CONVERSATIONS WITH COACHES: THEIR ROLES IN PENNSYLVANIA READING FIRST SCHOOLS

by

Kathryn E. Carroll

Bachelor of Science, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1989

Master's in Early Childhood Education, Carlow College, 1995

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This dissertation was presented

by

Kathryn E. Carroll

It was defended on

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and approved by

Isabel Beck, Professor, Instruction and Learning

Gregory A. Morris, Associate Professor Emeritus, Instruction and Learning

Charlene Travato, Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

Naomi P. Zigmund, Professor, Instruction and Learning

Dissertation Advisor: Rita M. Bean, Professor, Instruction and Learning

**CONVERSATIONS WITH COACHES: THEIR ROLES IN PENNSYLVANIA
READING FIRST SCHOOLS**

Kathryn E. Carroll, Ed.D.

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Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania were interviewed in order to gain a better understanding
of the problems and possibilities of coaching. Thirty coaches volunteered to be part of the study.
The coaches represented twelve districts across the state of Pennsylvania.

Data collection consisted of an interview created by the researcher. The interview
instrument asked questions in the following areas: background and preparedness, time spent on
"explicit coaching" activities, such as modeling and demonstrating, factors within the
organization that helped or hindered the work of the coach, what coaches perceived their
responsibilities to be, and what problems and possibilities there were with the jobs they
performed.

Analysis of the interview data revealed that over half of the coaches did not feel prepared
for the role when they first began coaching. An overemphasis on content knowledge in the
professional development coaches received prior to coaching and the lack of consistency in
schools of the expectations of coaches may have led to these feelings of unpreparedness.
Coaches complete a myriad of tasks during a typical week. The work is seen as necessary and as
requiring a long-term commitment on the part of the coach to build relationships with all staff
members. Over time, the coach became an accepted part of the school culture. The way the
principal embraced or did not embrace the role was instrumental in how quickly the coach was
seen as valuable within the school. Experiences, both positive and negative, have been good

teachers for each coach. Although coaching is a challenging position, it is one that has many

rewards.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The field of education has undergone major changes in an effort to improve reading scores. In the past, educators saw the materials or programs used with students as the centerpiece of education. If students had appropriate materials or programs in their classrooms, they would achieve. In more recent times, there has been a shift in perspective. Teachers are now seen as the cornerstone of change in education. They are seen as the ones who will coordinate current reform efforts in classrooms as they deliver instruction to students. Sanders (2002) states that effective teachers have a positive influence on student achievement. These teachers can impact growth in students in both the short and long term. "Successful teachers can elicit significant gains from students of all ethnicities and income levels" (2002, p. 13).

Educators have been seeking to remedy the problem of lack of student achievement through good instruction provided by classroom teachers. Good instruction comes when teachers reconsider their role in the classroom and work on improving their practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). "The vision of practice that underlies the nation's reform agenda requires most teachers to rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before" (p. 597).

In order for teachers to begin teaching in new ways, a system had to be put into place within the education community that would give teachers the knowledge and resources to change

their practice and, as a result, improve student learning. Professional development appears to be the mechanism by which the education community will help improve teacher quality.

Old methods of professional development were found to be ineffective. The "one-shot" or "sit and get" (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee & Klinger, 2002, p. 10) workshops where teachers were given a great deal of information in a few days with no follow-up could not be used if real change was going to happen. Instead, more effective means of producing lasting change in teacher practice had to be used. Studies have shown that incorporating relevant theory, demonstrating new skills and having opportunities for teachers to practice and receive feedback around a new skill help sustain teacher change (2002).

> High quality professional development programs should be structured to include three components: support, reflection, collaboration. In-service professional development opportunities need to provide for transfer of training, practice, feedback and reflection, as well as, support and reinforcement for the use of skills in natural settings (p. 25).

The need for these high quality professional development sessions became more urgent when the No Child Left Behind Act came into effect in 2001. The Reading First portion of this legislation was to "ensure that all children in America learn to read well by the end of third grade" (U. S. Department of Education, 2002b, p.1).

In order for teachers to be able to deliver instruction to students to have them reading "well" by the end of third grade, long-term, effective professional development needed to be in place. The Reading First initiative focused on the following as their five goals for teachers receiving professional development:

1. Be knowledgeable about scientifically based reading research

2. Participate in professional development that works with the core curriculum and state academic standards

3. Understand how to teach and assess the five major areas of reading instruction as identified by The National Reading Panel – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. Know how they relate to each other and in what order they need to be taught

4. Know the educational needs of students who are struggling readers and how to administer and interpret assessment data

5. Manage a classroom effectively so students and teachers can take advantage of the maximum amount of instruction time (Learning Point Associates, 2004)

How are teachers going to be able to do all of this? Reading First legislation has suggested that a reading coach be in all schools receiving Reading First monies. [Coaches] should be one of the "practices and strategies for professional development that should be evident in an effective reading program" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 7). It is felt that a person in the role of a reading coach would be able to help teachers successfully achieve all of the above goals and more. Job-embedded coaches have become commonplace because of it.

The concept of coaching, however, did not begin with the Reading First legislation. There are several programs and/or models of coaching that implement the role of the coach in very different ways. In the 1980's, Joyce and Showers (1996) used peer coaching in schools. In this model, teachers meet to discuss what strategies will be implemented, who will be the

"coach" and the "coachee" and what exactly the coach will look for during a classroom observation. They meet again after the observation to debrief what the coach saw during the lesson, what the teacher who taught and the coach who observed the lesson learned and what next steps could be taken.

A program that uses coaches as an integral piece is America's Choice. This is a design that uses the "coach as expert" philosophy the majority of the time. The program has rituals, routines and implementation guidelines for the coach to use when helping teachers incorporate both reader's and writer's workshop in classrooms. This design states upfront that the coach knows more than the teacher and that teachers must be explicitly taught how to use the strategies in the reform design (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders & Supovitz, 2003).

Another coaching model is Content-Focused coaching. This model zeroes in on the daily tasks of planning, teaching and reflecting on lessons by suggesting a framework and tools for addressing standards, curriculum, principles of learning, lesson design and assessment. It does *not* "prescribe particular methods or techniques of teaching" (West & Staub, 2003, p. 2). Through the process of Content-Focused Coaching, teachers learn how to improve their teaching for better student learning and to also be reflective on their teaching. When teachers first start working with a coach, they look at refining specific lessons for specific students. As the work continues, teachers begin to develop "professional habits of mind and general teaching expertise" (p.2).

Three major components, known as mental maps, make up the Cognitive Coaching model: planning conversation, reflecting conversation and problem-resolving conversation. The planning conversation happens before the teacher teaches a lesson, attempts to solve a problem or tries something new. The reflecting conversation happens after a teacher teaches a lesson,

solves a problem or completes a task. The problem-resolving conversation happens when a teacher is having difficulty solving a problem or is unsure of or unclear about something and asks for assistance from the coach. Depending on the problem a teacher is having, a trained cognitive coach chooses from among these three maps to help the teacher best deal with the issues at hand. Each conversation should help teachers think more deeply about the practices they use in classrooms (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

The Reading Success Network (RSN) is another coaching program with a national network of trainers who prepare coaches to work in K-3 classrooms providing exemplary reading instruction to students. The program was designed by the California Comprehensive Assistance Center and is a project of the Comprehensive Centers Network (McDonald & Mothner, 2002). The coaches' role within this program is twofold: to help increase student learning and to provide teachers with tools and skills to become successful reading teachers. To help coaches become able to work with teachers to attain these goals, they are given nine days of intensive training. During this training they learn a variety of ways to help teachers look at data. They are also trained to work with an entire school staff to help them be productive using standards-based, data-driven instruction. Coaches learn how to create learning communities by establishing trust, using effective questioning strategies, giving feedback in non-judgmental ways and being a good listener. Coaches also receive training on working with adult learners (2002).

Creating a school culture in which teachers collaborate willingly and without reservation is the goal of The Literacy Collaborative. When a collaborative culture is created, teachers can focus on giving and receiving constructive feedback in order to refine and expand effective teaching skills (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Coaches play a vital role in developing collaborative cultures in schools. Coaches are trained in eight constructivist principles of teaching and how to

conduct professional development with adults as learners. Once this knowledge is in place, coaches are ready to begin their work with teachers. The goal of the coaches' work in The Literacy Collaborative is to see shifts in teacher behavior. They coach teachers to use analysis and reflection every day to help inform their work with children and to deepen their understanding of how children learn. When doing this work with teachers, coaches ask a variety of questions to gain access to teachers' thinking: What worked? What did not work? How did you feel about the lesson? Why did you select the activity/strategy you used? What learning did you expect to take place? This analysis helps teachers reach a level of deeper understanding. This work in the collaborative is what leads to shifts in the teacher's teaching and, it is hoped, higher levels of achievement for students (2001).

Job responsibilities of coaches vary. The responsibilities of coaches across all of the models and programs include, but are not limited to the following: (a) demonstrate effective teaching strategies in classrooms, (b) provide professional development – large group, small group and one-on-one – based on scientifically-based reading research, (c) share knowledge of how to give and interpret assessments and data from the assessments and (d) provide teachers with necessary resources.

Because the role of the coach has become such an important topic in education, The International Reading Association (IRA) looked at all of the different models of coaching and the work coaches did in schools. They found that:

> There is considerable variability in the job descriptions for these coaches – some
> coaches are volunteers with no specific training in reading while others are school
> district employees with master's degrees and reading specialist certifications. In
> some schools, tutors who work with students are also called 'coaches'. There is

little consistency in the training, backgrounds and skills required for such positions and there is little consistency in the general competence of coaches, in part because there is no agreed upon definitions and standards for the roles (IRA Position Statement, 2003, p.1).

"The Roles and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States", the IRA position statement, puts forth minimum qualifications for effective coaches and states that

> the basic assumption [for the role of the reading coach] is that by increasing the expertise of the reading professional available to work with classroom teachers at the individual school level would allow these teachers to learn more about reading and reading instruction and student achievement (p.2).

The various models, definitions and responsibilities of coaches led to many unanswered questions about the role of the coach. The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the problems and possibilities of the role of coaches. It was expected that the results would provide insight into the perceptions coaches have about their position in schools. The study would be of value to those who prepare literacy coaches, those at the state level who work with coaches, and schools that employ them. The study was guided by these research questions:

1. What background and preparedness did they bring to the role of coach?

2. Which "explicit coaching" activities: modeling, demonstrating, co-teaching, co-planning and/or conferencing with teachers – did coaches spend most of their time doing? How was their time affected by work that was not directly related to coaching?

3. What factors within the structure of their organization helped or hindered them in their work?

4. What did coaches perceive their responsibilities to be and what were the problems and possibilities of the various jobs they performed?

The interview used in the study was divided into sections – Responsibilities, Successes and Barriers and Collaborative Culture – that explicitly addressed each of the above questions. Specifically, coaches were asked how they spent their time. They were asked how their role was affected by work that was not part of their jobs as Reading First coaches. Questions were also posed about any professional development sessions they had attended, how well prepared they felt for the role of a coach before they began and how that compared to their current feelings – at the time of the interview – of preparedness. Finally, they were questioned about the culture in their school – how conducive or not conducive it was to coaching and the response of teachers to the coach. Each interview question was carefully constructed with the research questions in mind, so each question could be answered explicitly.

1.1   DELIMITATIONS

This study aimed to interview Reading First coaches across the state of Pennsylvania to determine their perceptions of their role as a reading coach. The end result of this research is a descriptive summary of the coaches' responses. This study did not aim to show causality between coaches' perceptions and student achievement or teacher practice. A further

delimitation was the fact that only coaches in Pennsylvania Reading First elementary schools who agreed to participate were included in the interviews.

The very nature of qualitative research brings with it the issue of observer bias. Because of previous experiences and attitudes of the researcher, different trends, reflections or interpretations could be seen or made. This is something all qualitative researchers must be aware of and try and minimize in their work.

1.2   DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.2.1   Literacy Coach

Learning Point Associates (2004) in their *Reading First Coaching: A Guide for Coaches and Reading First Leaders* defines a literacy coach as "one who helps others to recognize their instructional knowledge and strengths and supports them in their learning and application of new knowledge and instructional practices" (p .6). They go on to state that coaches

> provide ongoing, sustainable support to teachers. Depending on the needs of teachers and the goals of the school, coaching can be provided one on one, in small groups, by grade level, by department or by skill level. [Coaches help teachers have] versatile, flexible and "just-in-time" learning (p. 6).

For this research, the term "literacy coach" was used to describe those activities geared toward improving teacher practice. It was used synonymously with the term "reading coach".

1.2.2   Model

The Literacy Dictionary (1995) defines a model as "a design or description intended to show the flow of an overall process or function, including its constituent processes and their relation to one another and to the process as a whole" (p. 156). The Literacy Collaborative and Content-Focused Coaching are examples of coaching models.

1.2.3   Program

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (2001) defines a program as "a plan of action to accomplish a specified end" (p. 1546). The Reading Success Network is an example of a program that uses coaches as one component of a comprehensive design that aims to provide exemplary reading instruction to students in kindergarten through third grade.

1.3   SUMMARY

In sum, since the No Child Left Behind Act was enacted in 2001, emphasis in the area of literacy coaching has grown. In order to better understand the role of coaches, their voices must be heard. It is important to understand their perceptions of their job, the successes they felt they had and what barriers prevented them from being most effective. The outcomes from the conversations with coaches in this study contribute to the coaching literature in literacy education.

2.0   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature focuses on three areas related to the development of this research study. The first section highlights the history of coaching as a mechanism for improving teacher practice. The second part of this review summarizes recent studies of literacy coaching. The third section explores the two categories of coaches and the different ways they perform their roles in schools. Finally, the review concludes by comparing six coaching models or programs.

2.1   HISTORY

Education reform can be traced back to the 1950's. The country was on the edge of sweeping changes in many areas. Education was no different. There were calls to improve the education of all children. The focus was on improving the quality of academics and to do so in an environment of social equality (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Changes were implemented through the 1960's. Because there was not a significant amount of growth in terms of student achievement, the 1970's brought evaluations of staff development that focused on teaching strategies. These evaluations found that as few as 10% of the staff development participants were implementing what they learned when they returned to their classrooms (1996). This, obviously, was of great concern to administrators who were delivering the staff development. They were investing time and money into the staff

development process and not getting much return on that investment. Educators had been assuming that teachers could take what they learned in their workshops and transfer that knowledge to their teaching without any more help or follow-up. Once it was discovered that this was not happening and that there was little to no research around "how people learn teaching strategies and how schools successfully disseminate innovations" (p. 14), changes began to occur. Up to this point, training designs for introducing teachers to new skills had been well developed. Now educators were developing ways to help teachers "transfer" (p. 15) that new learning to their classrooms.

In 1980, Showers and Joyce (1996) hypothesized that in order to have sustained implementation, teachers would need continued assistance once they returned to their classrooms. A person who had more experience or knew more about the strategy being implemented would work with the teacher in his/her classroom to assist in the implementation and transfer processes. Teachers would receive feedback from this consultant after being observed teaching with the new strategy.

This work in classrooms had a large impact on implementation. In fact, implementation levels rose dramatically in these classrooms. As a result, Joyce and Showers (1982) developed their peer coaching model. This model paired teachers to work together to plan, implement and reflect on teacher practice and student learning.

Around the same time, early 1980's, the Clinical Supervision model was being used in a large number of schools. Teachers were observed in their classrooms using teaching strategies that were taught at the one-day staff development workshops. After the observation, teachers were given feedback, often by the building principal, on how well or not so well the strategy had been implemented. This model worked to help teachers feel they were being supported, but,

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unfortunately, it was not sustained. Most of the responsibility of completing observations fell on the building principal. Because of other, sometimes more pressing, demands of the job, observations were often skipped. This led to lower levels of strategy implementation (The Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1983). This lack of time to complete observations on the part of the principal made the peer coaching groups, teachers working with teachers, more enticing.

Peer coaching and the Clinical Supervision model were used in the 1980's to work toward better implementation of teaching strategies. The 1990's brought new efforts to reform professional development for teachers, which would lead to improved student achievement.

In the mid- 1990's many educators were explaining why new agendas for reform in professional development were needed. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) state that teachers needed to begin examining and reflecting on their own practice. Teachers needed to teach "in ways they have never taught before" (p. 597). Teachers need to forget the old ways of professional development as they learn new, improved ways to develop the skills necessary to help students achieve.

> Because teaching for understanding relies on teachers' abilities to see complex
> subject matter from the perspectives of diverse students, the know-how necessary
> to make this vision of practice a reality cannot be prepackaged or conveyed by
> means of traditional top-down "teacher training" strategies. Professional
> development today also means providing occasions for teachers to reflect
> critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge about beliefs about
> content, pedagogy and learners (p. 597).

Sykes (1996) added to the call for changes in professional development. He stated that teacher learning is most important and "must be at the heart of any effort to improve education in our society" (p. 465). At that time, professional development for teachers was ineffective and did little more than "support a mini-industry of consultants without having much effect on what goes on in schools and classrooms" (p. 465). Sykes saw the system of professional development as one that would be difficult to change because it was developed at the federal, state and district levels. It was "powerful, resistant to change and well adapted to the ecology of schooling" (p. 466).

Although the outlook for changing the way professional development was delivered was thought to be difficult to change, there were people trying new ways of working with teachers. Around this same time, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform began to look at professional development for educators. They wanted to design a program that would focus on the teacher and engage him/her in a process of defining what would improve student achievement. A program was created that trained coaches to work with groups of teachers to identify student learning goals, be reflective of their own practice used to meet those goals and to look at student and teacher work in a collaborative effort to meet the objectives of the student learning goals (Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000).

Coaches began meeting regularly with teachers in what they called Critical Friends Groups (CFG). CFG coaches worked with teachers to create a culture of collegiality, self-reflection and using student work to assess whether or not set standards were met. This culture was created through the use of protocols. Participants used protocols designed to help them examine student work, solve problems, discuss texts, observe peers, set goals, build teams and create teacher portfolios (Dunne, et al., 2000).

The adage "Give me a fish and I'll eat for a day, teach me to fish and I'll eat for a lifetime" came into play in the mid-1990's. Joyce and Showers (1995) showed that if educators wanted sustained use of teaching strategies, they needed to provide coaching for teachers. Table 1 indicates that the simple "sit and get" (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee & Klingner, 2002) workshops used with teachers up to this point were not going to lead to any kind of application of new teaching strategies. Providing theory, doing demonstrations or having a teacher practice teaching a skill and receiving feedback only led to application in 5% of the participants. When coaching was used, 95-100% of the participants had an understanding of the strategy and used the new skill in a classroom situation. Ninety percent of participants incorporated the new skill into their daily practice.

Table 1 Adult Learning (Joyce and Showers, 1995)

Activity	Knowledge/Understanding	Use of New Skill	Application in Daily Practice
Theory	90%	25%	5%
Demonstration	90%	50%	5%
Practice/Feedback	90%	90-95%	5%
Coaching	95-100%	95-100%	90%

This new knowledge led to the creation of coaching programs across the country. Long Beach, California created a "cadre of coaches" (Norton, 1999, p. 2) to work with teachers in their classrooms. The day-to-day work of the coach varied from school to school, but they all had the overall goal of using the district's content standards to raise student achievement.

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania a project called LEADERS – Literacy Educators Assessing and Developing Early Reading Success – was being piloted in 19 elementary schools across the

state. The project provided an external coach, someone trained in literacy topics but was not from the school or school district, to work with teachers in their classrooms for at least 60 hours over the school year. Teachers also received 30 hours of training during a summer workshop and 42 hours of additional training throughout the school year (Swan, 2002).

The term "job-embedded" began to become more prominent and more widespread in the late-1990s. The term was defined as teacher learning that "takes place during the teachers' work day" (Sparks, 1997, p. 21). How the learning takes place can vary from situation to situation. Teachers can be involved in study groups, looking at student work sessions, planning lessons with a coach or other teachers, conducting action research and/or being coached (1997).   When the work with teachers became job-embedded, it was easier to tailor the professional development to the needs of the individual teacher. Individualizing the work was helpful in having the professional development reach its "maximum benefits" (Rock, 2002, p.1) because the individual needs of the teacher guided and influenced the training each teacher received. This led to deeper understanding and more learning for the teacher (2002).

Once it became clear that conducting professional development in a teacher's classroom was more effective than the traditional "one-shot" workshops (Hughes, et al., 2002), the need for in-school personnel was recognized. The role of the reading specialist was looked at with a new passion. Specialists had been in lower-income schools for over 60 years supplementing struggling readers' literacy instruction (Bean, 2004) but the role was now expanding. A reading specialist was defined as "a specially prepared professional who has responsibility (e.g., providing instruction, serving as a resource to teachers) for the literacy performance of readers in general or struggling readers in particular" (Quatroche, Bean & Hamilton, 2001, p. 282). Three major roles were identified for reading specialists: instruction, assessment and leadership.

Specialists worked with teachers collaboratively to deliver quality classroom instruction to all students. Specialists used their knowledge of diagnosis and instruction to develop whole –school and/or individualized literacy plans for students. The leadership role for specialists involved being a resource for parents, teachers and students. The knowledge a specialist brought to a school community should be shared to deepen the understanding of reading strategies and materials of all involved (Bean, 2004).

In 2001, the federal government passed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* under President George W. Bush. The Reading First portion of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* set aside money to employ reading coaches in schools that received funds from this legislation. School districts took this opportunity to hire people to serve in these roles.

The role of a literacy coach evolved from all of the work done in the process of literacy professional development over the past 50 years. "Much of the current excitement [surrounding literacy coaches] is driven by the belief that coaching can, if done well, broadly raise students' reading skills as a result" (*Reading Today*, 2004, p. 1). The grant specifically states that schools and school districts should not engage in the traditional forms of professional development, but should work with teachers to develop a variety of strategies to teach reading and to become reflective of their practice (2004).

2.2   COACHING RESEARCH

John Goodlad, as cited in Hall (2004) states that "we need long-term studies of literacy coaching. It is difficult to understand its value without ongoing studies and assessment" (p. 14). Although no specific studies were available for the coaching called for in the No Child Left Behind

legislation, there are studies relevant to the work of coaches. Joyce and Showers (1996) described the studies they completed throughout the 1980's to determine their conclusions about the effectiveness of peer coaching. This research led to studies of external coaches, effective professional development programs and specific coaching initiatives. Much of the research for job-embedded coaches, what Reading First advocates, was being presented to the field at national conferences throughout 2004 and 2005. Few studies were published in peer review journals during that time.

2.2.1   Peer Coaching

Joyce and Showers (1995) began their research of peer coaching in the 1980's. When rates of transfer were low after traditional professional development for teachers, they created a design they thought would improve the transfer rates. "We hypothesized that teachers attempting to master new curriculum and teaching approaches would need continued technical assistance at the classroom level" (p. 13). This work within classrooms ensured that the skills became part of the teacher's repertoire of strategies used with students.

Joyce and Showers tested their hypothesis in the early 1980's beginning with individual teachers, then with small groups and, finally, with entire school faculties. They found that "coaching helped nearly all teachers implement new teaching strategies. Equally important, teachers introduced to the new models could coach one another" (p. 14). Based on this work, peer coaching moved education from a time when the implementation of new strategies was exceedingly low to a time when implementation was happening consistently in a large amount of classrooms.

2.2.2 Center for Collaborative Education

Feldman and Tung (2002) analyzed teacher and administrator perceptions of the role of external coaches in schools. The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) funded this study. The organization worked with urban districts by implementing whole school reform efforts that worked toward improving student achievement. CCE worked with schools in the following four areas: (a) "building leadership capacity and a professional collaborative culture, (b) improving learning, teaching and assessment, (c) creating structures to support high achievement and (d) data-based inquiry and decision making" (pp. 2-3).

Five schools were selected for this study. Seventy-five teachers and nine administrators were the participants. These teachers and administrators were interviewed to determine their perceptions about the role of the coach in their schools, what work they did with coaches, how they perceived the coach as being a change agent, how coaching activities related to the reform model overall and what barriers got in the way of the implementation of the reform model. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Interviews were done in small groups of 4 -10 participants.

Most of the work of the coach happened during meetings. Small groups of teachers met with the coach each week to look at student work, use data to plan for instruction and to work on the school improvement plan. Coaches were working to establish a collaborative culture within the school during these meetings.

Coaches recorded their daily activities in a log. These logs were analyzed for what activities the coaches participated in, who they worked with, how long the work lasted, what content was covered and what resources, if any, were used.

The findings of the study were positive. Teachers and administrators saw the coach as having an important impact on school change. As would be expected, teachers saw the coaches' impact more at the classroom level. Teachers reported many changes in their classroom practices because of the coach. They also reported that the changes would be "sustained over time" because of their work with a coach within a reform model. Principals saw the impact occurring more at the school level. "Administrators viewed coaches as critical friends who could push their thinking about school-wide change" (p. 23).

2.2.3   A National Overview of Professional Development Programs

Hughes, Cash, Ahwee and Klingner (2002) examined professional development programs across the United States. They chose two urban, two rural and two suburban school districts from each state along with the 20 largest school districts in the nation to inquire about their experiences with professional development. A total of 314 school districts participated in the study.

A 19-item survey was sent to the reading/language arts director and the special education director of each school district. The items on the survey centered around three professional development themes: "program content, program structure and post-program accountability" (2002, p. 13). A total of 628 surveys were mailed out to the directors, 292 (42%) were returned. The final question on the survey asked if the directors would be willing to be part of a telephone interview. Sixty-two people said they would be interviewed. After at least five attempts to contact those 62 people, a total of 56 people were contacted and interviewed (2002).

Findings from the study centered around three broad themes: "content of the professional development, structure of professional development and accountability" (2004, p. 15). Because there were no significant differences in the answers of reading/language arts directors and special

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education directors, all responses were combined. Directors said that content for professional development sessions were chosen because of how they related to specific reading programs or practices, instructional strategies, including phonological awareness, reading comprehension, emergent or remedial reading. Because it fit into the district's philosophy or was expected to raise test scores were two other reasons that certain professional development was chosen. Seventy-five percent of the respondents said that "teachers' request" drove the choice for professional development (2002).

In terms of structure, most of the workshops followed either the full-day or half-day format. Only 25% of the respondents said there was any kind of individualized professional development (2002).

The accountability question asked if there was "a mechanism is place for collecting data on implementation and sustainability of practices presented at the professional development programs" (p. 21). Half of the respondents said they did have a system in place for accountability. Some respondents did admit, however, that the systems were, at times, "limited" (2002, p. 21)

Conclusions drawn from this study were that although professional development seems to be breaking out of the traditional "sit and get" workshops, there is still room for improvement. School districts were not monitoring the implementation of the workshop information on a consistent basis (2002).

Based on the answers from the directors, the authors created a list of components that should be part of effective professional development. These components incorporate:

1. Relevant theory

2. Demonstrations

3. Opportunities for practice

4. Feedback that is not only provided during the program but post-program, as well

5. Helps the teacher hone newly acquired skills (2002, p. 25)

2.2.4 America's Choice Coaching Model

The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) developed the America's Choice school network to offer schools and school districts help in implementing standards-based education. In 2003, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) evaluated the America's Choice coaching model in first-year schools. They investigated the role of the coach, the rollout of the literacy – reading and writing – workshops, how coaches worked with teachers in and out of classroom settings and how coaches were involved in delivering professional development to teachers (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003).

The authors collected data about the implementation of the grant and understanding of the reading and writing workshops from America's Choice schools across the country. Teacher and coach observations were done in classrooms. These observations were rated based on an implementation scale developed by the authors (2003).

Findings of the study were reported in a monograph distributed by CPRE. The authors concluded that the design was ambitious and much responsibility fell on the coach to implement design aspects. Because the framework was often implemented in low-performing schools, it

made the job of the coach more difficult. The role of the coach was subject to interpretation because there were few set guidelines for exactly how the coach should implement the workshops other than the overarching framework of the reform design. The phase of implementation that was studied had the components of the design put into practice more quickly than in previous years. This added to the stress and inability, in some cases, to reach the goals of the design. All of this led to the overall conclusion that NCEE should take a long look at the implementation guidelines and the pressure put on the coach to achieve what to some seemed like unattainable goals (2003).

2.2.5   Chicago's Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science

Chicago's Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science offered a three-year professional development program that used external coaches to work with struggling teachers in Chicago and the surrounding areas.

The study by Race, Ho and Bower (2002) was to highlight the instructional processes and practices of participating teachers throughout the school year based on evidence of:

1. Changes in level of intervention by the professional development staff
    throughout the implementation support

2. Content alignment with state standards in math and science

3. Use of best practices in the classroom

4. Use of a variety of instructional strategies – varied lesson formats to
    meet the diverse learning styles of the students in participating schools
    (p. 6).

In order to document these changes, professional development staff from the teacher's academy completed implementation logs after each classroom visit. These logs consisted of closed and open-ended questions. They were designed to get at who took the lead in teaching the lesson, what content was covered, alignment of content with state standards, the instructional strategy used, lesson format and best practices. A narrative section was filled in to get the observer's reflection of the observation (2002).

A total of 1, 745 logs were analyzed. They found that teachers were using standards to drive instruction and used a variety of strategies and best practices during lessons. The data also showed that as coaches worked with these struggling teachers, there was a change in the level of intervention. At first teachers wanted the coach to model lessons. As the implementation went on, teachers took on more of the teaching responsibilities and the coach observed and gave feedback. "Although not intended to imply causality, this change in intervention level occurred concurrently with reports of growth in content knowledge by teachers and/or an increased comfort and confidence by participating teachers with pedagogical approaches supported during the program (2002, p.25). A conclusion that should be further studied because of the findings in this study is the relationship between coaching and the willingness of teachers to work on using new teaching strategies.

2.3   THE EFFECT OF COACHING ON LITERACY INSTRUCTION

2.3.1   Minnesota Early Literacy Training Project

Alba-Johnson, Rodriquez, Arias, Johnson, McConnell, McEvoy, Horst and Passe (2004) studied the effect a coaching model had on the teaching behaviors and classroom environments of pre-school teachers in the Minnesota Early Literacy Training Project. Teachers from 36 pre-school sites with 52 classrooms in high-poverty urban areas of Minnesota participated in the study. These teachers were divided into "control" and "coaching" groups. The control group consisted of 18 classrooms with 31 teachers. The coaching group had 34 classrooms with 72 teachers. All of the teachers in the study received training on early literacy practices over seven two-and-a-half hour sessions. All professional development used the SEEDS curriculum – "Sense and respond, Encourage and enjoy, Educate, Develop through doing and Self-image – an interactive research-based early literacy curriculum designed to give preschool educators the knowledge and skills to provide early literacy experiences for 3 to5 year old children" (p. 10). After the seven training sessions, the control group continued their professional development for 13 months in their classrooms. The control group did not receive this on-going training.

Evaluation of the study was done using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) which consisted of three components: Literacy Environment Checklist, Classroom Observation and Teacher Interview and Literacy Activities Rating Scale. The checklist was a 24-item list that documented the materials and use of items in the book and writing areas of the classroom. The observation was designed to view the organization of and materials within the classroom, use of technology, reading and writing curriculums, diversity of students, home-to school connection and how students were assessed. This observation was

followed by a short interview with each teacher for any needed explanation of the observation data. The rating scale described the literacy activities observed in the classroom and how long they lasted.

Observations using the ELLCO Toolkit were done three times throughout the study. The first observation was before coaching happened with any of the teachers. The second observation was done "for preliminary results and coaching purposes" (p. 14). The third observation was completed after the coaching sessions had ended. All observations were done by coaches and other trained staff members. No coach observed in a classroom in which they had worked.

Coaches in this study received extensive training with the SEEDS curriculum, had at least a bachelor's degree and had experience in early childhood education. These coaches met with teachers in the coaching group every other week for six months. For the last seven months of the study, teachers and coaches met once a week.

The goal of the coaching sessions was to reinforce the objectives of the SEEDS curriculum and to influence the teaching practices of the preschool teachers. This was done through lesson planning and reflecting on and evaluating lessons taught. Coaches gave feedback, modeled specific strategies, set goals with teachers, videotaped teachers for self-reflection, shared literacy-related articles, answered questions and listened to successes and barriers as part of their work with teachers.

Results showed that teachers who had received the coaching after the seven professional development sessions were "more likely to improve their physical environments, making their classrooms more literacy rich, and increased their teaching behaviors, putting into practice new instructional strategies compared to teachers who only received early literacy training" (Alba-

Johnson, et al, 2004, p. 21). The group of teachers in the coaching group exhibited a "higher percentage" (p. 22) of growth in all areas of the ELLCO Toolkit. Growth for teachers in this group was in those areas that had been coached consistently throughout the study: physical environment and literacy activities. Conversely, teachers in the control group showed either small increments of growth or decreases in the use of ELLCO Toolkit behaviors and materials. In some control classrooms, the use of literacy activities "diminished considerably" (p. 22) during the 13 months in which they did not receive the on-going coaching. Final analysis showed that "training is not enough and it is necessary to have follow-up support to effectively influence teaching behavior" (p. 23).

2.3.2   Consistent Feedback

Gersten, Morvant and Brengelman (1995) studied the use of coaching, "translating research into practice" (p. 53), with general education teachers working with students with learning disabilities. The researchers of this study theorized that teachers would incorporate newly learned strategies for working with special needs children if they received consistent feedback and teachers would also understand the connection of quality instruction improving student achievement.

This two-year project focused on twelve regular and special education teachers, grades one to six, from one inner-city school. Student population in the school was 99% minority and 42% English Language Learners. The school was chosen for the study because it received the lowest score in this district on the California Test of Basic Skills.

Coaches for the study were two special education teachers from the school's district and two "project staff" (p. 53) with extensive experience in both special education and working with

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teachers in classrooms. The first year of the study began with teams of coaches – one from the district and one from the project – working together. During the second year, coaches from the district facilitated the majority of the coaching sessions, consulting with the project staff as needed.

Throughout the study, coaches observed in classrooms and gave feedback and suggestions to teachers. The observations focused on classroom environment, levels of student involvement, ability of students to perform the lesson's assignment, amount of feedback given to students and clarity of explanations during the lesson. Feedback was often given as data of student participation collected during the observation. Based on the data, suggestions of "concrete, realistic and relatively easy-to-implement practices" (p. 56) were used to help create an action plan for each individual classroom. To be certain all aspects of the plan were being completed, a cycle of observation, feedback, implementation emerged.

Data collection was done using coaches' logs and field notes, transcriptions of pre and post-conferences with teachers, transcriptions of meetings between the coach and teacher and interviews of participating teachers. The exact methods for analyzing the collected data were not explicitly stated in the article. The authors state "the process of generating and refining hypotheses went on for almost three years. A good deal of this analysis was questioning and refinement of our initial working hypotheses" (p. 58). The work of Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory, and Miles and Huberman, "hypothesis generation and verification" (p. 58) were used in the analysis phase of this research.

Six findings emerged from this study. First, change is not linear. Throughout the study, there were times of immense shifts in teacher practice. There were also times of little to no shifts occurring. A second finding was that it did not matter how often teachers were told that the

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study focused on student performance, they often felt their work was being evaluated. Third, general education and special education teachers approached teaching differently. Special educators were more systematic and explicit when creating action plans for the lower performing students. The fourth finding dealt with management. Although low performing students was a major concern for all teachers, it was not the only issue general education teachers had to deal with. There were a multitude of concerns that a teacher had to manage on a daily basis. A fifth finding showed a shift in teacher perspective. At the beginning of the study, teachers placed the majority of their focus on their instruction. As the study continued, teachers began to look at individual student responses to their instruction and saw that the levels of involvement increased. Lastly, new teachers created different challenges for coaches. They were often dealing with "first year teaching problems" (p. 63) and needed more guidance from the coach. They needed to "develop norms of typical grade-level performance before they could even begin to identify deviations from those norms" (p. 63).

2.3.3   Early Literacy Project

Morrow and Casey (2004) had two goals for this project: (a) substantiate current beliefs about what were effective ways to promote change in teachers and (b) present a model, based on current research, for best practices in early literacy education. In order to do that, the researchers worked with 12 teachers over a two-year period in "the most at-risk district in the state" (p. 662). All 12 teachers were from two schools within that district. They taught in kindergarten, first or second grade classrooms.

The researchers created a 10-item list of components that were necessary for professional development programs to be effective. Included in that list were two items relevant to coaching:

(a) "in-class assistance in the form of a reading coach . . . to help prepare materials and achieve goals" (p. 663) and (b) "a reading coach to model lessons" (p. 663).

Coaches in this project were teachers who had been effective in using research-based practices in their classrooms. Their role in the project was to work with the teachers in a variety of ways. They talked with teachers about specific strategies. Coaches modeled lessons. The coach completed classroom observations once a month. After the observation, the coach and teacher met to discuss the lesson and any concerns the teacher had.

At the end of the project teachers were asked to create a list of components that were essential to their change process. The twelve teachers generated a 10-item list. Two of the items referenced the work done with coaches. The chance to work with a coach and the opportunities to observe coaches modeling specific strategies were both instrumental in bringing about the change in teachers' practice.

The above studies show coaching as a viable strategy to impact change in schools. Although coaching has been utilized in education for over 50 years, few studies have been published to reveal the positive effects it can have. *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* has greatly enhanced interest in the topic of coaching. That interest has encouraged researchers and others to study the various aspects of the roles and responsibilities of coaches. To understand that role, researchers must know what kinds of coaches are present in the field today. The following section defines that variety of coaches.

2.3.4   Types of Coaches

The Reading First Initiative has brought much attention to the role of literacy coaches in schools. This legislation supplies funds to school districts to hire and train such personnel as a means of

improving teacher practice which will, it is hoped, improve student achievement in reading. Because of the legislation, coaching has taken a variety of forms in school districts across the country. Districts have many programs to choose from when they decide to incorporate literacy coaches into their schools. Some of the coaching designs have existed for almost twenty years. Others have been developed because of the current reform efforts. All of the coaching designs encourage on-going, in-school, high quality work between a coach and teacher (Guiney, 2001).

Two broad categories have been used to describe the coaching that is happening in schools: change coaches and content coaches. Although each coach focuses on instructional capacity, they go about building that capacity within schools in different ways (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Change coaches, or capacity coaches, as they are sometimes called, work to make improvements within the organization of a school. They take a deep look at the school and see where changes in time, money and personnel would best benefit the school as a whole. Change coaches work closely with principals to help them think about the instructional practices being used in the school, how to develop teacher leadership and how to best use the school's resources. The work of the change coach and the principal affects every teacher within the school as the coach and principal work to help the teachers in the building focus on improving teaching and learning (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

The specific work of the change coach includes:

1.   Helping principals understand the importance of recruiting teachers to
        assume instructional leadership roles to drive whole-school change

2.   Acting as strategists and assistants in building capacity for shared
        decision making

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3.   Modeling leadership skills for principals, as well as, for teachers.

4.   Assisting in scheduling

5.   Helping principals organize their time so that they are able to visit

               classrooms regularly to observe and offer feedback to teachers

               (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 5-6).

Content coaches work exclusively with teachers to improve the use of instructional strategies in a specific content area. They must be knowledgeable in adult learning and instructional reform. They must be willing and able to adapt their coaching methods to meet the needs of all teachers across the learning spectrum. Content coaches must have the ability to talk to teachers, determine what the individual needs of each teacher are and be able to address their needs in one-on-one and small group situations (Neufeld & Roper, 2003)

The specific work of the content coach is to:

1. Help teachers transfer what they learn about new practices to their classrooms

2. Help establish a safe environment in which teachers can strive to improve their practice without fear of negative criticism or evaluation

3. Work with teachers to plan and implement lessons

4. Work with some content-area teachers to hone specific strategies

5. Develop/find materials and other curriculum resources

6. Work with new teachers on new-teacher issues, as well as, on instructional strategies

7. Encourage teachers to talk about their practice with them and with one another

8. Observe classes and provide written and oral feedback after observations

9. Provide demonstration lessons

10. Help teachers develop leadership skills with which they can support the work

    of their colleagues

11. Provide small-group professional development sessions for teachers (Neufeld

    & Roper, 2003, p. 8-10).

In the 1980's when Joyce and Showers (1996) began to look at peer coaching as a viable way to improve teacher practice, coaches were content coaches because they focused on teachers and improving classroom instruction. As coaching has been studied in a variety of in-depth ways, educators have become aware of the fact that coaching will not be effective if it is done in isolation. It has to be "connected to other aspects of school change" and be "embedded in a systemic context" for the changes to endure (Supovitz, 2001, p. 83). As a result, change coaches and their work with the school as a whole became necessary.

The various models and programs that use coaches as an integral part of their design were discussed in chapter one. Some of these models and programs have the coach working as a content coach. Others have them in the role of a change coach. Still others use the coach as both a content and change coach.

2.3.5   Similarities and Differences among the Models and Programs

The ultimate goal of all six coaching models and programs – peer coaching, America's Choice, Content-Focused Coaching, Cognitive Coaching, Reading Success Network and The Literacy Collaborative – was improved student achievement. Each design used coaches to work with teachers on improving teacher practice which, in turn, it is hoped, will improve student achievement. Although the overall goal was the same, the way each design presented coaches to teachers, offered professional development to coaches, required coaches to deliver professional

development to teachers, used the coaching cycle, involved evaluation as part of the coaching process, used knowledge of adults as learners and the approaches to coaching were quite different. Each of these attributes as they relate to the six coaching models described in this paper will now be discussed.

2.3.6   How Coaches are Presented to Teachers

America's Choice was the only design that clearly stated their philosophy of the "coach as expert" the majority of the time. The writers of the program developed rituals and routines and implementation guidelines for both reader's and writer's workshop. No other design discussed here clearly stated from the beginning that the coach knew more than the teacher and that the teachers must be explicitly taught how to use the strategies in the reform design.

The Reading Success Network had a component of the coach being the expert but that is not the case all of the time. Only if the coach's experiences and what was learned from those experiences were relevant to the coaching situation would the coach be the expert. Otherwise the coach was in the role of a "critical friend".

In the Cognitive Coaching and Content-Focused Coaching sessions, the coach was more of a facilitator than an expert. Their job in these designs was to help the teacher look at his/her practice and deepen their understanding of it. At times this called for coaches to do some demonstration lessons or model a particular strategy for a teacher. This was more along the lines of being an expert. The difference between the demonstrations in the Cognitive Coaching and Content-Focused Coaching models and that of the America's Choice program was that teachers were expected to let the coach observe them teaching the same strategy soon after it was modeled for them. In the debriefing sessions after the modeling and observing, the coach asked

important questions to help the teacher reflect on and learn from both experiences. This put the coach back into the role of facilitator.

Peer coaching groups were almost the antithesis of the America's Choice design. From the beginning these teachers worked together to plan and implement curriculum. Each person was on the same level. They divided the work evenly. They decided together what strategies they wanted to implement. They took turns teaching and observing based on strengths and areas in which teachers wanted to improve. Teachers supported each other through the entire peer coaching process.

2.3.7   Professional Development

All six designs provided on-going professional development for coaches. The Literacy Collaborative, America's Choice and Reading Success Network explicitly stated in their literature that coaches received training before they did any work with teachers (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003 & McDonald & Mothner, 2002). The Reading Success Network had nine days of intensive training for coaches before they began their work with teachers. America's Choice had "multi-day trainings" for coaches. The Literacy Collaborative trained their coaches in the overall framework of the coaching design.

The literature on the peer coaching design simply stated that coaching groups were trained throughout the school year in how to work together, give feedback and other skills necessary for the successful implementation of the design (Joyce and Showers, 1995). The exact number of days was not given.

The same is true for Content-Focused Coaching and Cognitive Coaching. The coaches did receive training throughout the school year, but exactly what that looked like was not explicitly stated.

As part of their work in the role of change coach, America's Choice coaches provided professional development for the staff at their school. This could be delivered in grade-level team meetings, study groups and/or whole staff meetings.

Reading Success Network coaches could create learning communities that seemed to function like study groups. They also delivered professional development during team meetings. The other coaching designs did not seem to have coaches providing professional development for staffs.

2.3.8 The Observation Cycle

Cognitive Coaching and Content-Focused Coaching used the observation cycle at the heart of their designs. Teachers and coaches met in a pre-conference or pre-conversation to discuss the goals of the lesson, what student work might have come out of the lesson and what roles each person took during the lesson. Those roles – coach as modeler, coach as co-teacher or coach as observer – were carried out during the actual teaching of the lesson. After the lesson, the teacher and coach had a post-conference or conversation in which they discussed whether the goals of the lesson were met, how student work showed what was learned or not learned, how helpful the process was to the learning of the teacher and what the next steps might be.

Peer coaching followed a similar format but did not seem to be as formal as the previously described designs. Teachers met to discuss what strategies would be implemented, who would take on the role of the "coach" and "coachee" and what exactly the coach should

look for during the observation. They met again after the observation to debrief what the coach saw during the lesson, what the teacher who taught and the coach who observed the lesson learned and what next steps could be taken.

The other three designs – America's Choice, The Literacy Collaborative and Reading Success Network – did not use the observation cycle as an integral part of the coaching framework. Coaches were not asked to complete formal observations of teachers. They were more likely to use informal observations to talk with teachers about the teachers' practice.

2.3.9   Coaches as Evaluators

Five of the six designs purposely did not put the coach into the role of evaluating teachers after observations. America's Choice was the only design that has the coach giving evaluative feedback to teachers in the model classrooms and to other teachers after they have observed the coach's work in the demonstration classroom. The other designs wanted to draw the line between the coach being an evaluator and the coach being a facilitator of learning. They felt they would get much better results if the coach was not put in an evaluative role (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003).

2.3.10 Adults as Learners

The Literacy Collaborative was the only design that spent any time working with coaches around adult learners. Early training sessions centered around the differences between children and adults as learners. Coaches did not more forward until they had this understanding and were ready to apply it to their coaching situations (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

2.3.11 Approaches to Coaching

The America's Choice coaching component was a preset program that was rolled out to the people using this reform design in their schools. Content-Focused Coaching offered a framework to coaches and teachers without stating the specific techniques to be used to reach the goal of deeper understanding on the part of the teacher. The Reading Success Network used standards based on the work of the National Reading Panel as its framework for coaching teachers. The other three designs were based more on the needs of the teachers without a framework or explicit design driving the work of coaches with teachers.

Peer coaching and the Literacy Collaborative were the two designs that used the constructivist approach to teacher learning.   Teachers expressed their needs. Coaches and teachers then worked together to plan, develop and implement curriculum that best met those needs.

The goal of Cognitive Coaching was teacher autonomy. Whatever the areas of need were for the teachers to achieve that goal was what the coach and teacher used as the basis for their work together.

Coaching has been attracting much attention; at this point the attention is largely due to the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Making the decision to incorporate literacy coaches into a school district's reform efforts was just the beginning. Districts must decide if the coach will work as a change coach, content coach or both. This will help with the decision of what model the district will use to implement the role of the coach.

Looking at the models that have been presented in this paper, it seems that some are more conducive to the goals of the Reading First portion of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. The

emphasis on writing in the America's Choice design makes it a poor fit with the current emphasis on reading instruction. Because the overall design of the peer coaching model is teachers working with other teachers, it does not necessarily fit with the role of a coach set out by Reading First.

Cognitive Coaching and Content-Focused Coaching seem to be best aligned with the rigorous role coaches are now expected to have in schools across the country. They both work toward refining certain teaching skills for certain students. Their ultimate goal is to hone the skills of self-reflection and self-monitoring to create autonomous teachers. Coaches work with teachers through the planning, teaching and reflecting stages.

2.3.12 Summary

Other than the work of Joyce and Showers, there was little research on reading coaches to help administrators and specialists make important decisions about how to use reading coaches. For example, what makes an effective reading coach? How should reading coaches spend their time? Should they do any professional development with groups of teachers, or should they only work with individual teachers in classrooms? How much demonstration should they do, versus how much team teaching and direct observation and feedback? What education and experience should they have? All of these questions await further research (Dole, 2004, p. 466).

To begin to answer these questions, Dole asked "experienced and successful reading coaches what makes an effective reading coach" (p. 468). Their responses were the following:

1. Effective reading coaches have to have a greater level of reading
   expertise than the teachers they are coaching

2.   Reading coaches have to know how to teach reading extremely well and to have actually done it successfully

3.   Reading coaches must be reflective about their own instructional practice

4.   Reading coaches have to be able to articulate what they are seeing in a classroom.

5.   Reading coaches need to support and nudge – balancing on a fine line between supporting the status quo and placing too much stress on teachers

6.   Coaches need to be able to plan and organize "on the run"

7.   Reading coaches need a sense of humor (pp. 468-469).

Bean (2005) delves a bit deeper into the role of the reading coach. She has created a list of assumptions of the role of the reading coach. She found that coaching is:

1. An interactive process

2. Occurs in the context called "school" and the cultural norms affect the ways in which coaching occurs and is perceived

3. A process that is ongoing and requires sustained interaction among participants

4. Collaborative and collegial

5. Non-evaluative

6. Results oriented

The studies presented in this literature review show a profound interest in coaching as an agent of change in teacher practice and of one that can impact student achievement. The role of the coach, however, has changed a great deal since those studies were done. Coaches have

moved from outside the school to being an integral part of the everyday workings of the school environment. The recent work of Dole (2004) and Bean (2005) looked at the job-embedded role coaches are more likely to be working in today because of the current Reading First legislation. The need for more studies of this type of coach is essential.

3.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. . . . There are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered a . . . qualitative approach (Merriam, 2002, pp. 3-4).

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the problems and possibilities of coaching by interviewing Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania. This qualitative study relied on semi-structured interviews with coaches to determine how coaches "experience and interact" with the role of a literacy coach. Semi-structured interviews have pre-determined questions and question order. The questions were open-ended and the interviewer recorded the "essence" of the participants' responses.

The purpose of qualitative interviews is to gain "depth of understanding" (Gay and Airasian, 1998, p. 210). Therefore, the interview did "permit probing of participants' responses, exploring unplanned topics that arise and obtaining clarification of participants' responses" (1998, p. 210). Qualitative interviews encourage this probing in order to gather more in-depth

data about participants' "experiences and feelings [and] to examine attitudes, interests, concerns and values" (p. 209).

The interviews used in this study established whether the coaches in Pennsylvania had perceptions that mirror the assumptions made about the role of the coach in different coaching models and programs implemented nationwide. As stated in Chapter 2, these assumptions were that coaching is (a) an interactive process, (b) occurs in a context called 'school' and the cultural norms within each school affect the ways in which coaching occurs and is perceived, (c) a process that is ongoing and requires sustained interaction among participants, (d) is collaborative and collegial, (e) is non-evaluative and (f) is results oriented (Bean, 2005).

3.1   METHODS

3.1.1   Participants

During the 2005- 2006 school year, Pennsylvania had 161 Reading First schools and 180 Reading First coaches working in those schools. This study interviewed 30 of those coaches. The particulars of their background and preparedness for their role as coaches are presented in detail in the Results section of this dissertation.

Coaches volunteered to participate in this study. A letter inviting coaches to take part in the interview was sent to every Reading First coach in Pennsylvania. Coaches who chose to participate completed a consent form that contained their contact information and three times that were most convenient for them to be interviewed. These were returned to the researcher in

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the self-addressed stamped envelope included with the invitation letter. A copy of the invitation

letter and consent form are included in Appendix A.

3.1.2 Scheduling the Interviews

In March 2006, letters were sent to coaches inviting them to participate in the study. Thirty-five

coaches responded between March and May of that year.

Immediately after receiving the consent form in the U. S. Mail, an email was sent from

the researcher to the coach to arrange a time for the interview. Every attempt was made to

accommodate the coaches' first request for the most convenient date and time to conduct the

interview.

Five coaches who completed the response form indicating they agreed to be a part of the

study were not interviewed. One coach did not respond to three e-mail attempts and one phone

call to her school to schedule an interview. Four other coaches confirmed times for an interview,

but did not answer the phone at the agreed upon times. In each of these cases, a follow-up email

was sent to attempt to reschedule the interview. Two of these attempts went unanswered. Two

interviews were rescheduled, but, again, the phone was not answered at the agreed upon time.

There were no responses to the follow-up emails attempting to reschedule. As a result, thirty

interviews were completed and analyzed for this study.

3.1.3 Setting

There were 31 districts receiving Reading First funds in Pennsylvania during the 2005-2006

school year. Twelve districts were represented in this study. The following table shows a break

down of the number of coaches who participated in the study across the 12 districts. Nineteen districts were not represented in the study.

The Large Urban districts were the two largest districts receiving Reading First monies in the state. Therefore, it makes sense that a larger number of coaches were interviewed from those districts.

Table 2 Districts Represented by Reading First Coaches

Type of District*	Number of Respondents
Rural	1
Mid-Size Urban	1
Urban Fringe of Mid-Size City	3
Mid-Size Central City	1
Urban Fringe of Large City	1
Large Town	2
Urban Fringe of Large City	1
Large Central City	9
Mid-Size Central City	1
Large Central City	8
Urban Fringe of Large City	1
Mid-Size Central City	1

*Classifications obtained from Metropolitan Statistical Area section of www.sedl.org

3.1.4 Instrument

"Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645). Each coach participated in a 40-60

minute semi-structured telephone interview designed by the researcher. Seidman (1998) explains that "at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (p. 3). Finding out what the stories of Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania were and what they made of their experiences as coaches was "worth" looking at and was at the root of this study.

The interview for this study was divided into five sections: demographics, coach responsibilities, successes and barriers, collaborative culture and final thoughts. The demographic section asked about the background of the coach: certifications, number of years coaching, training and full-time status. The responsibilities section asked about the work the coach was involved in within the school and how that work had or had not been helpful to teachers. The third section inquired about the successes each coach had and the barriers that might have prohibited them from fulfilling their job responsibilities to their fullest potential. The culture section asked about the collaborative nature among teachers in each coach's school. It also asked about the working relationship the coach had with the principal. The final section simply allowed the participant to give any information that she felt was important for the researcher to know, but was not asked for. A copy of the interview is included in Appendix B.

The interview was developed with a literacy expert. Her input and consistent reviews of the document helped shape the entire instrument. She made suggestions for what categories to include, how to word the questions most appropriately and where to place the questions within the interview.

After this process, a second expert reviewed the instrument. She made recommendations about the placement of a particular question within the document and word choice. Her

suggestions helped create a document that was more purposeful for the information it is seeking from coaches.

To be certain the instrument was clear and succinct, a person knowledgeable in the fields of elementary school literacy and literacy coaching reviewed the complete interview. At his suggestion, the overall format of the interview was changed. The responsibilities of the coach was moved to the beginning of the interview followed by the successes, barriers and school culture, respectively.

The instrument was then piloted with a Reading First reading coach in the researcher's school district. Overall, she "liked the flow" of the interview. She also thought it had a "nice order". "I liked how you asked me about the three things I do in a week. That really made me think. Everything after that was based around that question. That question really got the ball rolling. Everything moved really smoothly from there."

The coach made no recommendations for broad changes within the instrument. There were, however, three instances where she needed to ask a clarifying question before she could answer the original question. The researcher noted these occurrences and a more clearly stated question was written after the pilot interview.

The pilot interview lasted exactly 60 minutes. When asked whether the length of the interview was too long, the coach said she "liked that [she] did not feel rushed." She was "able to think things through while [she] was talking about them." The interview seemed to flow naturally and did not appear, to the researcher, to be too long. The hour did, however, pass by very quickly. The researcher will have to be aware of this during future interviews to be certain the time limit of 60 minutes is honored for each interview.

The goal of the interview was to determine perceptions about coaching and successes of the job and barriers that prohibit the coach from performing the job most effectively. Interviews were conducted by telephone.

3.1.5 Procedures

The first step for this study was to create an interview that would "provide access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provide a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (Seidman, 1998). The steps previously described – having the interview reviewed by a second person and piloting the interview with a reading coach – helped ensure that an instrument was created that accessed the behavior of coaches and helped the researcher "understand the meaning" behind the work of the coaches interviewed.

All Reading First coaches within Pennsylvania received a letter requesting their participation in the interview. This letter explained all aspects of the interview – purpose of the interview, length of time, aggregation of data, no risks to participants and how each person was compensated for their time. As consent forms were received by the researcher, interviews took place at times deemed convenient by the coaches.

All interviews took place over the telephone at times the coaches designated as most convenient for them. Before an interview began, the researcher asked permission for it to be recorded. If the coach did not want to be tape recorded, the researcher did not record the interview. If the participant gave permission, the researcher recorded the interview. Twenty-seven interviews were recorded on audio tapes. Three coaches did not agree to having the session taped, so these three interviews were not recorded. These recordings were heard only by the researcher for analysis. The researcher also took notes throughout each interview, recorded

or not recorded. If the interview was recorded, these notes were used to help the researcher keep track of when the participant made certain comments, so they could be easily accessed on the recording. All notes and recordings were used to help the researcher create summaries of each interview.

Within three days of each interview, the participant was sent a typed summary of her answers to each interview question to complete a "member check" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). These checks involve "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 204). Each participant was asked to review the summary and either agree that it accurately described their experiences and perceptions of their job as a coach or they made necessary changes that made the answers more accurate. The researcher made any necessary changes to the summary once it was received from the participant. Four participants made clarifications to their summaries. A copy of the summary sent to the coach in the pilot interview is attached in Appendix C. Her revisions to the summary are underlined and attached in Appendix D. All identifying information has been removed from these documents.

3.2   ANALYSIS

"The purpose of interviewing is not to get answers to questions nor to test hypotheses and not to 'evaluate' as the term is normally used.   At the root of interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1998, p.3).

In order to create meaning from the data collected during the interviews for this study, it was: (a) analyzed as it is being collected and (b) consolidated and interpreted based on what the participants said and what the researcher heard and read (Merriam, 1998). Analyzing qualitative data "is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings or understandings or insights constitute the *findings* [emphasis in original] of a study" (p. 178).

The most basic level of analysis of qualitative data is a descriptive account of the findings. A deeper level of analysis involves creating categories for recurring themes extracted from the data. These categories are "systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge and the meaning made explicit by the participants themselves" (Merriam, 1998, p. 179).

The analysis process began as the researcher read the first interview. Keeping the research questions in mind, the researcher read the answers to the interview questions, made notes and asked questions as if she were "having a conversation with the data" (Merriam, 1998, p. 181). As more interviews took place and more analysis was done, general groups began to appear to the researcher from the answers given by participants. A list of these groups was kept as the beginning of a system of classifying participant responses for later reporting. "This master list constitutes a primitive outline . . . reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in your study" (p. 181).

From this list categories emerged. It became clear to the researcher what groups could be put together in one category. Other themes were able to stand on their own. When deriving the

categories from the data, it was important to be cognizant of the guidelines that follow. The categories should:

1. *Reflect the purpose of the research* [emphasis in original]

2. *Be exhaustive* [emphasis in original]

3. *Be mutually exclusive* [emphasis in original]

4. *Be sensitizing* [emphasis in original]

5. *Be conceptually congruent* [emphasis in original] (Merriam, 1998, pp. 183-185).

Categories were designed so they began to answer the research questions from the study. Each piece of data that was relevant to answering the research questions was put into a category or subcategory and each data unit fit into one only one category. Naming of each category was done carefully so that the name truly reflected the nature of the data units within it. A person who was not familiar with the data was able to read the names of the categories and garner understanding of their meaning. All categories had the same level of concreteness or abstraction (Merriam, 1998).

There was no limit to the number of categories in which the data were placed. It was more important for the researcher to create categories that were broad enough to include the uniqueness of participants' responses yet concrete enough to be understandable and usable (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Because of the large amount of data that was collected during the interviews, a system of putting data into categories was utilized. Merriam (1998) suggests four methods that can be used for this type of data analysis: (a) an index card method, (b) a three-step "information retrieval card" process, (c) a file folder method and (d) computer programs, such as NUD*IST. For this

study, the researcher organized the data using an index card system. Because "every researcher devised his or her own scheme for handling qualitative data" (Merriam, 1998, p. 187), this researcher saw the index card system as being the most appropriate for her learning styles – visual and tactile. The non –cumbersome size of the index cards and the ease of having each unit of data on one card and the concrete manipulation that index cards afforded the researcher were all reasons for the attractiveness of this method.

Each unit of data was written on an index card and coded according to its category. This system allowed for easy access and manipulation of each unit of data throughout the analysis and reporting stages of research.

3.3   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Qualitative research is observations of "people's construction of reality – how they understand the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 203). This study looked at the constructions Pennsylvania literacy coaches created about their role in Reading First schools. To be sure that the researcher accurately and appropriately reported the perceptions of the coaches, factors for internal validity, reliability and external validity were considered.

Internal validity demonstrates how well the findings in the research match reality. Member checks is one way this study enhanced internal validity. Member checks happened when the summary of answers to the interview questions were returned to the coach for verification and/or clarification. The types of data that were collected – interview answers and member checks – brought "holistic understanding" (Mathison, 1988, p. 17) to the data. Mathison suggests that this understanding helped create a comprehension about the topic being studied.

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Reliability refers to the capability of another researcher reproducing similar results from a similar study. Due to the nature of qualitative research, reproduction is not a possibility nor should it be a goal (Merriam, 1998).

Researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it. Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no benchmark by which to take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense (p. 205).

Reliability occurs not when a study can be replicated but when a person other than the researcher is able to say that the data make sense. It is consistent and trustworthy. There are three things a researcher can do to be certain the data is seen in this manner: (a) reveal the researcher's position, (b) have triangulation of the data and (c) authentication. To reveal the researcher's position, all information about the participants of the study must be disclosed – how they were selected and who they are. Triangulation, as previously stated, is the use of multiple methods for collecting data. Authentication happens when the researcher explains the analysis procedures in detail. How were the data collected? How were the categories constructed? How were the data put into categories and analyzed?

This study had two of the three components to ensure reliability. How the participants were selected was explained previously in this chapter. As part of the interview, participants gave information to tell who they are. Explanations of how categories were created and analyzed are shared in the Results section of this dissertation. Although coaches had the opportunity to check their responses for accuracy, that does not constitute "multiple methods of collecting data." As a result, triangulation of the data, in the traditional sense, did not occur in this study. It could, however, be stated that triangulation of responses occurred in the study because several coaches from different districts across Pennsylvania responded with similar answers to the

interview questions. Therefore, the experiences of coaches were triangulated among the interview participants.

External validity is the ability to generalize the results of the study to other situations. "In qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely *because* [emphasis in original] the researcher wished to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). As a result, generalizing results from qualitative research is not always easy. To increase the chance of the results being generalizable, the researcher conducted the research across twelve sites and provides detailed descriptions of the results of the interview in the Results section of this dissertation. This allows a reader to compare the situations described within this document to his or her personal situation, thus creating a degree of generalizability. These criteria were met during this study.

3.4   SUMMARY

In order to ascertain the perspectives of coaches in Reading First schools across Pennsylvania, an interview was conducted with coaches. The interview asked questions about responsibilities of each coach, successes coaches had, barriers they perceived as keeping them from doing their job most effectively and the culture in their school. The major themes that emerge from each question were written up as a descriptive report in the Results section of this document.

4.0   RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the problems and possibilities of coaching by interviewing Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania. The interviews examined what the coaches felt was going well and what they found to be difficult in their roles as coaches. The interview included questions about the backgrounds coaches bring to this position, tasks they perform every day and what factors they are helpful to them performing well and what keeps them from doing their jobs most effectively and efficiently. This chapter tells the story of the thirty coaches who were interviewed: who they are and the schools in which they worked, events that occurred during their work, conflicts that arose and their view of the role of the coach and how they fit into that role.

4.1   ANALYSIS OF DATA

When analyzing the data from the interview questions, coaches' answers were represented as accurately and with as much clarity as possible. To ensure this, when the interviews were completed, each interview question was viewed separately. The researcher wrote down, word for word, each coach's response onto an index card for each specific question. After that was completed for each question, all of the index cards were laid out and reread. It became clear, during the rereading that some index cards contained more than one "big idea". For example,

when asked to describe a successful conference, one response might have included information about the environment, the previous relationship between the coach and teacher and a description of the teacher as a learner. In this case, there were three distinct reasons as to why the conference was successful. When this sort of response occurred, a new index card was created for each individual idea. After completing this step, the cards were once again reread. During this rereading, patterns within the responses began to emerge and categories, based on these themes, were formed. These categories are used to present the qualitative information contained in this chapter.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, a colleague was trained to code the note cards created from all of the interviews. Inter-rater reliability was determined by my colleague and me coding ten percent of the note cards. Agreement between the two raters was found to be 88%.

Some parts of the interview were best analyzed by quantitative means, for example, the Likert Scale ratings of the way individual coaches evaluated different aspects of their schools and the importance given to various qualities of coaches. The quantitative results are accompanied by a descriptive analysis of the findings.

In the following sections each research question is addressed. The background that coaches bring to their role is discussed first. Next, findings of the factors within each school that helped or hindered coaches in their work is presented. In the third section I discuss how coaches spend their time and what, if any, time is taken away from coaching by work that is not directly related to the role of the coach. Finally, coaches' perceptions of their responsibilities and what possibilities they see for coaches is offered.

4.2   **RESEARCH QUESTION:** *WHAT BACKGROUND AND PREPAREDNESS DO THEY BRING TO THE ROLE OF THE COACH?*

4.2.1   Demographics

Although there were slight differences, the majority of the Reading First coaches were similar demographically. Twenty-six coaches worked with Reading First full time. The other four split their time in four different ways: (a) coached half time and worked with technology the other half of her schedule, (b) half-time coach and half-time Instructional Facilitator – in that role she worked with adults district-wide to be certain district initiatives were being implemented appropriately, (c) a coach 75% of the time and IST coordinator, Title I coordinator, assessment coordinator and summer school director the other 25% of her time and (d) a full-time coach, but her time was shared equally among third, fourth and fifth grades. So, she spent one third of her time working with teachers at each grade level. Her Reading First work was done with third grade teachers, while her other work was with fourth and fifth grade Title I students.

Twenty-seven coaches worked exclusively in one school. Three coaches split their time between two schools.

4.2.1.1 Number of Years as a Coach

Because Reading First began three years prior to the interviews taking place, it was not surprising that half of the respondents had been working as a coach for three years. One of the large urban districts in the state implemented a coaching program a year before the Reading First initiative was enacted. Six coaches, all from that district, have been working as coaches in schools since the district created that role. (See Table 3)

Table 3 Years Reading First Coaches Have Served as Coaches

Number of Years	Number of Respondents
1-2	5
3-4	21
5-7	4

4.2.1.2 Funding

Reading First provided the entire salary for twenty-three coaches. In seven cases, Reading First paid a portion of the salary for the coach. Five coaches had part of their salary paid from the Title I budget. Two districts paid a portion of the salary for their coaches.

4.2.1.3 Number of Years at a School

Fourteen coaches had worked full-time at one school since the inception of Reading First. Three others had been at the same school, but on a part-time basis – at some point over the past three years, each coach had to work in at least one additional school. Nine of the remaining 13 coaches had been at two schools. Two coaches had coached in three different schools. One coach had been at five schools throughout her six years as a coach. Another coach had been in eight different buildings during her seven years of coaching. She explained, "I go where fires need to be put out. That's why I've been moved around so much." (Coach 14)

4.2.1.4 Grade Levels

Overall, there was consistency in the grade levels that coaches worked within schools. Twenty-four respondents said that they worked with teachers in grade kindergarten through third. Four

other coaches stayed within the guidelines of Reading First, but did not work with all of the K-3 levels. Instead, their work was done with specific grades and teachers: (a) first, second and third grades only, (b) grades two and three, (c) solely third grade and (d) Kindergarten only. Two other coaches extended their work to levels not included in Reading First. One coach worked K-5, the other K-6.

4.2.1.5 Years in Education

Coaches had been working in education from 6-33 years, with an average of 22.6 years. Although the greatest number of coaches, eleven, had been working from 11-20 years in the profession, nine respondents had 31-40 years and another eight had 21-30 years. Only two respondents had fewer than ten years experience. A complete breakdown is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Years in Education of Reading First Coaches

Number of Years	Number of Respondents
0-3	0
4-6	1
7-9	1
10-12	3
13-15	4
16-18	2
19-21	3
22-24	2
25-27	3
28-30	2
31-33	7
34-36	2

4.2.1.6 Certifications

Nineteen respondents were certified Reading Specialists. One person was enrolled in a university program and was working toward her certification. Fourteen had graduated from a university program to obtain their certificates while five specialists received their certification by taking and passing the PRAXIS exam without completing a certification program. (This practice was no longer permitted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education after June 2006.)

Other certifications held by the respondents were:

Table 5 Additional Certifications Held by Coaches

Certifications	Number of Respondents
Secondary English	2
Reading Recovery	2
Educational Leadership	1
Administration and Supervision of Curriculum K-12	1
Speech and Language	1
English as a Second Language	1
Speech Therapist	1
Special Education	2
Principal	2
Bilingual Education	1

Two coaches were working toward a principal's certification and one was completing her work in the area of supervision. They expected to complete these programs in April or May 2007.

4.2.1.7 Professional Development

Each person who took part in the interview had participated in professional development provided by the state of Pennsylvania. Twenty-one said they had gone to several different sessions at PaTTAN – Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network – facilities. Seven attended the Coaches' Institute at Villanova during the summer. Three had attended the

Governor's Institute. It was reported that professional development in the areas described in the National Reading Panel report was carried out at each venue.

The professional development topic that was reported most often was Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Eleven people stated they had been explicitly trained in this method of coaching by Cognitive Coaching representatives sponsored by the state. Other topics at various sessions included: DIBELS, Differentiated Instruction, Flexible Grouping, data analysis and work with consultants from the Florida Center for Reading Research.

Twenty-three of the coaches attended professional development not provided by the state. The majority of these instructional sessions were provided by individual districts to advance district initiatives. One respondent stated that her experience was that these trainings were "more reading oriented than coaching oriented." (Coach 23)

If professional development was not at the district level, it was at the state or national level. Three coaches had attended the Keystone State Reading Association (KSRA) conference and one had been to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the International Reading Association (IRA) conferences. Districts with specific initiatives, such as Direct Instruction or Responsive Classroom, attended conferences that helped them advance that work in their schools.

One coach described the development she had done for herself.

I purchased and rented materials that would support my work as a coach. I spent hours reading, watching videos and reflecting on my work. I asked several people to observe me while I worked and then talked with them about improving my practice. It was time consuming, but was some of the most valuable learning I have ever done! (Coach 6)

4.2.2 Preparedness

When Reading First came into being three years prior to these interviews, coaching was a relatively new, or not a very widespread, concept. So, the people filling the roles of the coaches were pioneering uncharted territory. They came from a variety of backgrounds and brought a plethora of experiences to the new jobs. Many were exemplary teachers who were expected to make a smooth transition from teaching to coaching. The thirty coaches the researcher interviewed approached the task with excitement and optimism. Then reality set in. One coach explained,

> I thought I was prepared until I got into the role and I realized I had a lot of learning to do. I thought I was prepared, but I was very naïve!! I thought everyone would jump at the chance to work with the help of a coach and that everyone taught like me. I found out very quickly that neither was true! I thought a lot of things were givens, but they weren't. I thought this wasn't rocket science, but it is! (Coach 28)

Another coach simply stated, "On a scale of 1-10, I was a 1." (Coach 2) When asked how well prepared they felt for the role when they began coaching, fifteen coaches stated "not at all prepared," seven said they were "prepared for some parts of the job but not others" and eight felt they were "very well prepared."

There was no relationship between feelings of preparedness or lack of preparedness and the number of years a respondent had been in education. Coaches who did not feel at all prepared for coaching had between nine and thirty-three years of experience. Those coaches who felt semi-prepared for the role had been in education between six and thirty-five years. Those who felt very prepared for the job had between eleven and thirty-five years of experience.

Fifteen coaches realized soon after taking the job that they were not at all prepared for their new role. Much of the uncertainty, according to them, was because their role was so undefined. One person stated, "I had no real formal sense of what I was supposed to do about anything." (Coach 10) Another said, "I had no job description and I really felt like I was on my own." (Coach 30) One more remark was, "The role kept developing. I kept acquiring new roles to add to the already existing ones." (Coach 12)

Training that was intended to give the coaches a solid foundation and to ease some of their concerns, did not. Five coaches felt the training did not give them much needed direction for their new role. One said, "We did not have training in how to coach, model in classrooms and how to give suggestions to teachers." (Coach 21) Another coach stated, "It was difficult at the beginning because I had to learn a lot of new content and new assessments." (Coach 9) A different perspective was, "I did not have training in how to deal with people's personalities." (Coach 2) One coach revealed, "I worked at the book fair stamping books as the beginning of the year because I didn't have any idea what I was supposed to do." (Coach 18) Yet another coach stated, "It took me weeks to figure out even the most simple things." (Coach 24)

In 2004, the state decided that Cognitive Coaching would be the coaching model used to pre-conference, observe and post-conference with teachers. All Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania, at that time, were trained to use the Cognitive Coaching model with their teachers. When asked what model of coaching they used, fifteen coaches indicated they had used or had at least tried to use Cognitive Coaching when working with teachers. "I try to use it as close as possible, but I'm not quite there yet." (Coach 15) Eight coaches stated that they did not know what model of coaching they used. When explaining why she did not have a name for the model of coaching she used in her school, one coach said, "I do not use [Cognitive Coaching]

exclusively. I use my own model of coaching. I don't have a name for it." (Coach 4) Three coaches said they did not use any model of coaching in their school. "I was trained in Cognitive Coaching, but I'm not using it right now. I don't use any model of coaching right now. I mostly use co-teaching to work with teachers." (Coach 20) The remaining four coaches used other coaching designs when working with teachers. One coach used Peer Coaching. (Coach 16) The coach whose teachers taught using Direct Instruction utilized the Educational Resources Incorporated model of coaching – a peer coaching model in which national Direct Instruction facilitators, over a three year period, help develop observation and coaching techniques in school-level coaches. (Coach 8) Two other coaches simply stated they used "other" methods of coaching, but when pressed to name the model, they chose not to give it. (Coaches 7 and 25)

Although Cognitive Coaching, according to one coach "was intended to be a helpful structure within which coaches could work with teachers, it actually added some stress to [the] work." (Coach 30) To help identify why Cognitive Coaching might have added some stress, one coach said, "I had training in Cognitive Coaching, but that was too deep to begin with and I don't have the time to do all that is involved with it." (Coach 19)

The lack of a job description, training that did not seem to give these new coaches what they needed to begin their work and a coaching model that was "too deep"(Coach 19) for coaches and teachers who were just embarking on Reading First all led to these fifteen coaches feeling unprepared to assume the responsibilities of coaching. In sum,

I was very insecure about what I was being asked to do and what I was going to

have to ask teachers to do. I had only taught grades four and five before I became

a coach, so I felt unprepared for the new strategies I would have to use with the

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primary teachers – Text Talk – because I had not done the strategies myself. I

thought about quitting many times that first year. (Coach 22)

As indicated previously, seven coaches stated that they had some confidence about their

abilities to successfully step into the role of a coach before starting the job. Previous experiences

and training prior to beginning to coach gave them the self-assurance they needed.   One

respondent said her 20 years of experience as a first grade teacher helped her. Another had been

on the IST "for a long time". (Coach 13)   Her work on the IST team included providing

strategies to teachers for struggling readers. She found this kind of work "very helpful to [her] as

a Reading First coach." (Coach 13) She had "many strategies in [her] repertoire that will help

both students and teaches in the area of reading." (Coach 13) Another coach had done previous

work as a Success for All facilitator. She felt that this earlier work gave her "a good hold on

what was expected" (Coach 5) in the coaching role in a Reading First school.

Personal reading, district-level and state-level training were all helpful to these seven

respondents. One coach said that through her work as a teacher, she had much experience with

the strategies she was going to need to work with teachers. She felt very secure in her content

knowledge. Her concern was that she would no longer be working with children, but with

adults. In order to prepare for this work, she specifically stated that she "had done a lot of

reading on [her] own so [she] knew what it was going to be like to work with adults." (Coach 27)

Another coach appreciated the state training because "all of the content knowledge that the state

gave us made me feel at least a couple of steps ahead of the teachers." (Coach 17) A third coach

felt confident in her abilities because "the district had done a lot of training with the coaches."

(Coach 29)

Eight coaches felt very prepared for their new role. Previous experiences were the sole reason for their preparedness. All eight coaches had "taught for many years."(Coach 1) One coach specifically said that she had not only taught for many years, but that her teaching had included "a long time with a balanced and comprehensive literacy approach." (Coach 26) Each of the eight had done work with Cognitive Coaching, analyzed data and had training in reading strategies, curriculum and instructional practices. Six specifically stated they had previous leadership experience inside and outside of their schools. Four said they had observed in classrooms before they became Reading First coaches. One had visited schools where coaches were working. Two had done research for the role. One researched the role on her own. The other had completed a dissertation on coaching.

4.2.3   Summary

All thirty respondents had some similar experiences before they began coaching. They had all taught in a classroom. Over half of them were Reading Specialists. Slightly less than half have an additional certification. Even though the topics might have been somewhat different, everyone had attended some professional development before starting in their coaching role.

Although each respondent brought similar experiences to their new job, that did not mean they all felt prepared to begin. Half of them did not feel at all prepared to be a coach. Seven coaches thought they were ready for some parts of coaching, but not ready for others. Slightly less than a third felt they were very well prepared to face the challenge of coaching.

4.3   RESEARCH QUESTION: WHICH "EXPLICIT COACHING" ACTIVITIES:

MODELING, DEMONSTRATING, CO-TEACHING, CO-PLANNING AND/OR

CONFERENCING WITH TEACHERS – DO COACHES SPEND MOST OF THEIR

TIME DOING? HOW IS THEIR TIME AFFECTED BY WORK THAT IS NOT

DIRECTLY RELATED TO COACHING?

In this section, I discuss how coaches spent their time. First, I report the work coaches did during a typical week. A discussion of why they spent their time that way and how essential or nonessential they saw these tasks follows. Also included in this section is a compilation of the descriptions of the work coaches did with the one teacher that was most memorable to them. Finally, an account of successful and not-so-successful teacher conferences conducted by coaches is presented.

4.3.1   Time Spent

"Coaching is not something you can make happen. It just has to evolve." (Coach 20) Because "working with or for teachers is really what this job should be," (Coach 9) coaches work each week to make that evolution occur. They used many strategies and techniques that allowed them to enter teachers' classrooms and work to improve instruction and learning. When asked to name three things they spend the most time doing in a typical week, their responses fit into seven categories: team meetings, modeling, planning, co-teaching, instructing students, data analysis and coaches' work – paperwork and corresponding with other coaches, for example. Table 6 is a breakdown of how the seven categories were reported by coaches. The tasks are given in the order in which the coaches reported the activity: first, second or third.

Table 6 Coaching Activities Per Week as Ranked by Coaches

Activity	1	2	3	Total
Team Meetings	12	5	10	27
Modeling	6	4	4	14
Planning	7	3	3	13
Co-Teaching	3	4	3	10
Working with Students	1	6	3	10
Data Analysis	1	4	2	7
Coach Work	2	1	5	8

Fifteen coaches used these approaches because they were "in [their] job description and mandated by Reading First" (Coach 18) and "according to the Reading First log, this is what I am supposed to be doing." (Coach 24) Eight others stated that they were "told to by [the] principal." (Coach 11) One coach asked teachers to complete a Needs Assessment survey. (Coach 3) From that she knew exactly where teachers needed help and made plans based on teachers' needs. The seven remaining coaches were not that formal. They simply "saw the need and did the jobs." (Coach 10)

Team meetings were listed almost twice as often, 27 times, as any other task as something that a coach typically did during a week. These meetings were conversations among teachers and the coach to cover a wide range of situations: delivering professional development, disseminating information, providing support and dealing with curriculum issues.

Team meetings are a time when coaches can conduct professional development for teachers. One coach described the purpose of team meetings at her school as "Teachers have to

have knowledge about strategies and practices before I demonstrate so we meet at grade level meetings to discuss data and flexible grouping and strategies." (Coach 3) Another coach saw team meetings as a "good way to get to the broader issues. During these sessions, I can give background, we can read articles and/or give teachers the necessary resources for best practices in their classrooms. These meetings can be done across grade levels and, when it can be worked out, across schools." (Coach 20) Three coaches saw team meetings as "helpful to the process." (Coach 12, Coach 28, Coach 9) When asked to describe what that meant, a coach explained, "the meetings are built in ways to make sure teachers know how to implement the strategies that they could and should be using in classrooms with students. This helps the entire school know what is expected of everyone and how best to put everything together." (Coach 9)

Meetings can also be the venue through which coaches provide information to teachers from the state, district or administration. Five coaches stated that "differentiated instruction was a hot topic in the district this year." (Coach 14, Coach 22, Coach 26, Coach 27, Coach 30) Different mandates from the district and/or administrator were handed down as to how to explicitly incorporate differentiated instruction into classrooms and the number of times each week teachers were to be teaching using differentiated instruction. This kind of information was given to the coach and team meetings were used to pass the information along to teachers. The on-line course was another topic in which the coaches were given information from the state, district and administrative level. It was the responsibility of the coach to be certain every teacher knew the most up-to-date information about the courses. Team meetings were used to disseminate that information.

Teachers bring issues to the team and receive support in solving their problem. Team meetings are a time when "teachers can talk to each other. They don't often get a chance to do

that for this large of a block of time at any other time during the week." (Coach 7) As a result, problems or issues that teachers are having are often brought up for discussion. This is the time when teachers "brainstorm together to work out a problem." (Coach 29) Specific students were often the topic of discussion. Teachers, being concerned about lack of progress with a particular child or group of students, sought different approaches to better serve the needs of that child or those children. If the problem could not be solved in the team meeting, one coach said that she "tried to do the research for them. I tried to find the answers for them before the next team meeting." (Coach 11)

Discussing successes and answering questions about the curriculum also took place in team meetings. The curricula used in districts were relatively new – most districts purchased a new reading curriculum when they received their Reading First funding. So, many teachers had been working with their current reading series for no more than three years. Coaches were spending time at team meetings sharing successes and addressing curricula needs because, as they said,

> Teachers new to grade level and teachers new to the curriculum needed to know
> that it could work with children and also needed to know that they had people
> willing to help them get used to using the new reading series. (Coach 17)
>
> As with student issues,
>
> Teachers were a great help to each other because they shared ideas about different
> ways to use a strategy or prompt in the [teacher's] manual, where to find materials
> and what things could be skipped without compromising any kind of instruction.
> (Coach 12)

To sum, one coach stated, "Team meetings are a good time to communicate. They can be a good source of input." (Coach 6) Based on all of the conversations that occur at the meetings, the coaches used the information gathered "for organizing what I have to do next." (Coach 24)

Modeling was listed by 14 coaches as something they do each week with various teachers. Coaches described their work as using the gradual release of responsibility model. They "first have to show the teacher what the strategy should look like and then the teacher has to begin to take responsibility for the appropriate use of the strategy in his or her classroom." (Coach 8) A coach described modeling as "a way into classrooms. It is the easiest way to build trust and relationships with teachers." (Coach 30)

Coaches described using modeling in two situations: when "data showed something was missing in the classroom" (Coach 4) and where "there were things I knew should be happening in classrooms, but weren't." (Coach 2) Five coaches used data as the basis for their discussions with teachers that led to a modeled. Nine coaches utilized modeling as a way to demonstrate instructional strategies for teachers. Scenarios that illustrate each circumstance follow.

> I knew one of my first grade teachers needed help with decoding. From conversations we had had at grade group meetings and what I had heard as I walked past her room, I knew she needed some help. So, I went to her to talk about her word building. I tried to casually bring it up just to see what she was thinking. Her thinking scared me! She thought everything was okay. She said the kids were doing well and that they were really 'getting it.' I wasn't sure what to do. I didn't want to say straight up that she was not doing it right, but I didn't know what else to do. Around the same time we were doing the DIBELS test. I decided to wait until her scores came in on the Nonsense Word Fluency test to

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talk to her about word building. I made appointments with each teacher to go over their data individually. I didn't want to do it in a group meeting because of the trust factor. When I met with her, she was able to see that her students were struggling in this area. She was really stumped! She didn't know how they could not be doing well when it seemed like they were getting it when she taught it. I suggested that I teach it and she observe me and maybe we could figure it out together. That was the beginning of a lot of modeling in her room with conversations afterward. She could see the differences in our teaching and she finally realized that she was doing a lot of work during word building that her students should have been doing. They were 'getting it' with her help, but when she wasn't there to give that help, they couldn't do it. I modeled more lessons so she could see a different and better way to teach using word building. Eventually I watched her using the techniques I had modeled for her and we saw a difference in the scores of her students on that sub-test the next time we gave the DIBELS. (Coach 14)

I have a lot of new teachers in my building. Some of them are new new and some are new to a grade level. In both circumstances the teachers needed help with strategies that were new to them. They needed to see what word building, Text Talk, Syllasearch, flexible grouping and differentiated instruction looked like. I told my principal that we couldn't expect them to do it until they had seen a good model of it with their kids. So, that's what I did. I modeled different strategies for each teacher depending on what they said they needed or wanted me to do. For some teachers, after I did what they wanted, I modeled what I knew they

needed. By doing what they wanted first, it was easier for me to get back into the classroom and do what I knew they really needed help with – even if they didn't know it! Modeling was a big part of my week because it really was the only way I could be sure that teachers knew what the strategies should look like and the only way I could be sure I could hold them accountable for quality teaching. (Coach 3)

Thirteen coaches used the word "planning" to name an activity that was an integral part of their week. According to the code sheet definitions from the Reading First logs coaches completed for the Reading First Evaluation Team in Pennsylvania, planning is "coach prepares for a model lesson, co-teaching, evening event, etc. or creates, organizes and obtains materials for a specific teacher or teachers"(Pennsylvania Reading First Coaching Logs, 2007, p. 4).   That was not what the coaches described when they used the word "planning" as one of their weekly activities. What they described was closer to "individual coach-teacher conversation." That is defined as "coach has a conference with a teacher about various topics including: lesson planning, grouping for instruction, intervention strategies, about specific student, etc. **These conferences do not relate to an observation**" (emphasis in original) (2007, p. 4).   These conversations were an integral part of the process that eventually led coaches to do planning that was more aligned with the definition provided in their logs.

According to these thirteen coaches, "planning" usually began with an informal discussion between a coach and a teacher. One coach said,

After I talked to a teacher in the hall, in the lunchroom or during a quick visit to a classroom, I usually had one of two feelings: that teacher is full of it or that teacher has a real problem that I can help her with. (Coach 24)

Although no other coach was so blunt, five of them shared a similar sentiment. In order to deal with the teachers who were "full of it," (Coach 11) coaches informally visited classrooms. They would "just drop by and watch for a few minutes." (Coach23) These visits occurred "so teachers see my face consistently." (Coach 27) They were also done to "get a feel for what is really going on in classrooms so I know what really has to be done." (Coach 13) Coaches would plan their work with those teachers based on what they saw during those informal visits rather than on what they had talked to the teacher about.

For those teachers who "had a real problem" (Coach 3) with which the coach could be of assistance, planning also included doing a more formal observation "based on a question from a teacher." (Coach 14) A coach shared this scenario,

> A teacher was struggling with teaching decoding and she didn't know why. She
> asked me to come to the room and observe her lesson so maybe I could figure out
> what was going wrong. I observed and then she and I talked about it and planned
> for what she could do differently. (Coach 10)

Co-teaching was also listed ten times as happening often during a week. Coaches described two kinds of co-teaching. First, a coach could co-teach in a classroom by being responsible for a group of students for an agreed upon length of time. Coaches gave examples of 15 minutes, 20 minutes or an entire period. The coach and the teacher would plan together so both adults knew what each was accountable for. The coach was responsible for creating and/or gathering any necessary materials for the lesson. During the lesson, the teacher worked with a group of students and the coach did the same with a separate group of students.

A second way co-teaching occurred in classrooms was for the coach to sit in on a lesson and observe the teacher. When the teacher came to a point in the lesson where she either asked

the coach for assistance or the coach felt the teacher was struggling, the coach interjected and began to teach. The length of the interjection depended on the teacher. When he or she felt comfortable taking the teaching back, the coach resumed her observation. This type of co-teaching was always agreed upon between the coach and teacher before the coach observed the lesson

Co-teaching was seen as a positive way to interact in classrooms. One coach described co-teaching as an "essential way to begin working with teachers and is a great way to help teachers become confident in their classroom and instructional practices." (Coach 30) A second coach said, "Working with teachers in their classrooms is where I can be the biggest help. Co-teaching lets me observe and show teachers what they need to do all at the same time." (Coach 8) Coaches saw it as an essential step toward gradual release of responsibility. "Co-teaching helps you see if what you showed them during modeling has rubbed off." (Coach 1)

Although "80% of our time should be spent with teachers, not working with students, some principals and districts still insist that we do." (Coach 6) Working with students was part of an ordinary week for ten coaches. This included giving assessments, progress monitoring and teaching students in small groups or in one-on-one situations. One coach said she had to "take it upon [herself] to work with students because they were not progressing on the DIBELS." (Coach 16)

Data analysis was listed by seven coaches as a regular part of their job. Six other coaches stated that "depending on the time of year," (Coach 14) data analysis was an important part of [a coach's] work. "It can be used to plan with teachers and to show teachers their successes and where they still need to work." (Coach 22)

Eight coaches said that during a typical week they spent a large part of the time doing work that "did not directly involve teachers." (Coach 21) This included work on the computer, placing orders for materials and doing paperwork required by the state and individual districts. "Paperwork takes a huge chunk of my time." (Coach 23)

4.3.2   Importance of Their Work

Twenty-five participants rated the work they did each week as "essential" or "important". Team meetings are crucial because "There are so many nuances to teaching reading successfully. Teachers have to become a master at the art of teaching reading. When you have time to discuss those nuances, you help them reinvent their craft." (Coach 1) Modeling is one of the most essential aspects of their jobs because they know that "you can't tell teachers to do something and then not come into their classrooms." (Coach 28) Co-teaching, as well as modeling, allows the coach to be in classrooms and that "keeps you connected to your work so teachers can never say that you don't know something because you aren't in classrooms enough." (Coach 20) Overall,

> All of the jobs I do help refine teacher practice and are very critical to trying to
>
> change the practice of teachers. When doing these activities, you get the cycle of
>
> coach-teach-coach. Planning, co-teaching and then meeting again is the best way
>
> I know how to teach teachers and guide them in the way they teach. (Coach 9)

Five coaches rated the work they do each week as "not helpful". They said they spent too much time on one thing – testing or analyzing data – which takes them away from doing what they see as their "real work" (Coach 3) – modeling and working with teachers. One coach described her work as "time- consuming. I get bogged down in the paperwork too much."

(Coach 17) When asked why they could not change the work they do to be working in ways they saw as productive, each coach said that "these jobs are mandated by others and have to be done. I have no control over how I spend my time." (Coach 13)

4.3.3 Teacher That Sticks Out in Your Mind

When coaches were asked to think about all of the teachers they have worked with throughout all of the years they have been a coach, the question I was asked almost immediately by 26 coaches was, "Positive or negative?" When I told them it was their choice, four coaches chose to describe their work within negative circumstances. The other 26 coaches described positive situations.

All thirty coaches depicted their work with this teacher as a "process" or a "journey." No coach described meeting with a teacher just once. Each coach gave examples of steps that occurred in their work that led to either the positive or negative outcome.

> First I met with her and we talked about everything that was happening in her classroom – classroom management, room environment, individual students, the reading curriculum, how she groups students, how she uses data to inform her instruction . . . everything! Then we made a plan for how I would help her – in and out of the room. We decided that I would model first and then we would co-teach and then I would watch her. We decided that we had to have open communication with each other to make sure the process worked. Although things didn't always go as planned, we worked through it all together and she became a better teacher and I became a better coach because of our partnership.
> (Coach 8)

Five of the coaches explicitly stated that their work began with a pre-conference. This time was used to discuss "an area of concern or weakness with the teacher." (Coach 7) Those conversations, and presumably others like them, led to nineteen possibilities of work that occurred in classrooms. Coaches described work with teachers that included, but was not limited to, developing lesson plans, co-teaching, looking at data, modeling, observing, co-planning, talking, working with small groups of children and creating flexible groups. To debrief the work in classrooms, fifteen coaches said they conducted a post-conference with teachers where they "talked about what went well and what still needed to be worked on." (Coach 12) The post-conferences were also a time when three coaches used "questions and conversation to help the teachers be more reflective about their work." (Coach 18)

Modeling was the work done most often with teachers. Coaches modeled Read Alouds and Shared, Guided and Independent Reading techniques. Word Walls, Kid Writing, Reader's Workshop, QAR strategies (Question-Answer Relationship) were all mentioned by one coach each as a technique or strategy that was modeled for a teacher.

Three coaches mentioned that they arranged an observation in another classroom for themselves and a particular teacher. One coach described her situation,

> I had other teachers come with me to observe a particular teacher as a way to get
>
> everyone on board and on the same page. The teacher we observed was more
>
> experienced and was willing to share her ideas with the newer teachers. It worked
>
> well for everyone. (Coach 15)

Four coaches said that they used a reciprocal process to assist teachers in their growth. Coaches would model a strategy the teacher was struggling with while the teacher observed the

lesson. Then, after an agreed upon time limit, the coach returned to the classroom to observe the teacher using that same strategy with students.

In situations where the coach felt their work with a teacher had a positive impact, a pattern of similar characteristics among the teachers emerged. All of the teachers were very receptive to new ideas, asked a lot of questions, wanted to learn and were appreciative of the feedback coaches gave to them. They were willing to try new things and to make modifications in their work. Being open-minded and open to feedback and constructive criticism were also important to the positive working relationship between coach and teacher.

When a teacher possessed these qualities, major shifts occurred in her work with children. One coach described the transformation of a specific teacher and how this change influenced instruction.

When I first started working with this teacher she was boring. She stood in front of the classroom all day and talked at the students. When I approached her about working with her, she was open to the idea. We began with some modeling of small group work. She gave up control of the whole group situation and did less whole group, but her small group work was flat. It was mostly paper and pencil activities – basically, the kids were doing worksheets. After I observed her, we talked. I gave her feedback on the situation and she asked a lot of questions. Then she tried again. This time she seemed to better understand what her students needed. She put them in small groups with more meaningful work, but the groups didn't change, for the most part, during the few weeks she was trying this out. So, we talked some more after my observations. She got more feedback. She asked more questions. She sought me out with more questions and then finally asked

me to come watch her one more time. This time she was using everything she had available to her and her kids. She was really thinking about the kids and where their needs were. She grouped kids based on those needs and her groups changed when their needs changed. (Coach 29)

This scenario illustrates the concept of self-reflection as a large part of teacher growth. Seventeen coaches specifically stated that "getting a teacher to reflect on her teaching [was] one of the biggest contributors to improvements in teaching." (Coach 25) Observations led to teachers being able to verbalize suggestions for where they felt they needed to improve. One coach described how reflection improved the quality of one teacher's instruction. She told this story:

After months of struggling with a variety of issues, the teacher and I were having a conversation. During this conversation, she said, 'I know I am an okay teacher, but I want to be a really good teacher.' That changed everything! She and I knew that she wanted to do well and something shifted for her. Her confidence grew greatly and she was able to sustain her growth in her work with her children. Based on our work together, she developed a deep understanding of what she was doing and why she was doing it. She became so much more involved in making decisions for her children because of this new understanding." (Coach 1)

In fifteen of the twenty-six "positive" stories, the coaches' work with teachers did not begin in the most encouraging way. Teachers were reluctant to "let coaches in." (Coach 11) As a result, coaches had to find creative ways to set in motion the work with these teachers. One partnership began when the coach

kept approaching her and touching base with her to see if you needed or wanted

anything. She kept telling me no. I think she felt like she shouldn't need any help

from me. I think she saw it as a bad thing – a bad teacher – when I was working

with someone. So, she was very reluctant to let me in her classroom. Even though

I knew this, I kept checking in with her. She kept saying no. While she was

saying no, I was working with another teacher at her grade level. The teacher

would talk about things we did together and how positive everything was. When

the reluctant teacher saw what I was doing with one of her colleagues and how the

students were responding in that classroom, she must have changed her mind and

decided that she wanted that for her own classroom. The next time I checked in

with her, she took me up on my offer. We have been working together ever since.

(Coach 16)

A different way of developing a rapport with a teacher is illustrated in the following

example.

I knew this teacher didn't trust me, but I knew that I needed to be in her classroom

working with her. When the district told all of the coaches that we had to do

small group work in either a second or third grade classroom, I knew I would ask

her if I could work in her room. She agreed and this changed my relationship

with her. She now saw me as not being afraid to work with kids. We were able

to have good conversations about the progress of her students. This led to more

work and more conversations. I saw some shifts in her teaching after we started

working together. (Coach 10)

Just as similar characteristics emerged when the coaches described their work with teachers in positive relationships, the same was true for the four coaches who described situations they said were "negative." Each of the coaches talked about their frustration in their work with these teachers. The biggest challenge was getting a teacher to try a strategy after it was modeled for him/her. One coach described her situation,

I modeled <u>everything</u> for this teacher! You name it, I did it – Text Talk, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, vocabulary, writing, Differentiated Instruction, Flexible Grouping, everything. I always told her up front that she had to begin to incorporate these strategies into her classroom routines and teaching. She always said yes to my face. However, when it came time to do it, she never tried any of the strategies I showed her. She always had some excuse for why she couldn't do it: she didn't have the time, she didn't have the materials, she didn't this and she couldn't that! I would be so mad! When she said she didn't have the materials, I got them for her. I even made things for her! She still wouldn't try anything! (Coach 4)

When asked why she kept modeling for the teacher when the teacher was not carrying out her part of the expectations to the coach's satisfaction, the coach replied,

I did not come from this school and I felt that this teacher wondered if I knew what I was talking about. Trust was a major issue. I thought if I kept showing her how to do things, she would see that I knew what I was doing and we could begin to work together. I was so wrong about that! (Coach 4)

The coach's work with that teacher ended when, according to the coach, the teacher developed a "closed-door policy: she closed it every time I tried to walk through it." (Coach 4)

4.3.4   Conferences

Coaches were asked to describe a successful and a not-so-successful conference that they had completed with teachers in their role as a coach. They were asked to describe what made the conference successful or not as successful as they hoped it would be. This section reports those findings.

Five coaches had not facilitated any conferences with teachers after observing in classrooms. They had informal conversations with teachers, but had not gone through a pre-conference/observation/post-conference cycle with a teacher. Their time in classrooms was spent modeling and/or co-teaching, but not observing. One coach said that she had "been part of formal observations with the principal, but I have not done any conferences on my own." (Coach 19) Another coach stated that she does "not feel that this is part of my role as a coach. I am a peer not an administrator." (Coach 15) Two coaches said they were not allowed, according to their district, "to do any observations or conferences." (Coach 16, Coach 13) After reflecting on the work she wanted to accomplish in her school, one coach decided, "the school is not there yet. It would have done more harm than good if I had pushed myself into classrooms to do observations and formal conferences. We need to put other things in place first and then maybe I can start completing observations in classrooms." (Coach 6)

Coaches knew that being in the role of observer in classrooms would be threatening to many teachers. To lessen these feelings of anxiety, thirteen coaches described doing one or a combination of the following three things before they ever entered a classroom to do an observation:

1. Talked to the teacher "to find out what she wanted help with"

2. Created an observation form "with the grade group that I would use during my observations"

3. Taught "a model lesson using the strategy she would be observed teaching"

Each of these pre- observation strategies proved "helpful to focus the conversation after the visitation and made it most helpful for the teacher." (Coach 30) During the model lesson, the teacher completed the form that was created at the grade group meeting while observing the coach as the teacher. "This role reversal helped the teacher know exactly what would be expected of her during the observation." (Coach 2) Another coach explained the success of this approach by sharing,

The teacher had observed me teaching and she was able to articulate what she had seen during the modeled lesson. She picked up a lot of good information and made good suggestions for follow-up work with her students. I observed her implementing these changes when I did the observation on her. Her teaching definitely changed because of this work we did together. (Coach 12)

One coach shared a modification she made to the process, "I gave the teacher time to practice between my modeled lesson and my observation of her." (Coach 27) All of this preparation for the observation and "taking away the unknown about classroom visits from coaches" (Coach 28) helped make the conferences successful because, as one coach explained, "nothing was hidden from the teachers. [Each teacher] knew exactly what they asked for help with and how they were going to know if they were successful or not." (Coach 3)

The remaining twelve coaches described characteristics teachers displayed during a conference to make it successful. Every coach used the word "willing" to describe their

teachers' behaviors. Each teacher was willing to: change, reflect, listen to new ideas, incorporate new ideas into classroom teaching, look at data, talk about their students and the work done in classrooms or try something new. One coach's description was:

> I asked the teacher if I could observe her teaching during the 90-minute literacy block. I told her that she could pick the time and topic and I would just watch. She chose a phonics lesson. It was in the middle of her block. So, I watched the phonics part and then stayed for the rest of the period. She was anxious to talk to me about the lesson, so we met later that day to discuss it. Before we could even sit down, she asked me what I thought. I asked her to tell me her impressions first. That is all we needed. The conversation flowed from there. She was open to being self-reflective in front of me. She was able to see what went well and what needed some work – believe me, it was not a perfect lesson and we both knew it. It was refreshing to see her be so honest and not the least bit defensive. Her reflections were much better for her growth than me simply telling her what went well and what might be some areas where she could improve. Her willingness to let me in her classroom, talk with me when the lesson was still fresh in both our minds, her honesty about what went well and what still needs some work and her willingness to try some of the suggestions we talked about really the conference successful and made her teaching much better. (Coach 14)

Three of the twenty-five coaches who had conducted conferences with teachers said they had not had any that they would have described as "not so successful." One coach said, "All of the teachers have been receptive to my face. I don't know what they are saying behind my back, but they are receptive to my face." (Coach 1)

Descriptions of these conferences centered on what teachers were not – not receptive, not open, not willing and not available. Coaches described situations where the teachers were "passive-aggressive" (Coach 18) in the conference. One coach illustrated this with the following story.

A teacher came to me and asked me to observe her. She hadn't really bothered with me before this, so I saw it as a good sign. We could begin some good work together. After the observation, she readily agreed to meet with me. The conference was going to center around the issue the teacher has brought to me as something she was struggling with. When I tried to talk with her about it she diverted the conversation to another, less important issue. I tried to redirect her back to the original issue. She wouldn't stay focused on the issue. This happened over and over until finally I gave up. I arranged another meeting with her. She agreed very quickly again. The same thing happened in the second conference – she kept changing the subject and refused – in a really nice way – to talk about the issue she brought to me. Because of this, I could never get to the real issue to solve it. (Coach 7)

Other conferences became quite hostile the longer the conference continued. In one situation a teacher refused to meet with a coach because the teacher felt that "coaches had no business observing and conferring with teachers." (Coach 21) The coach went to the principal and the principal told the teacher that she had to meet with the coach. As a result, a meeting time was arranged. The coach began by describing what she felt were the positive aspects of the lesson. According to the coach, the teacher

came with her barriers up. Her arms were folded throughout the entire conference and she was rolling her eyes and had an attitude about the things I was talking about." When the time came for the coach to "give constructive criticism and make suggestions, all hell broke loose! According to the teacher, I had nothing to offer her. She told me that she 'could not or would not' accept any suggestions I gave to her. She kept asking who I was to ask her questions and give her feedback. She told me I wasn't that good of a teacher when I was in the classroom.   She felt like she was being severely criticized and told me, 'I'm busy, thank you, good-bye,' and she walked out of the room. (Coach 21)

The coach said that she never went to the principal about meeting with a teacher again. If the teacher chose not to have a conference after an observation, that was "more than okay" with her. (Coach 21)

Coaches also described conferences that, "on the surface," (Coach 17) seemed to go well, but the coach knew that she was not having a productive conversation with the teacher. For example,

I sat with one teacher who looked me in the face and told me that she understood what I said to her, but I knew from the look in her eyes that she wasn't going to make any changes to her practice. She wasn't going to do what I just finished talking to her about. (Coach 9)

Another coach described a similar experience, "During our conversation I knew the teacher was not paying attention. She was looking at me, but she was really looking through me." (Coach 24) A different coach explained that she rarely had a good conference because

teachers are delusional. They ask for your help and then they don't answer the questions you ask them about their work. They go on and on about something totally unrelated and they really think they are answering your question and that you are having a really good conversation about their work. (Coach 5)

4.3.5 Summary

This section discussed four main topics: how coaches spent their time, whether their time spent effectively, descriptions of a memorable teacher with whom they had worked and successful and not-so-successful conferences. Coaches divided their time among seven activities: team meetings, modeling, planning, co-teaching, instructing students, data analysis, and paperwork. Each activity played an important role in helping coaches assist teachers to improve their practice. Twenty-five coaches said these activities were essential to their work with teachers. Five coaches said they spent too much time on one or two of the activities which took away from their time in classrooms with teachers.

When describing a teacher that stuck out in their minds, coaches used similar characteristics to represent "positive" teachers. These teachers were receptive to new ideas and open to feedback. In a number of cases, the work with these teachers began slowly and, in some cases, negatively, but something occurred to create a more positive situation. When describing "negative" situations, coaches also used similar characteristics. Teachers refused, outwardly or more quietly, to try new strategies in their classrooms.

Successful conferences often began with modeling by the coach. Coaches often used an "I do, we do, you do" approach to creating a shift in teacher practice. This means that first, the coach modeled, then the coach and teacher planned a lesson together or co-taught using the same

modeled strategy, finally, the coach observed the teacher using the strategy in teaching reading. Willingness on the part of teacher made this process much easier for the coach. Not-so-successful conferences were described as taking place with teachers who were unreceptive to change, to new ideas and to the assistance from the coach.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT FACTORS WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF THEIR ORGANIZATION HELP OR HINDER THEM IN THEIR WORK?

This section discusses six interview topics. It begins with coaches describing factors that make their school a conducive or non-conducive environment in which to coach. A discussion of the ratings coaches gave their schools in seven different areas follows. Next, the kind of work coaches do with their principals and how they rated these administrators in terms of support is presented. Teacher response to coaching, additional training the coaches would like to have and the activities they wish they could be using during the week completes this section.

Twenty-four coaches rated the environment in their school as a conducive place to coach. The principal, teachers and the community they created together each had a positive impact on the school environment. The most important and most frequently identified factor in coaches' success was that "principal[s] and teachers see the role of the coach as valuable." (Coach 16) One coach described her school to the researcher as

the most conducive because the principal is on top of everything. She uses me as a resource and as a connection between her and the teachers. She definitely sees reading as a priority. She is clear about her expectations to everyone. She sees an area of weakness and is right on top of it. She involves me and all of the teachers

in the decision-making process at the school so everyone is invested in getting things done. Everyone sees each other's roles as important and we all work together to solve the issues she brings to us. She supports all of my requests for materials. She is open to all of my suggestions and any suggestions that come from anyone in the building – including parents. She is a good listener, too. She gives me her full support in everything that I do. (Coach 11)

Principals that were "supportive," (Coach 30) "interested in student learning," (Coach 6)"respectful of what I do,"(Coach 14) and "open" (Coach 12) set the tone for how coaches could work in their buildings. One coach explained the importance of support by stating, "I can go to him for anything. He will listen, support and work through any problems with me." (Coach 11) One quarter of the coaches who rated their environment as conducive said that their principal showed an interest in student learning through data analysis that occurred throughout the school year. Principals and coaches used these data to "constantly set new goals for the school." (Coach 12)

Principals were described as respectful and were praised when they created a schedule and gave "me the freedom to work with teachers so I can do my job." (Coach 16) Another form of respect was shown when coaches would go to the principal and describe an issue that needed to be addressed and the principal would "say that she would bring it up in the team meetings because she felt it was something that she should address the teachers on and it shouldn't come from me." (Coach 4)

Coaches appreciated the willingness of principals to try new approaches to professional development and teacher learning, such as study groups. A coach explained that her principal

had never heard of study groups before. It was something that I had read about and wanted to try. Once I explained to her what they were and what their purpose was, she was willing to give it a try. She even bought all of the teachers their own copy of the fluency book we were going to use. She said it was a gift to each teacher who was willing to participate in the group. (Coach 22)

One coach, who described her environment as conducive, summed up the effect the principal had on the school's environment by sharing, "When the principal is on board it makes everything so much easier. Everyone knows that she supports me so they do their best and support me too. It makes working together so much easier!" (Coach 19)

Three coaches said there were times when the school was conducive to coaching and times when it was not. Each coach described a setting that required time for everyone to adjust to the new roles and new expectations of Reading First. "At the beginning of the year it was not conducive, it has gotten better throughout the year." (Coach 18) One reason for the fluctuation between conducive and non-conducive is teacher "buy-in." (Coach 6) A coach stated, "Most teachers are on board with the program. Some other teachers still just aren't there yet." (Coach 13)

The environment was rated as not conducive to coaching by five coaches. Just as the principal and the teachers were cited as the basis for creating a conducive environment, they were also given as reasons for generating an unfavorable environment in which to work. Parents were also an issue for one coach. She said, "The parents are not involved and the children are an extension of what they see at home." (Coach 20) The principal's lack of understanding of the role of the coach trickled down to the teachers, so teachers have "no idea what coaching is".

(Coach 9) This helped create an environment in which there was "no comfortable give and take kind of thing going on." (Coach 1)

Teachers who did not understand the role of the coach did not understand how the coach could be helpful to them. So, when coaches offered suggestions to the teachers, the response was "we are doing fine, even when they really aren't." (Coach 18) One coach described her work in a school that had not accepted her role as

> everyone sees what I do because two-thirds of our classrooms have no walls and it
>
> is perceived that when I spend time with a teacher they need help and that I am
>
> out to get them. That attitude is contagious. (Coach 9)

The coaches working in these non-conducive environments were adamant about how things should be changed, but felt it was not their role to begin the change process. All five coaches believed that the transformations had to begin with the principal. The modifications "have to come from the top down," (Coach 1) one coach declared. Another coach seemed to have a similar train of thought when she said,

> Everyone needs to see the vision and share it. Relating that to everyone is the job
>
> of the principal. She needs to be certain that the school is laying a good
>
> foundation from which students can learn and can be successful. (Coach 9)

These five coaches were willing to work along with the principal to generate necessary changes is their school environments. They were skeptical, however, that this change could or would happen in their respective schools for one of two reasons: (1) lack of understanding of how to get teachers to work with a coach or (2) the punitive way the principal handled school personnel. Three principals told their coaches that they must "work with every teacher in the school." (Coach 20, Coach 9, Coach 7) Each of the three coaches wanted to begin their work

with teachers who were willing to work with them. One coach paraphrased a quote from Dr. Rita Bean, co-chair of the Reading First External Evaluation Team in Pennsylvania, from a presentation she gave to the coaches during the first year of the grant. The coach said, "Dr. Bean told us that working with teachers in schools is often like working with horses on a farm. You need to start with the horses that are willing to come out of the barn first." (Coach 7) Each coach thought that "if I start my work with willing volunteers, other teachers will see what I do and, I hope, want to work with me." (Coach 20) This, however, was not how the principals told the coaches to spend their time. Coaches were told to "spend equal amounts of time with each teacher in the school." (Coach 9) Because of the reluctance of some of the teachers and the feelings of resentment when the coach had to begin working with a teacher who did not want to be coached, this did nothing to create an environment that was conducive to coaching.

The two other coaches working in non-conducive environments, described their principals as "very punitive" (Coach 1) and "a dictator." (Coach 18) This made it "very difficult to get anything positive done at the school." (Coach 18) One coach described her working relationship with the principal as "he tells me what to do and what he wants and I do it. There is no discussion of reading or implementation." She wondered out loud, "How can you have a conducive environment when you are working with that?" (Coach 1)

4.4.1 School Culture

Table 7 illustrates how coaches rated teachers at their individual schools, using a Likert scale, in areas such as reflection, expectations of students and the use of best practices to teach reading. Thirty-two schools were rated because two coaches worked at two different schools and they

rated each school separately. For the most part, all coaches rated each aspect of their school in a positive vein.

The results indicate that coaches see teachers as effective most or all of the time in sharing ideas (84%), having high expectations for students (72%) and using data to inform instruction (78%). On the other hand, the areas of using best practices (57%), working collaboratively (48%), supporting innovative ideas (56%) and reflecting on their teaching (40%) were rated as not being utilized as often in most of the schools.

No coaches gave their schools a "not at all" rating in the areas of using best practices, having high expectations for students and supporting innovative ideas. These areas were rated as having at least begun in all schools. Teachers sharing ideas was occurring no less than sometimes in all schools.

The one area where there was much variability was "teachers reflect on their teaching." Teachers in one school are just beginning to reflect and teachers in four schools reflect on their teaching all of the time.

Table 7 Rating of School Factors by Reading First Coaches

	not at all	beginning	sometimes	most of the time	all of the time
	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)
Teachers use best practices	0(0)	2(6)	11(33)	14(42)	5(15)
Teachers share ideas	0(0)	0(0)	4(12)	15(45)	13(39)
Have high expectations	0(0)	2(6)	6(18)	15(45)	9(27)
Work collaboratively	1(3)	2(6)	14(42)	9(27)	7(21)
Reflect on their teaching	1(3)	9(28)	9(28)	9(28)	4(12)
Support innovative ideas	0(0)	2(6)	12(37)	16(50)	2(6)
Use data to inform instruction	1(3)	2(6)	4(12)	17(53)	8(25)

* There are more than thirty ratings because two coaches rated the two schools they worked in.

4.4.2 Work with Principal

Coaches were asked to describe the work they do with their principal and to rate their principal, using a scale of 1 -10 (very supportive), on how supportive he/she was in helping the coach carry out the responsibilities of her job. Table 8 shows the coaches' ratings. Fifty-seven percent of the coaches gave their principal a score of 10. Ten percent of the respondents rated their principal with a score of five or below.

Table 8 Rating of Principal's Support of Coaching

Rating	Number of Respondents*
1 - 3	2
4 - 6	4
7 -9	9
10	17

* There are more than thirty ratings because two coaches rated the two principals they worked for.

The work coaches do with their principals was consistent across all respondents: they meet together. At times the meetings were for planning. "We meet to set agendas for meetings." (Coach 5) Other meetings were held to debrief about work the coach had done on her own or work the coach and principal had done together. These meetings helped the coach and principal examine their work more closely and make any necessary changes or improvements. The majority of the meetings between the coach and the principal were used to discuss a variety of topics: school-wide data, student achievement, Reading First information, planning, "review what is going on with teachers" (Coach 23), observations, "plan initiatives that will come to the school" (Coach 21) and "develop an action plan for the school". (Coach 17)

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The frequency of meetings was different among coaches. One coach said that she met two to three times a day with her principal. (Coach 7) Two other coaches said they met with their principal every day. (Coach 25, Coach 12) The other 27 respondents said they had formal meeting times built into their schedules each week. Seventeen coaches stated that in addition to their scheduled meeting times, they also had informal meetings with the principal "when I have something I need to tell her [him]." (Coach 16)

Twenty-two coaches used the adjectives "supportive" and "respectful" when rating their principals with either a nine or ten. Principals were described as being supportive of Reading First initiatives, the work coaches do in classrooms, the need for coaches to attend necessary professional development sessions and buying materials teachers needed to "successfully implement the new reading curriculum." (Coach 10)

"Open" is another word that coaches used when giving their principal a favorable rating. [My principal] "is open to learning more. He is not set in his ways. He is excited and interested in learning." (Coach 8) Being available to the coach was another way a principal was "open". Taking the time to listen to the needs of the coach and/or teachers was essential to fourteen coaches. "She [the principal] has an open-door policy. She is always willing to discuss anything I want to discuss." (Coach 26)

Coaches who rated their principal as a 5-8 seemed to have had one or two unpleasant experiences with their principal and knew that the relationship could be better. "I feel supported, but the relationship could get stronger in terms of how we support teachers together." (Coach 13) They also understood, but did not identify with the principal's approach to his work. "He is emotionally supportive – he says, 'good job' – when I do something, but he really has nothing to do with Reading First." (Coach 6)

Two coaches rated their principal with a three. These ratings came from coaches who said their principals did not have any understanding of the coach's role and seemed to have difficulty getting along with people, in general. One coach explained, "he is incapable of relating to teachers or kids, so he strictly enforces his closed-door policy." (Coach 18) Another explanation offered by a second coach was, "he has no buy-in for Reading First because he wasn't there when the grant was written." (Coach 1) One coach attempted to discuss a non-conducive environment with her principal. The result was, "there have been promises about things getting better, but things have not yet improved." (Coach 9)

4.4.3   Teacher Response to Coaching

When coaching was first introduced to teachers in Reading First schools, the teachers were not sure how to react. It was unclear whether the coach would "run back to the principal with everything that was going on in their classrooms, so many teachers were defensive." (Coach 19) At the beginning of their work, coaches found that "not many teachers wanted us in their classrooms. Some teachers thought I was a coach because I had not been a good teacher, so I got out of the classroom and got an easier job." (Coach 8) One coach said that her teachers had "a violent reaction to me. They called me a spy and about a quarter of them gave me a really hard time." (Coach 25) Another coach struggled because she had "never been a classroom teacher. Teachers saw that as an obstacle. They didn't know if they should trust me or not." (Coach 1) Another coach felt that although the " teachers weren't sure what to make of me," she felt had an advantage, however, because she "was a teacher in the building at one time, so I think they were a little more open to me and my work because they knew me." (Coach 14)

Three years later, the response to coaches and the work they do is more positive. Eleven coaches used the word "resource" to describe how their teachers view them. Overall, all of the coaches are now seen as being "a general source of all kinds of information." (Coach 22) Coaches are approached "with almost every problem a teacher has. When they come to me, they know that whatever they need will get done." (Coach 4) This was accomplished through "consistent work." (Coach 5) Coaches said they listened to teachers, asked questions and were willing to "perform any task the teachers wanted me to do in order to build trust because trust is the key." (Coach 10) A coach shared that her

> teachers know they can trust me and they know that I am their resource and their help. We have developed a relationship in which they come to me in two situations: when they need someone to talk to and when they just want an answer to a question. I used to try to engage them in conversations every time they came to me – how is it going, what are the kids doing, are you having any problems with the new curriculum? Those kinds of questions were okay when they wanted someone to talk to. I learned, through their feedback, however, that they wanted to ask their question first and then I could question them only about things that pertained to the topic they wanted to talk about. In these situations, they really wanted to figure things out for themselves with a little help from me. I was just a sounding board. When they just wanted an answer that is really all they wanted. Again, through their feedback, I learned that when they wanted an answer that meant, 'cut the crap: no talking, no reflecting, just give me the answer'. (Coach 22)

4.4.4 Additional Training Needs

When asked if there was any other training they would like to have to help them as a coach, the answer given most often was "none." Seven coaches felt that the professional development provided by the state and/or their district had been "sufficient enough to get me ready and keep me going as I develop in this coaching job." (Coach 13)

Five coaches wanted to

go deeper into Cognitive Coaching. This was the best training that was ever given, but it didn't go deep enough. I know I wasn't ready to get too deep at the beginning because it was new, but now I have practiced it with teachers and I'm ready to go to the next level. (Coach 11)

Four coaches wanted additional training

in order to clarify the role of the coach. Things have changed since Reading First began and we have gotten a lot more jobs to do. Now we need to go back and revisit the original job description and see if we need to change it. Do we need to add some things to it? Do we need to take some things away? We can't do everything that we are doing now and be as successful as we might be. We have too much on our plates, so the role needs to be clarified once again. (Coach 27)

Three coaches simply wanted more time to talk and collaborate with other coaches. We need time to share what we are doing in a more informal setting. We need to have time to just walk around a room full of coaches and just talk. We have to have time to share our successes and have time to get some help with problems. There are probably a lot of coaches who are having the same problems. If we talk to each other, we can help each other solve the problems. We can also get great

ideas to share with our teachers or try at our schools from another coach. Sharing

is very important in this job. (Coach 15)

Three additional coaches wanted more training with how to organize and schedule their time. One coach explained that she does not

manage my time very well. I run around all day, but when I really ask myself

what I have accomplished at the end of the day, it isn't as much as it should be

with all the running I do throughout the day. I need someone to help me organize

my schedule and my time so I can be as efficient as I should be. (Coach 4)

Another coach said that she

wastes a lot of time. I am not using my time most effectively. I am in classrooms

all the time, but sometimes I'm not doing anything while I'm in there. I think to

myself when I'm just sitting there that I should be doing something else. I have a

schedule and teachers count on me to be there, but it doesn't seem to be working

as well as it could be and I don't know what it wrong. I would like someone else

to help me look at it and reschedule it so I'm using my time most wisely. (Coach

16)

The other eight coaches stated eight different areas in which they wanted more training. Five areas were academic in nature. They included: technology, vocabulary, comprehension, strategies for working with families of English Language Learners (ELL) and literacy center activities for grades two and three. The remaining three coaches wanted help with people-to-people interactions. One coach asked for more training to "get ideas of how to work with a difficult administrator." (Coach 18) Another coach wanted additional professional development

to "increase the social interaction skills of coaches." (Coach 6) The third coach requested assistance with "how to deal with odd or weird people." (Coach 13)

4.4.5 Wish List

This section discusses the activities that coaches did not have time to do consistently, but wished they did. Although five coaches said they were "pretty much getting everything in," (Coach 6) the other twenty-five coaches had a list of jobs they were not fitting into their schedules. All of their wishes centered around time: time to meet with teachers, time to model, time to plan, time to work with teachers in just one building rather than having to go between two schools.

Nine coaches stated that they needed more time to talk with teachers. Two of the coaches wanted that time to be on an individual basis. One coach said, "Time alone with a teacher is a good time to build trust, define individual needs and privately discuss any problems the teacher has." (Coach 21) The other coach wanted individual time with new teachers to "deal with all of the issues new teachers have – classroom management, lesson planning, new curriculum questions and anything else they need help with." (Coach 5)

Six coaches were seeking "more time to collaborate with grade groups built into the day." (Coach 8) One coach explained,

> Teachers are busy on their preps. They have meetings before school and also
> after school. I don't want to shove myself into their lunch break so there really
> isn't any time for us to meet. If it were built into the day, then we would have
> consistent time to talk together. Teachers would know about it and be able to plan
> for it every week. (Coach 17)

Another coach said that her "grade level teams exist on paper, but not is reality. Teachers are too busy to meet, so I would like to have more time to really meet with all of my teachers at each grade level." (Coach 26)

One coach wanted

to be able to go through a complete Cognitive Coaching cycle. Teachers don't want to give up their preps to pre or post-conference. We do some planning and conferencing in passing in the hallways. This is not a realistic way to make any improvements in teaching. We need more time to sit and plan and confer about lessons. (Coach 13)

The biggest disappointment for five coaches was that they had no time in their schedule to work with students. "I was not prepared for not being able to work with small groups of children." (Coach 6) These coaches wanted their time to be split more evenly between working with adults and working with children.

I know I'm not supposed to work with children, but I think that would really help teachers. I could do a lot of good working with students because I know what they need and I know how to give it to them. (Coach 29)

One coach did have small group instruction time in her daily schedule, but she wanted more time to work with students individually to "get them where they need to be." (Coach 20)

Four coaches felt that more time to model strategies for teachers was needed. "It is essential," (Coach 11) according to one coach. Another coach explained that she was teaching in different classrooms every day, but the teachers were not there to see her teaching because "the on-line courses are taking teachers out of the room while I teach. So, they can't see the modeling I would like to do for them." (Coach 15)

In order to "ensure success," one coach said, "I think we need to meet with other coaches on a regular basis to reflect on what we are doing. This will make us all better at our jobs." (Coach 18) Two additional respondents wanted more time with their fellow coaches. (Coach 9, Coach 14) One coach asked for "more all-coach meetings where we can mingle and share ideas; where we can talk about the successes of each coach and get support where we need it." (Coach 9) The other coach expressed a desire for "a shadowing and/or mentoring program for coaches. I feel alone at times and would like to have someone to run things by on a consistent basis." (Coach 14)

Another issue with scheduling was raised. A coach wanted to have more planning periods for herself built into her weekly schedule.

I need more time for my own planning during the school day. I can't do all that I need to do to get ready for my work in classrooms if I am in classrooms all day long. I have to have time to plan. This time for me will lead to better coaching. (Coach 30)

One coach tells her wish,

I need time to follow through on things I start. This is something I really wish I could be doing. I get things started, but I don't have time to follow it through. For example, I started doing Quick Reads in a classroom. I got called away in the middle of the class. I told the teacher who I had heard read and who I hadn't. I thought she was going to finish doing the other children. By the time I checked back with her, it had been a month and a half. I asked her how it was going and she said, 'Oh, was I supposed to do that?' Because so much time had passed, it didn't make sense to me to go back and do the rest of the kids and I didn't have

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time to start them all over again. If I had checked back with her sooner, we might

have been able to continue doing the Quick Reads. (Coach 2)

Another coach explained how being in two buildings affected the work she could do with

teachers.

Being at more than one building is difficult. You can't do all that needs to be

done. You can only do band-aid work. You have to assume that some people

don't need your help and that isn't always the case. I wish I could be in only one

building. Then I would be able to know my teachers better and be better able to

meet their needs and the needs of their students. (Coach 22)

One final coach did not have things she wished she could be doing in a typical week. In

fact, she wished for just the opposite.

I wish there were things I did NOT have to do every week – ordering materials

and paperwork, for example. If I didn't have to do these things, I could spend

more time with teachers and do the real job I'm supposed to do. (Coach 7)

4.4.6 Summary

Twenty-four coaches said their school is a conducive place in which to coach. When the

principal sets a positive tone that understands and values the work of the coach, the environment

is conducive to coaching. Conversely, when the principal does not understand the role and

communicates that lack of understanding to teachers, the environment becomes a more negative

place to work.

Teachers within certain schools are teaching with best practices, working collaboratively

and sharing ideas with colleagues, using data to inform instruction and reflecting on their

teaching at least most of the time. Different teachers participate in these activities sometimes while others are still just beginning to incorporate these aspects into their work.

Over half of the coaches rated their principals as extremely supportive, giving them a score of 10. A third of them gave their principal a rating of five or less. All of the coaches agreed, however, on the work they do with their principals: have meetings. Although the meetings varied in frequency and formality, they were all used to plan and discuss what was happening in their schools and what needed to happen.

Teacher response to coaching has evolved over time. Initially, teachers were not sure how to view coaches. Were they spies? Were they punitive? What exactly was their role? Three years later coaches are seen as a resource and are approached to help with almost any problem a teacher has.

Coaches would like to have more professional development in the area of Cognitive Coaching. They have received some basic training in this model and would not like to return in order to "go deeper." Several coaches would like to revisit their job descriptions to see what, if anything, needs to be added or taken away to make it more accurate. Sharing time with other coaches was requested. They would like to simply be able to discuss their work with colleagues. A final topic for needed professional development was how to best organize and schedule time to make the best use of it.

4.5   RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT DO COACHES PERCEIVE THEIR

RESPONSIBILITIES TO BE AND WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS AND

POSSIBILITIES OF THE VARIOUS JOBS THEY PERFORM?

This section discusses the difficulties coaches encountered in their work and how they see the role of the coach now. It begins with the obstacles coaches face on a consistent basis. It then describes how coaches document their effectiveness in their role. Finally, I discuss coaches' views about their preparation for the role, how they view coaching, and how they rate a variety of attributes of coaches.

4.5.1 Primary Barriers

According to seventeen coaches, time is the number one barrier in coaching. One coach lamented,

> There is not enough time in a day, a week, a month or a school year to get
>
> everything done that I need to get done. I feel guilty about it most days, but I try
>
> to tell myself that I am only one person and I really do the best I can. (Coach 6)

Coaches wanted more time to: meet with teachers, conduct professional development sessions, plan and organize their time and materials, co-plan, reflect on their work with teachers, meet with grade levels, meet across grade levels and meet the needs of all of the children in the school. A coach explained,

> They are constantly putting more on our plates – the state, the district, the
>
> administration. They don't realize how much we have to do and how much
>
> responsibility we have. Coaching has become a classic case of 'so much to do, so

little time.' How do we fit it all in? Sadly, the answer has to be that we don't.

We can't. It's hard to admit, but we just can't. (Coach 24)

Eight coaches listed their principal as a primary barrier. As discussed earlier, the lack of understanding of the role of the coach, not having the support of the administration, and a poor attitude toward change can all make the job of the coach more difficult to perform.

Five coaches identified paperwork as the primary barrier to their job.

I spend so much time doing paperwork that I don't have enough time with teachers. There is paperwork for my district and paperwork for the state. I have forms to fill out at the school if I want supplies or reimbursements or to be released to go to training. I am constantly filling out paperwork. It is really what I spend the most time doing each day. It is really a gigantic problem. (Coach 16)

Five coaches added one additional barrier to individual lists. One coach said that a lack of money in her school made it difficult to do everything she wanted to do for and with teachers and their students. (Coach 4) Another coach stated that she was "constantly filling in for other teachers when they were absent or had meetings to go to. This is obviously getting in the way of me being able to do all of my coaching jobs." (Coach 5) The third coach added "change over in teachers" to her list.

I do all of this work with a teacher and then she leaves at the end of the year to go to another school. Instead of getting an experienced teacher to take her place, a new teacher comes in so I have to start all over again. I work so much with the new teachers that I don't have time to work with anyone else. The other teachers want me to work with them, but I don't have time. (Coach 27)

Coaches being moved from one building to another was an obstacle for a fourth coach.

I just get the teachers to trust me and begin to work with me and then I get

assigned to another building. Relationships don't just happen over night. They

need time to grow to be effective. I do all of the hard work at the beginning and

then I don't get to have any of the benefits of that work. I can't be effective if I

have to move around every year. (Coach 10)

The fifth coach said that the district-level office in her district made coaching more

difficult, at times. "[The office] makes blanket rules rather than looking at individual coaches

and teachers in individual schools. They could help us reach more children if we were able to

make certain decisions at our schools." (Coach 20)

4.5.2 Documentation of Impact

During the interview, coaches were asked what they would use to document the impact they have

had in their work. Although each coach gave more than one answer to this question, twenty-nine

of the thirty coaches interviewed said that improvement in students' assessment scores was an

indication of their impact. The thirtieth coach felt she could not make a judgment about her

impact because "it is still too early to have that kind of feedback." (Coach 3)

Ten coaches did not name a specific assessment on which students improved, they simply

said, "student scores," (Coach 15) "test scores" (Coach 2) or "progress monitoring." (Coach 22)

One of those ten explained, "I know you really can't attribute that (increase in students' scores)

to me, but if the teachers have been effective, I hope they were effective because of me." (Coach

7) Another said, "If you go over the data from the time I started at the school as a coach until

now, you will see much improvement in scores." (Coach 14) A third coach stated, "The student

achievement in classrooms where I was more active is better. If you focus in on the teachers I

worked more closely with, you will see that those students have better assessment scores." (Coach 16)

When coaches did identify a specific test, they included: DIBELS, Directed Reading Assessment (DRA), Standards-Based Assessments (SBA) – a district-level assessment given three times a year in one of the large urban school districts, Terra Nova, and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Nine coaches said that their DIBELS scores had "moved up." (Coach 25) One coach shared that in her school "it used to be that the largest number of kids were 'intensive' [scoring at the below basic level]. That has now reversed." (Coach 11) A different coach believed that, "my school met AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) two years in a row. I must be doing something right!" (Coach 8)

When describing the other ways they would document their impact, coaches used what one coach described as "more qualitative kinds of things." (Coach 20) She added,

> When I read the reflective comments teachers made on the on-line course, I knew that I was being effective. They described how their knowledge had grown from working with me and that they wouldn't have done as well as they did in the on-line course if they hadn't done some work with me before they took it. (Coach 20)

Relationships were identified as an important way coaches could see the effect they had on teachers and schools. One coach said, "I have an excellent rapport with my teachers. Anything they ask of me or I ask of them gets done." (Coach 4) A different coach knew that the positive relationships she had developed with her teachers had made an important impact on their teaching. She was unclear, however, how to calculate that.

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I wish there was some way to measure the positive relationships I have with my

teachers. I know what they were like at the beginning, how hard we have worked

together and what they are like now. I know that because of these relationships

teaching has changed, thinking about teaching has changed. I just don't know

how you can measure something like that. I just know it and I know the teachers

know it. (Coach 29)

Shifts in teacher behavior were also an indicator of the positive results of coaching. One coach said, "The teachers are opening up more. They are coming to more Leadership Team meetings and they are coming to me with their questions consistently." (Coach 10) A second coach stated, "There is greater participation, buy-in, from teachers." (Coach 1) A third coach felt that if she

could have documented some conversations I've had with teachers over these

three years, you would see that I have impacted many of them. They used to

whine and complain about <u>everything</u>! Now they talk about instruction. Teachers

are actually taking testing and instruction more seriously. I can tell by the way

they talk and teach that they are aware of what they are doing and they feel

accountable for their work. (Coach 9)

4.5.3 Current Feelings of Preparedness

Twenty-eight coaches see themselves as well prepared for coaching after spending at least one year in the role. One coach is still unsure of her preparedness. She clarifies by saying,

I am much better prepared now, but I'm still unsure about how things are going to

be. I know I can do it, but I'm just sure I want to. I know what I'm doing is

useful, but if I had to do it all over again or could decide today, I would go back to the classroom without a second thought. (Coach 24)

Another coach feels "okay" about her work as a coach. She explains:

I have a different understanding of the role of the coach than the mandates put out by Reading First. I now know what the role <u>should be</u> based on my work. I know that I'm not supposed to be working with students. I know that I'm not supposed to be working with every teacher on the same things – oral reading fluency and differentiated instruction. This one-size-fits-all approach to coaching is not the way it is supposed to be. I try to do things the way they are supposed to be done, but with all of the documentation I am expected to turn in to different people, that is hard to do, at times. That's why I know that I am prepared to do the job of a coach, but I'm not doing it the way I also know that I should be. I am following rules that I don't really believe in just because Reading First says I should. Can I go against the grain and still keep my job? I love coaching, but do I really want to do it in this way? (Coach 12)

Experience was a good teacher for coaches. Although the experiences were not always positive, they were educational. One coach said, "Through good and bad experiences I have learned a lot about myself and how to coach teachers." (Coach 27) Another admitted, "I have made a lot of mistakes, but I have learned from every one of them." (Coach 10) Through their every day work, they became comfortable with Cognitive Coaching, been "thoroughly trained in all strategies and interactions," (Coach 9) felt comfortable "doing all of the things needed to bring up scores: modeling, small group instruction and interventions to meet students' needs," (Coach 6) learned how to administer and analyze assessment data and "found a way to work with

teachers that didn't necessarily want to work with me." (Coach 17) All of the knowledge gained

from these experiences created feelings of "confidence in all aspects of my job. I feel that I am a

good coach." (Coach 1) Another coach said her growth came,

> because I had to face some of my fears. I had to do professional development in
> front of teachers. That was so scary for me. I had no choice but to get through
> the fear and do it anyway. I don't get as nervous anymore. (Coach 30)

Two coaches shared lessons they learned about themselves that facilitated their growth as

coaches. One said,

> I had to learn a bit more tact. I realized I couldn't blurt out everything I wanted to
> say when I wanted to say it. I learned that the hard way. I hurt a teacher's
> feelings by being very honest with her. I now know that I have to wait sometimes
> to think about what I want to say and how to say it truthfully but with enough tact
> that the teacher will listen and will keep talking to me after I tell her what she
> needs to hear. (Coach 5)

The other coach learned a similar lesson.

> I had to learn how to play the people game. I had to hide my surprise about what
> was happening in certain classrooms. I had to bite my tongue in certain
> situations. I know that if I don't wait to talk to the teacher I might say something
> that I would regret later. It would be too honest for the teacher to hear. Teachers
> are trying their best. I need to guide them to doing better. That wouldn't happen
> if I hadn't learned to play the game of saying something that might be a little hard
> to hear in a nice way. (Coach 30)

Coaching became more widespread after the No Child Left Behind Act came into effect in 2001. As a result,

> There was a lot more published that I could read about the role of the coach from different perspectives. This really helped me understand what coaches were supposed to do and how I could best do those things at my school with my teachers. Many more materials are also available now to help me help teachers. (Coach 27)

> One coach felt she had

> come a long way in my job as a coach. On a scale of 1- 10, I am now an 8. I can now actually keep from sinking. I am almost floating almost every day now. One thing that really helped me get to this point was realizing that I have to remain emotionally intelligent and have to have a certain level of maturity to do this job. I tell myself every day, 'I am not fat, I am just thick-skinned. (Coach 2)

4.5.4 What Coaching Is

When coaches were asked to complete the sentence, "Coaching is. . ." they responded in two different ways. They either blurted out the first thing that came to their mind or they thought in silence for 10-25 seconds before they answered. The coaches who gave their answer right away, answered with a short, to-the-point phrase. For example, coaching is. . . "very satisfying" (Coach 18), "driving me crazy this year" (Coach 24), and "a lot harder than people think." (Coach 29) The coaches who thought for any length of time about their answer, had longer definitions of what coaching is. "Coaching is a teacher partnership model that includes

embedded professional development in which a coach supports teachers in improving their pedagogy and, at the same time, improving student performance." (Coach 4) Or,

> It is a way for me to share my knowledge or expertise as it lights a fire and thirst
>
> for knowledge in my colleagues so they can refine their practice. It is a really
>
> good mixture of teaching, on-going learning and growth for the coach, as well as
>
> the teacher. (Coach 12)

 Eight coaches said "challenging" and four more coaches said "hard." Five of these twelve coaches added a "but" or an "and" onto their response: "challenging but rewarding" (Coach 16), "challenging and a joy" (Coach 9), "challenging but beneficial" (Coach 22), "a challenging and tough job" (Coach 19) and "a hard, complicated and intricate process." (Coach 3)

4.5.5   Attributes of Coaches and Coaching

Coaches were asked to rate, using a Likert scale, how strongly they agreed or disagreed with fourteen statements about coaching. Table 9 shows the distribution of answers for each question. At least twenty-five coaches, eighty-three percent, "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with all fourteen statements.

> The statement "Coaches need to be able to plan and organize 'on the run'" was the only
>
> statement that had a respondent "strongly disagree." She was adamant in her explanation that
>
> coaches should <u>never</u> plan on the run. They have to be careful and cautious in
>
> what they say to teachers and do in classrooms. <u>Any</u> inaccurate information given
>
> out or strategy demonstrated haphazardly could have disastrous results for
>
> teachers and children. (Coach 17)

Four coaches "disagreed" with the statement "Coaching is non-evaluative." Each of them laughed when the statement was read and all four remarked that coaching "should be non-evaluative, but it really isn't. You honestly can't help but be evaluative when you walk into classrooms and watch teachers teach." (Coach 23)

Table 9 Rating of Importance of Aspects of Coaching

Indicators	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)
Greater level of expertise	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	13(43)	17(57)
Know how to teach	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	11(37)	19(63)
Have taught successfully	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	7(23)	23(77)
Be reflective of practice	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	29(97)
Articulate what they are seeing	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	5(17)	25(83)
Support and nudge	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	8(27)	22(73)
Plan/organize "on the run"	1(3)	1(3)	2(6)	5(17)	21(70)
Sense of humor	0(0)	0(0)	2(6)	4(13)	24(80)
Effective communication skills	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	29(97)
Culture affects coaching	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	6(20)	23(77)
On-going process	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	3(10)	26(87)
Collaborative/Collegial	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(6)	28(93)
Non-evaluative	0(0)	4(13)	1(3)	4(13)	21(70)
Results oriented	0(0)	0(0)	2(6)	6(20)	22(73)

This section began by looking at the barriers coaches face in their roles and ended with what coaches believe about coaching. In between coaches were asked to reflect on the three years most of the respondents have been Reading First coaches. Experience has been a good teacher for all of the coaches. Each one feels more prepared for her role now and although coaching is challenging, most are ready and equipped to meet those challenges. Their work has produced higher test scores on a variety of assessments and their relationships with teachers in their schools have improved, making their coaching more effective.

4.5.6 Final Thoughts

The interview ended with a question that does not relate to a specific research question. The final question asked coaches to consider where they might be five years from now. After answering that question, coaches were thanked for their participation in the interview and asked to give any final comments they had. The results of both questions are presented in this section.

Ten coaches said they would be retired five years from now. One coach specifically said she would "be on a beach in Hawaii." (Coach 14) Although an additional coach will not retire, she does not see herself in education at all. She plans to get married and be at home full-time. (Coach 26)

Eight coaches see themselves still coaching.

I know Reading First will be done by then, but I believe coaching is here to stay.

So, I think there will still be a need for coaches in all districts across the state. I

will have one of those jobs. (Coach 11)

One coach did not speculate what her job would be. She simply said,

Maybe by that point I'll know something about reading. It will take me that long to process everything I have learned since I became a coach. I'll have time over the next five years to sort it out and make sense of it. (Coach 2)

Ten coaches believe they will be working at the school level in one capacity or another. Two will be a principal. One sees herself in the role of vice principal. Three coaches will return to the classroom; one to fifth grade and two in elementary classrooms. One coach will become a school psychologist while another coach will become a staff developer. Two coaches will leave coaching and enter supervisory roles.

Three coaches see themselves moving to the college level to continue their work in the field of education. One coach would like to begin teaching at a local university as well as supervise pre-service teachers. Another coach plans to run the Reading Clinic at the university where she earned her Reading Specialist certification. Another coach wants to become a supervisor for Reading Recovery. Her duties would include teaching Reading Recovery teachers during their training year.

Seven coaches will be educating, but not necessarily in schools. Three of the coaches were not specific about what they would be doing. They were, however, very clear about what they would not be doing. Two will "not be coaching. When Reading First is over, so is my coaching career." (Coach 17, Coach 20) The third coach knows she will "not be in a classroom, but I don't know where I will go once the role of the coach goes away when Reading First goes away." (Coach 30) Another coach knows she "will be working in education, but I have no idea where I want to go from here." (Coach 22) One coach would like to become an educational consultant. "After all I have learned from coaching, I have enough material and knowledge to take this show on the road." (Coach 7) Another coach plans to "work with at-risk young people.

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I want to work with those students who no one else wants to work with or sees potential in." (Coach 26) A final coach would like to be "writing children's books. I have been planning it for years. I'll have the time within the next five years." (Coach 13)

Eleven coaches added a final comment to the interview. One coach reiterated what she said in her interview: "There really is too much paperwork!" (Coach 23) Another coach stated how helpful the interview was for her. "Your questions helped me reflect, they helped me to see. . . this interview was a good chance for me to reflect." (Coach 4)

Seven coaches expanded on ideas they talked about in their interview. One coach said, "[Coaching] is a really good job. Unfortunately, mandates like the on-line course make it hard. Coaches could be perceived in a positive way if teachers weren't mandated to do so many things." (Coach 15) A second coach said, "Coaching is unique. There is nothing simple about it. I am beginning to understand it and enjoy it!" (Coach 5) Another coach felt that "new coaches need to have someone to go to for support – someone who will not use the information the new coach shares as a negative against them." (Coach 21)

Two coaches gave suggestions for how to improve coaching. One coach said, "I hope the state really works hard on coming up with criteria for a coaching certificate. This should be supported more at the state level." (Coach 28) The second coach had two concerns: the role of the Technical Assistant (TA) and district-level communication. When talking about the TA, she said,

> When the coach needs support, she should be able to go to the TA in confidence.
> They should work with us so we can become more effective in our role as a
> coach. They should not make you feel like you are under a microscope. TAs
> need to practice Cognitive Coaching with coaches.

On communication, she felt that

there are times when the communication between coaches and the [district-level]

department is confused. They need to be sure that what is being said to the

principals is the same things that is being communicated to coaches. Everyone

needs to be hearing the same thing. There needs to be a Head Coach, like on an

athletic team – one person who makes all of the decisions and that everyone goes

to for those decisions.

4.5.7   Chapter Summary

Coaching is an intricate process. It involves people, personalities, places and is full of problems and possibilities. Through the interviews, coaches shared, very openly, their experiences. They discussed the background they bring to this role and how well they were prepared to be a coach. They described what jobs they performed on a consistent basis. They explained what factors helped or hindered them in their role in schools. They shared what difficulties they encountered and what successes they have had as a coach. Their honest answers gave us a rich picture of what is happening in all of these areas in thirty different schools across the state of Pennsylvania.

5.0   CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of this qualitative research study of interviews with Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania. The chapter also discusses the implications for coaching. Finally, it presents recommendations for future research in coaching.

This research study was designed to examine the problems and possibilities of coaching in Reading First schools. Coaches shared the background and preparedness they brought to their role. They described their responsibilities including the coaching tasks they participate in most each week and successes and struggles they encountered in their work. Lastly, they discussed how the culture of their school helps or hinders them in their work.

5.1   FINDINGS

This section presents the most significant findings for each of the research questions:

1. What background and preparedness do they bring to the role of the coach

2. Which "explicit coaching" activities: modeling, demonstrating, co-teaching, co-planning and/or conferencing with teachers – do coaches spend most of their time doing? How is their time affected by work that is not directly related to coaching?

3. What factors within the structure of their organization help or hinder them in their work?

4. What do coaches perceive their responsibilities to be and what are they problems and possibilities of the various jobs they perform?

5.1.1 Preparedness

1. The results indicate that not all coaches felt prepared to coach when they began their jobs. Half of the coaches felt prepared while the other half did not feel equipped for their work in schools. There was no relationship between the number of years a coach had been working in education and the feelings of preparedness for their coaching role.

2. The professional development coaches received was seen in both a positive and negative light. There were also concerns about the content and quality of what was being offered to coaches. Coaches did receive much content-based professional development before they began coaching. The lack of emphasis on adult learning, and its relationship to coaching, left some coaches feeling somewhat unprepared to deal with the coaching process itself.

3. The lack of consistency in the expectations of the role of the coach was an issue that arose in several different areas of the interview, making it difficult for some coaches to feel prepared. The variability in understanding of the role and support from principals, ways in which teachers responded to coaches, and the receptivity of the school as a whole to the presence of the coach seemed to be contributing factors to this feeling of being "unprepared."

5.1.2 Coaching Activities

1. In a typical week, coaches complete a myriad of tasks that range from administrative to assessment to coaching activities such as modeling and co-teaching.

2. Coaches performed these tasks because they were directed to do so. Although coaches said their work was mandated in most districts and schools, they did not see the work as unnecessary. A few coaches stated that certain responsibilities occupied an excessive amount of their time and shifted the focus away from their work with teachers. The majority, however, said that all of the work they did in a typical week was essential in their role as a coach.

3. Coaching requires a long-term commitment. Coaches were cognizant of the importance of relationship building in their work and they know that the ability to construct an effective relationship requires continuous work.

5.1.3 School Culture

1. Overwhelmingly, coaches agreed that the principal set the tone for the school being a conducive or non-conducive place in which to coach. When principals understood the role of the coach, the environment within the school was more supportive and respectful of the coaching role.

2. Although coaches met with their principals, the frequency, content, formality and duration were each different in the various schools.

3. Time has made coaching a more accepted part of the school culture. Coaches were not necessarily embraced when they first worked in schools. After three years, coaches were seen as resources for materials, answers to questions, and a source of information.

4. According to coaches, teachers are sharing ideas more often in more schools than they are using best practices, working collaboratively or reflecting on their teaching.

5.1.4   Perceptions of the Role of a Coach

1. Coaches used test scores as the greatest indicator of their success in schools. The quality of the relationship between a coach and teachers with whom she worked was seen as another indication of the success of a coach.

2. Experience seemed to be a good teacher for coaches. Those who did not feel prepared believed that they had learned to coach on the job. Although coaching is a challenging job, it can also have many rewards. Coaches learned from every experience they had gone through as a coach, both positive and negative.

5.2   CONCLUSIONS

1. Being prepared for the role of coach is important, but this preparation included more than having teaching experience and content knowledge. Although these are essential, coaching also calls for knowledge about how to work with adults, having excellent interpersonal skills and having specific technical skills.

According to the coaches interviewed for this study, they participated in professional development that provided them with content knowledge in "reading instruction and assessment." Through Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002) coaches were given a model for observing teachers and providing them with feedback after the observation. Their

professional development lacked, however, enough work in the areas of adult learning and leading professional development for others.

The results of this research support the guidelines in the position statement developed by The International Reading Association (2004). That statement suggests five requirements for reading coaches in their position statement "The Role and Qualification of the Reading Coach in the United State". IRA's position is that coaches must: (1) have successfully taught at all levels in which they coach. Documentation of success comes from the academic success of students. (2) be knowledgeable of "reading processes, acquisition, assessment and instruction" (p. 3). This knowledge is gained and sustained through attaining a reading specialist's certification and through on-going professional development for all coaches. (3) have practice in working with teachers to develop successful instructional practices. (4) possess the ability to deliver quality professional development to teachers. This includes being able to help teachers develop skills necessary to be reflective practitioners, as well as the coach being self-reflective about his/her practice. (5) be able to effectively observe and model in classrooms and to provide feedback to teachers that will contribute to the teacher's knowledge and understanding of their work with students.

2. A concrete understanding of the role of the coach can help create a school environment that is conducive to coaching. "Many literacy coaches have been hired without job descriptions or with job descriptions that are vague and include a clause that they'll do 'whatever is deemed appropriate by the principal'" (Toll, 2007, p. 24). Coaching is a role that could have a large number of various jobs attached to it. Implementation could look different in every school that employs a coach. Because this is a relatively new role in education, room for interpretation is great (Coggins, Stoddard & Cutler, 2003). "Coaches are not simply reading teachers

redefined" (Buly, Coskie, Robinson & Egawa, 2006, p. 24). In order to be certain this is not the case, a coach must have a job description that "has been conveyed, understood and accepted by both administrators and teachers in a district" (p. 24). Understanding from all stakeholders might have eliminated many of the problems Pennsylvania Reading First coaches encountered because of a lack of understanding of their role by administrators and/or teachers. Having everyone in the school know what the coach would or should be doing from the very beginning of their time in schools, might have helped coaches feel more prepared for their new role, and enabled the principal be supportive of the work of the coach and gave teachers a more solid understanding of how they and coaches might be able to work together to improve instruction.

   3. Each of the Reading First coaches described the success of their work as occurring over time. "In order for coaches to be effective, teachers and administrators must accept the creation of the role, the person who takes it on and the activities that person engages in as legitimate" (Coggins, et al, 2003, p. 34). This does not happen overnight. "Teachers and administrators come to see the coach as a legitimate leader through repeated interactions in which the coach demonstrates that coaching will help them to reach personal and collective goals" (p. 35). When describing their work with teachers, the coaches interviewed never said they went into a classroom once and then did not go back. Their work was continuous. This on-going approach to working with teachers allowed knowledge to be gained over time within the teacher's classroom with the unique make-up of students in that particular class. Coaches made suggestions based on their content knowledge and what they knew about the teacher. Teachers incorporated knowledge gained from working with the coach with their knowledge of their students to make decisions for those students. All of this leads to self-efficacy on the part of the teacher (Shanklin, 2006).

4. Principals set the tone for the success of a coach in each school. Neufeld and Roper (2003) state that the work the coach and the principal do together affects every teacher within the school. As a result, principals must be intimately knowledgeable about district level reform initiatives and also know how to best implement those initiatives in their school. "[Principals] must be part of the process, . . . providing the necessary support to bring changes to fruition" (Sturtevant, 2003).

Dufour & Eaker (1998) state, "The importance of effective leadership . . . is well established. It is difficult to imagine implementing and sustaining a school change process without strong leadership from a competent principal" (p. 183). They go on to cite Champy (1995) as stating, ". . . if someone in a key leadership position is opposed to change, an improvement initiative is almost certainly doomed to fail" (p. 183). It is clear that without the principal working to build capacity for change within the school, the change cannot and will not be sustained. Michael Fullan (1997), in his book *What's Worth Fighting for in the Principalship,* offers ten guidelines that principals can use to steer their actions as they begin to build sustainability in their school. The eighth principle is to "build allies" (p. 39). Fullan states, "One of the most encouraging developments over the last decade is the presence of more and more potential allies who seem to want to support and move in the direction of greater school-based implementation" (p. 39). When coaches and principals work together for change, they are the foundational allies that can produce strong, sustainable transformations within teachers and schools.

Principals can do several things to ensure the success of coaches in schools. First, they can be cognizant of the many jobs the coach is being asked to do and always be certain that each job contributes to the achievement of students in the area of literacy. Second, principals must

accept the importance of trust and confidentiality that must exist between the coach and the teachers. The coach must be able to talk with the principal about a teacher knowing that the principal will not use the information the coach shares as ammunition against that teacher. Once a teacher views the coach as being a "snitch" or "tattletale," their working relationship is ruined. "Coaches and principals must work out a delicate balance between confidentiality and reasonable feedback so that the coach can be a productive informant for the principal and the principal can use the coach's feedback in professional ways" (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 18). Finally, principals must be knowledgeable about what changes teachers are trying to implement. It makes it difficult for the coach when the principal has limited or incorrect understanding of district or school-level reforms. In these situations, the coach may be put in a situation where she has to oppose what the principal says. The coach and principal could also have difficulty evaluating progress within the school (2003).

5.3   DISCUSSION

According to *Reading Today*, literacy coaching is currently a "hot topic" in education. At least 75% of internationally known literacy leaders said, in a recent survey, that literacy coaching is and should be a topic generating much discussion in the field (Cassidy & Cassidy, February/March 2007). Although it is a "hot topic" this year, as well as last year, there are still many unanswered questions about what qualifications coaches should have before becoming a coach, what coaches do, what model of coaching should be used and whether coaching makes a difference with students (Toll, 2007). "Given the limited empirical basis for formulating recommendations about coaching models, coaching qualifications and procedures for preparing

coaches. . . systemic collection of data" (Snow, Ippolito & Schwartz, 2006, p.35) is needed to answer those questions with more evidence supporting them.

On the basis of the findings in this study, it is reasonable to conclude that coaching is a complex process. It requires coaches to be knowledgeable about literacy content along with being able to juggle the requirements of the state, district-level initiatives and school-based demands.

Sturtevant (2003) tells us that thousands of people across the United States are employed as literacy coaches and thousands more will become coaches over the next several years. Wren (2006) states, "With millions spent on literacy coaches across the country, and with the literacy (life) success of students in the balance, we should really understand literacy coaches very well" (p. 10). Do we? With all of the time, money and effort expended on incorporating coaches into the fabric of schools, do we understand how they spend their time, why they spend it that way and what effect their work has on the literacy achievement of students?

> A great deal has been written about literacy coaches – articles, books, internet sites. And much advice and guidance has been provided. However, little information is to be found in peer-reviewed research publications. Most of what we know about literacy coaches has come from very informal literature and testimony from experts. Controlled studies have not been reported. Most evidence comes from descriptions of successful literacy coaches. The informal, largely anecdotal evidence is substantial – dozens of articles, policy briefs, white papers, chapters and several books have been dedicated to the topic. That alone would be fairly compelling if it were convergent and consistent (Wren, 2006, p. 14-16).

What Wren is saying about the research of coaching is that we have quantity but not necessarily the quality we need to draw conclusions that can be supported by empirical research findings. The sheer volume of literature alone does not allow us to construct concrete conclusions about what creates effective coaches and goes into effective coaching.

It seems as if coaching has been embraced unconditionally. People view it as an effective way to improve teaching and as a way to solve many problems in the field. There is little research, however, to support those notions. Research is being conducted to provide evidence of its effectiveness after thousands of people have already been hired and millions of dollars have been spent to support the role. Have educators put the horse before the cart, so to speak? A great deal of money and resources have gone into providing coaches to all schools when there is no concrete evidence that suggests they have been successful in either creating change in teacher practice or affecting student achievement. When viewing coaching through this lens, one has to wonder if coaches should be an essential part of schools or should they be more of a luxury for those schools that can afford to pay someone who does not seem to perform many coaching tasks and does not seem to have a impact on teacher change or student achievement?

Although there are suggestions, based on research, there is no guide to follow when attempting to plan for coaching. Nor is there a guide to follow when attempting to evaluate what has occurred after coaching has taken place in a school. It is the nature of coaching that makes it challenging to develop those concrete, empirical studies that could be used to guide thinking, planning and evaluating of coaching. However, without some empirical findings, creating a guide with substance and validity is all but impossible.

As stated previously, coaching is a complex process. It has a great deal of ambiguity built into it. Its effectiveness can be based on many variables. Although this study was limited

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by the small sample of subjects that volunteered to be a part of it, it does add to the conclusions of other research that there are still many fundamental questions that need to be answered. What is coaching? Without a concrete definition of the role, it will be difficult to study its effectiveness. What makes coaching effective? How should coaches be prepared for their positions? What role do universities play in that preparation? Should coaches have their own certification requirements and certificate much like the reading specialist's certification?

Coaching is new. Because of that newness, it is being looked at through many lenses. One of the lenses through which coaching is viewed is from the perspective of the principal. The lack of a clear and consistent job description leaves the role of the coach open to the interpretation of the principal in individual schools. They use the coach in their school through their lens of how they see coaching being most effective. Although some individual considerations of differences among schools and student population should be taken into account, is it appropriate to leave the work of the coach mostly up to the discretion of the principal? Several coaches in this study clearly stated that principals did not understand their role and asked them to work in ways that coaches did not see as most effective. Is it necessary to prepare principals so they have a clear understanding of the role and the parameters within which coaches can work?

Teachers view coaches in very different ways. Some expect the coach to be their personal secretary to do paperwork that they do not want or do not have time to do. When demonstrating with a modeled lesson in the classroom, some teachers see the coach as a substitute and take that time to get other work done. Other teachers look at the coach as an evaluator and view working with the coach as a penalty. How can we work with teachers to be

certain they understand the role of the coach and know the benefits of participating in this collaborative and collegial relationship?

Coaching is a job that involves many aspects. It is easy to get lost in the details of day-to-day work that arises. It is important for coaches to keep the ultimate goal of shifting the understanding of teachers in mind and make decisions about what work will be most effective in reaching that goal. How can the work with coaches address the issue of time management and prioritizing to be most effective?

One way to standardize the evaluation of coaches and coaching is with the development of a coaching rubric. Such an instrument could identify characteristics that contribute to successful coaching, specify roles and behaviors that are important for successful coaching and suggest ways coaches could allocate their time for maximum benefit within schools.

In the past educators have worked on ways to adequately assess student work. Out of that work came rubrics and criterion charts. Rubrics have been successfully used in areas in which there was as much ambiguity as there is in coaching. The area of writing is one example. Writers were given a prompt on which to write. They knew, because of the rubric, what pieces should be in their writing, but they were given the freedom to weave those pieces into their writing in their own unique style. Coaching could work in the same way. It is a position that seems to demand that there be consistency and standardization within it, but requires a certain amount of freedom to account for the uniqueness of each school and the personnel within it. So, a coaching rubric could help coaches know what the expectations are, but would allow coaches to fulfill the criteria within the rubric in their own distinctive way.

Inherent in the challenge of creating such a rubric is standardization. We want it, but to have it could be detrimental. So much of coaching is based on the local variables – school

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culture, principal, teacher acceptance, student characteristics and student backgrounds to name a few. Many of these variables are actually out of the control of the coach. This is where the uniqueness of each coach and the variables within their school and district would be considered. Coaches would reflect on the teachers in their school, the principal, district demands, their content knowledge and their style of working with adults when deciding how to meet the criteria in the rubric.

Having standards and rubrics and comparing students to them did not occur overnight. It was a process that took years to infuse into schools and become an accepted part of education today. Soon education will demand that coaching be a position that has consistency and standardization within it. When creating a coaching rubric, the writers could learn from the work done with student rubrics and it might be an easier process.

There are, however, many questions that arise from thinking about standardizing coaching. As described in Chapter 2, coaching models such as The Literacy Collaborative and coaching programs such as The Reading Success Network were in existence and using coaches extensively before Reading First promoted their use. Although there are these models and programs for coaching already in existence that might bring some form of standardization to coaching, their use is not widespread. Is that because we are resistant to following a prescribed model or program because of the fact that it might bring standardization? Or, is it because they have not proven successful, so the search continues for a model that can do both – offer standardization of the role as it promotes success in schools.

The large number of variables among coaches makes the task of bringing uniformity to coaching extremely difficult. Within the study done here there were coaches who had been in education for fewer than ten years and others for over thirty. Some coaches had a great deal of

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experience working with adults and delivering professional development to teachers. Other

coaches did not know that working with adults was so different from working with children.

Professional organizations such as IRA and The National Council of Teachers of English

(NCTE) have begun to try and bring some consistency to the role of the coach. Each has

suggested minimum qualifications for coaches. They have defined the role. Each has said what

reading coaches should do as part of their daily work at the elementary, middle and high schools

levels. Right now, however, these are seen as merely suggestions. They are not universally

accepted as "must haves". Few, if any, of the Reading First coaches interviewed for this study

would have met all five criteria from IRA's position statement for what a reading coach should

be able to do when being hired. Some would not meet the requirements after working as a coach

for over three years. Although the work is a start and it is much needed, it seems to be more

helpful in terms of hiring and what coaches might be doing throughout the school year, but it

does not help in the evaluation of coaches and coaching.

Coaching is a job that changes over time. Coaches must have well-developed skills and

much knowledge in a wide variety of areas. The way they spend their time varies from day-to-

day, month-to-month and school year – to school year.   If one thinks of their work in terms of a

pie graph, the size of each piece varies constantly. Because each person's experiences are very

different coming into the job and as they discover the actual job requirements within their school,

thinking about making the professional development different for coaches might be necessary.

Differentiating professional development for coaches is needed to be certain coaches are

well developed in their content knowledge, ability to work with adults, skills in delivering

effective professional development to their teachers and capacity in successfully completing a

coaching cycle in which they deliver helpful and valuable feedback to improve the work of

teachers. This does not necessarily have to be done just within school districts. Coaching is

taking place nationwide. Can coaches in Pennsylvania learn from and contribute to the learning

of coaches in Montana, New Mexico and Ohio? A network in which coaches can communicate

with each other would be helpful to the learning of all involved. For example, IRA and NCTE

have joined together to create the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse

(www.literacycoacingonline.org). This is an on-line library of resources for coaches or those

interested in the field of coaching.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Long-term studies need to be completed to fully document the role of the coach because
  they would give more well-rounded picture of what coaches do. Long-term studies could
  interview teachers, principals and students about their work with the coach. This study
  relied solely on the coaches' recollection and presentation of how they coach. Future
  studies need to involve shadowing a coach or several coaches over a period of time to see
  first hand what coaches do. These results could be compared to coaches' responses to
  interview questions to determine similarities and differences.

- There is a need for case studies of highly effective coaches based on recommendations
  from principals, teachers or coaching supervisors. Upon completion of these studies, a
  list of common characteristics of exemplary coaches could be identified.

- Case studies can also be done that document the change in the teacher or teachers a coach
  works with most often. These results can be compared to any change that occurs in

teachers with whom the coach does not work closely with in order to begin to discover the impact a coach may or may not have on teacher change.

- A study of what training must be required for coaches is necessary. How much content knowledge must coaches have before they begin their work with teachers? How much understanding should coaches be required to have about the process of coaching prior to beginning work with adults is necessary for coaches to be effective?

- Experimental studies testing the effects of one coaching model against another – on-line vs. in-school, for example – need to be done. This could lead to information on what model is more or less effective than another model. This might help eliminate models that are shown to be less effective and help create an accepted coaching model.

- If a coaching rubric is created, a study needs to be done to know the effectiveness of that rubric. Does it, in any way, help standardize the role of the coach? Does the rubric contribute to successful coaching, specify roles and behaviors that are important for successful coaching and suggest ways coaches could allocate their time for maximum benefit within schools?

APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER TO COACHES

May 2006

Dear Pennsylvania Reading First Coach,

We are writing to you to request your participation in a research interview that is part of a doctoral dissertation. Very little has been written about coaches that reflects *their* views, voices and experiences. Without this perspective, it is difficult to know the problems and possibilities associated with this role. Katy Carroll, a doctoral student at Pitt, has undertaken a doctoral dissertation that should help all of us gain a deeper understanding of coaches and their various roles and responsibilities. Your input over the last year(s) has been so valuable to the External Evaluation team; we hope you will agree to be interviewed by Katy, as well. Her dissertation will expand on the work the Pitt Evaluation Team does with coaches. Her interviews will help educators gain a better understanding of your work and learn more about the role of the coach.

If you agree to participate, the interview will be conducted via telephone at a time most convenient for you. The interview will take approximately 40-60 minutes. Within 3-5 days of completing the interview, you will receive a summary of your answers for you to review. You will be asked to read the summary and make any changes or clarifications you wish to make.

All of your responses to each part of this process will be kept confidential. Only Katy will have access to the individual data. When being reported, all information will be aggregated. Your individual responses will never be identifiable in any way.

We know the school year is coming to an end and that it is a very busy time. If you would like to participate in the interview, but would like to wait until after the school year ends to do it, that is fine. Katy is willing to talk with you at any time.

We recognize how valuable your time is. To show our appreciation for the time you spend and the important information you share, a small gift will be sent to you after you complete your interview.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the attached form and return it to Katy Carroll in the enclosed stamped envelope. If you have any questions, please contact Katy by phone at 412-371-7713 or by email at kcarteach@aol.com

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of this request. We appreciate your participation in this important project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rita Bean   Dr. Naomi Zigmond
RF External Evaluation Team   RF External Evaluation Team

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Name _____

School District _____

Mailing Address (where you would like your summary to be sent):

_____

_____

Interview Times: Please choose three times, in order of preference, when you would be available for your interview. Evenings, weekends and during the school day are all accepted.

	Day of the Week/Date	Time
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

<u>Contact Information</u>

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Thank you!

COACH INTERVIEW

Introduction: *Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview is part of my doctoral dissertation research. It is an extension of the work being done by the Evaluation Team at the University of Pittsburgh. The purpose of this interview is to deepen our understanding of the problems and possibilities of coaches in Pennsylvania Reading First schools. The information collected will be useful to people who prepare literacy coaches, those at the state level who work with coaches and schools that employ them. The interview will take approximately 40 - 60 minutes. You will be asked questions about your school, as well as successes and barriers you have encountered in your work as a coach. I will be taking notes while we talk. I would also like to record our conversation so I can reference your comments when I write the summary for you and the findings for my dissertation. No one will hear the tape but me. All audiotapes will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed after my dissertation has been approved. All responses are confidential and will be aggregated when reported. So, your individual responses will not be identifiable in any way. Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may choose to stop it at any time. May I have your permission to record our conversation? Yes _____ No _____ Within three days of our conversation, I will return my notes to you for approval. You may make any changes or clarifications to your responses you wish to make to be certain the responses you give truly reflect your work as a coach.*

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

I would like to start the interview by learning a little bit more about you. I know that you are at _____ in _____district.

   1. Are you a full-time coach there? Yes _____ No _____

       a. IF NO: How many other schools do you work in? _____

            How often are you in each school? _____

        _____

   2. Are you a full-time Reading First coach? Do you spend all of your time working with RF teachers or do you do some non-RF work? Yes _____ No _____

   3. What grade levels do you work with? _____

4. What model of coaching do you use in your school? _____

_____

5. What is the source of funding for your position?

_____

_____

6. Do you have a reading specialist certification? Yes _____ No _____
   a. IF YES: When did you receive your certification? _____
   b. How did you get it? University program _____ PRAXIS only _____
7. Do you have any other certifications? Yes _____ No _____
   a. If so, what are they? _____
8. How many years have you been a coach? _____
9. Have they all been at the same school? Yes _____ No _____
   IF NO, How many schools have you been in as a coach? _____
   How many years were you in each school? _____

_____

10. Have you gone to any state training as a coach? Yes _____ No _____
    a. IF YES, what training have you gone to? _____

_____

11. Have you gone to any training that was not provided by the state as a coach?
    Yes _____ No _____
    a. If YES, what training have you gone to? _____

_____

12. How many total years of teaching experience do you have? _____

II. RESPONSIBILITIES
   Now we are going to move on to talk about the various responsibilities you have as a coach.

   1. First, think about all of the things you do in a typical week. What are the three things you spend the most time doing in a typical week?

   _____

   _____

   2. Why do you spend the most time doing these jobs? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

      a. Are they mandated? _____
      b. By whom? _____

   _____

   3. Now, can you rate those activities in terms of importance to your job as a coach? Are they essential, not helpful at all . . . ?

   _____

   _____

_____
_____
_____

4. Are there things you wish you could be doing each week that are important for you as a coach? Why do you choose these things?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

      I am now going to ask you about your work with teachers. I'm going to ask you to think about all the teachers you have worked with as a coach. Which one sticks out most in your mind? Describe your work with that person: what was your working relationship? Describe the coaching activities you performed with them. How did they facilitate or not facilitate your work with this teacher? If not mentioned, ask about: grade level meetings – how did you get involved (invited? mandated?), co-planning, modeling, co-teaching and observations.

III. SUCCESSES AND BARRIERS

      I now want to move to some questions about what you feel you do well in your job and what hinders you from doing your job to the best of your ability.

      1. How well prepared did you feel for the role when you began coaching? Why?
_____
_____

2. How well prepared do you feel now? Why?
_____
_____
_____

3. What other training would you like to have to help you as a coach?
_____
_____

      a. Why? _____
_____
_____

4. Have you ever conducted a conference with a teacher after you did an observation in their room? _____ Yes _____ No

5. Can you talk about your most successful conference? What made it successful?
_____
_____
_____

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_____

_____

6. Can you talk about a conference that didn't go as well as you hoped? What made it not so successful?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What would you say are the primary barriers in your job? What keeps you from doing what you want to do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. If you were asked to document that your work has been effective, what evidence would you use to show that you have had an impact on teachers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Finish this sentence: Coaching is: _____

_____

Why did you say that? (What causes you to believe that?) _____

_____

_____

IV. COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

I would now like to talk with you specifically about your school – how suitable you see it as a place to coach.

1. First, would you say the environment in your school is conducive to coaching or not conducive to coaching? _____

2. Can you describe what makes it that way?

_____

_____

_____

_____

For the next several questions I am going to ask you to rate different aspects of your school using a scale of one to five:

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	beginning	sometimes	most of the time	all of the time

3. Teachers talk to one another about best practices. _____
4. Teachers share ideas. _____
5. Teachers have high expectations for students. _____
6. Teachers work collaboratively with each other in large or small groups. _____
7. Teachers reflect on their teaching. _____
8. Teachers practice and support innovative ideas. _____
9. Teachers use data to inform their decisions about teaching. _____

10. Describe the teachers' responses or reactions to coaching in your school. Do they see you as a resource, a peer, someone punitive . . . ?

   _____
_____
_____
_____

11. Now let's talk about your principal. What kind of work do you do with her/him?

   _____
_____
_____
_____

12. On a scale of 1 – 10 (ten being the highest), how would you rate the level of support that you get from your principal? _____

13. Can you give me an example of why you rated him/her that way?

   _____
_____
_____

V. COACHING

For this next section, I am going to once again ask you to rate items on a scale of one to five. I am going to read you several statements about coaching. I will ask you to decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral agree	agree	strongly agree

1. Effective reading coaches have to have a greater level of reading expertise than the teachers they are coaching _____
2. Reading coaches have to know how to teach reading extremely well _____
3. Reading coaches have to have taught reading successfully _____

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4. Reading coaches must be reflective about their own instructional practice
   _____
5. Reading coaches have to be able to articulate what they are seeing in a classroom
   _____
6. Reading coaches need to support and nudge – balancing on a fine line between supporting the status quo and placing too much stress on teachers _____
7. Coaches need to be able to plan and organize "on the run" _____
8. Reading coaches need to have a sense of humor _____
9. Coaching is an interactive process that requires effective communication skills
   _____
10. Cultural norms within the school affect the ways in which coaching occurs and is perceived _____
11. Coaching is a process that is ongoing and requires sustained interaction among participants _____
12. Coaching is collaborative and collegial _____
13. Coaching is non-evaluative _____
14. Coaching is results oriented _____

IV. FINAL THOUGHTS
   I have one more question I would like to ask you.

   1. Where do you see yourself five years from now? _____
_____
_____

  Are there any final things you would like to share with me?

   Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today.   I appreciate the information you shared. I would like to verify the address I have for you to be able to send your summary. If you have any questions for me or think of something else you would like to share after we get off the phone, you can reach me at kcarteach@aol.com *Enjoy your day!*

  Address:

APPENDIX C

PILOT INTERVIEW

Name:
School:
District:
Full-time Reading First Coach working with grades K-3
Reading First funds are used to pay your salary
You have a reading specialist degree, but no other certifications
You have been a coach for 3 years: 2 at current school, 1 at another school in the district

  Training:
    State: PATTAN, Cognitive Coaching, Notebook Training (guide to using the five- step process to coaching: trusting, opening-up, facilitating them to run their own meetings . . .)
    Other than state: IRA, district coaching sessions

  Responsibilities
    Three things you spend the most time doing in a typical week:
    1. Planning lessons with teachers
    2. Co-teaching
    3. Data analysis/team meetings

  Why do you spend the most time doing these jobs?
    Based on formal observations that you did at the beginning of the year, you saw that not all teachers were using the grade level manual as the district would like them to use it. They were not using best practices when teaching reading. As a way to help them use best practices, you chose to plan lessons with the teachers and put the appropriate strategies into the lessons. Your co-teaching is a way for you to be certain that the strategies are being implemented – you don't teach for them, you mostly "butt in" or just "do parts" of the lesson so teachers are sure they are implementing the strategy appropriately. The data analysis is used as a way to show teachers that the strategies are improving test scores in their classrooms and where they go from here.

Rate these activities in terms of importance to your job

All three are very essential for teachers to understand when I want them to do in their classrooms– they need one another to work: data analysis to see how they begin, planning to see what they need to do today and co-teaching to know what exactly to do in the classroom.

Are there things you wish you could be doing that you think are important for a coach to be doing?

Working more with small groups of children – through co-teaching in classrooms you see that there are some students who are not "getting a thing" out of the whole group instruction because they are so far behind the other students. There are also students who could benefit from enrichment activities because they are ahead of the other students. Once teachers "get a grasp" on everything that you are getting them to do in their classrooms with the co-teaching, you would like to do more pull-out work with groups of students. Your job description says that you must do some work with third graders, but you would love to do more work with small groups of students at all of the grade levels.

Team Meetings

You collaborate with teachers at team meetings on a weekly basis. This time with teachers was a part of your schedule from the beginning of the school year. It is one period – 45 minutes. You discuss topics such as flexible grouping, data analysis – sometimes you analyze it at the meeting, sometimes, to save time, you do some analysis before the meeting and you just look at the possible groupings at the meetings, set goals . . . Basically you do the who, what, when, where and how of instruction.

This work has been helpful to teachers because it has given them a guide to follow. You are able to talk about what is ok or not ok for classroom work.

The only problem has been that many of your meetings are scheduled for Mondays. The school calendar has many Mondays off during the first semester. So, you have not met as regularly as you would have liked to.

Co-planning

You do co-planning with teachers

Your work has been helpful to them because it has moved them closer to using standards-based reading practices. Your presence has helped guide them through the manual and offer them support to know where to best spend their time. Teachers have been able to work through problems and issues they have had in the past and better use their instruction time because of the co-planning you have done with them

There have been no problems in this area

Modeling

You do modeling regularly for teachers on a "needs" basis. You do modeling when one of three situations arise:

1. Teachers ask you to model something specific
2. You see a teacher implementing a strategy incorrectly
3. When teachers are new or new to a grade level and they have never done a specific strategy before you show them how to do it – ex. Two teachers new to second grade had never done Text Talk before so you showed them how it is supposed to be done.

There are no problems in this area.

Co-teaching

You do co-teaching with teachers on a regular basis. It has been helpful because "teachers love it, I love it, kids love it". You "try to have a way about [you] that makes it non-threatening". It is helpful because teachers take control of the teaching. They use you as someone to bounce ideas off of. During the lesson they tweak their teaching and so do you when you interject a thought or idea during the lesson.

There have been no problems in this area. The consistency in your schedule with meeting dates and being in classrooms has made this a very positive thing for everyone involved.

Observations

You do informal observations with kindergarten and first grade teachers daily. You do second and third grades four times a week. All of your observations are done during the co-teaching time you are in classrooms. You try hard not to sit in the back of the room with a pad of paper and take notes on a teacher. You only do this when it is an observation that is mandated by the school district – Text Talk, for example. You never do observations with your principal. You could if you wanted to, but you do not choose to.

Model of coaching: Cognitive Coaching

Successes and Barriers

How well prepared did you feel when you began coaching?

Not well prepared at all. Before you became a coach you worked in a school that had a part time coach. Because you did not have a true role model, you did not know much about what the job entailed. Prior to becoming a coach you were a fourth and fifth grade teacher. You felt unprepared for the new strategies you would have to use with other teachers – Text Talk, Questioning the Author – because you had not done the strategies yourself. As a result, you were very insecure about what you were being asked to do and what you were going to have to ask teachers to do.

How well prepared do you feel now?

You are much more confident now in all aspects of the job. The only thing you still do not feel completely prepared for are the district-wide in-services you have to facilitate. You still get nervous and do not feel like you are very well received.

What other training would you like to have to help you as a coach?

More training on vocabulary – You know it is important and you know that it has an important role in Text Talk and within the Harcourt series, but you would like to see how to incorporate it into K-3 classrooms more effectively.

You have conducted a conference with a teacher after doing an observation.

Successful Conference: Text Talk in a second grade classroom

Before observing in the classroom and doing a conference with the teacher, you modeled the Text Talk strategies for the teacher. During your modeled lesson you asked the teacher to complete the formal Text Talk observation form on you while you were teaching. With this role reversal, the teacher knew exactly what would be expected of her during her observation. You also gave her time to practice in between the observation she did of you and the one you did of her. This all helped the teacher actually become excited about the observation. She saw the whole process as a positive thing. She was very interested in what she could improve – a sign of a good teacher.

Conference that was not so successful: formal observation of a kindergarten teacher with the Reading First Technical Assistant

In general, you are not comfortable doing formal observations on teachers. The kindergarten teacher was not prepared for the observation (even though she knew the coach and TA were coming). The teacher did not follow the manual so the lesson could flow. The lesson was confused and unorganized – rhyming words to beginning sounds back to rhyming words. . . You and the TA met before the conference to talk about what would happen during the conference. Although the TA was present during the conference, she "hung you out to dry" while you had to say "uncomfortable things in an uncomfortable conversation". The teacher became very defensive – she asked if you and the TA were the "manual police". You told her you would have to come back and observe her again. Although the second observation was better, the whole process took a toll on your relationship with the teacher. It took a long time for her to trust you again.

Primary Barriers

Literacy Plus makes blanket rules rather than looking at individual coaches in individual schools. Literacy Plus does not want the teachers to see you as an aide so, they don't want you working with a lot of students. You feel, however, that as a professional you should be able to say that you see a child who is "way out of sync" and there is "nothing the teacher can do" and then be able to say that you can help him/her and be able to do that. You could reach a lot more children if you were able to make those kinds of decisions.

What could you use to document the impact you have had on teachers?
Data: Terra Nova, District Reading Assessment, PSSA

If you go back over the data from the beginning of your time at your current school and now, you would see much improvement in all scores. You could also go back to notes from team meetings. The things you discuss have gone deeper and deeper into the work of a teacher.

Coaching is: *"challenging but it is working"*

Why did you say that? It is challenging but it is getting less challenging. It takes awhile for the teachers to trust you. It is working because student performance is getting better and teacher feedback says that it is working.

Collaborative Environment – School Culture

The culture at the school is conducive to coaching.

There are many challenges that come with teaching children in a low socioeconomic school. Teachers at these schools could use as much support as possible. Teachers at your

current school are very appreciative of the support you give them. This makes the environment conducive to the work you do with them.

Rate aspects of your school
Teachers talk to one another about best practices: *sometimes*
Teacher share ideas: *most of the time*
Teachers have high expectations for students: *all of the time*
Teachers work with each other collaboratively in large and small groups: *all of the time*
Teachers reflect on their teaching: *most of the time*
Teachers practice and support innovative ideas: *most of the time*
Teachers use data to inform their decisions about teaching: *most of the time*

Teacher Response: Teachers see you as a resource, a guide, a person they can turn to for answers and materials. "I hope they think of me as a fellow teacher – no supervisory aura – I was in their shoes."

What kind of work do you do with the principal?
You are the "go-through person" for her. You make sure that the replacement teachers in primary and intermediate classrooms are following their schedules and they know how to implement all of the reading strategies appropriately. You also make sure that K-3 teachers are prepared for the one team meeting the principal comes to each month. If teachers need to bring student work, show how they are using flexible groups, complete data analysis. . . you will deliver the information from the principal to the teachers and you will work with the teachers to be certain they are able to bring what is required of them to the meeting

Scale of 1-10 – rate the level of support you get from your principal: *10*
You have been together for three years. You were a little unsure of each other during the first year because you did not know each other. Because of the increase in scores during your year at the previous school and at your current school since you both came to that school, she trusts what you are doing. She knows that you are doing your job. She can count on you to follow the rules. She knows that you will "make her look good".

Where do you see yourself five years from now – *in a classroom teaching 5th grade*

Final comments: none

PILOT INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Demographics:

Name:
School:
District:
Full-time Reading First Coach working with grades K-3
Reading First funds are used to pay your salary
You have a reading specialist degree, but no other certifications
You have been a coach for 3 years: 2 at current school, 1 at another school in the district
  Training:
    State: PATTAN, Cognitive Coaching, Notebook Training (guide to using the five- step process to coaching: trusting, opening-up, facilitating them to run their own meetings . . .)
    Other than state: IRA, district coaching sessions

  Responsibilities
    Three things you spend the most time doing in a typical week:
    4. Data analysis/team meetings
    5. Planning lessons with teachers
    6. Co-teaching

  Why do you spend the most time doing these jobs?
    Based on formal and informal observations that you did at the beginning of the year, you saw that not all teachers were using the grade level manual as the district would like them to use it. They were not <u>always</u> using best practices when teaching reading. As a way to help them <u>learn and</u> use best practices, you chose to plan lessons with the teachers and put the appropriate strategies into the lessons. Your co-teaching is a way for you to be certain that the strategies are being implemented – you don't teach for them, you mostly <u>"jump in when needed"</u> or just "do parts" of the lesson so teachers are sure they are implementing the strategy appropriately. The data analysis is used as a way to show teachers that the strategies are

improving test scores and it helps us create flexible groups according to the needs of the students.

Rate these activities in terms of importance to your job
All three are very essential for teachers to understand what they should be doing in their classrooms– they need all three of these steps to take place so the instruction is meaningful and systematic: data analysis to see how they begin and how the students are progressing, planning to see what they need to do in order to make that lesson as explicit as possible and co-teaching so each teacher will have support while actually doing the lessons – then immediate feedback following each lesson.

Are there things you wish you could be doing that you think are important for a coach to be doing?
Working more with small groups of children – through co-teaching in classrooms you see that there are some students who are not "getting much" out of the whole group or even small group instruction because they are so far behind the other students. There are also students who could benefit from some extra enrichment activities because they are ahead of the other students. These activities are teacher guided and it's tough for the classroom teacher to pull them off while in flexible groups because they are working with the students in need most of this time. Once teachers "get a grasp" on systematic and explicit instruction in their classrooms during co-teaching, you would like to do more pull-out work with groups of students. Your job description says that you must do some work with third graders, but you would love to do more work with small groups of students at all grade levels. This is something personal as well – I really enjoy working with students in general and with this position you don't get to do as much as you would like.

Team Meetings
You collaborate with teachers at team meetings on a weekly basis. This time with teachers was a part of your schedule from the beginning of the school year. It is one period – 45 minutes. You discuss topics such as flexible grouping, data analysis – sometimes you analyze data at the meeting, sometimes, to save time, you do some analysis before the meeting and you just look at the possible groupings at the meetings, set goals . . . Basically you do the who, what, when, where and how of instruction.
This work has been helpful to teachers because it has given them a guide to follow. You are able to talk about best practices and why it's so important to use systematic and explicit instruction. We discuss our co-teaching lessons at these meetings - what went well? What do we need to change? What didn't work at all?
The only problem has been that many of your meetings are scheduled for Mondays. The school calendar has many Mondays off during the first semester. So, you have not met as regularly as you would have liked to. The schedule has been much better because the holiday break is over.

Co-planning
You do co-planning with teachers
Your work has been helpful to them because it has moved them closer to using standards-based reading practices. Your presence has helped guide them through the manual and offer

them support to know where to best spend their time. Teachers have been able to work through problems and issues they have had in the past and better use their instruction time because of the co-planning you have done with them

          There have been no problems in this area.

    Modeling

          You do modeling regularly for teachers on a "needs" basis. You do modeling when one of three situations arises:

1. Teachers ask you to model something specific
2. You see a teacher implementing a strategy incorrectly
3. When teachers are new to the district or new to a grade level and they have never done a specific strategy before you show them how to do it – ex. Two teachers new to second grade had never done Text Talk before so I did a demonstration lesson for both teachers. This helps them actually see the process and gives them a guide for when they plan their next Text Talk lesson.

    There are no problems in this area.

    Co-teaching

You do co-teaching with teachers on a regular basis. It has been helpful because "teachers love it, I love it, kids love it". You "try to have a way about [you] that makes it non-threatening". It is helpful because teachers take control of the teaching. They use you as someone to bounce ideas off of. During the lesson they tweak their teaching and so do you when you interject a thought or idea during the lesson. I tend to work with students in need during these lessons – it is very helpful for the students and the teacher.

There have been no problems in this area. The consistency in your schedule with meeting dates and being in classrooms has made this a very positive thing for everyone involved.

    Observations

          You do informal observations with kindergarten and first grade teachers daily. You do second and third grades four times a week. All of your observations are done during the co-teaching time you are in classrooms. You try hard not to sit in the back of the room with a pad of paper and take notes while the teacher is teaching. You only do this when it is an observation that is mandated by the school district – Text Talk, for example. You never do observations with your principal. If she has a concern after an observation she makes me aware of it and I help that teacher in the specific area that needs support.

    Model of coaching: Cognitive Coaching

Successes and Barriers

    How well prepared did you feel when you began coaching?

          Not well prepared at all. Before you became a coach you worked in a school that had a part time coach. Because you did not work with the coach much, you did not know much about what the job entailed. Prior to becoming a coach you were a fifth grade teacher. You felt unprepared for the new strategies you would have to use with other teachers – Text Talk,

Questioning the Author – because you had not done the strategies yourself. <u>This was especially true in the primary grades.</u> As a result, you were very insecure about what you were being asked to do and what you were going to have to ask teachers to do.

How well prepared do you feel now?

You are much more confident now in all aspects of the job. You look forward to <u>demonstration lessons</u>. The only thing you still do not feel completely prepared for are the district-wide in-services you have to facilitate. You still get nervous and do not feel like you are very well received.

What other training would you like to have to help you as a coach?

More training on vocabulary – You know it is important and you know that it has an important role in Text Talk and within the Harcourt series, but you would like to see how to incorporate it into K-3 classrooms more effectively.

You have conducted a conference with a teacher after doing an observation.

Successful Conference: Text Talk in a second grade classroom

Before observing in the classroom and doing a conference with the teacher, you modeled the Text Talk strategies for the teacher. During your modeled lesson you asked the teacher to complete the formal Text Talk observation form on you while you were teaching. With this role reversal, the teacher knew exactly what would be expected of her during her observation. You also gave her time to practice in between the observation she did of you and the one you did of her. This all helped the teacher actually become excited about the observation. She saw the whole process as a positive thing. She was very interested in what she could improve – a sign of a good teacher.

Conference that was not so successful: formal observation of a kindergarten teacher with the Reading First Technical Assistant

In general, you are not comfortable doing formal observations on teachers. The kindergarten teacher was not prepared for the observation (even though she knew the coach and TA were coming). The teacher did not follow the manual so the lesson could flow. The lesson was confused and unorganized – rhyming words to beginning sounds back to rhyming words. . . You and the TA met before the conference to talk about what would happen during the conference. Although the TA was present during the conference, she "hung you out to dry" while you had to say "uncomfortable things in an uncomfortable conversation". The teacher became very defensive – she asked if you and the TA were the "manual police". You told her you would have to come back and observe her again. Although the second observation was better, the whole process took a toll on your relationship with the teacher. It took a long time for her to trust you again.

Primary Barriers

Literacy Plus makes blanket rules rather than looking at individual coaches in individual schools. Literacy Plus does not want the teachers to see you as an aide so, they don't want you working with a lot of students. You feel, however, that as a professional you should be able to say that you see a child who is "way out of sync" and there is "nothing the teacher can do" and then be able to say that you can help him/her and be able to do that. You could reach a lot more children if you were able to make those kinds of decisions.

What could you use to document the impact you have had on teachers?

Data: Terra Nova, District Reading Assessment, PSSA

If you go back over the data from the beginning of your time at your current school and now, you would see much improvement in all scores. You could also go back to notes from team meetings. The things you discuss have gone deeper and deeper into the work of a teacher.

Coaching is: *"challenging but it is working"*

Why did you say that? It is challenging but it is getting less challenging. It takes awhile for the teachers to trust you. It is working because student performance is getting better and teacher feedback says that it is working.

Collaborative Environment – School Culture

The culture at the school is conducive to coaching.

There are many challenges that come with teaching children in a low socioeconomic school. Teachers at these schools could use as much support as possible. Teachers at your current school are very appreciative of the support you give them. This makes the environment conducive to the work you do with them.

Rate aspects of your school

Teachers talk to one another about best practices: *sometimes*

Teacher share ideas: *most of the time*

Teachers have high expectations for students: *all of the time*

Teachers work with each other collaboratively in large and small groups: *all of the time*

Teachers reflect on their teaching: *most of the time*

Teachers practice and support innovative ideas: *most of the time*

Teachers use data to inform their decisions about teaching: *most of the time*

Teacher Response: Teachers see you as a resource, a guide, a person they can turn to for answers and materials. "I hope they think of me as a fellow teacher – no supervisory aura – I was in their shoes."

What kind of work do you do with the principal?

You are the "go-through person" for her. You make sure that the replacement teachers in primary and intermediate classrooms are following their schedules and they know how to implement all of the reading strategies appropriately. You also make sure that K-3 teachers are prepared for the one team meeting the principal comes to each month. If teachers need to bring student work, show how they are using flexible groups, complete data analysis. . . you will deliver the information from the principal to the teachers and you will work with the teachers to be certain they are able to bring what is required of them to the meeting

Scale of 1-10 – rate the level of support you get from your principal: *10*

You have been together for three years. You were a little unsure of each other during the first year because you did not know each other. Because of the increase in scores during your year at your previous school and at your current school since you both came to that

school, she trusts what you are doing. She knows that you are doing your job. She can count on you to follow the rules. She knows that you will "make her look good".

Where do you see yourself five years from now – *in a classroom teaching 5th grade*

Final comments: none

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