had adjusted many aspects of her writing instruction, she still had many more changes that she would like to make. She mentioned the ideas that she discussed with the coach to help her students with editing and revising as one example of a plan that she wished to implement in the future:

When we come back from break, I want to work not only on my modeling, but on everybody as a whole becoming editors and revisers. I don’t know if it is going to be the editor’s toolkit bags or...I’ve got all these ideas, and I’m just working on getting them out. [I.I.Gr.4]
From Observation to Application

To actually see another teacher doing it on our grade level...it was like, 'Well, gosh all I need to do is change this a tad bit or add something.' I think actually having an opportunity to observe, I mean, it made me want to go and find more to do or other ideas or activities to implement. [P.I.Gr.5]

Participants in this study clearly conveyed how observing the coach teach model lessons impacted their perceptions about learning in the CCCM as well as their knowledge and skills in literacy. Another finding was that many participants also felt the observation had a significant impact on what they implemented in their classroom instruction. This finding confirms the work of Joyce and Showers (1996), which documented a dramatic increase in implementation of learning for teachers who received coaching. Knight (2006) also found increased levels of implementation when studying the impact of instructional coaching noting that 85 percent of teachers utilized at least one strategy they had learned.

Many participants noted that watching the coach deliver a lesson helped them feel more comfortable taking the lesson and using it with their own students. One participant commented on her tendency to “think about what I’m doing already and about what aspects I could be incorporating in my class” [I.I.Gr.4] while observing the coach. Another participant explained how the demonstration lesson impacted her comfort level:

And I, just speaking for myself, was very apprehensive about doing literature circles, but now that I saw the coach specifically show the children what their jobs were and explain the role sheets, it is going to be a lot easier. [P.I.Gr.3]

Other teachers noted that it was helpful to have everything they needed for the lesson and to have already watched the coach use the materials. A participant stated:
It was helpful for me to watch the coach and I guess see it. Because the materials were brought to me and I could see somebody else using it and could actually put it in place in the classroom right away, I tended to go ahead and do the things that we were talking about and using the ideas. [I.I.Gr.5]

Because watching the coach helped some participants think about how to use the lesson with their students and feel more self-assured about their ability to deliver the lesson well, many teachers discussed how the observation impacted their instruction. Other teachers also commented on how the availability of the materials for the lessons factored into their implementation in the classroom.

*Using Model Lessons.* During each of the panel interviews, participants discussed how they used the model lessons they observed in their classrooms. All of the teachers in cohort one shared that they had implemented the lessons on metacognition. Some teachers decided to modify the lessons to best fit the needs of their students. One participant stated:

> It was really nice to actually watch the coach do a lesson with children, and then I could go back and adjust it and do this a little bit differently. [P.I.Gr.3]

Two teachers in this cohort used their artifacts to show how they had implemented the model lessons to improve student learning. One participant brought the anchor chart she created with her students after watching the coach model the chart with another class. The other participant brought the materials for one of the lessons she had started and shared the students’ responses.

A teacher in cohort two explained that she had used a technique from the reading lesson to introduce the strategy of questioning to her students. Another participant from this cohort also used her artifact to show how she created a
questioning chart with her students during shared reading. She decided to follow the same format as the demonstration lesson, but she chose a different text.

One participant in cohort three shared how she used the writing lesson she observed with her students. She appreciated the coach providing the materials she needed to deliver the lesson and noted that this motivated her to use the lesson with her students. Another teacher discussed how he was able to follow-up with a lesson that the coach modeled in his room on word study. He explained:

The coach came in and did word study, and that was really helpful—the games and the activities that she did. I liked that, and I have been using them. It was nice to see it modeled. [P.I.Gr.2]

A number of teachers in cohort four discussed how they used the reading lesson that was modeled with their students. Some teachers shared that they did the lesson exactly as the coach had delivered it; others pulled out aspects of the lesson to incorporate into their teaching. One participant discussed a technique that the coach used with the students that she thought would be very helpful, especially for her second language learners. This teacher used a story about this technique as her artifact, showing how she saw improvement in students’ learning:

When we were doing our observation of the coach, she told them that if they came to a word that they didn’t know when they were reading to make a ‘W’ [with their fingers]. So when we were doing our guided reading groups I told her [the ELL student] about that, told the whole group about it. And I said, ‘When you are reading or someone else is reading, if you come to a word that you don’t understand, you don’t have to say anything just make this sign. And when we are done or at the end of a paragraph we’ll go back and discuss it.’ [P.I.Gr.5]

_BarrIers to Implementation_

_I mean this job is...there are so many great ideas that we have all had, but they just get thrown by the wayside because at the end of the day you just don’t have time to do everything. [P.I.Gr.3]_
Just as participants noted that having time for learning impacted their perceptions of the CCCM, they also referred to the impact of time on their ability to implement what they learned in the classroom. Another finding in this study was that many teachers felt that time became a barrier in their efforts to apply their learning. Participants spoke about the barrier of time in two ways: as it impacted their ability to plan and prepare their instruction and in reference to the amount of instructional time they had with students.

Although most participants discussed specific ways they implemented their learning by adjusting their teaching, changing their instructional approach, or using the model lessons, many teachers also expressed frustration with time to plan. This was especially true for participants in cohort one. Most of the participants in this cohort found time to implement the model lessons, but felt that they did not always have enough time to implement other ideas. One participant explained:

I think at this school we have really good teachers who work really hard, work extra hours, work on the weekends, but there is just not enough time because you still have to do all the other stuff that you have to do in your life and do everything you want to do with your class. [P.1.Gr.3]

Specific teachers in the other cohorts mentioned this issue as well, discussing how they need to spend so much time finding resources and planning outside of the school day. After learning in the coaching cohort, one participant stated:

I have all these great ideas. It is just having the time to sit down and get them out of my head and onto the lesson plan book and delivered! I have all these things that I want to do, and when it comes down to it there is never the time. There is always something. [I.1.Gr.4]
A number of teachers from cohort two discussed the issue of time with students. One teacher explained it this way:

For me it's just having enough time with the kids—instructional time. That's what inhibits a lot of my instruction I feel like. I'm not doing what I can or want to be doing. [I.I.Gr.4]

These teachers discussed issues of scheduling and other demands that decrease the amount of time they have instructing students. One teacher explained the impact of the school play on her ability to implement what she learned about writing instruction:

We haven't had a lot of time for anything! Writing has been pushed over to the side for me, because I have been trying to get caught up with all of the other stuff we were missing content-wise. I'm hoping that as soon as we get back from break that our schedules will get back to normal, and we will have our regular blocks, and we will be able to get back to writing again. But it has been hit hard with practice for the play. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher discussed how the schedule impacts her instruction:

My only problem is the timing. With the scheduling, writing is maybe a thirty-minute block, and I have found that I need a little bit more time. That block is right after reading, so if we extend reading then writing gets cut back. I wish we had forty-five minute blocks for everything. [I.I.Gr.4]

Participants who expressed these views about the barriers of time explained the CCCM did not cause these barriers to implementation, but was merely affected by the reality of their working environment. Some teachers even mentioned how they felt that the issue of time was diminished while working with the coach, but knew that it would again be a factor once the cohort ended.
Summary of Findings for Question Four

Research Question 4- What do participants observe with regard to student learning as a result of participating in this literacy coaching model?

Evidence of Student Understanding

...I am noticing it on their work too. We are doing common assessments every week, and we are seeing growth. Not from failing to 100 percent every time, but we are seeing kids who are making growth.[I.I.Gr.5]

Although the focus of all literacy coaching initiatives, including the CCCM, is the professional growth of the teacher, the ultimate measure of coaching’s effectiveness is student achievement. This aspect of coaching, however, has the least amount of support in the literature to date. Some studies have reported positive trends in student achievement after implementing coaching, but most researchers are hesitant to purport a causal relationship (Lewis et al., 2006; Moscovitch, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2003). Other studies have shown that while teachers make increases in their knowledge with the use of coaching as a form of professional development, student achievement scores remain flat (Garet et al., 2008; Meyer et al., 2007).

While the focus of this study was on the impact the CCCM had on teachers’ instructional practices, it is important to begin framing how these instructional changes affected student understanding. Participants in this study were asked to reflect on what they observed about student learning as a result of their experience in the CCCM. One finding related to this question was that most teachers saw evidence of student understanding within an aspect of literacy they had studied.

Teacher Observation. Teachers in each cohort discussed evidence of student understanding through observations of students’ attitudes, statements in class, and
responses to instruction. Many participants commented about changes in their students’ understanding with regard to reading. A participant in cohort one noticed her students were sharing their ideas more readily during reading workshop:

   This class...it is a heavy load of special needs students. I have never taught a class with 10 out of 22 students with special needs, but it is great. I do think that they are opening up and seeing more than they have in the past. [I.I.Gr.3]

A participant in cohort four also felt that her students were sharing more during reading instruction. She attributed this to the model lesson on metacognition and how it has helped her students pay attention to their thinking while reading:

   My kids were actually introduced to inferencing for the first time [with the coach] and I think they have...a better understanding of schema and that conversation that is going on inside their heads. [P.I.Gr.5]

Additionally, this participant shared in an individual interview that she sees evidence of this thinking when her students are reviewing after a reading test:

   And even when they get it wrong, because we go back over it, they are able to sit and reason it through and actually the second time, with a little bit of guidance and the discussion with their peers, find the right answer and explain why it is a better answer than the one they chose before. Which in the long run has to help! [I.I.Gr.5]

A participant in cohort three also saw the impact of the model lessons on her students. She shared how inferencing was usually a difficult strategy for her students to understand, but in subsequent activities, after the model lessons, she observed the students’ ability to remember what the strategy was and how to use it effectively. She noted:

   We did an inferencing activity yesterday, and it was the first one where I didn’t have anyone come up to me and say, ‘What is this word?’ So I think they really got it with the anchor chart and the two focus lessons. [P.I.Gr.2]
Another participant in this cohort discussed how he modified the way his students were using comprehension strategies in guided reading groups. He orally described his artifact as the types of questions he was asking and his students were answering after reading. He explained that he was requiring the students to apply the strategies that he was teaching instead of asking literal questions about the books. He felt that having consistent opportunities to respond to their reading was helping most of the students think about what they were reading and write better answers.

One participant in cohort four discussed her implementation of a technique she saw the coach using during guided reading. Her artifact was the symbol that she taught the students to make with their fingers if they came to a word that they didn’t know while reading. This participant explained the impact the technique had on one of her second language learners who usually won’t talk about words that she doesn’t know without teacher prompting. She told the story of how this student was able to use the technique successfully to monitor her reading:

So just incorporating that small thing...you know, I always told them to tell me if there is a word that you don’t understand, but for her speaking out was something she was not comfortable with. This was like a miracle for her, and then she was using those skills, the text-to-text and context clues, and all those things. She was able to put her hand back down because she was able to figure the word out on her own, which is really something good. [P.I.Gr.5]

Another participant in this cohort discussed how changes she made to her guided reading groups seemed to be benefiting her students. She explained:

I do see kids who are struggling with it this week, and the next week we come to the table, and we are doing the same thing with a different type of reading, and they’re more able to do it. They have a better understanding. [I.I.Gr.5]
Only one teacher in the interviews mentioned an area that she was not seeing evidence of students’ understanding with reading. She explained that she has a group of weaker readers who “are still working on decoding skills” [I.I.Gr.3] and she has not seen some of the strategy lessons transfer to their independent reading. This participant did feel that the lessons helped them, but recognized that they would need more instruction to be able to apply the comprehension strategies effectively.

Some teachers also discussed evidence of student understanding during writing instruction. A teacher in cohort two used her artifact to share how her students were starting to understand the importance of editing. She brought her writing sample about her favorite TV show, “I Love Lucy.” She explained how she completed the piece on poster board with the students and asked them if she was finished or if she should go back and edit her work. She shared what happened:

I neatly wrote the whole thing and I said, ‘Am I done?’ and they said, ‘Wow...look...yes!’ And I said, ‘But I really haven’t proofread it to make sure that I didn’t make mistakes along the way.’ And they looked at me like, ‘No...it looks neat!’ I hadn’t done it on purpose, but I said something like ‘The main character is a ditsy redhead name Lucy.’ And I hadn’t done that on purpose! I looked at it and said, ‘Oh my goodness...’ and then they looked at it like, ‘Oh. Ok.’ Because they are just so happy to get something on paper and if it is neat they think, ‘I am done.’ [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher in this cohort found her students were also responding to her writing lessons, because she was modeling with her own work. She brought a writing sample artifact as well, including a piece she wrote and a story that one of her students created in response to the lesson. The teacher felt:

When I use a model of my own writing, then the students are like, ‘Oh...yeah.’ It really clicks better. [P.I.Gr.4]
A number of participants in cohort three noticed evidence of student understanding after their focus on writing. One teacher mentioned the impact the demonstration lesson on capitalization and punctuation had on her students:

It has been helpful for some of my students to focus a little bit more on their endings. They have been doing it a little bit more. Occasionally they slip back into old habits, just like any of us do. [P.I.Gr.2]

Another teacher in this cohort concurred stating, "it has helped draw attention to the beginning and end...when they see that they only have two pieces of tape" [P.I.Gr.2]. These teachers found that their students were more aware of the punctuation in their writing after using highlighter tape as a tool for editing and revising.

Assessment Results. In addition to the observations teachers in this study made about their students’ understanding, some participants also discussed students’ performance on reading assessments as evidence of learning. Participants in cohort two seemed to agree that their students performed well on the district’s quarterly reading benchmark assessment. One teacher noted that her learning disabled students and second language learners had more trouble, but she felt that this was due to “differences in language—figurative versus literal...it was not necessarily an indication of their learning” [P.I.Gr.4].

Participants in cohort four felt similarly to teachers in cohort two. They all discussed the results of the quarterly benchmark as well as common assessments that they had been giving as examples of student improvement. As a team, they felt that many of the students had shown consistent progress stating:

Our benchmarks were good, and all of our common assessments have improved week to week to week. You can see growth in every one of our classes from the first assessment. [P.I.Gr.5]
One teacher in this cohort shared the progress one of her weakest readers was making on these assessments as her artifact:

I have one...and he started at his first common assessment at a 33. And I was like, 'Great.' But then it was a 44. Then we went up to a 60 and on the benchmark he made a 69. So to me, it is not where I would like him to be, of course I would want him to be in the 70s or higher but he has gone up. It's better than going down to the 20s. So that is big for him—consistently making the growth. That is between a 10- and 11-point gain each time. He participates more, so I think he is starting to feel more comfortable with the reading. [P.I.Gr.5]

A participant in cohort one also discussed her students' performance on assessments. She explained that she has been giving her class cold readings with grade level material and comprehension questions to help prepare them for the state reading test. She felt that they were showing progress on these assessments:

They are getting used to that, and a good group is doing well on them. There is a small group that is still having some issues, but I am working with those kids. [I.I.Gr.3]

Deepening of Student Thinking

They are in tune with their thinking now. More so I think. [P.I.Gr.3]

Participants in cohort one, two, and four discussed that they not only saw evidence of student understanding, but they witnessed a deepening of student thinking. These comments were always in reference to students' reading and often focused on how strategy instruction seemed to change the way students were thinking about their reading. Participants in cohort four discussed their students' ability to think more deeply after their focus on inferencing. One teacher found that her students were now automatically prompting each other to explain their thinking:

That is our phrase this year, 'prove it.' They even say it to each other now. They will say, 'I like this answer.' Well, 'Prove it.' It's neat to listen to because they used to be like, 'Unno.' [shrugging shoulders]
For some kids that was the only answer that they would give you. When you said to them, ‘Why is that?’ ‘Unnno.’ [I.I.Gr.5]

Many teachers in cohort one referenced a deepening of their students’ thinking after they began focusing on metacognition and working independently in literature circles. During an individual interview, a participant in cohort one reflected on her students’ progress once she began literature circles. At first she observed students applying the strategies, but in a superficial way. She felt that after she began specifically teaching how to use the strategies, such as questioning, to have a rich discussion about the text, the students began responding in a much deeper way to their reading:

At the beginning when we started literature circles, it was funny to see the person who had to come up with the questions—they would spit out these questions and then, ‘Yah. No.’ But then teaching them how to have meaty kinds of questions and thoughtful discussions was really wonderful. So that was huge because that was a big goal of mine. [I.I.Gr.3]

This participant also felt that the changes in her teaching affected her students’ thinking more broadly as well as impacting their attitudes about reading. She stated:

I think they have more of an understanding of the way that they learn. They are paying attention to it more, which I think when you are paying attention to it more and you take ownership of something and it becomes yours, then you understand it. I completely see them being much more involved in literature than in years past. And I think too—they are just excited about it. [I.I.Gr.3]

One participant in cohort two shared how the types of tasks she started requiring her learning disabled students to complete were helping to deepen their thinking. She used her artifact of a comprehension quiz to represent this impact. The students were asked to answer a series of true or false questions about the first few chapters of a book they were reading. However, the teacher also required them to
prove their answers by finding evidence in the text for their answer choice. The students all did well on the assignment, but it was challenging for them:

A few of them kind of belly ached at first and were like, ‘I don’t know’ and ‘I can’t find this’ but they stuck with it. So I am very proud of them, because this was really hard for them. [P.I.Gr.4]

Application in New Settings

*I’m noticing them taking the reading strategies that we’ve done in shared reading and guided reading groups and using them in different texts on their own. So that’s really cool to be seeing them do that.* [I.I.Gr.4]

In addition to seeing evidence of students’ understanding and witnessing a deepening of student thinking in response to instruction, some teachers also observed students applying their learning in new settings. One way that students began applying their learning was by taking the reading strategies and using them in other subject areas. Teachers in cohort one and four saw this happening with many of their students. One participant in cohort one noted:

I had a student today make a connection to what I was doing...on Greece. He said, ‘That reminds me of the Olympics.’ I mean, I think that says that it is carrying across into different areas, which is good. [P.I.Gr.3]

A teacher in cohort four felt like it didn’t matter what subject she was teaching because students were “sort of piggybacking off what they are learning with the inferencing from reading and then applying it to their other subjects” [P.I.Gr.5].

Another participant in this cohort concurred stating:

Like my kids now—no matter what subject you are in, they will say, ‘I infer...’ because we have really, really spent a lot of time working with it. [I.I.Gr.5]
Many participants in cohort one felt they also saw their students applying what they had learned about reading, even when they were not prompted by the teacher. One participant explained this using her artifact. She discussed how her read-aloud time had changed because the students were applying the comprehensions strategies automatically:

I also think my students are learning...even when I just do my chapter book, when I am reading aloud that isn’t necessarily pertaining to any lesson. It is cool to see them making connections and doing things we have talked about. Sometimes I have to tell them to put their hands down because I’m not doing much reading. They are exposed to it enough now that they want to make connections, they have questions, and good words to clarify, and things like that. [P.I.Gr.3]

Another participant in cohort one agreed that her students were using the strategies in various reading situations, and they were more able to communicate their thinking:

They are making connections with the things we are doing. This is the first time that I have ever heard them talking about, and they’ll even use the terminology, ‘That’s a text-to-text or that’s a text-to-self.’ or, ‘I made a connection with this.’ They are using the words and taking ownership of the things I am teaching. [I.I.Gr.3]

Some teachers also noticed students applying what they learned in writing. This was most prevalent for participants in cohort two. One participant noted how the model lesson carried over to a student’s writing assessment:

I did the first quarter writing prompt and...I did have a student who, when I looked at her rough draft, she had the X’s on every other line, and she wrote her rough draft just like the coach had modeled on the board, and then she went in and she actually edited and revised it. I hadn’t even gotten to touch that part yet. I was so excited to see that it did flow over, even though I haven’t had time to go back and talk about that. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another teacher discussed how she observed her students following through with editing and revising after she implemented the model lesson:
I did a similar lesson to what the coach modeled, and since then I have noticed that a majority of my students are skipping lines, which is making them more inclined to revise and edit because they have the space to do it. When they haven’t skipped those lines, they will say, ‘Well, I don’t have any room to do it.’ That is their excuse, but when they have got the space they do it almost automatically. They go back and make things better in their writing. [P.I.Gr.4]

_Engagement in Learning_

_They are talking more about what it is that we are learning and just talking about the books more, especially when we have silent reading. More than just reading a page and then talking about what they are doing on the weekends, I see them talking about the literature that they are reading. So that is huge! [I.I.Gr.3]_

Teachers in every cohort discussed their students’ engagement in learning since they began working in the CCCM. Participants noticed an increase in student engagement in all aspects of literacy—from reading to writing to word study. Often, teachers attributed this increase in engagement to techniques that the coach modeled or structures that the coach suggested, which changed the way students were learning. For instance, participants in cohort one discussed their students’ reactions to the model lesson on metacognition. One participant highlighted her students’ level of engagement when she explained her artifact. She brought the metacognition anchor chart that was created with her students during one of the lessons. The teacher explained the students’ reaction this way:

_We talked about the fake reading, and the kids loved it! I mean they were hysterical. When the special education teacher came into the room, they told her all about fake reading. They were just really into the lesson and making the poster as a connection to keep up in the room to use throughout the different subjects. [P.I.Gr.3]_

Participants in cohort two discussed student engagement in relation to reading and writing instruction. One teacher discussed what happened when she implemented
the model lesson on questioning with her students. She brought the questioning anchor chart that she used as her artifact and explained the outcome of the activity:

We read a really cool article about Indonesia where kids go to school on boats. You see these kids sitting on a boat on the cover of the story. They had lots of questions about it. I wrote my questions in marker, and then the kids had sticky notes. We did questions before, during, and then even after reading because a lot of questions were left unanswered. I think they are just more engaged with the sticky notes because they had three, but they wanted more! So we had to put them out...so it was cool. Then we went back and looked at what questions we had answered. They were just really excited. [P.I.Gr.4]

Another participant in this cohort shared how her students have been more engaged during the writing workshop. Trying to motivate her students to write had been a struggle at the beginning of the year, and she explained how that changed:

As far as attitude, I think they have been less resistant to writing. At the very beginning when we were doing our journals it was, ‘I don’t want to write.’ But now in the past couple of weeks when we are doing our journals, it hasn’t been as difficult to get them to write. I don’t know if it is because it has been so long since we were writing that they have opened up a little more, or if it is that they have seen more writing and they are feeling a little bit better about it. But I have seen less resistance to it overall. [I.I.Gr.4]

Word study and writing were the areas where teachers in cohort three observed increased student engagement. One participant commented on the impact the writing model lesson had on her students:

It really did help the kids start to focus—and standing up and talking about it as opposed to giving a worksheet on it. It actually gave them a chance to interact and come up and put the period at the end and use the tape. And I think it helps a lot because there are always a few who are going to need a lot of extra practice, but for some of the kids it helped them to focus more on the endings of their sentences. [P.I.Gr.2]
Another teacher in this group saw the impact on his word study groups. After observing the coach and grouping his students by their developmental spelling stage, this teacher noticed a difference in the way students were engaged with their work:

They are a little more active with word study. They sort them a lot more. There are some kids who are talking about the things and what the words mean without me prodding them. So that's good. [P.I.Gr.2]

The teachers in cohort four reflected on their students' engagement in the reading workshop. Some teachers discussed the impact of the inferencing model lesson:

I think it was a great idea to use the paper bag for the lesson. I hadn't even thought about using trash. The kids were like, 'Ugh...somebody's trash!' It had their attention...and just the ideas or responses they were coming up with—I was just like, 'I didn't even think about that!' It was like a domino effect. If Vanessa said something, somebody else would bounce off that, and I thought that was good. [P.I.Gr.5]

Both of the teachers in this cohort who were interviewed individually mentioned how their guided reading instruction had impacted their students' learning. One participant noted that all of her students were engaging in conversations about their reading:

When we do the guided reading, I see my kids taking more of a risk as far as asking questions or participating more. Normally, the kids who participate more in the whole group are the higher level kids. Some of the lower kids are intimidated, but I noticed when I was in small group they were excited and wanting to ask questions or they would just bounce ideas off of each other, and they didn't seem intimidated because we were in a smaller group. [I.I.Gr.5]

The other participant discussed how her students are helping each other learn in the small group format:

We were talking about schema in the small group, and one of the kids said, 'Yeah. It's the conversation that I have with myself.' And I was
like, ‘That is it! That is what I have been trying to get you to understand all of this time.’ And the other kids are sitting there like, ‘Ok. Yeah. I have that conversation with myself before I answer the questions every time.’ And all this time I had never thought to put it that way, but someone else did and it made a difference. [I.I.Gr.5]

For each of these teachers, the impact that the CCCM had on their practice influenced not just their students’ understanding about literacy, but their students’ interest, excitement, and attitudes about learning.

Summary

The first question in this study addressed participants’ perceptions and feelings about using the CCCM as a vehicle for professional development. Most participants in this study reported positive feelings about working in a coaching cohort and attributed this to one of three main factors: application, personalization, and collaboration. Participants in every cohort discussed the fact that their learning in the CCCM was both applicable and useful. This was the most common reason that teachers perceived the cohort positively. A number of teachers discussed how they acquired new ideas to use in their teaching and that the CCCM provided follow-up once they used those ideas in the classroom. Three of the four cohorts also discussed how ownership played a role in the applicability to their learning. Regardless of previous background in literacy knowledge, these teachers appreciated being involved in decisions about their learning.

In addition to their learning being applicable, some participants felt strongly that the other two factors were critical to their experience. Some participants discussed the positive impact of the cohort being personalized to their team or their individual learning goals. These teachers enjoyed the fact that the coach was
responsive to their needs, valued their ideas, and provided a focused learning environment where they could observe teaching in action. Other participants valued how the CCCM facilitated peer collaboration by providing opportunities for teachers to work with their colleagues to share ideas and discuss teaching and learning.

One drawback to this form of professional development was finding time for learning. Participants universally expressed the difficulty of finding time to grow professionally during the school day; however, they did not feel that the CCCM caused this problem, but merely highlighted an already prevalent issue in their profession. Although some participants felt that the benefits that they received from the cohort outweighed the drawbacks of finding time, many felt that they did not have enough time to grow professionally, while at the same time fulfilling their teaching obligations.

The second question in this study looked at how the CCCM influenced participants' knowledge and skills about literacy. All participants in this study were able to identify an area of literacy instruction they felt was enhanced by their learning in the cohort. Most participants talked about ways they expanded their understanding of literacy instruction through rethinking their beliefs, developing new insights, making connections to previous learning, or gathering new ideas. Some teachers felt their knowledge gain had a more profound impact than others, but all teachers reported instances of new learning.

Teachers credited their literacy learning to different factors of the CCCM. Some teachers felt the opportunity to observe the coach teaching had the greatest impact on their understanding. Others credited the collaborative nature of the model,
which allowed them to learn from their colleagues with the support of the coach. Important to note was the number of participants who felt coaching affirmed some of their current teaching practices. Participants explained that this affirmation helped them identify aspects of literacy they were already doing well, so they could focus on expanding their knowledge in other areas.

The third question focused on the issue of implementation. The literature on effective professional development clearly states that for teacher learning to result in student learning, classroom instruction must be impacted (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Joyce & Showers, 1981; Richardson, 1998). This study found that teachers in every cohort reported that the CCCM influenced some aspect of their literacy instruction. Similarly to the impact on knowledge about literacy, participants felt that their instruction was impacted to varying degrees. Many teachers shared how they began adjusting certain elements of their instruction after working in the cohort, while a smaller percentage of participants felt that it completely changed the way they teach. However, some teachers also discussed time barriers that interfered with implementing their learning. A few participants mentioned how lack of time impacted their ability to plan and prepare instruction, while others referenced the limited amount of instructional time in the day. This led some participants to discuss future plans to implement their learning.

Regardless of the level of impact on their instruction, most participants discussed the benefit of observing the coach teach the model lessons. Having an opportunity to observe before applying the lessons in their own classrooms seemed to greatly increase the implementation rate among these participants. All cohorts
discussed the benefits of having the materials needed to teach the lesson, and many participants noted that observing the coach teach the lesson first helped them feel more comfortable and confident implementing it with their students. Some teachers also felt that observing allowed them to process the best way to implement the lessons with their students.

The fourth question in this study ascertained what participants observed with regard to student learning as a result of participating in the CCCM. Many participants reported seeing evidence of student understanding in reference to specific literacy areas they had addressed in the cohort. Some teachers discussed student learning through observations of students’ attitudes, statements in class, and responses to instruction. Other participants referenced improvements in assessment results as evidence of student progress. A number of participants also reported their students were thinking more deeply about reading and were applying what they were learning in both reading and writing in new settings. Additionally, some teachers in each cohort referenced how their students were more engaged with literacy learning because of changes they had made in their classroom instruction.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

Summary

As literacy coaching has become a pervasive element in many local, state, and national professional development initiatives, increased focus has been placed on finding evidence to back the practice's effectiveness (Deussen et al., 2007; Dole; 2004; Moran, 2007). While some studies have shown that the use of literacy coaching positively impacted teacher and student learning, much more needs to be done to provide conclusive evidence on the effect of coaching (Moscovitch, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2003; University of Arkansas at Little Rock, n. d., Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009). The goal of this study was to build upon the established literature on effective elements of professional development and add to the emerging findings on the impact of coaching on teachers' instructional practices.

There are many factors to consider when evaluating the impact of literacy coaching on teachers and students. Because of the complex social nature of education and the competing influences over teachers' time, it is difficult to attribute a singular cause to specific outcomes in teacher and student growth. To unravel the multiple factors that impact teachers' work, this study used a qualitative case study design to identify the ways coaching influenced teachers in two educational settings. This research design prompted teachers to reflect on their experiences and the impact that coaching had on their learning and classroom instruction as well as the impact on their students' literacy growth. A specific coaching model was used that incorporated the common elements of coaching: non-evaluative design, a theoretical basis, and
observation and feedback. This study utilized these common elements within the Community Coaching Cohort Model (CCCM) to address four pressing questions about the effect of coaching on teachers and students.

**Impact on Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions**

The findings from this study suggest that most teachers, regardless of experience in the classroom or knowledge about literacy, felt positively about their coaching experience and they attributed this to many different factors. These factors are discussed below as they pertain to the aspects of effective professional development.

*Ongoing.* Because the CCCM extended over a nine-week cycle, participants in this study felt that it gave them an opportunity to receive ongoing support. A number of teachers expressed that receiving follow-up from the coach impacted their perceptions about learning in a coaching setting. Teachers reported that the ongoing nature of the model gave them motivation to try new things, knowing that the coach would be able to trouble-shoot any potential problems. Although many teachers admitted that they were not enthusiastic about the time commitment of the coaching model at the outset, by the end of the experience all types of teachers in this study felt that working with a responsive coach over many weeks positively impacted their personal learning and the way the cohort worked together.

*Job-embedded.* In addition to the benefits of the ongoing nature of the CCCM, participants also reflected on the way the experience connected to the context of their practice. Participants in each cohort discussed that the coaching experience was both applicable and useful because they had ownership of their learning and they
acquired new ideas to implement in the classroom. Teachers also reported that the coaching experience was personalized to their needs and to their work environment. Many teachers discussed the importance of the coach modeling lessons with the students at their school and how the opportunity to observe and discuss the lessons made the experience more personalized. Because teachers were able to direct their experience and it was personalized to their classroom needs, many teachers expressed that the CCCM was a helpful form of professional development.

*Collaborative.* Another important aspect of the participants’ experience in the CCCM was the opportunity to collaborate with their peers. Many teachers perceived the coaching model positively because they were actively engaged in their learning with their colleagues. Some participants attributed the strength of the model to the fact that they were able to collaborate as a grade level team, while others valued the opportunity to share ideas with other teachers. Although finding time for learning with their colleagues was challenging, overall, the participants in this study felt that the opportunities for collaboration positively impacted their attitudes about the CCCM.

*Reflective.* Participants alluded to the importance of reflection in their discussions about ownership and collaboration. Because teacher reflection is such an integral component of the CCCM, it allowed teachers to take ownership of their learning by reflecting on their students, their own learning goals, and how the cohort was addressing their needs. Some participants saw the reliance on reflection to be challenging, but ultimately a benefit of the model. Other teachers felt that the
continual opportunities for reflection in the CCCM led to more purposeful talk within their team and helped the group work together more effectively.

*Inquiry-based.* Because the CCCM used an inquiry-based design and was structured around teachers' inquiry topics, participants stated that they felt they were able to focus their learning and could control the direction of their professional development. Many teachers felt positively about their experience in the CCCM because the inquiry-based design allowed each cohort to self-direct their learning. Teachers reported that the coach worked as a facilitator in this model, helping the group focus their learning and providing feedback and resources to meet their goals. Many participants in this study discussed how the role of the coach in the CCCM positively impacted their learning.

*Impact on Teachers' Literacy Knowledge, Skills, and Practice*

All participants in this study were able to identify an area of literacy instruction they felt was enhanced by their learning in the CCCM. Teachers in each cohort provided evidence that they met the goals they had established at the beginning of the coaching cycle. Some teachers also felt they increased their knowledge or skill in areas of reading or writing that they had not initially expected.

Teachers in this study shared that they expanded their understanding of literacy by rethinking their beliefs, developing new insights, making connections to previous learning, or gathering new ideas. A number of participants also discussed how the CCCM affirmed some of their current teaching practices. Participants explained that this affirmation helped them identify aspects of literacy they were already doing well, so they could focus on increasing their knowledge in other areas.
Although some teachers felt their knowledge gain had a more profound impact than others, all teachers reported instances of new learning, which they credited to specific factors of the model. Many teachers felt the opportunity to observe the coach teaching had the greatest impact on their understanding. Others credited the collaborative nature of the model, which allowed them to learn from their colleagues with the support of the coach.

In addition to the influence on their knowledge and skills, most participants also reported that their learning in the CCCM influenced some aspect of their literacy instruction. Although classroom observations were not included in this study, teachers discussed specific examples of how their instruction had been impacted. Similarly to the impact on knowledge about literacy, participants felt that their instruction was impacted to varying degrees. Many teachers shared how they began adjusting certain elements of their reading or writing instruction after working in the cohort, while a smaller percentage of participants felt that it completely changed the way they teach literacy. Some teachers also discussed time barriers that interfered with implementing their learning. A few participants mentioned how lack of time impacted their ability to plan and prepare instruction, while others referenced the limited amount of instructional time in the day. This led some participants to discuss future plans to implement their learning.

Regardless of the level of impact on their instruction, most participants discussed the benefit of observing the coach teach the model lessons. Having an opportunity to observe before applying the lessons in their own classrooms seemed to greatly increase the implementation rate among these participants. All cohorts
discussed the benefits of having the materials needed to teach the lesson, and many participants noted that observing the coach teach the lesson first, helped them feel more comfortable and confident implementing it with their students. Some teachers also felt that observing allowed them to process the best way to implement the lessons in their own classroom.

**Impact on Students' Learning**

While the focus of this study was on the impact the CCCM had on teachers' instructional practices, it was important to begin framing how these instructional changes affected student understanding. Most participants in this study reported seeing evidence of student understanding in reference to the specific literacy areas they had addressed in the cohort. Many teachers discussed student learning through observations of students' attitudes, statements in class, and responses to instruction. These participants reported that students seemed to understand the concepts they were teaching and, in many instances, were demonstrating this understanding in both oral and written formats. Other participants referenced improvements in assessment results as evidence of student progress. A number of teachers observed continual increases in student performance on weekly reading tests and other teachers discussed improvements on quarterly benchmark assessments.

In addition to evidence of student understanding in response to instruction, a number of participants also reported that their students were thinking more deeply about reading and were applying what they were learning in both reading and writing in new settings. Many teachers felt their students were taking ownership of the things they were teaching and this allowed the students to use their learning in new ways.
Furthermore, some teachers in each cohort referenced how their students were more engaged with literacy learning because of changes they had made in their classroom instruction. Often, teachers attributed this increase in engagement to techniques that the coach modeled or structures that the coach suggested, which changed the way students were learning. These teachers felt that what they learned in the CCCM impacted their students' understanding about literacy, but also their interest, excitement, and attitudes about learning.

Overall, this study found that literacy coaching had a significant impact on teachers' instructional practices and, in turn, students' literacy learning. While each teacher's experience in the CCCM was unique, participants in each cohort and at varying grade levels and schools supported a number of findings addressing each research question. Additionally, this study found that teachers with various levels of experience and literacy education benefited from coaching. Because many different types of teachers reported that the coaching experience increased their knowledge base, impacted their teaching, and affected their students' learning, it can be concluded that, for many of these teachers, the CCCM was an effective form of professional development.

Implications for Practice

In addition to the findings stated above, there are a number of other factors that influenced the outcomes of this study. These factors have important implications for understanding the results of this research as well as any attempts to replicate these findings. The first factor, which cannot be understated, was the impact of using a clearly defined coaching model with established roles for the coach. This has been a
strong criticism of the coaching movement over the past decade, and many in the field have discussed the importance of clearly defining literacy coaches' work (Buly et al., 2006; Mraz et al., 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). In this study, both coaches followed the CCCM and explained how the model worked to both administrators and teachers at each school. By following a specific protocol for implementation, teachers and administrators had a thorough understanding of the coaching model before the cycle began (see Appendix A). This factor allowed the coach to remain oriented to the teachers and not be distracted by other tasks as reported in other coaching settings (Marsh et al., 2008; Deussen et al., 2007).

Having a clearly defined model also ensured that coaches utilized all the aspects of effective professional development, alongside the most established elements and tasks of coaching. Because the CCCM was designed based on the professional development literature and the successes of other coaching models throughout the country, all participants experienced the necessary components to maximize learning and growth. Contrary to many other formats for coaching, the CCCM addressed the issues of who will be coached and how the coach will work with teachers. Participants in this study were identified by team, and all team members received the same opportunities for modeling, collaboration, and support. Although all participants were able to learn collaboratively, some teachers requested different levels of individual support from the coach. This allowed the model to address each teacher equally, while also providing personalized support as needed.

The second factor that impacted the findings of this study was the use of knowledgeable and qualified coaches. A number of researchers and organizations
have begun delineating the qualifications coaches need to be effective (Dole, 2004; International Reading Association, 2004; Moxley & Taylor, 2006; Toll, 2005).

Among their many credentials, literacy coaches need to have experience in the classroom, a vast knowledge of literacy, and good presentation and communication skills with adult learners. Unlike findings from other studies (Deussen et al., 2007; Frost & Bean, 2006; Roller, 2005), the coaches in this study obtained master's degrees in literacy, had many years of experience teaching, and had both formal and informal training on coaching. Additionally, both coaches previously worked with teachers and students in grades kindergarten to fifth grade, and because their positions were at the district level, they had worked in schools with various demographic, economic, and cultural populations. The qualifications and experiences that the coaches brought to the CCCM had a significant impact on their ability to implement the model successfully and to work effectively with a variety of teachers and students.

In conjunction with a clearly defined model and knowledgeable coaches, the results of this study were also impacted by an intentional focus on teacher growth. Although this model, as with many other coaching models, had a theoretical basis and incorporated a non-evaluative design with opportunities for observation and feedback, the coaches also had a specific coaching stance. Instead of focusing on addressing problems with teachers' instruction or the implementation of a specific program or method, the coaches in this study maintained a neutral coaching position. This stance allowed coaches to focus on the teachers' needs and build generative practices, where teachers were self-directing their growth. By maintaining a neutral, supportive coaching stance, an environment was created where teachers did not look merely to
the coach for answers, but to their own experiences and those of their colleagues. This distinction is important to note because many participants discussed how working with the coaches in this study felt differently than other previous coaching experiences. They attributed this difference to the coaches’ stance—they did not tell teachers what to do, but rather supported their learning.

The final factor in interpreting the results of this study was implied in the discussion above about the coaches’ neutral stance. In addition to maintaining an attitude of support for teacher learning, the coaches in this study also adhered strictly to the inquiry-based design of the CCCM. The model was intended to be teacher-directed in nature, where the coach facilitated the discussion, but the teachers decided the topics they studied and the types of lessons they observed. This required the coach to have no hidden agenda or personal influence over the direction of the learning. It also required the coach to ensure that administrative leaders understood and valued the goal of empowering teachers to direct their learning, instead of requiring a top-down mandate (i.e., the teachers in second grade need to work on writing instruction).

While the coaches in this study had their own philosophies and beliefs about literacy learning, and they might have noticed areas where teachers could improve, they did not impose these beliefs on the cohort. Although this may seem like a minor nuance of the coach’s role, the data in this study confirm that many teachers valued their experience in the CCCM because they had ownership of their learning and it was personalized to their needs by a responsive coach. This result was only possible
because coaches respected teachers’ decisions about their learning and actively worked to help them meet their personal learning goals.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As many localities around the country face significant budget cuts and reductions to funding in education, the pressure to document the impact of coaching has never been stronger. This study answered some of the questions about how coaching can be used to help teachers improve their literacy practice and increase students’ literacy learning; however, questions still remain. Future studies will need to address more specific measures of student progress, such as growth over time, increases in test scores, and comparisons between treatment groups. Ultimately, funding for coaching will be linked to a school or district’s ability to show that the coaching initiative had a significant impact on student achievement, and additional research is needed to make these claims.

In addition to further study on coaching’s relationship to student learning, more research is also needed on the effect of the CCCM with teachers in other localities. While this study contained some very consistent findings, they cannot be generalized to all teachers in the field. Additional studies with teachers in various school settings and with differing school demographics are needed. Further documentation, specifically about teachers’ level of implementation after participating in the CCCM, would also help build a stronger case for the use of coaching. Studies utilizing observations of classroom instruction, combined with interview data, would provide more evidence of teachers’ level of implementation.
Although the CCCM was designed for literacy coaches, and this study looked exclusively at the impact of the model on literacy learning, the structure of the CCCM is not restricted to this one content area. Hopefully, future studies will also investigate the effectiveness of this model with other content area learning, utilizing mathematics coaches or instructional coaches who work with teachers in more than one area.

Now that coaching is becoming a more well-defined practice in educational circles, future research must continue to lay the foundation for useful and effective methods for this form of professional development.

Conclusion

Education has always been a profession with high-stakes, but great rewards, as teaching the nation’s children is both a grave responsibility and a high honor. But the increased divide between students who have mastered the basic skills of literacy and those who have not has put an ever-increasing burden on teachers and schools to “fix the problem.” However, the past two decades of reform have only succeeded in minimal increases in student achievement. Meanwhile, the job of teaching has become very demanding. Teachers are required to implement a myriad of research-based practices in a flexible manner to meet the needs of each student without being provided the education and support to do so.

While much is known about teaching students to be literate and teaching adult learners to grow in their practice, until recently, not much has been done to incorporate this research. As literacy coaching has emerged in the field over the past decade, many researchers and practitioners have hoped it would help bridge the gap
between theory and practice to support teachers as they do the complex work of
teaching students to read. This study found that a clearly defined coaching model that
is delivered by a highly-qualified coach with a neutral, supportive stance toward
teachers can positively impact teachers' perceptions about learning as well as increase
their knowledge base about literacy and their implementation of new literacy
practices. It also found that this increase in teacher learning can have an effect on
students' understanding and engagement in literacy learning. As federal legislation
continues to measure achievement against the goal of 100 percent of students reading
proficiently, hopefully the evidence and support for coaching will increase to help
teachers grow professionally and be more effective at helping their students become
literate citizens.
### Appendix A- Community Coaching Cohort Model

#### The literacy coach:
- Meets with a cohort of 4-8 teachers
- Facilitates the group for an 8-9 week cycle
- Meets with each cohort member individually at least once during each phase

#### The cohort members:
- Have coverage during coaching time
- Receive recertification points at the end of the cycle
- Evaluate the coaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Week 1/Inquiry</th>
<th>Week 2/Research</th>
<th>Week 3/Lesson Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>One day (approximately 1 hr)</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A S E</td>
<td>Discuss inquiry study as a process of analyzing: student data, participants’ questions, research related to these questions, and options for application.</td>
<td>Read and reflect on current research that addresses the inquiry topic(s) and record thinking on graphic organizer.</td>
<td>Develop two-three lesson plans using the coaching lesson planning template to be implemented in the lab site during the next week by the coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Week 4/Coach Modeling</th>
<th>Week 5/Mid-Cycle Reflection</th>
<th>Week 6/Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Two or Three days (1hr/p/day)</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A S E</td>
<td>Observation (30-45 min.)- lessons in the lab classroom</td>
<td>Post-observation (15 min.)- discussion about the lesson and inquiry topic</td>
<td>Read and reflect on current research that addresses the inquiry topic(s) and record thinking on graphic organizer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Complete the “Mid-Cycle Community Coaching Reflection Form” and discuss as a group what has been learned so far and what support is still needed.</td>
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<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Week 7/Lesson Development</th>
<th>Week 8/Cohort Modeling</th>
<th>Week 9/Final Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
<td>Two or Three days (1hr/p/day)</td>
<td>One day (1 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A S E</td>
<td>Develop two-three lesson plans using the coaching lesson planning template to be implemented in the lab site during the next week by the coach.</td>
<td>Observation (30-45 min.)- lessons in the lab classroom</td>
<td>Complete the “Summative Community Coaching Reflection Form” and celebrate the groups’ learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Post-observation (15 min.)- discussion about the lesson and inquiry topic</td>
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</table>

Note: Some weeks in the cycle can be condensed or completed together at one meeting. Times given in parenthesis are an approximation.

**Protocol for Implementation:**
- **Step #1** Analyze school data and needs
- **Step #2** Contact principal and meet to discuss model
- **Step #3** Select cohort members
- **Step #4** Set cycle calendar
- **Step #5** Meet with faculty
- **Step #6** Begin phases of the model
Appendix B- Panel Interview Questions

Learning

1. What have you learned about literacy instruction, in regard to the focus topic or your personal learning goals?

2. In what ways has the coaching cohort impacted your knowledge about literacy instruction?

3. What benefits have you noticed about learning in a coaching cohort? Drawbacks?

Follow-up Questions: What factors of the coaching cohort influenced your learning (working with coach, peer discussion, observation, etc.)? What factors could have improved your learning? Was this learning expected or unexpected?

Implementation

4. How has your learning in the cohort impacted instruction in your classroom?

5. What impact have you observed on your students’ learning pertaining to the focus area or your personal learning goals?

6. What did you bring to represent the impact that coaching has had on your students’ learning or growth? Why did you select it?

Follow-up Questions: How will your learning in the cohort impact your instruction in the future? What changes in student learning do you expect to see? Describe other evidence of student learning and growth.

Feelings

7. How do you think the cohort interacted, planned, and/or learned from each other?

8. What benefits do you think the coaching cohort has compared to other professional development opportunities you have had? What drawbacks?

9. What would you change about the Community Coaching Cohort to improve the process for other teachers?

Follow-up Questions: Why do you think that the coaching cohort has benefits/drawbacks from other professional development models? What about the coaching cohort made it more or less successful than other forms of professional development?
Appendix C- Questionnaire

1. What is your job title?

2. How many years have you been an educator?

3. How many years have you been teaching at your current grade level?

4. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

5. What was your major and/or minor at the undergraduate level?

At the graduate level?

6. What classes (if any) have you taken in reading/literacy for your undergraduate or graduate degree(s)?

7. What formal professional development in reading/literacy have you experienced since becoming a teacher?
Appendix D- Individual Interview Questions

Learning

1. How did the coaching experience impact you personally?

2. What aspects of your personal learning goals have you addressed? Which do you want to continue to study further?

*Follow-up Questions: What factors of the coaching cohort influenced your learning (working with coach, peer discussion, observation, etc.)? What factors could have improved your learning? Was this learning expected or unexpected?*

Implementation

3. How has your learning in the cohort impacted instruction in your classroom?

4. What impact have you observed on your students’ learning pertaining to the focus area or your personal learning goals?

*Follow-up Questions: How will your learning in the cohort impact your instruction in the future? What changes in student learning do you expect to see?*

Feeling

5. How did your feelings and perceptions change from the beginning of the coaching cycle to the end?

6. What aspect of the coaching cohort was most helpful to you (the whole group meetings, one-on-one conversations, or both)? Why?

7. What benefits have you noticed about working in a coaching cohort? Challenges?

*Follow-up Questions: What were the differences between whole group and individual coaching situations? Did one form or the other match your personal learning style?*
Appendix E- Researcher as Instrument Statement

My Background

I have been in the field of education for the past ten years, working in Pennsylvania, Maryland and now this state. All of my experiences have been in elementary and preschool settings working as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, literacy coach, and presently a teacher consultant for the elementary language arts department in my district. I never anticipated leaving the classroom or pursuing literacy as my area of expertise. However, after my first year as a kindergarten teacher, I realized that I was grossly unprepared to teach my students to read. While I felt that my undergraduate program was very rigorous in many regards, I graduated from college having only taken one reading course and I cannot recall learning anything substantial in that class. This lack of knowledge prompted me to apply at area colleges and universities to get my master’s degree in reading.

When I moved to this state, I had just graduated with my degree in reading and my certification as a reading specialist, but I did not intend to apply for this position. Regardless of my intentions, I ended up being hired, in my current district, as a K-2 reading specialist for the upcoming school year. This position and the experience that I gained from it led to each of the subsequent literacy positions that I have held. Nevertheless, it was a difficult transition, moving from a classroom position to a school-level position. In many respects, I struggled with how to help the teachers at my school improve their literacy instruction. I had acquired the content knowledge about best practices in reading instruction, but I did not know how to help
others change their beliefs and practices. It was not until I began my doctoral work in
curriculum leadership that I began to work more effectively with change initiatives to
help teachers strengthen their literacy instruction.

Even though I was always interested in helping teachers as well as students in
my position as a reading specialist, I had never considered working as a literacy
coach. That is, until I was encouraged to apply for a new literacy coaching position
that was being created in my district. After interviewing and obtaining the position, I
began reading profusely on the topic of literacy coaching and I was hooked. It
combined my passion for helping teachers work more effectively with students and
my love of learning within my profession. Although my position now is called a
teacher consultant, I still do a great deal of coaching myself as well as work closely
with the literacy coaches in my department.

My Beliefs & Values

Working as a teacher and in many positions that support teachers both at the
school level and the district level, has given me a clear insight into the complex task
of literacy instruction in schools. Teaching some kids to read and write is easy;
teaching all kids to read and write is much more challenging and requires in-depth
knowledge of literacy processes, reflective teaching practices, and support from
literacy professionals. I have found in my work with teachers at various school
settings, that many feel overwhelmed about how to teach their students to be
proficient readers and writers. I believe that teachers need continuous and ongoing
learning opportunities as well as school-based support in their efforts to educate all
students in literacy. I also strongly feel that this job-embedded learning is not
something “nice” to provide for teachers, but a critical component in the strategic plan for improving literacy learning for all students.

In addition to supporting ongoing professional development for teachers, I also strongly support coaching’s role in this endeavor. I have seen the impact that coaching can have on teachers, provided that knowledgeable and caring coaches are utilized. While I am a vocal supporter of the literacy coaching movement, I have seen the challenges that coaching poses to a school or district, with the biggest factor being cost. I believe that a well-structured coaching program with highly qualified coaches can be cost effective, but I understand the barriers to this vision.

*Expectations for this Study*

Ultimately, I am open to many outcomes of this study. Because the design of the research study is to examine the experiences of four to five different cases, or groups of teachers, within a coaching model, it is difficult to anticipate what the experience of each group will be. If the groups are anything like previous coaching cohorts, I expect that the teachers will report that they learned some skills or knowledge about literacy instruction and that they felt that coaching is much more helpful than other professional development opportunities that they have had. Some teachers may report initial changes in student understanding or performance and many teachers will say they have tried something in their classroom because of the coaching cohort. A few teachers may feel that the coaching cohort was not helpful, although I have not yet found that to be the case.

Regardless of my expectations, I am willing to accept each teacher’s personal experiences with the coaching model. I believe that all participants’ viewpoints are
valid in this study and they will be weighted equally. The only issue I will be unwilling to accept is if a teacher believes that coaching cannot help them because they have nothing to learn or because the only problem they have is their students' unwillingness to learn.

**Intended Outcomes**

One outcome that I would like for this study is that it will help build support for the effective use of literacy coaching as a means for professional development. I hope that this study will help others who are looking to utilize literacy coaches or build a case for the importance of having coaches in schools. Additionally, I would hope that the results of this study could be used to show the complexities of literacy instruction and the intricate nature of the coaching relationship.

Depending on the teachers' responses, I hope that the study would motivate teachers to advocate for professional development, such as literacy coaching, that they feel is most helpful to their learning. I would like for members of the educational profession, from teachers to administrators, to voice their opinions about the ways that we can help improve classroom instruction, especially in the areas of literacy.
Appendix F- Interview Consent Form

Literacy Coaching and Teachers’ Instructional Practices:
The Impact of the Community Coaching Cohort Model

I, ____________________________________________, agree to participate in a descriptive research study involving the effect of literacy coaching as a vehicle for professional development. I understand the purpose of this study is to examine elementary teachers’ perceptions of the Community Coaching Cohort Model. I understand that the researcher will collect information from many teachers, including myself, about our experiences and perceptions with literacy coaching. I have been selected because my experiences and opinions about literacy coaching are valuable to this study. As a participant, I understand that my involvement in this study is purposeful in that teachers working in the Community Coaching Cohort Model were selected with the intention of exploring a variety of perceptions about literacy coaching. I understand that the researcher is conducting this study as part of a doctoral dissertation through the College of William and Mary.

I understand that I will be expected to participate in one panel interview and/or one individual interview lasting no longer than one hour, during which I will be asked questions concerning my experiences with the Community Coaching Cohort and how it has impacted my learning and the instruction in my classroom. I understand that the honesty and accuracy of my responses are crucial for this study. I also understand that I am not required to answer every question that is asked, and that I can end the interview at any time. Further, I agree that I will read and review summaries of the information that is generated during the interviews to check and correct them for accuracy. In addition to participating in the interview, I agree to provide or create at least one artifact that represents the impact that coaching has had on student learning or growth. I will also complete a survey about my experiences in education, my training in literacy, and professional development opportunities I have had.

I have been informed that any information obtained in this study will be recorded with a pseudonym that will allow only the researcher to determine my identity. At the conclusion of this study, the key linking me with the pseudonym will be destroyed. I also acknowledge that individual discussions will be audiotaped to ensure the accuracy of the data analyzed. During the study, the researcher will secure these audiotapes. At the conclusion of the study, the tapes will be erased and will no longer be available for use. All efforts will be made to conceal my identity in the study’s report of results and to keep my personal information confidential.

Because the interviews will ask for participants’ personal opinions and perceptions, I understand that there may be some minimal psychological discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time by notifying the researcher by e-mail or telephone. My decision to participate or not participate will not affect my
relationships with faculty, administration, or with the College of William and Mary in general. If I have any questions that arise in connection with my participation in this study, I should contact Dr. James Beers, dissertation chair and professor, at 757-221-2385 or jwbeer@wm.edu. I understand that I may report any problems or dissatisfactions to Thomas Ward, Ph.D., chair of the School of Education Internal Review Committee at (757) 221-2358 or tjward@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to the conditions outlined above.

________________________  __________________________
Date                                          Participant

________________________  __________________________
Date                                          Investigator
Appendix G- Data Collection Samples

Panel Interview Summary

Portion from Cohort Two:

Focused Learning
- I liked the resources that the coach gave us. I liked looking at research and what's working and then talking about how we can incorporate that into our lessons. It just broke it down. It gave us a focus.
- I thought that the coaching cohort benefited us because we chose specific areas to work on together and even though the coach usually led it, it was a combination of our input and what we felt were our weaknesses. I think it was specific to us.
- I liked being able to focus on one thing. I think a lot of times I am so overwhelmed because I am trying to learn to do all of these things, but with this you could just focus on one thing. Once I feel comfortable with that I am going to try this. It was nice not to feel the pressure that I had to implement everything at once...that I could just focus.

Responsive Coaching
- It wasn't just a, "Here's what we are going to do." It was, "What do we all feel is a weak area? What do you want to concentrate on?" So we were involved in the process of what we were planning and what we were going to study.
- It was what we were looking for. We did the research part. We did the planning. We thought about what we wanted to see and the areas of weakness. I feel like we had so much more ownership- we had our hands on the whole thing rather that just saying, "This is what I am going to show you" or "This is what we are going to do." I felt that we had some control or power.
- I liked that it just wasn't information thrown at us, "You are going to do this in this way." And that it wasn't just thrown in a binder...how may binders can one person have!

Collaboration
- I think it was so much more effective working together as a group rather that having it just be one-on-one. I felt that I was learning from everyone else not just from the literature and not just from the modeling, but hearing the experiences and the ideas from my team, I thought was really effective.
- I really liked working with my own team. Working with our own team with our own students was really beneficial.
- I think we were all really supportive of each other because we are all on the same playing field. In other words, we have similar students and similar difficulties and so we understand what each other is going through. It was kind of nice that we were all in it together.
I feel that it has been a non-judgmental experience. Everyone has been very open-minded and receptive. It has been an open dialogue- just as kids' weaknesses should be discussed without penalty and I liked that.

Coaching as Professional Development
- I thought it gave me another person's viewpoint, which is important. I also got fresh ideas about how to approach things- even just how to use tone of voice and dialogue when teaching.
- I like going back into your classroom and trying this stuff out. It is nice to see it and the next day say, "Ok. Let's try it with your own kids and experiment."
- I think it was definitely the engagement piece that made it more beneficial than other professional development. That it was on site, with your own kids, with a collaborative team, in your building. Not somewhere away from what the real world is for you. And the coach modeled with our kids.

Individual Interview Summary

Portion from Cohort Four:

Teacher Understanding
- I think it made me take a closer look at the way I was teaching, reading especially because that was our focus as a group and my focus with the individual meetings with the coach. I think it made me take a hard look at what I was doing and things that I could do a little better- things that were working and maybe the courage to try a few new things that I hadn't tried before.
- We focused mainly on inference because that is where we were headed at that point. I really liked learning new ways to introduce. I think sometimes we get in a rut and you do it the same way and the same thing doesn't always reach all of the kids. So coming up with some creative ways to introduce the lessons. I enjoyed seeing that and having someone say, "Here is another way to do it."
- I'm thinking more about the way I'm introducing new things and the way I'm following up- making sure that the kids understand when we have that small group time what I am teaching in guided reading. When we introduce something in shared reading then they are coming to the small group with something that is actually on their level. I reinforce the same thing that we have been talking about.
- I think I do a better job. I feel like I am more aware of maybe who has a weakness in that area and who has a strength in that area and I feel like I am addressing those more.
- I think I know my students better. I really do and I have 41 that I am working with in reading right now. I do really feel like I have a better handle on what they do well and what they still need to work on.
- As a group we started talking about metacognition and I think that is probably the biggest change in my instruction.
As opposed to, "Here is the answer." Now it's, "Why did you get that answer?" And listening to their thoughts because sometimes they can give a really rational explanation for the wrong answer. Listening to them because sometimes the difference is schema.

For me the coaching helped me focus on the kids and listening to their reasons behind things.

Teacher Application

I had tried the last couple of years to set up centers. I had classes that made it really difficult for the last couple of years, but letting go and not having that control of what they were doing, that was really hard for me. And I told the coach that the biggest thing I wanted was for the literacy centers to be meaningful, not just them going to a corner somewhere out of the way while I was working with a group. Eventually the centers started to work pretty well. I created a contract, which the first one didn't work! We discussed that in a meeting and then it was like "Ok. I've revised everything and tried something a little new and this one actually seems to be working better." So the kids are held accountable for what they are doing while they are in the centers and I feel like something more constructive is taking place.

It think it allowed me to be able to stretch and go beyond what I probably would have to begin with. Because it would have taken me longer, trying to do everything that has to be done anyway, and also looking for the extra information.

It definitely impacted my instruction more than I thought it would.

Last year I did the collab class and we created groups and even though those groups are supposed to be fluid, I found that most of the time the small groups were the same people put together because they fell in the same reading level. This year I find myself actually pulling different groups together because that is where I see a weakness- those people need to get together. Or maybe there are a couple people who are kind of stronger with the weaker kids so that they can hear that conversation and then in a small group they actually begin to take part in that conversation. Where as with the whole class they are not quite brave enough to speak up so they will let the other kids carry on the conversation unless I specifically kind of pull them in. But in a smaller group, if you have someone who is a little stronger and they start something and then you see the other kids go, "Oh. Yes...I get that." So they start becoming part of the conversation.

Student Understanding and Engagement

Like my kids now...no matter what subject you are in, they will say, "I infer..." because we have really, really spent a lot of time working with it.

I think because of the way that I am grouping them now and allowing those groups to be a little more fluid, I think they are benefiting. I do see kids who are struggling with it this week and the next week we come to the table and
we are doing the same thing with a different type of reading and they’re more able to do it. They have a better understanding.

- Sometimes it is listening to each other. We were talking about schema in the small group, and one of the kids said, “Yeah. It’s the conversation that I have with myself.” And I was like, “That is it!” That is what I have been trying to get you to understand all of this time. And the other kids are sitting there like, “Ok. Yeah. I have that conversation with myself before I answer the questions every time.” And all this time I had never thought to put it that way, but someone else did and it made a difference.

- I am noticing it on their work too. We are doing common assessments every week and we are seeing growth. Not from failing to 100 percent every time, but we are seeing kids who are making growth. And even when they get it wrong, because we go back over it, they are able to sit and reason it through and actually the second time, with a little bit of guidance and the discussion with their peers, find the right answer and explain why it is a better answer than the one they chose before. Which in the long run has to help!

- That is our phrase this year, “prove it.” They even say it to each other now. They will say, “I like this answer.” Well, “Prove it.” It’s neat to listen to because they used to be like, “Unnno.” (shrugging shoulders) For some kids that was the only answer that they would give you. When you said to them, “Why is that?” “Unnno.”

Artifact Image

Cohort Two

Questioning Anchor Chart

[Image of a written anchor chart]
Survey Response

Cohort One

CCCM- Questionnaire

1. What is your job title?
   
   Classroom Teacher

2. How many years have you been an educator?
   
   9

3. How many years have you been teaching at your current grade level?
   
   I loop 2nd-3rd, but total
   I have taught 3rd grade for 4 years

4. How long have you been teaching at your current school?
   
   2nd year

5. What was your major and/or minor at the undergraduate level?
   
   Early Childhood Education

At the graduate level?

17 credits towards Masters in Reading

6. What classes (if any) have you taken in reading/literacy for your undergraduate or graduate degree(s)?

   Word Study
   Language Classes
   Reading in Content Areas
   Foundations of Reading etc...

7. What formal professional development in reading/literacy have you experienced since becoming a teacher?

   Word Study
   VA Reading Conferences
Appendix H- Artifact Analysis

Artifact #1- Metacognition Anchor Chart

*Description:* The participant brought a replica of an anchor chart that had been used in one of the demonstration lessons. The idea for the chart came from the book *Comprehension Connections* by Tanny McGregor, which was the text that the cohort used during the research phase. The chart was created with the participant’s class on poster paper measuring about 3 feet by 5 feet. On the bottom of the poster the participant wrote the word “metacognition” as well as the definition that the class decided upon, “thinking about thinking.” At the top of the poster the participant drew a Venn diagram of a book and a head, which intersected. Inside of the book was written, “words in the book.” Inside the head was written, “what’s going on in my head.” The intersecting portion of the diagram said, “real reading.” Between the diagram and the title was an equation stating, “text + thinking = real reading.”

*Participant Comments:*
- I have an anchor chart. It’s the one in the book and that the coach did and I read a story following the same guidelines and talking about the fake reading.
- We talked about the fake reading and the kids loved it! I mean they were hysterical. When the special education teacher came into the room they told her all about fake reading. They were just really into the lesson and making the poster as a connection to keep up in the room to use throughout the different subjects.

(included codes: teacher application, student engagement, modeling for teachers)

Artifact #2- Metacognition Lesson Materials

*Description:* The participant brought the picture book *Ish,* as well as the novel *The Time Traveler’s Wife.* Accompanying the books was a plastic Tupperware container containing green strips of paper with the word “thinking” and red strips of paper with the word “text.” These items had been used in one of the demonstration lessons and came from the book *Comprehension Connections* by Tanny McGregor, which was the text that the cohort used during the research phase.

*Participant Comments:*
- I brought my reading salad stuff. I got *Ish* also because I really love that book too and I did it as a read aloud last week and I just read the story and didn’t ask very many leading questions. Then today I am planning to do the rest of it, which is why I have my *Time Traveler’s Wife* book to read to them for the fake reading part and then I’m going to read *Ish* again to do the salad thing.
- I kind of split that lesson into two because when we had met after the coach modeled it, one of the things we talked about was what kind of modifications could be made to it and maybe reading the story aloud once first. I loved the reading salad lesson, but I wanted them to have heard it the whole way.
through before stopping to think because I was wondering if that, for my class, might be a little disjointed. I wondered if at the end, they would even know what they read because we stopped to talk so much.

(included codes: teacher application, adjusting teaching, modeling for teachers)

Artifact #3- Read Aloud Chapter Book

Description: N/A

Participant Comments:
• I also think my students are learning, like even when I just do my chapter book when I am reading aloud that isn't necessarily pertaining to any lesson, it is cool to see them making connections and doing things we have talked about. Sometimes I have to tell them to put their hands down because I'm not doing much reading. They are exposed to it enough now that they want to make connections, they have questions, and good words to clarify, and things like that.

(included codes: student engagement, student understanding)

Artifact #4- Questioning Anchor Chart

Description: The participant brought a chart that the class had constructed using the strategy of questioning. A similar chart was used in one of the demonstration lessons. At the top of the 3 foot by 5 foot chart was the word “questioning” and a large question mark with questioning words such as “why, what, where, how” written inside of it. The participant had recorded a few questions in marker on the chart and sticky notes covered the rest of the space. The sticky notes were blue, yellow, and green and had student questions written on them. Some of the sticky notes had a large “A” for “Answered” written in the corner.

Participant Comments:
• I brought a chart that we made from shared reading. I was using our Time For Kids magazine and I modeled something similar to what the coach did. I wrote my questions in a marker and then the kids had sticky notes. We did questions before reading, during reading, and after reading.
• We read a really cool article about Indonesia where kids go to school on boats. You see these kids sitting on a boat on the cover of the story. They had lots of questions about it. I think they are just more engaged with the sticky notes because they had three: one for before, during, and after reading, but they wanted more! So we had to put them out...so it was cool. Then we went back and looked at what questions we had answered. They were just really excited.

(included codes: teacher application, student engagement, student understanding)
Artifact #5- Comprehension Quiz

Description: The participant brought a one-page comprehension assessment that a student had completed. The assessment was labeled as a review of chapters 1-4 of the book *The Chalk Box Kid*. The directions stated, “Write true or false. You may use your book. Then prove your answer by writing the page number beside the question.” Below the directions there are 10 statements about the book. The student wrote true or false on each line and recorded a number to the left of his answers. The assessment was scored with 9 out of 10 correct.

Participant Comments:
- What I brought goes along with our guided reading. Yesterday I gave them a quick snapshot comprehension quiz on chapters one through four. But what I was particularly proud of, with these students, is that they had to go back and prove their answers. They had to go back to the page in the book, even though the answer could be true or false...they had a 50/50 chance of getting that question right, I wanted them to go back and find the page number where you could prove that this is what happened or didn’t happen. A few of them kind of belly ached at first and were like, “I don’t know” and “I can’t find this” but they stuck with it. So I am very proud of them because this was really hard for them.

(included codes: student understanding, student engagement)

Artifact #6- Rag Coat Writing Sample

Description: The participant brought the picture book *The Rag Coat* along with a copy of her version of the rag coat story. Additionally, the participant showed a student sample of the assignment. The directions read, “Design a coat that is special to you like Minna’s in *The Rag Coat*. Write a paragraph telling about your coat and why it special. Use your five senses.” Above the directions is an outline of a coat that the student used to design their own coat using crayons and markers. The paragraph describing the coat was stapled to the illustration.

Participant Comments:
- I have my model of the Rag Coat story and then the children wrote their rag coat story. I made a transparency of my story and I typed it up, which I don’t normally do. I modeled what I expected them to write.

(included codes: teacher application, modeling for students)

Artifact #7- I Love Lucy Writing Sample

Description: The participant brought a final copy of a piece of her writing that was recorded on a large poster. The laminated poster was lined and looked like an
oversized piece of notebook paper. At the top of the poster was the participant’s name and the date. The title of the piece, *I Love Lucy*, was written underneath the heading. The rest of the space was covered with the paragraph long essay about why the participant enjoyed the show *I Love Lucy*.

**Participant Comments:**
- We were writing about our favorite TV show and I was talking about *I Love Lucy*. We went through this whole thing about *I Love Lucy* and I did my final copy. I said, “This is how it is going to look and it's going to be neat and I'm going to have my heading and I'm going to have my title.” And I neatly wrote the whole thing and I said, “Am I done?” and they said, “Wow...look...yes!” And I said, but I really haven't proofread it to make sure that I didn’t make mistakes along the way and they looked at me like, “No...it looks neat!” I hadn’t done it on purpose, but I said something like the main character is a “ditsy redhead named Lucy.” And I hadn’t done that on purpose! I looked at it and said, “Oh my goodness...” and then they looked at it like, “Oh. Ok.” Because they are just so happy to get something on paper and if it is neat they think, “I am done.”

(included codes: teacher application, student understanding)

**Artifact #8- 6+1 Traits of Writing Book**

*Description:* The participant brought the *6+1 Traits of Writing* book by Ruth Culham that the cohort had used during the research phase of the model. The book was tabbed with pink sticky notes.

**Participant Comments:**
- I brought the book that the coach gave us because I think the biggest impact on me has been having new ideas and having a better understanding of writing. In the beginning I was not really wanting to focus on writing so much. I was more concerned about the reading, but after seeing the reading and the writing I felt like I was doing the reading ok and I realized that the writing is just as important. I think the book gave me a better understanding and new ideas.

(included codes: teacher understanding, modeling for teachers)

**Artifact #9- Guided Reading Question Response Sheet**

*Description:* N/A

**Participant Comments:**
- With my guided reading groups they are now doing questioning, but I did change my questions this year to be very generic to fit with any book. Last year I wrote questions that went with the book. This year it is more like,
"Write your prediction." And for the second nine weeks it has been generating questions so now each week they have to generate at least two questions about the book. I have changed it so we are doing the reading and the talking and then the questions are more along the lines of the GO Chart or the strategies and they are more open-ended as opposed to me sitting there and writing very specific questions for them. The focus of the book is more through discussion, where the writing part is more generic. They could answer the questions with anything.

- Each week they have to generate at least two questions about the book. I still have those that rush through it and put a simple question like, "Why is he green?" But I have noticed that some of them do write better.

(included codes: teacher application, teacher understanding, student understanding)

Artifact #10- Clarifying Technique: "W"

Description: The participant used her pointer finger, middle finger, and ring finger to make a "W" while holding her thumb and pinky finger down.

Participant Comments:

- When we were doing our observation of the coach she told them that if they came to a word that they didn’t know when they were reading to make a "W" (with their fingers). I have a child who is ESOL, she is up there so she gets very minimal support but she is also kind of quiet and shy so she won’t tell you that she doesn’t understand a word in front of anyone. She will come and ask me quietly, “What did that word mean?” And I can also tell by her facial expressions because I’ll say, “You didn’t get that did you?” And “no” and she’ll smile, but she won’t openly say it. So when we were going our guided reading groups I told her about that, told the whole group about it. And I said, “When you are reading or someone else is reading, if you come to a word that you don’t understand, you don’t have to say anything just make this sign. And when we are done or at the end of a paragraph we’ll go back and discuss it.” And for her it was like, “I don’t have to speak up, I don’t have to say anything.” And it was someone else who was reading, not her, and her hand went up and by the end her hand went down. I said, “Why did your hand go down?” And she said, “As he finished reading, I understood what it meant by the end.” And I said, “What was the word?” and she told me and said that she didn’t understand it when he used the word but as the paragraph continued she understood what the word meant. And she was able to tell me what the word meant. So just incorporating that small thing...you know, I always told them to tell me if there is a word that you don’t understand, but for her speaking out was something she was not comfortable with. This was like a miracle for her and then she was using those skills, the text-to-text and context clues and all those things and she was able to put her hand back down because she was able to figure the word out on her own, which is really something good.
Artifact #11- Common Assessment/Benchmark Example

**Description:** N/A

**Participant Comments:**
- Our benchmarks were good and all of our common assessments have improved week to week. You can see growth in every one of our classes from the first assessment. Even those who struggle...I have one from 4th grade who scored a “2-something” on his SOL and he started at his first common assessment at a 33. And I was like great. But then it was a 44. Then we went up to a 60 and on the benchmark he made a 69. So to me, it is not where I would like him to be, of course I would want him to be in the 70’s or higher but he has gone up. It’s better than going down to the 20’s. So that is big for him- consistently making the growth. That is between a 10 and 11-point gain each time. He participates more so I think he is starting to feel more comfortable with the reading.

Artifact #12- Tree Symbol (Participant 25C)

**Description:** N/A

**Participant Comments:**
- If I had to pick a symbol it would be a tree because I noticed that everyone here is working together and trying to bring their ideas together. And with that the tree is growing and we are branching out and the kids are doing good.
Appendix I- Organizing Codes and Definitions

*Teacher Understanding*—what the participant learned from his or her experiences within a Community Coaching Cohort

*Teacher Application*—what the participant has incorporated into his or her instruction or classroom practice

*Affirming Teaching*—confirmation of the participant’s practice

*Adjusting Teaching*—making modifications to instruction based on new knowledge or students’ needs

*Time for Teaching*—covering material and concepts that students need to know within a given time frame

*Modeling for Students*—showing students what they are expected to know and understand

*Student Understanding & Engagement*—what the students learned and how they interacted with their learning

*Student Accountability*—holding students responsible for learning in the classroom

*Focused Learning*—addressing specific, targeted areas for growth

*Future Learning*—an area that the participant hopes to gain more knowledge

*Time for Learning*—the issues surrounding the participant’s ability to grow professionally during the workday

*Responsive Coaching*—adjusting the learning experience to meet the needs of the participant

*Modeling for Teachers*—demonstrating a lesson for participants at their home school

*Collaboration*—working and learning together with teammates

*Coaching as Professional Development*—the participant’s perceptions about learning in a Community Coaching Cohort

*Coaching Modifications*—ideas for improving the Community Coaching Cohort Model

*Traditional Professional Development*—the participant’s perceptions about learning in traditional professional development settings
Appendix J- Examples of Member Checking

During a Panel Interview:

Example #1
P- I think that I felt more comfortable after having you come...that we were actually doing the right thing. In the guided reading...that's exactly what we were doing. And I thought...I was feeling like I wasn't doing the right thing. But it was the right thing! And that sort of confirmed or made me feel more comfortable with what I was doing and not feeling like, "What else should I be doing...I should be doing something different." So I think it calmed that fear.
R- Ok. Sort of validated...
P- Um hum. That's exactly how I felt.

Example #2
P- I just thought that...it gave me another person's viewpoint, which is important, and fresh ideas about how to approach things...even just tone of voice and dialogue. I mean I thought dialogue was really important.
R- Can you tell me more about what you mean by that?
P- Just because I kind of felt as you modeled, you kind of put yourself in their...you were no longer teacher...you were writer to writer. You were not, "Here's how you need to do it." You identified with the problems they had as writers. So I kind of felt that it freed them up to be who they are and admit the issues that they have and to risk-take a little bit more. Rather than having a fear that they were going to be wrong...because you showed indecision and that kind of validated that it was ok to be indecisive about things...you know...it was part of the whole show. And that you don't know from beginning to end how it's going to turn out until you start with baby steps along the way. And I think thinking out loud was so important...not only with writing but with reading. Understanding that everyone has weaknesses and everyone needs to have focus and it's just not a child issue, it's an "anybody issue" with writing.

Example #3
R- So tell me if I am hearing you correctly...you feel like you had some of the basic principles of literacy instruction in place from your experiences, being in the classroom for many years or teacher training, but maybe just getting some new ideas or a different perspective. Is that accurate?
P- And even a different approach to it or a different method (many agreements)

During an Individual Interview:

Example #1
P- Watching her...I teach two reading classes. So watching her...she introduced the lesson in my room and she introduced inferencing with the trash...pulling it out and letting the kids look at it. Well, I just took that same idea and immediately after she had done the lesson with the first class, I did the same lesson with the second class.
So it was helpful for me to... I don’t know, I guess see it and because the materials were brought to me and I could see somebody else using it and could actually put it in place in the classroom right away, I tended to go ahead and do the things that we were talking about and using the ideas.

R- Would it be fair to say that it impacted your instruction more than you thought it was going to?
P- Yes. It definitely did.

R- Ok. Is there any other examples that you might want to share about how your learning in the cohort impacted what you are doing with your kids?
P- I think I’m thinking more...about the way I’m introducing new things and the way I’m following up and making sure that the kids understand when we have that small group time what I am teaching in guided reading.

R- Can you tell me more about that?
P- The carryover...well, making sure that when we introduce something in shared reading, then they are coming to the small group with something that is actually on their level...I reinforce the same thing that we have been talking about.

R- Ok.

Example #2
P- Yes because I am looking at doing more modeling at the beginning, letting children take time to think on their own before having to participate, making sure anchor charts and visual cues are used.

R- So that feels different to you...
P- Yes.

R- And how about your kids...have you noticed their reaction or response?
P- Yes. I do believe that they are, especially when we have silent reading and they are talking more about what it is that we are learning and just talk about the books more. More than just reading a page and talking about what they are doing on the weekends...I see them talking more about the literature that they are reading. So that is huge! And making connections with the things they are doing...this is the first time that I have ever heard them talking about, and they’ll even use the terminology, “That’s a text-to-text or that’s a text-to-self.” Umm...or, “I made a connection with this.” So they are using the words and yeah.

R- So do you think it would be fair to say that the kids have taken ownership of the things you are teaching?
P- Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Example #3
P- Yeah. And I think with me being in grad school at the same time...it just kind of falls on top and I’m in charge of CSIT...so I think the Wednesday meeting with Anita, we would meet one-on-one at lunch and then with our group but it was like, “I can breath.” So that was really good for me.

R- So it felt like a different kind of meeting?
P- Yeah. I wasn’t like a chore...it just felt like, “This is what I’m doing and it’s not working.” Just following-up and communicating about what I am doing and not having someone tell me, “You are not where you are supposed to be.”
With Interview Summaries Via Email:

Example #1
From: Melanie
Sent: Wed 1/6/2010 4:13 PM
To: Sara Miller
Subject: RE: individual interview

Hi Sara,
Looks great! Good luck! :)
Melanie

From: Sara Miller
Sent: Tue 1/5/2010 7:50 AM
To: Melanie
Subject: individual interview

Hi Melanie,
I have attached a copy of our one-on-one interview from before break. If you get a chance to look it over, let me know if there is anything that you would like to add or modify.
Thanks,
Sara Miller

Example #2
From: Valenta
Sent: Fri 1/8/2010 4:33 PM
To: Sara Miller
Subject: RE: coaching interview

Hi Sara,
Looks goods to me!
Valenta

From: Sara Miller
Sent: Sun 1/3/2010 4:56 PM
To: Cohort #3
Subject: coaching interview

Hi all,
I have attached a summary of the interview with your team. If you have a chance to look it over, let me know if there is anything that you would like me to add or revise. Once you have had a chance to give me input, I will remove any references to your school and grade level (I have already changed the names). Thank you so much for helping me with this project!
Sara Miller
Appendix K- Sample Entries from Reflexive Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Plans Considered (PC); Decisions Made (DM); Actions Taken (AT)</th>
<th>Reasons (R); Questions (Q); Feelings (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08/09</td>
<td>DM- After looking at updated data on reading and writing achievement in all the elementary schools within the district, two schools were chosen to participate in the coaching cohort model. AT- The principal at each of these schools was contacted and both were in strong support of coaching for their teachers. At an initial meeting with each principal, the grade levels that will work in a coaching cohort were established: 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 5\textsuperscript{th} at one school and 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} at the other school. AT- The research proposal was resubmitted to human subjects including the research questions and the survey.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/09</td>
<td>DM- The coaching packet was finalized and printed after approval was obtained from human subjects. AT- All four cohorts were initiated this month. Each cohort will be on a slightly different schedule due to the coaches' and the teachers' availability and how quickly they were able to begin. Each coach will keep a log of when each cohort meets throughout the semester. AT- The research study was explained and all participants signed the consent from at one school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/09</td>
<td>AT- I have meet with one of the two cohorts at the second school to explain the study and the consent forms. PC- I am going to try to meet with the last cohort during their lunch break in November because I have had scheduling conflicts with their meeting time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F- The language arts department looked at current and previous SOL data as well as DRA and PALS reports and the number of students needing reading intervention. Special attention was also paid to subgroup scores within the schools. This student information was coupled with knowledge of the school culture and the administrative support for coaching to decide which two schools would benefit the most from the coaching cohort model. F- I was relieved to have both schools selected and that the principals were supportive and excited to have coaches working with their teachers. F- I am a bit nervous about finding time in my schedule to get to the second school to explain the research study and the consent forms. It might take longer than expected to meet face to face with each cohort.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q- I am wondering if the categories for the individual interviews should be: 1. teaching less that 10 years vs. teaching more than 10 years 2. participating in reading/writing classes or a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Date | Plans Considered (PC); Decisions Made (DM); Actions Taken (AT) | Reasons (R); Questions (Q); Feelings (F)
---|---|---
AT- Two cohorts have completed the survey. Once the last two cohorts are done, I will begin to schedule individual interviews for the end of November and the beginning of December.  
PC- I am thinking about using two recording devices for the panel interviews. I did some "review" reading about interviewing participants in qualitative research and one author suggested dual recording devices when interviewing more than one or two people.  
DM- I was not able to meet with the last cohort at the second school to talk about the consent forms due to scheduling complications.  
AT- All cohorts have completed the survey with the exception of three teachers who were absent the day the survey was given  
PC- I am planning on using three qualifiers to select the individual interviews: veteran (20+ years) vs. novice (5 or less years); many years on grade level (10+) vs. new to grade level (3 or less); many recent classes in literacy vs. no classes in recent memory  
PC- I will pick the participants for the individual interviews, with the help of the coach, once all the surveys have been returned.  
AT- Two panel interviews have been completed at one school.  
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R- The coach explained the consent form and the teachers didn’t have any questions so I will meet with them when we do the panel interview.  
Q- What is the best way to member check a panel interview? I tried to ask clarifying questions to ensure that I correctly understood the participants during the interview, but I would also like to send them the summary via email. Will it be hard for them to correct and clarify their thoughts because it will contain the opinions and viewpoints of so many others?
DM- After completing two of the panel interviews, I have decided that the participants for the individual interviews should be selected after the other panel interviews have been completed. I noticed that there seemed to be one or two dominate voices in the panel interviews and I would like to make sure to select individuals for the one-on-one interviews who didn’t get a chance to fully express themselves.
References


Hord, S. M., & Southwest Educational Development Lab, Austin, TX. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 18-19.


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