College of Education Theses and Dissertations

College of Education

Spring 6-2009

The Role of a Literacy Coach in Supporting Instructional Improvement and Student Achievement

Holly Jo Murer
DePaul University

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/soe_etd

Part of the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons, Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, and the Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons

DePaul University

School of Education

LITERACY COACHING AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL:

A STUDY RELATED TO TRUST AND COLLABORATION

A Dissertation in
Educational Leadership

by

Holly J. Murer

Doctor of Education

March 2009

We approve the dissertation of Holly J. Murer

Date of Signature

_____   April 3, 2009
John Gabriel
Associate Professor of Secondary English
Dissertation Advisor
Chair of Committee

_____   April 3, 2009
Katie Van Sluys
Assistant Professor of Elementary Education

_____   April 3, 2009
Liliana Zecker
Associate Professor of Elementary Education

Abstract

Using qualitative research methods, this study examines the professional development model of literacy coaching. Literacy coaches and classroom teachers were interviewed to explore the work of literacy coaching. The findings of this study indicate the importance of relationship building as part of the work of literacy coaching. It also indicates that literacy coaching is ongoing and requires a significant amount of time for implementation. Additionally, the principal not only has a significant impact on setting the purpose and providing support for literacy coaching but also impacting the teachers' use of time within a school. Also, systemic support within a school was suggested as necessary to support literacy coaching during interviews had with the literacy coaches participating in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

most importantly, encouraging me to continue and ensuring me that this goal was completely attainable. I also need to thank little Eleanora – when I started all of this, I couldn't have even imagined you. You actually waited to enter the world until I was done collecting my data! My hope for you is that you develop a love for reading and have great teachers such as the ones that participated in this research.

<div align="right">H.M.</div>

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

How I Came to This Topic

Prior to coming to work in the district in which this research was conducted, I worked in a much smaller school district where I was the principal of the elementary grade center for all pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grade students living in the district. The 50 faculty members were focused on literacy instruction and the development of reading for the 900 students for whom they were responsible. As the principal, I was responsible for organizing and implementing the professional development opportunities for the faculty members in addition to the many other responsibilities assigned a school principal. This is a difficult task when trying to meet the differing needs and interests of a large group. In addition to bringing in educational consultants, the use of book study groups, where an educational book is used to foster discussion about the topic of the book, was one professional development tool utilized. This seemed to get some of the teachers talking about their instructional practices with one another, however, I knew more needed to be done to keep the teachers engaged in their professional development. As I grappled with my own beliefs about education, such as my concern with the large number of students and staff within one school and the importance of being connected to the ones you work with on a professional level, I decided to move to a district where the elementary schools' student body were much smaller. In addition, the new district I was moving to had curriculum resources that were not available in the district I was leaving.

The Literacy Director in my new district is responsible for the language arts curriculum and professional development opportunities offered to staff. She works with

teams of teachers and other literacy specialists in the district to bring in educational authors, consultants and researchers as a form of professional development provided to the teachers. And although "big names" from the educational field specializing in literacy would come to the district to present their knowledge, their ideas didn't always make their way back to the classrooms. However, there was one professional development opportunity that some teachers were taking part in that seemed different from what the "big names" offered. The Literacy Director had hired a handful of literacy coaches to work throughout the district with interested teachers. This was my first encounter with the work of literacy coaching.

Prior to this research, I supervised two of the educators who have agreed to participate in this study. At that time, Ms. Cook was a literacy coach and Ms. Smith taught second grade in the school where I was the principal. Their professional experience piqued my interest in the role a literacy coach could have on teaching and student learning. What I saw first hand was not only the great detail that went into the instructional planning between Ms. Cook and second grade teacher, Ms. Smith, but also the orchestration of teaching that took place while the two of them taught together in the classroom. I felt they were successful in their work together due to the relationship that was based on respect, trust, and consistency in work each did to support this co-teaching model. In their work together, the literacy coach and classroom teacher developed a dynamic learning environment that provided their students numerous opportunities to read and be read to. Teaching was focused on the needs of the students. Reading material that matched the students' comprehension levels based on classroom assessments or tied to curricular themes was utilized throughout the day. I observed their

relationship develop over the time they worked together. Both individuals had a significant understanding of reading prior to working together, but through their conversations and listening to one another, they strengthened their beliefs about reading and created a dynamic learning environment for the students.

Not only as a school principal, but as an educator, I have great interest in how to foster continued learning among adults – specifically teachers. My interest in literacy coaching as a way to support adult learners is linked to the work that I witnessed first hand between the literacy coach and classroom teacher in the school in which I was principal. My research is not based on the work between Ms. Smith and Ms. Cook when they worked under my supervision, but based on the work they have done as literacy coaches in other schools with classroom teachers.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

School reform has been a focus of political agendas for years. An example of this early and continued focus is Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 ("Title 1") which was later amended in 2000. The stated purpose of Title 1 is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency in fundamental skills as measured by challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. One way that Title 1 seeks to accomplish this task is by "promoting school-wide reform and ensuring children access to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). One of the most commonly used measures in the debate on improving our nation's schools is reading proficiency. Much has been written regarding how best to improve student reading. This

study will examine one possible approach to improving reading instruction in the classroom.

While many efforts have been focused on the instructional materials used to teach our students or the way that we test our students' ability, schools could significantly improve reading instruction by exploring new ways to teach those responsible for helping our students learn – the classroom teachers. By strengthening classroom instruction, student learning should improve. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) recognize the need for change in the teaching profession by becoming a "learning profession." "Teachers today need to do much more learning on the job… where they can constantly test out, refine and get feedback on the improvements they make. They need access to other colleagues to get this learning from them" (p. 83). The support of literacy coaches is the professional development model implemented in the school district in which this research was conducted. Literacy coaches are utilized by teachers to provide professional development in the area of reading and as Hargreaves and Fullan suggest, they are able to support learning on the job.

The recent publication, "Educating School Teachers" by Arthur Levine (2006) highlights the importance of teachers being prepared to "educate all of their students to achieve the highest learning outcomes in history" (p. 11). Levine's book finds that most of the current teachers are unprepared for the changes that have become "new realities" of today's classrooms due to economic, demographic, technological, and global changes in our nation (p. 12). While his report focuses on the need to improve and reform teacher education programs for future teachers, one must also ask what can be done to

support and improve the instructional strategies of those educators who are already working in our schools.

Wilson and Daviss (1994) recognize that one of the weaknesses in the teaching profession is that few teachers have been shown that effective teaching is itself a higher-order skill (p. 84). Knowing how to help students construct knowledge is equally as important as having deep knowledge about the curriculum and content being taught. Teachers need to know how to teach students. Wilson and Daviss (1994) found that one of the obstacles to teachers' ability to develop and hone this high level skill is that schools, as institutions, and education, as a profession, do not provide teachers continuing, systematic opportunities to improve their own effectiveness in the classroom (p. 88). In examining effective ways to create such a system, Wilson and Daviss draw upon the research of Michael Fullan to elaborate on teacher's professional development.

Fullan (2001) found that "other teachers are often the preferred source of ideas. …The evidence is equally strong that opportunities to interact with other teachers are limited, and that when good ideas do get initiated, by one or more teachers, the support of others is required if the ideas are to go anywhere" (p. 59). Fullan's work also supports the idea that a school could greatly influence reading proficiency if it were able to implement a model of collaboration, where classroom teachers work with a peer on instructional strategies and initiatives to support effective reading instruction. These strategies and initiatives can be practiced with students and then discussed with other professionals to determine the strengths of the lesson and areas for improvement. This would create an internal cycle of on-going professional development. This study will

look at a professional development model that draws upon ideas that were the focus of Fullan's research.

One approach that the educational system has implemented to address the needs of students and teachers in the area of reading is the use of reading specialists. This teaching position has been around for quite a while and the role has evolved over time. In her article "The Changing Role of the Reading Specialist," author Janice A. Dole (2004) discusses the evolution of the reading specialist under the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"). The ESEA provided funding to support the improvement of reading achievement in schools with a significant number of students living in poverty. Title 1 funding was used to hire reading specialists who worked with students in what was typically a pullout program. Originally, the reading specialist was an isolated approach with little or no direct interaction with the teachers in the classroom. Struggling readers needing additional support were pulled out of their regular classroom to receive compensatory, small-group instruction implemented by the reading specialist. Not only did this approach not address how reading was being taught in the regular classroom, but it also presented reading instruction in a way that was completely foreign to what was going on in the students' regular classroom. Bean and Hamilton (1995) found in their research that classroom teachers and reading specialists see a need for changes in the Title 1 program. The reading specialists, teachers and principals involved in Bean and Hamilton's study indicate there is a need to have planning sessions that focus on developing working relationships among reading specialists and classroom teachers. Collaboration was considered an essential component for improving instruction and student achievement but it was not occurring "naturally" as part of Title 1 (p. 218).

The original pullout model under Title 1 did not address the need for a collaborative relationship between the reading specialist and classroom teacher, where instructional planning occurs to address the instructional strategies utilized by the regular education classroom teacher.   Rather, this intervention was specifically targeted at the students to help develop their reading skills in support of improved reading and academic achievement. Today, a reading specialist is expected to do much more than just work with students. According to the position statement of the International Reading Association (2000) on the roles of the reading specialist, the role can be seen on a continuum, with some specialists working primarily in a teaching role with students, while others spend the majority of their time in professional development with classroom teachers.   In some schools the reading specialist has been referred to as a literacy coach, which is a position that requires focus on coaching the classroom teacher to grow as an educator rather than serving as a small group tutor for kids who have fallen behind the rest of the class (Dole, 2004).   Cathy Toll (2007) distinguishes the difference between a reading specialist and a literacy coach by specifying that the clients of the reading specialist include teachers, parents, administrators, students and others, whereas, the client of the literacy coach is the teacher (p. 28).

As schools continue to address the needs of students, they can no longer focus solely on what students need to know. Schools must also ensure there is professional support to promote the teacher's knowledge of the content being taught as well as the instructional strategies that will most effectively help students develop strategies to support their reading comprehension.   The literacy coach's knowledge about reading

should allow her to provide ongoing assistance and support to teachers in their daily work of literacy instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to describe the work of a literacy coach and discuss if this work strengthens a teacher's understanding of literacy and her use of instructional strategies to create a learning environment that fosters the growth and love of reading in her students. A learning environment that fosters ample opportunities for students to read and reflect upon that reading through conversations with peers and teachers, has been identified by researchers such as Pressley (2007) and Smith (2004), to positively impact the cognitive growth of students. The study should assist educators in determining how a literacy coach and classroom teacher can work together to strengthen reading instruction and create a learning environment that research has found to support students development in reading text.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed with the literacy coaches and classroom teachers that worked together and participated in this study.

1. What is the work of a literacy coach?

2. What impact, if any, does the literacy coach as a professional development model have on the instructional strategies utilized by a classroom teacher?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between the teacher and literacy coach and classroom practices?

Significance of the Study

At the time of data collection, the schools and teachers in this study had worked with literacy coaches for three academic school years. The use of literacy coaches is a

professional development approach that encourages teachers to learn from one another, become reflective in their work and utilize the support of an on-site professional developer to improve instructional strategies in the areas of reading and writing. This study tells the story of the teachers and literacy coaches who worked together during the school year. Through the discussions I had with each teacher and literacy coach participating in this study, ideas about their personal growth and development of instructional practices were shared. The study shares what occurs in the work between the literacy coach and teacher. The study should indicate the importance of collaboration as a component of professional development. The importance of providing time for this collaboration as well as focus on developing relationships among professionals is also discussed in this study and is necessary for effective collaboration to occur.

<div align="center">Identification of Key Concepts Related to Study</div>

In developing this research, it will be important to understand what current research says about the following: (1) the role of a reading/literacy coach in a classroom; (2) elements of effective reading instruction; and (3) the role of professional development in school reform.

<u>Role of a Reading/Literacy Coach in a Classroom?</u>

Both the job title and responsibilities of reading specialists have changed as the expectations of the person in this role have changed. As schools have not only addressed the needs of students with the support of a reading specialist, many schools began to explore ways to support teachers in their instructional practice in the area of reading. Many schools placed this responsibility on reading specialists, but some schools realized that the additional responsibility of supporting teachers may be too much to ask of the

reading specialist.   What has recently evolved in schools is the position of "literacy coach." Dole, Liang, Watkins, and Wiggins (2006) conducted an informal survey in the 50 states to determine the general patterns and understandings of the reading professionals working in the schools. Their findings indicate that 20 states do differentiate between the role of a reading specialist and literacy coach. According to their findings, the reading specialists seem to spend a majority of their time working with students and literacy coaches appear to work more with adults and have administrative authority in their role.

One can gain a getter understanding of the role of a literacy coach if one understands what type of coach they are. Examples of the various types of coaches in education are discussed in a literature review written by Terry Greene (2004). She states that coaching is a way to support growth and move teachers toward using new instructional strategies and knowledge about teaching and learning (p. 1). Greene (2004) defines a variety of models of coaching including technical coaching, coaching used to transfer new teaching practices into teachers' existing repertoires; collegial coaching, coaching used to increase professional dialogue and help teachers reflect on their work; and content coaching, coaching that focuses on a specific academic area (p. 2). A literacy coach could be considered to combine the characteristics of a technical, collegial, and content coaching. A literacy coach may use book clubs, collaborative lesson planning, lesson modeling, lesson observation, lesson feedback, instructional materials review and/or presentation when providing professional development to teachers in the area of reading.

The International Reading Association's ("IRA") position statement on literacy coaches provides that literacy coaches need to be excellent classroom teachers, have an in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction, have experience working with teachers to improve their practices, be excellent presenters, be skilled in leading teacher groups to facilitate reflection and change, and finally, have experience that enables them to master the complexities of observing and modeling in the classrooms and providing feedback to the teachers (IRA, 2004). The literacy coach has many responsibilities and should be a key factor in positively impacting the instructional practices implemented by the classroom teacher.

Elements of Effective Reading Instruction

Classroom teachers of reading, as well as administrators, are required to meet standards and reach knowledge and performance indicators as listed in the 2002 edition of the Illinois Teaching Standards (ISBE, 2002). Standard one of the Illinois Reading Standards requires the reading teacher to have a deep understanding of reading and reading instruction (p. 142). Reading instruction is made up of several components that must be addressed in a classroom to engage students and support the development of reading skills and strategies that further comprehension. Reading instruction that couples the focus on skill development with the involvement of rich reading experiences is supported by educator, Michael Pressley. Pressley's (2006) research focused on the nature of effective instruction and the instruction needed to make a positive impact on comprehension skills in primary classrooms (p. 6). Pressley expanded on his work when he conducted research with Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampston and Echevarria (2006) on instruction in the later elementary grades. They found that effective teachers

infused various instructional components into a classroom that had a positive impact on

instruction and achievement (p. 294). These instructional components included

extensive reading at the heart of language arts instruction; diverse grouping patterns;

teaching of both word-level and higher-order skills and processes; writing instruction;

extensive evaluation of literacy competencies; integration of literacy and content-area

instruction; and efforts to promote student motivation for reading and writing. These

findings support the need for the implementation of balanced literacy instruction. John

Edwin Cowen (2003) offers the following definition of a balanced approach to reading:

> A balanced reading approach is research-based, assessment-based,
> comprehensive, integrated, and dynamic, in that it empowers teachers and
> specialists to respond to the individual assessed literacy needs of children
> as they relate to their appropriate instructional and developmental levels of
> decoding, vocabulary, reading comprehension, motivation, and
> sociocultural acquisition, with the purpose of learning to read for meaning,
> understanding, and joy (p. 10).

Although there is copious research available that identifies what should be

included in effective reading instruction, the findings of Pressley et al. (2006) were

surprising because there was a lack of explicit comprehension instruction taking place in

the upper elementary grades (p. 298). Their research found that comprehension

instruction was not the key activity in the upper elementary classrooms; "There was no

evidence that teachers instructed or encouraged students to coordinate the various

comprehension strategies in order to understand text" (p. 299). Cognitive processes such

as summarizing, monitoring confusion, self-questioning, and predicting based on prior

knowledge were not being specifically taught to the students. These findings are

supported by an earlier study on reading comprehension completed by Durkin (1978).

Durkin (1978) concluded "while many teachers believed they were teaching

comprehension, most often they were assessing instead of directly explaining how to comprehend" (p. 481). Fielding and Pearson (1994) explain comprehension as a complex process involving knowledge, experience, thinking and teaching. Blachowicz and Ogle (2001) describe comprehension as (1) motivated and purposeful; (2) a process that is constructive; (3) socially constructed; (4) scaffolded, skillful and strategic; (5) and self-monitored and self-regulated (p. 25). Dorn and Soffos (2005) state that the process of comprehension requires readers to assemble flexible strategies to solve problems. They view the "orchestration of various reading strategies a condition of deep comprehension" (p. 2).

Balanced comprehension instruction is defined by Duke and Pearson (2002) and focuses on the need to incorporate various strategies during instruction to support students' comprehension. "Good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing, and discussion of text" (p. 201).

This research will explore how the work between the classroom teacher and literacy coach impacts the instructional strategies used by the classroom teacher during reading.

Role of Professional Development in School Reform?

In addition to curriculum standards, the Illinois State Board of Education (2001) requires teachers to understand the role of the community in education and develop and maintain collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well-being (). A collaborative relationship

that develops between a literacy coach and classroom teacher is one avenue that may support teacher and student learning.

This research is concerned with how teachers' instructional practices can be strengthened. An underlying assumption is that strong instructional practices should support student learning. Angela Perry (2004) states that "the best way to improve our nation's youth is simpler than most people think. We must improve the ongoing education of the adults who facilitate student learning" (p. 1). Her statement seems to be common sense but its fruition is dependent on schools' abilities to transform the professional development in which teachers are engaged. She draws upon the work of Donald Schön (1983) to emphasize the "need for educators to engage in true dialogue and collaboration, or re-awakening of the student-like mind" (p. 37). Schön (1983) feels that if teachers experience learning from the student's perspective and collaborate with colleagues about teaching practice, they may be able to identify weak teaching practices and improve with the support of others (p. 37). Hawley and Valli (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 1999) review the essential characteristics of effective professional development in "Teaching as the Learning Profession." These characteristics involve continuous teacher and administrator learning in the context of collaborative problem solving. The schools need to be structured in such a way to permit educators the opportunity to learn as they collectively address the gap between high standards of learning set for students and the actual performance of students (p. 144). Arthur Levine (2006) has also expressed concerns regarding whether today's teachers are prepared to meet the needs of today's learners. In his recent report he indicates that teachers may be entering the field of education without the necessary preparation to meet the high

expectations of the job.   This presents another layer in the understanding that teachers are the key to school reform and student learning. If teachers are not gaining the knowledge needed to support student learning *prior* to their professional experience, then schools must address their learning while on the job.   Gary Sykes (1999) states that "the key to producing well-qualified teachers is to greatly enhance their professional learning across the continuum of a career in the classroom" (p. XV).

Literacy coaching can be viewed as a professional development option that may have a lasting, positive impact on instructional strategies used by the classroom teacher.

Limitations of the Study

1.   This study was limited to two schools that utilized the support of a literacy coach during the 2006-2007 school year.

2.   The results of this study of two elementary schools that participated in utilizing the support of the literacy coaches cannot be generalized across all elementary schools.

3.   The generalizations of this study are limited to schools that have professional development offered by a literacy coach.   In this case the literacy coaches were only working specifically with adults.

4.   The two schools are in the same suburban school district.

5. It was not determined if the work between the literacy coaches and classroom teachers had an impact on student achievement in the area of reading.

Order of the Presentation of Study

Chapter I of the study includes introductory information and rationale for the study. It includes the conceptual framework for the study, the specific research questions

to be explored, the design of the study, the significance of the study and the basic assumptions and limitations made by the researcher.

Chapter II of this study presents a review of the existing literature and research relevant to the professional development of educators, the evolution of literacy coaching and approaches and classroom features to teaching reading.

Chapter III of this study discusses the research design and methodology used to complete this study.

Chapter IV of this study consists of the presentation and analysis of the data.

Chapter V presents the interpretations of the findings relevant to the literature and the implications for further research on literacy coaching as it relates to teacher's professional development and student achievement in the area of reading.

CHAPTER II

Review of Existing Literature

The literature reviewed for this study focuses on the professional development of educators and what is needed to implement an effective professional development model in an attempt to improve the practice of teachers, which in turn should improve the achievement of students. Professional development and literacy coaching as a specific model of professional development are examined in this research. The process of teaching reading is also discussed to provide context for this area of curriculum and insight into what may be taking place in elementary classrooms. Effective elements of literacy instruction and classroom practice are also discussed to assist in framing the role of a literacy coach in the elementary school environment.

Conditions of Effective Professional Development

Effective schools need effective teachers. As schools face the challenges of implementing new reforms to ensure that all students are learning and meeting the educational standards, teachers are ultimately charged with the responsibility of meeting this challenge. In the report, "Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action" published in 2004, the Teaching Commission states that "teaching is our nation's most valuable profession" (p. 12), and that "quality teachers are the critical factor in helping young people overcome the damaging effects of poverty, lack of parental guidance, and other challenges." The Teaching Commission (2004) emphasizes that "the effectiveness of any educational reform is ultimately dependent on the quality of teachers in the classroom" (p. 14). It would be difficult to argue against this statement because many of our educational systems are filled with extremely effective teachers who are capable of meeting the

challenges of educating the students they meet with daily. However, there are also numerous teachers who are not prepared to meet the learning needs of their students. These teachers may work in an environment that does not support their professional growth or they may not see the need or have the desire to continue their own learning. Regardless of the obstacles, it is necessary to address the quality of the education our students receive.

The professional development of teachers is an important and a necessary means to ensure that educators are using best practices to inform their instruction and meeting the learning needs of their students. Smylie (1995) observes that "we will…fail to improve schooling for children until we acknowledge the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to work but also for teachers to learn" (p. 92). He believes that schools need to provide teachers opportunities to work and learn together. This learning environment would encourage teachers to jointly identify problems and develop new programs and practices. Smylie's thinking is aligned with the work of Sarason (1990) who feels that public schools from the beginning "have never assigned importance to the intellectual, professional and career goals of their personnel" (p. 144). Sarason identifies reasons why schools don't improve. One of the big issues he discusses in his work is that schools are only viewed as learning places for students – not the adults working in the schools. Because this is a popular view shared by stakeholders in education, the school environment has not been conducive to supporting teachers in their acquisition of new knowledge. Wilson and Daviss (1994) come to a similar conclusion about schools. They found that one of the obstacles to teachers' ability to develop and hone the higher-order skill of teaching is that schools as institutions, and education as a profession, do not

provide teachers continuing, systematic opportunities to improve their own effectiveness in the classroom (p. 88). Ball and Cohen(1999) share their beliefs about why traditional professional development efforts, which include one-shot workshops and short-term training seminars emphasizing new classroom activities often fail. They believe that teaching has been perceived as common sense with little need for professional learning, and that teaching has been organized as a career in which sustained learning is not needed for adequate performance (p. 4).

It has become apparent through my review of the literature on staff development and this research that the traditional methods of staff development, some of which include workshops and seminars, do not have a lasting impact on teachers' instructional practices. In part, this is due to the lack of connecting the components of professional development to the vision of the school or district and the missing collegial relationships among the teachers that support collaboration and reflective dialogue needed to work through new ideas.

Numerous studies have been done to determine what procedures and environmental conditions are optimal to implement high-quality professional development. Lieberman (1996) found that the following practices support effective professional development: collegiality, opportunities and time for inquiry, and learning content in context. Her perspective emphasizes that learning which occurs within the school environment and includes the aforementioned practices has the potential to stop the isolation that teachers may experience when trying to implement a new strategy or method. This isolation is a trademark of the school environment and can be linked to the lack of growth and learning teachers have experienced within the context of the school. Collaboration and collective

learning can be enhanced when teachers are actively learning within the school environment. This collaboration has the direct effect of diminishing the feeling of isolation.

Research done by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1980, 1982, & 1996) indicates that successful training of teachers should include a rationale for learning and using the new teaching method, observations and demonstrations of the new teaching method, practice using the new method, and sustained coaching for application. When used together, these components make it possible for teachers to use the new teaching model effectively. Their research emphasizes the importance of coaching the teacher as a component of professional development in order to increase the likelihood that the teacher will *transfer* the new method and teaching techniques into her classroom [emphasis added]. The original research of Joyce and Showers (1980) also indicated a need for structured and open-ended feedback to occur to support the teachers' learning. However, Joyce and Showers (1996) have changed their thinking on providing feedback to teachers as a necessary component of professional development as they believe it has the potential of becoming evaluative. Although research varies on including feedback as part of professional development, several researchers see feedback as an essential component of professional development (see, Gusky, 1995, Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Research continues to highlight that high quality professional development should focus on deepening the teachers' content knowledge and the knowledge of how students learn in a particular content area. Authors, Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000) of *Designing Professional Development that Works* identified six practices of effective professional development after surveying more than 1000 teachers who participated in

professional development sponsored by the Eisenhower Professional Development

Program. The six practices include:

- Form of professional development – Was the professional development structured in a traditional method (i.e. workshop or conference) or was it structured as a reform activity (i.e. study group or mentoring/coaching situation).

- Appropriate duration – The number of hours teachers participated in the professional development activity and the span of time involved.

- Collective participation – The opportunity for teachers to discuss concepts and problems that may arise when implementing new method.

- Focus on content- The activity was focused on a specific subject matter or subject specific teaching method.

- Active learning – Teachers had the opportunity to observe skilled teachers demonstrate the new method and be observed using the new method. Also included a review of student work, and planning for classroom implementation.

- Coherence – The professional development activities were related to the teachers' and/or schools' goals, built on earlier activities done in professional development and/or were followed by additional activities.

These six elements of staff development encompass some of the same ideas of Joyce and

Showers (i.e., collective learning, active participation, and coherence).

Coherence is an overlapping idea in the literature related to professional

development and is considered to be a strong indicator of the success of professional

development. Michael Fullan (1990) highlights this point stating that staff development

will never have its intended impact unless it is connected to the larger vision of the

school.   However, Fullan feels that the idea of coaching teachers as suggested by Joyce

and Showers could miss the mark when it comes to being a component that will increase

the effectiveness of teachers. Fullan is concerned that coaching as a professional

development innovation will not bring about change in the culture of the

organization/school. Fullan's position on staff development is that in order for it to be

successful, the innovation must address how it fits into the long-term development of the school and its continuous improvement. Literacy coaching as an innovation to support continued improvement within a school should be connected to the instructional needs of the school in the area of reading and writing. This connection could provide schools the support needed to assist in their overall improvement.

In a study completed by Rogers and Pinnell (2002), 292 reading and language arts directors and special education directors shed light onto the effective components of professional development by completing the National Survey of Professional Development Practices in Reading for Elementary School Educators. The findings of the study were grouped into three themes: content of professional development, structure of professional development and accountability of implementation and sustainability. Those surveyed and interviewed reported that the content of the professional development often focused on preparing students for state assessments. However, the study indicated that if the information presented was research based and included ideas that fit into the district's philosophy of reading, there was more chance of it being carried over into what teachers would use in the classroom. The most effective professional development programs provided teachers with interactive and hands-on opportunities to model new practices along with follow-up support in the form of coaching. These elements of professional development increased the likelihood of teachers integrating the reading strategies into their practice (p. 9-28).

Fullan's (1990) work has also shown that teacher collegiality and collaborative work cultures are related to the success of effective staff development (p. 12). If teachers are working together on implementing new ideas or programs, the shared effort to

understand how these can be carried out in their classrooms or school community will

more likely occur due to the collaboration among the teachers. Based upon what is

known about collegiality and collaborative work cultures, the coaching of teachers as a

staff development model should strengthen collegiality among teachers and within a

school.   Thus, the collegial nature of literacy coaching between the coach and the

teacher reinforces collaboration and enhances professional development, which in turn

improves and reinforces collaboration across the entire school creating a positive self

renewing cycle of change and development for the school.

When collegiality among teachers is strong there is a collective sense of purpose.

Barth (1990) shares the meaning of collegiality as defined by Judith Warren Little:

> *Adults in schools talk about practice. These conversations about teaching
> and learning are frequent, continuous, concrete and precise. Adults in
> schools observe each other engage in the practice of teaching and
> administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and
> talk about. Adults engage together in work on curriculum by planning,
> designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum. Finally, adults in
> school teach each other what they know about teaching, learning, and
> leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated and shared (p. 31).*

Coaching as a model of professional development is based on the idea of collegiality and

collaboration. The foundation of the relationship between the literacy coach and the

teacher is discussion and communication. The literacy coach should involve educators in

talking about their practice, observing teachers and being observed while teaching, and

sharing her knowledge about reading and writing. Barth (2006) believes that the "nature

of the relationships among the adults within the school has a greater influence …on

student achievement than anything else" (p. 8).   Smylie (1995) echoes this thought in

arguing for the need to provide teachers with the opportunities to work and learn

together. In a learning environment where this occurs teachers would be "encouraged to

jointly identify and solve problems and develop new programs and practices" (p. 104).

It is with the idea of developing collaborative interactions among teachers that a literacy

coach could play a vital role in strengthening the relationships among the adults in the

school setting.

Little (1999) emphasizes the need to focus on developing a culture of inquiry and

shared responsibility for student learning where teachers contribute to one another's

success for students (p. 238). Five elements of teachers' professional community that

produce a collective sense of responsibility for student learning have been summarized by

Garmston and Wellman (1999). The teachers should have:

- Shared norms and values;

- A collective focus on student learning;

- Time for collaboration where teachers share their expertise and perspectives on teaching and the learning process, and examine data about students to make decisions about their teaching;

- A deprivatized practice where they work together to solve problems; and

- Reflective dialogue with the purpose of developing a shared understanding about the process of learning.

Having shared norms of learning with a focus on student learning, time for collaboration,

and refection are elements of a school environment that will enhance the learning that

occurs for both teachers and students. Although it is not easy to achieve this type of

learning environment, the use of literacy coaching could be a mechanism used to develop

this type of learning community.

One of the elements that Garmston and Wellman (1999) believe will improve student

learning is including reflective dialogue as part of professional development. This

reflection on one's work should lead to a change in thinking. Schön (1983) believes that

reflection is critical for learning to occur. His work on the role reflection plays in the development of a profession highlights that the adults must not rely on or take for granted what is known about a specific technique or theory (i.e. learning and/or teaching), but must allow themselves to think differently about what is known. Schön writes that when one allows oneself to experience "confusion about the subjects she is to 'know,' new learning and thinking will occur" (p. 67). He believes this reflection on one's learning, will not only change one's thinking, but her actions as well. Similarly, Wheatley (2002) discusses the need "to have our beliefs challenged by what others think – we have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time" (p. 34).

Learning Theory Related to Adult Learners

Understanding how teachers best learn is another important aspect of the professional development of teachers to consider when planning for effective implementation. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) present that learners of all ages must be motivated to learn and be actively engaged in the process. Adult learners must also want to learn the new information and demonstrate the ability to problem solve and reflect on the new learning. Friend and Cook (2003) point out that adult learners bring a vast amount of prior knowledge, experiences and skills to each learning situation. In addition to this information, adults have acquired ideas, beliefs and values about learning through the successes and failures they have experienced in school – whether as a teacher or as a learner (p. 331). The characteristics of adult learners need to be considered and valued as part of the professional development process.

One current approach for working with adult learners and taking into account the knowledge they bring to the learning experience is the constructivist theory of education.

The basic premise of constructivism is that an individual learner must actively build knowledge and skills. Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy and Perry (1992) describe learning as an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience (p. 21). Their theory used to describe adult learning is derived from Piaget's (1995) theory of intellectual development for children. Piaget indicates activity in learning is necessary for children to construct knowledge. Creating an adult learning environment to reflect constructivism involves creating a safe environment where learners are actively involved in the learning process and encouraged to participate in discussions about the content. Providing opportunities for the adult learners to use their current knowledge to construct new knowledge is also necessary to help them grow and expand their thinking.

Alexander and Murphy (1998) summarized research on core beliefs about how people learn. The research on learning indicates that the learner's existing knowledge serves as the foundation for all future learning, and the ability to reflect on one's thoughts and behaviors is essential to learning. Motivation to learn, which can be influenced by both teaching experience and the environment that one works in, can play a significant role in the learning process as well. If the school environment is a place where collaboration occurs among the teachers and they feel safe to take risks in their teaching, teachers are more apt to participate in professional development opportunities with an open mind. Also if the experience of a teacher is not ignored and taken into consideration when planning professional development, she is more likely to feel that her knowledge about teaching is valued and will be more open to the new ideas presented.

Learning can be viewed as both a social and individual experience – the social aspect of collaboration will assist professionals in developing a clearer understanding of

how the instructional strategies can fit into one's classroom and support her style of teaching. This social aspect of learning is described in Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory where social interactions play a fundamental role in learning. In the realm of adult learners in schools this social interaction could take form as collaboration and conversations about teaching and learning between the adults. If professional development takes into account these principles, the traditional methods of training will shift and should allow the learner to construct new meaning from the information provided. Wiggins and McTighe (2006) discuss similar principles they have developed about how learning works in a true learning organization. Their beliefs about learning acknowledge that learners attain understanding only through regular reflection, self-assessment, and self-adjustment as prior learning is applied to new situations. Also, a safe and supportive environment where the learners are provided opportunities to reexamine and/or refine their thinking about instruction and where instruction is personalized to match the interests of the learners are additional principles essential in creating an adult learning environment.

Literacy Coaching

A traditional model of professional development, one-shot workshops or one size fits all models, most likely will not lead to improved learning opportunities for teachers because they don't contain the elements that research has shown to be key to successful learning opportunities for teachers. Rather, a nontraditional approach that supports what is known about adult learners and how they learn may be found in the professional development opportunities offered by a literacy coach. The idea of coaching as a professional development tool is not a unique idea in the practice of improving

instruction, but literacy coaching has taken on different forms in the schools across our

nation. An example of the different forms of professional development offered by

reading professionals was uncovered in an informal survey done by Dole, et al. (2006).

Only twenty states reported having reading coaches who "conduct a number of different

professional activities to assist and support other teachers" (p. 196).   One of the twenty

states did report that the literacy coaches in their state do spend 100% of their time

working with teachers. Their findings indicate that the use of literacy coaches is not

consistent or even existent in all of our states.

What Does a Literacy Coach Do?

Literacy coaching is a site-based professional development innovation that can

embrace the job-embedded, ongoing work that needs to occur in order for teachers to

transfer skills and strategies learned into the classroom. "Reading/literacy coaches serve

as mentors providing teachers with ongoing assistance and support in their daily work"

(Dole, et al. 2006).   Dole, et al. has described the literacy coach as a mentor, however, in

the book *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*, author Stephen Barkley (2005)

differentiates between mentoring and coaching. He shares that mentors typically have a

certain level of expertise and are assigned to assist someone with seemingly less

knowledge or experience. The assumption is that mentors work with those who are

lacking something or need to be fixed. He does not believe that coaching is about fixing

someone; it is a "relationship between two equals, one of whom is committed to making

personal and professional improvements" (p. 4). Barkley describes this coaching

relationship as a "partnership of support and development" where the coach provides the

tools, techniques and guidance to help the teacher grow (p. 24). Toll (2005) describes

the job of literacy coach as:

> One who asks good questions, provides resources, makes suggestions, assists in problem solving, demonstrates instructional strategies and engages in other activities to influence teachers' changes but with an emphasis on the teachers' goals (p. 58).

Vogt and Shearer's (2007) description of literacy coaches is complimented by Toll's

understanding of the coach's role. Vogt and Shearer explain the primary responsibilities

of a literacy coach as "supporting teachers and paraprofessionals by developing and

meeting their own goals and those of the school; helping teachers design individual or

group professional development plans; and conferring, modeling, coaching, and

observing teachers" (p. 191). Both of these descriptions highlight the need to focus on

the teacher's goals where support needed to influence the teacher in achieving her goals

is provided. As stated in the literature review earlier, professional development activities

that are related to the teachers' and/or schools' goals are found to create successful and

lasting learning opportunities for those involved (see Birman, et al. 2000, Fullan, 1990).

Because coaching is not a new concept in education, a literacy coach's role may

encompass certain characteristics of currently defined coaching practices. For example,

Neufeld and Roper (2003) think a literacy coach can be considered a content coach with a

focus on improving a teacher's instructional practices in the area of reading and writing

However, literacy coaching could also be considered cognitive coaching. Both coaching

models are framed around a constructivist learning theory. Cognitive coaching as

described by Costa and Garmston (2002) is based on the belief that growth occurs when

coaching interactions focus on "mediating a practitioner's thinking, perceptions, beliefs,

and assumptions toward the goals of self-directed learning" (p. 89). Cognitive coaches

are facilitators of self-directed learning. They focus on constructing and posing questions to engage the learner and transform their thoughts about the content being discussed. In Garmston's (1993) work where he is a coach of two teachers, he found that collegial relationships were developed and the teachers' reflective skills were deepened as a result of coaching. Although the IRA and the school district in which this study was done are still shaping the role of a literacy coach, building collegial relationships and reflective practices are important parts of the role.

A literacy coach, as defined by Walpole and McKenna (2004), is a site-based school reformer. They have defined the responsibilities of a literacy coach to include evaluating and selecting curriculum materials to correspond with the needs of the students, assisting teachers to interpret data and reflect on how their teaching practices impact that data, and providing support to develop the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers to change student achievement. This can be contrasted with Cathy Toll's (2006) view of the purpose of literacy coaching. From her work as a literacy coach and consultant to coaches, Toll has seen the literacy coach's purpose to be teacher remediation, program implementation, and/or teacher growth. Unlike Walpole and McKenna, Toll does not include student achievement in her description of a literacy coach's purpose. However, the role of a literacy coach as described by Toll has several overlapping ideas to those suggested by the research of effective professional development models. Toll (2007) most recently discusses how she would like literacy coaches to be viewed as a "fresh alternative" where coaching is envisioned as adding to the efforts of supervisors, traditional professional development providers and reading specialists" (p. 13).   Overall, the literature states the tasks of a literacy coach to include

modeling expertise, monitoring teachers, serving teachers, and collaborating with teachers and even supervising teachers.   To carry out the expectations of this role, several characteristics have been identified that will contribute to the success of a literacy coach.

Characteristics of Effective Literacy Coaching

This section serves to summarize what current literature shares regarding characteristics of effective literacy coaching that will assist the coach in meeting the needs of teachers. Effective literacy coaches understand that teachers come with a variety of strengths and needs, and they know how to start with the teachers' strengths and teach to their needs (Coskie, Robinson, Buly, and Egawa, 2005, p. 60). This is typical of good teaching in general but is one of the tasks that literacy coaches must carry off with finesse in order to coach well. Understanding what knowledge as well as philosophy the teacher has about literacy will assist the coach in working with that teacher. Also, understanding what the teacher would like to take away from the coaching experience will help guide the literacy coach in planning the professional development offered to help the teacher reach her literacy goals. The process of working to understand the learning needs and wants of the teacher will assist the literacy coach create a safe learning environment that is seen as a crucial component of the adult learning environment (see Wiggins & McTighe, 2006).

Data collected by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education suggest that certain characteristics and factors influence the effectiveness of a coach. These characteristics include strong human relations and communication skills, excellent teaching skills, the ability to be flexible and innovative in adapting curriculum to meet

the needs of local circumstances, and the ability to overcome foreseeable problems (e.g.,

teacher resistance) (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenlum, Saunders, Supovitz, 2003, p. 44).

The International Reading Association's (2004) position statement regarding a coach's

qualifications include the ideas of the Poglinco, et al. (2003) but also suggest that the

coach have in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and

instruction, and the experience to model and observe lessons, and provide feedback about

instruction to the classroom teachers as additional qualifications. Vogt and Shearer

(2007) state "a coach is most effective when she is a good listener and responds in ways

that are nonjudgmental and nonthreatening" (p. 199). A literacy coach must actively

listen to the teacher to understand her thoughts and feelings about her involvement in the

coaching process. The teacher may be more likely to take risks in her own teaching if she

knows the literacy coach is there to provide support in a nonthreatening atmosphere. As

suggested by the International Reading Association (2004), effective literacy coaching

includes observing and providing feedback to teachers. However, when one observes

teaching it may be difficult to be evaluative, nonjudgmental or draw conclusions about

what is observed. If observations and feedback are deemed an important characteristic

of literacy coaching, it will be important for the literacy coach to have strong human

relations and communication skills.

Shanklin (2006) shares six characteristics that define effective literacy coaching as

outlined by the Advisory Board of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse:

- Collaborative dialogue for teachers at all levels of knowledge and experience;

- Development of a school vision about literacy that is site-based and links to district goals;

- Data-oriented student and teacher learning;

- On-going, job-embedded professional learning;

- Observations that are cyclical and knowledge building over time; and

- Support rather than evaluate.

These suggested characteristics encompass many of the ideas discussed in research related to the professional development of teachers. If these characteristics are reflected in the development of the literacy coach's role, the success of the literacy coach may be positively impacted. In addition to the ideas presented above, effective literacy coaches support teachers in a non-evaluative role, use collaboration to build a trusting relationship, are accessible to teachers and have the support of the school's principal.

Support

The Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse Advisory Board's belief that literacy coaches be supportive rather than evaluative is also suggested in the work of Coskie, et al. (2005). They view support to teachers as the primary responsibility of literacy coaches. Their description of support does not include evaluation – the literacy coach's effectiveness is tied to being able to "hear teacher issues, observe their strengths, provide feedback and help them plan what comes next" (p. 60). Cathy Toll (2006) would like the term literacy coaching to be used only to describe work that supports teacher growth not remediation of teachers (p. 13). Toll believes that remediation should be left to supervisors which she defines "as those who ensure that teachers meet the requirements of their position at a satisfactory level and continue to do so over time" (p. 211). In her own work as a literacy coach and consultant to coaches, Toll has found that administrators will often turn to the literacy coach to determine if the teachers in the school are providing effective instruction. When coaches are asked to evaluate the

effectiveness of teachers, it is likely that teachers will shy away from the professional

support of the coach.   Knight (2007) believes that coaches need to provide support to

make it as easy as possible for teachers to implement a new practice (p. 32).   One of the

coaches interviewed in Knight's book states that a big part of her job is to provide the

support that will assist in removing every barrier that might stand in the way of a teacher

implementing a new teaching practice (p. 130).

Collaboration and Trust

Recognizing that coaching has been a suggested component of professional

development for a significant number of years as suggested in the work of Joyce and

Showers (1980, 1982, & 1996), schools are now just beginning to embrace this model as

a possible avenue to address the changing needs of our schools. Lyons and Pinnell

(2001) believe literacy coaching will be effective if the coach, as a staff developer, is able

to effectively analyze teacher–student interactions during reading and writing lessons to

determine what changes a teacher must make to improve student learning and bring about

a shift in that teacher's knowledge and practice (p. 111). This type of staff development

will most likely occur if a strong, trusting relationship has been developed between the

literacy coach and teacher. Trust is being able to depend on someone to achieve a

common purpose. Collaboration is one way to go about building this type of trusting

relationship.

Collaboration is defined as "to work jointly esp. [especially] with one or a limited

number of others in a project involving composition or research to be jointly accredited"

(Webster, 1993). Collaboration between the literacy coach and teacher as defined above

is an essential component of effective coaching. If their collaboration is focused on

sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus, reaching the teacher's literacy goals should be realized.   In a two-year study done in the Boston Public Schools on their district-wide coaching model, Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL), the findings indicated that coaching increased the amount of collaboration among the teachers involved in the coaching model and improved practice in the area of implementing a reading workshop (Schwartz & McCarthy, 2003).   This is promising information as schools continue to develop the role and work of the literacy coach and determine the purpose of literacy coaching. Cathy Toll (2007) discusses collaboration by relating it to the "connectedness of the people that coaches work." She describes a school's teaching staff as a "network which consists of all of the educators who comprise the staff as well as the connections between them" (p. 82). Within this network are "hubs."   She defines hubs as the teachers that have an unusually large number of connections to other components within the network. She relates this to the idea that literacy coaches should focus on engaging those teachers who are highly connected in order to give the literacy coach visibility as well as foster collaboration among the staff. This tactic, working with teachers who have an unusually large number of connections within the school, could potentially increase the amount of collaboration that occurs in schools among the teachers.

A coach of any subject area must be well versed in the content.   Literacy coaches must also establish the trust of the colleagues with whom she works. This may not be easy, as some teachers may equate the literacy coach to evaluation and feel that the purpose of this role is to evaluate their teaching methods and practices. Cathy Toll (2005) believes trust can be established when a coach demonstrates that she values the

expertise of others as well as recognizes the limitations of her own expertise (p. 60).

Depending on whether or not the school environment is established as a professional

learning community where collaboration and dialogue are the norm will determine the

ease with which a literacy coach can establish good working relationships and trust with

classroom teachers. Barkley and Bianco (2005) establish that coaching is not about

giving advice, providing constructive criticism, making judgments, or providing an

opinion. Coaching is a relationship..." (p. 4). Relationships are developed through

conversations and connections made with another person, which in turn supports the

building of trust between those in the relationship.

In Boston's CCL model, the coaches who were interviewed in the study shared that it

was difficult to build a positive, collaborative atmosphere. Their job began with working

to get teachers to focus on improving their teaching. Once that happened, "teachers

began to collaborate and friendly collegial atmospheres began to develop" (Schwartz &

McCarthy, 2003, p. 24). Neufeld and Roper (2003), who have been involved in

studying various coaching models, including Boston's CCL, suggest that literacy coaches

can develop an environment of trust and collaboration by approaching their own work as

continuous learners and admitting to the teachers with whom they are working that they

are not experts in everything related to literacy. If coaches are able to take risks in front

of teachers and try out new teaching methods they will have a stronger chance of getting

teachers to trust their ideas.

Accessibility

The accessibility of the literacy coach is another factor to be considered when

developing a relationship of trust and collegiality. In the study of the coaching model

used in America's Choice Schools, Poglinco, et al. (2003), found that teachers were more responsive to coaches and the ideas shared if the coaches made a concerted effort to check in with the teachers regarding the literacy program as well as provide some individual time with the teacher (p. 37). These actions were valued by the teacher and helped develop the trust between the coach and teacher.

One-to-one interviews between the coach and teacher are another way to develop a trusting work relationship between coach and teacher (Knight, 2007). The interviews allow for the gathering of information about teacher and administrative challenges, student needs and cultural norms specific to the school (p. 90). The interviews also allow the coach to educate the teacher on what can be offered to her through coaching.

Utilizing a literacy coaching model in an urban school setting, Blachowicz, Obrochta and Fogelberg (2005), found that one action in particular assisted coaches in establishing credibility and trust with classroom teachers. To develop trust with the teachers with whom they worked, the coaches located and organized literacy materials that were currently available in the district and made the materials easily accessible to the teachers. The materials included books for the teachers to use during guided reading, independent reading and shared reading. Teachers appreciated knowing what was available to them and began turning to the coaches with questions about how best to use these materials in their instruction. The complicated part of teaching effectively is selecting and organizing the curriculum materials and determining appropriate instructional practices that support the learners in the classroom (Allington & Johnston, 2002). Creating access to the necessary materials needed to implement an effective

literacy program is one thing that literacy coaches can do to begin developing relationships with teachers and enhance their effectiveness.

In his ongoing study of coaching, Jim Knight (2007) finds that in order for coaching to impact teaching practices, the model must have a balance between a top-down and bottom-up approach. His insight suggests that the school principal must have a guiding hand as the instructional leader to help teachers adopt new teaching practices that are in line with the district and state mandates. He also believes coaches should "position themselves as equal partners collaborating with fellow teachers" (p. 27). This would involve the coach assisting the teacher in applying learning to their real-life practice as well as encouraging dialogue to reflect on the learning that that is occurring.

The role of literacy coaching is evolving but already there are significant job expectations attached to the role. An important qualification of the literacy coach is to have a deep understanding of literacy instruction in order to support teacher learning. Effective literacy coaches are characterized by their knowledge of reading and writing and their ability to observe a teacher and select points that will lead to new learning and engage the teachers they are working with in reflection as a way to improve their skill. This knowledge is critical to help build the literacy coach's credibility among the teachers she works with, which should in turn support the development of a trusting, collaborative relationship. In order to fulfill the job expectations, a relationship built on trust needs to be developed between the teacher and coach so that collaboration and reflection can occur.

Effective Elements of Literacy Instruction

Teaching literacy is a complicated task due to the vast expectations that students must achieve. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2008) has adopted the following definition of what readers and writers of the twenty first century need to be able to do:

- Develop proficiency with the tools of technology,

- Build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally,

- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes,

- Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information,

- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts, and

- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

As technology changes, the above literacy practices will be impacted. However, simply put, readers and writers need to be able to make meaning of the world. In the article, *How Will Literacy Be Defined in the New Millennium*, Joyce Many (2000) notes that the basic level of literacy in our changing society will require readers to be "much more critically conscious of what they are using to construct meaning" (p. 66).

Today, schools need to focus on offering instruction that helps students attain the necessary skills of reading and writing in a thoughtful manner. Students are expected to be active in the learning process where inquiry and problem solving skills are developed. The International Reading Association (2004) states that a literacy coach must understand the process of reading as well as know the elements of an effective reading environment

in order for successful collaboration between the teachers and coach to have a chance of occurring.

Approaches to Teaching Reading

There are several approaches to teaching reading discussed by Weaver (1988) that shape the instructional strategies implemented by teachers. The approaches discussed encompass two areas: (1) identification of words; and (2) emphasis on meaning. The phonics, linguistic, sight word and basal reader approaches typically focus on identification of words. The thought is that when one of these four approaches is used the reader will derive meaning from within text – if the reader is able to decode the text and/or recognize the words, she will understand what is read. The language experience and whole language approaches emphasize the construction of meaning – the reader will bring prior knowledge and experience to the task of reading to create meaning. The belief underlying the use of these two approaches is that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text (p. 183).

Weaver (1988) compares classroom instruction based on the mechanistic view of instruction and the transactional view of instruction. One view in education has been based on the mechanistic view where instruction is built from the smallest parts to increasingly larger wholes where the teacher focuses first on letter/sound correspondences, then on strategies for analyzing words and then on comprehension skills (p. 222). In this environment, the teacher is viewed as the dispenser of knowledge and the student is the receiver of knowledge where reading is viewed as a one way process "originating in the text and ending in the reader" (p. 138). However, Weaver's research leans toward Louise Rosenblatt's transactional view of instruction where reading

is a transaction between the reader and the language of the text. The teacher is a facilitator of learning where classroom activities are developed and provided to encourage children's natural development of reading and writing (as cited in Weaver, 1988, p. 223). While reading, the reader has ongoing transactions with the text and meaning arises during these transactions. "Reading is a process, a transaction between reader and text in a given situational context, an event during which meaning evolves" (Weaver, 1988, p. 27). Rosenblatt's idea that the "meaning" [of the text] does not reside ready-made "in" the text or "in" the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text is cited by Weaver as it reflects her thinking about reading and comprehension of text. (p. 163). Through these transactions between reader and text, there will be a variety of interpretations of the text depending on what background knowledge the reader brings to the text (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993). This socio-psycholinguistic view of reading emphasizes that if the learner is to get meaning from the text, she must actively create meaning by bringing meaning to the text – reading is a "transaction between the mind of the reader and the language of the text" (Weaver, 1988, p. 138).

Frank Smith's socio-psycholinguistic theory stresses that (1) the more non-visual information a reader brings to print, the easier it will be for the learner to read and comprehend, (2) phonics is not the key to learning to read, (3) the short- and long-term memory work together to process incoming information from text, (4) demonstrations of reading, engagement in the literacy task, and sensitivity to the degree of learning that the learner expects to take place define the social nature of reading, and (5) learning to read is like "joining a club" (as cited in Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p. 153).

Constructivism Related to Literacy Instruction

It is relevant to briefly look at the constructivist view of learning and instruction and how it applies to the beliefs of reading instruction and a learning environment that supports a balanced approach to teaching literacy. Duffy and Jonassen (1992) compare the theories of objectivism and constructivism to highlight beliefs about instructional design that are used to shape the learning environment. The authors draw upon the work of Lakoff to define objectivism as "the belief that the world is completely and correctly structured in terms of entities, properties and relations – meaning is something that exists in the world separate from experience" (p. 2). Hence, in a classroom that is structured around the objectivist view of learning, students would be expected to come to complete and correct understanding despite the acceptance that they do not experience the same things or develop the same understandings from those experiences. Constructivism entails that meaning is rooted in experience and that meaning is created by us (p. 3). In a classroom structured around constructivism, students will develop understanding of what is taught based on their individual experiences.

Cambourne (2002) has taken the elements of constructivism and summarized what he believes to be the core theoretical assumptions about learners and the learning process. He states that:

- What is learned cannot be separated from the context of in which it is learned;

- The purposes or goals that the learner brings to the learning situation are central to what is learned; and,

- Knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through the processes of negotiation, evaluation, and transformation (p. 26).

So, if the belief of constructivism is used to guide our thinking about reading instruction, "the experiences and contexts in which learning to read is embedded will be critical to each learner's understanding of, and ability to use reading" (Cambourne, p. 27). This idea could mean that readers who are encouraged to construct meaning from text versus reading to determine the one 'correct' interpretation of text may use reading quite differently.

To create a classroom that encompasses the beliefs of the constructivists theory, Allington and Cunningham (2007) emphasize the need for teachers to foster thinking from the beginning of their lessons because real readers and writers are constantly thinking while they read and write (p. 52). The authors discuss the notion of "thoughtful literacy" as the avenue to foster thinking while reading and writing. This is the use of discussion, conversation, reflection and revision with the purpose of helping students achieve understanding. Having conversations with their peers and teacher for the purpose of discussing and reflecting on their thinking about the text, students are provided the opportunity to further develop understanding and to rethink an earlier understanding of what they read. "Thoughtful literacy" reflects Cambourne's (2002) view of constructivism in that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed with the support and guidance of the classroom teacher as well as interactions with peers. Learning is also viewed as a social event by Frank Smith (2004). He emphasizes that whether or not learning takes place usually depends more on the people around learners than on the learners themselves (p. 208). He explains his thinking by giving the following example of how very young children learn from others when they are interested in something someone else is doing. For example, by listening to adults talk

and watching their actions, most children are able to hypothesize the meaning of the spoken words. The child's interest in what the adult is saying and doing helps the child develop language.   The child's learning of language is dependent on the people around her.

Features of Reading Instruction

Schools must focus on attaining "thoughtful literacy" where the environment is characterized by the ability to read, write, and think in complex and critical ways (Allingon & Johnson, 2002). Allington and Walmsley (1995) emphasize that if teachers are going to create thoughtful readers they must focus on spending large parts of the school day engaging the children in reading and writing activities where the focus is on topics worth knowing (p. 11). Allington and Cunningham (2007) expand on this idea of creating thoughtful readers by discussing the need for elementary classrooms to include discussion, conversation, reflection and revision opportunities for students about the text they are reading (p. 51). These activities will help students think about their reading and allow a teacher to assess a student's understanding about the text.

Hiebert (1992) completed a study to determine if authentic literacy tasks, which she describes as ones "in which reading and writing serve a function for children, activities such as enjoying a book or communicating an idea in a composition…they involve children in immediate use of literacy for enjoyment and communication," supported struggling readers (p. 391). She provides strong evidence to support the use of authentic learning experiences to assist students learn. Hiebert's research, done in first grade classrooms and Chapter 1 programs, found a greater number of students who began the school year with little school-like literacy were able to become proficient readers and

writers in classrooms where the teachers created authentic literacy tasks and provided

guidance versus being in classrooms where skill and drill was emphasized. In classrooms

and Chapter 1 programs where the teachers stressed the learning of skills, children

demonstrating low literacy skills did not progress as well as their peers in the authentic

literacy classrooms. Hiebert also stressed in her research the need for these authentic

tasks to be supported by the teacher through guidance, modeling, and discussions

regarding the features of written language. Her findings support the need to create

learning environments where children are provided numerous opportunities to read and

reflect on their reading through dialogue with their peers and their teachers. This idea is

echoed by Rhodes and Shanklin (1993). They stress that when students see and engage

in authentic, real-world reading and writing, they learn how to do real-world reading and

writing (p. 54).   They believe that in authentic reading and writing, students are

constructing meaning to communicate and have substantial control of the event.

My research will look at what beliefs the literacy coaches and classroom teachers

have about teaching reading and how their work together shapes the learning

environment.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem

This qualitative study was designed to examine the impact the collaborative work between a literacy coach and a classroom teacher has on the reading instruction in elementary classrooms. In the previous chapter, the review of literature indicates that the role of literacy coach is comprised of many responsibilities and that it is difficult to know what impact it has on students. Educators and researchers believe that to improve the achievement of students and help them meet the high standards of reading, teachers must be provided with professional development throughout their careers that will enhance their instructional practice. As stated in the research, when teachers are offered opportunities to work in collaborative, supportive learning environments, there is the likelihood that new teaching strategies and practices will be carried over into their classrooms to support student learning [see Joyce and Showers (1980), Schön (1983), Lieberman (1996), Hawley & Valli (1999)].

I designed this qualitative study to look at the work of the literacy coach and determine if this format of coaching was a professional development model that has an impact on teaching and teacher growth.   The experiences of the participants in this study, when considered along with the available literature on literacy coaching, serve to inform those responsible for improving the professional development needs of teachers.

The following research questions were addressed with the two schools involved in the study utilizing a literacy coach as a professional development model:

1. What is the work of a literacy coach?

2. What impact, if any, does the literacy coach as a professional development model have on the instructional strategies utilized by a classroom teacher?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between the teacher and literacy coach and classroom practices?

Design of the Study

Qualitative research was done to investigate the topic of literacy coaching. The theoretical framework that guided the research is ethnographic research with phenomenological emphasis. This approach is the "attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in a particular situation" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 23).   Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and the ways people understand these experiences to develop world view. It rests on an assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).   The phenomenon of professional development, specifically literacy coaching as the model of professional development and its impact on classroom instruction was the focus of my study.   An ethnographic research project involves a study of a phenomena as seen though the eyes of those experiencing them, rather than through the eyes of an outside observer (Tuckman, 1999, p. 397). My use of ethnography is to give voice to those working as literacy coaches or with literacy coaches and an attempt to understand what they experience in their daily work together. Tuckman (1999) states that "to accomplish these goals, the researcher must determine the effects of the setting, the participants, and the observed phenomena on each other" (p. 395).   My data was collected through the use of interviews, where as the researcher, I

attempted to keep an open mind during my observations and interviews so as not to have any preconceived notions that I may have had influence the participants.

The three-year study "Does Professional Development Change Teaching Practice?" completed for the U.S. Department of Education found that change in teaching would occur if teachers experienced consistent, high-quality professional development (p. 60). The study indicates that there are six key features of professional development that improve teaching practice (three structural features and three core features). The three structural features (i.e., the structure of the activity) are: 1) reform-type; 2) duration; and 3) collective participation. The three core features (i.e., characteristics of the substance of the activity) are: 1) active learning; 2) coherence; and 3) content focus (October, 2000). This study completed by the U.S. Department of Education includes longitudinal data and provides useful information that I felt could be expounded upon in my research through the use of interviews and conversations with the literacy coaches where they were provided the opportunity to narrate the experiences they have in providing professional development. Interviews and conversations gave the coaches the opportunity to reflect on the impact they have had on the learning environment and the teachers they work with. The conversations with the literacy coaches and classroom teachers also provided rich detail in what is needed to support professional development. Interviews of the classroom teachers provided each the opportunity to explain what impact she feels the literacy coaching has had in the classroom as well as on the student's growth in the area of comprehension. A total of twelve students selected by the classroom teachers were also interviewed. The interviews with students focused on the

students' perceptions of themselves as readers and their views of reading. I also was able to speak with one of the principals of the school's participating in this study.

Research Methodology

Data was gathered through qualitative means by use of interviews of the literacy coaches, classroom teachers, a principal, and students along with observations of curriculum and lesson planning sessions. The in-depth phenomenological based interviewing as described by Irving Seidman (2006) was used to structure my interviews with the two literacy coaches and three classroom teachers. Using this model, I interviewed the five adult participants individually on three separate occasions. Each interview had a specific focus. The first interview had each participant share about herself in light of the topic; the second interview focused on the participant's present lived experiences in the topic of study; and, the third interview had each participant reflect on the meaning of her experience (p. 17). The interviews were audio taped during the interview session and then transcribed for review and analysis after the interview took place. Participants were informed that they might be contacted after the interview to clarify statements or ideas they shared during the interview. They were also informed in the letter of consent to participate that the information gathered in each of the interviews would be used only for the purpose of research study (APPENDIX A). The implementation of Seidman's (2006) three-interview process made it possible for me to look for trends within each of the participant's responses from one interview to the next. Also, since I was interviewing several people, I was able to check the comments of one participant against those of others. By doing this, I found the participants shared some of the same experiences, successes and struggles in working as or with a literacy coach.

In addition to interviewing the literacy coaches and classroom teachers, I was able to interview the principal from one of the schools participating in the study as well as twelve students from the various classrooms of teachers participating in this study. The principal giving consent to participate in the study was asked to share her perception of the literacy coach's work as well as her expectations of teachers in working with the literacy coach. The students who had parental consent to participate in the study were interviewed one time. The focus of the student interview was to discuss the perception of each child's view of him/herself as a reader. In my analysis of the student interview transcripts, students appeared to recognize that the classroom teacher and coach were working together to teach reading. Some suggested they saw changes in how their reading time was organized because of their work together.

My focus during this study was on the experiences of the classroom teachers and literacy coaches working together. Triangulation provided me the opportunity to compare and correlate the data collected. Using the three interview process as described by Seidman (2006), I was able to review the interview data checking for consistency about their own thoughts about literacy coaching and its influence on their professional growth. Also, I was able to correlate the data of all the transcribed interviews of each the participants. The data that was correlated includes the transcribed interviews, the field notes taken during my observations of planning sessions between the coaches and teachers, and student work samples and assessment data. The ideas and views that were shared by the people being interviewed were compared and contrasted with one another.

In addition to interviewing, I observed two planning sessions that occurred between the coaches and teachers. The observation of these planning sessions gave me

insight into the various types of reading strategies being discussed for implementation in the classroom as well as additional information about the students' learning needs. The literacy coaches discussed informal and formal assessments of students during these planning sessions and used the information to guide their instructional planning. It was beneficial for me to see how the literacy coach and classroom teachers collaborated with one another and negotiated through their belief systems as part of the planning process. Also, the field notes taken during the observation of planning sessions between the literacy coach and teacher were compared to the information gathered in the interviews. An analysis of student work samples and reading assessments provided additional information about the experience of the coach and classroom teacher working together. The student work samples were used as part of the planning sessions to help guide the thinking and planning that occurred.

In addition to the interviews and observations of planning sessions, I met an additional time with the teachers and literacy coaches to look at student assessment data collected as part of the schools' curriculum and assessment requirements, as well as student work samples that were collected by the teachers to show their progress in reading comprehension. A review of assessment data and student work of the twelve students was originally done to determine if there was an impact of teacher and coach interactions on students' progress in reading. As part of the district's expectations of measuring student growth, reading assessment data and student work samples were collected by the teachers to determine growth made in the area of comprehension. The teachers and coaches shared the various work samples with me and discussed the progress students were making toward deeper comprehension. However, after reviewing

my field notes from this meeting and doing further analysis of my data, it became apparent that through my research, I could not determine that students' progress toward comprehension was directly related to the work between the literacy coach and teacher. However, the field notes and data collected during this additional meeting, did shed light on my understanding of the work between the literacy coach and teacher, therefore I included this meeting as part of my methodology.

The intentional design to interview a small sample for this study allowed me to focus on the individuals through face-to-face interviews and establish a strong rapport with the respondents. Through this rapport, I was able to interact with the respondents and develop more complex questions throughout the discussion. The interviews used to gather my data allowed the participants' perspective on the phenomenon of interest to unfold (Marshall & Rossman, p. 109).   I was able to probe and ask additional questions to further explore the respondent's responses during the interviews.   In addition, the use of interviews provided me with more in-depth information compared to what could have been gathered through other means of data collection (i.e. surveys or questionnaires). The work of Guba and Lincoln (1981) also supports my decision to use interviewing as a main component of my data collection. The interviews provide a picture of the "thing in question," in the case of this research, literacy coaching, in the respondent's own words and terms (p. 187). The intent of the interviewing done with the literacy coaches and teachers was to describe the impact of a coach's work in the area of reading instruction. The use of interviews allowed the participants to share what they were experiencing in their daily work and discuss what the work between the literacy coach and classroom teacher entailed for them.   I was able to listen to the participants as they shared their

thoughts, ideas, and experiences about the work they did through literacy coaching. Using their words, I tried to understand literacy coaching and share what was learned by connecting the participants' ideas to themes that emerged in my review and analysis of the interview transcripts.

The literacy coaches were given the opportunity, through the various interviews, to reflect on their own role in impacting the learning environment through their professional conversations, planning sessions and collaboration they had with the classroom teachers.   Through the interviews held not only with the literacy coaches, but with the classroom teachers working with the literacy coaches, ideas emerged as to what the work of literacy coaching is. The study informs the need to have on-going professional conversations to support sustained development and growth of instructional practice as well as what that model of professional development could look like.

I was able to document the interactions that occur between the classroom teacher and literacy coach through observations of their lesson and curriculum planning. These observations of their collaboration and planning sessions allowed me to discover recurring patterns in the data I collected, as well as "live the experience" that the teachers and literacy coaches have in their work together. Summarized by Guba & Lincoln (1981), the observations allowed me to live in their experience and grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment (p. 193).

Student assessment data and work samples were originally gathered to explore what impact the work between the literacy coaches and classroom teachers may have had in strengthening students' use of strategies to support their reading comprehension. However, as the study progressed and interview transcripts and student work samples

were analyzed, there was not enough evidence in the data to determine what, if any impact, the teachers and literacy coaches had on student comprehension. The student assessment data and work samples collected did not clearly indicate what impact the work between the teacher and literacy coach had on the students' development of comprehension. The fluency assessments and Developmental Reading Assessments along with the student work samples have the possibility of being interpreted differently by two different educators. Because of this, I determined it was not in the interest of this research to focus on the cognitive growth of students, but rather, focus on the professional growth of the teachers working with the literacy coaches. The information gleaned from the student work samples and assessments, however, did play a role in curriculum planning. Therefore, the data is included as part of the data collected and analyzed for this research. Because the literacy coaches used the information gathered on students to assist in the collaboration between them and the teachers, I will describe two of the assessment tools used in their planning.

Fluency data was used as one measure of student growth in the district in which this research was conducted as they view it as an indicator of reading comprehension. Fluency is a reader's ability to accurately and effortlessly decode the written words and then give meaning to those words through appropriate phrasing and oral expression (Rasinski, 2006). Rasinski further describes a fluent reader as able to "direct their interpretive skills to comprehending what they are reading" (p. 61). Fluency means making readers' decoding skills so automatic that they can focus on the meaning of the text (p. 62). The Developmental Reading Assessment ("DRA") published by Pearson Learning Group which is research based, with demonstrated reliability and validity, is

also used by the teachers in the school district where I gathered my data. The DRA assesses accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Williams, 1999). This assessment was used as a measure of students' understanding (comprehension) based on their retellings of the assessed text using the descriptors on the DRA Comprehension Rubric.

Student work samples that required students to demonstrate their understanding of text were also analyzed during planning sessions between the literacy coach and teacher. Work samples included written entries by the students into their "reading response logs" (blank notebooks provided by the teachers) that often included thoughts, questions or ideas about the text students had read, oral responses to interview questions (recorded on paper by the teacher) that occurred between the classroom teacher and students after independent reading time, as well as work completed related to a reading strategy the teacher was focusing on during instruction. Due to a belief that comprehension is developed through reflective opportunities such as writing in literature response logs, teachers must observe and interact with students to understand their thinking about text (Dorn & Soffos, 2005). Teachers in this study used daily interactions with students, such as interviews about text as well as discussions during shared reading, to develop a better understanding of their students' comprehension abilities. Talking with the classroom teachers and literacy coaches in this study about their students' work provided additional information about the collaboration and planning that took place between the literacy coach and teacher.

Timeline of Data Collection

Table 1

Research Timeline	
January & February	District's Research Department read and approved research proposal
March	Received consent from participants.
April & May	Conducted interviews and observed planning sessions.

Once the research department of the school district approved my proposal for

conducting research within the district, school principals were contacted by the district's

Research Director to determine if they would be willing to allow research to be

conducted within their schools. Two of the district's school principals agreed to allow

the research to take place in their schools. Within a month after having the district's

approval, I asked the literacy coaches and classroom teachers working with these coaches

to participate in the study (see APPENDIX A). I explained the research methodology to

the participants and received consent from the adults. The classroom teachers assisted in

the selection of students that would be asked to participate in the study. I asked the

teachers to select students that would represent the student population of their schools as

well as varying reading abilities. Parents were then asked for consent for their child to

participate in the study (APPENDIX B). The school district also required that each

student give consent to participate in the study. Once parental permission was given,

those students were asked for consent (APPENDIX C). Consent of all participants was

received within a three-week timeframe and I was able to begin scheduling interviews

with the adult participants. The three interviews of each adult participant took place over

the course of two months. During this two-month period I was also involved in

observing planning sessions between the teachers and literacy coaches as well as interviewing students.

<div align="center">Description of the Sample</div>

All of the participants in this study and the schools in which the participants work are referred to by the use of pseudonyms in this study to protect their identity.   The information used to describe the schools participating in this study was obtained from the state's school report card.   The information used to describe the teachers and literacy coaches was obtained during my first interview with the participants when asked to discuss their experience in education.

<u>Lakeview Elementary School</u>

Lakeview Elementary School (pseudonym), a K-5 elementary school, is located in a suburb just north of a large Midwestern city. The current principal was hired in 2002 and the staff consists of fifteen classroom teachers, and specialists in the area of reading, speech and language, social work, psychology, music, physical education, art, and technology. The classrooms of kindergarten through fifth grade have class sizes ranging from 15 to 22 students. The total enrollment for this school year is 296 students.

The student population at Lakeview Elementary is economically and racially diverse. The following data is based on the 2006 School Report Card.   Specifically, the data indicates that 45.3% of Lakeview students were White, 44.3% Black, 6.8 % Hispanic, 3.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.3 % Native American. Additionally, 40.2 % are identified as low income based on qualifications for free or reduced lunch.   The school's mobility rate was 13.4 % with the attendance rate at 95.6%.   The 2006 report card indicates that 84.8% of the students in third grade meet or exceed the standards

assessed in reading on the State Assessment Test (SAT). This is above the district

average of third grade students.   64.7% of fifth grade students meet or exceed the

standards assessed in reading on the SAT, which is below the district average, where

76.0% of fifth grade students meet or exceed standards.   In addition to this information

as noted on the school's state report card, teachers spend approximately 170 minutes per

day teaching English/Language Arts.

The school has met the expected annual yearly progress in reading as set forth in

the No Child Left Behind law. Lakeview School's goals for school improvement have

teachers focusing on using data more effectively to plan for instruction and differentiating

instruction to meet the academic needs of all students.

The literacy coach who participated in the study at this school site is a first year

literacy coach in the district. She has however, several years of experience in education.

She has taught both pre-school, second and third grade for a total of 10 years at two

other elementary schools within this district. She is currently working toward completion

of her Master's Degree and participated in professional development this school year

related to literacy coaching. As a classroom teacher, she worked with a literacy coach

during the previous school year to strengthen her language arts instruction.

The classroom teacher who participated in this study at Lakeview School has

several years of varied experience in education. She has taught at the primary level

throughout her career in this district and has also worked at different schools within the

district. She volunteered to work with the literacy coach this school year and began

planning with her in the summer of 2006 to prepare for the school year. She has a strong

background in the area of math and was interested in strengthening her language arts

instruction with the support of the literacy coach. She has eighteen students in her classroom who represent the diversity of the school. Several of the students are reading at or above grade level based on district level assessments and several of her students are reading below grade level based on these same assessments.

<u>Clinton Elementary School</u>

Clinton Elementary School (pseudonym), a K-5 elementary school, is located in the same district as Lakeview Elementary School. The current principal was hired in 2002 and the staff consists of nineteen classroom teachers, and specialists in the area of reading, speech and language, social work, psychology, music, physical education, art, and technology. The classrooms of kindergarten through fifth grade have class sizes ranging from 17 to 23 students. The total enrollment for this school year is 367 students.

The student population at Clinton Elementary is economically and racially diverse. The following data is based on the 2006 School Report Card.   Specifically, the data indicates that 54.2% of Clinton students were White, 35.1% Black, 5.4 % Hispanic, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.5% Multi-racial/Ethnic. Additionally, 23.2 % are identified as low income based on qualifications for free or reduced lunch.   The school's mobility rate was 10.2 % with the attendance rate at 95.2%.   The 2006 School Report Card indicates that 79.1% of the students in third grade meet or exceed the standards assessed in reading on the State Assessment Test (SAT). This is slightly below the district average of third grade students where 81.8% meet or exceed standards in the area of reading.   85.7% of fifth grade students meet or exceed the standards assessed in reading on the SAT. This is above the district average where 76.0% of the district's fifth grade students meet or exceed standards.   In addition to this information, teachers spend

approximately 150 minutes per day teaching English/Language Arts. The school has met the expected annual yearly progress in reading as set forth in the No Child Left Behind law. Clinton School's school improvement goals have teachers focusing on implementing a Language Arts block that consists of shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, teacher read-alouds and a writing workshop, as well as differentiating instruction in all academic areas to meet the needs of the students.

The literacy coach who participated in the study at this school site has worked in this position for the past three years. She has several years of experience in education prior to holding this position. She has taught in both urban and suburban middle school and elementary regular education and special education classrooms. She has an Elementary Education Degree, a Special Education Degree as well as a Master's Degree in Psychology. She was asked to consider the position of literacy coach by the district's Literacy Director based on her strong teaching skills, understanding of reading and her ability to easily develop rapport with peers. She does not currently hold a teaching certificate in the area of reading but has been involved in the extensive training offered by the school district that has focused on reading as well as participated in classes and workshops offered outside the district related to coaching and reading.

Two classroom teachers participated in the study from this school site. One of teachers was in her first year of teaching. Ms. Block (pseudonym) graduated from a large university in the Spring of 2006 with a degree in Special Education. The classroom in which she taught this year consisted of four special education, primary aged students in grades two and three. The principal of the school asked the literacy coach to be involved in her classroom from the start of the school year to support her with the district's new

reading program as well as supporting her in the area of special education. The teacher in this classroom had little experience in teaching reading or writing prior to this school year. Her educational experiences prior to this first certified teaching position were in a school district located within a large university town in the Midwest. She had four different practicum, pre-teaching experiences, each focusing on different age levels of students with varying needs. The students' needs included learning daily life skills, how to cope with emotional needs, and specific learning needs.   She welcomed the support of the literacy coach in her classroom as well as the support of her principal.

The second teacher participating in this study has eighteen years of teaching experience. Ms. Smith (pseudonym) has taught in both parochial and public schools both in urban and suburban settings. She has worked as a special education teacher both at the resource level where students in the regular education classrooms were supported by her teaching as well as in self-contained special education classrooms. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership. She has taught at two of the schools in this school district during her tenure. She volunteered to work with the literacy coach assigned to the building this school year and focused on both reading and writing instruction with the coach. Her classroom is comprised of only eight students with needs in the area of special education. All but one of the students stay with her for instruction in the area of reading. One of the fifth grade students is mainstreamed into a regular education class for a majority of the reading block which is 90 minutes per day. This student, however, participates in independent reading time and writing in Ms. Smith's classroom.

The participant pool for this study is a good representation of the staff and student population of the school district represented in this study. The district began the use of literacy coaches three years prior to my data collection, so capturing the thoughts and ideas of the coach of Clinton School gives the reader of this research information on how the role has developed over the three-year period. The perspectives of the first year literacy coach working at Lakeview School allowed me to compare and contrast ideas about the role of literacy coach with that of the more experienced coach working at Clinton School. The classroom teachers also varied in the type of educational experiences they had as well as the number of years of experience they had. Their perspectives on the professional development offered by the literacy coach may have been impacted by their years in education as well as by the experiences they have had in this school district over their teaching careers.

In the original proposal for my research, I outlined a plan to explore the impact literacy coaching had on students' comprehension. The students that participated in the study ranged from second grade to fifth grade. Each who participated in the study had strengths and weaknesses in the area of language arts and were eager to share their experiences in reading. The students were also aware of the work their classroom teacher and literacy coach were involved in together to make learning experiences better for them. However, as my study progressed and I reviewed data, I was not able to actually determine what impact literacy coaches had on the students' comprehension. Along with my dissertation committee, I concluded that determining the impact of literacy coaching on student comprehension would best be explored in another research project.

It was very rewarding for me to get to know the participants through the in-depth interviews that occurred over the two-month period. As an elementary school principal I was often faced with the dilemma of how to meet the professional needs of school personnel due to factors such as financial and/or time constraints, diverse needs among staff, and interests among staff. It was refreshing to see that all of the adults who participated in this study were willing to give a tremendous amount of their time to address their professional needs and grow their instructional practice. It also became apparent that trust between the teachers and coaches was not characteristic of their professional relationships at the start of their time working together. It was something that had to be developed and how this occurred unfolded during the interviews as well as was observed in the planning sessions that occurred between the coaches and teachers. Through the conversations they had and the support that was provided by the coaches, teachers were willing to let go of perceptions and ideas about reading instruction they held close for years in order to better meet the needs of their students. The art of interview is a skill that takes years to perfect I am sure, but the insight provided in the time spent with these educators provided me with a great amount of data that could positively impact the way in which literacy coaches are utilized within a school or school district. The professional development they talked about with me is not something that can be offered in a one-day workshop or 'on the fly' when walking through the halls of a school. The thought, care, and concern that goes into building the relationship between a teacher and coach takes time to develop – time that schools and school personnel need to commit to if they are to improve. Understanding the classroom and the instructional needs of the classroom teacher is also necessary for a literacy coach to be effective and

this too takes time. As Michael Fullan (2001) has suggested in his research, the solution to improving schools is not simple, however the amount of knowledge we have needs to be used to guide our improvement efforts. The thoughtful planning and collaboration that took place between the educators involved in this study represents the willingness of educators to address the needs of our schools and make improvements in instructional practice.

<div align="center">Rationale for Study</div>

This study was designed to examine the relationship between the professional development provided by a literacy coach and the classroom teacher. But why study this phenomenon? Educators today are asked to help their students accomplish a lot during the school year. Most often the responsibilities are left to one teacher making the responsibilities seem like an unreachable goal. The No Child Left Behind law has a goal to improve teacher quality and has made states "accountable for ensuring that all children are taught by effective teachers and for developing a plan to ensure this goal will be met" (p. 13). As schools continue to work toward meeting this goal, this study may provide ideas on what a literacy coach can do to support the development of collaborative working relationships with teachers to support their professional growth. Schools may make greater effort to provide this resource to support teacher learning.

At each of the schools where two literacy coaches were studied, I utilized a qualitative approach to tell the stories of the literacy coaches, teachers and students participating in this study. I chose this methodology because as an educator, I know that time needed for the conversations that allow teachers to tell the story of what is taking place in their classrooms is often not provided. Time given to reflect on the teaching

practices occurring within schools is often allocated for other things that may or may not

be conducive to supporting the growth of teachers.

Chapter IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analysis of Data

All interviews took place in the school of each participant. The interviews were
completed before and after school or during the lunch and recess period. As each
interview was being conducted, I audio taped the questions and responses as well as took
notes on what the respondents discussed. The notes taken during the interviews were
used to highlight key points or ideas that stood out to me as possible emerging patterns.
As suggested by Sharan Merriam (1998), the right way to analyze data in a qualitative
study is to do it simultaneously with data collection (p. 162). Taking this idea, after each
interview was completed, I transcribed the audiotape for analysis. In addition to my
reading of the transcript, I shared each participant's interview transcript with her and
asked her to review it for accuracy. If the respondent wanted to clarify something, they
could either email me additional thoughts in relation to their original statements during
the interview, or if time permitted, they could call me to discuss the topic further or use
time at the following interview to discuss a previous question. Email notes as well as
notes taken during phone calls used for clarification of the interview transcripts were
analyzed along with the interview data. The intent of the participants' review of the
interview data is to strengthen the credibility of the study's findings. This initial analysis
of the interview transcripts was the beginning of looking for themes and ideas that could
be pursued in later interviews.

In addition to the interview transcripts, I had field notes from my observations of
lesson and curriculum planning sessions to add to the analysis. As suggested by Seidman

(2006), I began reducing the text by marking the transcripts "using brackets to mark passages that were interesting" (p. 117). Seidman states that there is no model matrix of interesting categories that one can impose on all texts so interviewers/researchers must "affirm their own ability to recognize it [interesting text]" (p. 118). Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the criteria to use when selecting units of data from the larger text. First it should be heuristic, it should aid in learning. Second, it should be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself – it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out (p. 345). As suggested by Seidman, my initial markings on the full transcript of each interview were brackets around material I found interesting. After this initial analysis of my data, I reread the passages I marked due to my interest in the text and began thinking of how these passages would aide not only in my learning, but the learning of the readers of this paper. I began the process of coding, labeling the data for further analysis. I did this by hand and came up with numerous codes as I read through all of the interview transcripts. I coded pieces of the data to indicate how the participants described the work they were doing and what was important to them. Codes were developed to indicate what they did in their work either as a teacher or literacy coach. Codes were also used to indicate aspects of the relationship between the literacy coach and classroom teacher. Examples of codes I used in my analysis of interview data include, trust, teacher needs, relationship issues, collaboration, administrative concerns, work initiated by teacher, and work initiated by coach. The codes I developed were related to the review of literature I did prior to beginning any of the interviews. I recognized several of the ideas and thoughts shared by the teachers and coaches to be

related to what I read in the literature about professional development of teachers, the

teaching of reading, and literacy coaching.   My review of literature is what influenced

the development of my codes. Below is a table outlining some of the codes I used in my

analysis of interview data.

Table 2

Examples of Codes used in Data Analysis			
Initial Marking of "Interesting Text" - Highlighted text in each interview that seemed relevant to the literature I had read related to literacy coaching, reading instruction and professional development.			
Codes Used to Identify Interviewee and Interview Session		**Codes Used to Mark Interview Data**	**Themes**
T – B1 T – B2 T – B3	Teacher, Ms. Block/1st Interview Teacher, Ms. Block/2nd Interview Teacher, Ms. Block/3rd Interview	S- support	Collaborative Relationships
T – P1 T – P2 T – P3	Teacher, Ms. Peg/1st Interview Teacher, Ms. Peg/2nd Interview Teacher, Ms. Peg/3rd Interview	LC – lack of support	
		L – leadership	
T – R1 T – R2 T – R3	Teacher, Ms. Robinson/1st Interview Teacher, Ms. Robinson/2nd Interview Teacher, Ms. Robinson/3rd Interview	TI – trust issue	
		D – dialogue	
LC – S1 LC – S2 LC – S3	Literacy Coach, Ms. Smith/1st Interview Literacy Coach, Ms. Smith/2nd Interview Literacy Coach, Ms. Smith/3rd Interview	CA – concern with administration	
LC – C1 LC – C2 LC – C3	Literacy Coach, Ms. Cook/1st Interview Literacy Coach, Ms. Cook/2nd Interview Literacy Coach, Ms. Cook/3rd Interview	WI/LC – work initiated by literacy coach	
		WI/T – work initiated by teacher	
		CR – concerns about relationship	
		BRI– beliefs about reading instruction	Changes in Instructional Practices
		DRI – description of reading instruction	
		OC – organization of classroom	
		IC – instructional materials	
		A - Assessment	

After coding on paper, I then used the cut and paste function on the computer to place all of the passages with commonalities together hoping this would help common ideas become clear to me. I then reread the interview passages I cut and pasted together according to the codes and recognized that some of the "categories that seemed separate and distinct … could fold into each other" (Seidman, 2006, p. 126). Searching for common threads and patterns within the original coding of data, I combined some of my codes. Categories or themes were developed based on the frequency of key ideas surfacing in the interview transcripts and observation field notes. This reduced some of the data that I kept for the paper as the process of combining some of the categories made some of the data seem less important and not helpful in my analysis. These ideas are presented in response to the following research questions:

1. What is the work of a literacy coach?

2. What impact, if any, does the literacy coach as a professional development model have on the instructional strategies utilized by a classroom teacher?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between the teacher and literacy coach and classroom practices?

Information About the School District

As stated in the Board Policy, a main goal of each school in the school district in which this research was conducted is a commitment to helping students realize their "academic potential by providing an educational program that will provide for the acquisition of knowledge" (District A Board Policy, 6:10, 2007). To help students realize their academic potential, the district employs teachers with strong teaching skills in various academic backgrounds. Oftentimes the teachers hired to work in this district

have experience that has been gained working in other school districts as well as having earned degrees beyond a bachelor's degree.

One area of curricular focus for the district is in the area of Reading/Language Arts. Emphasis is placed on this academic area through programs and supports that have been developed under the direction of the district's Literacy Director. Three years prior to this research, the district began to implement literacy coaching with the purpose of supporting teachers interested specifically in implementing a reading workshop. The teachers and literacy coaches used the book <u>Apprenticeship in Literacy: Transitions Across Reading and Writing</u> (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998) as a starting point in their development of a reading workshop. The reading workshop components that were the focus of this book, as well as in the training teachers took part in, included being read to, rereading of familiar books, shared reading, and guided reading. Interested literacy coaches and several primary grade classroom teachers throughout the district received training from Linda Dorn, one of the co-authors of this book. The district's Literacy Director paired up classroom teachers and literacy coaches to work together for eight-weeks to co-teach and establish a strong reading workshop based on the training provided by author Linda Dorn. These classrooms were referred to as "lab classes" by the district level administrator since they were trying a new approach by utilizing co-teaching during the literacy block. The literacy coach and classroom teacher co-taught during the literacy block to implement the components of a balanced reading program, which was to include shared reading, guided reading, read-aloud, and familiar reading. It should be noted that the district did not require teachers to work with the literacy coach - teachers volunteered to work with the literacy coaches.

At the time literacy coaching was introduced, I worked in the district and saw first hand the amount of time and energy that went into the planning and collaboration between the teacher and literacy coach to establish a reading workshop. The work between these educators piqued my interest in learning more about literacy coaching and how it impacted both teachers and students. The stories of some of the educators involved in working with a literacy coach or working as a literacy coach in this district are shared in this research. The educators' stories highlight benefits of coaching, ideas they have to improve coaching, and the impact they feel it has had on them as educators.

In the first of the three interviews, each educator that participated in this study was asked to describe her experience as an educator. This was an opportunity for the participant to talk about her schooling, memorable experiences she has had as an educator, various teaching opportunities she may have had or characteristics of her teaching style. The following section serves as an introduction to each adult participant in the study, two literacy coaches and three classroom teachers. One characteristic of all of the participants in this study is that they take their professional development into their own hands - they are motivated from within to improve their teaching practice and gain more knowledge about their craft. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) discuss learning and the importance of realizing that for children to become better learners, teachers must be continuous learners themselves – learning should be a professional obligation (p. 48). From the descriptions of their experiences as educators, I was able to pull evidence from the interviews transcripts of the research participants that indicate they value their own learning and recognize its importance in the process of educating students.

Introduction of the Participants

<u>Literacy Coaches</u>

       The first literacy coach, Ms. Cook (pseudonym), has worked as a coach since the onset of literacy coaching in the district. She has three years of experience in this position and is the coach at Clinton School. She describes herself as progressive, which she defines as a "teacher who is immersed in recent research about teaching, learning and literacy." She is involved in professional development offered through the school district, professional development opportunities outside the district and professional reading done on her own to support her understanding of literacy development in children. Ms. Cook discussed her growth: "My teaching continues to evolve as I engage in learning about best practices - I immerse myself in the latest research about best practice in teaching." Her attendance at the International Reading Association's annual convention as well as in-service offered through a local university have supported her professional growth this year. She feels her knowledge of teaching continues to grow due to her participation in professional development as well as through the dialogue she has with other educators regarding literacy. She sets high expectations for her students and holds herself to these same high expectations. She has taught both in urban and suburban school districts and has experience teaching in special education and general education classes at both the elementary and middle school levels. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and Elementary Education. She also has a Masters Degree in Educational Psychology. The school district selected her for the

position of literacy coach after teaching both regular education and special education classes for seven years in the district, despite the fact that she does not have a reading endorsement.

The second literacy coach involved in this study, Ms. Smith (pseudonym), is a first year literacy coach. She is the literacy coach at Lakeview School. She described her experience as an educator by first stating that becoming a literacy coach has contributed significantly to her growth as an educator. She reflected back on her first year of teaching stating that "everything seemed to flow in her classroom – it was easy teaching." But as she became more involved in professional development and gained more knowledge about teaching and student learning, it became more difficult to incorporate the new ideas into the classroom because she began to question her initial beliefs about what was important to teach and how to teach it. Her experiences have led her to describe teaching as one of the "most difficult professions." She has experience teaching pre-school, and primary grades in this school district and commented that in these experiences she developed very strong professional and personal relationships with the other teachers on her grade level teams. These relationships developed over time through collaboration and dialogue about teaching.

Ms. Smith can also be described as a self-motivated learner when looking at the examples of her own professional development. She has spent significant time involved in book study groups over her teaching career. Ms. Smith commented on one of the more meaningful professional development opportunities she took part in as a classroom teacher:

> The reading specialist at the school in which I taught second grade initiated a book club. I joined along with only five other teachers – it was a small group but

it was nice. It really helped me to start thinking about my own self as a reader and the kind of strategies I do or don't employ – I started thinking about literacy in a new way. I would just read and not necessarily think metacognitively about my thinking.   That then got me to thinking about what I was or wasn't asking the kids to do when they were reading.

When she was asked to be a literacy coach in the district, Ms. Smith asked the district's Literacy Director to send her to a coaching class that was being offered at a local university. "I asked for this class because I didn't feel I had all the skills to be a successful coach… it has been fabulous to be in a class with a bunch of other coaches who are in the same position that I am in and hear their stories and realize new or old in this position – you are still going to have similar challenges." She shared that these learning experiences have shaped her beliefs about reading instruction and the need for collaboration among adults in order for learning to occur. She has a bachelor's degree in Education and is working towards completion of her Masters Degree studying Educational Administration. After teaching ten years in regular education in the district, she was also appointed to the position of literacy coach without holding an endorsement in reading.

Classroom Teachers

Of the three teachers involved in the study, Miss Block (pseudonym), is a first year teacher of special education at Clinton School. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and discussed her student teaching experiences when asked to describe her experience as an educator. Her practicum experiences included working with elementary age and middle school age students both at a resource level, where she provided academic support to students, in addition to the teaching they received in the classroom and in self-contained special education classes. She found her cooperating

teachers to be very supportive of her during her student teaching experiences and felt she

learned a lot about behavior management from one of the teachers she worked with

during this time. She finds reading to be her favorite subject to teach, which she

attributes to her own enjoyment of reading. She feels as a first year teacher she is

prepared to teach all academic areas and feels she has a good handle on the district's

curriculum due to the early in-service the district's literacy and math directors provided

along with the early support of the literacy coach on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Robinson (pseudonym) also teaches special education at Clinton School. She

has eighteen years of teaching experience both in parochial and public school settings of

urban and suburban school districts. She has worked as a resource level teacher of

special education and as a teacher in self-contained special education classrooms. She

volunteered to work with the literacy coach and invited her into the classroom at the

beginning of the school year to begin coaching. Ms. Robinson holds a Masters Degree

in Educational Administration but shared at this point she isn't interested in pursuing an

administrative position as she really enjoys teaching and working with kids in the

classroom. She shared she still feels she has a lot to learn about teaching because there

are "new things learned about instruction and student learning all the time."

Ms. Kidd (pseudonym) teaches first grade at Lakeview School. She taught pre-

school for eight years prior to getting hired to teach second grade in the school district.

She had taught both second and first grade for several years at the time of this research.

She has an extensive background in the area of math and left the classroom for one year

to work for a university to write curriculum for a well known math program. She spoke

passionately about her teaching career and shared her concerns about inequalities she sees

in education. She felt that sometimes there are not enough supports to provide children who are not learning as expected or meeting the standards set for the grade level for which they are in. She shared that she is considering going back to school – possibly studying special education because she really wants to be able to understand how she can better support 'at-risk' kids in their learning.

Presentation of Data

Research Question 1 - What is the Work of a Literacy Coach?

The classroom teachers and literacy coaches were asked to describe the work of a literacy coach. In speaking to each of the classroom teachers involved in the study, it was evident that they all felt the job of the coach was to support the growth of the teacher in the area of reading and writing; however, the expectation that the coach would also have *direct* impact on the academic growth of the students was not a belief held by the teachers interviewed for this study. Ms. Robinson, teacher at Clinton School, commented that the literacy coach "should have a positive impact on how I teach reading and writing, but that it is up to me to use what I have learned from the coach to improve the achievement of my students." Teachers felt that they were responsible for the students' academic growth, but because the literacy coaches came into the classrooms to observe, teach and assess students, they recognized the coaches' work as possibly having an indirect impact on students. It was apparent through the interviewing process that each teacher felt they had several strengths as a reading teacher, but also felt that working with the literacy coach would improve those strengths as well as some of their self-identified weaknesses.

The following section describes the work of the literacy coaches as viewed by the classroom teachers participating in this study. Common ideas that emerged in the analysis of data in relation to the research question, indicate that taking into consideration the teachers' goals, advocating for the teacher, and providing advice and feedback about their classrooms and teaching were central to the work of the literacy coaches with the teachers in this study.

Work of Literacy Coaches Described By Classroom Teachers

Consider Teacher's Goals

Based on what the classroom teachers shared in their interviews, the responsibilities that make up the role of the literacy coach depend on what classroom teachers want assistance with in the area of reading and/or writing, as well as what personal knowledge and beliefs about reading and writing are important to the teachers.

Ms. Robinson specifically defined the coach's role as one where "the coach goes to the teachers and asks teachers to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in teaching reading and writing. From that conversation, the coach makes a plan with the teacher – the goal for the literacy coach is really to help the teacher become a better teacher." Helping one become a better teacher is anything but simple when a teacher wants to truly explore and understand what instructional practices she is using, as is the case with Ms. Robinson. As a teacher with a great deal of experience, she was very thoughtful about what she was doing, asked questions about new strategies introduced and wanted to know the "why" behind suggested instructional strategies or organizational changes suggested by the literacy coach.

Ms. Robinson talked about guided reading, an area of the balanced literacy block that she felt was a weakness of hers but at the same time a very important component of the reading block. She describes her conversation with the literacy coach about guided reading:

> I shared with her [literacy coach, Ms. Cook] that guided reading is probably one of the most … *is* the most difficult part of the reading block for me. I felt very apprehensive about sharing this with her because it is a big weakness of mine and it's a very important piece of reading – I should know what to do. We had a lengthy discussion about how I feel uncomfortable about my teaching at this time and I wasn't sure I felt comfortable trusting her to support me without letting [others know of my weakness].

Ms. Robinson spoke very highly of Ms. Cook's teaching abilities and her ability to take what she knows about the students' reading strengths and weaknesses and select appropriate text to develop reading strategies to support their comprehension. She explained in the interview that she knew she wasn't at the same place in her understanding and teaching of comprehension strategies as the literacy coach. She also shared how difficult it was to tell the coach she needed her to slow down, model more and really help her strengthen this part of the reading block. "I want her to plan with me because I'm not really sure how to go about picking out books for use during guided reading to teach strategies, continue questioning throughout the book and making it meaningful for the kids." This conversation suggests the importance of Wiggins and McTighe's (2006) principles about how learning works in a true learning organization. When instruction is personalized to match the interests of the learners along with time provided for the learners to refine and reexamine their thinking, the learners will attain a deeper understanding.

The guided reading component of Ms. Robinson's literacy block was an area that she had interest in improving and was addressed in the work between Ms. Robinson and the literacy coach, Ms. Cook.

Advocate for the Teacher

Ms. Robinson recognizes part of Ms. Cook's role as a literacy coach is to be an advocate for her:

> What I have been most impressed with . . . what's really been most useful for me that she has done this year, is being an advocate. For getting material and for getting me into workshops. She pushed so that I could get in to the district in-service and see Ralph Fletcher. She really fought really hard to get me reading materials. That part of her job has been difficult because she would tell me about what would seem like a simple thing - asking the curriculum department for required reading materials, but the politics in the District are a lot different and it's very difficult working in the Special Services Department but you also have to work with the Curriculum Department …

The literacy coach acknowledges that Ms. Robinson is open to learning and doing the best for her special education students and because of this she was an advocate for her. Reading resources and attendance at various reading in-service programs were not always offered to the teachers in this study. The literacy coach recognized the importance of Ms. Robinson having access to the information that would be presented at the district's in-services and workshops. She felt that the topics to be discussed during the in-service provided by the author of the writing book they were using would support the work between her and Ms. Robinson. She also knew that the reading materials were a must for teaching in regular education classes and that Ms. Robinson should have the same resources to help her students meet the standards of the reading curriculum whether it be access to curriculum materials or the opportunity to attend workshops offered by the district. And although the literature reviewed for this study suggests that one-day

workshop sessions offered by outside specialists don't often have the impact intended, in this case, it may have served to not only reinforce the work of the literacy coach, but also strengthen the relationship between the literacy coach and teachers because the coach convinced the district's Literacy Director to allow the teachers to attend. The literacy coach thought by attending this workshop together, it would be possible for the writer, consultant and presenter, Ralph Fletcher, to have an impact on the writing instruction she was working on with Ms. Robinson and Ms. Block. With the literacy coach's support, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Block had been using the writing resource, *Teaching the Qualities of Writing* developed by Ralph Fletch and JoAnn Portalupi (2007) as one tool to develop the writing of students. Both teachers talked about the work they had done in writing with the literacy coach over the course of the school year, and both were happy they were able to attend this one-day workshop to meet the person who developed the writing program they were using and gain additional insights about the writing program.

　　　　Analyze, Suggest and Advise

　　　　Ms. Kidd at Lakeview Elementary School feels that a literacy coach's role is to "analyze the structure of the reading program in a classroom and determine if certain components could be improved as well as determine what instructional strategies the teacher should be using to support student growth." She recognized that this could be tricky for a coach, knowing that it may be difficult to point out areas of weakness to a classroom teacher, as well as for a classroom teacher to hear about these weaknesses. Therefore, she also felt it necessary for the coach to be involved in ongoing conversations with the teacher so that the coach can get to the point of saying "hey, this part is really working, but maybe this part we can do a little differently to make it more effective."

When Ms. Kidd described her experience of working with Ms. Smith she highlighted how excited she was to be working with her again – Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith had previously taught second grade together in another school in the district and already had developed a strong professional relationship. They also have a strong friendship, which somewhat concerned Ms. Kidd because she was looking for feedback related to teaching:

> I was a little freaked out to be working with my friend. I was nervous…kind of apprehensive and a little intimidated because I really do see Ms. Smith as a model teacher and someone who is extremely capable of setting up an effective literacy block. I was also worried how honest she was going to be and whether she felt like she could be critical or was it just going to be fluff and say everything is great.

As the year progressed, Ms. Kidd found that the friendship she and Ms. Smith had as well as the professional relationship benefited their work together:

> She was able to really give me good, constructive feedback and then brainstorm. You know, I don't mind criticism at all as long as there is going to be some suggestion for change behind it. That is something that Ms. Smith has a really good knack for – her feedback never feels like criticism.

This discussion with Ms. Kidd indicates that she is looking for feedback from the literacy coach related to her teaching. She qualifies feedback as needing to be constructive with suggestions for improvement. The idea of literacy coaches providing feedback is not supported by the work of Toll (2006) however, as she feels it becomes too evaluative and may impact the work that can be accomplished between the coach and teacher. Although it may be evaluative, Ms. Kidd sees feedback as a way to support her growth as a teacher. (The statements made by Ms. Kidd above also provide some information related to the nature of the relationships between classroom teachers and literacy coaches. I will refer to this data again in relation to question three of this research.)

Miss Block felt that as a new teacher, the literacy coach "took the trial and error out of teaching for me." As a new teacher she felt that she was coming to this teaching position with a lot of ideas about teaching but found "[she] really needed help to focus on what was important to implement the district's curriculum." Miss Block recognized that the literacy coach's experience in teaching reading and writing supported the suggestions she gave the teacher regarding organizing the curriculum components in her classroom. After Miss Block attended the district level meetings about the new reading series at the beginning of the school year, she was happy to have the support of the literacy coach. She shared that the literacy coach, Ms. Cook, used assessment data collected previously on the students to begin the discussion of how to organize the reading block and use the new reading materials in her classroom to meet the learning needs of her students.   Ms. Block felt that the advice and suggestions from the literacy coach were to "influence my knowledge about teaching."

Ms. Block's comments about the work of literacy coaches contrasts with the writing of Barkley and Bianco (2005).   Shared earlier in this research, they see coaching as a relationship, not about giving advice, providing constructive criticism, making judgments or providing an opinion. While coaching should be seen as a relationship that impacts the work done between a classroom teacher and literacy coach, advice given by the literacy coach could be one characteristic of the relationship that links the teacher and literacy coach together. In my observations of the work between the literacy coaches and classroom teachers, the relationships seemed to develop due to the advice and suggestions that were given by the literacy coaches. Without the advice of Ms. Cook, Ms. Block may not have come to understand how she could organize the reading

curriculum and utilize it in her classroom. In my observations of Ms. Block and Ms. Cook working together, I don't think their relationship would have developed into the partnership it has without the advice as well as background knowledge of the students given by Ms. Cook. Ms. Block was a new teacher with good ideas about teaching and classroom management that she learned in college and in working with supervising teachers during her student teaching experiences. Her knowledge of reading and writing instruction, however, was an area that she recognized as needing to strengthen in part due to her minimal experience as a classroom teacher. She said, "I never really had a curriculum to teach from… I really just had to scrape things together… but it has been nice to work with Ms. Cook and learn to teach writing with the reading – tying it all together has been really good for the kids."

Although Ms. Robinson, teacher of 18 years, talked about needing and wanting to be observed by the coach during guided reading, she also expressed her apprehension:

> I have to know how to teach during guided reading and Ms. Cook is an excellent teacher. I'm probably not going to have her as a resource every year, so I've got to get over my feelings and just do it – let her observe me and give me feedback….It was hard for me to have the conversation of trust with her, but if I didn't have it, I won't get what I need to get out of the experience.

This teacher discussed the importance of feedback from the coach and recognized that the only way that it would be meaningful was to have the literacy coach observe her. Although Ms. Robinson was nervous about being observed by someone she described as "an excellent teacher," she felt observation was an important piece to support her growth as a teacher. It was very powerful during the interview process to hear Ms. Robinson discuss her teaching ability and share her perceived weakness of implementing guided reading. She is a teacher with 18 years of experience who is regarded by her principal

and peers to have excellent teaching skills. However, the process of reflection that has

occurred between her and Ms. Cook has contributed to her looking deeper into her

teaching. She wanted to learn more from a peer she described as "excellent" and was

willing to take a risk by opening up to her and sharing her weaknesses.

Work of Literacy Coaches Described by Literacy Coaches

In response to the research question, *what is the work of literacy coach?* the

literacy coaches talked about responsibilities they fulfilled in their positions. Both Ms.

Smith and Ms. Cook spelled out specific tasks that made up their days which include:

helping teachers understand assessment tools and how to use the information gathered

from the assessments to inform instruction; holding book study groups with the teachers

to foster a community of learning; helping put people at ease when new programs are to

be implemented; planning curriculum and developing lessons with the teachers to be

taught in the classroom both in the area of reading and writing; modeling lessons in the

classroom; co-teaching lessons with the classroom teachers to support the development of

new instructional strategies introduced to the teacher; assisting the teachers make sense of

the new reading series purchased by the district to be used in the classroom; working as

an advocate to get the teachers invited to district level professional development; and

finding needed curriculum materials for the teachers to use in their classroom.

Their beliefs about relationship building and collaboration as well as teaching

reading were ideas that unfolded in the interviews as we talked about the work they did

with each of the teachers. During the interviews, the literacy coaches elaborated on what

made the above tasks possible. Ideas related to the work of a literacy coach include:

support of adult learners; conversations, collaboration, and dialogue grounded in

assessment data to support growth; and building relationships. These ideas will be

elaborated upon by using data from the interviews. The following section describes the

work of the literacy coaches as viewed by the literacy coaches participating in this study.

Support of Adult Learners

Ms. Smith defined her work as literacy coach in relation to her answer to the

following question I asked during our first interview, "*what do successful teachers of*

reading do?" Ms. Smith responded by stating:

> I think that they set-up a classroom that invites and encourages the love of
> reading. They provide lots of opportunities for students to independently read,
> partner read, independently write, partner dialogue, group dialogue. They use
> assessments to help them hone in on what areas of reading their students are
> struggling with and where they can best support them. … I think they have to
> invite students to be a part of the learning at all phases and levels. They have to
> be flexible and know when it is time to move on or when re-teaching needs to
> occur. … they have to be well read themselves and be open to opportunities for
> professional growth. …willing to work with specialists in the building to help
> strengthen and grow their programs. They need to be good collaborators with
> everybody – I guess that would not just be a successful teacher of reading but all
> teachers. I think teachers – all teachers, need to be good at reflecting – reflect on
> their teaching and actions taken within the classroom.

She used her idea of what successful teachers of reading do to define her work as literacy

coach:

> I think my role is to support teachers in getting there ["there" refers to what Ms.
> Smith described above as the work of successful teachers of reading]. There are
> so many components of literacy to look at, but taking one idea at a time with
> teachers, depending on where they are, and helping them fine tune that in their
> classrooms – that is what I see my role as.

The above response indicates Ms. Smith understands the zone of proximal development

and connects it to adult learning. Vygotsky's (1978) perspective is that learning does not

occur at the actual level of development, it occurs at the zone of proximal development,

"the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by the individual

problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86). Ms. Smith views support as the component of her position that will help teachers create a learning environment that reflects her understanding of what a successful teacher of reading does.

Through the interview process, Ms. Cook reflected on her thoughts about how children learn and began relating that to how adults learn. She recognized that just as teachers need to differentiate instruction for their students, she needs to differentiate instruction for the adult learners with whom she works. This realization is tied to a conversation with Ms. Robinson about the guided reading component of the literacy block. When I asked her about the conversation that she had with Ms. Robinson regarding guided reading instruction in her classroom, Ms. Cook said that "it's easy for me to focus on strategies during guided reading - pick appropriate text for instruction…there has already been a lot of focus on this component [of the literacy block] in the district over the years… I think we [Ms. Robinson and Ms. Cook] need to go back to this." This indicates to me that Ms. Cook is becoming more aware of the differing needs of the adult learners she works with as they open up to her about their own strengths and weaknesses.

While the statements above are some indication that both coaches have an understanding of supporting adult learners, Ms. Smith talked about the professional development she had taken part in over the years of being a teacher and shared that the meaningful learning opportunities for her were offered by facilitators who knew how to teach adults. As a first year coach she realized that when she accepted the position she

never really thought about "adult learners" and how they differ from the children she has

taught.   As she navigated through her first year to reach out to teachers and work with

groups of teachers, she related some of her struggles in the position to not having enough

information or professional training to teach adults. Diane Sweeney (2007) speaks to the

idea that coaches are in roles that are poorly articulated and not trained in adult learning

and often face a school culture that hasn't been prepared for this form of professional

development (p. 39). Although she wanted to know more about adult learners, Ms.

Smith seems to have skills necessary to support adult learners.   In planning sessions I

observed, I noted that she was a good listener, took into account what the teacher was

saying she needed and worked to develop goals that were mutually agreed upon by her

and the teacher.

Margaret Wheatley (2002) identifies listening as the action that creates a

relationship. In my observations of planning sessions between the literacy coaches and

classroom teachers it was apparent that both coaches in this study are skilled listeners,

which may be linked to the support they were able to provide the adult learners who

sought their advice on teaching reading. This is an important characteristic that defines

teachers as well as literacy coaches.   The literacy coaches' ability to listen allows them

to effectively support learning of adults. An example of the understanding Ms. Smith has

in working with adult learners is captured in Ms. Kidd's comment. She said, "[Ms.

Smith] really listens to my concerns and doesn't make suggestions too fast – she has a lot

of information before she suggests how things could look in my classroom."

<u>Conversations, Collaboration, and Dialogue Grounded in Assessment Data</u>

Ms. Smith's definition of successful teachers, found on page 77 of this research, depicts the teaching profession as one in which a great deal of skill and talent is required. Since Ms. Smith is involved in teaching adults and helping them create a productive learning environment for the students, part of her role is recognizing the needs of her learners. One way that brings her to understand the needs of the teachers she works with is through dialogue and collaboration. She said that her most "successful relationships with teachers as professionals have been those where a lot of reflection is going on, a lot of dialoguing and a lot of conversation around assessments and learning." However, she shared that it seems that she has been in many meaningless meetings because collaboration does not always occur. She said the following related to her work:

> I think that sometimes my job seems like just a lot of meetings…however, I want those meetings to be meaningful…where [the meetings are used] to help teachers improve instruction. In doing that, I think a big part of my job is talking to teachers [helping them] better understand assessment tools and better understand how to use them to drive instruction.

The meetings she describes as meaningless are meetings where she felt collaboration wasn't occurring. The lack of collaboration may relate back to the ideas of Sweeney (2007). The culture of some of the schools in which Ms. Smith works may not be prepared for this form of professional development where conversations and collaboration need to occur.

Ms. Cook was asked to discuss the instructional planning that took place between her and the teachers during one of the interviews. She began the discussion talking about the use of assessments. Ms. Cook strongly believes in using "assessments to drive instruction… using them as a diagnostic tool." She stated that teachers see the

importance of using the assessments to assist them in instructional planning, but that she has done a great deal of work with the teachers to guide and assist them to understand how assessments can be used to support daily instruction. She has supported teachers in using the data they are to collect to "make thoughtful changes in their instruction" and help them recognize that data can be collected in informal ways in addition to the more formalized assessments that the district requires (DRA, ISEL, Unit Tests from the district's reading series). She has been working with teachers to develop teacher made forms and checklists allowing them to collect information on students when they are conferencing with them about texts they are reading, as well as using work from reading centers and reading response logs as indicators of student growth.

Ms. Cook also discussed the importance of having conversations – some of which she called "the difficult conversations around assessment and what good teaching looks like." She shared that teachers view her as a collaborative individual, which she defined as "someone able to work with others to make improvements in education. This is accomplished for me by being an open and honest communicator and able to start those difficult conversations." Friend and Cook (1996) define collaboration as "a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 6). Using this definition to account for the collaboration that occurred between Ms. Cook and the teachers she worked with, it was apparent that they had common goals – one being to improve instruction and the other to help their students achieve success in reading.

As a literacy coach, Ms. Cook will often administer assessments as a way to stay in touch with the kids as well as use the information gathered about the students as a

"teaching point" with teachers. Ms. Cook shared that administering reading assessments provides specific information that can be used as a conversation starter with the teachers. Ms. Cook thought it was a good way for her and the teacher to "compare notes" on the students and determine what type of instruction should be of focus during reading – "it was also a nice way of checking validity [of the students' growth in reading comprehension based on the reading assessments given by her and the teacher]."

In one observed planning session between Ms. Cook and teacher Ms. Robinson, recent DRA scores were used to begin the conversation of selecting appropriate books for instruction during guided reading. This was one of the "difficult conversations" that Ms. Cook referred to because both the literacy coach and teacher assessed the students using the DRA's but they got different reading levels and comprehension scores for the students. Ms. Cook used this planning session as a time to have the teacher share students' reading habits the teacher observed during guided reading, conferences held with the students about books they were reading and work done in their reading journals. As the literacy coach and teacher navigated through this conversation, the teacher began to recognize that maybe her assessment information didn't reflect the reading behaviors her students' exhibited during class. This led Ms. Cook to share with the teacher the book, *The Guided Reading Program* (Pinnell, 2002) which highlighted characteristics of each level of text as well as student behaviors to be observed when reading that level of text. The teacher felt that Ms. Cook's DRA scores were more accurate in describing the students' reading abilities and when she began to read through the shared information, she asked Ms. Cook to come and observe her giving a DRA to one of the students to see if she could pinpoint areas that she needed to address when giving the assessment. The

field notes taken during this planning session highlight the use of assessments to guide the dialogue that occurred.

Ms. Smith also shared that she believed using data collected on students made it easier for the teacher to open up to the idea of coaching:

> Instead of saying to a teacher - you aren't doing this very effectively [i.e. teaching comprehension strategies], you can look at student work samples and assessments and say, look, Joe didn't do so well with his comprehension of non-fiction. Maybe we can take a look at some other strategies we could teach him to use to improve his comprehension. I think one important thing is really looking at many opportunities for assessment – looking at very informal ways – just by looking at what the students are doing everyday and making a plan where you need to go with your teaching.

Ms. Smith felt that focusing on the literacy needs of the class or particular students rather than focusing on teacher weaknesses was a positive way to begin building a working relationship that may eventually lead to the teacher wanting to work with the coach. Having data and student work samples as indicators of what students are or are not doing well can support dialogue that may lead teachers to reflect on how their instructional practices are impacting the growth of students. A discussion informed by student work and assessment data is what Smylie (1995) indicates may lead to collegial relationships that encourage [teachers] to jointly identify and solve problems (p. 21). Smylie's statement also supports the literacy coaches' understanding that relationship building is part of their role and may be accomplished through discussions informed by student work and assessments.

Ms. Kidd said her work with Ms. Smith began with "thoughtful discussions." Through their discussions she definitely felt she grew as a teacher and the following statement supports the idea of Smylie (1995), stated above. Ms. Kidd said:

I have had the opportunity to look at things through new eyes – looking at various approaches to teaching reading and not just being stuck on one model. I think one other thing is really looking at many opportunities for assessment… I don't mean a formalized thing but I mean informal…everyday you can use what the students are doing to assess how they are doing, and decide where you need to go with your instruction.

During my observations of the literacy coach and teacher planning for instruction, I noted how the literacy coach and classroom teacher used thoughtful discussions based on the student data they had gathered formally and informally. The growth Ms. Kidd talked about during the interview was captured in my field notes. I noted for instance, that for the first time she was really looking at students' daily work from center activities to gain a better understanding of what the students understood from her teaching. Both educators really referred to the students' work as they planned for instruction and Ms. Kidd asked thoughtful questions of the literacy coach related to how she could better support students' learning based on the data, in this case, student work samples from the previous day's lesson.

Relationship Building

The daily experience of a literacy coach, as the coaches in this study define it, is tied very closely to the relationships they are able to develop with the staff members of the school. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) highlight the need to develop good relationships as they "lead to higher productivity, improved problem-solving and better learning" (p. 90). A significant part of the literacy coach's job is developing relationships.

Ms. Smith spoke about relationships in each of the three interviews that were conducted for this research, so the importance of this aspect of the work of literacy

coaching can't be overlooked. Ms. Smith stated the following in her recap of the work

she had done during the school year:

> I don't think I can get into the classrooms without building relationships. So if I
> had to place importance on each aspect of my position, I would put relationship
> building first. … with some teachers it will take longer than others to build
> [relationships] but I do feel that once I establish a relationship and some level
> of trust, I can move into being in classrooms with teachers. Planning sessions that
> occur between myself and the teacher is a way to build that relationship – talking
> about how things will look in the classroom.

Both Ms. Cook and Ms. Smith see building relationships with the teachers,

principals and students as a major part of their work. They found they were more

successful at building these relationships in some schools over others. When Ms. Smith

was asked what she would *change* about her role as literacy coach, she said that she

wanted to focus on making better connections with the principals of the schools in which

she worked. She felt that there was a disconnect in how the principals viewed the role of

literacy coaches – "some teachers see me as being a remedial piece to their teaching

because the principal suggested she work with me to improve her teaching as part of the

post-evaluation conference."   She said that the principal of Lakeview wasn't very

involved with her as a coach and unlike other principals she worked with in the district,

"the Lakeview Principal doesn't encourage teachers to work with me and doesn't invite

me to present information or share instructional strategies about language arts at staff

meetings." Ms. Smith said:

> When I do professional development for groups of people…that kind of helps
> because that lets people in a little bit more into my personality – allows them to
> trust me a little bit more. It is my hope that when I present that people get the
> impression that I *don't* have all the answers – that I am going to be working along
> side with them.

As an example of how she feels she can connect with teachers, she noted that she was not invited to the Lakeview staff meetings to present or talk on the topic of reading. She felt that by not being a part of staff meetings she missed an opportunity to begin building relationships with the staff at Lakeview School. She believes that the opportunity to present information about reading instruction at these meetings would have been helpful in building relationships with the teachers. She suggests that the underdeveloped relationship she had with the school's principal impacted the development of relationships with teachers at Lakeview School.

To overcome some of the missed opportunities she felt would support the development of relationships, Ms. Smith attended grade level meetings to learn of the grade level team's instructional focus. Over the course of time, teachers would look to her for suggestions. Ms. Smith said that she went about developing relationships with these teachers "by trying to show the teachers that we are collectively learning - I try to let them know that I am not the expert in everything – we will learn by working side-by-side, together." The idea of shared responsibility is a characteristic of learning seen by Friend and Cook (1996) to enhance collaboration and addressed by Fullan (2001) who states "purposeful interaction is essential for continuous improvement" (p. 124). By attending the grade level meetings, getting to know the teachers and developing an understanding of their teaching, Ms. Smith was able to 'purposefully interact' with the teachers and share ideas related to what they were focused on as a grade level team.

Not only do the literacy coaches see developing relationships with the adults as important, but they also viewed their relationships with the kids as a necessary and important component of their jobs. Ms. Smith states, "I think it is really good for coaches

to make connections with children and have a group that you work with… maybe pull a

group of students within the class you are working to provide enrichment or support so

you can stay connected to the kids." She felt this connection helps teachers recognize the

coaches as being teachers and not relegate them to the administrative side of education.

She feels relationships developed with students may in turn support the development of a

collaborative relationship with the teachers. She said:

> Teachers will see that I am still in the loop – you know, not removed from what it
> is like to work with a large group of kids and what behavior management issues
> one could potentially have and what it means to plan for that particular group of
> students.

Ms. Smith believes that working with kids could potentially help teachers and literacy

coaches build a relationship of trust because the teacher would be able to see that she is

also a skilled teacher.

The coaches found it was somewhat easier to begin developing relationships

where collaboration was already occurring. The relationships observed for this research

may have shown higher collaboration because most of the literacy coaches' "clients"

were volunteering to work with them. It is also relevant to note that both coaches in this

study believe in the importance of collaborating and reflecting on their teaching and see

both as avenues to create relationships with teachers. Ms. Smith pointed out that "those

people who are already collaborative seek me out… they are open to that type of

relationship so they pull me in."

In summary, the work of the literacy coaches as viewed by the teachers in this

study is to provide support to them with the intent of improving their instruction.

Teachers felt support provided by the literacy coach should take into consideration the

teachers' goals for their learning. The teachers also viewed the literacy coaches as

advocates for them – another form of support. Finally, teachers sought feedback from the literacy coaches by asking them to analyze what was taking place in their classrooms and provide suggestions and advice on how instructional practices could be modified to support student learning.

The literacy coaches also believe that the focus of their work should be to support teachers.   As suggested by Ms. Smith, she supports teachers in developing stronger instructional strategies to help students become successful readers. The support the literacy coaches provided the adult learners they worked with occurred through conversations, collaboration, and dialogue grounded in assessment data. The literacy coaches' work was also focused on relationship building, which they viewed to support the growth of teachers.   The literacy coaches' thoughts about their work echoes the findings of Coskie, et al. (2005) where they state the primary responsibility of literacy coaches is to provide teacher support.

Research Question 2 -What Impact, if any, Does The Literacy Coach as a Professional Development Model Have on the Instructional Strategies Utilized by a Classroom Teacher?

In exploring this question, I felt that it was important to understand the teachers' and coaches' perspectives on teaching reading. I felt that this understanding would illuminate the impact of the work with the coaches. Therefore, I asked the teachers and literacy coaches to talk about their beliefs about teaching students to read. The classroom teachers talked more about what components of reading instruction should be in place to ensure students have opportunities to learn to read during their reading block, the time in their daily schedule to specifically instruct students using the district's reading

curriculum. The literacy coaches highlighted the importance of students having numerous opportunities to read with emphasis on comprehending the text. This section will highlight some of the beliefs about reading the teachers and literacy coaches held as well as depict growth that occurred with the teachers in the areas of their students' independent reading time, the implementation of cohesive instruction, and writing instruction.

Impact on Independent Reading Time

Literacy coach, Ms. Cook, believes that all children can learn to read – "the degree of learning is different for each child so it is necessary for the teachers to differentiate their instruction and their assignments." In the primary grades she sees great importance for instruction to be placed on language development and building background knowledge. She believes that strong phonics/phonemic development at kindergarten, first and second grade is especially important, but that this instruction should not "compromise work that is done to help kids understand what they are reading. They need to be taught to think strategically and understand more deeply." She feels the instruction that best supports this is through mini lessons where skills and strategies are taught through extensive modeling and guidance. She also shared that students need to be given significant time to read throughout the day to practice the strategies taught. Researcher Richard Allington (1995) emphasizes that students should be immersed in reading with focus placed on comprehending the text that is read. Ms. Cook's understanding of the need to immerse the students in reading explains why she has worked so closely with both Ms. Robinson and Ms. Block on strengthening and extending the independent reading time in their classrooms.

The teachers at Clinton School, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Block, shared that their reading block was divided into two components, whole group class instruction and guided reading.   Whole group class instruction was used to introduce a specific strategy that would support the students' comprehension of text. After the group lesson, teachers would then meet with guided reading groups, the second component of the reading block, where the reading strategy teachers focused on during the group lesson was further developed with each guided reading group.

During this initial conversation with the teachers at Clinton Elementary, they hadn't completely etched out time in their day when students were given the opportunity to read to practice the reading strategies they were learning or the time to read for enjoyment.   Both teachers shared their own enjoyment for reading such as when Miss Block said, "I love to teach reading – I have always loved to read. I started out as an English major in college – I've always just loved words, books and also writing. I enjoy teaching reading a lot." Although she shared her enjoyment of reading with enthusiasm during the interview, it was difficult to recognize how her own love of reading was translated into her classroom. However, as my interviewing progressed, it was evident that the literacy coach was focusing on developing the time during the school day for students to read allowing for both the enjoyment of books as well as time to practice comprehension strategies.

For example, in a later interview, Ms. Block said, "Ms. Cook was pretty insistent that we start getting more independent reading time throughout the day so I have worked with her to make more time for that." Although the word "insistent" can have a negative connotation, Ms. Block didn't seem upset by the attention the literacy coach was

expecting her to place on further developing the use of time during the school day for students to read independently. With the support of the literacy coach, Ms. Block was able to move closer to the "extensive reading" that Pressley, et al., (2006) state as an instructional component necessary to the development of reading.

With focus on helping the students select appropriate reading material and suggesting to the teachers ways to conduct reading conferences with the students, literacy coach, Ms. Cook has worked with the teachers to develop independent reading time to allow the students to strengthen their reading abilities and practice reading strategies that have been taught. She said, "My focus with the teachers has been on explicit instruction of skills and strategies with a gradual release of responsibility given to the learners."

Ms. Block's initial thought about giving kids time to read independently was "ok, pick a book you like and read for 20 minutes."   Although initially Ms. Block did not see why the literacy coach wanted to focus on the area of independent reading, Ms. Block shared that she was open to the idea of changing how she implemented independent reading time.   She shared that as she worked with the literacy coach she became aware of the importance independent reading could play in helping her students grasp how to use strategies they had been taught to support their comprehension of text.   Ms. Block comments on the literacy coach's insistence paying off:

> [Independent reading] time became much more dynamic and useful for the kids – Ms. Cook and I worked together to teach the students how to pick 'just right' books for their reading. I've learned how to conference with the students about the books they are reading and have taught them how to converse about what they are reading.

With the encouragement of her literacy coach, Ms. Robinson recognized the need to also focus on providing a structured independent reading time. At the beginning of the

year Ms. Robinson shared there were several areas she wanted to strengthen in her reading block, "but the independent reading was one thing that wasn't where I wanted it so Ms. Cook picked that area to start with." This is one area of the reading block that Ms. Robinson feels has improved with the support of the literacy coach. "The students are now actually reading for at least 15 minutes and then taking about 10 to 15 minutes to write in their reader response logs. We do this first thing in the morning and they are doing so well with it – they are actually reading during the time they are given and better comprehending the text."

She and the literacy coach also worked on ways to hold the students accountable for what they were reading because Ms. Robinson didn't feel they were always reading during the time they were given. This accountability was being developed through the use of either written responses to what students read or through student conferences with the teacher to discuss and dialogue about what they had read during independent reading time. Ms. Robinson thinks her students need further instruction on how to describe their understanding of the text in their writing, but is pleased with their ability to select appropriate books to match their reading levels and use the independent reading time to read. She also shared that the literacy coach has suggested and modeled using reading interviews with the students to check their comprehension of the books they are reading. Previously, she had used interviewing sporadically during independent reading time to check student comprehension and realizes that this is a good suggestion from the literacy coach. Ms. Robinson shared that since the implementation of a structured independent reading time students are starting to display more appropriate behaviors of readers and are really focused on selecting books that are at their reading level.

One of Ms. Robinson's students, fourth grader Marcus (pseudonym), comments on the independent reading time during my interview with him. "Ms. Robinson and Ms. Cook have us read a lot in class – I mean a lot." When probed if he liked this change from his previous school year he simply answered "yes." When given time to describe this time he shared that "Ms. C. [Ms. Cook] showed Ms. Robinson different questions to ask us" and he referred to journals that they wrote in to share their thinking about what they read. Marcus shared that he liked reading and talking to Ms. Robinson about the books he read during this time, but he didn't like writing about it. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Cook established this independent reading time that was also followed either with the students conferencing with Ms. Robinson to discuss what they were reading or writing in their journals about what they read. It is clear in Marcus's statements that he recognizes there is more time to read independently this year, which was the focus of the work between the literacy coach and classroom teacher.

Impact on Cohesive Instruction

Ms. Kidd commented on how her work with Ms. Smith helped her see that her instruction could be connected to each component of the literacy block:

> … I finally see how the reading strategy can be connected throughout the literacy block or the mini lesson that we are focusing on can be connected to the centers, the shared reading that we do and in the guided reading lessons. She has helped me look at things sort of through new eyes – looking at a new approach instead of just being stuck on one way to do things.

When I observed their planning session that focused on questioning, it is apparent that the literacy coach shared how the students will benefit from multiple experiences with the strategy throughout the literacy block. Ms. Smith supported their planning with ideas from various resources which did include the district's reading series as well as

ideas from Debbie Miller's (2002) book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching*

Comprehension in the Primary Grades.

Ms. Cook and Ms. Robinson focused on guided reading as part of their work together. Ms. Cook felt it was important for the teacher to connect the teaching of strategies throughout the literacy block. In reviewing my field notes from one of the planning sessions, Ms. Cook shared with Ms. Robinson how to bring the comprehension strategy she would teach in the mini lesson during whole group instruction into the guided reading lesson. She explained to Ms. Robinson how this would be a natural step in the instructional process and allow Ms. Robinson to differentiate for the students in her guided reading lessons.

Ms. Robinson describes what impact she sees the work between her and the literacy coach to have on her reading instruction. She said:

> I see myself as a better reading teacher than in September because if you walk in my classroom during reading you wouldn't know these kids have emotional disabilities… they are reading, they are discussing with me and their peers about what they are reading. Also, I have pieces of a reading workshop in place, not all of them, but I am using guided reading, we have shared reading time, and they have their independent reading time …so you know this makes me feel more successful – I am aligned more with regular ed. now.

Ms. Robinson's reflection on the work that occurred between her and the literacy coach during the school year indicates that she is mindful of the impact their focus on reading has had on her teaching. The tone in her voice during this particular interview indicates that she feels stronger and more confident in her teaching. While attaining cohesive instruction throughout the literacy block may not be fully realized, her statements indicate she is aware of the growth she has made this school year.

<u>Impact on Writing</u>

As a first year teacher, Ms. Block said that her writing instruction was basically introducing students to different graphic organizers to help the students organize a paragraph. "Working with Ms. Cook, I was introduced to ideas on *how* to get kids to write – I learned how to help them express themselves through their writing. I learned how to help them add details to their writing, how to revise and edit. The kids now have fun writing." Ms. Block learned not only through planning sessions with Ms. Cook, but stated that the opportunities she had to observe the literacy coach teach writing helped shape how she facilitated instruction in her classroom: "Ms. Cook brings a lot of excitement to her teaching of reading and writing. The kids pick up on that and the kids 'buy into it' because she is so genuine – they focus when she is teaching because of how she talks to them." Ms. Block also talked about other growth she experienced in her teaching through the work with the literacy coach:

> I learned a lot from her modeling lessons – things beyond how to support the kids become better readers and writers. It was helpful for me to see how she set clear expectations for the students throughout her lessons – this impacted the behavior management system in my classroom. She has impacted the kids too. They know that what she and I are doing together is important – they know we are working together to help them.

The growth that was experienced through Ms. Block's collaboration with the literacy coach is echoed by the work of Fullan (2001) – "change involves learning to do something new, and interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New meaning, new behaviors, new skills and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals or are exchanging ideas, support and positive feelings about their work" (p. 84). Through the weekly interactions with the literacy coach, this classroom teacher learned how to get her students to write. This was a new teaching skill

for Ms. Block as her previous experiences with writing instruction were limited. The

emphasis that Michael Fullan (2001) places on the social aspect of learning and its clear

link to change was observable when the teachers and literacy coach planned instruction

together.   Ms. Block's comment that the literacy coach was having an impact on students

is of interest. She felt that the work between her and the literacy coach was recognized

by the kids as being important and done to support their learning. When I asked her to

share more on the impact, she said, "student behaviors have improved, which has allowed

them to focus more on writing." Although the teachers see it as their job to impact the

growth of students - not the job of the literacy coaches, it does seem the literacy coach

may have indirectly impacted student learning as stated in Ms. Block's comment above.

Ms. Robinson also perceived growth in her teaching of writing. She said:

> I think for writing if Ms. Cook hadn't come in and helped me prioritize, the students probably wouldn't be as fluent as they are right now. And they might not enjoy writing as much because *I* probably would have been floundering more and might have lost my patience with them. … I think because I had Ms. Cook encouraging me all year and working with me, that I probably . . . my level of teaching writing has been at a higher level because I have that little "cheerleader" that I see each week.

This statement suggests the belief Vygotsky (1978) and Fullan (2001) have on the social

aspect of learning is being played out in the work between the teacher and literacy coach.

By interacting with the literacy coach, Ms. Robinson views her writing instruction to

have changed in a positive way.

While this study does not set out to determine the impact of literacy coaching on

student achievement, Ms. Robinson shares her perception of the students' writing as one

example of the result of her work with the literacy coach in developing a writer's

workshop:

> They, [the students] they have become [pauses]…some of their writing, sometimes it will just take my breath away with what they come up with. The details – like if you ever come in during the day, ask Taylor (pseudonym) if you can see his notebook – he's very sensitive and he'll flip out if you want to do editing [laughs], but his ideas, wow – what great writing… The kids have definitely become better writers since the beginning of the school year, "they will write for extended periods of time and they're getting better about having conversations about what they wrote and wanting to improve their writing.

The student writing Ms. Robinson describes suggests their work may have been influenced by the work between the literacy coach and classroom teacher.

Factors that Affect the Impact of Literacy Coaching

Because this district does not mandate that all teachers work with a literacy coach and principals typically don't assign teachers to work with a literacy coach, there were factors that emerged from the data about how much a literacy coach can impact the instructional practices of the teachers. Self-motivation, trust, and the relationships the literacy coaches developed were three factors that contribute to the impact a literacy coach can have on instructional strategies utilized by a classroom teacher.

Self-Motivation

When the literacy coaches were asked to talk about how they came to work with the teachers they were working with at the time of the data collection, each coach shared that there were several teachers who had approached them asking for their professional support. Their responses to questions asked about the teachers they were working with indicate that for the most part the teachers were self-motivated and wanted to learn something new or improve an instructional practice or component of the reading block in their classroom. Ms. Smith said, "usually whenever teachers want to work with me they come to me. The kindergarten teachers contacted me and said, 'would you be willing to talk to us about readers' workshop in our classrooms? We've been [implementing] it but

we don't feel like it is really flowing the way that it should.'" Ms. Smith said that this was the beginning of their conversations related to guided reading and the kindergarten reading workshop.

After attending training given by Linda Dorn, literacy coach, Ms. Cook, was asked by the district's Literacy Director to work in one of the lab classrooms that would focus on developing a reading environment that consisted of reading components as suggested by Linda Dorn.   Ms. Cook said that she asked if *she* could select which lab classroom she worked in. "I wanted to work with someone I thought would work hard and want to make changes." Although Ms. Cook doesn't come out and say it, her desire to select someone she viewed as hard-working suggests that she recognizes that self-motivation has an impact on learning.

These examples shared by the literacy coaches indicate that self-motivation plays an important factor in determining who works together.   Sharan Merriam's (2001) review of literature about adult learners describes the adult learner as someone who is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (p. 5).   The adults in this study display internal motivation versus external motivation to learn. Each coach shared that the professional development they took part in was their choice. The teachers that worked with the literacy coaches in this study also created the learning opportunities they had with the literacy coaches through their own self-motivation to learn. The adult learners in this study had the self-motivation to work on improving areas of their reading instruction.   As described earlier, Ms. Robinson, Ms. Cook and Ms. Kidd felt there was growth in the areas of independent reading, cohesive instruction and writing. This growth may be linked to their work with the literacy coaches.

Ms. Robinson shared that she talked to the literacy coach about teaching guided reading and that she really "didn't feel that she was successful with the students during this time and wasn't able to implement lessons in the way she had observed the literacy coach." This conversation was "uncomfortable" because she felt her instruction was weak during guided reading and both she and Ms. Cook viewed guided reading as a very important part of the reading block. Ms. Robinson was uncomfortable sharing this during our interview as can be heard in the sound of her voice in the audio-tape. She slowly disclosed what she thought appeared to be a teaching weakness of hers. But as she talked about her guided reading instruction during the interview, I realized she was very self-aware and realized the possible learning opportunities she had in working with the literacy coach. She also realized that if she did not share the instructional area she had determined as a weakness with the coach, the literacy coach would not be able to help her improve her teaching practice during guided reading. This is an example of Barkley's (2005) belief that professional improvements supported by coaching can only come about when the person being coached "takes ownership of her own improvement" (p. 5).

By not taking ownership of their own learning or having the self-motivation to learn and work with a literacy coach, some teachers in this district are not exposed to the professional development opportunities that a literacy coach could offer. Teachers are not typically assigned to work with literacy coaches in this district. Because of this, it seems that the impact of literacy coaching is limited to those teachers who chose to work with them.

Trust

In addition to the self-motivation to learn, the data indicates that trust is a factor that impacts the professional development model of literacy coaching. Ms. Cook said that she has an "open and honest relationship with the building principal [at Clinton School]… she trusts the way I work with kids and adults." Ms. Cook feels that the trust the principal shows in her teaching style as well as her knowledge of reading has been a factor in her being able to work with several teachers in the school:

> …the principal will encourage teachers to work with me at either their team meetings or intervention meetings as a way to address a student's academic needs. I will then get emails from teachers saying they would like me to come into their classrooms. The teachers also know and realize that their principal is very supportive of them and views coaching as a positive thing for all teachers. They don't see it as a remedial piece. Here the attitude is one of let's get on board because this is new and this can benefit all of us.

In her study of the social organization of schools, Rosenholtz (1989) notes that principals working in collaborative settings "trust teachers' creative instincts as much-if not more than their own, allowing them [principals] to relinquish their need for control and share responsibilities with them" (p. 61). At Clinton School, the relationship that has developed between the coach and principal is based on trust and has helped determine what impact coaching will have on teaching in this school. Rosenholtz (1989) found that where principals encourage helping relationships … teachers tend to work harder to help their colleagues succeed (p. 61). Because the principal trusts the educational judgments and actions made by the coach, as well as encourages her staff to work together, teachers seem to be willing to begin a professional relationship with Ms. Cook.

Ms. Robinson shares, "I think Ms. Cook is one of the best teachers I've ever worked with and even though it can be difficult at times – I think I am very fortunate to

have her here because of what I can learn from her – to have someone of that caliber

working with me every week… I can already tell just this year that I've become a better

teacher." This statement indicates that the teacher's high regard for Ms. Cook and

respect for her knowledge of reading and writing may be supported by trust she has in

her. Also, the difficulties that they have overcome in working together have helped build

the trusting relationship they have. Ms. Robinson has identified her teaching weakness to

be in the implementation of guided reading. She recognizes that Ms. Cook will be able to

support her in this area and has asked that she observe her teaching this portion of the

reading block. At the same time however, she struggles with sharing her weakness with

another colleague:

> It will be uncomfortable to have her observe me, but I am ok with it because we
> have talked about it. It will be really uncomfortable for me when she watches me
> do the guided reading because that's where I feel the least confident. That is
> going to be tough, …I'll be nervous. That's why I want her to plan with me – I'm
> not really sure how to go about picking out the strategies and continuing
> questioning throughout the book and making it meaningful for the kids. I am
> nervous because it is such a weakness for me. … I know I need someone who is
> experienced to watch and help me out because I have to know how to teach
> guided reading well … I really need to take advantage of Ms. Cook this year – I
> don't know for sure if they will put her here next year so that's why I'll have
> those conversations about feeling uncomfortable with her – because I know I've
> got to take advantage.

In our conversation, Ms. Robinson's discussion about her feelings of being nervous about

having her weakness exposed suggests that trust was a factor in her professional growth.

Had she not opened up to the literacy coach and trusted Ms. Cook with her concerns of

being observed as well as her struggles with teaching students during guided reading, she

may not have been able to gain anything from the input provided by the literacy coach.

She also said, "Ms. Cook has helped me understand that it's not just about getting

through the curriculum – my focus is making sure the students are deeper readers and that

they are really comprehending what they are reading. I think Ms. Cook has really helped me keep that focus." This statement is evidence of what Ms. Robinson has gained in working with Ms. Cook.

Ms. Robinson's reflection on her work with the literacy coach suggests that collaborative, open and honest conversations may not have occurred had trust not developed between her and the literacy coach. She said that they do differ in their beliefs about teaching reading and there is compromise when they are planning together. Ms. Robinson felt that Ms. Cook was very step-by-step in her planning and will come right out and tell one how it should be in the classroom. "I think if I didn't trust her, I might just have said no to some of the ideas she wanted to implement in the classroom and cut her out of the planning because it's uncomfortable talking about my feelings… about why I do or don't do something in my classroom."

Relationships

The relationships that the literacy coaches were able to develop seems to impact the work they were able to accomplish. The literacy coaches discussed positive aspects of the relationships they had within the schools as well as negative aspects that impacted the relationships between them and teachers.

I asked Ms. Smith to talk about her impact on the teachers she worked with. To demonstrate the impact of relationships, she shared her experience of an attempt to begin working with a grade level team of two first year teachers at another school (not participating in this study). The relationship played a significant role in what she was able to accomplish. In an effort to develop a relationship with the team of first year teachers she said:

...it was a terrible situation. ...we just go off on a really bad foot with our relationship. I think they misconstrued me as being a person that thought they didn't know what they were doing and that they needed remediation. It was very difficult for me to give any help or support.

The situation she describes above indicates there is importance to relationship building as part of the role of literacy coaching. Ms. Smith shared that some of the colleagues she worked with in previous years negatively impacted the building of a relationship with this team of first year teachers. She explained that one veteran teacher in particular didn't see the value in working with a literacy coach and was at least partially responsible for fostering the false notion that a part of Ms. Smith's role as a literacy coach was to support the principal in evaluating teachers' instructional practice. Ms. Smith also spoke about the fact that because she was in several schools and also required to attend many district level meetings, it was difficult to devote the time necessary to prove her purpose and to build the trust necessary to support those relationships. In the situation described above, the damage was very difficult to undo, however, I think it speaks to the importance of trust as well as to the importance of the time it takes to build a meaningful relationship in which work can occur.

Ms. Cook talked about the importance of developing relationships to carry out her responsibilities as a literacy coach. She stated that in addition to working with teachers, a big part of her role is being someone who has a good working relationship with and supports the building principal, and further, to understand the language arts curriculum and how it should be implemented. Ms. Cook said:

A literacy coach has to be knowledgeable about the district's curriculum - know what that two hour reading block should look like to be able to support the principal. Sometimes it is also necessary to teach principals about "best practices" of literacy instruction because the principals are expected to have their

hands in many different managerial things and they may not necessarily have all the knowledge about the curriculum.

This statement indicates that the principal of a school may look to the literacy coach for support. The following statement by Ms. Cook also suggests that the principal may encourage the development of relationships between teachers and literacy coaches. Ms. Cook said the following about the principal of Clinton School:

The teachers here know and realize that their principal is very supportive of them and that she views coaching as a positive thing for all teachers. She knows I am very open to sharing ideas, presenting at staff meetings and working with any teacher. We find ways to problem solve – when she brings up any concerns in the building we just find a way to work together.

However, even though Ms. Cook places importance on building relationships to successfully begin the work of literacy coaching and has demonstrated the ability to effectively use conversation with adults, and show interest for what is occurring in teachers' classrooms, she said:

It is still difficult to build relationships with teachers because as coaches we are responsible for three or four schools. We also don't have a "coaching framework" where all principals understand the value in working closely with a coach. We need a coaching culture. Principals and teachers have to be open to change and the only way that will happen is if we work as a team in setting goals to extend our learning and professional development.

The coaching culture the Ms. Cook is referring to is described by Cathy Toll (2007) and Buly, et al. (2008). Toll believes "if a literacy coaching program is to have maximum effectiveness, coaches, teachers and administrators should be clear about desired outcomes of the program" (p. 44). Effective coaches as described by Buly, et al. (2008) have a "carefully considered job description that has been conveyed, understood, and accepted by both administrators and teachers in a district" (p. 227). Ms. Cook's statement suggests there is still work to be done in developing the model of literacy

coaching within the schools so that relationships can develop to support the work of literacy coaching.

Relationships between some of the coaches and teachers originated as friendships. When Ms. Smith was asked to discuss the impact her coaching had with Ms. Kidd she struggled to differentiate the results based on her professional role as literacy coach or her role as friend:

> That is a little hard to determine because we talk so much about so many things in education that I'm not sure if I can tell what impact coaching has had versus what impact our friendship has had in her classroom. I don't think I changed her thinking [about reading] because she's very reflective and very thoughtful about her teaching and children so I think instructional needs and kids are always at the forefront of her mind.

Margaret Wheatley (2002) focuses on the courage it takes to work on changing things, "we only need enough courage to invite friends into a conversation. Large and successful change efforts start with conversations among friends…" (p. 25). The friendship between Ms. Smith and Ms. Kidd will be discussed in the next section, however, it seems that this relationship supported their professional conversations about reading instruction.

Research Question 3 -What is the Nature of the Relationship Between the Teacher and Literacy Coach and Classroom Practices?

The nature of the relationships between the teachers and literacy coaches participating in this study seem to be related to the work that occurs between the two as well as classroom practices. Three ideas surfaced during my review of data that describe the nature of the relationship between literacy coach and classroom teacher. First, trust is a factor that seems to be a component of the relationship between the teacher and

literacy coach and a characteristic of the relationship that could impact the work of

literacy coach and classroom practices. The interview data also uncovers that some of

the relationships between those participating in this study developed as friendships first

and then into a professional relationship. The third idea describing the nature of the

relationships that I will talk about is based on the conversations, dialogue and

collaboration that occurred between the teachers and literacy coaches.

Trust as a Component of the Relationship

As listed in the online Oxford English Dictionary (2008), "to trust is to have

confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person". The work of the

literacy coaches was based upon the trust they were able to develop with the classroom

teachers. Following is an example of part of an interview I had with first year teacher,

Ms. Block. I connected the development of trust between her and the literacy coach to

Ms. Block's characterization of Ms. Cook being a "master teacher." Ms. Block based her

characterization of Ms. Cook on the observations she did of her teaching as well as the

knowledge she shared with Ms. Block though her modeling of both reading instruction

and classroom management. Ms. Block said, "just the first few lessons that she did for

me set me up for success…. She [Ms. Cook] has a really clear idea of what the

expectations are for the kids throughout the whole building and she helped me establish

that right from the beginning in here." The knowledge Ms. Cook shared with Ms. Block

was not only though conversations but also through observable teaching behaviors. Miss

Block was able to trust the ideas and suggestions that Ms. Cook shared because she

associated her experience and knowledge as characteristics that qualified her as what she

described "a master teacher in the area of language arts." The trust Ms. Block had in Ms.

Cook may have developed though the observations she had done of Ms. Cook teaching her students. The opportunity for the teacher to observe the literacy coach teach was an opportunity for Ms. Block to learn not only about reading but also about classroom management. Ms. Cook demonstrated her knowledge to Ms. Block by teaching in her classroom. This action may have impacted the development of trust in Ms. Cook by Ms. Block.

Trust as a characteristic of the relationship between the teacher, Ms. Kidd, and literacy coach, Ms. Smith, is suggested in the following statement made by Ms. Kidd:

> When we talked about what was going on in my classroom I could hear what she was saying and I didn't take it personally or feel like I was a bad teacher. I think t hat many people perceive Literacy Coaches as running back and telling – being the administrative gopher. And I think because of our relationship I never had that feeling – no I never had that and I could honestly say to other teachers, 'you know, uh uh, that's not what happens.

Ms. Kidd viewed the open and honest conversations that were able to occur between her and the literacy coach as possible due to the strong relationship they had – one that was grounded in trust.

Friendship Characterizes the Relationship Between Literacy Coach and Teacher

When Ms. Kidd described her experience of working with Ms. Smith she highlighted how excited she was to be working with her again – Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith had previously taught second grade together in another school in the district and already had developed a strong professional relationship. They also have a strong friendship, which somewhat concerned Ms. Kidd. She spoke about their friendship during two of the three interviews. During the first interview she said:

> I was a little freaked out to be working with my friend. I was nervous…kind of apprehensive and a little intimidated because I really do see Ms. Smith as a model teacher and someone who is extremely capable of setting up an effective literacy block. I was also worried how honest she was going to be and whether she felt like she could be critical or was it just going to be fluff and 'everything is great'.

As the year progressed, Ms. Kidd found that the friendship she and Ms. Smith had as well as the professional relationship benefited their work together:

> She was able to really give me good, constructive feedback and then brainstorm. You know, I don't mind criticism at all as long as there is going to be some suggestion for change behind it. That is something that Ms. Smith has a really good knack for – her feedback never feels like criticism.

One could assume that because Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith were previously grade level teammates with a positive professional relationship, a trusting relationship that would enhance the professional growth of Ms. Kidd already existed. Ms. Kidd talked very highly of Ms. Smith's teaching ability as well as her character. "Although we had worked together before and are friends, she walks into the [class]room and I see this phenomenal teacher and I think, oh she has never watched me teach before – what is she going to think? Will she give me feedback that is going to move me forward or are we too close and our work together will just be fluff?" Ms. Kidd said that she feared their friendship might get in the way of literacy coach, Ms. Smith, being able to give her honest feedback about her teaching. Ms. Kidd's responses to my interview questions suggest that trust has developed over time between her and the literacy coach as friends and that their friendship had a positive impact on the work she and the literacy coach engaged in. This data suggests that the level of work they were doing together as teacher and literacy coach is different from the work they did together when they were both classroom teachers. They needed to go through the process of developing a level of trust that could support this new professional relationship.

Both Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith stated in their interviews that they spent a lot of time talking over the summer before the school year began to determine what it was they wanted to do in Ms. Kidd's classroom. As Cathy Toll (2006) suggests, "coaches usually best support teachers when a plan has been developed which includes steps for meeting the goal, resources needed, a timeline, and methods for determining whether the goal has been met" (p. 55). The preplanning and conversations that Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith had prior to beginning their work together helped develop a stronger trust between the two.

<u>Conversations, Dialogue and Collaboration Impact the Relationship</u>

The relationships between the literacy coaches and classroom teachers are tied to the conversations and dialogue that occur between the coaches and teachers. This section serves to highlight the impact of the conversations and dialogue on relationship building and the teachers' instructional practice.

Ms. Smith said that the teachers she felt most successful with were "teachers who were willing to spend time dialoguing, having a lot of conversation about what was happening in their teaching – I don't think we would have made progress without this dialogue." The dialogue, conversations and collaboration that took place with teachers were typically focused around assessment data or professional books that dealt with reading or writing topics. I observed the type of dialogue that Ms. Smith felt was a necessary component of successful coaching when she and Ms. Kidd planned together. Their discussion of student needs was based on the student work that had been done in their reading journals related to asking meaningful questions about text to help in comprehending the text. Ms. Smith and Ms. Kidd were learning from each other in this conversation, both about the students and instructional strategies that could be used to

support the learners. Ms. Smith provided several instructional resources during this

planning session to guide their thinking and planning. Both the coach and teacher used

time during this planning session to reflect on how previous lessons related to

questioning had gone with students. The rich discussion about students' progress based

on what they saw in the student's work samples and the teacher's thoughts on her

teaching resulted in a good plan for follow-up lessons that would occur in the coming

week.

Ms. Smith said the following of her work to develop relationships:

> I have been trying to better define my role in conversations with people. I think that is one way to help. I think face-to-face contact as much as possible is helping. Also, building better relationships with principals… I hope this will help teachers see that we are not about remediation. I think establishing some book study groups will help build relationships with teachers and alleviate some fears of me being seen as the expert and they needing knowledge from me – [book study groups] are probably less threatening than me being in classrooms working with a teacher.

Ms. Smith also referenced an idea of Diane Sweeney (2003) to ground professional

development in student work. "As she [Sweeney] suggests, I plan to talk to teachers and

take it off of the teachers and put it on the students - 'you know, I would really like to

come into your classroom and support your students. What areas do you see your class

struggling with? What are some literacy needs that your class has?' Approaching

teachers this way may put them at ease."

It is recognizable in each of the transcripts from the interviews I had with Ms.

Smith that she has put considerable thought and effort toward trying to establish

relationships with her peers. The interview data suggests she is very thoughtful in

determining how to approach teachers and what impact her interactions with teachers

may have on their relationship.

Previously in this chapter, Ms. Smith described what she felt makes an effective teacher of reading. She focused on the need for the teacher to create the love of reading with her students through her instruction. However, she also emphasized the need for collaboration, dialogue and reflection among teachers about what is happening in their classrooms to enhance the teaching that occurs. And while she believes that these three components are necessary for effective teaching, she doesn't feel that all schools or staff members have all of the components in place:

> I don't think that schools are looked upon as a place for collaboration even from teaching training programs. Nor have schools been seen as reflective environments … people can do a better job of that… teachers should come out of their training classes expecting that they are going to work with a group of teachers and collaborate around content and around assessments.

The school district participating in this research does not have a mandate that requires teachers to work with literacy coaches. While mandating that teachers and literacy coaches work together does not necessarily mean collaboration will exist, Ms. Smith suggests, collaborative relationships are not necessarily a component of the school environment nor is the encouragement given to foster collaborative relationships.

Both coaches talked about their successes related to co-teaching which required collaboration among the teachers to occur. Friend and Cook (1996) describe co-teaching as "[two professionals] sharing decision making about instruction and ensuring that both have active roles in teaching. Specifically, they plan and use unique and high-involvement instructional strategies to engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present" (p. 45). Ms. Cook speaks to the success she experienced as a literacy coach: "My most successful moment has been recently in a second grade classroom teaching, co-teaching with a second grade teacher. It was

successful because it was truly a co-teaching approach where we both planned, utilized

resources we had and taught together in the classroom – we were always interacting with

one another." While co-teaching is one aspect of a relationship that can occur between a

literacy coach and classroom teacher, the literacy coaches felt this type of relationship

supported the conversations, dialogue and collaboration that needs to occur to support

their work.

Ms. Robinson shared that because of the professional relationship that has

developed between her and the literacy coach, other teachers are beginning to seek out

the support of Ms. Cook. "[Other teachers] will hear me talk about Ms. Cook and all the

good stuff she does with me and they want that. She is going into a couple other

classrooms because of what we do together." What is being experienced is similar to

what Margaret Wheatley (2002) means by saying that "change begins from deep inside a

system, when a few people… respond to a dream of what's possible. We just have to

find a few other who care about the same thing" (p. 25). Ms. Robinson's example of

other teachers seeking out the support of Ms. Cook is the beginning of the conversation –

the conversation that will lead to change within this school.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an analysis of this study's results. It begins with an overview of the study, including the research questions addressed, the research design, and a brief description of the participants in the study. Conclusions drawn from the study are presented in response to the research questions. The connections between the findings and conclusions and the educational literature are also explained. Finally, considerations and recommendations for future research and educational practice are offered.

Summary of the Study

This study was designed to examine the work of a literacy coach; examine what, if any, impact a literacy coach has on a teacher's use of instructional strategies; and examine the nature of the relationship between the literacy coach and teacher. The qualitative study was conducted through the use of one-on-one interviews as the main source of data collection with five educators. Each interview had a specific focus. The first interview had the participants share about themselves in light of the topic, the second interview focused on the participants' present lived experiences in the topic of study and the third interview had the participants reflect on the meaning of their experience (Seidman, 2006). I also observed planning sessions that took place between the teachers and literacy coaches. Field notes were taken during the planning sessions and the notes were used to confirm some of the statements that the participants made during the interviews.

Initially, the study was also going to explore if the literacy coach had an impact on students' reading comprehension. However, as the study progressed, achievement gains indicated in the analysis of data from student interviews, student work samples and reading assessments could not be directly linked to the work of literacy coaches. However, some of the student data was used to shed light on the three questions addressed in this study.

Two literacy coaches and three classroom teachers from a suburban school district just north of a large Midwestern city participated in this research. The student population at both Clinton and Lakeview Elementary is economically and racially diverse and students are making adequate progress toward the state standards in the areas of reading and writing based on the state's achievement tests.

Each literacy coach participating in this study has extensive experience in the field of education but both are newer to the position of literacy coaching. At the time of data collection, Ms. Cook had been in the position for three years and Ms. Smith was a first year literacy coach. The three classroom teachers who participated in this study varied in their experiences.   Ms. Block was a first year teacher of a self-contained special education classroom, Ms. Robinson taught eighteen years both as a resource teacher and self-contained special education teacher and Ms. Kidd had taught at the primary level in both first and second grade for several years. The principal of Clinton School was also interviewed one time and provided some of the background information related to literacy coaching as well as her opinions on the work of the literacy coach.

The following three questions are addressed in this study:

1. What is the work of a literacy coach?

2. What impact, if any, does the literacy coach as a professional development model have on the instructional strategies utilized by a classroom teacher?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between the teacher and literacy coach and classroom practices?

Before discussing the findings of my research related to the research questions of this paper, it must be noted that the educators involved in this study are all committed to the teaching profession, committed to the students they teach and committed to their individual professional growth. My respect for each teacher and coach continued to grow as I learned more about them through the interview process. I know the high expectations of the job they are faced with each day and the work entailed to meet those expectations. The schools in which they work are comprised of challenges found in many schools today. The classrooms the teachers work in have students with and without support systems beyond the school, students who are challenged and not challenged by the grade level curriculum, students capable and not capable of following expectations of behavior as determined by the school, and students with and without motivation to learn. Each of the educators who participated in this study has the gift of knowing how to teach and relate to the students. As an educator, I learned that it was important for me to reflect on what happened during the school day and think about what I did or didn't do to improve the possibility of learning for the students. The participants of this study reflected on their work with the purpose of learning how to teach better, how to teach to meet the needs of the new students they are given each school year, as well as learn how to best utilize the educational resources at their disposal. Most importantly, the participants in this research continue to ask questions about teaching and learning – they ask these questions of their peers. They collaborate - they talk to one another and they

listen to one another. They recognize they have an important job – a job they take very

seriously. Sometimes, I felt these educators were hard on themselves and occasionally

unaware of the successes they were having in the work they did together. They have a

great deal to celebrate because as suggested in their conversations with me, they are

growing and understanding their teaching better – both the teaching of adults and

students.

> Coaching as describe by Guiney (2001):
>
> …is not work for the faint-hearted. To do it well requires a calm disposition and the trust-building skills of a mediator combined with the steely determination and perseverance of an innovator. Add to this mix the ability to know when to push and when to stand back and regroup in the long-term process of adopting new approaches to galvanize a school to function differently. To succeed a coach must be a leader who is willing not to be recognized as such and, at the same time, who is able to foster leadership among teachers who rarely regard themselves as leaders. (p. 741).

Although the literacy coaches who participated in this study would not describe

themselves as Guiney describes literacy coaches, they repeatedly displayed these

qualities and had a strong impact on those teachers who challenged themselves to grow

professionally and take the time to work with these literacy coaches. The principal at

Clinton School is to be commended for supporting the teachers to take risks in their

learning and encouraging them to continually explore new learning opportunities.

<div align="center">Findings to Research Questions</div>

Several recurring ideas emerged in my review of interviews with the teachers and

literacy coaches as well as in my field notes taken during observations of planning

sessions. The teachers describe the work of a literacy coaches in relation to:

consideration of the their professional goals; being an advocate for the teacher; and

analysis of their instruction followed with suggestions and advice. The literacy coaches

describe their work in relation to their understanding of adult learners; conversations, collaboration and dialogue grounded in assessment data; and the ability to develop relationships. The following section is divided into two parts. The first section depicts how the teachers describe the work of a literacy coach and the second section depicts how the literacy coaches describe their work.

Research Question 1- What is the Work of a Literacy Coah?

Through the interview process, the teachers viewed the literacy coaches' work as supportive. Data suggests that support was provided by the literacy coaches to the teachers in the following three ways: consideration of the teachers' professional goals; advocating on behalf of them; and through analysis of instruction followed by suggestions and advice.

Teachers' Description of the Work of Literacy Coaches

The teachers expressed in their initial interview that the work of the literacy coach is to support them in areas of interested growth or in instructional areas that they, as teachers, have identified as weaknesses. Additionally, the interview transcripts indicate that the teachers participating in this study want the work of the literacy coach to include observing and analyzing their instruction. The teachers also want the observations to be followed with suggestions and advice on how to improve their instructional practice. The data also indicates that as the relationship between the teacher and literacy coach developed, the teachers' ideas about the type of support provided by the literacy coach shifted. Teachers became willing to work on areas of reading instruction identified by the literacy coach rather than simply focusing on where they felt they needed improvement. Instead of simply wanting the literacy coach to validate their personal

goals, teachers became open to the literacy coaches' suggestions. Teachers in this study asked the literacy coaches to use an "evaluative eye" to determine if there were areas of instruction that could be improved regardless of whether the teacher saw the identified area as needing change or improvement. This shift in the work of a literacy coach could be based on the development of trust between her and the teacher.

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) emphasize that successful literacy coaches must be able to effectively analyze teacher-student interactions during reading and writing lessons and determine what changes a teacher must make to improve student learning and bring about a shift in teacher's knowledge and practice (p. 111). In considering this statement by Lyons and Pinnell, as well as the teachers' description of the work of literacy coaches, the development of trust is suggested as a factor that could lead to the work of analyzing classroom and instructional practices.

In contrast to what Lyons and Pinnell suggest above, Buly, et al. (2006) and Toll (2007) point out that literacy coaches must be in a non-evaluative role to develop collegial relationships built around trust and mutual goals. The principal of a school is usually in an evaluative role and responsible for formal teacher evaluation, which typically involves observing a teacher while instructing students and recognizing strengths and weaknesses of the instruction. Evaluation may be used as a tool to support the professional growth of teachers, but it is often used to determine continued employment from year to year as well as assist in determining tenure status of teachers. If evaluation as a tool for determining employment from year to year is what current published researchers are referring to when stating that a literacy coach should be in a non-evaluative role, then I will draw upon my own experience as a principal and agree

that a literacy coach should not take part in determining a teacher's job status. But if there is to be no evaluative element in literacy coaching, how is a coach to help improve a teacher's use of instructional strategies if they don't observe and evaluate her teaching and provide feedback? The act of observing is to "see or sense through directed, careful, analytic attention" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1993).   When asked by a teacher to observe in their classroom, the literacy coach is analyzing the instructional practices of the classroom teacher. This analysis would most likely have the literacy coach evaluate the effectiveness of various components of the reading instruction including, but not limited to, use of class time, use of reading materials, and effectiveness of teaching methods.   The observations of the teacher and discussions that would follow these observations should be for the purpose of determining the focus of the work between the literacy coach and classroom teacher.   In this study, the teachers and literacy coaches were able to develop collaborative relationships built around mutual goals with the use of observations of teaching done by the literacy coach. Classroom observations during reading were a component of the work of literacy coaching that teachers found to support their professional development.

Additionally, having the literacy coaches advocate on behalf of the teachers is a factor that seems to play into the development of trust between the literacy coaches and teachers and impact the work that occurs between the two. The data suggests that the literacy coaches acted as a link between the teachers and administrators. For example, Ms. Cook was able to convince the district's Literacy Director to allow the teachers at Clinton School to attend a school district in-service being offered by an outside consultant. By advocating for the teachers, the literacy coach may have enhanced the

trust between them.   As suggested by Knight (2007) providing support to make it as easy as possible for teachers to implement new practice (p. 32) is an act that can assist in the development of trust.

<u>Literacy Coaches' Description of the Work of Literacy Coaches</u>

Interview data and field notes imply that the literacy coaches supported the teachers as they made their way through the new reading series that was the backbone of the district's reading curriculum. They supported the teachers using assessment data and their understanding of adult learners, conversations, collaboration and dialogue all grounded in their focus on relationship building.

<u>Teachers of Adult Learners</u>

Because a big part of a literacy coach's role is to be a support to teachers and be a teacher to adult learners, literacy coaches must have knowledge on how to teach adults. While the teachers never directly talked about the work of a literacy coach being specific to adult learners, it was a concern that was shared by both of the literacy coaches in this study. The literacy coaches felt the need for more information regarding adult learners as necessary to improve their practice.   Data from the interviews and field notes noting their interactions with the teachers during planning sessions, exemplify that both literacy coaches understood how to enhance the teachers' own motivation to learn. In helping to build the teachers' knowledge and expand their thinking about reading instruction, the literacy coaches provided additional instructional resources and ideas to use while teaching. They involved and encouraged the teachers to reflect on how they felt their instructional practices were changing as a result of their work together.   As well, they tapped into the teachers' self-motivation to support the exploration of different

instructional practices to further develop reading instruction in their classrooms. The literacy coaches also gently pushed the teachers to think beyond their teaching routines and imagine new ways of meeting the needs of their students. The literacy coaches provided support and encouragement to the teachers, which allowed the teachers to become comfortable taking risks in their teaching and trying some new ways of doing things in their classrooms. The coaches didn't pretend to have the answers to all questions regarding reading or even claim to be the best teachers of reading, however, they were able to recognize the strengths they not only had as teacher leaders, but also the strengths of those teachers with whom they worked. They built upon these strengths and continued to grow professionally.

Teaching adults is a substantial part of a literacy coach's job, and both coaches in this study recognized the need not only for them, but for all of the literacy coaches in the district to be involved in ongoing training focused on working with adult learners. Sweeney (2007) suggests that just as literacy coaching is a job-embedded form of professional development for teachers, coaches should have the same type of professional development opportunities offered to them. Opportunities to observe other coaches and then discuss what happened in the coaching process can foster reflective thinking and new thinking about the coach's practice. Having conversations about the daily practice of literacy coaching with other literacy coaches in the district may also further their knowledge of working with adult learners. The interview data suggests that ongoing conversations about what is happening among the literacy coaches in this district and their own sharing of stories with one another about the successes and challenges they face

in their daily work with the adult learners they are trying to support will only improve their practice and bring clarity to the work they do each day.

<u>Conversations, Dialogue and Collaboration Grounded in Assessment Data</u>

One element of teachers' professional community that produces a collective sense of responsibility for student learning as summarized by Garmston and Wellman (1999) is that time for collaboration [must be provided] where teachers share their expertise and perspectives on teaching and the learning process, and examine data about students to make decisions about their teaching. Using the information gathered from classroom reading assessments as well as students' daily work, the literacy coaches were able to focus their conversations and collaboration on "facts" that had been collected on the students by both the teachers and literacy coaches. Among themselves they produced a 'collective sense of responsibility for student learning.' Bean and Hamilton (1995) conducted a study of reading specialists and found that collaboration was considered an essential component for improving instruction and student achievement (p. 218). The literacy coaches and teachers who participated in this study are living out the work of what other researchers in the field of education have indicated as essential to improved instructional practice. They are making decisions about instruction based on student assessments with an intent on improving student learning.

<u>Relationship Building</u>

Both coaches felt that the relationships they built with the adults in the schools had an impact on their coaching. The literacy coaches see relationship building as a significant part of their role. The data collected indicates both Ms. Smith and Ms. Cook put considerable thought into how to advance the relationships they had already established

as friendships to support their work of literacy coaching.   They also considered how to cultivate new relationships with other teachers.   However, despite their efforts to approach peers and establish the idea of working together, it seems that success in building relationships will not be fully realized until there is support from the building principals with whom they work.   Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) indicate that teachers need access to other colleagues to learn from and with them.   Cathy Toll (2007) believes "if a literacy coaching program is to have maximum effectiveness, coaches, teachers and administrators should be clear about desired outcomes of the program" (p. 44). As suggested by Ms. Cook, the culture of coaching does not exist within the schools in which they work. This is an area that should be further considered within this district if they are seeking ways to improve their literacy coaching model.

Research Question 2 - What Impact, if any, Does the Literacy Coach as a Professional Development Model Have on the Instructional Strategies Utilized by a Classroom Teacher?

    To discuss the impact on instructional strategies utilized by classroom teachers as suggested by the data, the following areas will be addressed: independent reading, cohesive instruction, and writing. The data also suggests the following three factors play into the impact of literacy coaching: self-motivation to learn, trust and relationships.

    Independent Reading

    Each teacher in this study reflected on change that occurred within their classroom as a result of the focus of the work between her and the literacy coach. The two teachers at Clinton School imply in their interviews that independent reading time

was changed in their classrooms due to the work between them and the literacy coach.

Ms. Cook discussed in one of our interviews that students should be given significant

time to read throughout the day to practice the comprehension strategies they learn in

reading.   While the two teachers had independent reading time set aside in their schedule

prior to working with the literacy coach, Ms. Cook placed emphasis on independent

reading to make it more meaningful for the students. Initially, students were given

approximately 20 minutes to read on their own; however, the teachers shared that they

were not sure the students were actually reading during this time as they had nothing in

place to hold the students accountable for comprehending the text. Also, some of the

students had difficulty selecting appropriate text to read independently. Ms. Block

indicated that with the support of the literacy coach, "this time became much more

dynamic and useful for the kids. I've learned how to conference with the students about

the books they are reading and have taught them how to converse about what they are

reading." The support from the literacy coach appears to be a step toward addressing

reading comprehension as "comprehension is a complex process that is socially

constructed" (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001). The teachers' implementation of conferencing

with students after independent reading time supports the social aspect of constructing

meaning of what has been read. Allington and Cunningham (2007) emphasize the need

for teachers to foster thinking while reading and writing.   They suggest discussion,

conversation, and reflection as avenues to reach their notion of "thoughtful literacy." The

data suggests both teachers at Clinton School are utilizing either conferences or reflective

writing after independent reading to develop thoughtful readers.   While the "extensive

reading at the heart of language arts" as suggested by Pressley, et al. (2006) may not be

fully realized in these classrooms, the work has begun to support the teachers develop an understanding of the role that conversations with their students about the text they are reading plays in comprehension.

Cohesive Instruction

The implementation of cohesive instruction was something that Ms. Kidd suggested as an improvement in her practice in relation to the work she and Ms. Smith engaged in together. Ms. Kidd describes cohesive instruction as taking a reading strategy taught in a mini lesson and connecting it to the centers, shared reading and guided reading components of her literacy block. The planning session observed between Ms. Kidd and Ms. Smith indicates that thoughtful decisions were made regarding the strategies that would be the focus during instruction as well as emphasized during the various components of the literacy block (i.e. center work, independent reading, writing, etc.). This is an indication that the teacher is developing a stronger awareness of the need to provide "a great deal of time and opportunity" to focus on the strategy which will support the students' comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Writing

Ms. Robinson shared that the interactions between her and the literacy coach supported her organization of the writing block and suggested that this has impacted the writing of the students. She said, "…some of their writing, sometimes it will just take my breath away." She shared that she feels because of the literacy coach's encouragement, she has been able to prioritize her instruction during writing. Ms. Block said she learned how to get the kids to write through observations of lessons taught by the literacy coach.

While data suggests that there was an impact on instructional practices utilized by the classroom teachers due to working with the literacy coach, self-motivation to learn, trust, and relationships were three factors that seemed to impact how the work of the literacy coach was carried out. The participants in this study were self-motivated and wanted to learn something new or improve an instructional practice or component of the literacy block. Ms. Smith indicated that teachers would seek her out when they wanted help with something. She saw this as the opportunity to begin a conversation that may lead to collaboration between her and the teacher. Her comment indicates that the self-motivation of teachers brings them to her. Sharan Merriam (2001) shares the adult learner is someone who is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (p. 5). This district does not mandate that teachers work with the literacy coach, so those who chose to – those teachers who are self-motivated to take ownership of their learning are the ones that have greater potential of being impacted by the work of a literacy coach.

Factors Impacting the Work of Literacy Coaches

Teachers and coaches also suggested that trust was a factor impacting the work between them. In the example where Ms. Robinson shared how uncomfortable it was to reveal an area of weakness in her instructional practice to the literacy coach, one can make an assumption that Ms. Robinson was able to do this because she had confidence in Ms. Cook not to share that with anyone as well as the confidence in her knowledge to be able to support her in this area of teaching. Having confidence in a person is a characteristic of trust.

Ms. Cook suggests that the trust of the school's principal impacts the work that can occur between teachers and literacy coaches. She said, "the teachers know and

realize that their principal is very supportive of them and views coaching as a positive thing for all teachers…" Supporting Ms. Cook's comments, Rosenholtz (1989) found that where principals encourage helping relationships…teachers tend to work harder to help their colleagues succeed (p. 61).

Relationships are another factor that impact the work of a literacy coach. As Ms. Smith indicated in her attempt to work with a team of first year teachers, the relationship got off to a terrible start, making it very difficult for the three of them to begin working together. In addition to the terrible start at building a relationship, Ms. Smith indicated that due to the fact that she was unable to dedicate significant time to this relationship because of responsibilities she had at other schools or at the district level, she was not able to undo the damage that had been done.

Ms. Cook discussed another negative factor of relationship building within the schools. In addition to stating that being responsible for more than one school played a factor in relationship building, she also said a "coaching framework does not exist in the district – [not all of] the principals and teachers understand the role or see the value in working closely with a coach." Effective coaches as described by Buly, et al. (2006) have a "carefully considered job description that has been conveyed, understood, and accepted by both administrators and teachers in a district" (p. 227).

Ms. Smith provided insight to how she thought relationships could be strengthened with teachers. She felt that staying connected to the kids would help teachers see that she "is still in the loop – you know, not removed from what it is like to work with a large group of kids and what behavior management issues one could potentially have and what it means to plan for that particular group of students." By

letting teachers see that as a literacy coach she is skilled as a teacher, Ms. Smith feels working with kids could potentially help teachers and literacy coaches build a relationship of trust.

Based on the discussions with the literacy coaches and teachers participating in this study, the staff and administration in this district may need to develop a stronger understanding of the work of literacy coaches in order to enhance the reach of literacy coaching. While further development and understanding of the work of a literacy coach may be needed, the teachers in this study talked about the collaborative relationship they had with the literacy coach. The teachers shared how this collaboration led to the growth of their instructional practice in the areas of both reading and writing.

Additionally, it is known that access to other colleagues is crucial when it comes to developing relationships and making gains toward school goals. However, having access to other colleagues in the school can be a difficult task to achieve if the principal isn't focused on carving out the time for teachers to work together. Aside from the time allocated to teaching, the school day contains "obstacles," such as recess duty, scheduled meetings with grade level teams to discuss a pre-determined topic, or meetings with parents that make it difficult for colleagues to gather for the purpose of learning together. While these "obstacles" are necessary components of the school environment, access to other colleagues is part of the equation to developing relationships.

It seems important for the principal to demonstrate that professional relationships are an important part of the school's learning environment if relationships among literacy coaches and teachers are to develop. This requires the principal to maintain focus on the instructional practices that are occurring in the classrooms and engage in discussions with

staff about what they are doing in their classrooms. The principal needs to demonstrate the importance of collaboration to all staff. By showing true care and concern for both the teachers and students in the school, the principal will begin to establish relationships that may enhance the development of the literacy coach's relationships with teachers. The principal needs to set the example and show that the staff should aspire to work and learn together.

Because it is left to the teachers' discretion to determine if they take part in the professional development opportunities provided by the literacy coaches in the district in which this study was done, self-motivation to learn seems to impact who works with the literacy coaches. Although mandating that teachers work with the literacy coaches would not support a collaborative work environment,   the support of the principals as well as their own modeling of collaboration and taking of risks to continually learn may help the school realize a vision of literacy that supports the implementation of effective, research based instructional strategies.

Understanding that a top down mandate expecting all teachers to work with the literacy coaches will not work, it is crucial that the school's principal show interest in what literacy coaching can offer, develop a relationship with the literacy coach in the school and possibly even tap into the knowledge of the literacy coach to support the principal in her role as instructional leader.   Equally as important as developing a relationship with the literacy coach, the principal should encourage the taking of risks among her staff and nurture an environment where teachers come together to learn from one another.   These actions are characteristic of the principal of Clinton Elementary School and seem to have impacted the work the literacy coach is doing in the school.

Although not all teachers are involved with the literacy coach at Clinton School, the principal's involvement with her staff and encouragement for them to take risks in their teaching has more teachers seeking out the support of the literacy coach. It seems important for this district to address how they are carrying out their vision for literacy since not all of the teaching staff is exposed to the learning opportunities offered by the literacy coaches.

Research Question 3 - What is the Nature of the Relationship Between the Teacher and Literacy Coach and Classroom Practices?

The nature of the relationship between a literacy coach and teacher, will be discussed specifically in the areas of trust, friendship, and conversations, dialogue and collaboration.

The relationship between literacy coach Ms. Cook and classroom teacher Ms. Robinson is both a friendship and professional working relationship. The friendship they share grew out of teaching in the same school prior to working together as literacy coach and classroom teacher. The focus of their work this year seems to have been enhanced by this friendship, but also at times made difficult conversations more difficult. As shared earlier in the presentation of data, Ms. Robinson discussed the difficulty she had in sharing her weakness of teaching meaningful guided reading lessons that developed deeper thinking about the text students were reading. She said it was difficult to expose a weakness of hers to a friend and at the same time share her weakness with this professional colleague who has a great deal of knowledge about reading instruction and this specific component of the literacy block. She recognized however, if she chose to

just act as though she understood what instructional practices should be utilized during guided reading, she would never truly learn from Ms. Cook and benefit from her knowledge.

This conversation indicates that Ms. Robinson trusted Ms. Cook. Sharing her weakness may have been difficult because some school environments foster the idea that a teacher must have all of the knowledge and be able to impart that knowledge to her students. Wheatley (2002) talks about needing to be able to give up beliefs we have in order to think and work together in new ways. She also points out that "we have to be willing to admit that we're not capable of figuring things out alone" (p. 35). The relationship between Ms. Robinson and Ms. Cook and the conversations about guided reading are supported by Burkins (2007) following point, "the stronger the conversations and the deeper the connections, the more meaningful the work becomes. Meaningful work leads to lasting change and facilitates an atmosphere of reflection" (p. 77). Although Ms. Robinson feels she still has a great deal to learn in order to strengthen the guided reading component of the reading block, she feels she has the literacy coach's attention and understanding of what her needs are, and with her support, will get to a place where she feels she is meeting the needs of her students during this portion of the reading block. This is the beginning of the collaboration that needs to take place in schools. Educators need to be open to learning from one another, be open to the ideas of others and be willing to work together and recognize there is always going to be the need to change within schools.

I also asked Ms. Smith to talk about her impact on the teachers she worked with, she said that in an attempt to begin working with a grade level team of two first year teachers

at another school (not participating in this study) the relationship played a significant role in what she was able to accomplish. The situation as described in chapter four, indicates the importance of relationship building as part of the role of literacy coaching. Ms. Smith discussed the difficulty she had in building a relationship with a team of first year teachers. She related some of the difficulty in successfully developing a relationship to the idea that some colleagues she worked with in previous years negatively impacted the building of a relationship with this team of first year teachers. She shared that one teacher in particular didn't see the value in working with a literacy coach and was at least partially responsible for creating the misinterpretation that Ms. Smith's role as a literacy coach was to remediate teacher instructional practice. She also related some of the difficulty in building this relationship to the fact that she was in several schools and also required to attend many district level meetings. She found it was difficult to devote the time necessary to prove her purpose and to build the trust necessary to support this relationship. This example speaks to the importance of trust as well as to the importance of the time it takes to build a deep relationship.

Time is a valuable and scarce commodity in a school. When time is not carved out of the busy schedule of the school day to allow teachers to focus on relationship building and the importance of the work that should be occurring within the school, isolation of teachers may be reinforced.

Despite Ms. Smith's difficulty in developing a positive relationship with this team of teachers, she is able to recognize that her relationship with Ms. Kidd did impact the learning environment of her classroom. When Ms. Smith was asked to discuss the impact her coaching had with Ms. Kidd she struggled to differentiate the results based on her

professional role as literacy coach or her role as friend. She said, "[this] is a little hard to determine because we talk so much about so many things in education that I'm not sure if I can tell what impact coaching has had versus what impact our friendship has had in her classroom." When Ms. Kidd talked about their friendship and working together she indicated that although trust was a positive factor in their relationship as friends, trust needed to be developed on a different level to support the work that she and the literacy coach would engage in. She was looking for open and honest feedback from the literacy coach and was unsure this would happen due to their friendship. However, she suggests that because they further developed their trust, feedback was constructive and supported her learning.

Margaret Wheatley (2002) focuses on the courage it takes to work on changing things, "we only need enough courage to invite friends into a conversation. Large and successful change efforts start with conversations among friends…" (p. 25). Toll (2005, 2007) suggests that the work of literacy coaching begins with friends.

It could be implied in this research that the work between a literacy coach and teacher starts between friends. This study may be an example of how friendships that already existed supported the work of literacy coaching. It could also be suggested that the work between literacy coaches and teachers supported the development of friendships. Friends who work together probably already spend time together to discuss educational matters. If this is the case, the literacy coaches in this study may have felt safe in approaching their teacher friends to begin the work of literacy coaching. Because a friendship between a literacy coach and classroom teacher may not be possible in every case,

consideration should be made in how to move the work of literacy coaching beyond those who are already friends.

The work of relationship building needs to occur within schools. This may allow the successful examples of the work of literacy coaching to trickle into the classrooms of those who don't easily volunteer to give of their time, energy and possibility of having one investigate one's belief systems as part of professional growth. As I found in my review of the literature related to professional development, ideas shared by Fullan (1990, 2001), Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982, 1996), and Garmston and Wellman (1990) focus on the need for schools to focus on developing collaborative work environments. The idea of schools needing to focus on developing a collaborative culture where teachers are encouraged to learn from and with one another has been a part of educational literature for a significant amount of time. The conversations I had with the literacy coaches and classroom teachers support the importance of collaboration and relationship building.

Ms. Smith relates some of her impact on teachers' instructional practices on the differences in how teachers live out their daily work. While she views some teachers as being collaborative by nature, she has had to work toward creating a collaborative relationship with others. Relationship building and nurturing of these relationships takes time. In addition to this time, the relationship needs to be one in which trust is developed and the capacity for each individual to share opinions yet remain open-minded to new learning. This all takes a considerable amount of time - school administrators as well as teachers need to be willing to commit to this time. The use of literacy coaching to impact the instructional strategies within a school is not a quick fix.

Conclusions

The literacy coaches in this study are good listeners and they encourage the teachers to take risks and be open-minded about new learning. The literacy coaches also ask questions of the teachers to help them reflect on their practice and their learning. They are empathetic toward the needs of the teachers they work with. They themselves are risk takers.

From this body of research, the data analyzed indicates that the teachers in this study were open to changing their instructional practice by trying various ways to structure the time devoted to teach reading and utilize suggestions from the literacy coaches during instruction. Additionally, they used research-based information about reading to determine how they would instruct their students, and recognized that students' assessment data was an essential component that should inform their instructional planning. The teachers began taking risks in their instructional practice with hopes of having a stronger impact on student learning. They reported changes in how they taught.

I found that there were three critical elements in order for literacy coaching to be an effective professional development tool. First, the teaching staff needs to have time to utilize the resource of literacy coaching. Second, a collaborative relationship needs to be fostered between the teacher and literacy coach. The support of the school's principal is critical to nurturing these two elements. Some of the difficulties the literacy coaches encountered in their work may have been connected to these two elements.

<u>Collaborative Relationships</u>

  The connections the literacy coaches were able to make with staff members within some schools was stronger than others, yet the literacy coaches worked diligently to make connections within each school they were assigned. An environment where the expectations of working together and having conversations sharing one's beliefs about reading instruction appears to support the work of the literacy coach. Relationship building is at the heart of literacy coaching as well as at the heart of teaching. An important characteristic of the relationship between the literacy coach and teacher is collaboration.

  This study supports the ideas of Fullan (2001). He suggests that if schools are able to implement a model of collaboration where classroom teachers work with peers on instructional strategies and initiatives this will support effective reading instruction. Collaboration also supports the social aspect of learning.   Schön (1983) emphasizes the need for educators to engage in true dialogue and collaboration…."   He sees this as the opportunity for educators to identify weak teaching practices and improve with the support of others (p. 37). The conversations I had with the literacy coaches and teachers during my data collection support the ideas of Schön.   My findings suggest that through their work together and support of one another, the teachers were able to think differently about their teaching practice as well try new instructional practices in their classrooms. Through the interviews and observations of planning sessions, I came to better understand the power of collaboration among individuals trying to improve their teaching practice as well as learn from one another.

As one of the literacy coaches stated during an interview, collaborative individuals may be the ones who seek out the assistance of a literacy coach. My research is not to suggest that collaborative relationships develop just because a literacy coach and teacher work together. However, I do think this body of research strongly suggests the importance of having a collaborative relationship between literacy coach and teacher in order for the work of literacy coaching to have any impact on the instructional practices of reading. This affirmation means that schools need to foster the building of collaborative relationships among their staff members. As coach Ms. Cook said in our last interview, "my work can't begin until I have developed a relationship with the teacher." Additionally, value needs to be placed on the time that must be devoted to develop collaborative relationships. Simply put, time must be allocated for teachers to collaborate regarding educational practice.

Time

From the interviews and observations of teachers and literacy coaches, it became apparent that time was an issue they struggled with. All of the participants realized that a significant amount of time was needed to work together. The professional development that occurred in the work with a literacy coach did not occur in one meeting or one workshop. The participants recognized that the professional development model of literacy coaching was ongoing. The literacy coaches felt they didn't have enough time to meet the needs of the schools in which they worked due to the number of schools they were assigned as well as due to the additional responsibilities they had beyond working with the teachers or obstacles they faced in trying to work with teachers. Additional duties such as attendance at district level meetings each week took time away from being

in the schools with the teachers and students. And obstacles such as trying to build

relationships with school administrators and staff to support the work of literacy coaching

took time away from the actual work related to reading and instruction that could occur in

the work of literacy coaching.

Aside from sharing they were always seeking ways to find additional time to do

their work together, it was apparent that the teachers and literacy coaches in this study

worked efficiently during the planning periods that were established as part of their

school day. This may have been due to the focus they brought to their meetings. Student

assessment data and daily work samples were used to guide their discussions and

instructional planning. However, even though they were able to accomplish some things

during their planning periods, they often met before or after school, including weekends,

to further plan and discuss the needs of their students and instructional practices that

would support their learning.

Conversations and planning related to the students' progress in reading and the

teachers' instruction could not be completed in a 'one-shot' meeting or one-time

discussion. Because of this, the educators in this study were very generous of their

personal time when it came to working on their instructional practice. It is also important

to note that the participants in this study didn't see the additional time they devoted to the

work of literacy coaching as anything beyond what they would do as a professional.

However, from my work in schools, I know some teachers are not able or willing to

commit a significant amount of personal time to additional work that is not required of

them. I think it is reasonable to state that it is the professional responsibility of teachers

to take part in professional development.   But in the case of this research, teachers were

not required to work with literacy coaches as part of their professional development. Looking at providing the time needed to support the work of literacy coaches and teachers is necessary for schools if they are to realize what could be accomplished in their work together. The ideas shared by the literacy coaches and teachers related to time support the finding of Lieberman (1996) and Garmston and Wellman (1999). Lieberman emphasizes that in order to implement high-quality professional development, opportunities and time for inquiry must be provided. Garmston and Wellman also highlight the importance of giving time for collaboration where teachers share their expertise and perspectives on teaching and the learning process. The literacy coaches and teachers in this study also affirm there is need to invest time in order for professional development to be effective.

Principal's Impact on Literacy Coaching

The principal not only has a significant impact on the teachers' use of time within a school, but also with setting the purpose and providing support for literacy coaching. Because there are only so many hours in a school day, the principal must make decisions that have a positive impact on the use of time. The systemic-support needed within a school to support literacy coaching is suggested in the conversations had with the literacy coaches participating in this study. Their understanding of the need to have the principal's support as well as involvement in developing their purpose within the school was necessary to enhance the success they felt they experienced with the teachers participating in this study. It seems that if the schools in which the literacy coaches work were to develop a clear sense of purpose for literacy coaching, the issue of time would be addressed as well. It was evident from the conversations with the literacy coaches that

they didn't feel as effective in schools where the support of the principal was weak or nonexistent. Jim Knight's (2007) research of coaching indicates that the principal must have a guiding hand in what takes place between the teachers and coaches so that their efforts are in line with the school's vision of literacy. Also, Knight has found that the principal and coach must work together to ensure that the support of the literacy coach is utilized by the teachers.

Drawing upon my own experience as a school principal, the principal should be involved in the professional development of teachers. This statement is made with an understanding of the many responsibilities of a school principal. As stated in this research, the coaches were working with teachers to develop stronger instructional practices in the areas of reading and writing. It seems that if the principal is also having professional conversations with the literacy coach and sharing the school's vision of literacy, there is a greater possibility that the work of the literacy coach will have a stronger impact within the school.

Also, a considerable body of knowledge exists about what characterizes the professional work environment of schools in which learning for both adults and students is cultivated. For example, as discussed by Allington and Cunningham (2007), "schools where public professional conversations are fostered and supported are where children are becoming readers and writers" (p. 17). They define professional conversations to be discussions of instructional practices held with peers in which problems are exposed and solved. For this to occur, professional trust must be high. A school principal's leadership impacts the professional trust within a school as well as the professional development that occurs within the school. Further research is needed to determine the

nature of the relationship between the effectiveness of literacy coaching and the leadership of the principal.

Further Considerations and Recommendations for Research

Additional ideas to explore due to the themes that emerged during the analysis of the interview data will be presented in this section. There is a considerable body of knowledge that exists regarding how schools should create collaborative cultures. The importance of relationship building within schools is significant. Relationship building can allow for focus to be placed on meaningful conversations that may lead to instructional practices to support all learners, both children and adults. While it seems that the work of literacy coaching impacted each individual that participated in this study, as well as the instructional practices the teachers utilized, there is more to learn about literacy coaching.

Hiring collaborative individuals with the expectation of having relationships grounded in collaboration, reflection, and questioning may support the work of literacy coaching. However, it is important to recognize that individuals with a collaborative nature can't just be expected to carry on without a support system and the encouragement to take part in continued learning. What do we do when the school environment isn't already viewed as a place for adult learning, collaboration, risk taking, and examination of instructional beliefs - a place where conversations about education occur regularly and openly? Literacy coaches can be a catalyst for the change, but they can't do this alone.

The system in which this research was done is made up of talented educators with job titles including, superintendent, curriculum director, principal, literacy director, reading specialist, classroom teacher, literacy coach, and instructional aide to name a few.

These educators could be instrumental in creating a vision of literacy instruction for this school system, which may in turn further develop the possibilities of literacy coaching. Within this vision needs to be the understanding that time must be committed to reaching the goals developed within the vision of literacy. Support needs to be provided by the supervisors of teachers and literacy coaches to allow for risks to be taken, strongly held convictions and beliefs about reading instruction to be examined and questioned with the understanding that some of these beliefs may need to be let go if they don't help the schools reach the goals of the vision of literacy.

<u>Impact on Students</u>

At the onset of this research, I hoped this research would indicate if the literacy coach had an impact on students' comprehension of text. The teachers were able to talk about improvements they saw in the students over the year in the areas in which they worked with the literacy coach. Ms. Robinson perceived her students to improve in the area of both independent reading and writing and Ms. Block commented that in addition to independent reading and writing, she recognized that the literacy coach had an impact on the behavior management strategies she used with her students.

While the teachers' perceptions of academic growth may be accurate, it is difficult to point to the work of the literacy coach as the factor that impacted student growth in reading and writing. Although the teachers said they observed growth in the reading behaviors demonstrated in class as well as improvements on the assessment data (DRA scores and fluency scores) compared from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year, student growth in the area of reading and writing cannot be directly tied to the work of the literacy coach based on this research.

Although this research cannot conclude that student achievement was impacted by the work of the literacy coach, it does suggest that the learning environment was influenced by the work between the literacy coach and classroom teacher. Evidence of this was displayed in the enthusiasm teachers brought to the instructional planning sessions observed as part of the data collection. The teachers increased the amount of time students spent during the school day involved in actual reading as well as time reserved for students to discuss their reading with their teacher and peers. This time allowed the students to practice the strategies they were learning to support their comprehension of the text as well as reflect on what they were reading. It will be important to research further what impact literacy coaching has on the development of students' literacy.

Currently in this district, literacy coaches do not work with students and are not encouraged to by the district's Literacy Director. Current literature on the topic of literacy coaching (see Toll, 2007, Burkins, 2007, Walpole & McKenna, 2004) and the IRA do not suggest that a literacy coach work with students as that is the role of the reading specialist in schools. The work of literacy coaching is currently focused on adult learning. Further inquiry into the work of literacy coaches with students and its impact on reading should be explored.

Women as Learners

In this study, all of the participants were women. In the field of education, particularly in the elementary school setting, women typically outnumber men in teaching positions. Because all of the adult participants were women, this could somehow have impacted the themes that I saw emerge – the idea of trust, collaboration and need for

relationships.   In my reading of *Women as Learners*, by Hayes and Flannery (2000),

Flannery discusses the relational view of women's identity. This view proposes the

following:

> Women develop and gain a sense of identity in a context of connections with
> others rather than through individuation and separation from others. In this
> model, women's sense of self is organized around building and maintaining
> relationships. The emphasis is positive, with women seen as proactively
> connecting with others rather than being dependent on them (p. 60).

In this research, substantial data was shared regarding relationships between the teachers

and literacy coaches. The literacy coaches used time in all of their interviews to talk

about the need to develop relationships to carry out their work. Recognizing that

Flannery's ideas may be a factor affecting this research, additional questions could be

explored to determine how the learning of women impacts the work of literacy coaching.

Literacy Coach Certification

Also, both of the literacy coaches in this study were hired for this position without

holding the reading certification that is recommended by the International Reading

Association. Both of these teachers are regarded by their peers and supervisors as

excellent teachers of reading and demonstrate their knowledge of reading through their

instructional practices. Each also has been involved in ongoing professional development

throughout their careers in education not only in the area of reading, but also in coaching.

Additional research could be done to determine if the reading endorsement really does

prepare a person for the literacy coaching position. Also, currently the IRA does not

discuss adult learning and working with adults as part of the expertise one must have to

earn the endorsement for literacy coaching. This area should also be addressed as both

literacy coaches identify adult learning as an area they could learn more about to support them in their work.

Trust

In addition to looking at the leadership within a school and its impact on literacy coaching, trust in the school environment should be explored further. Because this was a common idea that was sometimes just hinted at in the interview transcripts as well as deliberately discussed by both the literacy coaches and teachers, trust appears to be a significant factor related to literacy coaching.

Relationships are built on trust and it seems without it, developing a relationship can be difficult if not impossible. Schools need to focus on relationship building and hold this as a priority. Without trusting relationships, collaboration - the conversations about the work to be done in schools, may not be as meaningful. Allowing yourself to be vulnerable in an environment where you can discuss weaknesses, your strongly held beliefs, and your convictions about teaching, can only happen where trust has developed.

Evaluation as an Aspect of Literacy Coaching

What does it mean to evaluate? It seems unavoidable for an evaluation to include judgments or questions of why something is being done in a classroom. Can a literacy coach really remain unbiased without opinion on how instruction should occur based on her knowledge of reading? Part of the observation and evaluation process is providing feedback. Wouldn't this feedback inevitably include judgments based on one's knowledge of instruction and reading as well as one's own experiences in teaching? Rather than attempting to remove evaluation as part of the literacy coach's role, further

research on how to strengthen the foundation for constructive, collaborative dialogue between the literacy coach and the teacher needs to occur

<center>Interviewing as a Form of Data Collection</center>

The idea of sitting with people to talk with them, giving them space to share their stories was something I always imagined I would do to carry out my research when I entered my school's doctoral program. Although it was required to take classes informing the graduate students both of quantitative and qualitative studies and methods, I was not fazed by the "warnings" given by professors and other researchers who carried out qualitative studies using interviews as their main source of data.   Stories of the amount of time needed to carry out the interviews, transcribe interviews, read and re-read interview transcripts trying to make sense of what was being said and the complete uncertainty one could feel when trying to make meaning of it all were ignored.   Yes, it was extremely time consuming and sometimes frustrating – especially if background noise would drown out the participants comments on the tape used during the taping of the interviews, or unforeseeable circumstances required an interview to be rescheduled, however, it was also the best use of my time in getting to know the participants of this study. Just as the teachers and literacy coaches in this study talked about the need for trust to be present in order for a relationship to develop where meaningful work could occur, I too had to build trust with the participants in order for each to feel comfortable sharing their stories. The transcripts of the first interviews seem minimal compared to what I gathered in the second and third interviews with the participants. I feel I was able to build trust by sharing the typed transcripts of the interviews and asking for their input to see if what was said in the interview and now on paper truly reflected their thoughts. I

also attempted to spend some time before I began each interview to talk informally with the participants and see how thing were going in their classrooms because I truly was interested in what they were working on with their students. I also recognized that the interviews took place after a busy day of teaching so I tried to be cognizant of the participants' time and not take too much of it for the interviews. As time went on though, some of the participants didn't look at the clock to make sure they could make it to their next responsibility – they continued to talk and share their story.

I hope that in my role as a principal I made time available to carry on the type of conversations that I had with the individuals in this study. Schools are busy places, but I think the time can be devoted to allowing for deep, meaningful conversations to occur. Each of the participants had beliefs on how professional development could be carried out, they had uncertainties about some of their instructional practices, and they had questions on how to best meet the needs of their students. I don't know that they have been given the opportunity to share these ideas until my interviews. I think one of the big ideas I take away from my method of data collection, is that although time consuming, interviewing – having conversations, allows for growth and a better understanding of people. If trust is built, relationships fostered, risk taking encouraged, and time given to support each of these, chances are conversations will occur – these conversations will lead to the collaboration necessary to bring about change within schools.

REFERENCES

Alexander, P.A., and Murphy, P.K. (1998). The research base for APA's learner-centered principles. In N.M. Lambert, & B. L. McCombs, <u>Issues in school reform: A samplers of psychological perspectives on learner-centered schools</u> (pp. 33-60). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Allington, R.L., & Cunningham, P.M. (2007). <u>Schools that work: Where all children read and write.</u> Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Allington, R.L., & Johnston, P.H. (2002). <u>Reading to learn: Lessons from exemplary fourth grade classrooms.</u> New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Allington, R.L., & Walmsley, S. A. (1995). <u>No quick fix: Rethinking literacy programs in America's elementary schools.</u> New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ball, D.L., & Cohen, D.K. (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), <u>Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice</u> (pp. 3-32). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Barth, R. (1990). <u>Improving schools from within: teachers, parents, and principals can make the difference.</u> San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Barth, R. (2006). *Improving relationships within the schoolhouse*. <u>Educational Leadership, 63</u>, (4), 8-13.

Bednar, A.K, Cunningham, D., Duffy, T.M., & Perry, J. D. (1992). Theory into practice: How do we link? In T.M. Duffy & D.H. Jonassen (Eds.), <u>Constructivism and the technology of instruction</u> (pp. 17-34). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Birman, B.F., Desimone, L., Porter, A.C., & Garet, M.S. (2000). *Designing professional development that works*. <u>Educational Leadership, 57</u>, (8), 28-33.

Blachowicz, C.L., Obrochta, C., & Fogelberg, E. (2005). *Literacy coaching for change*. <u>Educational Leadership, 62,</u> (6), 55-58.

Blachowicz, C.L., & Ogle, D. (2001). <u>Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners.</u> New York, NY: Guliford Press.

Bodgan R., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). <u>Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.</u> Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Buly, M. R., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Egawa, K. (2008). Literacy coaching: coming out of the corner. In R.D. Robinson, & M.C. McKenna (Eds.), Issues and trends in literacy education. (p. 227). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Burkins, J. M. (2007). Coaching for balance: How to meet the challenges of literacy coaching. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Cambourne, B. (2002). Holistic, integrated approached to reading and language arts instruction: The constructivist's framework of an instructional theory. In A.E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 25-47). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Collaboration (1993). In Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged online. Retrieved May 16, 2008

Coskie, T., Robinson, L., Buly, M.R., & Egawa, K. (2005). *What makes an effective literacy coach?* Voices from the Middle, 12, 60–61.

Costa, A.L., & Garmston, R.J. (2002). Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Cowen, J. E. (2003). A balanced approach to beginning reading instruction: A synthesis of six major U.S. research studies. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Cunningham, J.W., Many, J.E., Carver, R.P., Lee Gunderson, L., & Mosentha, P. B. (2000). *How will literacy be defined in the new millennium?* Reading Research Quarterly, 35, (1) 64-71.

Dole, J., Liang, L.A., Watkins, N.M., & Wiggins, C.M. (2006). *The state of reading professionals in the United States*. The Reading Teacher, 60, 194-199.

Dorn, L. J., French, C., & Jones, T. (1998). Apprenticeship in literacy: Transitions across reading and writing. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Dorn, L., & Soffos, C. (2005). Teaching for deep comprehension: A reading workshop approach. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publlishers.

Duffy, T.M., & Jonassen, D. H. (1992). Constructivism and the technology of instruction: A conversation. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Duke, N. K., & Pearson, D. P. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading instruction. In Farstrup, A.E., & S.J. Samuels (Eds.), What research has to say about reading instruction. (pp. 205-242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Durkin, D. (1978-1979). *What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction*. Reading Research Quarterly, 14, 481-533.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1996). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals. (2nd edition). White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2003). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals. (4th edition). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Fullan, M. (1990). Staff development, innovation, and institutional development. In Fullan, M. (Ed.), Changing School Culture Through Staff Development (pp. 3-25). Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Development.

Fullan, M. (2001). The new meaning of educational change. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Garmston, R., Linder, C., & Whitaker, J. (1993). *Reflections on cognitive coaching*. Educational Leadership, 51, (2), 57-61.

Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B.M. (1999). The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Guskey, T.R. (1995). Professional development in education: In searching of the optimal mix. In Guskey, T.M., & Huberman, M. (Eds.), Professional Development in education: New Paradigms and practices. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). Effective evaluation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Guiney, E. (2001). *Coaching isn't just for athletes: The role of teacher leaders*. Phi Delta Kappan, 82, 740-743.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (1998). What's worth fighting for out there? New York, New York: Teachers College Press.

Hawley, W.D., & Valli, L. (1999). The essentials of effective professional development. In L. Darling-Hammond, (Ed.), Teaching as the learning profession: A handbook of policy and practice. (pp. 127-150). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Hayes, E., & Flannery, D. (2000). Women as learners: The significance in gender in adult learning. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Hiebert, E.H. (1994). Becoming literate through authentic tasks: Evidence and adaptations. In Unrau, N.J., & Ruddell, R.B. (Eds.), <u>Theoretical models and processes of reading</u> (pp. 391- 413). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

International Reading Association. (2000). Teaching all children to read: the roles of the reading specialist: A position statement of the international reading association. Newark, DE: Author.

International Reading Association. (2004). <u>The role and qualifications of the reading coach in the United States: A position statement of the international reading association.</u> Newark, DE.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1980*). Improving inservice training: The message of research*. <u>Educational Leadership, 37</u>, (5), 379-385.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1982). *The coaching of teaching.* <u>Educational Leadership, 40</u>, (1), 4-10.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1996). *The evolution of peer coaching.* <u>Educational Leadership, 53</u>, (6), 12-16.

Knight, J. (2007). *Five key points to building a coaching program.* <u>The Journal of the National Staff Development Council, Winter, 28,</u> (1), 26 – 31.

Knight, J. (2007). <u>Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction.</u> Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Levine, A. (2006, September). <u>Educating School Teachers.</u> Retrieved from http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Educating_Teachers_Report.pdf on March 12, 2008.

Lieberman, A. (1996). Practices that support teacher development: Transforming conceptions of professional learning. In McLaughlin, M.W., & Oberman, I. (Eds.), <u>Teacher learning: new policies, new practices</u> (pp. 185-201). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). <u>Naturalistic Inquiry.</u> Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Little, J.W. (1999). Organizing schools for teacher learning. In Darling-Hammond, L. (Ed.), <u>Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice</u> (pp. 233-262). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lyons, C.A., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). <u>Systems for change in literacy education: A guide to professional development.</u> Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1999). <u>Designing qualitative research.</u> Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). <u>Qualitative research and case study application in education</u>. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miller, D. (2002). <u>Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades.</u> Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

National Council of Teachers of English. (2008, February 15). <u>Toward a definition of 21st-century literacies</u>. Retrieved from <u>www.ncte.org</u> on 3/3/2008.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003, June) <u>Coaching: a strategy for developing instructional practice.</u> The Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Observing (1993). In Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged online. Retrieved from <u>http:www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/observing</u> on August 10, 2008.

Perry, A. (2004). <u>Deep change: Professional development from the inside out.</u> Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.

Pressley, M. (2006). <u>Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching.</u> New York, NY: The Guliford Press.

Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Mistretta-Hampton, J., & Echevarria, M. (1998). *Literacy instruction in 10 fourth and fifth grade classrooms in upstate New York.* <u>Scientific Studies of Reading, 2,</u> 159-194.

Piaget, J. (1955). <u>The language and thought of the child.</u> Cleveland, OH: World.

Pinnell, G.S. (2002). <u>The Guided Reading Program Teacher's Guide</u>. From <u>www.teacher.scholastic.com</u>

Poglinco, S.M., Bach, A.J., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders M., & Supovitz, J.A. (2003, May) <u>The heart of the matter: the coaching model in America's choice schools.</u> Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Rasinski, T.V. (2006). Fluency: An oft-neglected goal for the reading program. In C. Cummins (Ed.), <u>Understanding and implementing reading first initiatives</u> (pp. 60-71). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

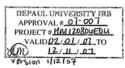Rhodes, L.K., & Shanklin, N.L. (1993). <u>Windows into literacy: Assessing learners k-8.</u> Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rodgers, E.M., & Pinnell, G. S. (2002). Learning from teaching in literacy education: New perspectives on professional development. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In Theoretical models and processes of reading. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Sarason, S. (1990). The predictable failure of educational reform. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schon, D. A. (1983). The reflective practitioner. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.

Schwartz, S., & McCarthy, M. (2003). An in-depth look at collaborative coaching and learning and workshop instruction in a sample of effective practice schools. www.blpe.org/reports.htm.

Seidman, I. (2006). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Shanklin, N. (2006, September 27). What are the characteristics of effective literacy coaching? Literacy Coaching Clearing House retrieved from http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs

Smith, F. (2004). Understanding Reading. Mahway, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Smylie, M.A. (1995). Teacher learning in the workplace: Implications for school reform. In T.R. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sweeney, D. (2003). Learning along the way: Professional development by and for teachers. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Sweeney, D. (2007, Winter). *Mirror, mirror, in the lab*. Journal of the National Staff Development Council, 28, (1) 38- 41.

Sykes, G. (1999). Teacher and student learning: Strengthening their connection. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), Teaching as the learning profession: A handbook of policy and practice. (pp. 151 – 180). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

The Teaching Commission (2004). Teaching at risk: A call to action. Retrieved from http://www.csl.usf.edu/teaching%20at%20risk.pdf

Toll, C. (2005). The literacy coach's survival guide: Essential questions and practical answers. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Toll, C. (2006). The literacy coach's desk reference: Processes and perspectives of effective coaching. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Toll, C. (2007). Lenses on literacy coaching: Conceptualizations, functions, and outcomes. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Trust (n.d) In Oxford English Dictionary online. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from http://dictionary.oed.com

U.S. Department of Education. (2000). Does professional development change teaching practice?: Results from a three-year study. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/epdp/index.html

Vogt M., & Shearer, B. A. (2007). Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind in society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walpole, S., & McKenna, M.C. (2004). The literacy coach's handbook: A guide to research-based practice. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Weaver, C. (1988). Reading process and practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, Copyright © 1993 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. Published under license from Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.

Wheatley, M. J. (2002). Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Examining the teaching life*. Educational Leadership. 63, (6), 26-29.

Wilson, K.G., & Daviss, B. (1994). Redesigning education: A nobel prize winner reveals what must be done to reform American education. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate

DEPAUL
UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF STUDY: The Role of a Literacy Coach in Supporting Instructional Improvement and Student Achievement

What is the purpose of this research?
I are asking you to be in a research study because I are trying to learn more about the impact a literacy coach may have on the teacher and on the classroom learning environment. You are invited to participate in this study because you are currently working as a literacy coach or are working with a literacy coach. This study is being conducted by Holly Murer at DePaul University.

How much time will this take?
This study will take about ten to twelve hours of your time.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in three interviews, collect data on three to four of the students in your classroom and share this data in a meeting with the literacy coach, teacher and myself. Most of the data you collect is currently collected through the district's reading assessment schedule and includes the DRA, Unit Tests, and Fluency Scores. In addition to this, eight samples of student comprehension work on daily assignments will be used in the study.

What are the risks involved in participating in this study?
Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. For example you may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions asked during the interview.

What are the benefits of my participation in this study?
You will not personally benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that what I learn will help you plan effective instruction to meet the needs of your students.

Can I decide not to participate? If so, are there other options?
Yes, you can choose not to participate. Even if you agree to be in the study now, you can change your mind later and leave the study. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later.

How will my privacy be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Whom can I contact for more information?
If you have questions about this study, please contact Holly Murer at 773-728-3342 or by email at hollymurer@yaoo.com. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Shay-Ann Heiser Singh, DePaul University's Director of Research Protections at 312-362-7593 or by email at sheiser@depaul.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.
Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have all my questions answered. I consent to be in this study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX B

Parental Permission for Participation

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY
TITLE OF STUDY: THE ROLE OF A LITERACY COACH IN SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

What is the purpose of this research?

I am asking your child to be in a research study because I are trying to learn more about the impact the work of your child's classroom teacher and the school's literacy coach has on your child's reading. Your child is invited to participate in this study because s/he is in a classroom where the teacher and literacy coach plan together for reading instruction. This study is being conducted by Holly Murer at DePaul University.

How much time will this take?

This study will take about one hour of your child's time.

What will my child be asked to do if I allow her/him to participate in this study?

If you allow your child to be in this study, s/he will be asked to participate in two thirty-minute interviews that will be conducted on two different days during your child's lunch/recess period. Each interview will last no more than thirty minutes. Interview questions will focus on having your child describe him/herself as a reader and reading habits s/he has. Your child's classroom teacher will be present in the room during the interview. The interviews will be audio taped with the sole purpose of my intent to review the interviews for my research. The information I gather during the interview sessions will be shared only with your child's classroom teacher so that s/he may use the information for instructional planning.

What are the risks involved in participating in this study?

Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what your child would encounter in daily life. Your child may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions but the open ended questions based solely on reading will be presented to your child in a friendly manner.

What are the benefits of my child's participation in this study?

Your child will not personally benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that what I learn from the study will help the teachers working with your child.

Can I decide not to allow my child to participate? If so, are there other options?

Yes, you can choose not to allow your child to participate. Even if you allow your child to be in the study now, you can change your mind later, and your child can leave the study. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to allow your child to participate or change your mind later. Also, even if you give permission, your child may decide that s/he does not want to be in the study and that is ok with me.

How will my child's privacy be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will identify your child. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records.

Whom can I contact for more information?

If you have questions about this study, please contact Holly Murer at 773-728-3342. If you have questions about your child's rights as a research subject, you may contact Shay-Ann Heiser Singh, DePaul University's Director of Research Protections at 312-362-7593 or by email at sheiser@depaul.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.
Statement of Consent:

Page 1 of 2

166

I have read the above information. I have all my questions answered. (Check one:)

☐ I permit my child to be in this study.   ☐ I **DO NOT** permit my child to be in this study.

Child's Name:_____   Grade in School: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature:_____   Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Student Consent to Participate

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: THE ROLE OF A LITERACY COACH IN SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

What is the purpose of this research?
I am asking you to be in a research study because I am trying to learn more about how the work between your classroom teacher and the literacy coach impacts your development as a reader. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a student in a classroom where the teacher and literacy coach are working together. This study is being conducted by Holly Murer at DePaul University.

How much time will this take?
This study will take about one hour of your time.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two thirty-minute interviews that will take place on two separate days during your lunch/recess period.

What are the risks of being in this study?
This study does not involve any risks other than what you deal with in daily life. The risks are minimal. For, example you may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions during the interview.

What are the benefits of being in this study?
You will not get any benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that what I learn will help your teachers plan the best instruction for you and other students your age to support you in the area of reading.

Can I decide not to participate? If so, are there other options?
Yes, you can choose not to participate. I have asked your parents to let you be in this study. But even if your parents have said "yes," you can still decide not to be in the study. Even if you agree to be in the study now, you can change your mind later and leave the study. Nothing bad will happen if you decide not to participate or change your mind later.

How will my privacy be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I might make, I will not include any information that will identify you, like your name. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will be able to look at the records.

Whom can I contact if I have questions?
If you have questions about this study, please contact Holly Murer at 773-728-3342. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Shay-Ann Heiser Singh, DePaul University's Director of Research Protections at 312-362-7593 or by email at sheiser@depaul.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep with you.

Statement of Assent:
I have read the above information. I have all my questions answered. I agree to be in this study.

Signature:_____   Date: _____   Grade in School:_____

Guardian/Parent's Name:_____

Page 1 of 1

VITA

Holly Murer attended elementary school and high school in Plainfield, Illinois. She

received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Illinois State

University in June 1990. She received the degree of Master of Science in Educational

Administration from Northern Illinois University in August 1994. She taught third grade

at Crystal Lawns Elementary School in Plainfield, Illinois from August 1990 to June

1994. After receiving her Master's Degree in 1994, she was the Reading Coordinator of

Passow Elementary School in Franklin Park, Illinois from August 1994 to June 1997.

She then worked as the principal of Grand Prairie Elementary School from July 1997 to

June 2003. Most recently, she was the principal of Orrington Elementary School in

Evanston, Illinois from July 2003 to June 2006. She currently is focused on her family

where she and her husband are raising their daughter.

Permanent Address: 4416 North Racine Avenue, Chicago, Illinois