

**AN EXPLORATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN WESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS**

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Providing high-quality professional learning opportunities for teaching staff is a key responsibility for school leaders that can lead to increased teacher capacity and higher student outcomes. Instructional coaching is a professional development model that has gained in popularity over the past decade. An instructional coach is an individual who works with teachers one-on-one, or in a small group setting on a variety of professional learning topics aiming to increase teacher capacity. This qualitative study examined the experiences of three instructional coaches who are currently working in Western Pennsylvania secondary schools. The three participants work in districts that vary in size, setting, and socioeconomic status. Participants engaged in semi-structured interviews, observations of coaching sessions, and document analysis to examine how instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches are able to achieve teacher buy-in, and how the coaching process has enhanced the practices, knowledge and beliefs of instructional coaches. The findings for this qualitative study provide insight for consideration by school leaders, instructional coaches, teachers, school board members, and policy makers. The findings resulted in emerging themes for each research question and five overarching conclusions to the study. Conclusions drawn

from this research suggest that school leadership is vital to instructional coaching implementation and success, schools must have an established vision and purpose for instructional coaching and professional development to maximize impact, coaching is a reciprocal process resulting in both instructional coach and teacher advancement, varying contexts should be taken into consideration when implementing instructional coaching, and instructional coaches possess a strong sense of self in terms of self-learning, self-motivation. While these themes were evident in the literature empirical research on instructional coaching is still limited. These findings reveal significant understandings in regard to how instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches were able to achieve teacher buy-in and how the instructional coaching has enhanced the beliefs and practices of instructional coaches.

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PREFACE

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The journey that I have ventured on the past few years has been one that has challenged and pushed me in ways that I had never experienced before. There were countless moments

when I battled self-doubt, questioning if I had the ability and fortitude to complete the journey, as well questioned if all the sleep deprived nights and time away from my family were worth it. I could not have overcome those moments without the encouragement, advice, support, and love of family and friends whom I cherish more than anything.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public education has had its fair share of reform initiatives. Many initiatives are often multifaceted and have aimed to transform the educational landscape of K-12 education and improve teacher and student outcomes. Recently, there has been an increased emphasis on educators improving their overall quality of instruction and practice, thus resulting in better student outcomes (Alterman, Finkelstein, & Parise, 2015). Offering ongoing, consistent, job-embedded, and relevant professional learning opportunities that lead to positive teacher outcomes is a challenge that school leaders must embrace and accept as a significant responsibility (Coggshall, Croft, Dolan, & Powers, 2010). This research study examined Instructional Coaching, a specialized professional development approach that has gained momentum over the years as an effective method of professional learning.

A shift is occurring that is challenging the assumption that teachers know the majority of what they need to about teaching before they enter the classroom (Elmore, 2002). The importance of a quality teacher who understands pedagogy, knows the curriculum content, implements classroom management techniques, and provides engaging instructional strategies has long been argued as critical for student success (Darling-Hammond, Jaquith, Mindich, & Wei, 2011; Knight, 2012). Instructional coaching is an on-site professional development method that involves working with classroom teachers in one-on-one, or small group settings on a variety of instructional competencies that are geared toward the individual needs of the teacher

(Knight, 2007; Sandstead, 2016; Saphier & West, 2009). This research study aimed to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of practicing instructional coaches through interviews, observations and document analysis. Literature was explored, and has helped determine the elements of effective professional development as well as the concepts and principles of instructional coaching.

Having an understanding of how to effectively develop a teaching staff through professional development is essential for a school leader (DuFour, 2004). Educators need to possess the knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning to support students to utilize the higher-order thinking skills necessary to achieve at a significant level (Andree, Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, Richardson, & Wei, 2009). Implementing instructional coaching could allow for teachers to have that opportunity to build and expand that knowledge and understanding.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Providing valuable learning opportunities for teachers that are geared towards improving classroom instruction and overall teacher capacity is a complex and pressing issue (Knight, 2012). School leaders such as principals, curriculum directors and superintendents can have a lasting impact on teacher practice and ultimately student achievement and need to support professional development for teachers. Learning opportunities that lead to organizational and personal change require extended time, sustained effort, and need to be associated with a vision, focus, and goals that drive the initiative (DuFour, 2004; Saphier & West, 2009).

Teachers may attend professional learning sessions at a variety of locations or on-site in the school where the teacher works. School leaders can increase the effectiveness of these on-site staff development sessions by bringing relevant learning opportunities that are work embedded, supported and challenging for the teachers to build teacher capacity and sustain school improvement (DuFour, 2004).

This study examined what is known about effective professional learning, and considered essential elements in instructional coaching. Instructional coaches are on-site staff developers that work with teachers in a variety of capacities to enhance their understanding and practice of teaching. Limited research has been conducted on instructional coaching and there is a call for more research from a variety of perspectives (Borman & Feger, 2006; Coggshall et al., 2010). This particular study examined the perceived impact instructional coaches feel they have on teacher practice, and teacher “buy-in”. Additionally, this study gathered instructional coaches’ perspectives of their own professional knowledge and practices.

Further knowledge and understanding of the practice of instructional coaching, as well effective professional development practices in general, can benefit school leaders (DuFour, 2004). Instructional coaching may be a viable option for some school districts while others may incorporate different core features of instructional coaching into their professional development plan for staff members.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explores the following questions:

Q1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?

Q2: How is teacher “buy-in” of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?

Q3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?

Instructional coaches have to frame their roles and responsibilities, create learning activities with teachers and identify specific instructional areas for focus. These factors are important in determining potential impact that instructional coaches have on teacher practice (Boatright, Gallucci, Van Lare, & Yoon, 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Coggshall et al., 2010; Desimone, 2009; Knight, 2008; Saphier & West, 2009). This study sought to better understand the lived experiences of practicing instructional coaches and helps identify ways that instructional coaches assist teachers in enhancing their practice and knowledge of teaching and learning.

At times leaders encounter various forms of resistance or obstacles when implementing school reform initiatives (Andree et al., 2009; Alterman et al., 2015). Lack of teacher acceptance, or “buy-in” is a potential barrier. Instructional coaches’ experiences with these types of encounters are valuable in helping to understand implementation of this professional development model (Blanton & Wood, 2009; Knight, 2004).

Instructional coaches are also encountering new learning experiences through the coaching process that result in their own growth and development (Knight, 2008; Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Understanding the learning progression of an instructional coach can assist in gaining deeper insight into the practice of instructional coaching as well as shed light on their beliefs and practices (Borman & Feger, 2006).

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used throughout this study:

Instructional Coach – An individual, working in an educational setting, who works in a full-time or part-time capacity to assist teachers with work embedded professional development initiatives. The coach assists teachers in translating professional development directly to their pedagogy.

Job-embedded – Professional development topics and initiatives that are directly aligned to the current work teachers are doing in the classroom.

Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching – (PIIC) A resource for instructional coaches, that includes mentors working out of Intermediate Units (IUs) throughout the state of Pennsylvania, that offer professional development and different supports for instructional coaches that are currently working in school settings.

Professional Development – An activity that a teacher will participate in, either on-site at a school or off-site, with the goal of increasing a teacher's knowledge of teaching, content, and classroom practices. Topics for professional development can be varied or very specific to particular learning topics, such as technology integration, instructional and assessment strategies, engaging students, and literacy strategies, to name a few.

School Reform Initiative – A measure that is undertaken by the administration and staff to change a particular outcome within a school, such as student behavior, student achievement or teacher practices.

Teacher Capacity – The overall ability and competency of a classroom teacher to teach content, engage students, and support learning.

Student Outcomes – How students are engaging in learning and achieving desired expectations. These may include high-stakes state or national assessments, student projects and assignments and/or other assessments.

1.4 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Professional development is a central component of many school leaders' professional responsibilities. Planning and coordinating such learning activities is a challenging process but rewarding endeavor. When I started my teaching career, like many novice educators, I needed additional supports and guidance that would have made me a more effective teacher. I did not feel like I received those supports and it took a number of years to feel fully comfortable and confident in how I was leading the classroom. I have also experienced mandatory professional development sessions that offered little relevance to what or how I was teaching. In addition, if the professional development session did provide new learning that I deemed useful, I rarely experienced follow-up or guidance to ensure that I was appropriately implementing the new strategies. As a result, I ceased implementing the activity or initiative. Conversely, not all professional learning opportunities I have experienced have been meaningless. The more rewarding professional development opportunities were those that I found to be more relevant due to my particular areas of need. Useful professional learning was also dependent on the guidance, support and feedback I received on an ongoing basis.

When I moved into a school level leadership role I was given full autonomy to coordinate teacher professional development sessions. I understood the complexity in developing learning opportunities for teachers that were relevant, meaningful and could lead to individual and school

level change. Each individual has unique learning tendencies as well as areas of strength and weaknesses. Providing creative and appropriate learning opportunities is a difficult task, but if done so in an appropriate manner with the proper follow-up and supports it can lead to positive teacher change and increased student outcomes. I have witnessed the benefit for teachers and students when a particular initiative goes well, and I want to continue the positive work in providing significant professional development that leads to increased teacher capacity.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

The following chapters of this dissertation are organized in a manner that presents an integrated review of the current literature on instructional coaching followed by an overview of the study methodology. Chapter 2 presents the review of the literature on instructional coaching, in particular the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches, educational impact that instructional coaching has had on teacher practice and obstacles and challenges that school leaders encounter when implementing instructional coaching. The third chapter provides an overview of the methodology used for this study, and Chapter 4 discusses the findings that emerged from data analysis. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and recommendations for future research, as well as recommendations for instructional coaches and school leaders.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

School district administrators have the important responsibility of continual development of professional capacity among educators. School leaders strive to provide relevant and meaningful learning opportunities for their teachers to foster a deep understanding of complex and higher-order teaching skills and content knowledge. High-level instruction contributes to increased student achievement outcomes and students reaching their maximum learning potential (Andree et al., 2009).

Instructional coaching differs from what many people would consider more “traditional approaches” to professional development. Traditional approaches are described in the literature as one-time trainings, presentations, or conferences where material is presented in a top down approach with little follow-up (Crilley, Good, Kohler, & Shearer, 1997). In addition, traditional approaches of professional development are reportedly more likely to be conducted in large group settings that are not specific to any particular grade or subject level, and as Harris and Sass (2007) suggest, ultimately do not positively influence the productivity of classroom teachers or change classroom practice. These kinds of professional development typically have a minimal impact on the development of teacher knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1999). The literature also affirms that traditional teacher trainings have fewer than 15% of participating teachers actually implementing new ideas and practices (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Joyce and Showers (1996) state that this is due to a lack of adequate teacher knowledge and confidence related to school

reform objectives and measures. Instructional coaching is an alternative method to these traditional approaches to professional development.

The following literature review examines the practice of instructional coaching by exploring the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches, what impact instructional coaching can have on a school or district, and what obstacles and barriers exist when implementing an instructional coaching model. The literature was also examined to inform the researcher's understanding of effective professional development to be used as a basis for comparison between instructional coaching and more traditional approaches to professional learning.

2.1 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elmore (2002) considers teacher professional development to be at the center of individual teacher and whole school improvement and change. There is debate regarding the nature of what constitutes high quality and highly effective professional development practices and outcomes (Alterman et al., 2015; Coggshall et al., 2010). The literature is rich in terms of topics and practices that teachers can experience in regards to professional learning (Alterman et al., 2015, Birman, Desimone, Garet, Porter, & Yoon, 2001; Borman & Feger, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Common themes can be identified in the literature regarding what constitutes effective and meaningful professional learning (Andree et al., 2009; Blanton & Wood, 2009; Borman & Feger, 2006; Elmore, 2002; King, Neuman, Pelchat, Potochnik, Rao, & Thompson, 2004).

Learning Forward, formerly the National Staff Development Council, is a foundation dedicated to providing resources for effective teacher and administrator professional

development. Learning Forward (2016) published their extensive and comprehensive definition of professional development as it relates to teachers. Learning Forward identified qualities of effective professional development such as professional development that is sustained, evidence-based, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and applied classroom focused activities. Learning Forward (2016) also emphasizes that professional learning opportunities must be aligned with the academic goals of the school and include input staff members. In addition, professional development activities should aim to improve and advance: (1) the academic knowledge of the teacher in the subject they are teaching, (2) an understanding of how all children learn, and (3) analysis of student learning for the purposes of modifying instructional strategies, assessments and teaching materials to improve instruction (Learning Forward, 2016).

The aforementioned qualities illuminate the characteristics of effective professional development, but what does the literature state about ineffective professional development? Traditional methods of teacher professional development that are ineffective lack connections with and relevance to the practice of classroom teachers. This disconnect yields little improvement in the quality of instruction often resulting in lost learning opportunities and teacher frustration (Alterman et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Elmore, 2002; Knight, 2012).

Effective professional development is believed to have a positive impact on teacher practice, which then positively influences student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011). The literature and Learning Forward (2016) are congruent in definitions of effective professional development which aligns in the following ways: (1) job-embedded, (2) collaborative, (3) ongoing, (4) actively engaging, (5) connected to teacher practice, (6) differentiated by individual teacher needs, (7) aligned to district and school goals and initiatives, (8) increases teacher

knowledge of instruction and content, and (9) supported by administration (Alterman et al., 2015, Borman & Feger, 2006; Coggshall et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Dufour, 2004).

High-level adult learning that leads to increased teacher capacity and change in teacher practice can be challenged by both variables within the learning environment and teacher resistance (Elmore, 2002; Knight, 2012). The learning environment that needs to be created in order to support sustained and challenging teacher development opportunities is difficult to produce (Saphier & West, 2009). Teacher resistance also presents challenges. Teachers who have been subjected to poorly planned, irrelevant, and ineffective professional development can be very guarded due to their past experiences and overcoming such resistance is very challenging for any individual (Borman & Feger, 2006; Elmore, 2002). The topic of teacher resistance will be discussed in a later section of this literature review.

Despite the challenges and complexity involved in coordinating effective and meaningful professional development, there are approaches available that show promise. Knight (2012) asserts that professional learning is effective in education settings where teachers and administrators have adopted a particular, focused framework for instruction and identify specific teaching practices that are consistently implemented. One such framework is instructional coaching.

The instructional coaching model negotiates the challenges presented by learning as well as teacher and organizational change. Instructional coaches partner with teachers to help them understand and incorporate research-based instructional practices into their classrooms, so that students are taught in a more meaningful, engaged and effective way (Knight, 2012). Instructional coaching can increase teacher capacity, but takes time, support, and buy-in for

sustained improvement in the classroom, across a school, or an entire district (Saphier & West, 2009). The next section explores the indications of the literature with regard to the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches.

2.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The term “coach” carries many different interpretations and denotations depending on the context. Many people automatically associate the term “coach” with an individual who prepares, develops and enhances specific athletic skills of individual team members eventually culminating in some sort of competition with another team or individual. Coaching also has a meaning in an academic setting. Coaching of instructional staff members, in particular teachers and principals, “provides a safe environment in which to learn and perfect new teaching behaviors, experiment with variations of strategies, teach students, and thoughtfully examine the results” (Crilley et al., 1997, p. 240). Coaching is used as a method for organizational change, improved teacher learning, as well as being a vehicle to advance teacher thinking and influence the art of teacher practice (Campbell & Malkus, 2011).

Coaches are usually experienced, skillful, well-respected educators with classroom teaching experience (PIIC, n.d.). The work schedule of coaches can vary district-to-district. Some coaches are in coaching roles full-time, and their entire workday revolves around working with teachers and principals one-on-one; some coach in small group settings on a wide variety of professional learning topics. Often coaches assume classroom teaching duties part-time, teaching classes only on a limited basis. The rest of the school day they assume the role of coach

and spend that time working with teachers on professional development topics and assuming coaching responsibilities (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Knight, 2008).

Coaching is based on the assumption that when properly supported and implemented, coaching of teachers will lead to advances in teacher knowledge and understanding of researched-based teaching practices, thus resulting in a positive change in student achievement and engagement (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Coaching is a productive approach to professional learning because, as King et al. (2004) state, “coaching strives to blend what is known about effective professional development with school-based and school-specific needs regarding both content and school climate” (p. 2).

Instructional coaching is a specific professional development model, or framework for academic coaching. Instructional coaches are considered to be experienced, knowledgeable, on-site professional developers that work with teachers in a one-on-one or group setting (Boatright et al., 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches work with classroom teachers through a variety of activities that aim to improve teachers’ instructional practice and professional teaching knowledge. Instructional coaches help teachers grow professionally by building on their existing strengths while helping teachers to improve in specific individualized areas, increasing their ability to realize their potential as educators (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches are considered to be teacher-centered as well as student-centered as they facilitate teacher meetings in a no-fault, encouraging environment. Establishing such an environment that is conducive to adult learning and teacher improvement can be a challenge instructional coaches need to overcome. Instructional coaches often accomplish this by engaging teachers in conversations and activities that result in changes in teacher practice that are tailored to individual teacher needs in alignment

with the overarching vision and mission of the district (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

One of the specific areas where instructional coaches often focus in their work with teachers on is their instructional practice and delivery in the classroom. Kowal and Steiner (2007) define an instructional coach as, “someone whose primary professional responsibility is to bring [instructional] practices that have been studied using a variety of research methods into classrooms by working with adults rather than students” (p. 1). Instructional coaches will lead non-evaluative and non-threatening discussions with teachers to introduce instructional strategies that they can use in their classrooms. Instructional coaching is grounded in inquiry, sustained, collaborated, attached to the work teachers are completing with their students, and tied explicitly to improving practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Instructional coaches also help build as Feldman, Ouimett, and Tung (2004) phrase it, “a professional collaborative culture which is developing a community of teachers as learners, who discuss curriculum and instruction with each other regularly” (p. 4). Creating a professional collaborative culture is done through discussion and active learning opportunities led by the instructional coach. These conversations and sessions help teachers better understand the teaching profession from a broader and deeper perspective that considers both curriculum and instruction.

The literature on instructional coaching points to several recurrent themes (Andree et al., 2009; Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gibson, 2005; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2007). The literature reveals that when instructional coaching: (1) is implemented with adequate support and fidelity, (2) involves a process that is embedded and sustained throughout the school day and school year, (3) includes collegial interactions

rather than a top-down approach, (4) incorporates ongoing dialogue, and (5) learning is active and individualized depending on needs and vision of the district, there is a good chance that teacher improvement and positive school change can occur (Andree et al., 2009; Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The following sections discuss the specific role and responsibilities of coaches in regard to these themes in greater detail.

2.2.1 Instructional coach work is embedded and sustained

Instructional coaches work directly, either in full-time or part-time capacities, within a school or district. They are on-site professional developers that directly work with teachers in a variety of contexts. Instructional coaches are in the school buildings providing everyday, on the spot, sustained professional development to teachers (Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Andree et al. (2009) posit that professional development that lasts for 14 hours or less has no impact on student learning, and that most professional development does not focus on topics in-depth. Birman et al. (2001) offer that sustained and intensive professional development opportunities are more likely to have an impact on teacher implementation than shorter professional development opportunities. Job-embedded staff development practices move the focus of professional learning to the work site, in the case of teachers, the focus on professional growth occurs within the school (Dufour, 2004).

Blanton and Wood (2009) also list long-term and sustained professional development as important characteristics of effective and meaningful teacher growth. Also, when professional development content is related to the specific work of the teacher (job-embedded) a deeper

impact will be seen relative to on teacher effectiveness, growth and change (Blanton & Wood, 2009). Desimone (2009) states that activities that are spread out over the length of a semester, or a duration of at least 20 hours, are critical in increasing teacher knowledge and skills and improving their practice. Job embedded activities are common practices found in the literature of an instructional coaching framework. These practices involve the coach modeling lessons in the classroom for the teacher, action research projects, leading professional learning communities, and examining student work and assessments (Coggshall et al., 2010).

2.2.2 Instructional coach as an equal

The literature illuminates the various roles that instructional coaches play in the professional development and growth of teachers. A further description found in the literature of an instructional coach describes an instructional coach being a supporter, co-equal, active participant, and partner in the coaching process (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Boatright et al., 2010; Crilley et al., 1997; Desimone, 2009; Feldman et al., 2004; Knight, 2012; Knight, 2007).

Much of the work that an instructional coach does is in partnership with a teacher or principal. The relationship between an instructional coach and teacher is not one that should be considered authoritative. In an authoritative relationship there is only one way to do something, or only one answer to a problem, which comes from a person of hierarchy (Knight, 2007). The instructional coach does not take an authoritative role in the process and does not simply tell, direct or show the classroom teacher what to do. Instructional coaches do not provide the “right” answers for teachers, but rather they suggest resources and strategies that lead a teacher to incorporate researched based practices (Knight, 2012; Sandstead, 2016).

The partnership between teacher and instructional coach is teacher-driven and coach facilitated. This partnership is also co-constructed between teacher and coach through shared expertise and experience. Each coaching interaction is goal-oriented, dialogic, collaborative and reflective (Teemant, Tyra, & Wink, 2011). The Partnership Approach Framework by Knight (2007) lists seven principles to instructional coaching (See Figure 1 below). The first principle in the Partnership Approach is Equality. According to Knight, coaches and teachers are equal partners, and coaching is a process involving personal interactions. In the Partnership Approach, Knight suggests that coaches interact with a teacher as a sibling would interact with another sibling when giving guidance. Instructional coaches learn from the teacher just as the teacher learns from the instructional coach, this happens in a true partnership.

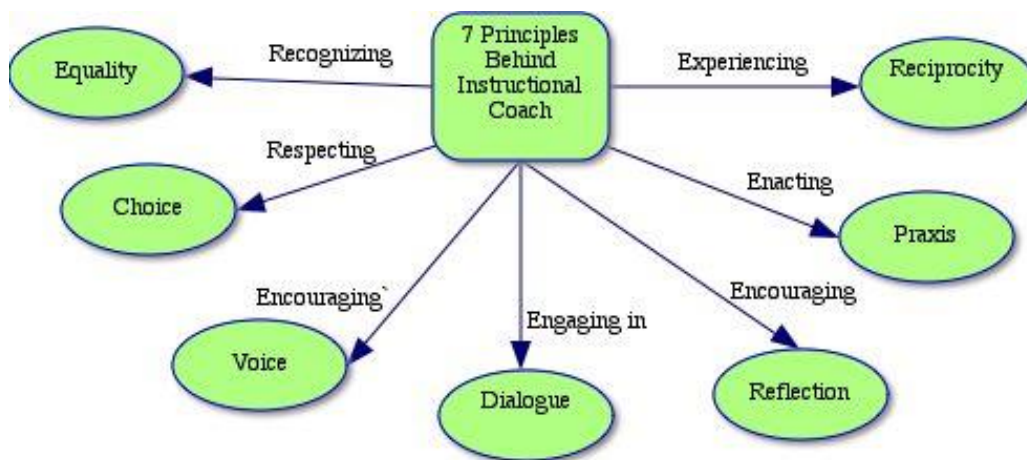


Figure 1: Knight's Seven Principles of Partnership Approach (Knight, 2007)

2.2.3 Coaching conversations lead to active learning

Instructional coaches can work with teachers in individual one-on-one sessions, or in small group settings involving a few different teachers. The literature suggests that the dialogue that occurs in these settings should be teacher-centered, as well as student-centered, and co-constructed between the instructional coach and teacher (Knight 2007; Teemant et al., 2011). Instructional coaching includes a series of authentic conversations focusing on instructional and teaching practices. The instructional coach facilitates the conversation with specific topics identified together by the coach and teacher. Such topics that would be discussed would be: instructional strategies, formative and summative assessments, technology use in the classroom, and data analysis (Teemant et al., 2011).

Shidler (2009) states that coaching “conversations are focused on specific goals, with each participant listening and observing one another to gather information which will lead to a plan for accomplishing these goals.” (p. 454). The goals and action plans lead to active learning opportunities for teachers. Teachers incorporate a new strategy, practice or technique with the assistance of the instructional coach. Birman et al. (2001) believe that having teachers participate in these active learning activities are more likely to produce teachers with more enhanced teacher knowledge and skill.

Active learning is a critical component to increasing teacher knowledge and skills, resulting in improved teacher practice (Birman et al., 2001; Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, Shapley, & Yoon, 2007). Active learning means teachers are actively involved with the implementation of an action plan, but also involved in decisions about new strategies, techniques, or practices they opt to undertake (Desimone, 2009).

Revisiting Knight's (2007) Partnership Approach Framework mentioned previously, Choice is another principal of the Partnership Framework. Knight recommends that teachers have a choice about what they want to learn about. If a teacher cannot say "no", then saying "yes" has little meaning. A teacher's conscientious choice to implement a professional learning initiative is an indicator of buy-in (Alterman et al., 2015; Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004).

Instructional coaching is also a continually reflective and responsive process (Crilley et al., 1997). Teachers, with the support and encouragement of coaches are able to reflect upon current practices and refine and expand their instructional knowledge and capabilities (Crilley et al., 1997; King et al., 2004). According to the Partnership Approach Framework by Knight (2007) Dialogue and Reflection are two additional principles. Meaningful dialogue between the instructional coach and teacher helps develop a community or culture of thought (Knight, 2007). In addition, Knight (2007) emphasizes the distinction between conversation and dialogue. Dialogue is rich in content and more exploratory in the instructional coaching context.

Reflection is a key process of instructional coaching because it allows the teacher to freely choose or reject ideas after consideration. Instructional coaches allow teachers to reflect on action as well as encourage teachers to reflect in action (Knight, 2008). Joyce and Showers (1996) affirm that learners should be provided with opportunities to discuss and reflect with others, such as coaches or peers, to enhance the learning process. Instructional coaches help facilitate the reflection process through ongoing discussions and providing non-evaluative, non-judgmental feedback to the teacher. Instructional coaches listen more than talk, and ask more than tell during these open and ongoing dialogue discussions. (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

2.2.4 Individualized professional learning

It has been a long-standing practice for educators to teach students in a differentiated manner. Not every student learns and grasps a new concept the same way. Therefore, lessons are designed, prepared and carried out with the different learning styles of all students in mind. Adult learning, specifically teacher professional development, is no different. Learning opportunities for teachers can also be individualized to meet the needs of all teachers. What works for one teacher does not necessarily work for another. A particular weakness for one teacher may be the strength of another teacher who is just across the hall (Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). If professional development is geared towards the specific needs of each teacher, as well as how each individual teacher learns, greater opportunity exists to change teacher practice (Birman et al., 2001).

Just as the specific professional development needs of each teacher are unique, so are the needs and learning cultures of entire schools and districts. Guskey (2009) states, “It is safe to say that no improvement effort in the history of education has ever succeeded without thoughtfully planned and well-implemented professional development activities designed to enhance educators’ knowledge and skills” (p. 226). Knight (2004) believes that an instructional coach needs to recognize each school’s unique culture when planning and providing learning opportunities for teachers. The models and methods for instructional coaching are largely dependent on school-wide contextual factors (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Knight, 2012). Consideration for school-wide contextual factors is critical to school reform and relevant professional development (Knight, 2012). Instructional coaches should be able to adapt to the different knowledge and skill levels of teachers as well as to the different needs of each school setting (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

2.2.5 Instructional coach as a change agent

Professional development is offered to teachers for a variety of reasons, one being that all staff members can learn and implement new strategies they can use in their classroom that ultimately make them better educators. Instructional coaches aim to help with that improvement of teacher and classroom practice. Instructional coaches are supporters of the school at large and help promote a culture of change and improvement through positive interactions and relationships (Arbaugh et al., 2010; King et al., 2004). Instructional coaches assist in that teacher improvement and development by advocating for teacher change and encouraging teachers to consider new strategies and ideas that they can implement in their classrooms (Campbell & Malkus, 2011).

As school district leaders build a school or district reform agenda they should establish reform priority measures. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) state that effective professional development is connected to aspects of school change with a focus on the improvement of content and pedagogy. Instructional coaches work with teachers to implement these school and district instructional reforms and push the reform agenda as it relates to teaching practices or content understanding. Instructional coaches push these reform agendas while at the same time meeting the individual needs of teachers (Boatright et al., 2010; Feldman et al., 2004). Each individual teacher has their own preferred learning style, but they also have their own way to responding to an instructional coach.

Instructional coaches aim to inspire and motivate positive change in teacher practice; they try to do this without provoking teacher resistance. Patience and communication can help coaches change the practice classroom teachers that align with reform measures of the school (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Changing teacher practice and changing the

nature of how teachers and students learn may be the most direct way to address and improve student achievement outcomes (Knight, 2012; Van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).

Learning Forward (2016) includes Change as a key factor and principle as part of the Standards for Professional Learning. Learning Forward states, “Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students implies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change” (Learning Forward, 2016).

Professional learning and development centers around improving teacher practice and ultimately student learning and student achievement. That requires all educators, administrators and classroom teachers, to reflect on professional practice and change by implementing new ideas, strategies and programs. This is a complicated task and instructional coaches can be instrumental in instituting change.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

The literature was examined to identify the characteristics, or qualities of successful instructional coaches. Feger, Hickman, and Woleck (2004) outline six characteristics that successful instructional coaches possess that are important to teacher engagement in the instructional coaching process: interpersonal skills, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, awareness of coaching resources, and knowledge of the coaching practice. The work of Gibson (2005) reinforces the list of characteristics, but expands by including knowledge of learners (both adult learners as well as student learners) and knowledge of educational contexts.

The attributes and qualities that Gibson (2005) and Feger et al. (2004) list are reinforced throughout the literature. The success of instructional coaching also depends on the attributes of the individual in that role, as well as other external and internal factors (Knight, 2012). Regardless of those other factors, finding the right person for the position is key. The literature points to a number of qualities that successful instructional coaches possess. The following sections explore those qualities in two categories: interpersonal skills and comprehensive knowledge.

2.3.1 Interpersonal skills

Teacher is a people business. Almost all aspects of a school organization involve working with people and building relationships. In a study conducted by Heineke (2013), where the instructional coaching process was examined, all participants felt that relationship building was key to the coaching process. They did not believe it was a difficult process to build relationships, but it required the coach to be visible and available in order to build trust.

Building trust is considered by Feldman et al. (2004) to be the first step in the coaching process. Trust is created through ongoing conversations about teaching and learning and done so in a non-judgmental manner. Instructional coaches build trust through what Knight (2007) describes as empathetic listening. Empathetic listening considers the participant's perspective. Knight offers that, "with empathy, deep communication, nourishing humanizing communication is possible" (p. 63). Empathic listening is quieting ourselves while listening to others, and instructional coaches guide that process while also providing honest, reflective feedback to teachers in a non-threatening manner. In order for instructional coaches to have an impact on improving and changing teacher practice, a teacher needs to feel fully supported in order to

believe that the instructional coach is there to make them a better educator. The issue of trust is further explored in a later section.

Communication between the instructional coach and teacher is key to building trust (PIIC, n.d.). Clear, consistent and frequent communication between coaches and teachers is critical to successful implementation of an instructional coaching model (Feldman et al., 2004). Communication allows individuals to understand the perspective, which helps to establish common ground with regard to desired outcomes. Instructional coaches foster communication, trust and support on an individual basis, but also among the entire faculty (Crilley et al., 1997). Instructional coaches must possess great people skills, an infectious personality, humility, honesty, sincerity, and knowledge of learning to help communicate and work with teachers about instructional practices and strategies to be implemented (Knight, 2007; Sandstead, 2016).

2.3.2 Comprehensive knowledge

One critical element identified in the literature in changing and improving teacher practice is providing professional development opportunities that focus on subject specific content, as well as how children learn (Birman et al., 2001). Instructional coaching encompasses content, curriculum, and pedagogy in an effort to improve teacher instruction, enhance teacher knowledge and increase student achievement (Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Instructional coaches, though they are working in an equal partnership with teachers, must demonstrate this extensive knowledge and expertise of teaching and learning to help implement teacher change and improvement in the classroom. Instructional coaches help teachers apply what they have learned about new strategies and practices and transfer that new knowledge into practice in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Instructional coaches are responsible for bringing evidence-based practices into the classroom while supporting teachers who implement those practices (PIIC, n.d.). A primary function of an instructional coach is to help teachers understand these research validated practices and offer solutions to problems they face in their practice (Knight, 2004). In order to do that, instructional coaches must know the proven strategies and possess a large repertoire of effective practices to share with teachers. Without a large arsenal of effective practices an instructional coach may be viewed by teachers as ineffective, which has the potential to reduce teacher buy-in (Knight, 2007).

Darling-Hammond (1999) stresses that successful teachers tend to be those who are able to apply a broad range of teaching strategies and interaction styles. Furthermore, successful teachers do not have just a single, rigid approach to teaching. They have countless strategies and teaching styles to ensure that all students are engaged in the learning process, and that all students are achieving at appropriate, challenging levels. In addition, instructional coaches must possess strategies to engage adults in a non-threatening and effective manner that allow them work in a meaningful and trusting way (King et al., 2004; Knight, 2008, Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Saphier & West, 2009).

Instructional coaches engage with teachers in a manner that allows for the further development of teacher practices in regards to classroom instruction. However, it is suggested in the literature that in order to truly meet the needs of the students, coaches assist in linking content knowledge to pedagogy, as well as to the research on learning (Bickel et al., 2017). This emphasis on the “what” of teaching is addressed when instructional coaches have a firm understanding and working knowledge of the content that is being taught in the classroom. This emphasis on content knowledge aligning with pedagogical practices leads to increased student

and teacher outcomes (Bickel, Bernstein-Danis, & Matsumura, 2014). The Content-Focused Coaching model, from the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning, aims to do just that: expand on coaches content knowledge, as well as their knowledge of instructional practices that fit within a specific content area, while building coaching capacity to collaborate with teachers to advance student outcomes (Institute for Learning, 2015). Instructional coaching is not just having an understanding of instructional practices; it is having an understanding of those practices within the context of the desired content.

Instructional coaches not only possess pedagogical and content knowledge, but they are also aware of the resources that are available to teachers. These resources could be quite simple and may include sources and sites for supplementary content information. Resources can also be complex and involve technology integration or work with outside agencies that connect content with real world application (Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

The background, knowledge, and expertise that instructional coaches possess must be comprehensive. They also must exhibit the people skills that are required in order to reach and communicate with teachers in a collegial fashion. Instructional coaches, to put it simply, must exhibit the characteristics of outstanding teachers as well as open and non-judgmental colleagues (Knight, 2007). Strong instructional coaches have the potential to enhance professional learning and teacher change (Boatright et al., 2010; Feger et al., 2004; Gibson, 2005; Knight, 2012).

2.3.3 Instructional coaching activities

A primary responsibility of an instructional coach is to work with teachers in a one-on-one or small group setting with the objective to improve teacher instructional practice and increase teacher capacity. When instructional coaches work one-on-one with a teacher they are able to

collectively, with the input of the teacher, pinpoint the areas of greatest student and teacher need. Instructional coaches work with teachers to identify where additional instruction, support, and guidance is needed, create learning experiences that address these needs, develop engaging lessons and appropriate assessments while applying new strategies in the classroom. In this capacity, instructional coaches also help identify and organize resources for the classroom teacher to use while implementing new strategies. Throughout this process, the instructional coach and teacher reflect on student and teacher learning, adapt as necessary, and can possibly repeat the cycle with new goals and strategies throughout (Andree et al., 2009; Arbaugh et al., 2010; Blanton & Wood, 2009; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Teemant et al., 2011).

One key activity that Knight (2007) describes as being an essential part of the coaching process is instructional coaches modeling instructional for classroom teachers. Modeling could entail the instructional coach demonstrating questioning techniques or instructional strategies, modeling formative assessment practices, or implementing technology use in the classroom. Andree et al. (2009) report that teachers are more likely to attempt classroom practices that are modeled for them by instructional coaches or by their colleagues. Modeling encourages teachers to implement new strategies and coaches can provide the proper support and feedback required for the teachers to feel comfortable initiating a new strategy (Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Shidler, 2009; Teemant et al., 2011). Shidler (2009) found that teachers who had the opportunity to watch an instructional coach model a strategy or practice felt more confident implementing it themselves after observing the actions of the coach.

In a small group setting instructional coaches may facilitate many activities that are not as intricate as the activities they conduct in a one-on-one setting. Feldman et al. (2004) list developing a collaborative professional culture as one of the goals of an instructional coach.

This can be achieved through instructional coaches establishing professional learning communities with small groups of staff members. Feldman et al. (2004) believe that after the initial stages of communicating the roles of instructional coaches and building collegial relationships, instructional coaches need to move into having meaningful discussions with educators on teaching and learning. These discussions can take place in a professional learning community setting where book studies are conducted, articles are read, instructional strategies are discussed, and group members share different classroom practices.

Instructional coaches, even though they are knowledgeable and established educators must also dedicate time to their own professional growth and learning (Arbaugh et al., 2010). Instructional coaches communicate with other instructional coaches in formal and informal settings and also must ensure they are continually exploring new practices that they can bring to their school and district. Coaching is a reciprocal process where an instructional coach is learning from the teachers just as a classroom teacher may be learning from the instructional coach (Knight, 2007). Collaborative instructional coaching is a platform for school reform that can result in change and improvement of a school district (Boatright et al., 2010; Feger et al., 2004; Gibson, 2005; Knight, 2012).

2.3.4 Coaching as a reform initiative

Coaching in the K-12 setting has become a common reform measure recognized by federal and state initiatives. State and federal legislatures have recognized that professional development is a critical component for school reform to occur. Neufeld and Roper (2003) contend that enabling all students to learn and achieve at a high level requires professional development that is offered in the same individualized, rigorous manner, but delivered in a new way. President Obama's

educational initiative, Race to the Top, awarded federal dollars to state education departments based on multiple criteria set by the Department of Education. One such criterion involved states agreeing to develop principals and teachers by providing professional development, induction and coaching options (United States Department of Education, 2009).

In 2005, the commonwealth of Pennsylvania established the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative, known as PAHSCI. An instructional coaching model was implemented in 26 high schools across the state. The mission of the PAHSCI was, “To build capacity within school districts to improve teaching and student achievement through collaborate whole-school reform practices based on instructional coaching, collegial networks, and job-embedded professional development for teachers” (PAHSCI, n.d.). This statewide coaching initiative showed promise and was recently transformed into the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC). The current program, which is a partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Annenberg Foundation, is aimed at developing and supporting instructional coaches through Pennsylvania Intermediate Units. Individuals are employed as mentors who are responsible for working with individual school-based instructional coaches by providing ongoing professional development opportunities and supports (PIIC, n.d.).

Other states from across the country have used coaching frameworks with school reform initiatives. The Pathways to Success Project in Topeka, Kansas placed coaches in middle and high schools with the goal of providing staff development with intensive supports in their aim at improving student achievement (Knight, 2004). In Alabama, a statewide coaching initiative was put into place to help fund coaches in K-12 schools. The responsibility of the coach is to provide high quality professional development to teachers that provide effective classroom instructional practice (Blanton & Wood, 2009). Lastly, in Wyoming, a program was developed in 2006 called

the Instructional Facilitators Program. The Instructional Facilitators Program put coaches in schools with the goal of providing professional learning directly to teachers based on research-based instructional practices (Rush & Young, 2011).

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University has also recognized instructional coaching as a promising new professional development practice. AISR, as cited in King et al. (2004), works with urban school districts across the country aiming at school-wide reforms measures. The Aspen Institute Program on Education, which partnered with AISR also reported after examining coaching models implemented in San Diego, Louisville, and Boston, that coaching holds promise for school-wide comprehensive reform (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). This promise of has been documented not just in one particular area, but also in different areas across the United States that identified instructional coaching as a reform initiative that could possibly help teachers, and thus schools improve their practice.

2.3.5 Section conclusion

An organization is only as good as its people. Education is no different. Federal and state policies have established that effective educators are a priority and local school leaders must dedicate the appropriate resources to ensure that teachers are provided with valuable professional learning experiences. Darling-Hammond (1999) reports that students who are assigned to ineffective teachers score significantly lower and demonstrate lower achievement gains compared to students who are assigned to teachers that are considered effective. The bottom line is that teachers do matter.

Instructional coaching is a specific professional development framework that allows school districts to offer sustained, job-embedded professional development for staff members.

Instructional coaches are expert teachers with a solid understanding of research-based best practices (Boatright et al., 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Feger et al., 2004; Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches also possess strong interpersonal skills that allow them to communicate with adult learners and address their specific needs.

Instructional coaches' roles and responsibilities require expertise in professional development, communication, and research-based instructional practices. Professional development needs to be closely related to the intended outcomes, and the literature points to those outcomes being centered on increasing and maximizing teacher ability (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Instructional coaching is a professional development model that aims to improve teacher ability and effectiveness and ultimately increase student achievement.

2.4 EVIDENCE OF EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

School district leaders are often called upon to implement new educational initiatives in various capacities. Initiatives may be based on contextual factors determined by needs of individual teachers, schools, and school districts as a whole. These initiatives can vary greatly, from technology integration in the classroom, to curriculum and assessments, to teacher instructional practices. Some educational initiatives may have a deep, meaningful impact that can lead to positive change for a teacher, school, or district, while others end with little to no teacher buy-in, limited to no change or improvement, and are considered failures (Birman et al., 2001; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Feldman et al., 2004).

Various instructional coaching models are being implemented around the United States as well as abroad, which aim to change and improve teacher instructional practices and increase

student achievement (Boatright et al., 2010). The prior section of this literature review offered the characteristics of instructional coaching models; this section explores available evidence on the impact instruction coaching has at the classroom and school levels.

Professional development opportunities for educators are designed to increase teacher knowledge, increase teacher capacity, resulting in improved student learning and outcomes (Desimone, 2009). Instructional coaching models yield the same desired results, and like other professional development initiatives, the success of instructional coaching is evident in the observed impact on instructional practice and student achievement.

2.4.1 Impact on teacher practice

Instructional coaching, in comparison to more traditional methods of teacher professional development, is a better strategy to upgrade and improve teaching and learning, is easier to sustain continually over time, and makes direct connections to the teacher's classroom (Birman et al., 2001; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Feger et al., 2004; Knight, 2012; Saphier & West, 2009). Knight (2007) highlights the work of Bush (1984) to point out that teachers who attend traditional professional development sessions typically demonstrate a 10% implementation rate with newly introduced strategies and teaching methods. This is due to a lack of support and follow through. In comparison, Knight (2007) asserts that more than 90% of teachers embrace and implement programs when given proper support from instructional coaches. Support includes such things as continual dialogue and reflection, modeling, etc. Joyce and Showers (1996) also found that fewer than 15% of teachers implement new ideas from traditional professional development due to lack of knowledge and support required for successful implementation in the classroom.

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative, a 3-year \$31 million dollar initiative placed instructional coaches in 26 high schools from 16 districts that were considered to be of high need (PAHSCI, n.d.). At the conclusion of the grant period a survey of teachers who worked directly with instructional coaches showed the following: teachers reported that they understood research-based strategies better, teachers who worked with instructional coaches felt more likely to integrate identified researched-based strategies in the classroom, teachers were more likely to actively participate in professional development activities, teachers expressed that they had a deeper and increased knowledge of research-based strategies, teachers felt that their quality of instruction had improved, teachers expressed an increase in discussions on student achievement and professional practice, and teachers felt that their students were more engaged, enthusiastic and participated better in writing practices, critical thinking and understood literacy strategies better than before the teacher began working with the instructional coach (Blanton & Wood, 2009).

These comprehensive findings correspond with other conclusions found in the literature on the impact instructional coaching has had on teacher practice (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Duncan et al., 2007; Knight 2007). The findings suggest, like other professional development initiatives, that instructional coaching can have a positive impact on teacher outcomes, such as increased efficacy, teacher knowledge of instructional practices, and use of such practices in the classroom.

2.4.2 Impact on teacher efficacy

Teacher efficacy is defined as “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4).

Hoy, Hoy, and Tschannen-Moran (1998) define efficacy as a “cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given attainment” (p. 203). Increased teacher efficacy has the potential to positive student learning outcome, such as student achievement, motivation, and student confidence (Hoy et al., 1998). Teachers with high levels of professional efficacy report being more open to new ideas and initiatives, and also reportedly more willing to try new instructional methods through experimentation and trial and error to better meet the needs of their students (Hoy et al., 1998). Teachers with high level of efficacy believe in the child’s ability to achieve academically at a high level, and devote more time and effort to teaching and improving their own teaching practice (Shidler, 2009).

Instructional coaches, particularly coaches that are able to model strategies and practices for teachers, can increase the confidence levels of teachers and their professional efficacy (Shidler, 2009). Modeling, which was explored in greater detail in the previous section, has been identified as a key component of instructional coaching (Knight, 2012; Sandstead, 2016). Modeling allows a teacher to observe an instructional coach’s successes and failures in the classroom, as well as reflect on the teaching process to identify why a particular strategy did or did not work (Sandstead, 2016). An instructional coach who is able to model a lesson or strategy for a teacher before teacher implementation has potential to raise the confidence and comfort levels of teachers about their belief and ability to be successful in the classroom (Knight, 2007).

Ross (1992) argues that teachers who believe they can make a difference are more open to working with an instructional coach and receiving feedback. In addition, teachers with a high level of teacher efficacy view their work with an instructional coach as a learning opportunity that allows them to expand on their craft and enhance their knowledge and skill of teaching. A study conducted by Ross (1992) confirmed his hypothesis that student achievement was also

higher in classrooms of teachers who exhibited high levels of teacher efficacy. One finding in Ross's study is that teachers with a high level of efficacy did not benefit more from working with an instructional coach as Ross had hypothesized. Teachers who exhibited low efficacy benefited the most from working with an instructional coach. This suggests to me that instructional coaches could have a greater impact working with teachers who are in need of the most help and support. Instructional coaching has also had an internal impact on teacher's efficacy levels. Teachers in the Netherlands who worked with an instructional coach throughout a specific time period reported feeling more confident in their instructional practice after having worked with the instructional coach to incorporate specific instructional practices into their classroom (Andree et al., 2009).

Instructional coaching can also serve as a professional development framework for school and district leaders. The work of Houchens, Hurt, Keedy, and Stobaugh (2012) examined the coaching process between school principals and instructional coaches. Principals were required to work with an instructional coach concerning a problem of practice within their school. Principals created and developed action steps to address the area of concern and worked with an instructional coach to reflect on the process of the action steps, and to also reflect on teaching, learning and leadership. The findings from this study concluded that each principal valued the coaching process, in particular the structure, feedback and reflective exercises. They also reported that their confidence in confronting instructional leadership problems was greatly enhanced and each principal reported that they improved as an instructional leader throughout the coaching process.

Teacher and school leader efficacy is an important indicator of teacher and student success (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Hoy et al., 1998; Shidler, 2009). Instructional coaches can

assist teachers and school leaders in becoming more confident in their ability to teach students effectively, and can in turn become a catalyst for growth and change (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

2.4.3 Improving teacher practices and teacher knowledge

Instructional coaching aims to improve instructional capacity of teachers in schools through ongoing, sustained dialogue and purposeful activities facilitated by the instructional coach. When comparing professional learning opportunities in the United States to other nations who are outperforming the United States on international exams, there is a difference in terms of allotment and investment of professional learning time. United States teachers spend 80% of their school day in the classroom leading instruction, compared to 60% of teachers in outperforming nations being in front of their students. Also, time for planning, collaboration, and ongoing, sustained professional learning is built into international teachers' workday (Andree et al., 2009).

Instructional coaching provides ongoing supports for teachers to guide them in their improvements and development (Boatright et al., 2010). Improvements are evidenced by selected or purposeful instructional strategies that teachers incorporate in their lessons, the technology they utilize in the classroom, assessments administered to students, and analysis of those assessment results. Knight (2004) believes that coaching can lead to contagious behavior with regard to implementation of instructional practices. Neufeld and Roper (2003) also state that instructional coaching does increase instructional capacity of schools and teachers, which they argue is a known prerequisite for increased learning.

In a study conducted by Knight (2008) teachers attended a workshop session on teaching practices, and then participated in follow-up meetings with instructional coaches. Knight found that 70 of the 82 participating teachers were implementing the new teaching strategies regularly in their classrooms. Another study by Knight (2004) involved the Pathways to Success Project in Topeka, Kansas where full-time instructional coaches were placed in six Topeka middle schools, and later three high schools. A group of teachers were provided professional development with intensive follow-up support from instructional coaches, which was designed to improve the instructional capabilities of the teachers. Of the 125 participating teachers, 98 reported using the research-based strategies that instructional coaches introduced and continued implementing these strategies in their classrooms for an extended duration following the conclusion of the professional development initiative.

In the state of Pennsylvania, 91% of coached teachers who were involved with the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative stated that coaches helped them understand, use, and develop new teaching strategies. Additionally, 79% of the teachers coached reported that they felt they had made significant changes to their instructional practices that their students were more engaged during lessons, and that attendance increased in their classes (PAHSCI, n.d.).

When comparing teachers who have worked with an instructional coach to teachers who have not worked with an instructional coach, Joyce and Showers (1996, 2002) report that teachers working with an instructional coach practiced new skills more frequently. Not only did they apply the practices more often, they also applied them more appropriately in the classroom. Joyce and Showers also found that teachers who worked with an instructional coach demonstrated a clearer understanding of the purpose and use of the new skills, and they showed greater retention and improvement of their skills over time. Knight (2007) believes that coaches

help teachers gain a deeper understanding, and increase their knowledge of not only what they teach, but also how they are teaching it.

Lastly, the work of Teemant et al. (2011), researched elementary teachers, who participated in a 30-hour workshop on improving pedagogy and classroom organization for diverse populations. The teachers also participated in seven individual coaching sessions. Findings showed a significant increase in improvements in teacher pedagogy, patterns of teacher growth, and significant changes in classroom organization. Increasing teacher capacity is a difficult and complex undertaking but the above mentioned examples suggest that instructional coaching is a vehicle that can lead to positive teacher change and enhancement.

2.4.4 Impact on student achievement

Professional learning that is sustained and occurring on a continual basis is effective, and has lasting impact on student achievement (Birman et al., 2001; Crilley et al., 1997; Desimone, 2009). Research has supported this notion of sustained and reoccurring professional learning having an impact on student achievement. It has been identified that professional development accumulating more than 14 hours has a positive and significant effect on student achievement (Andree et al., 2009; Duncan et al., 2007). Instructional coaching is both sustained and reoccurring and shows promise to have a positive impact on student achievement if carried out in a coordinated and sustained manner.

Another identified major component of instructional coaching found in the literature is the actual face-to-face interactions between an instructional coach and classroom teacher. The actual physical interaction between coach and teacher includes the instructional coach modeling lessons for the teacher, assistance with lesson planning, sharing of appropriate resources, and

facilitating feedback sessions. Shidler (2009) examined student achievement outcomes pertaining to time instructional coaches and classroom teachers spent together working on specific curricular content and instructional strategies. This particular study looked at the time spent together in relation to student alphabet recognition. Shidler (2009) concluded that there was a significant correlation between the time coaches spent in the classroom encouraging incorporation of specific content and instructional strategies and the achievement scores of elementary students on alphabet recognition.

Student achievement scores on standardized tests have also been examined to determine the impact of instructional coaching. In the state of Pennsylvania, the majority of schools that participated in the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative, PAHSCI, demonstrated student achievement gains. With regard to reading scores, 15 of the 21 schools with data exceeded the state change percentage of students who scored advanced or proficient. In math, 18 of the 21 schools exceeded the change percentage (Blanton & Wood, 2009).

Student achievement gains were also found in the state of Florida. A study of a state initiated high school coaching program aiming to implement literacy-based strategies in the classroom showed that receiving an instructional coach was associated with statistically significant improvements in annual reading gains in 2 of the 4 cohort schools (Lockwood, McCombs, & Marsh, 2010).

The Pathways to Success Project in Kansas, which implements instructional coaching in the classroom, associated multiple improvements with specific instructional coaching focal areas. For example, teachers who worked with instructional coaches on classroom management saw a reduction in discipline referrals. Science teachers who worked with an instructional coach on self-questioning strategies observed an increase in science testing scores. Another teacher who

worked with an instructional coach to implement new writing strategies in the classroom saw an increase in student writing scores on state assessments (Knight, 2004).

In Alabama, the American Institutes for Research examined the Alabama Reading Initiative, which aimed to improve student literacy by placing instructional coaches in schools across the state (Blanton & Wood, 2009). It was concluded that teachers had a deeper awareness of the importance of literacy in their specific content areas following their work with an instructional coach, and were also more aware of specific instructional strategies and practices used to increase student achievement. Teachers also reported increased collaboration with colleagues after working with an instructional coach. Students who were surveyed indicated they were more engaged in reading and experienced greater self-confidence in their ability to read. Students were able to apply various reading strategies independently, and students enrolled in ARI schools tended to do better on standardized test compared to students in non-ARI schools (Blanton & Wood, 2009).

Another study out of the state of Virginia showed that instructional coaching contributed to increased student math scores after instructional coaches were able to gain experience and knowledge about the coaching process (Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Instructional coaches facilitated sessions that were structured to encourage the administrative team and teaching staff to work and learn together to incorporate instructional best practices in the classroom (Campbell & Malkus, 2011).

Instructional coaches facilitate small group meetings among various combinations of teachers and administrators to foster consensus building, open discussions on instructional strategies, modeling of strategies and practices, and reflective conversations. Such meetings are frequently referred as professional learning communities (Teemant et al., 2011). This type of a

learning experience and learning environment has been shown to improve student outcomes (Birman et al., 2001; Crilley et al., 1997; Desimone, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 2002). A comprehensive five-year study found that schools that formed active professional learning communities saw student absenteeism reduce, student dropout rates reduce, and achievement scores increase in math, science, history, and reading (Andree et al., 2009).

Instructional coaching encompasses many different aspects of teaching and learning. Instructional coaching aims to enhance, and possibly even change practice. The task of changing teacher practice requires encouragement, support and feedback (Knight, 2012; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Saphier & West, 2009). This process is predicated on the belief teacher improvement and ongoing professional development is linked to an increase in student engagement in the classroom, and overall in student achievement (Gibson, 2005; Hoy et al., 1998).

2.4.5 Research is limited

Instructional coaching is a relatively new educational initiative that requires further research (Boatright et al., 2010; Feldman et al., 2004; Gibson, 2005; Teemant et al., 2011). Empirical research on instructional coaching is limited, and few studies have been conducted that specifically examine the elements of instructional coaching, and how those elements impact student achievement on high stakes testing specifically (Blanton & Wood, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Knight, 2008). Additionally, few coaching studies have been conducted that examined how instructional coaching helped promote teacher instructional change and how that instructional change correlates to increased student achievement. There has been a call for future research to identify the components of instructional coaching that are responsible for promoting

instructional change, teacher improvement, and the impact those have on student testing outcomes (Crilley et al., 1997; Lockwood et al., 2010).

General research is limited on the impact of teacher professional development, specifically comparing the effects of different characteristics of professional development on teacher and student outcomes (Birman et al., 2001). A small number of studies were highlighted in this section to illustrate the benefits of instructional coaching for student achievement and teacher competencies, but more research is needed to examine instructional coaching through multiple perspectives and in greater depth.

2.4.6 Section conclusion

Inconsistent perspectives have been identified in the literature surrounding the definition of effectiveness in teacher practices. The debate centers around the issue that observed change in teacher practice may not necessarily mean that a larger educational initiative was effective. There are varying perspectives on the sole use of student achievement results to evaluate the effectiveness of education initiatives (Desimone, 2009). Many facets of the implementation and planning of educational initiatives should be examined to evaluate success, including analysis of costs, time investments, and defined student and teacher outcomes.

Professional development is integrated into every school system, and each school system has its own unique professional development initiatives (Alterman et al., 2015; Andree et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011). The effectiveness of an initiative ultimately depends on a number of variables, including the stakeholders. All factors should be examined when planning and evaluating any professional development initiative, no matter the scope or size, to ensure that teachers learn and apply new knowledge and practices to impact on students in their classrooms.

2.5 OBSTACLES, BARRIERS, AND CHALLENGES WHEN IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING MODEL

When implementing a school or district-wide initiative, no matter the size and scope, school leaders can anticipate the likelihood that challenges will arise. These challenges and obstacles hinder the impact and positive change that could occur. Instructional coaching was examined in the previous sections to analyze the roles and responsibilities of coaches and the impact that instructional coaches can have in a school or district. This section will look to identify challenges and barriers that school leaders can anticipate when implementing instructional coaching within their schools. Boatright et al. (2010) assert there are difficulties, some foreseen and some unseen, that often arise when instructional coaches begin working with classroom teachers to improve and increase their teaching abilities. The following sections identify potential barriers that were found in the literature that could prevent instructional coaching from having a lasting and meaningful impact within a school or district. Also described are actions that instructional coaches and school leaders can take to overcome barriers and maximize the impact of instructional coaching in a school or district.

2.5.1 Potential teacher resistance

School districts typically have multiple professional development initiatives occurring at one time throughout the school year (Andree et al., 2009). These initiatives, if not communicated, planned, and integrated by school leadership effectively, can leave faculty members confused, frustrated, and overwhelmed. The complexity of professional development and school change require careful planning to minimize frustration for teachers (Feldman et al., 2004). Knight

(2007) suggests that teachers do not necessarily resist professional learning and change initiatives; they resist poorly designed, inadequately communicated, irrelevant professional learning and change initiatives. Professional learning and change programs that offer little support, inadequate planning, and offer no follow-up activities are more likely to be met with resistance from teachers (Borman & Feger, 2006; Knight, 2004).

Past experience also plays an important role in the way an individual views certain circumstances. If teachers have previously experienced school-based professional development sessions that were of little relevance to their practice, felt little or no support following the learning opportunity, and generally did not feel the topic pertained to them, there is a very good chance that new professional learning opportunities will be met with resistance and even resentment (Arbaugh et al., 2010; PIIC, n.d.).

A survey conducted by the National Staff Development Council reported that most teachers participate in some form of professional development each school year. The survey revealed that teachers felt the professional development sessions offered to them involved a focus on academic subject matter, but lacked depth and substance. Additionally, the National Staff Development Council survey reported that most activities did not involve any collegial work among teachers and followed a more limiting traditional approach to professional development. The overall results of the survey reported that nearly half of the teachers were dissatisfied with their opportunities for professional growth (Andree et al., 2009).

Poorly planned and coordinated professional development sessions can result in negative teacher outcomes; so can mandated federal and state improvement methods. Federal mandates sometimes require districts with low student achievement to implement specific reform measures to reverse negative student outcomes. Finnigan and Gross (2007) contend that forced mandates,

such as the aforementioned professional learning topics and school improvement plans, lead to negative outcomes and teacher resistance. Accountability policies, such as the ones found in the reauthorized No Child Left Behind legislation (2015) are designed to encourage a district to implement action plans to correct the failing outcomes (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). These action plans are intended to motivate the staff to perform at higher levels and focus attention on specific student achievement outcomes (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Finnigan and Gross (2007) conducted a study of the Chicago Public School system, and found that mandated reform measures are counterproductive to the desired outcomes. The study examined staff motivation levels after mandated reform measures, and the researchers reported a staff decrease in student expectations, a decrease in staff motivational levels, and a demoralization of staff members in underperforming schools.

Teachers can also be reluctant and hesitant when it comes to working with an instructional coach due to fear of being evaluated in the classroom. As discussed in an earlier section, instructional coaches are not to be viewed as experts who direct teachers in an authoritative manner. A major challenge of instructional coaching is the perception of coaching as a punitive measure, or that a teacher is working with an instructional coach because they are ineffective and the instructional coach is there to tell the teacher what to do (Boatright et al., 2010; Feger et al., 2004; Knight, 2004; Lockwood et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Instructional coaches are not administrators and serve in a non-supervisory capacity (Boatright et al., 2010). Successful coaches are clear with teachers that they are there to provide support, assist them in their professional growth, and to provide the right encouragement and resources that ensure that teachers are successful (Knight, 2004). This type of professional relationship and interaction is very difficult and challenging, but building an authentic, trusting

professional relationship is key to ensuring that instructional coaching has the opportunity to be successful (Feger et al., 2004; Feldman et al., 2004; Heineke, 2013; Sandstead, 2016).

2.5.2 Building authentic trust

Instructional coaches who exhibit effective coaching qualities, and who are properly supported have the capacity to open the doors of professional dialogue and professional sharing with a teaching staff (Borman & Feger, 2006; Knight, 2007). Creating such a professional and collegial culture is a challenge, especially if an instructional coach is working within a school where such a professional learning climate is foreign. Not all schools have a culture of collaboration, professional dialogue and improvement, and it is even argued that school climates promote teacher isolation and privacy (Alterman et al., 2015; Andree et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011). The instructional coaching model has the potential to alleviate teacher isolation and burnout while promoting collaboration between teachers and instructional coaches. Instructional coaching also aims to foster communication between teachers across grade levels and content areas while building trust and support among the faculty (Crilley et al., 1997).

Effective instructional coaches strive to establish a climate of trust with their teaching colleagues and they also exhibit a long-term commitment to professional development for teachers, as well as for themselves (Arbaugh et al., 2010). It is important, especially at the beginning stages of implementation that instructional coaches work to build collaborative, reflective, and open professional relationships with teachers and administrators (Feger et al., 2004). Consistent, frequent, and clear communication are critical to successful implementation of an instructional coaching model and can help start building authentic, trusting, and collegial relationships (Feldman et al., 2004).

Instructional coaches can start building connections with teachers through their interactions immediately. Knight (2008) suggests that instructional coaches should start by “coaching light” (p. 21). Coaching light would entail instructional coaches having informal reciprocal discussions with teachers to build personal and professional connections. These discussions could lead into more in-depth topics concerning educational areas that teachers are interested in learning more about. The learning process is also reciprocal, as the instructional coach may be learning the material and the process for the first time along with the teacher. These topics could possibly open the door to the teacher trying different instructional activities in the classroom and then participating in more educational discussions that are centered on instruction, student achievement and even goal setting. Knight (2008) refers to these more rigorous and reflective learning practices as “coaching heavy” (p. 22). Such activities may require the teacher to decide to implement a completely new practice or strategy that they have never used in the classroom, such as assessment strategies, technology in the classroom, or new instructional methods.

Another identified strategy in helping bridge the relationship between instructional coach and teacher is for the instructional coach to identify practices that are easy and powerful. Coaches can simplify information for teachers by summarizing information and strategies, highlighting important information in manuals and articles, identifying and sharing classroom resources and doing small items such as copying handouts, or helping a classroom teacher prepare a presentation (Knight, 2007). These small tasks can open meaningful dialogue between the teacher and instructional coach while not overwhelming the teacher with information. The objective of these interactions is to help break down any barriers that a teacher may have and

allow teachers to identify a particular focus area for deeper work with an instructional coach on to further enhance their practice.

These initial deliberate interactions between an instructional coach and teacher, while critical to establishing open dialogue, could be viewed as undermining the authenticity of the relationship. A review of the literature revealed that this early relationship is not tainted with malice or manipulation, but is a genuine professional starting point between an instructional coach and teacher. As previously stated, the literature points out that instructional coaches should not be viewed as the expert, but as a resource and a colleague of teachers. Instructional coaches are also learning throughout this reciprocal process and the instructional coach and teacher are getting to know and understand each other while also better understanding their own beliefs. Both instructional coaches and teachers, through open dialogue and discussion, can come to better understandings of themselves, and also of each other when reflecting on teaching and learning. Tananis (2000, p. 102) uses the work of Schwandt (1999) to discuss coming to an understanding of another, but also of oneself, “to engage in an open dialogue wherein one does not simply defend one’s own belief or criticize what the other believes, but rather seeks to become clear about oneself” (Schwandt, 1999, p. 459) and in so doing, become more sensitive and aware of the “other.” Tananis (2000) continues, “through the interplay of dialogue we not only reveal ourselves to others and come to know others, we also come to a deepening awareness that how we frame “other” in fact, reframes our conception of “self” (p. 102). In terms of instructional coaching the dialogue process between an instructional coach and teacher is to gain a better understanding of each other and how each other views teaching and learning. It is also an exercise that allows the instructional coach and teacher to reflect individually and have a better understanding how they see themselves professionally, and even personally. Trust is a key

element to a personal initiative such as instructional coaching. If either the instructional coach or classroom teacher does not perceive a level of authentic trust, the potential for teacher and coach improvement and enhancement of professional practice, to me, would most likely diminish.

2.5.3 Overcoming resistance and challenges

Instructional coaches and school leaders can help counter teacher pushback and resistance when implementing an instructional coaching model through preparation and planning. The importance of building authentic and trusting relationships with the teaching staff has already been discussed in the previous sections and has been identified as a common theme throughout the literature (Feger et al., 2004; Feldman et al., 2004; Heineke, 2013; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2007).

Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) point to the coaching model of the International Reading Association (IRA). The IRA identifies three different levels of activities for the Instructional Coaching Model. Level 1 activities are described as being informal and focused on relationship building between the instructional coach and classroom teacher. The examples that Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) describe as Level 1 activities would be an instructional coach leading teacher professional learning communities, meeting with teachers one-on-one to discuss teacher identified needs and issues, discussing teacher goals, helping teachers solve problems, and assisting with student assessment activities. Once positive relationships are built instructional coaches can move onto Level 2 and Level 3 activities that grow in intensity, also extending the coaching to new strategies. Level 2 and Level 3 activities also allow the instructional coach to establish themselves as a valuable learning and an enhancement resource available to all staff members.

Persistence is a simple and straightforward approach for addressing teacher resistance (Knight, 2008). Instructional coaching is a slow process as it can take time for instructional coaches to build the authentic trust and collegial bond that has been previously identified as essential to instructional coaching (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2012). Instructional coaches must continue to work on building their credibility with staff members by having ongoing dialogue with individuals, sharing resources with teachers, and simply demonstrating their skill set, personal qualities, and knowledge of the instructional coaching model (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Feldman et al., 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Another simple strategy that can assist an instructional coach in overcoming teacher resistance is the acknowledgement and celebration of positive teacher and student outcomes that occur during the coaching process (Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Praising and saluting teacher attempts, regardless of the level of success, can be a great strategy for increasing stakeholder awareness of the work that can be done between an instructional coach and teacher, but is also gives credit where it is deserved. When teachers take a chance and try something new in their classroom to enhance their own practice and professional knowledge, instructional coaches should acknowledge that action and can also foster deeper understanding of the instructional coaching process (Gibson, 2005; Heineke, 2013; King et al., 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

2.5.4 Miscommunication of responsibilities

For a school district at the beginning stages of instructional coaching implementation in their schools there is a period of time that requires someone, often a district or school administrator, to delineate the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the instructional coaching process for the

faculty. If not communicated clearly and properly, instructional coaching can face obstacles during most initial stages (Knight, 2007).

It is very common for instructional coaches to be viewed as non-collegial, “experts” who exist to tell the teachers to do in their classrooms (Arbaugh et al., 2010). Instructional coaching is a new paradigm in teacher learning and development, and a key aspect to successful implementation of an instructional coaching model is to build an understanding among the staff of what exactly instructional coaching is and is not. Establishment of this understanding requires time, patience, follow-through, and careful planning (Heineke, 2013).

Instructional coaches must also fully understand what their roles and responsibilities are within a district or school. Many instructional coaches are learning “on the job” with little formal background or training on the instructional coaching process, in particular working with adult learners in a co-equal, partnership approach (Boatright et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Across the United States there is little consistency with regard to the qualifications and standards of practice for training of instructional coaches (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). The nuances of instructional coaching take time to master, similar to the learning curve of mastery of classroom instruction that a teacher experiences (Gibson, 2005; Saphier & West, 2009). The professional skill set of an instructional coach is refined through experience, eventually resulting the redefined role of a teacher as an emergent instructional coach who is respected and accepted by his or her peers (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Van Nieuweburgh, 2012).

Clear definition of an instructional coach’s role in an overall school development plan is especially important for first time coaches. Novice instructional coaches face the difficult task of establishing a new professional identity with a staff they may or may not already know (Arbaugh

et al., 2010). A study conducted by Arbaugh et al. (2010) examined the transition of a classroom teacher moving into a coaching role. The teacher found the transition particularly difficult due to a variety of factors. The newly hired coach reported a lack of clarity and understanding from the teachers with regard to the instructional coaching process, as well as confusion with specific roles and responsibilities of the coach. Additionally, the coach felt caught between administrators and teachers on occasions, and reported a lack of a consistent vision or expectation for their work. This lack of understanding and communication can affect the impact of even an experienced instructional coach (Arbaugh et al., 2010).

The roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches are based on the contextual factors of school settings. Each school and district is unique in its own regard, and there is no identified one-size fits all approach when it comes to implementing an instructional coaching model (Blanton & Wood, 2009; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2012). In order to successfully implement instructional coaching, there must be a shared understanding of roles among all stakeholders involved (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Boatright et al., 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Specifically, teachers and instructional coaches should have a clear understanding of the instructional coaching model and the responsibilities of all constituents (Knight, 2008). Research has shown that success of instructional coaching is tied to articulation of a focus on the district vision for instructional coaching, as well as what the systemic approach to professional development. Coaches who report their roles as ambiguous, ill-defined and lacking support also report that their district does not have a strong, clear picture of the various aspects of instructional coaching (Boatright et al., 2010).

2.5.5 Wavering administrative support

School and district leadership play a crucial role in successful improvement efforts, and instructional coaching is no different (Guskey, 2009). Administrative support, in particular principal support, has been identified as a key component to successful instructional coaching programs (Feldman et al., 2004; Knight 2008). The ability of the school principal to articulate and support the reform measure to their staff is essential to the success or failure of a reform initiative. The literature points out that when principals are not supportive, or even resistant to instructional coaching, it becomes difficult for a coach to build a collaborative culture and open dialogue among the staff (Feldman et al., 2004).

As mentioned previously, instructional coaches aim to create open, honest, and trusting relationships with classroom teachers. More importantly, instructional coaches must work to do the same with principals. The relationship between an instructional coach and principal should encourage conversations that create change in behavioral, pedagogical, and content knowledge. These can lead to a positive change with regard to school climate, teacher isolation, insufficient support, and instructional capacity (King et al., 2004).

Instructional coaches create trusting relationships with principals for a number of reasons. The job of the instructional coach is not to just work with classroom teachers; but rather to work with the principals as well to increase their instructional capacity, understanding and professional learning (Knight, 2012). In order for this to occur, the principal must trust the instructional coach and feel at ease working with that individual in a non-evaluative, non-judgmental manner (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). In addition, instructional coaches also must devote time to this relationship to ensure that administrative support is consistent throughout the coaching process. Principals who personally understand the instructional coaching process

significantly increase the chance for successful coaching implementation at the teacher level (Blanton & Wood, 2009).

Administrators can also help coordinate the job responsibilities of instructional coaches to ensure they are doing work that aligns with the institutional vision. A common obstacle in unsuccessful instructional coaching initiatives is a lack of administrative support and focus for instructional coaches; many instructional coaches find themselves devoting time to issues and projects that do not really involve the principles of instructional coaching. Other coaches find themselves overextended and unable to fully support classroom teachers (Blanton & Wood, 2009; Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Heineke, 2013). These concerns have obvious negative consequences for teachers and their students. The American Institutes for Research conducted a study of the K-12 Alabama Reading Initiative which incorporated instructional coaching into its goal of increasing high quality of instruction by incorporating literacy skills at all levels. The findings indicated that instructional coaches who were overextended, meaning responsible for working with multiple schools, and who were also given other major responsibilities other than coaching, saw a less significant increase in student test scores (Blanton & Wood, 2009).

When principals engage with instructional coaches as co-instructional leaders to create a vision for school-wide academic improvement, instructional coaches will demonstrate heightened responsibility for teacher improvement and students' academic success (Knight, 2008). Also, when school administrators are fully aware of, and actively support the instructional coaching process, coaches report that their work is more successful in comparison to school districts where instructional coaches report having non-supportive administrators who are disengaged in the coaching process (Feldman et al., 2004). The literature is clear that

instructional coaching involves much more than just the coach. Open-minded teachers who seek improvement and a supportive and growth-minded administration are essential to the work of instructional coaches.

2.5.6 Complexity of job responsibilities

Instructional coaching involves a comprehensive skill set aligned to dynamic job responsibilities (Knight, 2007). Finding an instructional coach who embodies and exhibits all of the necessary qualities can be difficult. The literature points to the importance of communication skills, relationship building skills, and knowledge of adult learners (Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Work sessions between coaches and teachers happen one-on-one as well as in large and small group settings, with the instructional coach facilitating dialogue around the instructional practices of teachers who possess varying degrees of skepticism (Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

In addition to personal skills the literature also suggests that instructional coaches must exhibit the professional knowledge and understanding of effective practice that make them instructional leaders (Feger et al., 2004). Instructional coaches should have a firm understanding of subject matter across grade spans and demonstrate pedagogical knowledge, understanding how children, and also adults learn (Feger et al., 2004; Knight, 2008). The literature emphasizes the importance of instructional coaches having a working knowledge of the seemingly unlimited resources that are available to teachers, across grade levels and content areas (Knight, 2007). Lastly, the literature suggests that instructional coaches should understand the coaching process in terms of striking a balance between teacher engagement while still encouraging teachers to have a voice in a non-evaluative and open manner (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Feger et al.,

2004; Knight, 2008). Instructional coaching is a complex model and complicated process that requires skill and deep understanding of rationale and implementation. Instructional coaches should continue with their own professional growth and development to ensure they remain current in their familiarity with research-based best practices to share with teachers (Knight, 2008). This is a professional commitment that requires time and effort, but could pay dividends in the growth and development of teachers and instructional coaches.

2.5.7 District financial concerns

Fiscal responsibility is a significant responsibility for every school district leader or school board member. The financial cost that initiatives bring to the district should be evaluated before any final decision is made. Many stakeholders view professional development of staff members as a necessary cost to ensure that high quality professional learning, and high quality instruction occur in each and every classroom (Fermanich, 2002).

Little is known about school spending with regard to professional development of staff members due to limited research and complicated calculations in state and district budgets (Birman et al., 2001; Fermanich, 2002). Research on instructional coaching is also limited in terms of any cost analysis for funding an instructional coaching program (Boatright et al., 2010; Feldman et al., 2004).

Despite the minimal research on the costs of instructional coaching, there are studies in the literature that offer an indication of such costs. Knight (2012) examined the costs of professional development at six different schools. Three of the schools were implementing an instructional coaching model while the other three schools were using a more traditional approach to teacher learning. The instructional coaching model that Knight (2012) examined

involved a former teacher being employed at a single school full-time. The instructional coach would work with the teachers and building principal to incorporate research-based methods with the objective of improving classroom instruction. Knight used an ingredients method to cost out instructional coaching with the bulk of the money going towards the salaries and benefits of instructional coaches. Knight concluded there was a substantial difference in costs when comparing instructional coaching and a more traditional professional development program. Knight (2012) reported that the cost of the instructional coaching program at the three schools was over six times greater than their comparison schools.

Another study of the Cincinnati Public School District looked at seven elementary schools that implemented instructional coaching in their building. Cincinnati Public Schools spent 59% of their professional development budget on instructional coaches, or about \$7,700 per teacher. Included in the cost were salaries and benefits as well as mileage costs, parking fees, tuition, overnight stays for conferences and substitute costs (Fermanich, 2002).

In the city of Boston, the district invested a substantial amount into professional development, \$5.8 million, which went to funding 75 coaches in 97 schools. The thought process, according to Neufeld and Roper (2003), was that an investment in the improvement of teacher practice would increase student achievement and educational equity. In an effort to maximize the use and availability of the coaches, coaches were cycled through with different groups of teachers every few weeks as to ensure that all teachers had access and availability to work with the instructional coach (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Another study involving Boston Public Schools identified that the instructional coaching model cost approximately \$5,000 per teacher and principal, which is 2% - 3% of the total operating budget of the Boston Public School system (Fermanich, 2002).

The cost of instructional coaching is substantial. Blanton and Wood (2009) state that in order for districts to be as fiscally responsible as possible, they recommend that instructional coaches be used across content areas to ensure that they are able to work with multiple teachers. Knight (2008) suggests that the ratio should be nine teachers for every one instructional coach in order to maintain costs and also maximize the work that instructional coaches can do in schools. Instructional coaching is a relatively new teaching and learning initiative that requires further research surrounding the impact and practices of coaches. There is also a call for additional research regarding the financial impact that coaching can have on a district as well as the long-term sustainability of the program (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

2.5.8 Section conclusion

School leaders anticipate the obstacles and challenges that may lie ahead when starting a change initiative. Thoughtful consideration and planning to overcome these obstacles is a key to success of any initiative. Instructional coaching blends what is known about effective professional development with site-specific content regarding school-based needs (King et al., 2004).

In addition, Blanton and Wood (2009) believe that teachers appreciate instructional coaching, but coaches must be well prepared, challenges need to be identified and a plan put in place to address and overcome those challenges and obstacles. However, a reoccurring theme found throughout the literature is that any type of change takes time.

Coaches need time to work on and become familiar with the coaching process, curriculum, instructional strategies, overcome teacher resistance, and also establish themselves as a part the school culture (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Sandstead, 2016). Also, change is a gradual and difficult process for teachers and they need encouragement, support, and feedback to get

them through any initial opposition that prevents that change (Hoy et al., 1998). The literature is clear that instructional coaching embodies the qualities necessary to make a meaningful impact on teacher's practice. Effective instructional coaches are able to provide the support, feedback and meaningful dialogue and activities that lead to teacher growth and continued improvement.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

Delivering high quality classroom instruction that is relevant, engaging, challenging and effective is a very complicated and complex set of skills and strategies. Every classroom teacher, even the strongest, has room for growth and continued development that can help increase their knowledge of teaching and strategies to become better and more effective educators. Just as complicated and complex as what qualifies as highly effective instruction is providing those significant, high quality professional learning opportunities that develop teachers into flourishing educators. Sustaining such professional learning is a time consuming task for a school system, especially with the recognition that each teacher is unique in their how they learn, as well as each teacher has areas where they can improve and grow as an educator as well as areas of strength. Providing those learning experiences that lead to new teacher knowledge and expansion of teacher practice are difficult to coordinate and facilitate, but are a necessity in today's educational arena.

Increasing teacher capacity and accountability has been called for in different educational reform measures throughout the years (Alterman et al., 2015). The reauthorized (2016) Elementary and Secondary Education Act, entitled the Every Student Succeeds Act (2016) expands on the definition of professional development and recognizes that educator learning is

an integral component of building and maximizing teacher capacity. The definition for professional development uses terms such as sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data driven, and classroom focused (Learning Forward, 2016). The reasoning behind this emphasis on improving teacher quality is based in the belief that quality instruction is connected to improved student learning outcomes (Boatright et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Heineke, 2013). If teacher quality has an effect on student learning outcomes, such as achievement, then ensuring that teachers are reaching their maximum potential, and continuing to enhance their teaching knowledge and ability should be a major priority for school leadership. It is argued then that schools should be organized in a way to promote teacher learning and expansion on teacher expertise (Crilley et al., 1997).

As previously stated, providing professional learning opportunities that encompass what is known about effective professional development is a daunting task. Instructional coaching is a professional development model that holds promise as far as incorporating what the literature points to as effective professional development practices (Alterman et al., 2015, Borman & Feger, 2006; Coggshall et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Dufour, 2004; Knight, 2012). The literature also points to the need for further research on instructional coaching, in particular the impact that instructional coaching can have on student and teacher outcomes as well as particular activities and practices that lead to quality teacher change (Boatright et al., 2010; Feldman et al., 2004; Gibson, 2005; Teemant et al., 2011).

This study allowed the researcher, as well as readers, to gain a better understanding of instructional coaching by examining the individual experiences of three instructional coaches. Each experience is unique based on a variety of contextual factors. This study investigated instructional coaching by examining the experiences of instructional coaches; in particular how

instructional coaches perceive they are impacting teacher knowledge and practice, how instructional coaches are able to obtain teacher buy-in and how the coaching process has enhanced the knowledge and skills of the instructional coach. The knowledge gained has allowed for a better overall understanding of the professional development learning process and offers insights into a professional development model that holds promise in increasing teacher capacity.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will address the following research questions:

- Q1. How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?
- Q2. How is teacher “buy-in” of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?
- Q3. How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?

3.3 RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

This research study is a qualitative case study, involving three different schools in different settings. This study aimed to thoroughly examine instructional coaching and help the researcher gain insight via interviews, observations and document review, into how the instructional coaching process is being utilized in southwestern Pennsylvania secondary schools to improve teaching and learning practices. Qualitative inquiry, specifically case study research, was

selected due to the researcher's desire to understand a particular complex phenomenon from a holistic and real-world lens (Mertens, 2010; Yin, 2014). Qualitative inquiry affords the researcher the opportunity to both understand and construct knowledge related to instructional coaching based on the experiences of instructional coaches currently in the position. This case provides a comprehensive and rich contextual account of personal experiences, beliefs, and practices of selected instructional coaches in the southwestern Pennsylvania area (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher believes that by selecting the qualitative research method approach of case study, it has afforded the researcher the opportunity to answer the research questions from the unique, individual perspectives of instructional coaches based on their experiences (Stake, 2006). The data was collected while in the natural settings of each instructional coach and the researcher believes a deep understanding was gained regarding the perceptions instructional coaches have on their impact working with teachers, as well as how they are able to overcome obstacles to gain teacher buy-in, and how their own professional learning and practice has been impacted by the coaching process.

Three instructional coaches working in secondary school settings were selected for participation in this study. The instructional coaches are from three different school districts in southwest Pennsylvania and all three coaches are participating members of the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC). PIIC has been described briefly in the review of literature and is discussed in an upcoming section. Examining three different schools is not meant to provide a full representation of instructional coaching as a whole. It does allow for the researcher to find meaning and understanding by working with participating instructional coaches in their natural environment (Hatch, 2002; Mertens, 2010). Each participant has had a

different lived experience due to the individual culture of each school, as well as different experiences on how they implement coaching. Thus, each participant offered a unique perspective based on such experiences. Case study involving multiple settings allows for those individual cases to be explored, but also allows for the phenomenon to be studied based on different contexts and unique differences of each school in order to gain a holistic understanding (Stake, 2006).

Instructional coaches involved with the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) have their own individual lived experiences in regards to instructional coaching, but they will also have similar shared experiences as it relates to implementing instructional coaching in their schools. This research had an objective to reveal the potential and current status of instructional coaches as it pertains to teacher professional growth and development, as well as the individual growth of the instructional coach. This research is useful in identifying specific obstacles that instructional coaches face when recruiting teachers for participation in coaching and possible strategies they utilized to overcome such obstacles in order to gain teacher buy-in. In addition, this research helps identify how instructional coaches perceive their impact as well as how instructional coaches have developed their own new knowledge and skill set through the coaching process.

3.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dr. James Knight from the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning has done extensive research on professional learning, specifically instructional coaching. The conceptual framework for this research study involved Dr. Knight's Partnership Principles of Instructional

Coaching (2007). Knight (2007) asserts that the partnership approach to instructional coaching results in teachers being more engaged in the learning process, retaining more information and strategies, and are more likely to implement new teaching practices. The use of this framework will assist in the analysis of the research as well as provide a guide for the semi-structured interviews with the participants. The Partnership Principles reflect Knight's stance on what stands behind successful, effective coaching. The Partnership Principles are equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Each principle will be described below.

The first principle, equality, is based on the relationship of instructional coach and teacher. The coaching process is not designed to be a top-down approach where the instructional coach identifies a weakness of the teacher and directs him or her to incorporate specific instructional strategies or teach in a specific manner. In an instructional coaching model the coach and the teacher are equal partners, collaborating on a variety of potential practices that could have a positive impact on student and teacher practice. No one person is better, or has more authority in a partnership approach.

Choice is the second principle, and refers to teachers having input into what they want to learn about, and possibly what they would like to improve upon or expand upon. Knight (2007) argues that teachers need to have the power to say yes or no to individual classroom choices that can have an impact on their overall teaching practices. Knight (2012) also asserts that if you take away the teacher's ability to choose, you are taking away from their professional capacity, and that if teachers are treated professionally they will act professionally.

Voice is the third principle, and that involves the opinions and beliefs of the teacher in the coaching process. Teachers must be able to express their ideas, thoughts and concerns regarding their professional learning and practice. In a partnership approach the instructional

coach listens empathetically to the teacher in a non-judgmental manner. Empathic listening allows a person to get inside another person's frame of reference. Knight (2007) believes that the most important service that an instructional coach can provide is to let the voice of the teacher be heard throughout the coaching process.

The fourth Partnership Principle is dialogue. True authentic and open dialogue can help build a trusting relationship between coach and teacher. The more meaningful and open the dialogue is, the easier it is to create a professional learning culture that promotes communities of meaningful thought. Dialogue is more complex and deep compared to a simple conversation or discussion. Having authentic dialogue involves reflecting on practices and beliefs, asking probing questions that generate thought and considerations around teaching.

Reflection is the fifth principle and is an ongoing exercise throughout the coaching cycle. Reflection is a practice that allows teachers to accept and reject different ideas being discussed and considered with the instructional coach. Reflection is also a key practice for an instructional coach that allows for contemplation into what may be working, what can be done differently, and if the principles are being followed throughout.

The sixth principle, praxis, involves both the instructional coach and teacher applying their new knowledge and practice to their real-life occurrences as they are learning. Knight (2007) contends that when someone learns, reflects, and acts they are engaged in praxis. The instructional coach can model this behavior and also recognize teachers throughout the coaching process while they demonstrate the same behavior.

The last principle, reciprocity, entails each member benefiting from the success, learning and experience of others. When this is applied to instructional coaching the outcomes are such that the instructional coach is growing and benefiting from the learning and experiences of the

teachers they are working with. In addition, the teachers are learning and benefiting from the knowledge and experiences of the instructional coach, but also their teaching colleagues that have gone through, and are going through the coaching process as well. Listed below in Table 1 is each research question this study seeks to explore and which Partnership Principle aligns with each research question.

Table 1: Research Questions and Conceptual Framework Alignment

Research Question	Aligned Partnership Principle
Q1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	Equality Dialogue Choice Reflection Voice Praxis Reciprocity
Q2: How is teacher “buy-in” of the instructional coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	Equality Dialogue Choice Praxis Voice
Q3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?	Dialogue Praxis Reflection Reciprocity

3.5 PARTICIPANTS

The Allegheny County Intermediate Unit (AIU) hosts monthly Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) meetings for instructional coaches in the southwestern Pennsylvania area. The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) is a statewide resource that provides support and networking for instructional coaches. Each intermediate unit

in the commonwealth has a PIIC coordinator on staff to help assist and collaborate with instructional coaches to support their work in schools.

The researcher identified potential participants for the study by obtaining a list of instructional coaches that attend PIIC meetings at the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit (AIU). Stake (2006) recognizes that participants must have relevance to the topic, but the researcher must also ensure a balance and variety. The researcher targeted three different instructional coaches that work in schools that vary in size and socio-demographic status. The researcher also took into account how long each instructional coach has been in their coaching position. The researcher aimed to understand the stories and lived experiences of instructional coaches in-depth. In order to do that the researcher believes that the more experiences a coach has had, the better the complexity of instructional coaching is shared. Thus, a more seasoned instructional coach can help the researcher grasp a better understanding of their lived experiences.

Once potential participants were identified they were contacted via email (Appendix A) seeking to schedule a telephone call to discuss their participation in the study. During the phone conversation both researcher and participant discussed roles and expectations for this study. An overview of the research project was discussed and the participant then accepted participation in the research.

Once three instructional coaches were identified and agreed to be an active participant a letter was sent to the superintendent of each school district requesting permission to conduct interviews and observations on school grounds (Appendix B). As a requirement for IRB approval, the superintendent for each instructional coach submitted a letter on district letterhead stating they understood and were willing to allow the instructional coach to be a participant in

this study. Considering each district has its own unique school culture and professional development processes, the researcher anticipated that the practices, challenges, leadership and perceptions would vary. However, common themes were anticipated to emerge from the data that was collected and analyzed. Instructional coaches who participate in PIIC meetings at the AIU were targeted due to logistics, but also due to likelihood of receptiveness and resources (Stake, 2006). The researcher did not know which cases would be targeted at the initial data collection stage but understood that additional cases, or participants, may be selected if new issues arise that suggest additional cases are necessary (Hatch, 2002; Mertens, 2010).

After completion of the research study further information was sought to clarify the authority structure for each participant. Clarifying the authority structure for each participant and their respective district helps bring understanding and meaning towards each participant in regards to how they interact with their teacher colleagues, administrators and fellow coaches if applicable. Listed below in the table is a visual representation for all participants including demographic data as well as how each participant is classified in their district and what authority role they play in each district. Each participant shared that they are not considered evaluators or supervisors of teachers. All three participants revealed that they do work with administration in the capacity of designing professional learning opportunities for staff, but they were all members of the collective bargaining unit and did say that at times that is a conflict that they have to overcome with teachers in regards to how they are perceived. This leads the researcher to believe that the formal relationships between the teachers and the instructional coaches are not the same type of relationship teachers exhibit with a district or school level administrator.

Table 2: Visual of Demographic and Authority Structure

Participant	Gender	Coaching Experience (Years)	District Classification	Employment Category	Evaluate or Supervise	Completion of Induction Program
Mrs. Miller	Female	6 years	Rural	Collective Bargaining Unit Member	No	Yes
Mrs. Casey	Female	6 years	Suburban	Collective Bargaining Unit Member	No	Yes
Ms. Finley	Female	4 years	Urban	Collective Bargaining Unit Member	No	No

3.6 METHODS

Qualitative inquiry, specifically case study design, was selected as an appropriate research approach because of the desire to understand a complex phenomenon that involves important contextual conditions pertinent to gaining an understanding (Yin, 2014). This qualitative inquiry included semi-structured personal interviews with an instructional coach, observation of coaching sessions, and document analysis to identify patterns of experience.

A pilot study was conducted with an instructional coach before formal research began. Convenience and accessibility can be the main criteria for selecting a participant in the pilot study (Yin, 2014). The instructional coach involved with the pilot study works in the same professional setting as the researcher and agreed to assist with the development of the study. The pilot study was used to gather feedback on interview protocol, observation protocol, and document analysis guide. The pilot study was used to help refine data collection and data analysis procedures and helped build validity of the study (Yin, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and were chosen due to the ability to go deeply into the understanding and experiences of the participants (Hatch, 2002). The interview questions were developed from the review of literature and are aligned with the research questions as well as the conceptual framework. The interview protocol listed in Appendix C was the guide for each interview. Guided questions and follow-up probes were also used. Additional clarifying questions were asked within the semi-structured interview format when elaboration from the participant was required (Mertens, 2010).

Data was also collected through observations of coaching sessions involving the instructional coach and classroom teachers. An observation protocol guide was used for each observation; see Appendix D, to help guide data collection by the researcher. The intention of the observations was not for the researcher to gain a complete and thorough insight into the pedagogy of instructional coaching. Rather, the observations were intended for the researcher to use as confirmatory examples of what instructional coaches shared in interviews. The researcher designed this protocol instrument and specific categories are included in this study that align with the conceptual framework. The categories could have been modified during the observation

based upon the emergent needs of the study as the researcher recognizes throughout the research process (Yin, 2014).

Document and artifact analysis was also a data collection source for the researcher and a similar protocol guide was developed to help gather consistent qualitative data during the site visits, see Appendix E. The document protocol guide was developed based upon the literature, and observations were added that aligned with the conceptual framework. This document helped aid the researcher in organizing data during the data analysis phase of the study. This protocol guide was intended to organize qualitative data that will bring to the surface and support instructional coach's perspectives of their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches achieved teacher buy-in and how they have refined their own knowledge and practice.

The following table, Table 2, is a visual representation of the research process. Listed are the research questions that this study seeks to explore as well as the evidence the researcher was seeking, how the data will be collected and analyzed, and the Partnership Principles aligned with each research question.

Table 3: Research Study Chart

Research Questions	Data Collection Activity	Data Analysis	Conceptual Framework Alignment
Q1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	Interview protocol questions 1, 2, 2a, 2b 2c, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Anecdotal Notes • Document/Artifacts review Coaching session Observation Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deductive Coding to identify conceptual framework components • Analytic Memos • Emerging codes outside conceptual framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Dialogue • Reflection • Praxis • Reciprocity
Q2: How is teacher “buy-in” of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	Interview protocol questions 4, 4a, 4b, 4c <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Anecdotal Notes • Document/Artifacts review Coaching session Observation Document analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Dialogue • Praxis
Q3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?	Interview protocol questions 5, 6, 6a, 6b <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Anecdotal Notes • Document/Artifacts review Coaching session Observation Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inductive Coding to identify emerging themes from the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue • Reflection • Praxis • Reciprocity

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was systematically collected and coded through semi-structured interviews, observation of coaching sessions and document review. Data was then analyzed to identify themes in an effort to portray how instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches were able to achieve teacher buy-in, and how instructional coaches perceive their own professional practice has been enhanced due to instructional coaching. The researcher explored

qualitative research software as a possibility to coding data that emerged from the research. Software was not used as a tool to organize the coded data and was not used to assist in identifying meaningful emerging themes or patterns (Yin, 2014).

As Saldaña (2016) suggests with qualitative methods, data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. The coding of the data involved Saldaña's (2016) recommended coding methods, which involve first and second-cycle coding. Prior to first-cycle coding initial data analysis occurred during the interviews and observations (Appendix D) of coaching sessions. Notable remarks and comments that emerged from the interviews and observations were pre-coded by the researcher, and later horizontalized (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The process of horizontalization involves the researcher compiling different categories from the data, which involve the participating instructional coaches' beliefs, thoughts, and actions, in order to aid in the emergence of themes. These categories, which are groups of statements from the participants, provided the researcher with a sense of understanding of the instructional coaches' experiences and were later the foundation for codes and later themes that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Data collected from each site, which involved semi-structured interviews, observations of coaching sessions and document analysis, involved first-cycle coding methods of attribute coding and structural coding (Saldaña, 2016). Attribute coding is identified as a first-cycle coding method used at the beginning of a basic data set. Attribute coding is appropriate for managing multiple sites and a wide variety of data sources. Initially, all data was coded by descriptors and attributes including, but not limited to, pseudonym, specific data format, and participant characteristics (Saldaña, 2016).

Structural Coding was also used in first-cycle coding as a way to organize data by conceptual phrases that align with the conceptual framework and research questions (Creswell, 2007; Saldana, 2016). All data collected was evaluated and assessed to allow for themes and categories to emerge. Attribute Coding and Structural Coding were further organized and later refined in second-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016).

The following is an excerpt from the interview transcript of participant #1, Mrs. Miller that demonstrates first-cycle coding for this research study. Mrs. Miller was answering a follow-up question in regards to how she felt she was enhancing teacher practice; she touches upon a reoccurring theme of self-educating herself on professional development topics. She stated: “People (teachers) may come to me and want to know how to do something, or want to do a particular activity in their classroom. Well, I might not know how to do that, but I need to find it, and I need to teach myself and then it turns into learning all these new things. So it’s a matter of how do you do that, you have to teach yourself and then turn around and teach staff. So you have to be self-motivated and be able to learn yourself in order to pass that along.” This excerpt was initially coded as “Self-learning” when reviewed by the researcher, and additional comments about self-learning, self-motivation, and self-improvement were also identified as such throughout the initial stage of reviewing and coding.

During second-cycle coding the researcher sought to reorganize and reconfigure first-cycle codes through Pattern Coding, which can help synthesize themes from the data (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern codes were compared across data sources and assisted the researcher in constructing meaningful organization of the data. Pattern Coding also assisted the researcher in identify emergent themes, which were beneficial in later stages of data analysis (Hatch, 2002; Saldana, 2016).

Following the same coding example discussed on the previous page, during second-cycle coding analysis the emerging theme of “Self” began to surface when reviewing data. The first-cycle codes associated with self-motivation, self-learning, and self-improvement were categorized during second-cycle coding simply as “Self” and the theme really began to show through during analysis of all three participants across the study in regards to their own professional growth. The theme of “Self” fully emerged at the conclusion of first and second-cycle coding methods.

Deductive and inductive analysis occurred during data analysis. Deductive coding enabled the researcher to identify particular fragments of data that align to the conceptual framework, Knight’s Partnership Principles. The data sources were categorized through first and second-cycle coding processes to identify elements of the conceptual framework. Additional codes were assigned to the data, which may differ from the principles in the conceptual framework. Inductive data analysis is built from the bottom up where the researcher builds themes or patterns from the data collected (Creswell, 2007). Inductive coding did occur to identify patterns or themes involving instructional coach’s perceived impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches were able to attain teacher buy-in, and how instructional coach’s professional knowledge has increased through the coaching process.

3.8 RESEARCHER ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Researcher bias, a potential limitation to the study, associated with personal and professional experience must be determined, acknowledged and discarded to objectively examine the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006). However, personal and professional

bias should not be confused with knowledge and prior engagement with the phenomenon being studied. The researcher involved with this inquiry has a past experience involving instructional coaching in a secondary setting. The school district that employs the researcher has implemented instructional coaching practices, and the researcher seeks to gain a better understanding of instructional coaching to possibly incorporate within the school district. Also, due to prior professional experience as a secondary and district level administrator, the researcher recognizes the importance of teacher professional growth and has experience planning and facilitating professional development sessions involving teachers. While acknowledging his own experiences and personal and professional convictions on teacher professional development, the researcher seeks to only use professional experience and knowledge in order to gain an understanding of the practice being studied (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014).

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several possible limitations that exist for this particular study. The researcher is aiming to gather certain perceptions from instructional coaches. A limitation exists that the researcher can never fully know the thoughts or the beliefs of the participants with certainty. This limitation was addressed by the inclusion of a variety of data sources as well as member checking when appropriate. This validates the tentative assertions that are posed by the researcher (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2014).

Another possible limitation is the small sample size of this study. Three instructional coaches from three different schools were examined. The cases and sites each have their own unique contextual qualities. The researcher acknowledges three instructional coaches is not a

substantial sample size; however the research process involving semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis allowed the researcher to explore the instructional coaching process at a depth that allows for understanding (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006).

A particular challenge that possibly limits the study is based on the amount of data that was compiled from the semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. Large amounts of data were collected and reduced to themes or categories through deductive and inductive coding processes (Creswell, 2007). The researcher accepts the amount of data that was required to be compiled and understood it was necessary to grapple with the data to come to an understanding of the phenomenon.

Lastly, measures were taken by the researcher to minimize influence and personal bias. The researcher did not want to affect the condition of the participants during the interviews and observations. While professional experience informed the design and conduct of the study, the focus was to represent the participants' experiences most authentically and fully. A data collection protocol was developed and was followed to increase consistency and lesson opportunities for interference with data collection throughout the research process (Hatch, 2002).

3.10 ETHICAL ASSURANCES

For this study the researcher's objective was to gain an understanding of instructional coaching from the perceptions and experiences of practicing instructional coaches. One piece of data sought was through semi-structured interviews directly related to perceptions and beliefs of instructional coaches. Thus, it was important to assure the participant was able to speak in an open and free manner with no fear of impact on current employment status. Each participant

was provided with a consent form, see Appendix F, which was read aloud to each participant before each interview. At the beginning of each interview the participants was informed of the measures in place to ensure that each participant was anonymous and all of the data gathered was kept confidential (Mertens, 2010).

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, coaching sessions were observed. The researcher only observed these sessions, and did not actively participate or engage in the dialogue or activities that occurred. At the beginning of each observation a consent script was read aloud to each participant, see Appendix G, which outlined the measures in place to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Audio recording did occur throughout the research process, specifically during the semi-structured interviews. Each interview was transcribed after they were completed. The audio recordings and transcripts were locked in a secure location in the researcher's office. The names of the participants were never stored in the same location as the audio recordings and transcripts. Due to the possibility that the participants may have been the only instructional coaches in their school, both the names of the school and the instructional coach were replaced with pseudonyms to further protect the identification of the participants. At the conclusion of this study, all transcripts, audio records and data collection will be destroyed.

4.0 FINDINGS

Designing and facilitating effective professional learning opportunities that are ongoing, job-embedded, relevant, and that lead to positive teacher outcomes is a complex and difficult task for school leaders (Coggshall et al., 2010). These learning opportunities have the potential to lead to changes in teacher practice and thus increase teacher capacity. There has been a recent emphasis on educators improving the quality of instruction and practice, resulting in better student learning outcomes (Alterman et al., 2015). Instructional coaching is a professional development model that has grown in popularity over the years as an effective method of professional learning. There has also been acknowledgement of the need for further research, not only research on instructional coaching, but the study of professional development in general, and the changes to teacher and student outcomes that are the result of such practices (Desimone, 2009).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the practice and experiences of instructional coaches in secondary schools. The research questions were designed to provide an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches could achieve teacher buy-in, and how the coaching process has impacted the professional knowledge, practices and beliefs of practicing instructional coaches. In this section, each participant will be profiled and findings will be presented according to each research question. Common themes will then be discussed that emerged from across all three

sites. The findings for each research question were gathered from semi-structured interviews, internal documents, and coaching session observations.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND REPRESENTATION

Participants were all active members of PIIC and regularly attended monthly PIIC meetings at their Intermediate Unit. To ensure variety and balance the participants were selected for participation based on their level of experience. Sites were identified to include a range of contexts, with varying district sizes and socioeconomic contexts (Stake, 2006). All interactions took place in the school where each participant was employment.

After each interview the recording was transcribed, field notes were taken throughout the research process, and analytic memos were written before, during and after data collection (Saldaña, 2016). Initial First Cycle coding was used during the initial review of the transcripts. Attribute coding was used at the beginning of the data set to identify basic descriptive information. Structural coding, another First Cycle coding method, was used to identify words, phrases or segments of the interview to assist identifying major categories or themes. After initial First Cycle coding occurred the transcripts were reviewed again and Second Cycle coding occurred to develop a sense of thematic, categorical, and theoretical organization in order to ultimately identify emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016). The Second Cycle coding method used was Pattern coding. Pattern coding allowed the researcher to group First Cycle codes into smaller categories and emergent themes (Saldaña, 2016).

The following section profiles each participant by identifying characteristics of the school and the participating instructional coach. Emerging themes are then identified by each research question.

4.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

4.2.1 Participant #1 – Mrs. Miller

Mrs. Miller is currently in her 6th year as an instructional coach at Ridgeview High School. Ridgeview High School is part of a large, rural school district that has an enrollment of just over 1,700 students. Student demographic data from the latest School Performance Profile (www.paschoolperformance.org) states that 89% of the student population is white, 8.5 % are African American, 1.5% as Hispanic, and a very small Asian and American Indian/Alaskan population comprise about 1% of the student population. The economically disadvantaged population sits at 63% and 19% of the student population are special education students.

The secondary school campus sits on the outskirts of a busy town that shares the same name as the school. The secondary campus is comprised of three separate buildings and an athletic field complex. One of the buildings is home to grades 7 – 9, and the other school building houses grades 10 – 12. The athletic field complex sits just outside and in the middle of both buildings. Also on the campus is the district administrative building that sits by itself at the end of the athletic complex. The buildings are visibly dated, but appear to be well maintained, and classrooms have been recently renovated with upgrades to technology, flooring and furnishings.

Mrs. Miller has her own large classroom, with 25 student desks and additional tables and chairs at different corners of the room. There is an interactive white board on a sidewall close to her desk, which is littered with books, folders, a laptop, and an iPad. Mrs. Miller does not have any student teaching responsibilities and conducts two workshops per month in her classroom for teachers. There is also a bulletin board that is decorated with material from a recent book study that was completed on Text-Dependent Questions (TDQ). Mrs. Miller was eager to discuss her roles and responsibilities at Ridgeview High School as well as let me see one of the monthly workshop sessions that she was conducting.

Mrs. Miller reported that Ridgeview High School has had coaching in place for over 10 years. The coaching initiative started with the Classrooms for the Future Grant that sought to expand technology use in the classroom. A requirement for the CFF grant was a technology integrator coach whose primary responsibility was to train and support teachers while they integrated new technology in the classroom. The coaching initiative then expanded at Ridgeview when the district agreed to take part in the Keystones to Opportunity Grant, which aimed to increase literacy outcomes for all students. The KTO grant, which only lasted for one year at Ridgeview, allowed the district to expand to 12 instructional coaches specializing in technology and literacy. The district appears to be focusing on implementing a writing program district-wide called Collins Writing, but Mrs. Miller acknowledges that they are not sure how the roll out will go.

“I think that teachers are going to be required to do some part of Collins Writing and were not exactly sure what we are leaning toward. He [Dr. Collins] talks about Type Two Tuesdays, we’ve talked about 10% Summaries, but there are so many things I am not sure how it is going to play out....but that is going to happen at an in-service day so teachers will have to be at the presentation.”

The district is also moving to a 1-to-1 initiative for the following school year that would give every student a Chromebook device. This new initiative has forced Mrs. Miller to become more familiar with the device and explore ways that a Chromebook can be used effectively used in the classroom.

“Now it has become a matter of learning all of the Google stuff that we don’t already know or enhancing the Google stuff that we do already know in a 1-to-1 Chromebook setting. So for me at times it has been pretty simple to figure out what I need (professional development topics) to push out to staff because it is device driven.”

The following section will outline the overall emerging themes that surfaced from the semi-structured interview and the observation and document analysis of Ridgeview. The emerging themes will be reported by research question and a later section will compare emerging themes across all three sites.

4.2.1.1 Emerging themes – Mrs. Miller

RQ1: *How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?*

Mrs. Miller reports that her role as instructional coach is, *“introducing and supporting new professional development opportunities for teachers, so I think we have a responsibility to bring to the table some things that we have learned and also support teachers as they implement those things.”* It is interesting that throughout her interview Mrs. Miller referenced how the instructional coaches are responsible for deciding which ideas or activities to bring to the teachers. Mrs. Miller provided me with a pamphlet that she created for the building principals to showcase the activities the instructional coaches have lead over the past five school years. When asked how many of the listed activities were originated by the instructional coaches she shared that all of the activities were developed through discussion and consensus among the instructional coaches. The pamphlet included a list of 104 activities, and of those activities 65

were literacy-based strategies, 7 were assessment related strategies, 16 instructional based activities, three were curriculum aligned strategies, and 13 were technology integration related strategies.

The term, “self-motivated” was used quite a few times by Mrs. Miller throughout the duration of the interview. This term will be revisited during analysis of research question #3 as well, but Mrs. Miller tended to refer to those teachers who she is having an impact on as being self-motivated learners. For example, Mrs. Miller stated the following when asked about how teachers perceive her coaching role:

“We really don’t have one pocket of teachers or department that have bought in, it is more about the teacher and that’s where I talk about being self-motivated. I really think it takes a teacher who wants to learn and wants to make sure their kids are getting opportunities, you know, and a lot of teachers are like that and some are not.”

When asked to elaborate on how teachers perceive the role of instructional coach Mrs. Miller stated some teachers find value in their work and regularly seek out the coaches and visit for guidance and support. However, there are some teachers who are resistant to working with them, which she accredits to the teachers not fully understanding what the role of instructional coach entails. Mrs. Miller also reported that there have been multiple changes in leadership over the past five years at the district, which she believes has lead to difficulties with vision and focus for instructional coaching. As Mrs. Miller stated, *“I also think the district needs a vision for coaching and a vision for professional development and a vision for where we want our staff to be instructionally.”*

When further prompted about how instructional coaches in Ridgeview know that they have impacted teacher practice, Mrs. Miller was not able to confirm that teachers are implementing the strategies the instructional coaches share with them. She said that she has

received feedback via email or had conversations in the hall that lead her to believe that the strategies are being used. Mrs. Miller shared that there have been many discussions among the district instructional coaches about what impact instructional coaching could have if administration required teaching staff to implement certain strategies in their classroom. She acknowledged that the counter argument would be how effective an initiative when teachers do not have a choice and are forced to implement strategies. This dilemma aligns with one of Knight's (2007) Partnership Principles of "choice," where teachers have the power to affirm or reject initiatives they want to implement in their teaching practice.

Overall, Mrs. Miller believes that she is having an impact on teacher practice. Mrs. Miller stated, *"I may not have quantitative or tangible proof, but I do believe that I am making teachers better and expanding their practice and making them feel more comfortable and confident as teachers."* A reoccurring, underlying theme that emerges is the need for administrative support, vision and leadership to help make the instructional coaching initiative more impactful at Ridgeview High School. As Mrs. Miller states:

"To be completely honest, it would be helpful if they [principal] also attended the workshops, because sometimes we get some pushback from staff and they [teachers] ask questions that really it's not our, we don't have the authority to answer, and so I feel as though it would be helpful if they attended."

Table 4 below lists the First Cycle and Second Cycle codes (Saldana, 2016) that were developed when analyzing the transcripts, observations field notes and document review.

Table 4: RQ1 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Miller

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding Pattern Coding
1-3e	RQ1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing new ideas • Supported • Empowered • Workshops • Feedback from teachers • Technology • Device driven • Literacy Focus • Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology • Literacy • Workshops • Vision • Change • Self-motivation

RQ2: *How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?*

Mrs. Miller believes that there are teachers who have bought into the coaching process at Ridgeview High School. At the 45-minute workshop session I observed there were six teachers present representing three different departments. The teachers appeared to be engaged throughout the workshop by responding to questions and asking their own. The discussion was centered on implementing the writing strategies presented at a teacher in-service day the week prior. I was not an active participant in the study group and did not ask any follow-up questions to the teaching staff. There were two more workshops that were scheduled that day following the same format and the same content.

These workshops, scheduled routinely twice per month, are credited by Mrs. Miller as having aided in the buy-in process. Mrs. Miller states:

“We do an instructional practice workshop every month during the teacher’s CBL [Content-Based Learning] period. That is where they are often looking for new ideas, so a lot of the things we present we are able to work into that period pretty easily. I think the teachers appreciate that we have a dedicated period that they can seek out help and new learning and they are spread out that it doesn’t seem to upset the teachers by taking away too much of their time.”

Mrs. Miller also credited a known instructional coaching strategy, modeling, as an important element of teacher buy-in. Mrs. Miller reports that:

“We have done what we call in-house field trips, where teachers can come to this room with their classes and I will teach the students. The teachers are there but they are taking a step back and they are seeing and it is pretty difficult to say you don’t know my kids and you can’t do this if they come.”

Modeling is identified in the literature (Andree et al., 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Shidler, 2009; Teemant et al., 2011) as an effective strategy for coaching and for teacher improvement.

Instructional coaching has been at Ridgeview High School for over 10 years and Mrs. Miller shared with me how at first it was difficult to get the teachers involved. Their initial goal was to just get the teachers in the door. So she said they spent considerable money on food and arranged events around breakfast, lunch and dinner to get people in the classroom. She felt that once the teachers were present, they were able to communicate with the teachers what their intentions were and start identifying areas involving literacy, curriculum, assessment and technology that they could support with teachers.

A reoccurring theme throughout the interview was the concept of the skills and attributes of the coach itself. Mrs. Miller told the story of a colleague who was not very successful at Ridgeview. She said he was hard to approach, was disinterested when teachers gave feedback and suggestions, and it was hard to connect with this individual. That particular instructional

coach has since retired and she speaks very highly of the current individual in that position. Mrs. Miller stated:

“I did see what a personality can do in this position. Our other coach is now very approachable, knowledgeable, and if he doesn’t know he’ll go find it. He is also respectful with the teachers and I think they just like flat out like him because he is a genuine person.”

This theme was coded as interpersonal skill because it encompasses all of the positive attributes associated with the instructional coach possessing the necessary skills to mesh well with the staff.

The data appears to show teacher buy-in as a mixed result at Ridgeview High School. There are teachers that Mrs. Miller refer to as her *“frequent flyers”* and she also acknowledges that there are teachers who are resistant to working with her. She believes that they have to focus on the teachers who come, contribute and are willing and motivated to try new things. Table 5 below gives a visual breakdown of First and Second Cycle coding for research question #2.

Table 5: RQ2 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Miller

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
4a – 4d	RQ2: How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning time • Flexible • Food • Book Study • Modeling • Personality • Approachable • Easy • Evaluation process • Technology • Knowledgeable • Administrative Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal Skills • Modeling • Flexible Planning • Leadership

RQ3: *How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice, and beliefs?*

Mrs. Miller emphasized throughout the interview how the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) has greatly assisted in her professional development as an instructional coach. Mrs. Miller said that the PIIC mentor from their intermediate unit has been “*outstanding to work with and even comes to the school to meet with any of us if we need the assistance.*” Mrs. Miller also stated that she attends the monthly PIIC meetings held at the IU and can bring back many ideas from those sessions. When asked follow-up questions as to what activities she brings back Mrs. Miller stated:

“there are a number of coaching strategies that are discussed which are helpful and they go over different instructional strategies, some literacy focused or technology, that really gives me ideas about doing those things here.”

Mrs. Miller also admits that she was never formally trained as an instructional coach, but PIIC has helped immensely and a coaching induction program would be a good idea.

The theme of *self-learning* began to emerge during the coding process. Mrs. Miller stated, “*you have to teach yourself then turn around and teach staff*” when she was discussing how the coaching process has increased her own capacity. She especially addressed self-learning when discussing technology advances, although being device driven helps with where to start learning. Mrs. Miller explained:

“For us it was also device specific, we had this iPad initiative where they got iPads in the hands of every teacher. Then it was a matter of ok now what? So for me it turned into what tools can I find or what can we use that’s going to help enhance our classrooms and our instruction with the iPad.”

In addition, an example was made about what happens when a teacher approaches about a new strategy or technology, Mrs. Miller stated:

“If a teacher tells me they want to do something but they aren’t quite sure how to do it, well I might not know how to do that either, but I need to find out, so I teach myself then I teach them.”

Mrs. Miller also stated that she reads a lot and is always searching for new ideas to present to teachers, which she feels results in her own learning. When reflecting on her own professional knowledge, practices and beliefs Mrs. Miller stated a very interested comment that will be revisited with the other sites as well. She stated:

“I say all the time, if and when I go back to the classroom, my teaching style will be completely different because of instructional coaching.”

She also stated that the experience of being an instructional coach has motivated her to “*become better*” and has opened her eyes to continual improvement. This leads to an interesting contemplation in regard to professional growth and the coaching process, which improves and

enhances their capabilities more, the instructional coach or the teachers? Also, if one person is getting more out of the coaching process than the other, who should that person be?

Table 6 listed below gives a visual representation of the coding process for research question #3. Mrs. Miller appears to be a very motivated individual who is striving to bring new ideas to her school. She finds the PIIC meetings beneficial and is willing to admit that the process has made her a better teacher if she were to go back to the classroom.

Table 6: RQ3 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Miller

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding – Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
5 – 7	RQ3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice, and beliefs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIIC workshops • PIIC meetings • Self-motivated • Self-teaching • PLN • Reflective • On own • Exploratory • Mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-learning • Leadership • Change • PIIC

4.2.2 Participant #2 – Mrs. Casey

Morris High School is located within a large, affluent school district in the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Mrs. Casey has been at Morris High for 3 years and was previously an instructional school at a large rural school district before being furloughed after 3 years. Mrs. Casey then worked at a higher education institute as a technology coach working with faculty on technology integration

in their classrooms. She then was hired at Morris High School to work as an instructional coach at their secondary schools. Her primary responsibility is the upper high school faculty, grades 11 and 12.

Morris High School has a population of just over 2,500 students. According to the latest public data from the School Performance Profile site (www.paschoolperformance.org) 84% of the students are White, 12% are Asian, African American students make up 2% of the student population, and the remaining 2% are American Indian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Multi-Racial. The school has a very low economically disadvantage population of 6% and 6.4% of the student population are identified as special education students. Morris High School also achieves at a very high level on state assessments, as do the other schools in the district.

Morris High School has a beautiful campus with updated buildings and athletic facilities and different wings of the building and campus designated for the arts as well. The hallways are clean and well maintained and the classrooms appear to have all necessary technology requirements and furnishings.

Mrs. Casey has her own designated office connected to the media center. It is a room that is more deep than wide. One-half of the office is comprised of Mrs. Casey's desk and a conference table and chairs a number of bulletin boards. The other half of the office resembles something like a lounge. There is a large couch with two large cushioned chairs. There is also a large bookshelf against the wall filled three-quarters of the way with books. A medium-sized table is next to the bookshelf and a number of virtual reality headsets are on the table. Mrs. Casey tells me that the virtual reality headsets are her next project as far as figuring how teachers can use them in their classroom.

Mrs. Casey reports that the school district is in year 3 of a coaching initiative that has gone from 3 instructional coaches to now 8. She is not sure if the school district plans to add anymore coaches but she describes the coaching program at Morris School District as, “*amazing.*” Mrs. Casey also states:

“I guess I will say, I believe we are so blessed to have as many coaches as we do and the program that we do here.”

Mrs. Casey is very energetic, enthusiastic and prepared as she has a notebook with comments already written down about her position.

The following section will outline the overall emerging themes that surfaced during the semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis of Morris High School. The emerging themes will be reported by research question. Following each research question will be a visual breakdown of the First and Second Cycle coding process as well.

4.2.2.1 Emerging themes – Mrs. Casey

RQ1: *How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?*

Mrs. Casey summarizes her responsibilities by stating, “*I work in small groups, 1-on-1, with teachers to co-teach, lesson build, lesson plan and train.*” Mrs. Casey believes she is a, “*catalyst for change*” and when asked to elaborate Mrs. Casey said:

“I really think it is change and support. Change in mindset for teachers is what I’m after. Change in instructional practice then because of that changed mindset.”

The teachers at Morris High School also view her role as that change agent according to Mrs. Casey. She believes the teachers perceive her role that way because of emails that she receives and conversations she has with teachers.

Mrs. Casey credits that perception to the clear expectations of her role as an instructional coach at Morris High School. She believes that the involvement of the principals and upper administration has helped with those expectations as well. In addition, she believes that the collective work that the instructional coaches have done over the past three school years helps build credibility with the staff.

This school year Wilson High School had a 1-to-1 laptop initiative. Mrs. Casey said:

“Quite a bit of my work this year has centered around instructional strategies involving the laptops. I think that without the sessions I had with teachers many of them wouldn’t have really known how to best utilize them. Last week we really focused on a program called Quizlet Live which is what you saw us talking about.”

The interaction she is referring to is involved a teacher that Mrs. Casey described as, *“one of our most senior teachers.”* In that session they discussed the creation of two Quizlet Live sessions the teacher was developing for her classes. The teacher also brought up a speed dating activity that Mrs. Casey and the principal facilitated a week prior during an in-service day. That activity allowed the teacher to hear a number of ideas, two of which she was asking Mrs. Casey for more information about.

When asked about the speed dating activity Mrs. Casey shared her experience about the activity and the in-service day:

“Well I went to our principal with what I envisioned the day to be and he was really excited about and was like go for it. We have a really good working relationship. So the day started with Ignite Talks because I am really trying to build this sense of sharing...then we did a speed dating activity where every 5 minutes they switched to a new date and they had to share an activity they did this year in their classroom with the laptops that was really well liked by their students.”

After the speed dating session, the teachers were given active work time, which entailed reflecting on what was shared, then posting comments on a Google Plus Community that Mrs. Casey had created. She cited the responses on the Google Plus page as evidence that teachers are learning and enhancing their practice from the activities that she leads.

Mrs. Casey also believes that she is able to enhance teacher practice by individualizing learning by teachers and by departments. Mrs. Casey stated, *“Each teacher is different...So I do it by teacher vs. content.”* When asked to elaborate she told a story about a teacher she thought would use the virtual reality headsets. She approached the teacher; they discussed what the upcoming content was in the teacher’s class and Mrs. Casey helped identify virtual reality resources that she thought the teacher could use to enhance the learning in the classroom. During the exchange Mrs. Casey also said:

“Or if I come across something that meets a certain department’s need as well then in that case I will go into their department meeting and show them...and just give them kind of a teaser, if they want to learn more they reach out to me or I follow-up with who I think would really use it.”

Toward the end of our conversation Mrs. Casey added how modeling for teachers has allowed her practice to be impactful on teacher practice:

“I think part of the instructional coaching process as well, that I don’t want to say gets looked over a lot, but we do a lot of is modeling. Which is tremendous for teachers.”

Morris High School provides time for teachers by providing a substitute, which allows teachers to work with Mrs. Casey while she leads them through different activities as if they were the students. This technique is a bit different compared to other modeling practices where the instructional coach will go into a teacher’s class and model a lesson with the teacher’s

students. Mrs. Casey believes this approach allows the teachers to ask questions during the modeling and gain a better understanding of the practice.

Table 7 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ1 for Mrs. Casey's participation. Mrs. Casey believes that instructional coaching is having an impactful change on teacher practice at Morris High School and could give specific examples as to how.

Table 7: RQ1 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Casey

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding – Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
1 – 3e	RQ1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-teach, small group, 1-on-1 • Catalyst for change • Change • Equal • Clear expectations • Sharing • Comments • Individualized • Modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change • Sharing • Motivation • Individualized • Modeling

RQ2: *How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?*

Mrs. Casey believes she has some teachers who are reluctant to work with her but that number is very small. She credits her working relationships as to why teachers are so open to her ideas and willing to work with her. She says that she receives numerous emails from her colleagues that lead her to believe they value her work. Mrs. Casey said that she can:

“...build meaningful relationships buy popping into their [teachers] classrooms and even though there are 100 teachers at the school, I know each and every one of them and I can pluck resources, specific resources that would be at their level, lessons that would be at their level to do and aligned with their curriculum. That’s how well I know them. But, I think that’s why they feel that connectedness toward me and that trust.”

Mrs. Casey even uses the example that the superintendent, who she described as a supporter of coaching, advised the instructional coaches to “*make friends*” with the teachers and support them in any way even if it is as simple as plugging in a projector.

To elaborate on an example previously discussed, the Ignite Talks, Mrs. Casey said she did an Ignite Talk for the staff on the last in-service day. She said she approached three teachers that she felt would be good at giving a five-minute motivational speech to the staff. I thought the following comment was worthy to note, “*So I got three teachers and they all said the same thing. Because it was me they would do it.*” That statement leads me to believe that Mrs. Casey has the respect of at least some of the staff members.

Mrs. Casey shared with me that she thinks that relationships are essential but also you must know your craft and be respected:

“I think number one you have to have those relationships with them [teachers], and I hate to use this term, but I’m going to use it you have to have street cred. Like in this building they really have to respect you, who you are, and believe that you really do know your stuff because if they don’t they aren’t going to give you a second thought. It is terrible but it’s true, and once you have those, you have gotten them to buy-in but now you have to hook them.”

I asked Mrs. Casey about the “hooking them” statement and she said:

“So what I do is keep it simple. No matter who the teacher is, if the tool or strategy is not simple, um if it is not something I am super sold on because it’s complex, I’m not going to give it to them.”

Mrs. Casey also brought to the surface how she believes teachers at Morris High School believe she is one of them. She believes that reason teachers are not that reluctant to work with her is that she is a certified teacher; she thinks she is able to *“talk their language”* and that she, *“understands their needs and what the classroom looks like and what an honors class is like vs. and applied science class is like or an AP course is like and the expectations that comes with each.”*

Teacher buy-in is not at 100% at Morris High School. Mrs. Casey believes that over 95% of teachers have bought-in to coaching and she said the other 5% she just *“let’s go.”* She said she keeps trying and is always acknowledging them and is professional, but she believes she cannot spend too much time trying to break through to people who may not share the same change mindset as her and other teachers open to working with her.

Table 8 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ2 for Mrs. Casey’s participation. Mrs. Casey believes that she does have teacher buy-in from the vast majority of the teaching staff. She has built that trust and respect over time through building relationships and a connection with the staff members.

Table 8: RQ2 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Casey

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
4a – 4d	RQ2: How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback • Expectations • Consistent • Relationships • Knowing each teacher • Connectedness • Trust • Reluctant ones • Knowledge • Hook them • One of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Knowledge • Ability • Relevance

RQ3: *How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?*

Mrs. Casey is an enthusiastic individual who leaves an impression that she really enjoys working as an instructional coach and she loves learning and connecting with people. During her interview, Mrs. Casey explains that she can learn from her colleagues, who she says are the other instructional coaches in the district and teachers, as well as through learning opportunities presented to her from PIIC meetings and other conferences. Mrs. Casey also mentioned attributes of self-learning and being self-motivated by finding new learning opportunities for herself and dedicating time to researching and investigating new ideas and resources to share with teachers

Mrs. Casey leads the researcher to believe that the coaching process for her is a reciprocal process, which is one of Knight's (2007) partnership principles. She stated in her interview:

“I learn something new from them [teachers] every day. As much as they, as much as I show them, they show me just as much and I tell them. I always tell them.”

Mrs. Casey gives an example of a teacher she worked with to incorporate virtual reality in the classroom. Mrs. Casey was able to find some resources that allowed the students to view 360-degree pictures of the country they were studying. She stated the teacher was able to come up with a variety of writing assignments and prompts that she did not think of, and now she is able to suggest the strategies as she works with another teacher on incorporating virtual reality into daily lessons.

Mrs. Casey said that she was never formally trained when hired as an instructional coach. She did receive some training through the Classrooms for the Future grant but she said it was not as meaningful and in-depth as it possibly could have been. She classified PIIC as an, “*extremely important resource*” for her and the other coaches in the district. Mrs. Casey says that not every coach in the district attends the monthly PIIC meetings held at the IU. However, the instructional coaches at Morris School District conduct their own regularly scheduled meetings to discuss information from PIIC meetings, and other topics they find professionally relevant such as additional conferences they attended or coaching interactions they have had.

Mrs. Casey also demonstrates being a self-motivated learner and she told me about applying to present at conferences just so she can attend and learn new information. She also stated she is an active member of Twitter, and believes it is a great resource to learn new ideas and to share her own successes and thoughts. Mrs. Casey summarized her ongoing professional learning opportunities as, “*These are all great and they allow me to connect with others, other like-minded change agents.*”

Mrs. Casey also stated that her time as an instructional coach has changed her perception of teaching and learning. Mrs. Casey stated:

“I am always trying to think of something new and every time I am rooted in something. You have an experience and you rethink things. Like even teaching practices.”

This reflection piece of her practice is something that Mrs. Casey said she has been trying to dedicate more time to, and is cognizant of the *“the importance of reflection.”* Mrs. Casey credits the changes in how she perceives teaching and learning to being *“engrossed in the learning community”*

Table 9 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ3 for Mrs. Casey’s participation. Mrs. Casey believes that the coaching process has enhanced her practice and many professional learning opportunities arise out her desire to learn something new, or her ability to tinker with new ideas and strategies, and implement them with purposefully selected teachers.

Table 9: RQ3 - Coding Analysis Mrs. Casey

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
5 – 7	RQ3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIIC meetings • Purposefully selected • Network • Learn from teachers • Twitter • Engrossed • Reflection • Applying to present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocal • Network • Self-learner • Self-motivated

4.2.3 Participant #3 – Ms. Finley

Ms. Finley is currently in her 10th year in education. She considers her path to her current position as a bit unorthodox as she has been in challenging districts with high poverty her entire career. Her first teaching job was in rural Alabama with 100% of her students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. She then relocated and took a job at a large urban school district in New York, which again, was a challenging school district with high poverty rates and high population of minority students. After six years in New York she wanted to be closer to family and applied for an instructional coaching position at Village High School. She ultimately was offered, and accepted, an instructional coaching position and is in her 4th year at Village High School.

Village School District could be classified as a supporter of coaching as they have 14 full-time coaches. There are 9 instructional coaches spread throughout the district, 4 at the high school. The other 5 coaches are technology coaches that work with teachers on integrating technology in the classroom. The instructional coaches are primarily, according to Ms. Finley, responsible for literacy instruction and strategies in the classroom.

Ms. Finley considers Village School District a challenging district due in large part to financial troubles she contributes to the number of students in the district who attend charter schools. The student population is 69% minority students and 56% of the total population of students live in poverty (www.paschoolperformance.org). Ms. Finley also states that there is high population of students who qualify for special education services (19%) and believes that instructional coaching is a great resource and support system for teachers in the district.

Despite the demographic or student achievement data that paints a picture of a struggling school district, Village High School appears to be a safe building with facilities that are dated but clean and functional. Ms. Finley's office sits in a large media center just inside a newly

renovated library. There are three large computer labs connected to the media center with large windows both to the outside yard and to the media center.

The following section will outline the overall emerging themes that surfaced during the semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis of Valley High School and Ms. Finley. The emerging themes will be reported by research question. Following each research question will be a visual breakdown of the First and Second Cycle coding process.

4.2.3.1 Emerging themes – Ms. Finley

RQ1: *How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?*

Ms. Finley states that her primary responsibility is working with teachers one-on-one, occasionally in small group settings, on implementing literacy strategies in their classrooms. When hired she was told that literacy across content areas should be her focus and she has not strayed from that since being hired. She has been working with teachers on different adolescent literacy initiatives such as text dependent analysis, close reading, Collins Writing strategies, and Penn Literacy Network strategies. She stated that she has made some great strides in the Technology Education and Science Departments. She also coaches a fall sport and started athletic journaling with her team. Ms. Finley summarized athletic journaling as reflective writing where student-athletes free-write regarding a variety of topics related to their sport. In addition, they are encouraged to write about frustrations they are feeling during the season as well as in the classroom. She has introduced the concept to athletic coaches in the fall, winter, and spring sports as well and said she was surprised by their willingness and interest in trying the strategy with their teams.

Ms. Finley says that her greatest impact is change. She admits that most teachers she works with:

“...want to change their practice and want to be more reflective. People that want to, and are willing to try something new.”

When asked to elaborate she stated:

“The teachers that I work with, they are not burned out. They are willing to be self-reflective and find their own gaps and find something they want to do in the classroom that can lead to change.”

Ms. Finley appears to pride herself on her ability to lead teachers to becoming more reflective and practices what she called, *“reflective listening.”* She says that reflective listening is listening to understand a teacher, and not listening to respond to the teacher. She believes that this practice allows the teacher to come to a conclusion on which strategy they want to implement in the classroom. This practice appears to mirror two of Knight’s (2007) principles, choice and voice.

Ms. Finley works with teachers throughout the school day, but also conducts a monthly professional development session after school. She states these sessions allow for teachers to hear new ideas and also share out what they are trying in their classroom. She believes that these sessions allow for ideas to be promoted and ultimately spread, but also allows for *“like-minded people to get together for a discussion.”*

Ms. Finley was a different experience than the two previous participants. She was the only participant to specifically address that her impact has been on student outcomes, in addition to teacher outcomes. Other participants put the focus on changing teacher practices. In the classroom Ms. Finley said that her ultimate goal is:

“...to see the students become efficient readers and writers who can function as adult readers and writers.”

Ms. Finley addressed this later in the interview when she was discussing the impact she had on students through the athletic journaling:

“I want to start to get them [students] in that habit of reflective writing and writing about what you are feeling and our frustrations rather than acting out physically about our frustrations and our feelings. I feel like I will have made a change when that happens across sports.”

This was an interesting statement and during a follow-up question, Ms. Finley did state that the district has been having trouble with student violence during the school day.

Ms. Finley believes that instructional coaching has had a tremendous impact at Village High School even though many from outside the school may not notice due to a reputation of being a difficult school. She believes she has made an impact on teacher practice, which has then had an impact on student performance. She used the following example as her logic for believing that instructional coaching has made a positive impact at Village High School:

“I think that if I were to leave, or instructional coaching were to go away next year, the Astronomy teacher will still be doing Collins Writing and the Ecology teacher will still be doing the stamp method. The documentation folder for Bots IQ would still be significantly better than when it was 3 years ago and the Spanish teachers will still be using their models and the Photography teachers will still be using 10% Summaries I worked with them on. I think those things are systemic. Those practices have been changed.”

Table 10 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ1 for Ms. Finley. Ms. Finley believes that she has had an impact on teacher practice as well as student outcomes. She feels that instructional coaching has led to teacher change and literacy strategies have been her avenue to invoke that change.

Table 10: RQ1 - Coding Analysis Ms. Finley

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding Pattern Coding
1 – 3e	RQ1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy practices • Athletic teams • Value • Change • Reflective • Listening • Specific feedback • Teacher practices • Impact on students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Focus • Change • Reflective • Enhancement • Student Outcomes

RQ2: *How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?*

Ms. Finley believes that teacher buy-in has not really been an issue, but admits that a number of teachers are reluctant to work with her for various reasons. She believes that forcing teachers to work with her, like any other forced professional development session, is a waste of time. Ms. Finley states:

“Some teachers definitely see the value in it [instructional coaching] and utilize the coaches fully. Others, I think, still have the perception that what they are doing is fine and that we can use our resources better elsewhere. I just work with the willing and I try to change the perception that instructional coaching is a deficit model.”

Deficit model is an interesting way to describe how someone perceives instructional coaching. The thought being that a teacher has specific weaknesses (deficit) that they need to address and the instructional coach is there to address those weaknesses. Ms. Finley says that

her job has been to communicate to the staff that she is not there to work with people who need help; she is there to work with people who want help. She said the after school workshops help with the obstacle of changing perceptions but she believes that there will always be a crowd that is resistant to working with her.

Ms. Finley said that over the years she noticed how buy-in from key teachers helped other teachers get involved in the coaching process. She referred to these key teachers as “*heavy hitters*.” Ms. Finley said these individuals are well respected by other staff members, mostly within their departments. Once she was able to have success with these teachers, and they bought in, then she was able to move three more teachers based on her success with the influential teachers.

Ms. Finley credits her ability to connect with teachers due to a number of self-described professional traits. She said she follows-through on what she says she is going to do. She is always professional with the teachers and responds to teacher’s emails, stops and has informal discussions with them in the hallways and never breaches the confidentiality or trust of the participating teachers. Ms. Finley refers to her work with teachers as “*similar to the confessional at church. I don’t tell people what we do and I don’t tell you what other people do.*” I witnessed her interaction with a science teacher as they discussed two different writing activities that they were going to try in the classroom. Ms. Finley was very respectful, and at times reserved when listening to the ideas of the teacher. Ms. Finley stated that this science teacher was a hard sell at first but now she works with this person a few times each year on different projects. The teacher appeared to be genuinely interested in different writing activities more as a reflective and brainstorming process.

When discussing the observed coaching session Ms. Finley discussed co-teaching and modeling as important strategies to achieving teacher buy-in. She said that the teacher I had observed was almost challenging her to come in and model different strategies when they first started working together. She said once the teacher found out she was willing and the strategies were effective that the teacher was more open to working together. Ms. Finley said she always offers to model lessons, but prefers if the teacher co-teaches with her. Ms. Finley said that she ultimately wants to get to a practice of observing a lesson and providing feedback but she does not think the teachers are quite there yet. She said, “*Modeling and co-teaching are necessary in order to get buy-in.*”

Ms. Finley’s desire to move from modeling and co-teaching to observation is that she believes she will have greater impact looking for specific data such as how often the teacher is calling on female students for answers, and how many students were on task, and how students responded after being redirected in a certain way. Ms. Finley says that at this point she only provides feedback on what they are specifically working on. She said she would not address issues like classroom management unless the teacher brings up seeking feedback in this area.

Table 11 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ2 for Ms. Finley. Ms. Finley reports there are teachers still reluctant to work with her but she is working hard to change the perception of instructional coaching. She believes that modeling and co-teaching have been effective strategies, as well as communication, follow-through and building relationships.

Table 11: RQ2 - Coding Analysis Ms. Finley

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
4a – 4d	RQ2: How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling • Co-teaching • Quality • Influential teachers • Deficit Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling • Perception • Interpersonal Skills • Trust

RQ3: *How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?*

Ms. Finley appears to be very passionate about her job responsibilities and the role of instructional coaching in schools. She believes that instructional coaching has made her a better teacher and that she looks back on her teaching practices five years ago and thinks,

“Wow, that was terrible. That is not the way to do it anymore. What I did can be tweaked, but I can’t get it out and use it again and I taught history. Not very often does history change. The way I delivered it, the way I had my students do it is not the way to do it today. I think that’s true for everybody and I think that instructional coaching is all about changing practice. Not that what you are doing is wrong, but because somebody can always change, you can always improve. Instructional coaching has made me change and made me improve.”

Ms. Finley believes that if a teacher is still employing the same practices they have always used then they are disserving students. The idea of change is big theme for Ms. Finley when she discusses the instructional coaching process. Ms. Finley believes that everybody needs

to continually change and grow to adapt to the needs of the students of the time, as well as to the latest research and practices that are effective.

Ms. Finley speaks very highly of PIIC and the benefit of the monthly meetings held at the IU. Ms. Finley was not formally trained in the coaching process, although she believes the district would benefit from such a process. Ms. Finley believes that PIIC allows for other instructional coaches to share different initiatives and practices that are working, she is hesitant to call them “best practices” and believes that the mentor at the IU is a large reason the monthly PIIC meetings are so informative and useful.

Ms. Finley appears to be a self-motivated learner as well. She is a member of the International Literacy Association and reads their journals regularly looking for ideas. Ms. Finley credits the International Literacy Association for bringing the idea of athletic journaling to her. Ms. Finley also says that she reads several publications to, not only look for ideas, but to share with staff members as well. She said the hope is for the teachers to be inspired by the article and to make it their own and then she assists them with implementation if appropriate.

Table 12 below lists the First and Second Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were developed while analyzing RQ3 for Ms. Finley. Ms. Finley is an energetic and passionate educator who appears to approach her job with a distinct level of professionalism. She is an advocate for PIIC and spends a great deal of time searching for new ideas and expanding her own knowledge of instructional coaching and teaching and learning as well.

Table 12: RQ3 - Coding Analysis Ms. Finley

Interview Questions	Research Question	1 st Cycle Coding – Structural Coding	2 nd Cycle Coding – Pattern Coding
5 – 7	RQ3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PIIC• Self-motivated• Self-learner• Reflective• Lack of Induction• Exploring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PIIC• Self-learner• Change• Reflective

4.3 EMERGING THEMES ACROSS SITES

The following section explores the themes that materialized from across the three sites in relation to each of the three research questions. Although each participant had their own unique experiences and perspectives, commonalities did emerge during analysis of the data when compared across all three sites. The emerging themes are discussed by each research question below. In addition, the Conceptual Framework, Knight's (2007) Partnership Principles, is reviewed to determine the alignment of the principles for each research question. Lastly, this section begins with a brief discussion on the emergence of the varied content-focused approaches that each instructional coach utilized within their specific districts.

4.3.1 Emergence of content-focused approaches

Discussed in a previous section, is the importance of an instructional coach having an understanding and knowledge of pedagogical practices, as well as knowledge and understanding of the specific content being taught in the classroom. Instructional coaching that incorporates a content-focused coaching approach, that supports and allows for the development of students, teachers, coaches and school leaders by engaging in practices that increase student learning and build teacher capacity with the support of tools, routines and structures has shown to be an ideal model that leads to lasting impact and change (Artz, Bickel, & McCarthy, 2010; Bickel et al., 2014). All three participants were able to demonstrate specific content that they aim to work with teachers on; Mrs. Casey's objective was technology integration in the classroom, Ms. Finley was literacy-based practices, and Mrs. Miller was broader compared to the other two participants, centering her work around literacy strategies as well as technology integration in the classroom.

One particular point of interest that emerged from the observations and interviews was the lack of any specific structure, or framework, for which the participants are working in when they engage with teachers. All three participants had their own routine and method for how they were working with individual, or groups of teachers. Confirmed after follow-up discussions was that the methods being utilized by the instructional coach were organically created by the instructional coach while the coaching process was occurring with teachers. All three participants reported during the follow-up process that they continue to modify and adapt their coaching methods, structures and approaches. They were not trained or utilize any one particular method or framework, such as the Content-Focused Coaching process from the Institute for Learning out of the University of Pittsburgh for example, or the Partnership Approach, to guide

their coaching structure in how they plan, facilitate and reflect with teachers during the coaching process. This lack of a research-based method or framework is a concern. Each participant acknowledged that having a framework or structure would be extremely helpful in that it would assist in guiding them with their work. The areas that the participants identified were how to provide meaningful feedback to teachers, how to approach teachers with ideas, how to plan, when to co-teach and model, how to identify specific course content, and assisting with proper student questioning prompts.

4.3.2 RQ1: Perceived impact

The findings from this study indicate that instructional coaches believe they are having an impact at their respective schools. All three participants stated that they are enhancing teacher practice, although each participant has their own context in which they are doing that. Technology appears to be a focus for Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Casey and it is interesting how they do not consider technology integration as a stand-alone initiative. Ms. Finley, on the other hand, works in a district that has committed to having coaches solely responsible for technology integration and a whole other set of coaches working on instructional strategies in the classroom, her focus being literacy. The enhancement of teacher practice aligns with the literature in terms of how these three instructional coaches implement their job responsibility. All three instructional coaches appear to initiate instructional coaching in an embedded, sustained, authentic, active and individualized manner which aligns with the literature of key responsibilities of instructional coaches (Andree et al., 2009; Boatright et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2007, 2009; Neufled & Roper, 2003).

It was particularly interesting to see how each instructional coach utilizes learning time with their teachers. Regardless if it was during school, after school, or during a designated teacher in-service or workday the three participating instructional coaches appear to be utilizing the time appropriately and effectively. Mrs. Casey was even utilizing a program that allows for teachers to post comments and collaborate outside their normal workday at any time during the day or night. The interactions suggest that teachers are able to participate in active learning and discussions, as well as work with the instructional coach on topics that are relevant and connected to their classroom. These types of interactions align with the literature in terms of providing learning activities that are effective and connected to teacher practice (Boatright et al., 2010; Knight, 2007; Shidler, 2009; Teemant et al., 2011).

The literature points to instructional coaching as a potential change strategy for teachers (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; King et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). All three instructional coaches discussed change multiple times in their discussions. The change they were referring to was teacher change, and how they believe they have helped teachers change their practice, but also their mindset as educators. In addition, instructional coaching was referred to as a way to positively change the school and/or district on a grander scale.

Leadership was a reoccurring theme that emerged during coding of the transcripts. Leadership emerged in two different impactful areas. Each instructional coach demonstrated leadership qualities with how they find, plan and present professional development options for their staff. They also exhibit characteristics of leadership in the way that they approach their profession and conduct themselves when they are working with their colleagues. In addition, it was surprising how often the importance of school leadership and support came up during the

interviews. An examination of Mrs. Miller's situation reveals several reasons why instructional coaching does not appear to have as strong of an impact as it does at the other two school districts: a high turnover of leadership, a lack of vision for staff on professional development and instruction, and a lack of involvement by school leaders.

Mrs. Casey appears to have full support of her administration. Administrators participate in professional development with teachers, help identify professional development topics and also appear to have a vision for instruction and teacher learning. There was a significant difference in the way the researcher perceived instructional coaching at the two different sites. Evidence of strong school leadership is an important attribute of successful coaching implementation (Feldman et al., 2004; Guskey, 2009; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2008).

The conceptual framework, Knight's Partnership Principles (2007) was expected to surface during the research process. The researcher hypothesized that the Partnership Principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis and reciprocity would be evident during the data collection and data analysis phases. The Partnership Principles that did materialize were equality, choice, voice, and praxis. Based upon the observations and interviews, it was apparent that the instructional coaches perceived they were treating each teacher interaction in a co-equal manner. The teachers all appeared to have a choice in regards to their attendance and if they wanted to implement a particular strategy. Mrs. Miller even brought up the internal debate she had about what impact instructional coaching would have if administration forced teachers to attend or implement particular strategies. The researcher also observed the teachers expressing their opinions and beliefs about how to best implement certain strategies and content, an indicator of autonomy. Mrs. Casey was particularly effective in allowing the teacher she was with express her opinion about the speed dating activity and the Quizlet live quizzes she was

developing. Lastly, each instructional coach and teacher demonstrated praxis, by sharing and implementing new ideas and strategies with teachers and with students in the classrooms.

Table 13 below is a visual representation of the emerging themes and expected and actual conceptual framework alignment.

Table 13: RQ1 - Analysis Breakdown

RQ1: How do instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice?	Emergent Themes	Expected Conceptual Framework Alignment	Actual Alignment of Conceptual Framework
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Practice • Utilization of Time • Modeling • Change • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Dialogue • Reflection • Praxis • Reciprocity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Praxis

4.3.3 RQ2: Teacher buy-in

Teacher buy-in is critical to the success of many school initiatives and instructional coaching is not any different (Boatright et al., 2010). A key emerging theme that each participant discussed was building trusting relationships with teachers. Each participant had their own unique method of establishing trust and early success helped increase the momentum of teacher buy-in. Trust is identified in the literature as a key component to successful implementation of instructional coaching (Feger et al., 2004; Feldman et al., 2004; Knight, 2004; Lockwood et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). All three participants believed that they had

built trusting relationships with the teachers they were working with, but all admitted that there was a faction of teachers that remained disconnected and resistant.

The concept of trust appeared to be intertwined with another emerging theme, the interpersonal skills of the instructional coach. For this study I defined interpersonal skills as the instructional coaches' comprehensive knowledge about teaching and learning, their ability to communicate and connect with peers, and their self-motivation to improve and create learning opportunities for the teaching staff. The literature strongly supports the notion that interpersonal skills are vital to instructional coach success (Crilley et al., 1997; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2004, 2008; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufled & Roper; Saphier & West, 2009). All three participants were authentic in their interactions with the teaching staff and knowledgeable about current instructional initiatives, as well as what they had previously worked on with staff. Mrs. Miller's example comparing a former coach with a current coach who exhibits these types of skills is a good representation of the importance of interpersonal skills.

A strategy or practice that all three participants discussed as helping building teacher buy-in was modeling. The practice of modeling is identified as an essential part of the coaching process (Knight, 2007; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Shidler, 2009; Teemant et al., 2011). Mrs. Miller and Ms. Finley appear to follow a more traditional path to modeling, going into the teacher's classroom, or in Mrs. Miller's case having the class come to her room, and modeling the lesson or strategy. The teachers watch and will co-teach during the lesson. Ms. Finley uses modeling differently. She described her modeling as teaching the lesson, content, or strategy for the teacher without any students. The teacher serves as the student during the modeling interaction. In both scenarios, the data appears to show modeling as a two-fold

strategy. One, utilizing modeling as an effective strategy for gaining teacher understanding, and two, using modeling as a method to gain teacher buy-in.

Lastly, teacher perception surfaced as an emerging theme for teacher buy-in. All three participants had different experiences in regard to how instructional coaching is communicated and perceived by the teaching staff. The term Ms. Finley used to describe the misconception was rather interesting, “*Deficit Model*.” This term describes perfectly how teachers may perceive instructional coaching to address the issues that they have weaknesses in. All three participants clarified that they are not there to work with poor teachers, but they are there to help expand on strategies or initiatives that have been identified in some manner. The data suggests that teachers who understand that perception, that instructional coaching is not a “*Deficit Model*,” are the teachers who are actively participating. The teachers who have that misperception are identified as the teachers who are reluctant to connect with the instructional coach.

The way that teachers perceive, or understand, instructional coaching appears throughout the literature as a barrier to implementation (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Boatright et al., 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Heineki, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2008). However, it was interesting to conclude that one aspect of the literature was not apparent across these three cases. All three instructional coaches did not appear to be perceived, based on the observations and semi-structured interviews, as a person above the teachers. The data suggests a collegial and co-equal relationship with the teachers, and there was no mention of teachers being reluctant due to being evaluated or directed what to do by the instructional coaches. This makes teacher buy-in more attainable (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Gibson, 2005; Saphier & West, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Van Hieuweburgh, 2012).

In summary, all three instructional coaches have their own methods of reaching out to teachers and gaining their trust and ultimate buy-in for instructional coaching. The coaches' methods are uniquely geared toward contextual issues related to the culture of each school. Building trust with teachers, having a comprehensive skill set, modeling instruction and practices, and positive teacher perceptions were key themes found in these three cases.

Table 14 below identifies emerging themes for research question two, as well as the aligned Partnership Principles that materialized. All hypothesized principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue and praxis, were evident. The data demonstrated instructional practices that were equitable in terms of the instructional coach and teacher relationship not being a top-down, hierarchal relationship. All three participants referenced being equal colleagues in the coaching process. The teachers were able to express a choice and voice during interactions, which leads the researcher to believe a level of trust was established. Authentic and open dialogue centering on instructional practices, teaching, and learning were apparent through analysis of the interviews and observations and all participants actively described a particular level of praxis during the coaching process.

Table 14: RQ2 -Analysis Breakdown

RQ2: How is teacher buy-in of the coaching process achieved by instructional coaches?	Emergent Themes	Expected Conceptual Framework Alignment	Actual Alignment of Conceptual Framework
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Interpersonal Skills • Modeling • Perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Dialogue • Praxis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Choice • Voice • Dialogue • Praxis

4.3.4 RQ3: Professional knowledge, practice and beliefs

The most significant theme for this research question was the impact that the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) has had on the practices of each instructional coach. All participants found great value in the monthly PIIC meetings and reported that they attend them regularly. Based on the responses of all three instructional coaches, the content is beneficial as well as the networking and sharing of ideas and strategies. PIIC is viewed as a valuable resource, and support system, and seems to have evolved from a heavy literacy focus to a more extensive inclusion of technology integration and assessment.

The importance of “self” surfaced throughout each experience with the participating instructional coach. All three participants demonstrated self-motivation, self-learning and self-improvement. When discussing their own professional learning, as well as their interactions with teachers, each coach explained how they have to learn and teach themselves before they are able to work with the teacher. In addition, each coach demonstrated self-motivation to continue to learn new content and strategies on their own. The most interesting response came from Mrs. Casey who said that Twitter is a forum that she utilizes to find new ideas she can share with teachers.

For this particular case study the term “Self-Improvement” refers to the self-perceived impact that serving as an instructional coach has had on each participant. Meaning, each instructional coach made a reference to how instructional coaching has made them better teachers. This raises a fascinating question. Who experienced the most significant change during the coaching process, teacher or the instructional coach? This reciprocal process, the instructional coach learning just as the teacher is learning, is an identified principle in Knight’s (2007) Partnership Principles.

Change was a continuous theme that emerged throughout each interaction and was identified when analyzing each research question. In this instance, change was identified as an emerging theme because each instructional coach discussed how their view of teaching and learning, both for professionals and students, has changed since becoming an instructional coach. In addition, through their efforts seeking teacher improvement and change they experienced personal and professional change as well. Change is identified in the literature as an indicator of effective instructional coaching (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Feldman et al., 2004; King et al., 2004; Knight, 2012; Learning Forward, 2016). The data suggests that being a change agent, or as Mrs. Casey stated, “*a catalyst for change*” not only has an impact on teacher practices, but also the practices, beliefs and knowledge of instructional coaches as well.

Table 15 below provides a visual representation of the emerging themes for research question three as well as the aligned Partnership Principles that materialized. The principles of reflection, praxis and reciprocity were evident from the experiences that the instructional coaches shared. The principle of dialogue, which was previously hypothesized as being evident, was found to be absent during the analysis portion of this study. However, choice emerged as an aligned principle. The instructional coaches were able to exercise choice on many different professional learning activities, which was also intertwined with the emerging themes of self-motivation, self-improvement, and self-learner. The instructional coaches demonstrated consistent reflection on practices, which has led to increased learning for the coaches. The coaches, through various professional learning activities, demonstrate ongoing praxis. An overarching theme of this study is the concept of the instructional coaching process as a reciprocal process. The instructional coaches appear to be learning and growing just as much, if not more, than the teachers they are collaborating and working with during the coaching process.

Table 15: RQ3 - Analysis Breakdown

RQ3: How do instructional coaches perceive their own professional knowledge, practice and beliefs?	Emergent Themes	Expected Conceptual Framework Alignment	Actual Alignment of Conceptual Framework
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIIC • Self – Improvement Motivation Learner • Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue • Reflection • Praxis • Reciprocity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice • Reflection • Praxis • Reciprocity

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is divided into six sections that include the discussion of five overarching themes the researcher was able to conclude by conducting this research study. In addition, a coaching model involving both a content-focus and process-focused approached is explored. Recommendations are also made for future study, as well as practicing and future instructional coaches and school leaders. To conclude this dissertation study, final thoughts and conclusions are shared.

5.1 DISCUSSION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEMES

The examination of each research question resulted in themes that materialized during the data analysis phase of this qualitative study. The previous chapter discussed each research question and the findings and themes that emerged individually within the sites as well as those themes that were shared among all three sites. Holistically, the shared experiences of the three participating instructional coaches emerged overarching themes that stand as final conclusions from this study. These themes are significant as they can contribute to future studies or even be researched individually in-depth. The five overarching concluding themes that will be discussed are: (1) Importance of Leadership, (2) Vision and Purpose, (3) Reciprocal Process, (4) Contextual Issues, and (5) the Concept of Self.

Theme 1: Power of Leadership – Throughout this particular study, discussion about and references to school leadership occurred regularly. The importance of school leadership was evident through the analysis of all three-research questions. Each instructional coach expressed, in subtle and direct ways, how school leadership directly impacts their work with teachers, and how school leadership helps achieve teacher buy-in, as well as how it shapes their own professional development topics. School leadership was explored in the review of the literature but from the perspective of coaches building trusting relationships with principals (Blanton & Wood, 2009; Knight, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen- Moran, 2010) as well as principals being able to fully understand the coaching process and help creating a professional learning of staff members (Blanton & Wood, 2009; Feldman et al., 2004; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2012).

Exploring the experiences of the participants really brought to light just how important the concept of school leadership is to instructional coaching. The researcher confesses to making an error in underestimating this key component. The importance of principal support was emphasized during the semi-structured interviews. Superintendent support was also identified as being essential to the success of instructional coaching. One participant expressed general frustration by the lack of participation by the school principal in the professional development sessions, as well as her belief that the teaching staff needs the reassurance from their administration that the content and professional development focus is important. The participant even asked for my opinion on how to approach this delicate situation. In addition, it was apparent from two of the participants how buy-in, support, and a shared vision by the superintendent made instructional coaching so successful in their districts. The same two participants also seemed to have a much higher satisfaction level with their positions, and it was visible in the experiences and anecdotes that they shared with the researcher.

Theme 2: Vision and Purpose - During the research process it became evident that having a vision and purpose for instructional coaching was key to success. Vision and purpose can be intertwined with school leadership, however the instructional coaches also play an important role in setting the objectives and the means for carrying out a shared vision. It was interesting to see how the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coaches, specifically in regards to technology integration, were determined by device and platform decisions. Once the decisions were made the instructional coaches were able to plan and facilitate learning opportunities for teachers on how to integrate technologies into their daily lessons.

Based upon what the researcher observed and heard, one participant is doing outstanding work with regard to their work with teachers. However, there did not appear to be any particular strategic vision or purpose for what was driving her work. The coach was doing a great job coming up with the activities, but they were decided by the coach and not tied to an overall district or school goal or objective. This observation aligns with the work of Learning Forward (2016) that emphasizes professional learning should be connected to school and district level goals of academic and professional development initiatives to be effective. Conversely, the other two participants appeared to have a staff focus or vision that was guiding their activities. They both gave the researcher examples of projects that had unexpectedly developed throughout the school year, so there is a sense of spontaneity or experimentation. The perception of the researcher was one that the instructional coaching had a place in the professional learning culture of the building and that vision and focus for instructional coaching was driving the work they were completing with teachers.

Theme 3: Reciprocal Process – All three participating coaches believe they are all better educators because of their experiences as an instructional coach. Instructional coaching,

as the data suggests, is a reciprocal process where the instructional coach is learning and becoming a more effective educator just as the teacher is experiencing a new learning opportunity. The idea of coaching being a reciprocal process was identified in the conceptual framework used for this study, Knight's Partnership Approach (2007). Of all seven principles, reciprocal was the most evident principle identified by the researcher. An interesting thought, which will be discussed in a later section, is who is benefiting the most from the coaching process and the coaching relationship, the instructional coach or teacher? Regardless, the development of new knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning will continue to occur and instructional coaches may be the means for a district to share such knowledge and understanding.

Theme 4: Contextual Considerations – In this research study the researcher aimed to explore the experiences of instructional coaches who work in differing educational settings. Mrs. Miller works in a rural school district with significant poverty, high turnover in school leadership and deals with an entire different set of challenges than the other two participants. Mrs. Casey works in an affluent, suburban school district that has had sustained leadership and does not have the same financial constraints as the other participants. Ms. Finley works in an urban school district with a large number of minority students and has a set of challenges that are different than the other participants. This sample size allowed for variety and perspective in terms of how instructional coaching is being implemented in these different settings. What emerged from this exploration is that the approach and focus on a wide variety of issues is dependent upon the situation and setting where the instructional coaching is taking place. The researcher believes that all three participants have done a fine job identifying how instructional coaching can work in their situation, and have adjusted their practice to meet the specific needs

of their teachers and student populations. They have also done a fine job identifying what initiatives work best for their situation. Simply stated, context matters.

Theme 5: Emergence of Self – The emergence of self, self-motivation and self-learning, was a prominent take away from this research study. Instructional coaches must possess certain important interpersonal skills. They must also be self-motivated individuals who are continually seeking out new learning opportunities and new strategies to implement with staff. Instructional coaches also experience an element of self-teaching, and self-informing in their roles. Being able to adapt to these new learning opportunities, and successfully understanding oneself is a challenging and complex endeavor to undertake. Below (Figure 2) is a visual representation of the emerging themes by research question, and overarching conclusions of this study.

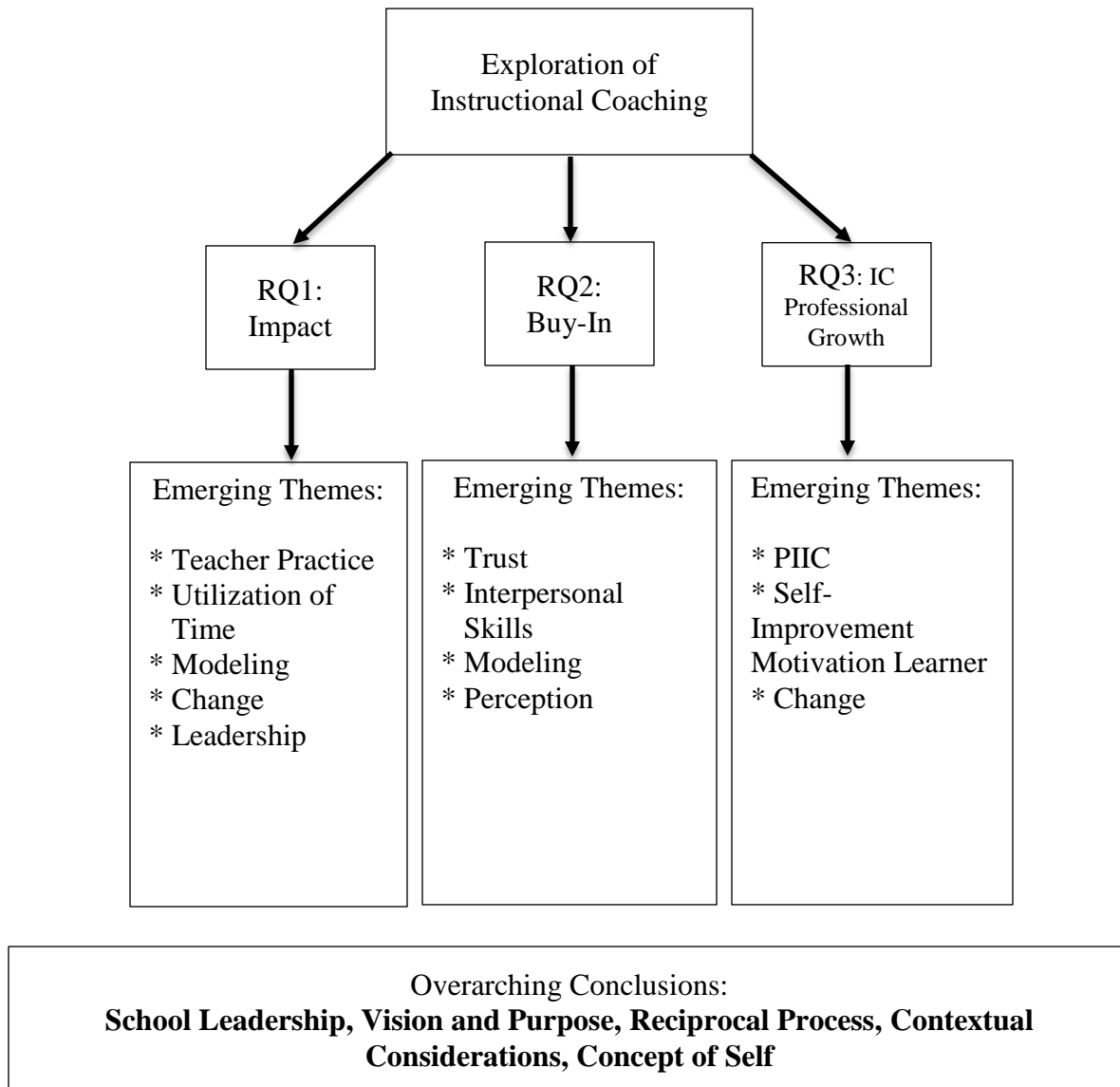


Figure 2: Visual Representation of Themes and Overarching Conclusions

5.2 COMBINATION OF PROCESS AND CONTENT

The conceptual framework that helped guide and form this study heavily emphasizes a process approach geared towards building meaning relationships that promote collaboration and communication between the teacher and instructional coach. A critique of such a process-

focused approach is that effective professional learning, one that results in increased teacher capacity, which then translates into enhanced student achievement should include a more content-focused approach (Beers, Jennings, Roeser, & Skinner, 2012; Desimone, Hochberg, Lee, & Minor, 2016). Content is a very critical component to effective professional development. Strong working relationships in combination with a focus on content-specific pedagogy positively influences student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011).

Desimone & Pak (2017) examined the practice of instructional coaching through the lens of five predictive elements of effective professional development: (1) content focus, (2) active learning, (3) sustained duration, (4) coherence, and (5) collective participation. What was concluded was that instructional coaching is a powerful mechanism for teacher learning because it embodies and reflects all five elements of effective professional development in ways that meaningfully bolster teacher and student learning. This study revealed that all parts of the process must function together. For instructional coaching to be successful, a combination of the coaching process and relationship building and trust are interwoven with a specific content focus that is relevant and meaningful to the teacher and the instructional practice.

The varying dynamics of instructional coaching in different contexts and content areas often present complexities. If an instructional coach is able to build a rapport with a teacher, but is unable to provide and connect meaningful and relevant content, the effectiveness of the instructional coach is significantly diminished. Conversely, if the content is present, but the instructional coach is incapable of building a meaningful connection, or is unable to allow the teacher to feel like an active, co-equal member in the partnership, then the effectiveness of instructional coaching is limited. The combination of process and content will help maximize

the effectiveness of instructional coaching thus resulting in improved teacher and student outcomes.

Identifying and acknowledging the importance of both pedagogical and content specific knowledge for an instructional coach is vital. How a school district frames instructional coaching, and the manner and process in which it is carried out allows for the instructional coach to be in a position for success (Artz et al., 2010). The participants for this research study were not utilizing any particular framework, or model, to guide their practice. The researcher believes this is because that any training that the participants did go through was rich in detailing what instructional coaching is and how it can be helpful to teacher development and practice. However, the participants described in follow-up conversations how any training they did receive did not go into as much detail as to specifically how you carry it out. The Content-Focused Coaching model and teacher cycle is an example that emphasizes a preconference planning meeting initially, followed up by an in classroom, modeling session, then an individual teacher led session, concluded with a post-conference with a guided reflection protocol on the impact the lesson(s) had on student learning (Bickel et al., 2014; Artz et al., 2010). Selecting and implementing a specific practice or framework would be up to discretion of each school district and dependent upon a number of factors. It is recommended that a district create clear expectations for instructional coaches, create a vision and focus for how instructional coaching will be utilized, as well as create routines and identify cognitive tools and guides to assist in the coaching process (Bickel et al., 2014). The researcher believes that identifying a particular method for how instructional coaching will be carried out will help create clear expectations that allow all stakeholders to understand how instructional coaching works. In addition, having a

framework to guide their practice allows for the instructional coach to feel supported and legitimized in work, and how their practice is carried out.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This study points to possibilities for future research based on the emergent themes. In this section, the researcher highlights recommendations and suggestions that have emerged through the research process.

Impact of Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching - Each instructional coach discussed how PIIC has been influential in their work and development as a coach. Each instructional coach stated that they regularly attend PIIC meetings hosted by their IU. A potential study would be to examine the impact that PIIC has had on coaching practices as well as the influence PIIC has had on specific professional learning content and professional development activities that are implemented at participating instructional coaches' schools. The researcher would suggest a large-scale study involving the evaluation of PIIC to gain feedback from instructional coaches on what practices they felt were relevant and meaningful, as well as feedback on practices instructional coaches deemed unsuccessful.

Teacher Perception of Instructional Coaching – This particular study examined the perceptions and experiences of instructional coaches only. Coaching sessions were observed but the teachers were not active participants in terms of providing their experiences of instructional coaching. A study involving both classroom teachers and instructional coaches, or an examination involving only classroom teachers would reveal how classroom teachers perceive the work and practices of instructional coaching. Specifically, how has working with an

instructional coach enhanced teacher practice and pedagogical understanding? Lastly, identifying specific practices and activities that classroom teachers find meaningful and impactful will help with the overall understanding of instructional coaching.

School Leader Perception of Instructional Coaching – It was acknowledged in the findings of this study that school leadership was viewed as a key component to the coaching process in multiple contexts. Gaining an understanding of the perspective of a principal, superintendent, or other key school administrators would be very beneficial to the field of instructional coaching. In particular, gaining an understanding of how school leaders are able to achieve buy-in, as well as how to educate school administrators to provide leadership that supports instructional coaching and promotes the buy-in of the faculty.

Potential Ethnography Study – As an addition to the previously listed potential studies, an extended study, such as an ethnographic study of instructional coaching would be useful in examining the relationships between a teacher and/or principal and an instructional coach. A study like this would be very complex and would require a great deal of time and data collection. An ethnographic study that examines the nuances of teacher and/or principal and instructional coach over time would illuminate a complex, ongoing social interaction involving interpersonal relationships.

Gender Perspective - This study was limited to the thorough analysis of the perspectives of three female instructional coaches. When identifying potential participants the researcher did not take into account gender, or any other criteria other than size, location of the school district, and demographic data. In reflecting upon this study, the researcher pondered whether there would be any variance in the findings or experiences had he interviewed a male instructional coach. More specifically, research question one, involving the impact of instructional coaching,

and research question two, which examines teacher buy-in. Instructional coaching involves interpersonal relationships and the professional interaction between male and female could have an impact on the experiences of the participants, and the overall instructional coaching experience. The researcher believes examining complexities and nuances of the experiences of instructional coaches of differing genders would be an interesting research study.

Financial Examinations – The review of the literature examined the cost of instructional coaching, but further, more specific research can be conducted examining the financial impact that instructional coaching can have on a school district. All school leaders and school board members need to determine the cost of an initiative and weight the impact it can have on a district, whether considering student outcomes or teacher outcomes. Further examining the cost of instructional coaching can help stakeholders determine if the cost is worth the potential impact. For reference, a budget of a school district that has one full-time instructional coach was examined to see what instructional coaching is costing the district. The salary of the instructional coach is \$88,000, and the cost of the family insurance plan was \$19,491.24 for a combined cost of \$107,491.24. The researcher acknowledges that there are additional costs, which can be referred to as hidden costs. These costs can include all items that are unknown, unforeseen, or included in other budgetary line items. Such costs would include reimbursement for mileage for attendance at meetings, conferences, site visits, etc., tuition costs for a variety of courses, conference fees, equipment purchases, etc.

Value-Added Study – The examination and analysis of student outcomes on assessment is a common approach to determining the impact of a particular initiative. A study examining the assessment outcomes of students whose teacher worked with an instructional coach, compared to students who were assigned a teacher who did not work with an instructional coach

is a potential study that can help determine the added-value of instructional coaching. This study could help identify impact of instructional coaching on student achievement. In addition to that, studying particular instructional coaching activities and teacher practices, and the resulting student outcomes would also provide information related to best practices for instructional coaching methods to yield improved student achievement.

Content Focus Study– As discussed in a previous section, professional development that has a content focus has been found to be most effective (Desimone et al., 2016). A study examining the varying content focus of instructional coaches can be explored to help identify specific content that is having the largest impact on teacher and student outcomes. The three participants for this study collaborated with teachers to support a variety of topics and content. In addition, all three coaches worked with secondary teachers from varying content fields. A possible study could be to explore how instructional coaching impacts a particular content area, math for example. Taken a step further, this might be a focused comparison study of the work and student achievement results of an instructional coach working with a specific content area, or grade level, compared to an instructional coaching working with teachers from across multiple content concentrations.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

This study explored instructional coaching from the unique perspectives of three participants. From those experiences, commonalities surfaced that allowed the researcher to identify themes and to make recommendations for practicing instructional coaches based on the analysis of those

experiences. Following are recommendations for instructional coaches that can assist them in their practices.

Relationship with School Leadership – It was evident from this research, and validated in the literature that school leadership is key to successful coaching implementation. The researcher was naïve as to how significant school leadership was to the coaching process prior to conducting this study. The high school principal and upper administration were both discussed as to their impact in driving a particular focus and vision for instructional coaching. Instructional coaches should continually communicate and collaborate with school leaders to support the vision and mission of districts and schools. Instructional coaches should invite principals and other school leaders to attend coaching sessions and workshops, as well as encourage their active participation. Instructional coaches should also not be apprehensive to having open and candid conversations with school leaders about their importance in being an ally in order to make the instructional coaching initiative successful.

Advocate for Coaching – Instructional coaching is a professional learning model that many teachers may not fully understand, or school leaders for that matter. Instructional coaches must be advocates for their craft and promote the work they are doing with teachers. Instructional coaching is not, what Ms. Finley coined, “a deficit model” for teachers. That misconception can be addressed and teachers will also come to recognize that instructional coaching is a support to higher quality teaching practices, and higher-quality student outcomes.

Commitment to Self – Each participating instructional coach for this study demonstrated a perceived level of self-motivation and self-learning. An instructional coach must understand that learning opportunities must be sought out and teacher recruitment must also be continually attempted. Instructional coaches must also be motivated to continually improve their individual

practice and understandings, and be willing to reach out to teachers they feel may benefit from such understanding. In addition, a school district may have a strategic vision for professional learning, but unexpected learning opportunities often present themselves. Instructional coaches must be willing to explore and come to an understanding on their own.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Due to a key finding of this research study, the importance of school leadership, the researcher believes that recommendations for school administrators are appropriate. These suggestions are based on the findings and observations from all three participants for this study. The researcher recommends that school leaders model appropriate learning behaviors for staff, be creative with the implementation of instructional coaching, have a strategic vision for professional learning and instructional coaching, and provide the proper supports for instructional coaches. School leaders must also properly communicate the clear expectations for both teachers and instructional coaches in terms of professional learning and professional responsibilities.

Get Creative – Instructional coaching comes with a cost and not every school district is able to fund this initiative. In these circumstances, school leaders can utilize coaching philosophies and methods through teacher leaders, department heads, or even themselves. The three participants in this study were all full-time instructional coaches, meaning they did not have any classroom teaching responsibilities. If a school district is unable to implement a coaching model in this way, they may look at having the instructional coach teach a part-time schedule and the rest of the workday could be dedicated to coaching responsibilities. School leaders can also get innovative, by providing creatively scheduled time for learning opportunities

and for interactions between teacher and coach. Utilizing time before, during and after school is a creative way that school leaders reinforce the importance and priority of instructional coaching for the school district.

Vision – It was evident for the researcher, based on the experience conducting this study, that having a vision for professional learning, and an overall vision for instructional coaching was important. A strong vision and strategic implementation plan helps the instructional coach identify particular learning activities that can occur throughout the school year. Additionally, an instructional coach can assist in making that strategic vision a reality for a school district. Lastly, a clear vision for instructional coaching can alleviate uncertainties, or misconceptions, about the work that instructional coaches complete to increase teacher capacity.

Support – From the researcher's experience, school leaders can offer the necessary support that instructional coaches require, and can have a lasting impact on their practice. School leaders can offer support by establishing priority for instructional coaching, modeling behaviors, and being active members in instructional coaching activities. School leaders should have regular communication with instructional coaches to generate new ideas and reinforce initiatives. School leaders can also work alongside instructional coaches to create a vision for professional learning including instructional coaches as co-equal stakeholders in the planning process. School leaders should also be understanding and open to the idea that instructional coaches can help them extend their knowledge, practice and ultimately their effectiveness as instructional leaders.

5.6 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Instructional coaching has the potential to transform the learning culture of a school district. From experience, I have witnessed how instructional coaching practices transformed a school's teacher learning culture from a closed and isolated mindset to an open, collaborative and meaningful practice that resulted in teachers expanding on their craft. High school teachers began sharing ideas and strategies as well as collectively reading books, journals and articles pertaining to the teaching profession. These teachers enhanced their understanding of the importance of literacy in the secondary classroom, began using assessments as a learning tool that guided and informed their practice, as well as began implementing technology as a learning resource that made teaching and learning relevant to their students.

These were not the intended outcomes when the school district began the coaching initiative. We did not have any intended outcomes. We did not fully understand what instructional coaching was and we did not know what it could be. All of these positive discussions and activities began to happen organically. When this research study began my objective was to gain a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the practice of instructional coaching. I felt from my prior experiences that I had a sound foundational knowledge of instructional coaching and was looking for some more ideas that I could bring back to my district. Just like when we started the coaching initiative, I did not fully know what to expect, and in the end I am amazed at how organically ideas emerged.

This research study has really opened my eyes to what effective professional development entails. In addition, the importance of strong school leadership was overwhelmingly apparent to me. A strong instructional leader should be a support for instructional coaches, should help create and guide a vision for professional learning, should be

willing to find creative ways to provide valuable learning time for teachers, and should be willing to actively participate and model in the process. Instructional coaching has the potential to be very impactful on a staff and district; however that success depends on a number of factors. What I was able to conclude is that everything plays an essential part; people matter, content matters, context matters, and your process matters.

APPENDIX A

EMAIL SEEKING PARTICIPATION

Dear (Insert Name)

My name is Aaron Thomas and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh as well as a superintendent in the western Pennsylvania area. I am in the process of writing my dissertation, and I am seeking to examine the instructional coaching process at an in-depth and personal level. Specifically, I am exploring how instructional coaches perceive their impact on teacher practice, how instructional coaches are able to achieve teacher buy-in, and how the professional practice and knowledge of instructional coaches have increased through the coaching process.

Due to your involvement in the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaches (PIIC) meetings held at the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit (AIU) your name was given to me by Dr. Heather Moschetta as a possible participant for my dissertation study.

If you would be interested in hearing more about this research study, and the possibility of sharing your story and experiences of being an instructional coach please respond via email. I would like to schedule a phone conversation where we can discuss the study in more detail and I

can answer any questions you may have. I am more than willing to arrange the phone conversation around your busy schedule and I hope you consider being a participant.

I appreciate your time and I hope to hear back from you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Thomas

(Phone Number)

Amt92@pitt.edu

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Superintendent (Insert Name)

My name is Aaron Thomas and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh as well a superintendent in the western Pennsylvania region. My dissertation examines the work of instructional coaches in the western Pennsylvania region. An instructional coaching working in your district, (INSERT NAME) has expressed interest in participating in my study. I am writing to seek your permission to interview (INSERT NAME) as well as observe a coaching session between (INSERT NAME) and a cooperating teacher.

The purpose of my study is to gain a better understanding of the instructional coaching process and I believe the results will be beneficial to a number of school stakeholders. Information obtained from this study may be particularly beneficial to school administrators, principals, curriculum directors and other school leaders who are responsible for providing professional learning opportunities for teachers.

In order to protect the privacy of each individual and the school district pseudonyms will be used. Also, the interviews and observations are voluntary and the participants are able to withdraw at any time. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Both will be kept in

a locked and secure location within my office and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. In reporting findings, no names or identifying data for individuals or school districts will be revealed.

If you feel that (INSERT NAME)'s participation in this research study should not occur please contact me as soon as possible to notify me. I appreciate your time and consideration and please contact me if you have any concerns or questions. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,

Aaron Thomas

(Phone Number)

Amt92@pitt.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you again for agreeing to be a participant in this research study. We are ready to begin our discussion and I just wanted to remind you again that this interview will be audio recorded. I will be the only individual reviewing the audio recordings and I will also transcribe the interview. The audio recording and transcripts will be kept in a secure location in my office that is locked at all times. Your name and school will also be assigned a pseudonym to further ensure your anonymity and recordings will be destroyed once they are anonymously transcribed. Are there any clarifying questions you have before we begin?

1. Please tell me about your professional background and how you became to be an instructional coach at (insert pseudonym school).
2. What do you perceive your role is as an instructional coach?
 - a. How do teachers perceive your role? How do you know?
 - b. What activities do you lead with teachers that you feel enhances their professional knowledge and practice?

- c. What areas of instructional practice have you worked with teachers on? For example, assessment, classroom management, technology integration, instructional strategies, etc.
- 3. What are you trying to achieve as instructional coach and what do you feel you have achieved?
 - a. What specific examples can you give me that support that?
 - b. What attracted you to coaching as a change strategy?
 - c. What was your experience with other methods?
 - d. How does coaching engage others through change strategies?
- 4. Do you or did you have difficulty recruiting teachers to work with?
 - a. How do you recruit teachers to work with you now?
 - b. How do you go about introducing new ideas or new topics for possible work?
 - c. How did you overcome teacher reservations related to working with you?
- 5. How has the coaching process enhanced your knowledge and practice?
- 6. How do you continue your professional learning and continued development?
 - a. Have any of the beliefs about teaching changed since becoming an instructional coach?
 - b. Do you attend any regularly scheduled meetings or conferences that help you understand the coaching process better or the teaching and learning process?
- 7. Is there anything else you would like to add about instructional coaching or the coaching process that we haven't discussed?

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL GUIDE

Observation Date:	School District (Pseudonym):
Start Time: End Time:	Teacher (Pseudonym):
List of handouts:	Topic of Discussion:
Field Notes/Evidence of Conceptual Framework:	

APPENDIX E

DOCUMENT PROTOCOL GUIDE

School District (Pseudonym):	Date:
Document Type	Field Notes/Observations
• Articles/Readings	
• In-Service Agendas	
• Coaching Agendas	
• Classroom Observation Form	
• Schedule of Coaching Sessions	
• Professional Learning Community Documents	
• Professional Development Agendas	
• Reflection Sheets/Assessments	

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM – INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

Thanks you for being a voluntary participant of this study. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the instructional coaching process. Specifically, this research will examine the perceptions that instructional coaches have related to their impact on teacher practice, as well as how instructional coaches gain buy-in from teachers, and how the coaching process has impacted your own professional growth, beliefs and practices.

You have agreed to be a participant of this study and your superintendent has given consent for you to participate. Your willingness to share your story and your experiences of your role as an instructional coach will provide viable information necessary for this study. Your identify will be completely anonymous as your name and the name of the school and district will be provided with a pseudonym throughout the research. The audio recording of this interview, as well as the transcripts, will be kept in a secure location within the office of the researcher and destroyed at the conclusion of this research. The interview should take between thirty and forty-five minutes. There are no foreseeable risks or direct benefits to you for participating in this study. If necessary, you may be contacted by the researcher for follow-up questions. Your

participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this project at any time. The research has already shared all contact information with the participant at this time.

I have read the above description of the Instructional Coaching Study and understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM

Thank you for being a voluntary participant of this study. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the instructional coaching process. Specifically, this research will examine the perceptions that instructional coaches have related to their impact on teacher practice, as well as how instructional coaches gain buy-in from teachers, and how the coaching process has impacted professional growth, beliefs and practices of instructional coaches.

You have agreed to be an active participant of this study and your superintendent has given consent for you to participate. Your willingness to allow the researcher to observe a coaching session will provide viable data necessary for this study. Your identify will be completely anonymous. Your name, along with the name of the school and district will be provided with a pseudonym throughout the research. During the observation the researcher will be completing field notes on the Observation Protocol Guide. A copy of the Observation Protocol Guide will be provided for you to review. All data from this study will be kept in a secure location within the office of the researcher and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. There are no foreseeable risks or direct benefits to you for participating in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this project at any time.

The researcher has already shared his contact information with each participant, but if any questions do arise the participants can contact the researcher at any time.

I have read the above description of the Instructional Coaching Study and understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

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