

**An Action Research Study of Instructional Coaching: Supporting Emotional Support
Elementary Teachers' Instruction in an Online Environment**

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An Action Research Study of Instructional Coaching: Supporting Emotional Support Elementary Teachers' Instruction in an Online Environment

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of instructional coaching in supporting the instruction of Emotional Support teachers in an online teaching environment. I centered the coaching of each Emotional Support teacher around a specific core teaching focus. The results of the study were inconsistent; with each participant showing different degrees of success.

Through reflections and interviews with teachers along with recorded class sessions, I analyzed elements of my own coaching that contributed to the changing of teacher practices or lack thereof. Findings indicated that many factors contributed to degree of instructional change that each teacher was able to implement in their own practices. Teachers who saw value in the coaching and in refining their own practices were able to make small changes to their practice to the benefit of their students.

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Preface

First and Foremost, I would like to thank my husband, Shawn, for his unending support and love. Throughout my entire EdD journey, he was by my side cheering me on and believing in my work. He never hesitates to support all my dreams and ideas no matter how crazy they may seem. His selflessness and drive inspire me daily.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Problem of Practice

I am an instructional coach and Director of Curriculum in a diverse urban school district. The problem driving my action research study is twofold. First, my district has a high and increasing number of young students who have been identified as needing emotional support. At the elementary level, we have two teachers who teach Emotional Support classes to identified emotional support students. Yet, unlike other teachers in my district, the Emotional Support teachers have not received systematic support for their teaching, and I have noted that the quality of the instruction in these classrooms is variable. I am concerned that the students in these classrooms are not being served as well as they could be. Overall, there are few set district requirements or resources for the Emotional Support teachers in terms of academic instruction and social emotional support needs. Essentially, the emotional support classrooms become a “holding place” for students with SED when they become disruptive in the regular education classrooms and need a separate place to work or deescalate. Yet, given that “academic” learning and social and emotional well-being are interrelated, there is potential for the Emotional Support classroom to meaningfully contribute to the overall well-being of the students in my district.

Second, in my role as an instructional coach, I need to study and refine my own practice. Although I have worked as an instructional coach for many years, building on my work as an elementary teacher, I have not had a robust, theory-driven approach guiding my activity. I need to study my own practice in order to improve my coaching. With this additional insight, I will be able to better support not just teachers in my district but also other instructional coaches.

1.2 Connections to Trends in the Field

The above-mentioned problems are also reflected in the broader field of education. First, there is a critical need to better support students' mental health, including their social and emotional needs, as a part of their schooling. The rates of mental health diagnoses of children are rising quickly in the United States, and K-12 schools have been slow to develop approaches to address students' needs (Simpson, Peterson, & Smith, 2011).

One particular category of diagnosis that is rising quickly is "serious emotional disturbance" (SED), which can include psychiatric disorders (e.g., anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder) and behavioral disabilities (e.g., oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder) (Hinshawn, 1992). When students demonstrate an inability to learn or maintain interpersonal relationships over a period of time such that it negatively affects their educational performance, they are often identified under this category (Gold & Richard, 2012; Kauffman & Badar, 2013). Importantly, students identified as having SED are typically identified because of issues they are presenting at school; and, the diagnosis can indicate a continuous cycle in which the students have difficulty adjusting to the classroom environment and structures, are removed from the classroom for disciplinary action, and subsequently end up losing learning opportunities to worsen matters (Simpson & Petterson, 2011). And, at the core of many behavioral disabilities is trauma (Hollins & Sinason, 2000). For these reasons, students with SED are a particularly vulnerable group, and they are especially reliant on their teachers for equitable instruction and services in a school setting.

Most recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, instruction has moved online. Many have worried that the move to online teaching and learning may disproportionately negatively affect minoritized and especially vulnerable groups of students (Bosworth & Asman, 2020). Students

with SED may be especially vulnerable to experiencing disproportionately negative outcomes in this shift. This makes the instructional approaches of their teachers more important than ever before.

A second need in the field is to develop and refine instructional coaching approaches that improve teachers' instruction in their classrooms. Coaching, as a way to offer teachers' job-embedded professional development, has been a popular reform idea supported by education policy for approximately the past 20 years, and it has been seen as a useful alternative to fragmented professional development approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000 incentivized districts to include instructional coaches; and subsequent legislation provided funding for hiring coaches.

However, there continues to be a lot of variation about what counts as coaching, how coaches actually spend their time, and the extent to which coaches are useful in bending instruction (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Concluding their literature review of coaching, Denton and Hasbrouck conclude:

There is a need to develop fully-articulated models of instructional coaching based on cohesive theories, and to validate these models. In a very real sense, practice has preceded theory in this area. Until coaching models are clearly defined, it will be impossible to determine whether specific coaching approaches result in improved teacher practices and, most importantly, in improved student outcomes. (p. 172)

For example, Bean and Zigmond (2006) identified many strikingly big questions that should be addressed by future research, including, "What should coaches do with their time? What coaching activities have the greatest effect on teacher practices and student achievement?" and "Is coaching truly effective for improving teachers' competence, fidelity of implementation of research-based practices, and confidence?"

Again, in the context of COVID-19, these questions loom larger than ever. How are coaches to think about their potential for supporting their colleagues when *both teaching and coaching* are moved online? Some scholarship has however pointed to the affordances of online coaching. For example, online coaching can promote access to professional development because it can include teachers who live in rural and remote areas and it can be offered more affordably (Glover, Reddy, Kurz & Elliott, 2019). Online coaching can also provide a bit of emotional distance between the teacher and the coach, who often holds the role of offering critical feedback; this distance may support teachers to be more vulnerable rather than defensive and could help their uptake of feedback (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2019). Yet, online coaching models have tended to be designed for and deliberately chosen by teacher participants and coaches, and they have tended to focus on shifting teachers' regular practice. It is unclear the extent to which the online coaching literature relates to a time of COVID, in which teachers' and coaches' practice has suddenly shifted, produced many additional challenges including simple technology challenges, and is likely to shift back again in some amount of time. Within this specific context, it is important for the field to generate knowledge about how instructional coaches are seeking to modify their approaches, and the extent to which they are finding success.

1.3 Research Question and Local Need

In this action research study of my own coaching practice, my research question was: To what extent and in what ways did my online coaching support focal elementary Emotional Support teachers' instruction online? I sought to align my approaches with key principles gleaned from the literature and generate new insights about my coaching practice.

I have noted some concerns in the learning opportunities and teaching practice of Emotional Support classrooms in my district. While our Emotional Support classrooms can serve students individual behavioral needs, there has historically been limited specially designed instruction and social emotional curricula to meet the students' formal academic and social needs. The emotional support classroom teachers complete a social skills activity and lesson daily, however, there is not a set district requirement for these teachers.

Outside of the instruction students with SED receive when they have the opportunity to remain in their general education classroom, little individualized instructional design and support take place. Within the ES classroom, students will typically complete the work that their general education peers are doing with the support of their special education teacher and support staff. Typically, the Emotional Support teachers will adjust assignments, ultimately lessening the rigor for students diagnosed with SED. "Time outs" with an iPad as opposed to restorative practices or conversations with the students directly are frequently given to students with SED when the teachers feel they need to reset behaviors. Collaboration among general education and special education teachers may take place informally at common grade level planning meetings, but formalized scheduled collaboration is infrequent and sporadic. For the purposes of my ongoing work, my focus and reference of content in this study is on the socioemotional content for students diagnosed with SED and not traditional academic content.

Making matters worse, in the early weeks of COVID school closures in March 2020, I noted that there was little to no direct instruction taking place virtually. Instead, assignments were simply given to students and the teachers expected them to independently work through the material or with their special education teacher and/or an aide.

Within these contexts, I seek to support Emotional Support teachers to support their students' learning in a virtual environment. There is not a one size fits all approach that can be taken by teachers or instructional coaches. Yet, working directly with Emotional Support teachers is the first step toward ensuring that these classrooms, virtual or in-person, are spaces for social and emotional and academic learning.

2.0 Review of the Literature

My review of literature was aimed at understanding the two primary problems driving my inquiry. First, I sought to understand productive instructional approaches for supporting children's socioemotional needs in school classrooms. Second, I sought to understand promising ways of coaching teachers, particularly using online tools. My questions were:

1. What principles can guide instructional approaches that support both socioemotional and academic learning in a virtual setting?
 - a) How do socioemotional and academic learning affect one another?
 - b) What happens when students' socioemotional learning is not adequately supported?
2. How can Emotional Support teachers be supported to improve their instruction online through coaching and feedback?

Overall, I did not find clear answers for how to effectively support teachers working with young students in the SED support classroom. In seeking studies that brought together children with vulnerabilities in an online setting, I found zero sources. When I searched for teaching elementary students in an online setting, I found zero sources. My review highlights a gap in the literature and a need for projects such as mine.

2.1 Need for Early Identification and Intervention

A clear line of work suggests that students with pronounced social and emotional needs require early identification and intervention. Nearly all studies reviewed discussed the critical need for early identification and intervention. The need for early services is crucial because students diagnosed with SED have historically made significantly lower progress, academically, than peers without an SED diagnosis (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). Outcomes for these students plagued by lower academic achievement and behavior difficulties are bleak as they are at an increased risk for school dropout, low rates of post school employment, and general social adjust problems (Wagner, 1995).

Additionally, research suggests that students who experience reading difficulty are more likely to be referred to restrictive classroom settings than students having difficulty in any other subject (McGinniss & Forness, 1988). Research reports that early deficits for students diagnosed with SED will increase as these students continue through school compared to their non-disabled peers (Wehby, et al., 2005). Early remediation for these students is vital as schools attempt to close achievement gaps and bring these students closer to grade level proficiency. Targeting young children for academic and behavioral interventions early in their school career is more viable due to the fact that the social and academic differences of these students are not as advanced in the primary grades (Wehby et al., 2005). Although these studies point to the need for supporting students' social and emotional needs, they do not seek to describe how teachers can do so effectively.

2.2 Principles for Teaching Students with Pronounced Social and Emotional Needs

There is not one single program or intervention that has been designed or implemented that fully and consistently addresses the social emotional and instructional needs of students diagnosed with SED, most specifically in an online setting. While the literature does not point to one perfect fix for the needs of students diagnosed with SED, the literature does in fact show that students diagnosed with SED tend to benefit from the development and implementation of quality instruction that meets both their academic and social emotional needs. The sticking point, however, remains around what constitutes quality instruction and appropriate programming virtually for children diagnosed with SED. This is of course complicated by students' identities, specific needs, and their multiple social contexts of school and community.

2.2.1 Prioritize Teacher-Student Relationship

The teacher-student relationship is essential for student learning, and seems to be particularly important for students with pronounced social and emotional needs (Barton- Arwood, et al., 2005; Daunic et al., 2013; Dawson & Venn, 2000; Gunter & Reed, 1997; Learned, 2016; Levy & Vaughn, 2002; Simpson et al., 2011; Sutherland et al., 2008; Wehby et al., 2005).

For example, Dawson and Venn (2000) implemented a study on the effects of teacher modeling versus computer reading models. The study took place with first and second grade students diagnosed with SED. The results of this study were noteworthy as teacher modeling was found to be more effective than computer modeling, but both were more effective than no model at all. However, it is important to note that teacher relationships and bias did matter. In the study,

teacher modeling was found to be less effective when based on negative interactions and relationships with the students (Dawson & Venn, 2000).

2.2.2 Improve Instructional Quality

The idea that remediation and intervention need to be provided in both academics and behavior was significant to a number of studies. Most often the instructional needs of students diagnosed with SED are neglected as teachers attempt to control and focus on problem behaviors (Gunter, Jack, Shores, Carrell, & Flowers, 1993). In one review of special education classrooms, the authors concluded that instructional quality in self-contained SED classrooms can be quite low and not conducive to increasing achievement (Levy & Vaughn, 2002).

But, research has indicated that academic and social emotional learning do not occur separately but rather, are closely connected. So, focusing on enriching the learning opportunities for students with SED can improve their academic performance while also reducing problem behaviors (Barton-Arwood, Wehby, & Falk, 2005). Studies found that treatment plans for students diagnosed with SED should address academic needs in addition to behavior (Wehby et al, 2005). A study in which social emotional lessons were combined with academic instruction for specific social skills found that interventions designed to strengthen self-regulation skills have the potential to enhance social emotional and academic learning together (Daunic et al., 2013). Most studies that focused on both academic learning and social emotional learning saw positive behavior benefits. The benefit to merging academics with social and emotional programming was increased student motivation, attention, and socially acceptable behavior, as well as a reduction in negative and aggressive behavior (Daunic et al., 2013).

These findings connect to much larger bases of research on the importance of creating learning opportunities for students that invite them into rich, intellectual work. For example, in a study with Kindergarten students that combined social emotional lessons with early literacy skills a program was piloted that implemented lessons to develop social-emotional learning in young students (Daunic et al., 2013). The lessons were taught two to three times a week for 20 minutes total in small groups with children who were at risk for behavioral problems. The lessons used authentic children's literature to deepen vocabulary and comprehension skills while teaching social and emotional competencies. The study found that interventions designed to strengthen self-regulation skills have the potential to enhance social emotional and academic learning together. Significant to the results of this study was the idea that teachers reported an increase in school-related competence and internalizing behavior.

In a study by McTigue, Washburn, and Liew (2009), the authors discussed improving academic resilience in young learners through literacy activities and a structured classroom environment. The article advocated for reading skills and social emotional learning to be considered together during classroom instruction. Techniques like morning meeting, peer sharing, and student journaling were used to build classroom community as well as the self-efficacy of second grade students. Student belief in their abilities as readers grew while the students became more socially competent as a result of the activities and encouragement taking place in the classroom. A critical take away from this article was that in order to build successful readers, reading instruction that encourages social-emotional skills in addition to literacy needs might be most effective.

One important component of ensuring instructional quality involves honoring the need that students, especially young children, have for communicating with one another. Children, like

adults, learn and build connections through conversation. An abundance of research has shown that rich classroom talk matters for student learning (e.g., Juzwik, Cazden). It is not possible to have rich instructional quality without extended opportunities for student talk.

2.2.3 Honor Students as Whole People

Foundational to these classroom conditions may be a practice of using positive and humanizing talk to position students diagnosed with SED as competent learners. Without instructional talk that honors students as whole people, attends to their ideas, and positions them in positive ways, it is likely that students will continue the patterns of tumultuous school behavior while deepening poor relationships with schools and teachers.

In a yearlong ethnographic study, Learned (2016) looked at how young readers navigate school contexts across content and institutional processes. Learned spent a year shadowing eighth and ninth grade students who were identified as struggling readers. While these students were not identified as students having an emotional disturbance, they were students with chronic conduct problems. Analysis after the year of observations showed that behavioral and discipline data positioned students as struggling and deficient regardless of their engaged and successful reading. Noteworthy about this study was cautions of deficit thinking in literacy. As teachers reported being compelled to act punitively for poor behavior during instruction, students pointed out that inadequate instruction and other school context factors, such as tracking, is what ultimately led to their disengagement and misbehavior institutionally. Several studies reviewed shared sobering statistics of how black students, namely boys, are typically tracked into academically lower ability groupings and special education programs (Harry and Klingner, 2006) and further positioned to be unintelligent, deviant, and culturally deficient youths (Ferguson, 2000).

In a study by Golden (2017), culturally-responsive pedagogies were used with students in an effort for students to be able to reposition themselves as competent after having been positioned negatively by prior school systems. Having teachers that are culturally sensitive and position students in humanizing ways, allowed students to reposition their identities to counter the negative ways they had been framed in the past. Students began to see themselves as “becoming somebody” and able to do “something with their life” (Golden, 2017). Research on positioning students has found that classrooms in which teachers believe that all students are capable of academic success are most effective for student learning (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). Examination of classroom learning requires study beyond curriculum, but rather a closer look at how institutions continue to create deficit labels. More specifically, teacher and student perceptions of proficiency and success create learning opportunities or oftentimes, lack thereof (Learned, 2016). Humanizing speech can no longer be situated in pockets, but must be infused throughout school systems and addressed systematically in order to build instructional and culturally responsive capacity.

2.3 Principles for Coaching Emotional Support Teachers

Teachers in the field, novice and veteran, are challenged daily with providing high quality education for all children. Providing not only instruction, but also support to students who have intensive needs online is equally challenging and oftentimes requires additional professional support.

2.3.1 Coaching Should Be Individualized and Responsive

Like student instruction, professional development opportunities should be individualized and intensive (Conroy, Alter, Boyd, & Bettini, 2014). Research is suggesting that engaging teachers in coaching cycles throughout an entire academic year or roughly 50 hours of coaching can lead to an increase in effectiveness over time. Important to note, however, is that continued changing of a coaching goal can minimize progress, ultimately impacting the amount of change made in individual practices (Kraft & Blazar, 2017). Many studies are suggesting that currently one of the most effective professional development opportunities, which can lead to teacher change, is that engagement in a learning cycle that can provide teachers with modeling support, application and practice, feedback, continuous follow-up. (Barkley, 2005; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; Joyce & Showers, 1982, 1996; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Killion & Roy, 2009; Knight, 2007).

2.3.2 Coaching Should Be Sustained Over a Significant Period of Time and Focused on a Specific Professional Goal

There are many approaches to the coaching and professional development of in-service teachers. When conducting a review of studies, Joyce & Showers (1980) were able to articulate the following to be critical components of coaching cycle:

1. Presentation of exemplar model
2. Modeling of identified skills
3. Rehearsing with identified skill
4. Structured feedback

5. Additional coaching for application of skill.

This study supports the idea that the above-mentioned qualities should be present in coaching cycles to lead to an increase in teacher effectiveness and a change of practices. Additionally, coaches and teachers should engage in collaborative consultation throughout the coaching cycles to ensure reflective practice, problem solving, and self-reflection of their own practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Effectively promoting changes in teacher practice through coaching was an idea studied by Vanderburg and Stevens (2010). 35 teachers were interviewed about their participation in coaching programs. Results from this study indicated that teachers highly valued the support of a coach when learning to apply new instructional practices. The study also revealed that teachers reported seeing changes in themselves as teachers as well.

One team of authors propose practice-based coaching cycles to better support teachers as they learn how to put knowledge into action within their classrooms (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). The coaching cycle, which includes four phases, seeks to improve inequities and learning opportunities for minoritized students by equipping teachers with practices that support and value the knowledge and resources students bring to the classroom. The four phases of each coaching cycle include: introduction to a focal practice, preparation to enact the practice, enacting the practice within a professional context, and analysis and reflection of the practice. The use of the coaching cycle allows coaches or teacher educators to work with teachers to focus on the in-the-moment work of teaching, which is difficult to plan for and difficult to do consistently well.

Sutherland, Conroy, & Ladwig (2015) share that during initial phases of practice-based coaching, the coach and teacher assess classroom needs together and then work to implement a plan to improve professional practice. A unique feature of practice based coaching cycles is the

iterative cycle. After observation and reflection of the intended practice, coaching cycles can be adjusted and repeated until the desired outcome is achieved.

In recent years, online coaching has become more common, both because of the advancement in technology and the recognition of the various communities who are unable to access coaching in person (e.g., those living in remote communities). There are a few key principles that seem to matter for online coaching specifically. First, and most critically, coaches need to have a clear understanding of their role and the particular framework guiding their coaching. Ultimately this framework will vary depending on the district and school implementing the coaching, however, research supports this as an imperative first step in laying the foundation for successful online coaching (Stoetzel & Shredrow, 2019). Secondly, the success of online coaching depends largely on the design of the learning for teachers. Recent studies share the idea that teachers stated that the flexibility of time and accessibility of content takes a backseat to the flexibility of being able to customize and apply the concepts and content into their own professional practice and context (Stoetzel & Shredrow, 2019). Creating online spaces that can allow teachers to share their potential application of practices within their own context serves as a cornerstone to ensuring teacher engagement and further implementation by the teacher.

2.4 Conclusion

As a result of this literature review, I seek to implement and embed principles of instructional coaching in order to support Emotional Support teachers in my district.

3.0 Method

The research question guiding my action study was: To what extent and in what ways did my online coaching support focal elementary Emotional Support teachers' instruction online? I sought to align my approaches with key principles gleaned from the literature and generate new insights about my coaching practice.

3.1 Action Research

Action research examines the effects of an action or intervention on a particular problem. Action research is used for issues that develop from real world, routine problems (Denscombe, 2014) and it is a strategic process for practical problem solving (Buss & Zambo, 2016). The practicality of action research is a good fit for my problem of practice, as it enables iterative revision and adjustment of my activity based on the needs of my participants and in concert with my own learning. This allowed me to revise and adjust my project continuously based on the needs of not only the teacher participants, but according to my own learning as well. Since "...teachers live in a space of decision making that can never be anticipated by a prescribed program," bringing action research methods to my inquiry was appropriate (Schutz & Hoffman, 2017, p. 7).

3.2 Inquiry Setting

Duquesne City Public School currently serves students in grades PK-6. Approximately 82% of the student population is African American and most of our students' families fall below the poverty line. About 33% of the students in my district have been identified as requiring special education services. Often in my district, the evaluation process is started for students when teachers and school personnel are at a loss of how to adequately support student learning and behaviors.

The primary stakeholders involved in this project are the students of my district who have been diagnosed and subsequently labeled with SED. Since the inception of Emotional Support classrooms in 2010-2011, each year there are approximately 10-15 students assigned between the two classrooms. The rooms are separated by grade level with Kindergarten through third grade students in one-space and fourth through sixth grade students in another.

Most students in Duquesne who receive special education services spend the majority of the school day in their regular education classroom. They receive push-in or pull-out support depending on the severity of the disability and their individualized education program. However, students who exhibit severe conduct misbehavior and have a diagnosis of SED are placed in a more restrictive setting within our Emotional Support classrooms. These types of behaviors include frequent physical aggression, anger and depression, leaving their assigned classrooms and being consistently out of assigned areas. Typically, the path to Emotional Support placement begins when the general education teacher in combination with the Student Support team feels it has exhausted all efforts in keeping the child mainstreamed and successful in the regular education classroom. The Student Support team consists of the general and special education teachers, the building principal, the school counselor, and the school psychologist. These stakeholders meet

continuously once a student is referred for support in order to design a comprehensive plan for support and intervention for the student. At the point where the Emotional Support placement becomes a discussion, typically, the general education teacher and Student Support team now consider the student a disruption to his own learning and the learning of the other students in the classroom. Once diagnosed and placed within the ES classroom, the percentage of daily time each student spends in the ES classroom and in the regular education classroom depend on the needs of the particular child and their individual behaviors. The ultimate of the Student Support team however, is to have the child educated in the regular education classroom with typically developing peers for as much time daily as possible.

While our Emotional Support classrooms can serve students' individual behavioral needs, there has historically been limited specially designed instruction and social emotional curricula to meet the students' academic and social needs. Special education teachers may work with students diagnosed with SED to remediate skills and close instructional gaps for their individual caseload of students. Overall, there are few set district requirements for the Emotional Support teachers in terms of academic instruction and social emotional support needs.

3.3 Participants

The participants in this study were two Emotional Support teachers at Duquesne Elementary School. I selected these teachers as participants in my study as they are currently the only two emotional support teachers in my building and their specific caseload of students tend to exhibit the most need for additional support and intervention daily. One teacher Rachael (all names

are pseudonyms) teaches emotional support grades K-3. The other teacher Jessica teaches emotional support grades 4-6.

Jessica, an African American woman in her early twenties, was a first year teacher. Jessica holds a Pennsylvania teacher certification in special education for grades K-12. At the time of data collection, Jessica taught students with SED in grades 4-6. The 2018-19 school year was her first year of teaching and she was hired in October, after the school year had begun. Jessica held some experience working with special needs students from her student teaching and summer internship experiences, but she had no other teaching experience to pull from throughout this project.

Rachael taught our students with SED in grades K-3. Rachael was also new to the district, although she came to Duquesne with about eight years teaching experience and holds a valid Pennsylvania teaching certificate in middle school English and Social Studies as well as a certificate in Special Education K-12. Rachael was also hired late into the school year, and had just begun her position in January. Previously, she taught high school emotional support in a more affluent, suburban community. Rachael is a middle aged, white female, and previous to the 2018-2019 school year at Duquesne, she had no prior established relationships with our students.

In keeping with action research, I was also a participant in this study. At the time of the study, I served as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Duquesne. This was my 15th year in the district and my second year in this leadership role. I had spent 11 of my 15 years working in the capacity of an instructional coach and supporting teachers' literacy instruction. In my curriculum position, I oversaw the instructional practices of teachers district wide, and worked to build comprehensive instructional programming in all subject areas. I worked closely, in a coaching capacity, with all teachers to share instructional, research based, best practices and

implement these practices across the district. I came to Duquesne with an elementary teaching certificate and my masters degree in reading and language arts. During my tenure at Duquesne, I have earned additional credits in Reading Recovery and Early Childhood education prior to coming to the University of Pittsburgh to obtain my EdD.

3.4 Coaching Plans

I sought to bring a hybrid approach to my coaching, based on my synthesis of the coaching literature. I prioritized the principles of effective coaching adapted from my reading of the coaching literature. These principles included designing coaching plans that begin with models of exemplar practices and are aligned to individual teacher needs. Additionally, I ensured that coaching plans were iterative and could be adjusted throughout the cycles based on teacher needs that were observed throughout the coaching cycles.

To design with these principles in mind, I created an iterative, four step coaching cycle that would allow for goal-driven, sustained coaching with each teacher. An iterative cycle was critical to ensure that collaboratively we could make adjustments as needed based on the needs of the students. I worked with both teachers to identify places for growth in their current practice, and then selected a cornerstone text that would guide our work. I drafted a 4-quadrant coaching plan (Appendix A) for both teachers and then used the coaching plan to guide our discussion during our first coaching session. During this session, both Jessica and Rachael and I examined how ideas from the cornerstone text could be incorporated into their classrooms and what might need to be adjusted and customized based on the needs and grade levels of their current students. Throughout

both cycles of coaching as lessons took place, I observed virtually then checked in and debriefed about what was working and what could be adjusted.

In keeping with the cyclical nature of action research, I conducted my coaching in two cycles or loops. The first took place with the focal teachers from March-May 2020. The second took place with the same teachers from September-October 2020.

For both teachers in both cycles I focused on strengthening the instructional quality of their teaching based on pre-observations of both teachers and my knowledge of declining quality of instruction in the spring due to COVID. I understood instructional quality as involving the content that teachers brought to their classroom and the degree of student engagement they facilitated. I acknowledge that I might have focused on other aspects of their teaching as well. In order to identify what would represent instructional quality, I had to make some decisions about what the “content” of the elementary SED classroom might include in my district. I determined that the “content” of the SED classroom would ideally include socioemotional concepts and ideas that could be helpful for young students who are coping with trauma and other challenging circumstances. For example, the concept of mindfulness is one that may be useful in the SED classroom. To be mindful means that individuals are aware of choices they have and can make in their lives, and it can be a source of personal empowerment for young children to begin to think of their personal actions in this way. Teaching mindfulness might include engaging with students about how they could bring such a stance in their lives, what might be challenging about it, or engaging in reflection about a time they were mindful or not and the results.

Instructional quality means more than just determining and teaching concepts, however. It also involves approaches to teaching and engaging students. These approaches include prioritizing teacher-student relationships, improving instruction quality by combining

socioemotional content with into traditional academic learning, and honoring students as whole people. In the SED classroom especially, it is highly important to include ways that teachers build relationships with students, ways they support students to build and sustain relationships with one another, and ways they support students to participate in the classroom community generally. So, I also wanted to include a focus on supporting focal teachers to consider ways of strengthening their approaches to engaging students and relating to them.

During the first cycle of my study, I spent a week observing the virtual instructional practices of both teachers virtually. After my observations, I created a coaching plan centered on a guiding text I selected. The guiding text was a podcast titled, *Resilient Students: Bridging Body and Mind with Dr. Derrik and Cassie Tollefson*, which detailed de-escalation and coping strategies along with socioemotional content. The podcast shared strategies and work from a 4th grade teacher about building resiliency in students. Vocabulary and content around the brains I-system is shared along with the benefits of teaching students to self-regulate. I selected this because the topic and content of the podcast aligned with my ultimate goal of prioritizing socioemotional content and making the Emotional Support classrooms spaces for academic and socioemotional learning. The podcast allowed me to share strategies for mindfulness and self-regulation with the Emotional Support teachers without the official packaging of curriculum and scripted lessons.

During my initial coaching conversations with each teacher, we collaboratively sketched the first wave of lessons. Both teachers taught lessons based on our initial coaching session and I observed the recordings of both participants' lessons. During our second coaching session, I debriefed with both teachers about the first week of lessons and listened to the teacher's interpretations of how they felt the plan was going. We then developed a plan using the 4-quadrant cycle to develop an outline of the next phase of lessons for cycle 1.

In the fall, during my second cycle, I began by meeting with each teacher and identifying instructional goals. Both teacher participants and I reflected on the spring and our first cycle of coaching. Jessica and Rachael both articulated where they wanted to pick up with their students and instruction as well as what objectives they had for their specific case load of students. As a coach, I affirmed the goals they had laid out and together both participants and I brainstormed some ideas for lessons and what their instructional plan could look like. I began observing the following week and provided feedback informally to both participants. We touched based regularly and made changes based on student engagement and other observations.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

I collected data from several sources and looked for patterns that emerged across these data sources. The sources of data I collected were: coaching interviews with the focal teachers as well as reflection responses from the two participating teachers, teacher lesson plans, virtual class session audio recordings, and virtual coaching session audio recordings. See Table 1 below for a summary of my inquiry question, the design of the study, and the evidence I collected.

Table 1 Design Overview

Inquiry Question	Design/methods	Evidence	Analysis and Interpretation
To what extent and in what ways did my online coaching	I conducted <i>structured interviews</i> with the two focal teachers' prior to	The evidence came from the conversation and data that emerged from each coach	Coaching Cycle 1: I analyzed coaching audio and transcripts of the interviews by noting themes or trends. I used grounded coding to identify and test emergent themes.

support focal elementary Emotional Support teachers' instruction online?	and after the two coaching cycles. I also collected <i>recorded audio of coaching sessions</i> . This offered me opportunities to reflect on my own practice as a coach and gain insight into how the teachers experienced our work.	cycle. I examined in reflective conversation with the focal teachers: 1. How the coaching approach appears to be working, based on what happens in the classroom. 2. What promising ideas emerge about how to refine the approach? 3. What seem to be some of the limitations of the coaching approach?	Coaching Cycle 2: I incorporated my findings from Cycle 1 into my revised coaching model. Then, I analyzed the next phase of interviews and coaching sessions for trends.
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Table 2 Data Collected

When Collected	Data Source	How Many Collected Per Teacher
Cycle 1, Spring 2020	Structured Interviews (audio recording)	I conducted structured interviews of the two participating teachers focused on their instructional views and approaches, in particular with students who have been labeled SED. Interviews took place at the beginning and end of cycle 1 to gauge teachers' attitudes and thoughts about the coaching cycle. In total, I conducted 4

		interviews during the first cycle (2 per teacher).
	Classroom observations (Zoom video recordings)	I conducted audio and video recordings of the virtual class sessions before and during the coaching cycles in both participating teachers' classrooms. Video recordings included the "try on" phase of each coaching cycle to gauge teachers' engagement and interaction. Audio recordings were transcribed for coding purposes. In total, I collected 17 classroom videos during the first cycle.
	Coaching Sessions (Zoom Video Recordings)	I also collected audio recordings of my virtual coaching sessions with each teacher. In total, I collected 4 coaching videos, two from each teacher during cycle 1.
Cycle 2, Fall 2020	Structured Interviews (audio recording)	I conducted structured interviews of the two participating teachers focused on their goals for cycle 2 and what they saw the benefits and struggles of coaching. Interviews took place at the

		beginning and end of cycle 2. In total, I conducted 4 interviews during the second cycle (2 per teacher).
	Classroom observations (Zoom video recordings)	I conducted audio and video recordings of the virtual class sessions during the second coaching cycle in both participating teachers' classrooms. Video recordings included the "try on" phase of each coaching cycle to gauge teachers' engagement and interaction. Audio recordings were transcribed for coding purposes. In total, I collected 17 classroom videos during the second cycle.
	Coaching Sessions (Zoom Video Recordings)	I collected audio recordings of my virtual coaching sessions with each teacher. In total, I collected 4 coaching videos, two from each teacher during cycle 2.

3.6 Data Analysis

For the purposes of my ongoing design work, I chunked my data into two separate phases. Cycle 1 was the first cycle of coaching that took place in the spring of 2020 and Cycle 2 was the cycle during the fall of 2020. As I collected each new piece of data in Cycle 1, I reviewed it, and then I coded and analyzed the data together. My goal was to generate useful and specific conclusions about what seems to be working, what could be adjusted, and to actually put those insights into my practice in Cycle 2.

I collected interview recordings, coaching sessions, and class sessions using Zoom and then transcribed them. I coded the transcripts to identify patterns and themes in teachers' practice and in my coaching practice. I analyzed my collected data by sorting the transcripts by theme.

I engaged in grounded analysis of my data, meaning that I wanted to see emergent themes rather than imposing a particular scheme on the data. I began by first looking at what the teachers did with their students, then moved to looking for patterns in my own coaching practice, and then by relating the two sets of patterns together.

I focused my analysis of teachers' instruction on two areas: their representation of content complexity and the degree of student engagement in their class meetings. I coded for content complexity by first looking if the lesson was aligned to the needs of the students. I looked at socioemotional content to be any type of character building, bullying, self-coping and regulation, as well as resiliency. I then looked at the level of application of the socioemotional content that was expected to be taken on by the students. I finally examined the topic of the lesson and determined if it seemed to match the maturity level of the students being taught. I next looked at the student engagement of each lesson. By "engagement" I mean the amount of student talk versus teacher talk or instances where the students are talking in response to the teacher as well as

instances in which two or more students talk without the teacher talking in between. I coded for engagement by calculating the number of minutes that students talked versus the number of minutes that the teacher talked. I gathered averages for students talk and for teacher talk for each of the cycles of coaching.

Table 3 Final Codebook: Teachers Instruction

Category	Code	Definition
Student Talk	Student-Student Talk	Instances in which two or more students talk without teacher talk in between
	Teacher-Student Talk	Instances in which the teacher talks between each student's turn of talk
Student Engagement with Ideas	Personal connection/reflection	Student offers a personal connection or reflection related to course content
	Question	Student asks a question related to course content
Teacher's representation of socioemotional content	Complex	Content was aligned to a socioemotional skill (ie: character building, self-regulation, coping, etc.) and was grade level appropriate. Lessons included application of the content represented at the student level.
	Approaching	Content presented was socioemotional in nature but its relevance was ambiguous for the group of students. Content was presented in unclear/ confusing way with little to no application at the student level.
	Poor/Absent	The lesson presented no content or the content discussed was not explicit and had no clear instructional objective. The content was not related to socioemotional health or wellbeing.

I focused my analysis of my own coaching practice by examining an aspect of the interactions between me and the teachers. I sought to analyze the teachers' willingness to engage with specific ideas in our interactions. By willingness to engage in coaching, I mean the extent to which each teacher collaboratively engaged with me throughout the coaching cycles. I examined each transcript of coaching conversations as well as emails that took place between the teachers and myself and looked at what the teachers actually did in their conversations with me as well as how I engaged as the coach. I looked through the coaching transcripts to see if each teacher participant took the feedback given to them after my observation of lessons or if the teacher had a different perspective. For example, did the teacher engage in the productive struggling of trying on new practices or did they decline to engage with ideas or feedback? Alongside this question, I looked at my own coaching moves and the extent to which I supported goal-driven, sustained professional learning. I looked at places where I brought the coaching conversation back to our ultimate teaching goal. I also examined where I shifted coaching support to address the changing or perceived needs of the teacher themselves. When presented with push-back, did I stay the course and go back to our coaching plan or did shift support based on the varied needs that were presented each day and allow the teachers to direct our conversations? I carefully analyzed each coaching transcript and looked for times the teacher participant deflected the focus to a perceived need and essentially changed the course of our coaching plan from the established goal. At these times, I coded and tracked if I allowed myself as the coach to be swayed into a new direction or if I remained steadfast to the original coaching goal chosen. Using this process, I attached the codes of being anchored to the coaching plan or drifting from the coaching plan.

Table 4 Final Codebook: Coaching

Category	Code	Definition
Teachers' Engagement in Coaching	Committing to suggestions	Instances in which teacher agreed to and engaged in planning implementation of suggestions
	Declining feedback	Instances in which the teacher offers an excuse or rejects coaching suggestions
My facilitation of sustained and focused teacher learning	Returning to goal	Instances in which I remained anchored to the coaching goal and was able to scaffold coaching conversations according to my initial plan.
	Shifting from goal	Instances in which I became from the coaching goal chosen and responded to teachers perceived needs and issues. Coaching conversations changed based on the current needs of the teacher.

3.7 Trustworthiness and Credibility

As an action researcher and the instructional coach, I had a professional stake in demonstrating that my study and this approach yielded evidence of teacher learning. There was the possibility that I could have been influenced and biased to the study by being directly involved in the research through collection of data, analysis, and teaching. However, I acknowledged that my study and approach could not yield completely positive results. In order to ensure the credibility of my project and that I was seeing what was present in the data, rather than what I

wanted to see in the data, I enlisted the help of other professionals in my context. I shared the full data set with my thesis advisor and co-analyzed sections of data. I also enlisted the help of a colleague to review the data and my findings to determine that my analysis was accurate. This process yielded confidence in my project.

Second, since I had created my particular instructional approach for use in my own emotional support context, it was possible that it may not transfer easily to other educators in my district. This is an issue that is common in action research studies and not necessarily a problem as long as I did not make claims of generalizability.

4.0 Findings

Based on my analysis, I assert that my coaching unevenly supported the two focal teacher participants. My coaching led to relatively substantive changes in the instructional practice of Jessica, and it led to minimal changes in the instructional practice of Rachael. Over the course of our work together, Jessica continuously refined and improved her instructional practice using socioemotional content. She engaged in professional growth as a result of our work and was able to implement content at a higher level, likely to the benefit of her students. Rachael only demonstrated slight instructional changes in her practice throughout the course of our work together. In what follows, I offer my analysis of my coaching patterns and patterns in each teacher's instruction.

4.1 Content Complexity

In this section, I share data patterns of each teacher's representation of content in their teaching.

4.1.1 Rachael

In the spring, there was a definite absence of socioemotional content in lessons designed and implemented by Rachael. After coaching and collaboration, Rachael began to plan and

implement lessons that had the presence of socioemotional content. However, her representation of content was still low in complexity.

During the first cycle, one out of four, about 25% of Rachael's lessons had the presence of socioemotional content. Three of her lessons served as check-ins for the students and offered her caseload an opportunity for tutoring or specific academic help. For example, in one lesson, Rachael told a student that she heard he had been having trouble with the short i sound, so they were going to practice together. She then produced various words for the child (ice cream, fish) and had the student identify long i or short i.

Rachael: Yea, You have it a little bit of trouble with the letter I, is that one confusing.

Student: No

Rachael: No. Can you tell me what the short I says.?

Student: i

Rachael: i , yes. Can you tell me what the long I says? Remember when we talked about they say very own name right.

Student: uh huh

Rachael: So the letter I says i.

Student: I

Rachael: So I'm gonna ask you if I say "it". Is that a short or long i.

Student: short

Rachael: Yes, you got it. What about the word ice cream?

Student: i

Rachael: Long, yea. And that's one of my favorite words ice cream. Do you like ice cream?

Student: Mmhmmm

I coded this as no content because it was not focused at all on the student's social or emotional health or wellness. Instead, she focused the time on short and long vowel sounds.

One lesson, however, presented content surrounding identifying emotions through senses. In this lesson, she gave students an introduction of the five senses and talked about how a person's senses can contribute to feelings. In this lesson, Rachael said,

So let's talk about sight. I know that when it's bright and sunny outside and I see that it - makes me feel happy. Well, when it's dark and gloomy, maybe raining or storming, it makes me feel kind of tired, maybe like I want to take a nap. So the things that we see can affect our emotions.

The introduction of feeling and emotions tied to the senses prompted me to code this as more complex content that I had initially seen from Rachael as it was an instructional lesson and content that was directly tied to academic skills and standards. However, the rigor of the content still fell below the level of need that her students exhibited as there was no application of the skill at the student level. The lesson consisted of simply sharing of information and the students did not have an opportunity to grapple with or engage in the content.

In the fall, 8/8 or 100% of Rachael's lessons had the presence of socioemotional content, although I still coded 50% of the lesson content as average or below. More specifically, two of her lessons in the fall focused on identifying and the importance of positive and negative self-talk; a crucial concept for elementary aged students with SED. Rachael went over several examples with students of positive and negative self-talk and had the students identify through a thumbs up or thumbs down if the statement was positive or negative. For example, "I will never be able to do

it” was an example of not positive self-talk, while “this is really hard, but I am going to keep trying” was positive self-talk.

Still, several of Rachael’s lessons during the fall focused on low level skills like identifying a strength or checking-in with students on how they were feeling. For example, in one lesson, Rachael’s only objective was to have the student check in with how they were feeling. If a student indicated they were not having a great day, she had other students in the zoom session tell a joke or try to cheer them up. This pattern did not seem to offer students meaningful strategies or tools for their own social and emotional well-being. Instead, it reduced what could be very real difficulties students were having to being “solvable” by hearing a joke. Moreover, in these checking-in lessons, there was quite a lot of time spent in superficial talk, which seemed to disregard the importance of instructional time.

4.1.2 Jessica

Jessica more substantially increased her content complexity of lessons throughout our coaching. In both the fall and spring, 12 out of her 13 lessons, or 92%, articulated clear and concise content objectives. Initially, Jessica planned and implemented lessons that had a clear instructional goal that benefited the students on her caseload. Her lessons aligned specifically to academic standards and offered content new to the students. For example, in one lesson, Jessica introduced mind mapping techniques to students as a tool for their tool box as she worked through her instruction to improve their resilience. Jessica had shared with her students about small mind (only thinking about yourself and what you want) and big mind (thinking about others and the consequences of your actions) and then walked them through a mind mapping activity. She said,

For today we're going to do something called mind mapping, which goes back to using your small mind and your big mind. Only with mind mapping, we're basically giving all solutions, possibilities, feelings for everything that's going through our head. but we mind map for our small mind and then we also map for our big mind.

The content and objectives of her lessons fit with the needs of her students and allowed them to learn skills and coping strategies to not only the benefit of themselves but those around them as well.

Throughout our cycles, Jessica moved the needle of complexity further by having students apply concepts to their individual lives and behaviors. In the fall, one lesson that Jessica taught was on setting boundaries. She explained the need for boundaries and why and when people use them. Jessica then had the students identify times when they had established a boundary. After several students seemed to be having trouble with a concrete example, Jessica used what she knew about the students and scaffolded their thinking to show how these skills and concepts were present in their lives:

Jessica: When you come into my room upset, what is something that we learned

Last year you had as a boundary. You would come in, with your fists clenched up and what?

Student: I want to sit in the cabinet and be left alone.

Jessica: Yes, that is a boundary you set. You didn't want to talk about things until you had some time to yourself to calm down.

Jessica was able to engage her students in conversation and thinking about how the specific content and lesson skill was applied to their daily behaviors.

4.2 Student Engagement

In this section, I share data patterns of each teacher's engagement of students throughout their lessons.

4.2.1 Rachael

During my spring observations of Rachael's teaching, Rachael's lessons included minimal opportunity for student talk. Lessons from the fall incorporated opportunities for student talk, but teacher talk still far exceeded student talk in these lessons. In the spring, Rachael's lesson during the first cycle offered less than three minutes of student talk per 12 minute lesson. After coaching cycles and collaboration, Rachael began to plan and implement lessons that had live student interaction, however, the quantity of engagement was still low with about 10% of each lesson being student talk.

During the spring, Rachael offered pre-recorded lessons and check-in sessions, which did not present students the opportunity to engage in much talk with one another or with Rachael herself. For example, in one check-in session with student JD, Rachael spent most of the zoom session speaking with JD's mom and giving her strategies to support learning at home with JD. Rachael shared touch math manipulatives and showed JD's mom how to use these resources to count money, an area that JD was struggling with.

Rachael: The nickel, has one dot so that is five. And then the dime, if you can see has two dots so. Let's go down here. Now I was going to; I can revamp this worksheet a little bit if it looks too difficult. I found several of them. This was the best picture to share with you because the dots works out very well. You have then, this quarter and this nickel, we

would count by fives using the touch points- come on, five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty five, thirty, thirty five, forty. You can count the change and then you could add two dollars to one dollar and forty cents, okay? And the pennies would be one.

Student mom: Okay

Rachael: So we would say use those touch points to count the quarters dimes and nickels and then count by ones for the extra penny. Okay does that make sense?

Student mom: Okay.

Rachael: So this worksheet in particular has five dollar bills, ten dollar bills, twenty dollar bills, I'm not going to send it the whole thing yet, I'm just going to send one that has only coins and then one that has the dollar bills. So I have a few different ones and I will send both of those things to you. You can pick and choose what you want to use from them just practice counting money. I'm not going to say that you have to do all of this or if I send you five worksheets that you has to do all, but just so that you can practice some of that money you can kind of pick and choose. And I found a few YouTube videos that explain it, it might be helpful, if you have change at home and you want to count the change but have this visual, I can mail you just one that you don't have to print. Does this make sense? Do you have questions about it?

While this type of check in may have been beneficial for JD's mom, it did little to support JD's social or emotional health.

During the fall, Rachael planned and implemented live lessons with her students. There were increased opportunities for students to engage in discussion, with 100% of her lessons having some sort of opportunity for student talk. Rachael, however, did not seem to capitalize on this

opportunity and when she did, depth of conversation was surface level with one word answers as 87% of her lessons in cycle 3 had less than five minutes of student talk.

Two lessons which offered the highest level of student talk, at almost 50%, were activities that allowed students opportunities to share how they were feeling on the particular day of the lesson. This activity produced more time for student centered talk, however, again, the depth of talk was low level and the connection to the lesson topic of self-awareness was unclear. Also, several of her lessons included the questioning method of having the students respond with a thumbs up or a thumbs down in response to her question. This may have been an effective way to check for mastery of a skill, however, it did not allow for active student engagement where students had the opportunity to share out.

4.2.2 Jessica

Jessica created more opportunities for her students to talk throughout the duration of the coaching cycles. In the spring, students had minimal opportunities to collaborate and engage in learning together with peers as only 20% of her planned lessons had student talk. 67% of lessons this fall yielded more than 5 minutes of student talk which led to increases in student participation and engagement as well as increased time students were engaged in conversation with one another.

Similarly to Rachael, Jessica's spring instruction included no opportunities for student talk due to the nature of prerecorded lessons. Jessica had one live lesson during the spring that resulted in 2.5 minutes of student talk during her approximately 16-minute lesson. Only one student joined that lesson, so the student talk was in direct response to Jessica's prompts or questions and not necessarily engaged with other students.

During the fall, Jessica was able to engage more students in live lessons with 55% of her lessons having more than one student in attendance. The students were able to engage in conversation throughout her lessons in response to the lesson topic as well as speak freely in response to Jessica's prompts. 6 out of 9 cycle three lessons had between 5 and 10 minutes of student talk with students engaging in conversation either with Jessica or each other about the lesson topic. For example, in one lesson, Jessica used breakout rooms to allow students an opportunity to meet with one another and apply the active listening skills presented in the lesson. In another lesson, students each took an opportunity to share a personal boundary they had set in their personal lives to show evidence of understanding the lesson presented.

Jessica: This reminds me of bey blades, yea?

Student: yes

Jessica: So what is a boundary you would put in place to make sure your bey blades do not get broken.

Student: nothing, they are indestructible!

Jessica: Well what would you do if one was stolen or missing?

Student: Well if someone stole one, we would be scrapin, but that wouldn't happen because I give them to you every day to hold until recess.

Jessica: That is a boundary. That is a boundary you set. You know that if something were to happen to these, you would be upset, so you give them to me to hold.

That is a perfect boundary, J.

Jessica was able to engage her students in conversation where they could personally apply the skill being taught.

4.3 My Coaching Approach

My initial coaching plan for both participants was the same. I began with the identification of a core teaching practice to use as the goal of our coaching conversations. I then presented both Rachael and Jessica with a podcast that detailed content and strategies to enhance student resiliency, mindfulness, and coping. Both participants listened and saw how the podcast could be used as a tool in teaching socioemotional content to their students. While the focus of my coaching work centered around a core teaching practice that would ultimately improve each participant's instruction, the podcast was the material used to implement the core practices. I utilized the 4-quadrant coaching template to build out our coaching sessions and support each teacher's growth toward their goal. All of my coaching sessions with Jessica stayed anchored to the goal that we determined together. Of Rachael's coaching sessions, only 33% of them stayed anchored to the goal; instead, my coaching with Rachael seemed to drift over our cycles of work together.

Jessica's goal was to improve her instructional quality by planning and implementing rich socioemotional content. We planned to introduce socioemotional concepts and vocabulary to her students explicitly and systematically.

Schmidt: yes. Okay, I think that when I listened to it again, I think when they talked about like front loading the terms and concepts to the kids and like teaching them about like dis-regulation and how to recognize when they're getting into that is a good idea, especially for your age group of kids because a lot of times they can recognize. You know they recognize what they're doing, but do they recognize why they're in that state? I mean a lot of times they can like, they'll be able to articulate, like I don't get to be picked

first in line, but how do you feel, I guess effectively manage that when you're in your small mind.

Jessica: Yeah that would be when I introduce and talk about our super powers, like the super senses.

Schmidt: yeah, yeah. I think that will work really well and

Jessica: I think once you know, I start using it and sit down and do meetings with fourth fifth and sixth grade, I think their teachers will also be able to say you know make sure you know you're checking in on your senses and stuff - so that they will be able to help them because more times than not it's not happening when it's in my room, it's happening when it's with somebody else and so for them to be able to help too I think will be really helpful.

Immediately in our initial coaching conversation, Jessica was able to plan about how she would collaborate and plan with the other grade level teachers in order to extend the socioemotional content and lessons into the students regular education classes. Not only was she prepared to plan and implement the content in her own Emotional Support classroom, but she was also planning on monitoring the students application of the skills in classrooms where they had to most social and emotional needs.

Rachael's immediate goal was to build relationships and get to know her students on a more comprehensive level while still supporting their socioemotional learning.

Schmidt: I thought though with your kids and your teaching focus, we could maybe start with like the simple skills, like when they talk about super power senses, just like identifying like you know, what are the senses and having them like practice going through things like that like identifying how they are feeling and model using them to

calm down, like in the podcast, the example of giving them a brick and having them identify, like is it soft, is that rock, is a cold, is that warm, and doing that kind of stuff with them to elicit their own language about some senses and what they feel. I think your focus will be very different in that it will essentially be different for each student. Since your students are younger and still very closed off and quiet, the focus of teaching with each student in mind will be important. What Jeremiah needs is very different than what Faith needs, however, both have an extreme need for this type of language and skill set.

Rachael: Ok, that makes sense, I could, like maybe, have a general lesson on the material, but have them respond in a way that is unique to their needs and feelings.

As these excerpts suggest, during both first coaching sessions both participants presented interest in the content and in implementing in their perspective classrooms.

As the spring went by, Rachael's coaching session quickly became filled with reasons as to why the lessons were not working and why her students were not engaged. These sessions happened during the height of COVID and in the middle of the mandated school closure in Pennsylvania. Rachael expressed having concerns about lack of engagement of students and difficulty engaging them virtually in any type of lesson. In my position as a coach, I deferred to the needs Rachael was expressing and we moved away from our original focus. The following excerpt shows an instance of this drift:

Schmidt: How did things end up? How do you feel about how the kids took the lesson?

Rachael: Umm, it was ok. It is difficult to assess how exactly they interacted with the lesson because they are not online, no one comes to the lives, and they really didn't send me the video assignment. They just really attend class with their regular ed teacher if that.

They're not handing in assignments. I know it is the end of the year, but I just feel like they are done.

Schmidt: Ok, let's think about how we can engage them, keeping in mind we need to leverage their parents for support.

After our initial plan and lesson, Rachael came to our next coaching conversation defeated and expressing concerns about her students online engagement. I drifted from our initial coaching goal and worked with her instead to develop ways to engage her students and their parents in online instruction during the final weeks of school.

Differently from Rachael, my coaching sessions with Jessica remained focused on our instructional goal and the resource I had provided her. During Jessica's second coaching session, we immediately referred back to the exemplar model and reflected together on how the first week of lessons seemed to go with her students. Engagement was an issue with Jessica's students as well, but we planned the next phase of content that she thought her students would need to be able to develop mastery of the strategies presented in the podcast. For instance, one part of our conversation was about the transfer of the skills into individual practice. Jessica's students needed to be able to apply the de-escalation and coping techniques to their daily behaviors in order to make marked improvements in their social behaviors.

Jessica: I think it went well. I think what I would have to do will probably be to incorporate this as a part of the morning meeting and just do it pretty much every day for it to become something that they used and like the terminology to be more frequent.

Schmidt: right

Jessica: which is what I want them to do, but basically doing like a check in every morning, with like, are you in their small mind, big mind, is there anything bothering

you, and then do a check in again during de-escalation just so that they become so familiar with it and that they use the terminology basically as replacements for what they would typically say.

Jessica articulated during our coaching conversation that she intended to implement these practices and socioemotional content the following school year with her students. She was able to see the value that these lessons had on her students and she was committed to continuing these practices the next academic year.

This fall, my coaching approach was less formalized. I met with both Jessica and Rachael and had them identify goals for the first few weeks of school, which again were taking place virtually. Rachael said that her goals were to teach a social emotional lesson daily to her students in order to strengthen their toolbox of coping and management strategies. Jessica said her goal was to continue where she left off in the spring with resilience and coping strategies and building the foundation of skills presented in the original guiding text.

4.4 Interaction Patterns with Teachers

Throughout the coaching process, the interactions between myself and both participants were vastly different. Below I unpack the patterns in my interactions with both teachers.

Initially when presented with my project, Rachael seemed eager and interested in the study and being a participant. Quickly into our first conversation, I was able to gain an understanding of how each of our coaching conversations might go. Despite the suggestion or strategy, Rachael consistently presented with the attitude that she had implemented or practiced what was being offered before. Instead of taking up the practice and planning and rehearsing the instruction, she

would deflect to something she had used before that was similar or the same according to her. Interactions with Rachael seemed forced. During each cycle, Rachael presented issues that were a challenge to her teaching, and during each cycle I offered suggestions and support to her perceived issues. I abandoned our initial goals and began to offer ways to support where she saw difficulties in her practice when they came up, week by week. Throughout each of our coaching cycles, Rachael implied that she had previously utilized the suggested strategy or implemented similar content. When presented with an exemplar of lesson idea, 100% of Rachael's responses were acknowledging she had already engaged with something similar. For example, in our first coaching session, when presented with the lesson idea on senses, our conversation was the following:

Rachael: So it is a social skills curriculum that you pay for. I have just like a very basic version of it. And. I'm going to use Pinterest a lot to get pictures but it's, let me see if I can show it to you. It's a little bit similar to, like, the senses so they have these. The kids are the superheroes, they're called super flex. And. It has to do with flexible thinking.

Schmidt: ok

Rachael: So there's rock brain and if you get rocked- you know if you're fighting rock brain, you're fighting somebody who can't be, or you get stuck on an idea

Schmidt: ok

Rachael: Glassman, I think that's his name, I can't even read it, it's so little. Umm gets really upset, really fast and once, it's like he's breakable

Schmidt: ok

Rachael: Braineater is when you're learning, and things are really easily distracting you, so he's a little guy, he's an octopus that has like a TV and a remote control. Some of them are applicable, I mean not all of them are applicable to everyone. There is fun sucker,

who sucks the fun out of everything, not all of our kids are you know like that, so it would depend on what I know about the student on which I could introduce to them but it's similar to like the super senses.

From our first coaching conversation, Rachael compared the content or suggestion given to something she had previously taught or implemented. She would immediately relate to something she had familiarity with and then revert to the old practice instead of investing in and “trying on” a new practice or skill.

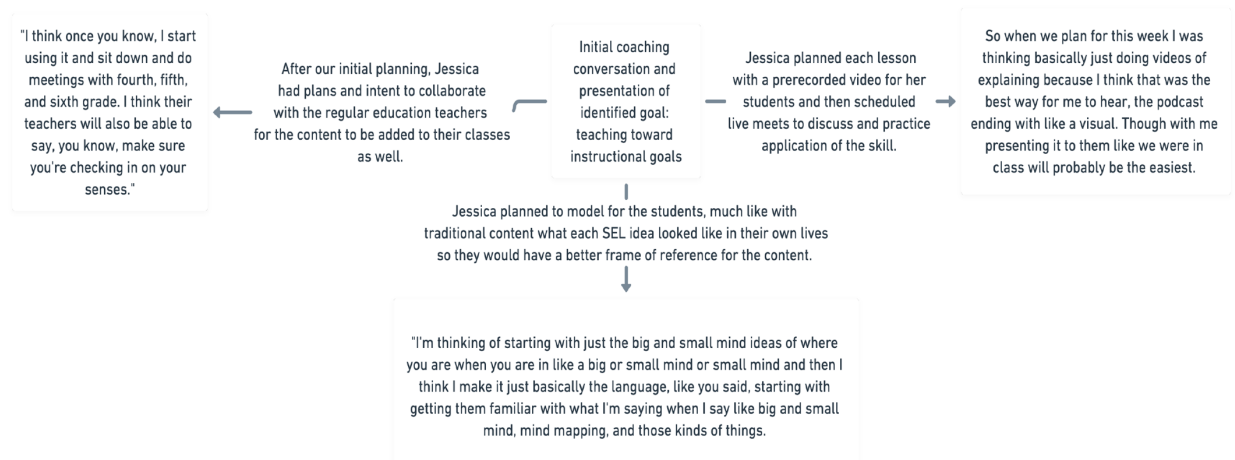


Figure 1 Interaction Patterns with Rachael

Instead of trying on and rehearsing new content or ideas, Rachael continuously deflected to something she had previously done or was already familiar with. Rachael and I would get through the initial introduction and planning of the coaching session, but when the observation took place, the lesson differed greatly from what we had planned. This contributed to the difficulty I had moving forward in her coaching cycles. Ultimately, I let her direct the coaching pathway and became unanchored from the identified coaching goal. I abandoned my own goals that I had established for her teaching and instead allowed her perceived issues become our goals.

In contrast, Jessica took up the model presented and got to work identifying gaps in current practice and next steps in implementation. She planned and rehearsed lessons before sending out content videos to the students in the spring. During our first session, Jessica dove right into how she envisioned this exemplar and content with her students.

Jessica: Yeah, they said at the end about like why are you so invested and sure this works and why do you think it works and they said to try it on yourself and it was so funny because this morning I found myself getting frustrated over something and I was like why am I being small minded, like immediately went there with like mapping it out, like really honestly mapping it and so it was, I think, am I being selfish? Is it a big deal? Is it a small deal? And those kinds of things. It was really helpful. They just sit down and look at like the maps and look at where I was looking at and like being frustrated and is it a big deal or is a little deal, you know like those kinds of things, so I think it could be very helpful and broader I guess not just for ES students.

Schmidt: yeah, I agree, especially with our students in general, because even though we have a lot of students that aren't identified as ES but still have the same behaviors, as of you know some of the kids display.

Jessica: I liked when they talked about should and must.

Schmidt: yeah, I just think it's something that our kids could really relate to and they would have an easy time. understanding and putting it into practice, but I was gonna

Jessica: I was thinking the same thing about the should and must, sorry, I'm looking down at my notes, I thought that might almost be like an adaptation to it for students are having a harder time with like the mapping and stuff to just go like, when you're in a pinch and when they're saying about like being in line first and then saying I must be

first and just saying like ok, you must be first or you should be first, I feel I think would be very easy.

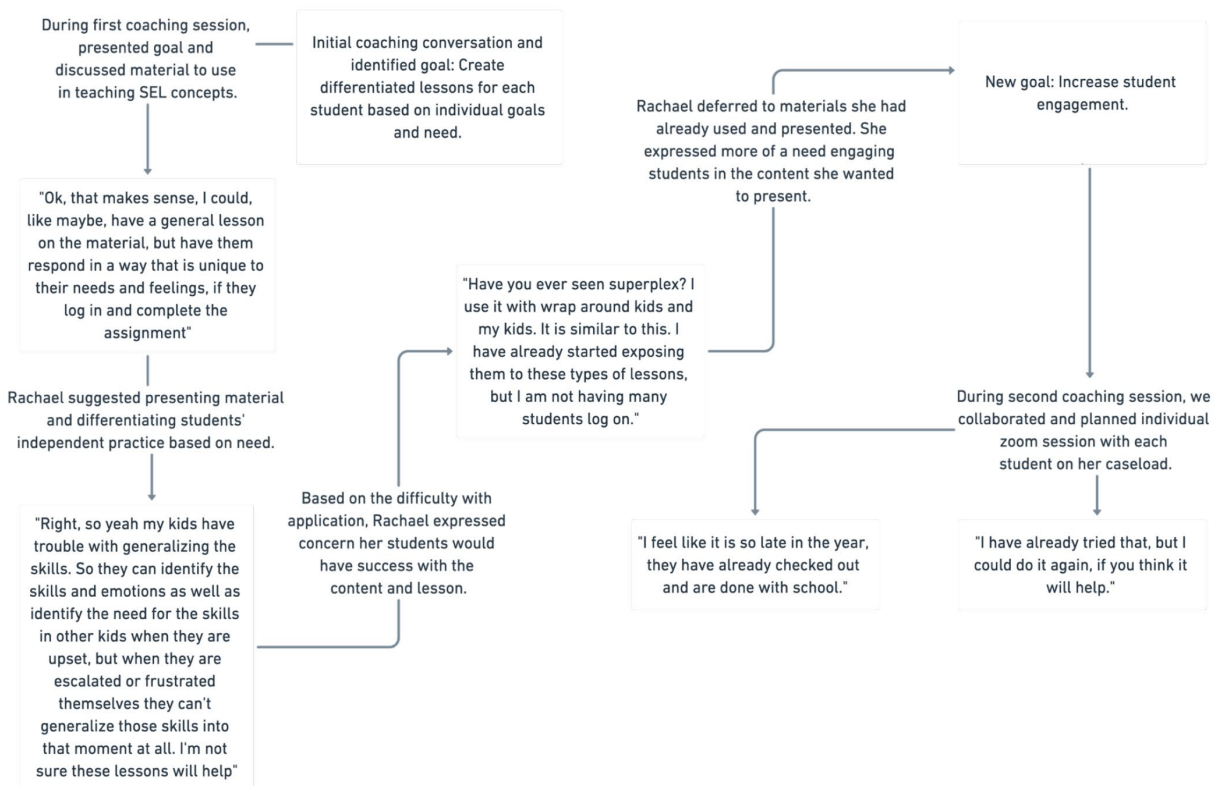


Figure 2 Interaction Patterns with Jessica

Throughout the study, Jessica's focus remained on the core teaching practice. All of our reflections on lessons, coaching conversations, and next steps went back to how to bring socioemotional ideas and content to her students in an explicit manner. Our focus was consistently to bridge the gap from where the students were to where we wanted them to be in reference to our coaching goal. When aspects or engagement seemed to be low, we used our time to scaffold ways to get the students where we needed. It was clear through these actions that Jessica believed in the work and was committed to working through any barriers that may have presented themselves in the cycle.

4.5 Conclusions: My Practice and My Effectiveness

Throughout the coaching sessions with Rachael, I continuously deferred to the perceived needs she presented. While I had ultimately started the coaching plans with the same procedure and a clear teacher-generated goal, each time I met with Rachael and she deflected from the main goal with an issue or an excuse, I shifted course in my plan. I allowed Rachael to essentially call the shots in our plan and I continued to follow up her needs with suggestions and interventions which she seemed to find no value in. My coaching practice became unanchored from my initial coaching plan and goal and took on a more haphazard approach. Thus, my coaching led to minimal increases in teacher effectiveness for Rachael. She implemented slight instructional changes, such as live instruction and teaching toward instructional goals and was able to produce nominal changes in her practice.

My practice with Jessica also started with a collaborative coaching conversation and identified teacher goal. All of our coaching sessions and interactions reflected back to the goal and the current gaps in practice. We continuously discussed and planned next steps in moving her practice and instruction toward the identified core practice. Suggestions and support were immediately implemented and Jessica and I used the time after each lesson to reflect and debrief about what had just taken place. My coaching with Jessica remained anchored to our focal goal throughout all of the coaching cycles. The coaching plan and core teaching practice became the constant that all of our coaching conversations centered around. My coaching cycles with Jessica allowed her to make improvements and to work toward continuous refinement of her instructional practices while receiving immediate feedback. She engaged in true professional growth as a result of our work and was able to shift the quality of her instruction, likely to the benefit of her students.

4.6 Teachers' Reported Experiences of Being Coached

Although my analysis suggests uneven change in the teachers' instructional practice, both participants reported benefits to their own practice. When asked what it was like to work through a professional learning cycle together and more specifically what worked well or could have worked better, both teachers offered positive insights.

Rachael said:

I thought it was really beneficial to work through this especially since I am so new to not only this age group but also the district in general. I think I found more benefit working in my own capacity as opposed to a regular education teacher because my students have such unique needs that it was nice to have direction and ideas from someone else about what could benefit them. The whole coaching cycles worked and like I said it was nice to have someone not necessarily with more experience to bounce ideas off of, but just really someone to share ideas and best practices and not be afraid that if things failed or went badly it would be seen as a negative. In terms of what could have worked better, I would have liked to see the benefits of doing this when we had the students in front of us every day, all day and could have worked more intensely on some of the skills.

Jessica said:

Working through this learning cycle has taught me so much not just about the strategies, but also learning about constructive criticism. I have learned from collaborating on a project about how to be adaptive and flexible. I have enjoyed gaining new perspective and resources on a topic that I am passionate about and want to incorporate more of in my classroom. I think the strategies were integrated as best as they could have been given the

situation we are currently in. For my students that did sign on and participate they will be more aware of the vocabulary being used for next year. I think what worked was using student input as well as calling them weekly to see them and interact with them. These strategies will continue to grow and flourish in my room when we return as a whole class.

It is interesting to note that both participants reported positive changes and benefits to their own practice. Potential explanations include that the teachers really did think that they grew professionally over the multiple months we worked together, and, possibly, that they were better able to detect change in their own practice than I was when observing them teach a subset of lessons. It is also possible that they felt some pressure to say that they benefited from our time together when talking to me.

5.0 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to improve the opportunities to learn online for students who have been diagnosed and labeled with SED in my school district. Both Emotional Support teachers participated in this study and engaged in two coaching cycles, facilitated by me. The coaching was intended to be individualized to the needs and goals of each teacher, sustained over a period of time, and responsive to their emerging challenges and perspectives. A key aspect of my coaching was selecting a cornerstone text (a podcast) for us to consider, co-plan with, and come back to as a resource for supporting instructional quality in the elementary Emotional Support classroom.

Ultimately, I found that both teachers may have benefitted somewhat from our coaching, but that Jessica made clearer changes in her instruction. When I considered this in relation to my coaching, I found that I was actually a somewhat different coach with each of these two teachers. With Jessica, I was an “anchored” coach who was both responsive to her evolving needs but also exemplar- and goal-focused. With Rachael, I was a “drifting” coach who, with all the best of intentions, allowed the coaching sessions to fluctuate too widely in their focus based on the expressed needs and statements of the teacher. The differences in my own coaching could have come from a number of different factors. First, I had more of an established relationship with Jessica than Rachael because of the timeline of Rachael’s hiring. Subsequently, given the fact that Rachael was so new to the district combined with the COVID pandemic, led to increases in her attention to the coaching plan. Rachael’s needs ended up being quite different due to the different stressor in her professional context. Lastly, working as the coach and ultimately as their evaluator, my boundaries for myself were unclear. I hesitated being too directive during our coaching work

as this project was non-evaluative. These elements contributed to the patterns I examined in my coaching work.

Throughout this study, as the coach, I was able to learn a new way coaching different than what I had used in the past. For years, I worked as an instructional coach with no guiding framework or model. This study gave me the opportunity to try out a definitive coaching cycle with teachers. Like most learning experiences, there were difficult times that led me back to the literature and caused refinement of my coaching own work. The iterative cycle of each coaching loop allowed me to not only refine and impact teachers practices, but my own practices as a coach as well.

My own fluctuation as a coach—and the apparent differences in my effectiveness—underscore the complexity of the work of instructional coaching. Coaching is, in fact, a practice, and it is one that is relational and dynamic. Just as coaching approaches may differ across contexts and people, they may also differ within the same coach's work, based on interpersonal dynamics, alignment or misalignment of priorities, or other factors, such as the length of time of the coaching loop.

One important and notable finding was a potential disconnect between teachers reported and perceived professional growth and what I was able to observe in their instruction with students. It is possible that teachers did both grow and that I missed some important aspects of growth with Rachael. It is also possible that perceptions and enacted practice can differ such that observing teachers' instruction becomes critical for understanding potential effectiveness of coaching. This supports the arguments of teacher educators, who argue that coaching should be a collaborative cycle that begins with a rich example and allows the coach and teacher to work together to support students (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Such models allow space for teachers to view their current

practice, which can lead to the identification of current gaps. Providing teachers with a model of what rich instruction could look like allows teachers an opportunity to reflect upon their own teaching. An implication in my district is that we would do well to include more routine videoing and reflection of teachers rather than relying on exit slips and other written reflections as measures of instructional change. And, we might benefit from inviting teachers more into a self-directed process of considering the potential gaps between their perceptions of their instruction and their actual instruction.

These findings offer critical guidelines for coaches to consider when designing future support and coaching plans for teachers. Equally important as high-quality teaching and student engagement is the opportunity afforded for teachers to engage in viewing and reflective practice of their own teaching. Additionally, the importance of coaching plans to be created with an explicit teaching goal and focus as well as the opportunity to engage in the coaching loop for several weeks or the whole academic year. My study offers a tentative response to Bean and Zigmond's (2006) questions: "What should coaches do with their time? What coaching activities have the greatest effect on teacher practices and student achievement?" and "Is coaching truly effective for improving teachers' competence, fidelity of implementation of research-based practices, and confidence?" I feel confident in answering that coaches need to offer short iterative cycles that offer teachers a chance to see their work in juxtaposition with rich examples of instruction. This type of coaching loop may in fact support teachers' professional development.

As my district continues work through school transformation, this study can serve as a guide for coaching that can yield improvements in teacher instruction. Coaching models that have no systematic framework or model can get lost in the larger school system and may not yield consistent and effective results, as was evidenced in my previous years as an Instructional Coach.

Teacher practices and student achievement saw little and inconsistent gains despite my district having four Instructional Coaches. Teacher engagement in a clearly defined coaching model that includes components outlined in my study (guiding practice, collaborative planning, rehearsal of application, and reflective feedback and support) would allow opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful work and reflection focused on their individual practices. A critical piece moving forward for my own district will be identification of teaching goals as well as the opportunity for teachers to view their own teaching practices.. Creating the space as a district to make effective coaching cycles a priority will lead more comprehensive coaching opportunities for teachers as well as coaches.

As we continue embarking in school transformation, ensuring that there is protected time and space to facilitate work between coaches and teachers will be a critical piece. I see next steps towards ensuring this becomes possible as creating substitute days to ensure teachers have productive and focused time with coaches, scheduling and facilitating common planning time between general education and special education teachers, and creating a shared district vision for not only coaching but also for special education spaces, such as the emotional support classroom. Utilizing focused and protected time throughout these coaching cycles; the teacher and coach could work through iterative cycles of continuous observation and feedback aligned to their individualized coaching goal. Teachers would have the opportunity for in the moment feedback and rehearsal of skills while they worked on improving individual instructional practices. These focused practices would allow for teachers and coaches not only focused time to refine teacher practices, but also allow all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and goal of each classroom. Emotional support classrooms could begin to be seen as spaces that serve students socioemotional needs instead of spaces for time out. General education and special

education teachers can begin to develop a shared investment in all students without labeling students or coming from negative space.

Finally, I have reflected on the online nature of my coaching and most of the teachers' teaching. I read about online coaching and distilled principles from that literature such as a clear and effective coaching model into my own work. In reality, I did not change my coaching much at all for the online context. I used online tools to operate more or less as I would have in person, but I could have built out more explicit and robust opportunities for the teachers to rehearse and try on the new strategies and content. In retrospect, I could have approached each teacher's individual needs differently by providing increased personalized support based on their specific needs. This would have included building more personalized relationships with each teacher and spending more personalized time with them on goal setting and purpose. This could have resulted in more pronounced success of teacher change and improvement.

5.1 Contextual Factors

As an action research study, this study had several contextual factors. In terms of my individual practice and setting, the small number of initial lessons and students made it difficult to navigate. Because of the low number of students on each caseload and the initial infrequency of meetings, the study seemed to get off to a slow start. Along these same lines, perhaps selecting a guiding text with the participants or allowing the teachers to have some input initially could have created more buy in or ownership from the teachers.

The onset of COVID and disruptions to my school context brought about additional challenges: time and format of delivery of services. Both of these factors were brought on by the

COVID-19 pandemic and contributed greatly to the outcome of this study. Shifting to virtual instruction was difficult in and of itself and was compounded also by the onset of this study. Initially, this study was set to begin at the beginning of March. Schedules and initial interviews were being made and conducted. When COVID-19 mandated the closure of all K-12 school buildings on March 13, 2020, this study was pushed back several weeks. The coaching cycles and instructional lessons were implemented in May as opposed to March when students were preparing to finish learning for the school year and were seemingly exhausted from several weeks of online learning. Because my coaching and the implementation of instruction from the teachers took place so late in the school year, aspects of the initial two coaching cycles felt rushed.

The second contextual factor was the format of the delivery of services. When the pandemic shut down schools for in person instruction in mid-March, this project and ultimately the teachers instruction, was forced too now be virtual. Working with students who have limited access to devices and consistent technological infrastructure, made daily live lessons and check-in's with all students impossible. While recording lessons may have been a benefit to both participants, because they were given the opportunity to get each lesson exactly as they wanted, it served as a limitation because I was unable to accurately analyze student engagement. Even as teachers moved to live instruction during the fall, virtual student engagement remained a difficult aspect of the study. While both participants had students join live instruction, opportunities for high student engagement remained limited. Additionally, primary age students (K-3) relied heavily on parent or guardian support during virtual instruction. The parent/family situation of these high need students is difficult at best and the addition of virtual learning complicated this area further.

Additionally, the time frame of the study seemed to serve as a critical factor in this study. If the study could have been extended and additional cycles completed once school and instruction

returned to normal, there may have been more significant change in the instructional habits of both participants.

When identifying factors surrounding time, the length of time that Rachael was employed by the district could also have impacted this study. Rachael was hired in January and had just begun solidifying and building relationships with her caseload of students. When schools were shut down in March, her students had previously established routines and built parent engagement relationships with their general education teacher. During the closure, her students followed the general education teachers' assignments and workload. Rachael's lessons and interventions for socioemotional health seemed to be viewed as optional since the coursework was not graded and there were not already established relationships and expectations for her work.

5.2 Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, working as a participant in my study and being the only person to review and analyze the data served as limitation. I had the potential to not see my coaching work honestly and fully due to my relationships with both participants. Additionally, performing this study in my own district with teachers that I was officially their evaluator was a limitation. The line between support and accountability was blurred in my own coaching and often I was passive as to be seen as the evaluator. Finally, creating the coaching plans by myself and not working with a special education specialist who know students with SED and their needs well was a limitation. My coaching approach could have been refined to better suit Emotional Support teachers had I created coaching plans collaboratively with the Special Education director.

5.3 Future Research and Implications

This study suggests that additional and continued professional learning for the Emotional Support teachers is needed. As the Director of Curriculum in my district, I can continue to engage in this model with teachers throughout the district. With both teachers I would prioritize the sharing of rich instructional practices followed by the rehearsal of those practices in comparison with their current teaching. While each teacher's instructional priority would be different, I would place larger emphasis on the viewing of his or her current practices in conjunction with co-created goals for professional learning. This would allow us to coaching loops that are individualized and responsive as well as sustained over a significant period of time.

I suspect that a larger focus on instructional quality could benefit many teachers in my district, not just the two with whom I worked. I can facilitate professional learning opportunities in order to support my colleagues' ongoing professional development. In order to scale up this coaching model in my district, I can train other administrators and coaches to use this specific coaching loop with teachers. More specifically, using this specific framework for coaching will allow teachers to continuously be exposed to rich instructional practices, have multiple opportunities to view their current teaching practices, collaboratively plan and try out targeted practices under the direction of myself or a coach, and most critically, receive continuous and timely feedback that is directly aligned to their individual practices.

Balancing the dynamic of support and accountability was difficult for me throughout this study. Extending this model to include additional administrators and teacher leaders who can serve as a coach would build a more widespread approach to support not only myself but also the teachers. Additionally, working in informal coaching models that will take place separate from this study may allow me to be more direct with teachers since I can switch between the role of

evaluator and coach more clearly. This model can also serve as a space where teachers have opportunities to view rich teaching models in comparison to their own practices while receiving corrective and supportive feedback.

Instructional coaching is definitely a needed area of practice as during the past 13 years, while my district had identified instructional coaches, there was not one uniform or consistent approach to how coaching would take place. The results of this study allowed me to see the need for a uniform and consistent model for coaching as opposed to implementing haphazard practices. This study provides a model that includes critical pieces of coaching, such as the representation of exemplar practices and the immediate reflection of such practices. If given the opportunity to continue this learning in my professional context, I will use the coaching cycles from this study as a model and expand my timeline for each cycle. Spending additional time planning and rehearsing what the lessons will look like could assist in making the teachers instructional change. My own growth as a coach can be supported by working in coaching cycles of my own with district mentors to refine and grow in my own work as a coach and instructional leader. Sharing the practice of action research and how it benefits the professional teaching community will be significant for the teachers in my district. The modeling and collaboration combined with the various iterations needed are some of the aspects that will benefit the teachers with whom I work.

On a larger scale at the district level, there will need to be discussion about the ultimate goal of the Emotional Support classroom. As a team of district leaders, a shared mission and vision for these spaces needs to be created. From an instructional standpoint, but also from a coaching standpoint, the creation of a shared vision would ensure that teachers, coaches, and support staff were all working toward the same common goal and within the same parameters. As a team, the role of the Emotional Support teacher will need to be established and communicated. Are these

spaces going to be spaces solely for emotional and social growth? If so, selecting content and supporting instructional practices that foster this growth in students will be critical. System level decisions such as socioemotional curriculum and identified time for support will need to be addressed. Creating and aligning these core ideas would allow students to become the shared responsibility of all teachers who engaged with them as opposed to be secluded and excluded to alternative placement classrooms where learning is seen as occurring separately.

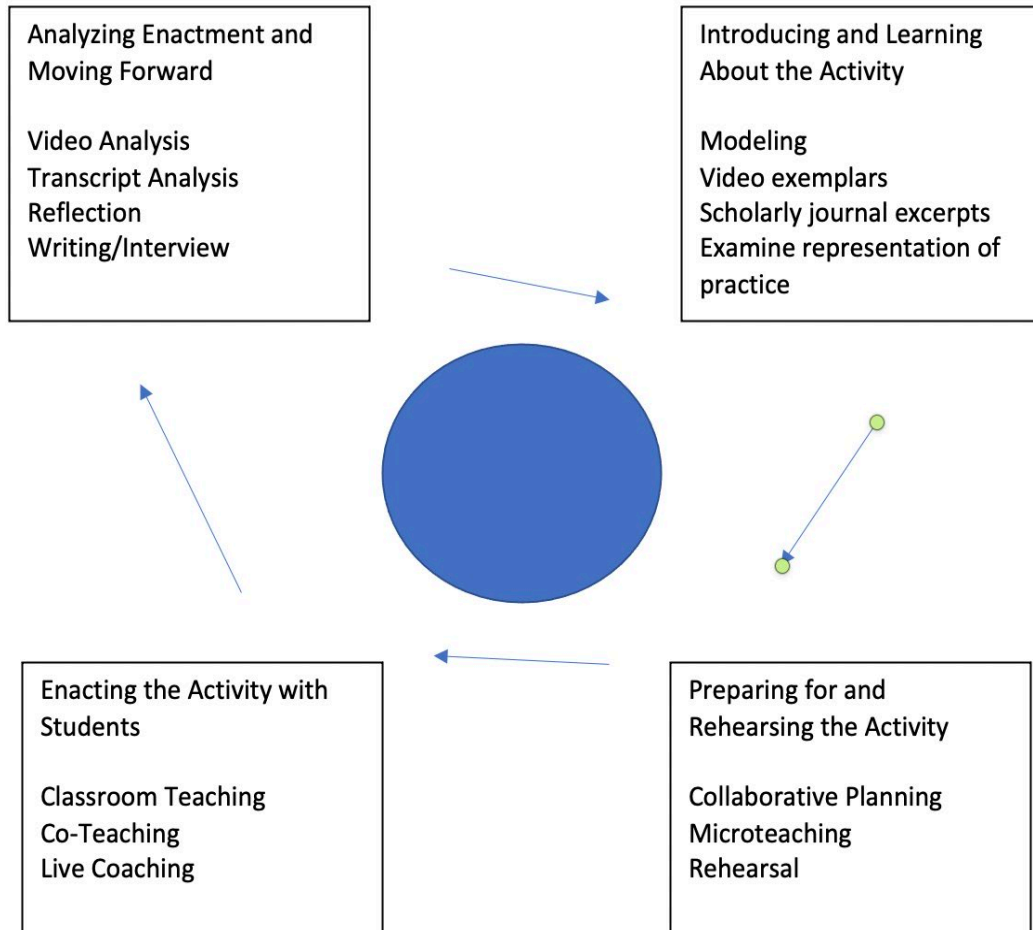
5.4 Conclusion

Working to improve learning opportunities for students with SED is challenging and critical work. The research conducted in this study provides a solid foundation and starting point for educators and future researchers.

When examining learning outcomes for students diagnosed with SED, data from this study supports that examining and refining teacher practices through collaborative coaching cycles is beneficial. Teaching practices that were examined through coaching cycles can be employed across content areas and not singly used for socioemotional learning and health.

The data presented in this study should allow educators to be able to better understand that individual teacher practices always have room for growth and improvement. Additionally, the success and results educators can yield can be transferred to other teachers through coaching to build instructional capacity. I seek to build on this work with my colleagues toward a culture of continuous learning that is focused on student learning and success in all areas.

Appendix A Coaching Cycle



* Adopted from McDonald M., Kazemi, E., & Kavanagh, S.S. (2013).

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