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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED FROM
PRINCIPALS TO IMPACT TEACHER
EFFECTIVENESS: DEVELOPING
A GROUNDED THEORY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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College of Education and Behavioral Science
School of Education Research, Leadership and Technology
Program of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

August, 2013

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Entitled: *What Instructional Coaches Need From Principals to Impact Teacher Effectiveness: Developing a Grounded Theory*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Educational Research, Leadership and Technology, Program of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

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ABSTRACT

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Principals that work with instructional coaches need to understand the conditions necessary to maximize their impact on teacher effectiveness. With any school improvement initiative, the positive presence and explicit support provided by the principal is critical to its overall success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The insights and perspectives of instructional coaches and principals can be analyzed to improve the systemic integration of this educational reform innovation.

A qualitative methodology using a grounded theory approach was used to gather data and develop the theory. Eight instructional coaches and two principals were recruited from two medium-sized school districts in a Western State. These districts were purposefully selected because their instructional coaches engage in the core practices of high quality instructional coaching identified in the literature review (Borman & Feger, 2006). This study posits that principal attitudes and actions impact the capability of instructional coaches to increase teacher effectiveness. When principals demonstrate certain attitudes and actions, instructional coaches feel better able to increase teacher effectiveness. When these attitudes and actions are not present, instructional coaches feel their efforts in raising teacher quality are diminished.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the era of education accountability, expectations are high for both the teachers and the systems held responsible for student learning. The mandated goals set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which include increased student achievement targets, college and career preparedness, and equitable access to robust teaching and learning are felt by every one of our nation's public schools. In response, school systems have implemented a multitude of strategies to raise overall student achievement, many of which rest upon improving the effectiveness of their teachers through high quality professional development. Looking forward to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the No Child Left Behind Commission seeks to shift to an evaluation of teacher effectiveness based on student learning evidence rather than teacher qualification (Darling-Hammond, 2010a). Educational reform at the national level is focused on increasing student achievement.

The literature reveals a prevalence of studies linking teacher quality to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Jordan, Mendro & Weerasinghe, 1997; Kupermintz, Shepard & Linn, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997) and high quality professional learning to teacher effectiveness (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Guzdial, & Palinscar, 1991; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman &

Kwang, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1981; Kennedy, 1998; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007). Darling-Hammond suggested that “creating a profession of teaching in which teachers have the opportunity for continual learning is the likeliest way to inspire greater achievement for children, especially those for whom education is the only pathway to survival and success” (1998, p. 11). Thirty years ago, Joyce and Showers (1982) introduced the concept of peer coaching, where teachers support teachers within a school. While peer coaching has been linked to improved instruction (Joyce and Showers, 1996), sustaining this strategy has been difficult as teachers seldom have the time, energy, or skills to provide this type of support on an ongoing basis.

The business world has employed coaches for years to sustain continual learning and improve employee performance (Connellan, 2003). However, the integration of this specific role into school systems has been a recent phenomenon (Knight, 2007).

After years of disappointing results from conventional professional development efforts, and under ever-increasing accountability pressures, many districts are now hiring coaches to improve their schools. These coaches don't use locker-room pep talks to motivate their teams, but they do strive to improve morale and achievement-and raise scores-by showing teachers how and why certain strategies will make a difference for their students (Russo 2004, p. 1).

The support that instructional coaches can provide covers a great deal of ground: data collection, analysis, and management; group facilitation and problem-solving; new teacher mentoring and veteran transitioning; resource gathering and information brokering; action research and program evaluation; intervention support; and of course, job-embedded professional development supporting whole-school learning sessions, study groups, book clubs, and one-on-one coaching cycles (Killion & Harrison, 2006). According to Koh and Neuman (2006), exemplary elements of instructional coaching

include practices that promote teacher reflection, model instructional strategies, provide technical feedback, invite collaboration and sharing of ideas, and support teachers in prioritizing their personal growth needs.

Recent research suggests that effective instructional coaching programs can positively impact student achievement and overall teacher effectiveness (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; National Reading Technical Assistance Center [NRTAC], 2010; Stephens et al, 2007; Vanderberg & Stephens, 2010). This information is welcome to school systems that must prioritize their spending well, align it with proven strategies, and demonstrate a return on their educational investments. The literature is quite expansive in relation to the nature of coaching responsibilities and programmatic design (Blachowicz et al, 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Killion & Harrison, 2005; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010; Knight, 2009; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Ross, 1992). School systems that utilize instructional coaches know they must make the most of their program in order to deliver a high quality public education that meets the intellectual expectations set forth by our nation.

With any school improvement initiative, the positive presence and explicit support provided by the principal is critical to its overall success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al, 2008; Waters et al., 2003). The inclusion of instructional coaches within a school system is no exception. The behavior of the principal is vital, as coaches hold minimal formal authority in the schools where they work and are often undermined by teachers they are attempting to support through an educational reform (Donaldson et al., 2008; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). Due to the increasing demands placed on principals, their ability to effectively delegate and share instructional leadership within

the building is crucial to the overall success of the school (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). However, the literature on how principals effectively support coaching efforts is still a shallow, emerging topic of exploration (Kral, 2007; Ippolito, 2009; Shanklin, 2007; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

This grounded theory study will explore the perceptions of instructional coaches and building principals who work with instructional coaches in their schools in order to build a theory that describes what instructional coaches need from principals to increase teacher effectiveness. Perceptions of instructional coaches and building principals within two school districts will be analyzed. The goal of this study is to provide additional information for educational leaders who either currently coordinate instructional coaching programs or are considering the implementation of one.

Background of the Problem

In the 1970's, when they began their work, Joyce and Showers (1996) were disturbed to find that as few as 10% of the training participants implemented what they had learned during the training. They describe how their initial teacher trainings incorporated a number of important training components like the presentation of information or theory, facilitator demonstration, and even time for participant practice. They did not realize a notable increase in teacher change of practice until they began using peer coaching strategies as a follow up to the core training. Interestingly, when they began systematically incorporating peer coaching strategies, nearly all of the teachers involved demonstrated a change in practice (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Today it is accepted that one-shot trainings with little to no follow up are avoided due to their lack of positive impact on change in teacher practice and positive effect in student achievement (Darling-

Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Novick, 1996; Showers et al., 1987). In fact, present NCLB policy defines high quality professional development and mandates that public funds support activities that include the following:

- Improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach
- Are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom
- Give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards
- Are an integral part of broad school-wide and districtwide educational improvement plans
- Are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused
- Are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences
- Advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are based on scientifically based research (United States Department of Education, 2004).

As educators are held increasingly accountable for student achievement through NCLB, their individual effectiveness becomes an elevated concern. This, along with the strict definition of high quality professional development, is why the use of instructional coaches has increased nationwide and is looked upon with great favor (Neufeld & Roper; 2003).

With the number of coaches steadily rising across our nation, the research issue that is of immediate value to educational leaders is how to effectively support instructional coaches in their work supporting teachers.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of understanding of what instructional coaches need from principals to increase teacher effectiveness within the school system. Since most studies of instructional coaching have concentrated on a qualitative analyses of what coaches do to support teachers or quantitative analyses of how much coaching increases teacher effectiveness, it is appropriate that this study focused on the attitudes, actions, and systemic practices that instructional coaches need from principals in order to improve teacher quality. By listening to the voices of instructional coaches and principals who supervise instructional coaches, a theory was formulated that can be utilized by school systems to strengthen their coaching programs.

Research Questions

The development of two broad research questions framed this study and created a manageable focus for the exploration (Creswell, 2007). The guiding questions for this research are as follows:

- Q1 What actions of school principals strengthen an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?
- Q2 What actions of school principals diminish an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?

Significance of the Study

Prior to the enactment of NCLB, educational institutions were largely unaccustomed to the degree of accountability and authority fostered by this legislation. Typical school infrastructure was not designed to rapidly accelerate student achievement or teacher effectiveness. In the beginning, only the lowest-performing schools were under fire, but as the years went by, more schools failed to meet the achievement goals set by the NCLB reform. In 2006, only 750 schools across the nation were considered to be in corrective action (Smarick, 2010), but by 2009 more than 4,500 schools across the country entered into the more severe restructuring stage (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2010).

School systems responded to this perfect storm by implementing a vast number of strategies and programs designed to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. A widely recognized practice to positively impact teacher effectiveness has been the deployment of instructional coaches at the school site level. Reading First, a NCLB signature program, embraced the use of this particular professional development innovation. Instructional coaching meets the U.S. Department of Education standard of high quality professional development because it is “sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused” and likely “to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004 ¶ SEC. 9101.34.a.vi). The integration of instructional coaches to support job-embedded literacy learning put a coach in ninety-nine percent of all of its 5,880 Reading First schools (NRTAC, 2010). Following the lead of Reading First, the number of instructional coaches employed in school systems has dramatically increased (NRTAC, 2010).

In the current No Child Left Behind era, both the teachers and the systems held accountable for student learning are expected to produce results. With high achievement standards set at the national and state level, schools must optimize their instructional coaching programs to dramatically impact teacher effectiveness. As noted by Richard Allington (2002), “If we truly hope to attain the goal of ‘no child left behind,’ we must focus on creating a substantially larger number of effective, expert teachers” (p. 740).

Definition of Terms

Technical terms appear throughout this dissertation that address various aspects of instructional coaching and accountability in education. The following are provided as reference.

Instructional coaching: Instructional coaches employ research based best practices in their work with classroom teachers. Instructional coaches promote teacher growth through modeling, reflection, data analysis, collaborative planning and the utilization of high quality professional development strategies.

Peer coaching: Teaching peers who develop mutually supportive, confidential interactions in order to develop and reflect upon new strategies designed to impact student learning (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Professional development: High quality professional development is defined as ongoing, research based, job embedded training that is continuous and designed to impact teacher quality and effectiveness (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that sets the stage for the accountability movement, focused on teacher effectiveness and high standards for student achievement in the United States. This chapter includes the background, historical chronology of the accountability movement that includes an emphasis on increasing student proficiency, eliminating student achievement gaps, policy determining high quality professional development, teacher effectiveness, and the shift towards the use of instructional coaches to positively impact educational outcomes.

Background

According to David Tyack and Larry Cuban, authors of *Tinkering Toward Utopia: a Century of Public School Reform* (1995), reforming public schools has been a favorite way of improving society for a long while.

In the 1840s Horace Mann took his audience to the edge of the precipice to see the social hell that lay before them if they did not achieve salvation through the common school. In 1983 a presidential commission produced another fire-and-brimstone sermon about education, *A Nation at Risk*, though its definition of damnation (economic decline) differed from Mann's (moral dissolution). For over a century and a half, Americans have translated their cultural anxieties and hopes into dramatic demands for educational reform (p. 1).

Tyack and Cuban explain that collective faith in the power of education has had both positive and negative effects. On one hand, it has helped Americans create the most comprehensive system of public schooling in the world. But on the other

hand, our tendency to overpromise has too often led to disillusionment and finger pointing, claiming our schools have not done enough.

A Nation at Risk

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan felt a great need to respond to “the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system” (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Most educational historians would agree that our current school reform efforts began with this call of alarm:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur--others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments.

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war... (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983 ¶ 1-2).

A Nation at Risk (ANAR) set the stage for an ongoing debate about rigorous academic content standards, a national curriculum, school choice, vouchers, and standardized testing as a means to determine the overall effectiveness of schools, teachers, and the principals. Many educators and non-educators fought back, citing the report as flawed and inflammatory. In 1990, Admiral James Watkins, then Secretary of Energy, led a commission comprised of scientists from the Sandia National Laboratories to refute many of the claims in ANAR, namely those that suggested that American students were

falling behind based on low standardized test scores and dropping out at a greater than ever rate. This became known as the Sandia Report (Huelskamp, 1993).

There are also those who believe President Reagan might have inadvertently given pro-education supporters a boost. USA Today education reporter, Greg Toppo (2008) explored this theory. He explained that Reagan's original education platform consisted only of three basic ideas: support private schools through vouchers and tuition tax credits, reduce overall federal education spending, and completely abolish the U.S. Education Department. Instead being able to move ahead with his original plans founded on these three principles, after the release of ANAR, Reagan found he had to back down from his rhetoric on education cuts. His speeches on vouchers and privatization went nowhere, and he actually had to increase federal education spending to appear to be doing something about the crisis. Toppo (2008) goes on to share that twenty-five years after ANAR, only a small number of students are enrolled in private schools via vouchers, and federal education spending has grown from \$16 billion in 1980 to nearly \$72 billion in 2007.

Goals 2000

Signed into law on March 31, 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act articulated steps the U.S. would take ensure its ability to compete on the world stage. This was the first large-scale federal vision painted post-ANAR. Goals 2000 established a process to identify world-class academic standards, measure student progress, and provide the support students needed to meet the standards (Paris, 1994). The Act established a National Education Standards and Improvement Council to certify national and state content standards, student performance outcomes, and the assessment systems

voluntarily submitted by states. The intent was to create standards that identified what all students should know and be able to do to be productive, world-class citizens in the 21st century. The concepts embedded within Goals 2000 grounded our nation in the standards-based education practices we know today. The act set the stage for our era of accountability through the seeds of common, rigorous academic standards and a comprehensive assessment system.

No Child Left Behind

Public education officially entered the high-stakes era of accountability on January 8, 2002, when No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was founded on four pillars: accountability for results, an emphasis on using scientifically-based research, expanded parent options, and expanded local control and flexibility. The purpose of this legislation underscored our nation's new moral imperative: leave no child behind.

The first pillar of the new law, accountability for results, when translated into practice became statewide accountability systems that evaluated student proficiency, compared student results across student groups and within schools, labeled schools on a continuum of success from excellent to failing, and delivered consequences to schools and districts not meeting the targets of adequate yearly progress (AYP). These consequences, at the most extreme, could include whole school restructuring, including the turning over of public schools to public and corporate charters.

Each state was required to design an accountability system within the parameters of the new law. Those parameters included the establishment of a timeline showing how 100 percent of students would achieve proficiency by 2014; this defined a state's measure of

adequate yearly progress (Ravitch, 2010). All public schools and LEAs were held accountable for the achievement within individual subgroups of populations. Subgroups for accountability include major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and students with identified disabilities. The goals for each subgroup could be the same as long as each subgroup reached 100 percent proficiency by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

The second pillar, scientific research, negated a large body of qualitative and non-experimental research that was currently in use and called upon school systems to implement educational practices supported by rigorous evidence instead. For school systems, the implications of this shift manifested in new theories related to math education, the teaching of reading, overall teacher quality, and what constituted comprehensive school reform. It required school systems to use evidence-based practices when applying for federal and state Title formula grants as well as federal and state funded competitive grants. This created a large shift in practice that necessitated increases in professional development support as school systems needed to move to integrate instructional strategies that were evidence-based as described by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The third pillar, expanded parent options, gave families access to attend a public school of choice when their school was identified as persistently dangerous or their Title school was identified as a school of improvement or in corrective action. Free supplemental services, like tutoring, were also made available to students attending poor-performing Title I schools. An unprecedented \$182 million was earmarked by the federal government to help set up, develop, and expand charter schools in anticipation of NCLB

laws encouraging parents to explore options outside of traditional public schooling systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Finally, the fourth pillar expanded local control and flexibility. The policy provided additional funds for a limited number of state and local flexibility initiatives to support innovative programming, support for rural communities, and greater opportunities for faith-based organizations to assist in educating children. The impact of NCLB was certainly far-reaching.

As pointed out by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, “This law has created dozens of ways for schools to fail and very few ways to help them succeed” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011 ¶ 3). Michael Fullan, a widely known proponent of educational reform would agree. He explains that the ideals of No Child Left Behind were on target, but the strategies used to effect change were doomed to fail (Fullan, 2010). He lists the most obvious the issues as follows:

- Pie-in-the-sky, unachievable goals
- Too many goals and corresponding tests
- Individual state standards and assessments that give too much room for variation
- Virtually no strategies for capacity building, just consequences
- Unrealistic timelines and overuse of threats
- The result caused meaningless hoop-jumping and no real change (p. 22-23).

As more states are granted waivers from specific policy language within the No Child Left Behind legislation, the goal to mitigate the perceived gap between American students and their counterparts still exists and new programs increase the demand for teacher effectiveness.

Race to the Top

In 2012, President Barack Obama launched the Race to the Top (RTTT) competition, a program that has to date provided over \$4 billion federal dollars to 19 states that promise to create robust plans that:

- Develop of rigorous standards and better assessments
- Adopt of better data systems to provide schools, teachers, and parents with information about student progress
- Support for teachers and school leaders to become more effective
- Increase emphasis and resources for the rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest-performing schools (The White House, 2013).

Nineteen states have won Race to the Top funding, and each has shifted their accountability system requirements to encompass the critical components outlined in the competition criteria: new assessments, higher standards, educator evaluation systems that account for student growth, and increased pressure for schools failing to perform.

One of the central reform ideas within the RTTT criteria focuses on teacher effectiveness. States and policymakers argue that that states need viable approaches to measure the effectiveness of teachers, valid effectiveness ratings for each individual teacher, and the capacity to use those ratings to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, tenure, and dismissal. (Achieve, 2009). This approach is predicated on the belief that the key to improving public education in America is placing highly skilled and effective teachers in all classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2010a). Unlike the majority of high-achieving nations, the United States has not yet developed a national system of supports and incentives to ensure that all teachers are well prepared

and ready to teach all students effectively when they enter the profession. (Darling-Hammond, 2010b). However, RTTT attempts to set this type of system in motion. It outlines a definition of both the Effective Teacher and the Highly Effective Teacher that must be adopted by states in order to accept the cash prize of multi-million dollar funds for state departments of education:

Effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top application). States, LEAs [Local Education Agencies], or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined by the Race to the Top application). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple observation-based assessments of teacher performance.

Highly effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., at least one and one-half grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top application). States, LEAs [Local Education Agencies], or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined by the Race to the Top application). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple observation-based assessments of teacher performance or evidence of leadership roles (which may include mentoring or leading professional learning communities) that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The Race to the Top competition increased teacher accountability to a new height, driving the need to fully understand what impacts teacher effectiveness and how it relates to student achievement and the increased potential to develop globally competitive citizens.

Minding the Gap

There is no lack of evidence to suggest our perceived achievement gap is exaggerated or false. Whether measured on an international or national scale, far too many American students are failing to achieve at a level that will increase their chances

of successful participation in our global knowledge economy. Tony Wagner defines the global achievement gap as the gap between what we are teaching and testing in our schools and the skills all students will need for colleges and careers in the 21st century (Conlon, 2008). Instead of teaching students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers, Wagner (2008) believes our educational system that is asking students to memorize facts for multiple-choice tests has exacerbated the gap between Americans and our international peers. In his book, the *World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) sets the stage for the reform suggested by Wagner. Friedman describes the forces of globalization, identifies the workers that will suffer most should they be unable to keep ahead of the globalization trend, and offers suggestions to remedy this problem by providing a more robust system education so that Americans can compete not only with Americans, but also the most brilliant minds around the world.

This issue is compounded by the real and persistent achievement gap that exists between Americans on the basis of ethnic heritage and race, economic standing, language acquisition, and presence of identified disability according to results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Barton & Coley, 2009). For example, on the 2009 NAEP 8th Grade Reading exam, students with identified learning disabilities on average scored 37 points less than students without identified learning disabilities; English language learners scored on average 47 points lower than their non-English language learning peers; students in poverty on average scored 24 points less than their peers not living in poverty; while Hispanic and Black students on average score 24 points and 27 points less than their White peers respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). That a gap exists between these populations of students is not

necessarily a surprise. In fact, as Barton and Coley (2009) suggest, it may be the result of inequities that exist between groups inside and outside the school system. In their *Parsing the Achievement Gap* report, the researchers identified a number of factors that may impact the gap. These include inequities in curriculum rigor, teacher preparation, teacher experience, class size, availability of instructional technology, fear and safety at school, parent participation, frequent changing of schools, low birth weight, environmental damage, hunger and nutrition, reading to babies, excessive television watching, and at home parent-pupil ratio. In all these categories, they found gaps to exist between minority and White populations in most situations and between poor children and their more privileged peers in many situations (p. 3).

Linking Teacher Effectiveness to Student Achievement

The quest to link teacher effectiveness to student achievement, to find some value-added because of teacher quality, sent many researchers to work. The name William Sanders has become nearly synonymous with value-added assessment in the field of education. In 1984, Dr. Sanders began to study this issue and began to document findings related to the measurable effects of teachers on student achievement. His mixed methodology study of three years of student achievement scores from Knox County schools allowed him to conclude the following:

- There were measurable differences among schools and teachers with regard to their effect on student learning indicators
- The estimates of school and teacher effects tended to be consistent from year to year

- Teacher effects were not site specific, i.e., a gain could not be predicted by simply knowing the site of the school
- There was a strong correlation between teacher effects as determined by data and subjective evaluations by supervisors
- Student gains were not related to their ability or their achievement when they entered the classroom. (Sanders & Horn, 1994, pp 300).

The quest to identify value-added metrics continues as a central component of the question of measuring teacher effectiveness.

In 2008, the National Comprehensive Center on Teaching Quality released a report synthesizing research on the topic of teacher quality in order to enlighten policymakers on the subject. According to researchers Goe and Stickler (2008), a wide range of studies indicate that some teachers contribute more to their students' academic growth than other teachers. However, they explained that the research does not clearly indicate the specific teacher qualifications, characteristics, and classroom practices that are most likely to improve student achievement and that more research is needed in this area (Goe & Stickler, 2008).

With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, independent education researchers in partnership with school districts, principals, and teachers began the search for fair and reliable measures of effective teaching in the fall of 2009. The MET (Measures of Effective Teaching) Project, which analyzed over 13,000 digital video lessons, student perception surveys, and scores from a voluntary group of math and reading teachers, released their initial findings in a policy brief in December 2010.

- In every grade and subject studied, a teacher's past success in raising student achievement was one of the strongest predictors of his or her ability to do so again
- Teachers with the highest value-added scores on state tests also tend to help students understand math concepts or reading comprehension through writing
- Students know effective teaching when they experience it
- By combining different sources of data (test scores, observation, student perception) it is possible to provide diagnostic, targeted feedback to teachers who are eager to improve (MET Project, 2010).

With the increasing number of research projects uncovering links between teacher quality and student achievement, the next important quest is to uncover what strategies are best able to improve teacher effectiveness.

High Quality Professional Development

Knowing that research has linked teacher effectiveness with student achievement, it is important to for school systems to fully understand what constitutes effective professional development. Using a national probability sample of 1,027 mathematics and science teachers, a group of researchers led by Michael Garet (2001) conducted the first large-scale empirical comparison of effects of different characteristics of professional development on teachers' learning. Their study identified three core features of effective professional development:

- Clear content focus: whether a subject matter, instructional strategy, or foundational understanding as to how students learn, teachers are more likely to

be positively impacted by professional development that has clear, focused content.

- Embedded active learning: teachers are more likely to be impacted by professional development that is engaging. They seek to be actively involved in meaningful discussions, planning, practice, observations, and student work analysis.
- Coherent with a larger systemic goal: when the professional development is clearly aligned with a larger focus goal, like a building or district goal, teachers are more likely to be positively impacted (Garet et al, 2001).

The findings of this large-scale comparison study support the findings of Saxe, Gearhart and Nasir (2001) who similarly found that student achievement increased most when teachers were engaged in sustained, collaborative professional development that specifically focused on deepening teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices. Likewise, the context of the professional development has been found to be more effective when it is approached with coherence, embedded as part of the total school reform effort, and seamlessly integrated into the teacher work routine order to limit fragmentation between what teachers learn outside the classroom and what they are intended to implement inside the classroom (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Penuel et al., 2007; Supovitz, Mayer & Kahle, 2000).

All of these findings link to the seminal research conducted by Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce who searched for strategies to increase the rate of transfer in the 1970's. When they began their work, Joyce and Showers were disturbed to find that as few as 10% of the training participants implemented what they had learned in training (Joyce &

Showers, 1996). They describe how their initial teacher inservices incorporated presentation of information or theory, facilitator demonstration, even time for participant practice, but they did not realize a notable increase in teacher change of practice until they began using peer coaching strategies as a follow up to the core training, systematically connecting the learning outside the classroom to practice inside the classroom. Interestingly, when they began systematically incorporating peer coaching strategies, nearly all of the teachers involved demonstrated a change in practice (Joyce & Showers, 1996).

It is now believed that one-day, surface-level trainings with little to no follow up should be avoided for their lack of positive impact on change in teacher practice and positive effect in student achievement (Colorado Department of Education, 2012; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Novick, 1996; Showers et al., 1987). It is also known that a clear training focus is necessary to provide coherence of purpose and opportunities for embedded active learning must be incorporated for educators to practice their learning in their own classroom context (Penuel et al., 2007; Supovitz et al., 2000). The importance of making the connection between the learning and the larger systemic goal of the building and/or district is imperative. For these reasons, instructional coaching and peer coaching models have been looked upon with great favor when school systems look to maximize teacher effectiveness through the inclusion of high quality professional development.

The Shift Towards Instructional Coaching

While the term “instructional coaching” is relatively new, the concept of “coaching” is not. The seminal research of Joyce and Showers (1981, 1982, 1986, 2002)

elevated the concept of peer coaching, forming the foundation of what has transformed into instructional coaching today. In an analysis of the evolution of coaching, Joyce and Showers (1996) revealed that teachers who had a coaching relationship, meaning those who shared aspects of teaching, planning, and pooling their experiences, practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more effectively than did their peers who worked alone to expand their toolkits. When the Joyce and Showers studies were examined further, one researcher found that a dramatic increase in the transfer of learned skills into the classroom took place when teachers were offered coaching as part of the professional development process (Bush, 1984). These findings indicated that when only a presentation of the skills was included in the training, 10% of the participants transferred the skill to their classrooms. It was also revealed that when modeling of the skill was added, 13% showed a transfer of skills. Furthermore, when participants were given time to practice their skills during the training with peers who gave them feedback, it was found that 16% of the participants transferred the skill into their classrooms. However, when robust training included presentation, modeling, time for practice and feedback, as well as onsite coaching follow up to the training, 95% of the participants successfully transferred the skill into their classrooms. This groundbreaking study provided much needed data relative to the literature on effective professional development at the time (Joyce & Showers, 1996).

The studies in subsequent years that link teacher quality to student achievement and high quality professional learning to teacher effectiveness have also given weight to the instructional coaching model (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Garet et al., 2001; Jordan et al., 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Showers et al., 1987; Wenglinsky, 2000; Wright et al.,

1997). The number of teacher leaders in the role of instructional coaches has grown dramatically in the last decade due in part to the research on effective professional development which focuses on job-embedded learning as well as the expansion of NCLB's signature program, Reading First, which operationalized the use of instructional coaches on a large scale across the nation (NRTAC, 2010). Furthermore, the emerging body of research that directly links instructional coaching to increased student achievement led to the sustained spread of instructional coaches in the school system (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell, Fullan & Glaze, 2006; Denton et al., 2007; Guiney, 2001; NRTAC, 2010; Russo, 2004; Stephens et al., 2007).

The study (2010), for example, reports substantial effects from a four-year longitudinal study on the implementation of the Literacy Collaborative, a schoolwide reform model that relies on one-on-one coaching to improve student achievement in literacy. A hierarchical, crossed-level, value-added-effects model was used to compare student literacy learning over the three years the program was implemented against observed growth under baseline conditions. Results demonstrated increasing improvements in student literacy learning over the three years with a 16% increase in learning against the baseline in the first year, 28% increase in the second year, and 32% increase in the third. Biancarosa concluded that the "prominent role of coaching acted as a lever for enacting change in teachers' practice and consequently in students' learning" (p. 31). According to this study, the instructional coaches' roles are deeply connected to the change in teacher effectiveness.

Defining the Role of Instructional Coaching

As researchers have noted, there does not appear to be one ‘official’ written job description for instructional coaches that is shared by all school systems that employ them (Poglinco, et al., 2003). However, the literature reveals that instructional coaches characteristically engage in a wide variety of activities and assume a number of roles in their work (Hall, 2004; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Richard, 2003). In a review of the literature, Borman and Feger (2006), summarized the following activities as most frequently associated with classroom-based instructional coaching:

- Demonstrating and modeling instructional practices and lessons
- Observing instruction
- Co-teaching
- Co-planning lessons and units
- Providing feedback and consultation
- Promoting reflection
- Analyzing students’ work and progress

For the purpose of this study, an instructional coach will be defined as an on-site staff developer who supports classroom teachers effectively implement instruction in order to positively impact student learning (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007, Knight, 2009; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). While instructional coaches may be employed full or part-time, they may serve a single school or several schools depending on their assignment (Borman & Feger, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Certain coaching positions are designed to allow the professional developer a focus on a specified topic, like math or literacy, while others take on a broader role that is defined by the

principal (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Instructional coaches are infrequently used in supervisory or evaluation process. In fact, many advocates of instructional coaching stipulate that evaluation of teachers is a role that coaches should not take on as it is typically reserved for the principal (Cameron, 2005; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Knight, 2007).

The Role of the Principal in Student Achievement

A report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation on the effects of leadership on student learning found that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). In fact, after extensive study, they claim that they have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Leithwood has been researching this topic for many years. In 2003, he and Riehl reviewed the current literature related to successful leadership practices in schools and found three core practices that principals should pay attention to:

- Setting directions: which includes identifying and articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and creating high performance expectations.
- Developing people: which involves offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing an appropriate model.
- Redesigning the organization: which includes strengthening school cultures, modifying organizational structures, and building collaborative processes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

The Leithwood and Riehl review provided a synthesized focus for practitioners and policy makers alike. However, the authors suggested that additional research was needed

to be able to provide a more definitive answer as to the effect of leadership on student achievement.

With literally thousands of studies on leadership practices, the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) took up the challenge of conducting a meta-analysis of the most rigorous of these studies. They designed a process to analyze over 5,000 of leadership studies and selected 70 that met their criteria for design, controls, data, and rigor. The following 21 specific leadership responsibilities are significantly associated with impacting student achievement:

1. Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.
2. Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines.
3. Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time and focus.
4. Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs.
5. Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.
6. Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention.
7. Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.
8. Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students.
9. Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments.
10. Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students.
11. Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.

12. Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies.
13. Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures.
14. Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.
15. Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo.
16. Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations.
17. Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling.
18. Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning.
19. Adapts leadership behaviors to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent.
20. Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems.
21. Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school culture (Waters et al., 2003 p.4).

The 21 capabilities provided the educational community with a rich array of indicators to use to examine principal quality. But McREL went further to elaborate upon the subtle nuances of leadership, specifically when leading others through the change process. McREL recognized that all change was not of the same scope and magnitude, and so in their report they identified two types of change: first order change and second order change. Typically, a change becomes second order when it is not obvious how the change will make things better for people, when it requires stakeholders to learn new approaches, or when it conflicts with prevailing values and norms of the

community. Approaching first and second order change strategically enhances the likelihood of positive impact on student achievement. However, failing to do so could result in a negative impact on achievement (Waters et al., 2003).

The Interdependency of the Coach and Principal

While coaches draw upon their personal credibility and respect they earn from working with staff, coaches hold minimal formal authority in the schools where they work. Without the explicit support of their principals, coaches are often undermined by teachers they attempt to support due to a prevailing culture that allows for continuous personal growth to be considered optional as opposed to an expectation (Donaldson et al., 2008; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). In the school setting, it is the principal who holds the formal authority and whose actions greatly impact the work of the instructional coach. It is critical for principals to demonstrate strong support for their instructional coaches in order to maximize their potential success. Empirical research detailing how instructional coaches are effectively supported is lacking, however Pankake and Moller (2007) did share their practitioner perspectives on what they perceive school-based coaches to need from their principals. According to these authors, in order to take full advantage of school-based coaches, principals must provide the following support:

1. Collaboratively build and monitor an action plan
2. Negotiate the relationship
3. Be available
4. Provide access to human and fiscal resources
5. Maintain the focus on instructional leadership
6. Help maintain balance to avoid overload

7. Protect the coach's relationships with peers
8. Provide leadership development opportunities.

As instructional leaders, the work of the instructional coach and the principal both have the capacity to impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement. To optimize their collective impact, they should understand how their work is related and interconnected.

Summary

School districts across the United States have been charged with improving student achievement, college and career preparedness, and equitable access to robust teaching and learning. To respond to this demand, school systems have engaged in massive reforms efforts on many levels. They have increased student access to rigorous, scientifically-based programs and practice. They have introduced comprehensive internal assessment systems to actively and dynamically monitor student progress. They have implemented high quality professional development identified with improving overall instruction. Instructional coaching is one of those models. It has been identified as a powerful tool, impacting teacher effectiveness and student achievement when implemented successfully. Instructional coaching is an investment, in time, energy, and financial resources. How should systems best support this investment? What behaviors or actions of school principals support coaches as they work to increase teacher effectiveness? There remains a substantial gap in the research around the variety of support of needed by instructional coaches. This study is intended to address this gap and add to the body of research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methodology that was used to explore instructional coaches' and principals' perceptions of the attitudes, actions, and systemic practices that principals employ that advance their role as coach in order to improve teacher effectiveness. Grounded theory was the methodology used in this qualitative study. Included in this chapter are the following: a restatement of the problem, research questions, rationale for a qualitative design, research setting, sampling method, data collection and analysis procedures, limitations of the study, trustworthiness, ethical assurances and the researcher's bias.

Restatement of the Problem

There is an insufficient understanding of what instructional coaches need from principals to increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Since most studies of instructional coaching have concentrated on a qualitative analyses of what coaches do to effectively change teacher practice or quantitative analyses of how instructional coaching increases teacher effectiveness and/or student achievement, it is appropriate that this study focused on the attitudes, actions, and systemic practices of school-based leaders that enhance the ability of instructional coaches to positively impact teacher quality. By listening to the voices of instructional coaches and principals who work with instructional

coaches, it was possible to formulate a theory that can be utilized by school systems to strengthen their coaching programs.

Research Questions

The development of two broad research questions framed this study (Creswell, 2007). The guiding questions for this research are as follows:

- Q1 What actions of school principals strengthen an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?

- Q2 What actions of school principals diminish an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?

Rationale for a Qualitative Design

The increasing number of instructional coaching programs implemented in school systems across the United States is a phenomenon worthy of study. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was used. The theoretical perspective most often associated with qualitative researchers is phenomenology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) and supports the philosophical stance of this study as well. Phenomenology invites us to engage with the phenomena of our world and make sense of it (Crotty, 1998). The concept of instructional coaching has been co-constructed by educators via organic processes over time. Instructional coaching was not discovered but created by many and varied educators searching for an innovation that best supports cognitive development within an educational system. Therefore, the epistemological foundation of constructivism is well suited to the qualitative study of instructional coaching. As Crotty (1998) explains, knowledge is contingent upon human practices being constructed and meaning is made through the interaction between human beings and their world.

The methodology selected for this study was grounded theory. According to Creswell (2007), a theory is often needed by people experiencing a phenomenon and grounded theory can provide an excellent framework for that study. Developed by researchers Glaser and Strauss (1967), the emphasis in this methodology is the generation of theory that is grounded in data. A rigorous methodology, grounded theory methods involve the construction of theory through inductive, open-ended data collection where efforts are made to remove bias by the systematic and explicit coding of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory is flexible. It enables new issues to emerge that the researcher may not have thought about previously and aligns with the epistemology of constructivism. Therefore, this topic was especially well suited to qualitative study.

Research Design

Following the typical procedures for ground theory, the data sources selected in this study were theoretically chosen to best formulate the theory.

When doing theoretical sampling, researchers must determine what data sources (e.g., groups of people, documents, bodies of literature) could yield the richest and most relevant data, and what cases (e.g., individuals, particular settings, specific documents) drawn from these sources are most likely to provide empirical indicators needed for category development (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007, p. 1138).

Theoretical sampling and continuous comparison of data against categories that emerge during analysis are characteristics of grounded theory (Creswell, 2007). Open-ended data collection practices allow the researcher to enter the field without preconceived ideas.

Glaser and Strauss describe how bias is diminished in a grounded theory study:

An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different

areas. Similarities and convergences with the literature can be established after the analytic core of categories has emerged (Glaser & Strauss, p. 37).

In this study, alignment to the literature was conducted after the data was captured following best practices in the literature for grounded theory research.

In 2000, Charmaz, a student of Glaser and Strauss, expanded the constructivist orientation of grounded theory by advancing the idea that reality arises from the interaction among researcher, participants, data, and analysis. (Charmaz, 2006; 2008). His approach was founded on the assumption that reality is discovered and generated by the interactive research process (Charmaz, 2008). Generated theory emerges from the researcher's analysis and the interpretation of data that includes not only the words of the participants, but their own interpretations as well (Charmaz, 2008; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

This qualitative study relied upon interviews and focus groups to collect data. The data set included four instructional coaches and one principal from two different public school districts for a total of ten data points. The sample of the instructional coaches and principals were constructed from volunteer participants from two different school district sites matching the sample criteria for data sources. The principal volunteers were constrained to those who currently work with instructional coaches in their buildings. This design allowed the researcher to compare the emergent themes from the instructional coach data with the perspectives of the principals.

Only after formal consent was given by districts, individual coaches, and principals, did the participants meet to converse with the researcher during one-hour private interviews guided by open-ended questions, as recommended by grounded theorists (Creswell, 2007). Interviews were conducted privately in a location mutually

agreeable to the participants. Each participant was given the option to select the setting from one of two choices: an office setting or local coffee shop. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The researcher took notes during the interviews. These notes will be maintained with the digital recordings, transcripts of recordings, and consent forms in a secure file located in the researcher's office for a period of three years. Before each interview and focus group, the participants were briefed as follows: they were provided additional information about the study, the potential benefits from the study, and the steps the researcher would take after the study was complete. The participants were also given an opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the study and/or their role in the study.

According to Draucker, while theoretical sampling is considered a hallmark of grounded theory methodology, there is little direction available to researchers to implement this process (2007). Theoretical sampling is the collection of data for comparative analysis with the goal of generating theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In order to support researchers, Draucker and his colleagues created a guide to facilitate systematic decision-making regarding theoretical sampling and enhance the development of core categories. The core category is the central theme of a grounded theory that integrates all aspects of that theory (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The core category occurs frequently over the course of data analysis, which connects with other categories and generates theory about the research question (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978).

Draucker's theoretical sampling and core category development guide is the result of an extensive literature review of 29 grounded theory articles that reference theoretical

sampling procedures (Draucker et al., 2007). The guide details procedures for the initial recruitment using selective sampling techniques, followed by open coding processes to identify the emerging categories, axial then selective coding strategies to support the theoretical sampling, and confirming/disconfirming sampling to determine the core categories and theoretical framework (Draucker et al., 2007).

In this study, several core categories arose. The first three categories, which were bounded by the research questions, were the actions of principals that positively impact an instructional coaches' ability to impact teacher effectiveness and the actions of principals that diminish an instructional coaches' ability to impact teacher effectiveness. Two additional categories that arose from survey and interview data were the attitudes of the principal towards coaching and the belief that continuous improvement is everyone's responsibility.

Data should be compared and analyzed in order to find concepts around which ideas cluster and where new directions for research are suggested (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to develop and refine tentative categories with the goal of reaching theoretical saturation, which occurs when all data can be coded into categories and no new categories emerge (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). This checking and refining of categories among data suggests further areas for exploration by a return to the field or by a return to the literature (Charmaz). Theoretical sampling allowed this researcher to strengthen emerging theories by defining the categories and how they relate to one another.

Draucker's guide supports the use of the literature in the theoretical sampling process (2007). However, traditional grounded theory suggests that too much literature

review may contaminate or impede the analysis of codes that emerge from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1967), however, recommend that the researcher engage proactively with the literature, returning to it and entwining it through the research process as though it were another voice. This study used data from interviews, focus groups, active participatory group research, and the literature in order to build an inductive and open-ended understanding of the attitudes and actions principals take that positively impact or diminish an instructional coach's ability to strengthen teacher effectiveness. This data was used to develop codes against which subsequent data and analysis were compared (Charmaz, 2008).

Throughout the process the researcher used notes, axial coding, and compared information constantly through memoing and sorting in order to generate theory. After the interviews and focus groups, the researcher identified categories (themes/variables) and their properties (sub-categories), sorting the categories following the generative theory process. Research from the current literature was incorporated as the researcher wrote. A storyline was created that connects the categories as suggested by Creswell (2007). Member checking was used to verify the report for accuracy and comprehensiveness.

Research questions in this study were intentionally designed to be broad to allow the researcher to follow unanticipated paths that emerged from the data (Draucker et al., 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). A broad lens allows for the analysis of the interactive nature of the phenomenon without shutting down potential avenues of theory that may emerge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). The goal of this study was to generate a theory

about instructional coaches' and principals' perceptions in the context of their own words. For these reasons, identifying quality data sources was integral to the methodology.

Identifying Data Sources

For the purpose of this study, an instructional coach is defined as a staff developer who supports classroom teachers on-site to effectively implement instruction that positively impacts student learning (Killion & Harrison, 2005; Knight, 2007; Knight, 2009; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). While instructional coaches may be employed full or part-time, they may serve a single school or several schools depending on their assignment (Borman & Feger, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Certain coaching positions are designed to allow the professional developer a focus on a specific topic, like math or literacy, while others take on a broader role that is defined by the principal (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Instructional coaches are infrequently used in supervisory or evaluation process. In a review of the literature, Borman and Feger (2006), summarized the following activities as most frequently associated with classroom-based instructional coaching:

- Demonstrating and modeling instructional practices and lessons
- Observing instruction
- Co-teaching
- Co-planning lessons and units
- Providing feedback and consultation
- Promoting reflection
- Analyzing students' work and progress

The instructional coach models at both the Sunny Park and High Plains School Districts were selected for study as each met the sample criteria as defined in the literature review. The Sunny Park district is considered to have a strong instructional coaching program as the district staff has presented regional and national professional development conferences about their instructional coaching efforts. This district was selected as a research site because the researcher previously conducted a pilot study on instructional coaching there and is a member of the Sunny Park staff, thus making this district both a criterion and convenience sample.

High Plains School District was approached as a second research site after one of their educational leaders mentioned its high quality instructional coach program to this researcher. Through this connection, the researcher was able to learn more about their instructional coaching program and ensure that it fit the identified sample criteria. This utilization of snowball sampling provided an additional case for study that met the original criterion and offered some variability to this study that maximizes theory transfer.

The Setting

This research study takes place in two different public school districts located within a geographic region 250 miles from a major urban city in a Western state. The Sunny Park School District serves approximately 16,000 students. Student diversity includes differences in culture, economic status, and English language skills. According to 2010 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the Sunny Park student population is predominantly white (76.6%), while other racial groups include 18% Hispanic, 1 % Black, 1% Asian students and 2% Multiple Races (Table 1).

Table 1

Sunny Park School District Student Population by Race

Category	%
White	76.6
Hispanic	18
Black	1
Asian	1
Multiple Races	2

Other types of diversity within the Sunny Park's student population include 35% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged, 3.5% identified as English language learners, and 10.5% identified with learning disabilities (Table 2).

Table 2

Sunny Park School District Student Population by Special Identified

Category	%
Economically Disadvantaged	35
English language learners	3.5
Students with disabilities	10.5

The High Plains School District serves approximately 22,000 students. Student diversity includes differences in culture, economic status, and English language skills. According to 2010 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the High Plains student population is largely white (73%), while other racial groups include 22% Hispanic, 1 % Black, 1% Asian students and 3% Multiple Races (Table 3).

Table 3

High Plains School District Student Population by Race

Category	%
White	73
Hispanic	22
Black	1
Asian	1
Multiple Races	3

Other types of diversity within the High Plains student population include 45% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged, 4.7% identified as English language learners, and 11% identified with learning disabilities (Table 4).

Table 4

High Plains School District Student Population by Special Identifier

Category	%
Economically Disadvantaged	45
English language learners	4.7
Students with disabilities	11

While Sunny Park and High Plains are similar in size and population demographics, their programs differ slightly in how their instructional coaches are hired, evaluated, and assigned work. The elementary and secondary instructional coaches in Sunny Park are funded with district monies, but are hired to work at either one or two school buildings on a full or part-time coaching basis. Instructional coaches who coach part-time in Sunny Park typically teach students or provide intervention support for the

other half of their contract. The Sunny Park coaches are evaluated by the school building principal.

The elementary and secondary instructional coaches at High Plains are funded with district monies and all work as full time staff developers. However, the secondary coaches are content specialists and coach teachers at all the middle and high school sites. The elementary instructional coaches, on the other hand, are generalists assigned to specific elementary schools according to their need as determined by student achievement. District office personnel hire, coordinate, and evaluate the High Plains instructional coaches.

Access to the Sites

Permission to perform this study was given by each school district's superintendent designee. The researcher had the opportunity to explain the purpose of the study to potential participants via email transmission to each instructional coach and principal in the two districts.

Selective Sampling: Initial Recruitment

Criterion, snowball and random sampling were used to recruit and select participants for interviews and focus groups. When invited via email to partake in the first phase of the study, 10 instructional coaches (33% of the total population) and 8 principals (26%) from the Sunny Park School District replied that they were interested in participating. Of those coaches replying in the affirmative, all served elementary student populations. A computer program that generates random assignments was used to produce a customized set of four random selections from the group of ten willing to participate. One of the eight principal volunteers was strongly recommended by an

instructional coach for the principal interview because of her strong support and proven ability to implement systemic practices that positively support instructional coaches to improve teacher effectiveness. This process of snowball sampling, identifying participants or cases are information-rich, was consistent with theoretical sampling techniques in ground theory studies (Draucker, et al., 2007). This principal was one of the eight who volunteered to participate in the study.

Upon receipt of the email request to participate in the study, four instructional coaches from High Plains School District (40% of the total population) and one principal (3% of the total population) replied that they were interested in participating. Of those replying in the affirmative, all served secondary student populations.

Instrumentation Design

All participants were assured of confidentiality, informed that their participation was completely voluntary, and were told that they could withdraw from the study at anytime. All data collected including informed consent forms, interview audiotapes, and audiotape transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's office for a period of three years. First names only were be used during interviews.

Pseudonyms were assigned during audiotape transcription and the interview audiotapes were destroyed immediately following transcription. All participants were offered a summary of the study findings.

There were few foreseeable risks and/or discomforts due to the design of this qualitative research. The participants may have been concerned about their job status within the school system, as the information they share could be sensitive. However, only volunteers were accepted, and each was assured of their confidentiality. All participants

were made aware that the information they offered would not be shared with their immediate supervisor or any other person beyond the researcher. They were also informed that they had the freedom to exit the research study at any time.

This researcher believes that there were potential benefits to the participants for engaging in this study. The enlightenment they stood to gain from the discussions with the interviewer and the focus group could help them construct knowledge and ideas related to their work which may enhance their feelings of success and efficacy. Each participant was compensated for his/her time with a \$10 gift card to a local coffee shop.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The initial phase of the study was conducted at the Sunny Park School District. It consisted of semi-structured interviews which used questions based on themes suggested by the literature. The four instructional coaches were contacted via email and individual interviews were scheduled (Appendix A). Interviews were recorded with participant permission (Appendix B), after reminding them of the purpose of the study and assuring the confidentiality of their responses (Creswell, 2007). An interview protocol was used to guide interviews (Appendix C). The researcher took notes during the individual interviews. The recordings from the individual interviews were transcribed and sent to the four participants via email. The participant members reviewed and checked the transcriptions. Corrections to the transcripts were made.

Data analysis began at this point. From this researcher's point of view, several themes started to emerge from the data and impressions were written in this researcher's journal. Thematic and content analyses of the interview data included open and non-hierarchical axial coding (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) with categories,

themes, and codes derived as they emerged from the inductive process. Emic codes were derived from phrases and concepts that were meaningful to participants (e.g., “coaching cycle,” “continuous improvement,” and “gradual release”). Etic codes included “creating a shared vision,” “setting clear expectations,” “holding teachers accountable,” and “championing,” derived from recent coaching and leadership literature (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Pankake & Moller, 2007). Codes across data sets were noted, applied, revised, and reapplied, with each subsequent data transcript addition. Researcher’s notes were taken during each interview, and reflective notes were written afterwards.

The four instructional coach participants from Sunny Park were energized by the interviews and requested to participate in the research process at a deeper level. They agreed to meet a second time as focus group to engage in active participatory research and the member checking process. Themes that emerged from the researcher notes and coding process formed the basis for exploration during the focus group. Prior to the focus group, the emergent themes from the researcher’s perspective were written on 4 in. X 8 in. index cards and selected supporting details from the transcripts were written on 3 in. X 5 in. index cards. Three evaluation constructs identified from literature on assessing the impact of professional development (Killion, 2002) attitudes, knowledge, and actions were written on 2 in. X 8 in. tented placards. The index cards were arranged on a table so that the supporting details were near the overarching themes, and the overarching themes were centered within each of the three evaluation constructs.

After the participants arrived, the researcher explained the relationship between the various index cards, describing the emergent themes, the supporting details and how

they were organized in a non-hierarchical fashion by evaluation construct. The set purpose was to perform a member check to increase the validity of the findings, as the author of this study desired to confirm her thematic analysis with the participants. An engaging discussion ensued and there was universal agreement and confirmation of the ten pre-determined themes. The focus group determined not to add any themes nor take away any themes, but did combine themes.

During the focus group, it became apparent that the participants desired to organize the themes in a way that made sense to them. The researcher removed the evaluation constructs of attitudes, knowledge, and actions leaving the ten overarching themes on the table. At this point, the members of the focus group became active participants in the construction of meaning regarding the ten overarching themes. They began to develop a visual construct of how the themes related to one another. The researcher encouraged the participants to engage in these actions as this work appeared to empower them and satisfy their need to understand the relationships between the themes and draw their own conclusions in relation to the grounded theory related to the supports instructional coaches need from their principals and district. As the methodology of participatory action research and grounded theory are both supported by the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and the epistemology of constructivism (Crotty, 1998), this change from the conceptualized research design, while spontaneous, was beneficial to the research and the well being of the Sunny Park participants.

The second phase of the research took place at an office setting at the High Plains School District. Four instructional coaches and one principal were recruited from a request for volunteers emailed to each instructional coach (Appendix A) and principal

(Appendix D) within the district. During the recruitment process, a request from the High Plains instructional coaches to meet collectively instead of individually was sent to this researcher via email. The instructional coaches explained that they were a strong, collaborative group and preferred to share their perceptions together rather than individually. This researcher responded to their desire affirmatively. Interviews were recorded with participant permission (Appendix B), after reminding them of the purpose of the study and assuring the confidentiality of their responses. An interview protocol was used to guide this focus group (Appendix C). The researcher took notes during the focus group and took the opportunity to paraphrase what the participants said and ask clarifying questions. The recordings from this focus group were transcribed and sent to the four participants via email. The participant members reviewed and checked the contents transcriptions. No corrections to the transcripts were requested.

While the instructional coaches wished to participate as a group, this researcher followed the original research design and conducted a private interview with the volunteer principal during a separate time. This was important, as it was believed a separate interview would reduce feelings of anxiety on the part of the principal and the coaches. This interview was recorded with the principal participant's permission (Appendix E), after reminding him of the purpose of the study and assuring the confidentiality of his responses. An interview protocol was used to guide this interview (Appendix F). The researcher took notes during the interview and took the opportunity to paraphrase what the participant said and ask clarifying questions. The recordings from this interview were transcribed and sent to the principal via email. The member reviewed and checked the contents transcriptions. No corrections to the transcripts were requested.

Themes that emerged from data gathered at Sunny Park were applied to the data gathered from High Plains. Codes across data sets were noted, applied, revised, and reapplied, with each subsequent data transcript addition. The findings from the codes that emerged from the first and second phase of the research were assembled into the following categories: (a) the necessary principal attitudes, perceived by the coaches and principals to be essential for an instructional coach to maximize positive impact on teacher effectiveness, (b) the barriers identified by instructional coaches and principals that diminish an instructional coach's positive impact on teacher effectiveness, and (c) the actions principals take that optimize a coach's impact on increasing teacher effectiveness. The researcher recognized categories were used in further data interpretation. The identified categories were used to write an initial storyline to give explanation to the phenomenon of study. Constant comparison with the coded interview data was central to this process.

In the third stage of the research study, the researcher returned to Sunny Park to interview the secondary principal recruited to participate in this study. Due to scheduling conflicts, this participant was unavailable during the first phase of the research process when the interviews were taking place in Sunny Park. Therefore, this last interview was conducted after the interviews and focus group was conducted during second phase in High Plains. This final interview was recorded with the principal participant permission (Appendix E), after reminding her of the purpose of the study and assuring the confidentiality of his responses. An interview protocol was used to guide this interview (Appendix F). The researcher took notes during the interview and took the opportunity to paraphrase what the participant said and ask clarifying questions. The recording from this

interview were transcribed and sent to the principal via email. The member reviewed and checked the transcriptions. No corrections to the transcript were requested. Following this interview, themes that emerged from data gathered during the first and second phase of the study were synthesized. Codes across data sets were noted, applied, revised, and reapplied with this final data transcript addition.

Limitations

It is important to note that the researcher currently holds the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction for a public P-12 school district in Colorado. In her role, she provides support to an instructional coach initiative at the district level. While she does not evaluate individual instructional coaches as this time, in a previous role as school principal, this researcher directly supervised an instructional coach for six years. It has been her personal experiences with instructional coaching that led the researcher to pursue the line of inquiry in this study. Additionally, this researcher is a director on staff at one of the research sites. As such, the reader should note the potential for bias by the researcher.

The study was conducted at two districts, Sunny Park and High Plains, both located within a geographic region of 250 miles from a major urban area in Western state. The two districts have student populations between 5,000 and 35,000 with district-funded instructional coaching programs that serve elementary and secondary student populations. As such, the resulting theory may not be as transferrable to programs in school districts of smaller size.

Trustworthiness

It is essential in qualitative research to address the aspects of trustworthiness. This study incorporates the interviews of both instructional coaches and building principals, a focus group to perform the process of active participant research, member checking, substantive field notes taken during the interviews and focus group, and a researcher's journal to capture the qualitative process.

Reading the interview questions to the participants verbatim supported study trustworthiness. All follow up questions were clearly documented via digital recording and transcription. The transcripts were analyzed to determine whether the follow up questions extrapolated information from the study participants that was consistent with the desired purpose of the original interview questions (Creswell, 2008). A member checking process was embedded via email consultation with each interviewee in order increase trustworthiness. The researcher's journal was used to capture information throughout the qualitative process and helped to illuminate the decision-making, idea generating, and problem-solving done by the researcher. This documentation strengthens the monitoring of subjectivity and decision-making.

Ethical Assurances

An application for approval for the review of research involving human subjects was filed with the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the University of Northern Colorado along with a request for authorization to move forward with the study (Appendix G). A copy of this dissertation proposal accompanied the IRB application.

Researchers are obligated to recognize ethical concerns associated with the process of gathering data involving human participants. The researcher is employed in a

leadership position and works directly with the participants who were involved from the Sunny Park School District. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the interviews were conducted in a confidential location. It was not possible for the interviewer to totally control what was said outside the private interview. Therefore, the researcher needed to assure that all participation was based on a deliberate choice supported by the participants' desire to take part in the study without fear of coercion or threat of employment. The instructional coaches and principal who participated in this research study are stakeholders in the community. It was the aspiration of this researcher to assure that all participants were honored and revered for their willingness to contribute to the body of knowledge and benefit from the results of this study. The trust factor had been established between the researcher and Sunny Park participants, and the researcher recognized this may have presented a potential liability to the study.

Researcher Bias

As the researcher, I do have biases towards instructional coaching. I served as an instructional coach director for two years and continue to oversee instructional programming where I am employed. I also have experience working as a technology-focused instructional coach in a middle school for one year and supervised an instructional coach as a building principal for six years. Thus, I have been both coach and supervisor and know that my perceptions are grounded in these experiences.

I also believe that effective instructional coaching has a profound impact on teacher quality. However, as a district level administrator, I have conducted no program evaluation that has provided me with sufficient evidence to link instructional coaching to student achievement. Nevertheless, I do believe inherently that instructional coaching can

and does have an impact on student achievement. Because of this, I am an acknowledged advocate for the use of coaching as high quality professional development.

Over the course of the ten years that I have been involved with instructional coaching approaches and programs, I have sought to answer the question of what supports instructional coaches to effectively impact teacher quality. My research is a personal quest for this information. I have been an educator for twenty years, ten as a teacher and ten as an administrator and I am passionate about supporting all teachers with high quality professional development, as I believe it is potentially the single most likely activity that will impact their overall effectiveness thereby increasing student achievement.

I believe that there are many factors that serve as barriers to school systems attempting to meet the demands of high student achievement, college and career preparedness, and equitable access to robust teaching and learning. I feel the weight of the pressure and the sense of urgency every day. There is no time to waste in the life of a child. Each teachable moment connects to shape and shift the opportunities throughout the lifetime of a child. There is nothing more important than educational access to ensuring a democratic and civilized world. I am proud to be a member of the educational community and add to the body of research on leadership and policy studies.

Summary

By listening to the voices of instructional coaches and principals who work with instructional coaches, this researcher formulated a theory that could be utilized by systems to strengthen their instructional coaching programs. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) endorse the capability of qualitative research to examine and report findings that support

what is taking place. The methodology of this qualitative research study fostered the emergence of important findings that can serve districts with current programs in place or districts considering the integration of instructional coaches.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Overview

The participants in this study clearly indicated two foundational attitudes and three critical actions principals could employ to maximize or diminish the potential benefit of instructional coaching. Two principal attitudes, *Coaching is Valuable* and *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation*, create a foundation ripe for instructional coaching within a learning community. Three principal actions are critical to increasing an instructional coach's impact on teacher effectiveness: *Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching*; *Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support*; and *Holding Others and Self Accountable for Continuous Improvement*. The five actions and attitudes are portrayed in visual format (Figure 1).

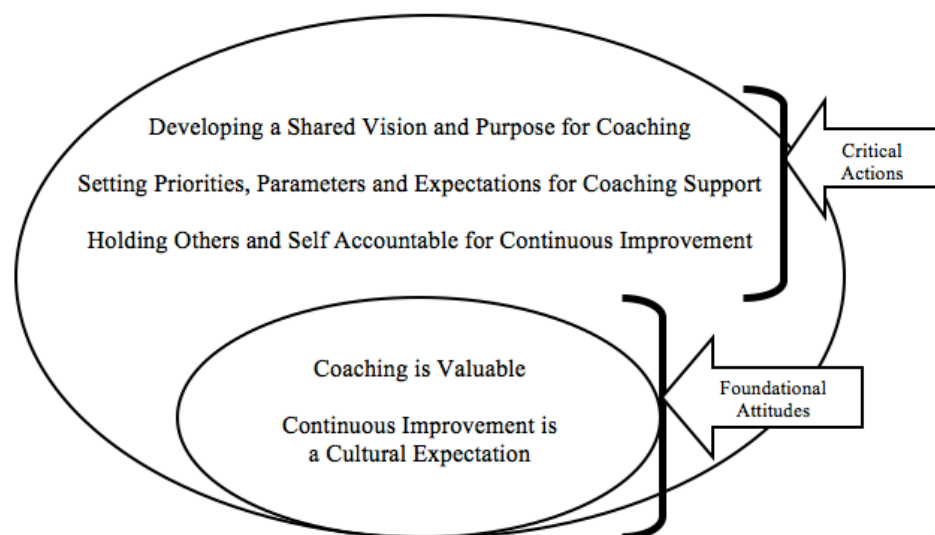


Figure 1 – Actions and Attitudes that Maximize Instructional Coach Impact

The Context

For the purpose of this study, an instructional coach is defined as a staff developer who supports classroom teachers on-site to effectively implement instruction that positively impacts student learning (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007, Knight, 2009; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Instructional coaches most typically engage in the following activities: demonstrating and modeling instructional practices and lessons, observing instruction, co-teaching, co-planning lessons and units, providing feedback and consultations, promoting reflection, analyzing student's work and progress (Borman and Feger, 2006; Killion & Harrison, 2006). While instructional coaches may be employed full or part-time, they may serve a single school or several schools depending on their assignment as decided by the school system at large (Borman & Feger, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Certain coaching positions are designed to allow the professional developer a focus on a specific topic, like math or literacy. While others coaching models allow a coach to take on a broader role that is defined by the principal (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Instructional coaches are infrequently used in the supervisory or evaluation process.

The instructional coach models at both the Sunny Park and High Plains School Districts were selected for study as each met the sample criteria as defined in Chapter Three. There are strong similarities between the instructional coach models and a few important differences that include the number of schools served by each coach and the responsibility of contributing to the teacher evaluation process (Table 5).

Table 5

Instructional Coach Model Comparison

	<i>Sunny Park School District</i>	<i>High Plains School District</i>
Enrollment	16,000	22,000
Number of schools served by coach	1 or 2	8 or 15
Funding source	District	District
Coach's evaluator	Principal	District
Roles and Responsibilities		
Modeling instruction	Yes	Yes
Observing instruction	Yes	Yes
Co-teaching	Yes	Yes
Co-planning	Yes	Yes
Providing feedback	Yes	Yes
Promoting reflection	Yes	Yes
Analyzing student data	Yes	Yes
Teacher Evaluation	No	Yes

Ten total participants were interviewed for the study (Table 6). Four instructional coaches and one principal participated from each school district.

Table 6

Participants within the Study

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Number of Schools Served</i>
Sunny Park School District			
Kaylee	Coach	Elementary	1
Julie	Coach	Elementary	1
Lucille	Coach	Elementary	1
Candice	Coach	Elementary	1
Cecilia	Principal	Secondary	1
High Plains School District			
Eve	Coach	Secondary	15
Cindy	Coach	Secondary	15
Isabella	Coach	Secondary	15
Danielle	Coach	Secondary	8
Mike	Principal	Secondary	1

Understanding the similarities and differences between the district coaching models and the study participants provide an important contextual basis for this study. Five

overarching themes emerged from the conversations and dialogue with all ten participants. These themes provide the basis for understanding how principal attitudes and actions increase or diminish an instructional coach's impact on teacher effectiveness.

Foundational Attitude: Coaching is Valuable

Instructional coaches feel better equipped to impact teacher effectiveness when working with principals who firmly believe that *Coaching is Valuable*. When principals exhibit positive attitudes toward coaching, instructional coaches feel that the path before them is fertile ground for teacher improvement. The strategies coaches employ, such as modeling best practices, co-teaching, co-planning, analyzing student data, promoting reflective practice, observing teachers, and providing feedback, are most successful when viewed as valuable professional development efforts that are likely to impact teacher effectiveness. When a coach's core work is congruent with the principal's value system, coaches feel more likely to increase teacher quality. However, when instructional coaches believe principals consider coaching to be an unimportant endeavor, the foundation of their existence is unstable. Coaches working for more than one principal, like in High Plains, find themselves spending more time coaching in buildings where their efforts are considered more valuable. Coaches who work for only one principal, like those in Sunny Park, often ask for a new coaching assignment or to return to the classroom when the principal does not value coaching. Over time, coaches find themselves gravitating to the principals who believe coaching is valuable and spending less time at the school where principals do not hold this attitude.

Consider Kaylee's experience working with two different principals who shared their enthusiasm for coaching from the beginning of the Sunny Park School District's instructional coach initiative:

I've been lucky to work for amazing principals during my coaching time. I feel like my principal was really responsible for bringing coaching to our district. It was the excitement this principal had like, "We have to jump on this bandwagon! We can do it!" We got trained in coaching; there was just this belief in it and knowing how good it could be. In fact, this principal told me that I had the best job, a dream job, "What you are doing, I can't go back and do, but you can!" Our principal made us feel like we were on the top of the world. It was really that exciting force that got us going through the beginning stages and set us on the path we are now.

Julie, on the other hand, enjoys working with her principal, but she is not certain the coaching position and role is valued. She feels more strengthened by the support primarily given by the Sunny Park's instructional coach coordinator and the other instructional coaches with whom she networks regularly. She struggles to make sense of how coaching fits into her principal's vision. Julie expresses her perspective in the following manner:

I feel I get a lot of support for coaching from the district coordinator. I really appreciate her coaching and the time to connect with the other coaches. It helps me reflect on areas that I can improve in my own practice. At the building, I regularly meet with my principal and discuss what is going on in the building, but my responsibilities are not clearly defined and connected to what we are doing in the building. There's not really a vision for how coaching is supposed to work in our school. I can't tell if my principal values coaching.

Kaylee and Julie both shared insights related to the level of value a principal attributes to instructional coaching. Both shared a preference in working with principals who valued instructional coaching.

There may be a variety of underlying reasons for a principal to not value coaching.

Eve is a coach in the High Plains School District. She supports teachers in each of her

school district's fifteen secondary schools. She acknowledges that a principal's attitude may be tied to the perceived competence of the instructional coach. Instructional coaches must live up to high expectations, as their role is tied to improving teacher effectiveness. If the coach is not perceived to be effective in her work, coaching may not be viewed as a valuable endeavor. Principals may not have ascertained a coach's value due to insufficient time spent confirming a coach's abilities. Eve explains her thinking in this way:

We talk about building trust with teachers, but I don't know if we always feel that administrators trust us. I believe that competence plus integrity is needed to create trust. It's fair that they [principals] need time to measure our competence and integrity, but we don't always have the time.

While instructional coaches perceive their impact diminished by principals who do not believe coaching is valuable, they recognize that they must work to change that perception. This can be challenging for coaches like Eve who support multiple principals at multiple school sites. Instructional coaches employed in systems where their work is spread across many schools, or an entire district, have less time to develop relationships with principals than the coaches who work at primarily one or two schools. Principals working in newly implemented coaching models who are still developing an understanding how a coach can impact teacher effectiveness, may need more time to develop a relationship with a coach and comprehend how to collaboratively work as a team to interdependently improve teacher effectiveness. Regardless, systemic coach deployment structures or immature innovations may exacerbate a perceived belief that a principal holds little value for instructional coaching in general and diminish a coach's impact on teacher effectiveness.

Mike is a middle school principal in the High Plains School District. He has worked with all of the instructional coaches his district employs. Mike clearly values what his district instructional coaches do to impact teacher effectiveness in his school. “My AP [Assistant Principal] and I have made it a priority to employ the help from the coaches whenever we can and we’ve been pretty lucky because whenever there is time in our building, we have lots of interest.” From his perspective, coaching is valuable for everyone. Mike referenced a highly effective teacher on his staff that is, “talking to the coach all the time, they are always back and forth trying to get ideas from each other.”

Communicating that coaching is important for master teachers and novice teachers alike is vitally important. Mike explains this point by describing how he crafts a message for his master teachers about coaching in order to convey a very positive tone within the building:

When we are talking to our staff, we use all kinds of analogies like, Tiger Woods is a great golfer, but he has a swing coach who points out little things to him all the time. So, the message is that we can all get better. We can all benefit by being open to coaching.

In addition to communicating his positive attitude toward instructional coaching, Mike and his assistant principal demonstrate how much they value coaching by regularly assuming teaching responsibilities for faculty members who are focused on improving a targeted component of effective instruction. By providing teachers with opportunities to engage in coaching, Mike’s demonstrates his belief in coaching:

My assistant principal and I, we go in classrooms once a week so teachers can get coached. We have a schedule, teachers sign up for the spots in advance. For example, our 8th grade team is looking at student talk, that’s their focus, so they go and observe that. It’s not just about going and hanging out in another teacher’s class. It’s pretty specific and pretty focused. We got the idea from the coaches and it’s really been great. It’s

working out well and the teachers love it. We are really starting to see some carry over, some change in practice.

Principal attitudes have an effect on instructional coaches as well as the faculty they lead.

Mike and his assistant principal are intentionally trying to show how valuable they think coaching is by providing time, an educator's most precious commodity:

We wouldn't do these crazy things, like run a different schedule or step in and teach for a teacher if we didn't think it wasn't important. Because when we are out of the office it doesn't mean that school stops, it's still going to be crazy. So yeah, we're trying to show that it is something that is really important. We're trying to show that we are willing to give them time to grow professionally.

Mike conveys his positive value for instructional coaching in his building with passion.

He recognizes how instructional coaching supports both his veteran and novice teachers.

Cecilia is a secondary principal with over ten years of building leadership experience in the Sunny Park School District. She has worked with a number of instructional coaches over the years at different school sites. Cecilia knows that getting the right person hired as an instructional coach is vitally important. She shares her impressions about this topic:

It's an art to find the right person for the job. They have to have an engaging personality so that people connect with them, but they also have to have strong instructional skills so they can support people. And, most importantly they have to have strong leadership skills because they are leaders and role models in the building.

Cecilia is willing to take the time to hire a quality instructional coach because the position is that valuable to her and her belief about effective leadership.

Cecilia believes her most important role in the building is that of an instructional leader. She knows that maintaining a strong focus on building operations will keep her school running smoothly and safely. She understands

that developing quality relationships with the students, parents and staff will help foster a positive school community culture. However, Cecilia believes that her core work is increasing a teacher's overall effectiveness.

Effective teachers spend time getting to know students as individuals, knowing their strengths and deficits and knowing their learning needs. Effective teachers have a strong understanding of their content, they are able to personalize learning so that it meets student needs, fill their gaps, and accelerates their growth as much as possible. It's similar to an effective principal, who listens and supports and helps teachers grow to be the best they can be. The number one focus I have every day is supporting teachers every day, to ensure they have cognitive shifts in their practice.

As a principal, Cecilia uses coaching techniques to raise the level of effectiveness of her teachers. She listens to their needs, she asks questions, she offers suggestions, she models, and she provides feedback. She values the work of the instructional coach because she sees the interdependency of what they are attempting to accomplish, together. Cecilia explains her thinking in this way:

You have to look at who is your instructional coach and what are their strengths because this is an extension of the principal's job. As principals, we have so many demands on our time. It's an expectation that we are instructional leaders, so how you use the instructional coach is an extension of your personal instructional leadership. You've got to empower that instructional coach, and that empowerment is what is going to move your staff forward. It's my personal responsibility to do this.

Cecilia sees the instructional coach as an extension of her own role as instructional leader. She values her own ability to coach her staff and sees the inclusion of an instructional coach in her building as a valuable tool to increase teacher effectiveness.

Principal attitudes are revealed in how they demonstrate and communicate the value of coaching. Their attitudes can increase or diminish an instructional coach's ability to maximize teacher effectiveness. Coaches across the interviews described the belief in the value of coaching as key to optimizing their impact on teacher quality. Kaylee

summarized her perception about the relationship between the principal's belief that coaching is valuable and its effect on her impact in this way:

Having a principal who down to the bone believes that coaching is really amazing and awesome is something you can't fake. It is just there and the power of that creates all these permutations that support you as an instructional coach.

Principal attitudes have an effect on instructional coaches as well as the faculty that they lead. When the principal portrays a positive attitude towards coaching and speaks to its value, instructional coaches feel more able to impact teacher effectiveness. Conversely, instructional coaches feel their effectiveness is diminished when principals do not value coaching. They feel less able to increase teacher quality and struggle to find their niche in the educational system.

**Foundational Attitude: Continuous Improvement
is a Cultural Expectation**

When principals demonstrate an attitude that learning is everyone's job and *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation*, instructional coaches perceive an increased ability to impact teacher effectiveness. An attitude that everyone on staff should work continually to improve their knowledge, skills, and practice aligns well with the systemic implementation of coaching. This principal attitude creates synergy in the school system. It increases the likelihood that the coach is able to positively impact teacher effectiveness as the staff is primed to accept the coaching that is offered to them. The role of the coach, in essence, is designed to support continuous improvement. So, when principals project an attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation it constitutes a foundational level of support for the instructional coaches and all that they do. Lucille is an elementary coach in the Sunny Park School District. She has worked

with different principals and understands how continuous improvement can impact her capacity to improve teacher effectiveness:

There has to be a systemic presence, a cultural norm that we are all here bottom line, to improve student achievement. We know that unless we continue to develop our practice, it isn't going to happen. I don't care how developed you are, how masterful a teacher you are, you are going to work with a different class ever year, with different needs and you are always on a journey learning along the way.

Lucille passionately believes that the cultural norm of continuous improvement supports her as an instructional coach.

The theme of continuous improvement resonated with the instructional coaches from High Plains School District as well. According to Eve, “the teachers that are the most effective have internalized that [continuous improvement] is just their own personal culture, or team culture, or building culture.” Eve believes that we are, “still painfully shifting toward an understanding that teachers should be what we are asking kids to be, learners.” According to Eve, this is a journey of personal discovery that many educators are still in the process of accepting. Cindy, another instructional coach from the High Plains School District explained this phenomenon in the following manner.

Sometimes teachers feel that they are asked to change because something is wrong with them, not because the world has changed around them. The world changes, shift with it. Teachers who are more open to continuous improvement, because it is their culture, are more effective because they want it [coaching]. They are ready for ideas and change and meeting kids where they are. So, obviously, the most effective coaching is when you have a teacher who is open and not feeling that this [change] isn't what they want to do.

Lucille articulates how a strong building culture of trust creates synergy for continuous improvement and impacts her work to increase teacher effectiveness:

So when that whole school culture has that sense of inquiry, has that sense of wonder about the data, about the student learning, about the practice,

then it's a real culture of trust. Then teachers are accessing the coach not because someone thinks they are incompetent, teachers are accessing the coach because it's part of our building culture; we are all in this together trying to figure this out. And, here is a coach to help me reflect and grow.

Lucille feels energized when teachers are committed to continuous improvement within an educational reform effort.

When continuous improvement is not a cultural expectation, instructional coaches feel less able to increase teacher effectiveness. For instructional coaches, like Eve, who work with many teachers and many principals in different buildings, the principal is key to shaping a collective attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation. According to Eve, "It's really about building a culture of continuous improvement, I mean, that's way bigger than us [the instructional coaches]. When we go in to a school, the culture is already established, or not." As the leader of the building and the person ultimately accountable for the school culture, it is the principal who must foster the belief that continuous improvement is an expectation. Many principals, like Cecilia in Sunny Park, project this attitude in all they say and do.

Cecilia has been both a middle school and a high school principal. She has worked with several instructional coaches for over five years. She has had experience hiring instructional coaches and has strong ideas about what she can do to improve their chances of raising teacher effectiveness. As principal, Cecilia is very conscious of her role in sharing a cultural expectation for continuous improvement. She expresses her beliefs in the following way:

The effectiveness of your coach will depend on how well you create a learning culture in your school. There has to be an expectation that every one is a learner and that everyone will learn and grow every year. As a principal it is my responsibility to find time in the schedule for learning. It's my responsibility to find resources so that teachers have access to

quality professional learning opportunities, and it's my responsibility through the evaluation process to identify that teachers are learning and growing every year. Coaches don't have the power to find time and resources and hold teachers accountable. That is my job as a principal, I have to work to get that in place.

Cecilia has a high degree of consciousness related to her role in promoting continuous improvement. She identifies specific strategies she can employ to increase the instructional coach's capacity to increase teacher effectiveness, and it begins with putting structures in place to promote continuous improvement.

Mike in High Plains is also cognizant of the role he plays as a principal to build a strong learning culture. As an administrator with close to ten years of leadership in the same building, he sees the task of promoting the culture of continuous improvement as one that is ongoing and potentially never completely finished. While he believes that most of his staff has bought into the expectation of continuous improvement, some still need a nudge and his support of instructional coaches to ensure teachers make the connection of why their role is important in the process of instructional improvement.

Mike shared his experiences with this process:

Yes, there is still a small pocket of teachers who think they [the coaches] are talking down to them or coming in telling them what they should be doing. But, I think that it's our job as principals to create that culture that says, "Hey, we are all about learning," and, "If there is somebody who can help you get better, why wouldn't you take that opportunity?"

Mike believes the creation of a continuous improvement culture is foundational to the success of his teachers and his students. The "downside" as Mike describes, "is that we have to work that much harder because the expectations of each other are so high." However, he explained that developing a strong culture of continuous improvement is "paramount of what we are doing, ensuring that

nobody is resting on their laurels, no one is taking a day off, and we are all trying to get better each and every day.”

Through the interviews, the instructional coach participants shared a number of examples of how principals demonstrate their own belief in continuous improvement. Several cited times when the principals themselves asked for “coaching” to plan for an upcoming event or resolve a problem or issue. Coaches recounted times when the principal shared what he or she was learning or refining in his or her own practice. The supervision and evaluation process can be an arena where principals develop a cultural norm of continuous improvement and learning. Principals can set the expectation for faculty to access coaching during the evaluation cycle. This connects coaches to each teacher’s individual effectiveness goal. Coaches feel better able to impact teacher effectiveness when they are referred to by principals as “go-to” people for professional development and one-on-one support. All of the coaches explained that they feel supported when principals specifically communicate, invite and remind their staff to access them for personalized learning opportunities as well as department and/or grade level team reflection and planning. Furthermore, they recognize that when the principal’s attitude is that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation, the contextual glue is poured so that their work to increase teacher effectiveness is optimized.

The actions the principals take because of these foundational beliefs deepen their positive impact on overall educator quality. However, when principals do not hold the attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation, it feels like a barrier is placed before the coach. Teachers are less open for change. They are more resistant to learning new strategies. They see coaches as another person telling them what to do

instead of a person supporting and helping them grow in their profession. Principal attitudes have an effect on instructional coaches as well as the faculty they lead, and the attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation is critical to the likelihood of an instructional coach's ability to increase teacher effectiveness.

Critical Action: Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching

The participants in this study each work in districts where the coaching model is centrally funded and supported. Each instructional coach stressed how important the development of a clear, shared vision for instructional coaching is to increase teacher effectiveness. When instructional coaching began as an initiative in the Sunny Park School District, it was new to everyone including the school principals. Candice is an elementary coach in the Sunny Park School District. As she recalls, "I remember in the beginning getting the information from the district about what coaching is and what coaching isn't. That was just so clear and it really helped everyone begin to understand the roles and responsibilities of coaching, including my principal." Julie remembered a time when the Sunny Park instructional coach coordinator came to her building to coach her in front of her staff. "I think it really helped the teachers and my principal to see me getting coached. Before that experience, they really didn't know what I meant when I talked about coaching versus consulting, or coaching versus collaborating. They needed to see what coaching was to understand it."

Once the initial groundwork was laid, it became increasingly important for principals to work with their staff by *Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching* in order to align the instructional coach's work with their building work. As the leader of the building, the principal is ultimately responsible for working with staff to

develop a shared vision for school and individual teacher improvement. Through this process, key strategies are identified for whole school and individual teacher goals. A shared vision helps create a connection to a purpose for coaching, resulting in coaches who feel more equipped to impact teacher effectiveness. Schools that have a plan for change are prepared to accept the support of someone like an instructional coach because they already know where they are going and they have an idea about how they are going to get there. On the other hand, principals that have not adequately developed a shared vision or aligned the school's work with coaching diminish an instructional coach's ability to impact teacher effectiveness. The lack of vision and plan create a barrier for an instructional coach to overcome. A vision and a plan create a context for a coach to come in and provide onsite professional development.

Eve explained the relationship between the principal and the development of shared vision and purpose succinctly. From her perspective, "The principal needs to be the one who identifies the right work, and ideally, it needs to be measured, so that I can come in and then help teachers be their most effective." Kaylee provided several examples in rich detail how her principal was able to identify the "right work" and how the coach would be able to support it. During the interview, she elaborated how her principal connected specific instructional coaching strategies aimed at increasing student achievement in reading and writing, their shared vision for literacy improvement:

Since the beginning my focus has been to support all the elements of our comprehensive balanced literacy model. Our principal explained that I was available to support with guided reading, interactive writing, and interactive editing. The next year I was to help teachers understand how to implement the new literacy assessments and analyze the data to inform their practice. Now we are working on writing. We've all been to the training and my job is to provide follow-up support for all the teachers.

Every year it has been a different focus, but my principal always shares how I am here to support our building work.

Kaylee believes her principal has supported her efforts to increase teacher effectiveness by creating a strong vision for how coaching will support their building goals.

Isabella is a secondary coach who works in the High Plains School District. Similar to Kaylee, she spoke to the strength of aligning the coach's work with the school vision. She remarked on how empowering it feels when coaches can intentionally support the building work described in a school's improvement plan. Isabella explained that in her district, some of the coaches have been a part of the process of building a school improvement plan, "actually sitting with their principal and helping them write the plan and collaborate with their team." She recognizes the power in being able to align her work with school goals. "If I had access, then, when I am working with a teacher, I could make an explicit connection to what we are doing in relation to it [the school plan]." With an explicit connection created by the school principal, she feels better able to increase teacher effectiveness.

When the vision is unclear and purpose for coaching is not set by the principal, the instructional coaches felt less confident in their abilities to impact teacher effectiveness. Eve explains her perspective on this matter:

We are most effective when we are seen as a resource to help them [teachers] get where they want to go, and it is easier to help when they have already decided where it is they want to go. Last year I was no good at all when we would go in and we could tell that the individual, or the team, or the leadership wasn't sure what the right work was. Again, it is such a complex decision based on so many factors that we don't have awareness of. Sometimes we would guess right and sometimes not and it was a big fat tank. But, you just can't be really effective when no one knows what the work is in the first place.

Eve feels her ability to coach is strengthened when the principals connect instructional coaching with an outcome in mind.

Mike is a principal who understands how to develop a shared school vision and create a purpose for instructional coaching within that vision. He has systematically aligned the instructional coaches' work with his building's innovation around standards-based grading. This building-focused work emerged after a team of teachers attended a statewide literacy conference. Collectively, Mike's faculty began to sense that they had found the right work that would transform student learning in their community. His efforts to create a shared vision and purpose for coaching aligned to their building goals increased their successful implementation of the innovation and increased teacher effectiveness. Mike explains his thinking in this way:

It's been a big shift, but the coaches have been so instrumental in working with a lot of the changes partly because they are able to talk to lots of people and read the research that teachers don't have the time to read. One of them put together an amazing pamphlet that really explained the whole process that was pretty messy...They really helped...They just worked as part of the whole team. They just came in and helped us with everything. That was a great process, and that helped my whole building see what they [the coaches] can do, and just that, they are there to help. They are really an extension of our staff; they just aren't always at the building.

Mike can identify how instructional coaches support his building's vision. He demonstrates his clarity of the functional role an instructional coach can take on as an adjunct staff member of his learning community.

Cecilia also connected the importance of developing a shared vision and the work of the instructional coach by relating, "The coach has to work independently throughout the school, so it is truly imperative that she has a strong understanding of the school goals as well as a toolbox of instructional strategies to help increase teacher effectiveness."

Cecilia offered some examples of how she has worked to ensure there is a strong shared vision and a clear purpose for coaching:

As a principal, I think one of the most important things that you can do is to really understand your school and the vision for where you are headed. This has happened for my staff by going on some school visits together, looking at data together, identifying a collective needs of the school, finding the assets of our school, and working together so that the goals of our school are clearly identified so that the instructional coach can go in and support the teachers. We build a plan from our shared viewpoints. We make sure we have a common language, a common vocabulary, and we make certain the coach is a part of our leadership team so that the leadership team works together to build the plan stemming from the whole school vision.

Cecilia has made the connection of creating a shared vision and articulating a clear purpose for instructional coaching. She also articulates effective strategies to support the development of a shared vision and purpose.

Typically it is the principal's responsibility for setting a school direction, articulating a vision, and fostering the acceptance of group goals. These actions are essential to overall effective leadership. When building principals successfully develop a shared vision and purpose for coaching, instructional coaches are better equipped to impact teacher effectiveness. When building principals do not develop a shared vision and purpose for coaching, instructional coaches are less able to impact teacher effectiveness. Principal actions have an effect on instructional coaches as well as the faculty they lead, their ability to develop a shared vision and purpose is critical.

Critical Action: Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support

One of greatest challenges expressed by all of the instructional coaches in this study is their capacity to effectively manage how they spend their time. According to Eve, "We have tough choices to make about how we spend our time. Do we do a few things

well or are we going to do a whole lot of things poorly?” Whether coaching primarily at one school or 15 schools, instructional coaches believe they need assistance from the building principals to help them maximize their coaching time. *Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support* are actions that principals can take to increase an instructional coach’s ability to increase teacher effectiveness.

Kaylee is an instructional coach who works at one elementary building. This year, she is a full-time coach due to increased funding. In the past, she has worked as a part-time coach, splitting her responsibilities between teaching and coaching. It’s much easier for Kaylee and her principal to collaboratively prioritize her coaching work now that she has that twice as much time. However, when she was coaching part-time, she needed clarity from her principal to help prioritize her work, set parameters for what she should and shouldn’t focus on, and articulate clear expectations to the staff on how they were supposed to access coaching support. In the beginning of the year, Kaylee’s school established a buildingwide writing focus. Kaylee is still called upon to offer suggestions and support for reading, math, science, and social studies even though writing is the priority. Explicit parameters were set around the types of coaching support she would provide and this was communicated by her principal. She does not write lessons for her colleagues nor does she provide writing interventions for students. Kaylee’s set parameters are to spend as much time with teachers as she can, not doing other work that doesn’t increase teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, all teachers are expected to access coaching for a specified time and purpose. The strategies are clearly articulated in the building improvement plan and communicated by her principal. Kaylee explains what the priorities, parameters, and expectations look like in her building:

This year individual coaching has been tied into our PD [professional development]. We were all trained in the same writing strategies this fall and it is now mandatory that each teacher do a full cycle of coaching with me, with deadlines. Like, first grade this is your deadline; and second grade this is yours. We put them into overlapping, staggered deadlines so that everyone was expected between January and April to have a coaching conversation about the writing strategies. And, having a little more coaching expectations each year has really meant that teachers are utilizing me more, and my coaching logs are showing that I am working more and more with teachers.

Kaylee perceives her capacity to increase teacher effectiveness is strengthened by her principal's clarity of priorities, parameters and expectations.

Candice is an instructional coach who works primarily at one elementary school. She works part-time as a coach, and part-time as a literacy specialist. She has worked with two different principals and each created clear expectations for teachers regarding how they should access coaching. "Working with me is an expectation throughout the year. Everyone is a learner here; there's a strong culture for that. Our principal set the expectations up front and now it feels natural, teachers want to meet with me all the time. It feels so good to be used!"

At Mike's school in High Plains, instructional coaches are accessed by teachers on a regular basis. There are clear parameters present. Coaches work with teachers increasing their instructional effectiveness and the implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. They do not provide interventions for students, or manage disciplinary issues, or engage in other work that is not aligned with specific building goals. Mike describes the many manifestations of support that are provided by the coaches:

For us, they do a lot of meeting with curricular teams. They help with our Thinker's Workshop and help teachers understand what that looks like in their classrooms. They'll come in and observe classes and give feedback... Sometimes they come in and model a lesson for other teachers. So, they come in and do a lot of stuff for us, and they are doing things that teachers

would love to do but they don't have time, like finding articles and other great research, and sharing that with them.

Mike has had time to process the types of coaching support that best impacts teacher effectiveness. He and his assistant principal have seen results when the instructional coaches work collaboratively with his staff to attain specific building goals. When considering the how to prioritize the limited time coaches are available to support teachers, Mike expresses his opinion as follows:

I think for me, really, the biggest bang for the buck is when the coaches work one on one or with a small group of teachers trying to better their craft. I think in the long run that is where you get the biggest bang for your buck. You might not reach the same number of people as you do if they are providing training for a large group, but I think when they work with small groups or an individual you can have a dialogue. I think that is one of the great things on how we have set it up as a district.

In addition to understanding how the instructional coach's time can be prioritized to maximize impact on teacher effectiveness, Mike has considered how to prioritize the content that will become the focus work of the coach. As a leader, Mike promotes a shared responsibility for identifying the content priorities for teacher work in his building. His skillfulness allows him to build ownership and buy-in at the school level, while furthering the goals prioritized by his staff. Mike explains his strategy in this way:

I try to give my teachers a lot of time and input on identifying what they believe they need to work on. My 8th grade team really wanted to focus on drawing student knowledge out, that purposeful talk from students in class. They really thought that was something that they weren't doing as well as they could, and so that was their target... Our 7th grade team really focused on writing, especially short constructed responses, it just wasn't happening for them, not the way we wanted it to. So we came up with a plan, and they have been carrying that plan through since the first week of school. They've been working hard, and we analyzed the benchmarks last quarter and they were so much better than the first quarter and they were like, "Yeah! We are doing the right things!"

Mike's capacity to develop shared responsibility elevates the priorities collectively held by the school faculty. His actions increase an instructional coach's capacity to impact teacher effectiveness.

There are instances when instructional coaches are called upon by principals to work with an entire staff or a small group who have identified a content priority aligned with their school goals, but there are other occasions when coaches are asked by principals to work with a specific teacher who is struggling. Danielle is an instructional coach who works at several secondary school buildings within her district. One of her new responsibilities this year is working with teachers who are on individual improvement plans because their performance is considered ineffective by the standards set in the district teacher evaluation. This delicate work necessitates a high priority and clear parameters because teachers may lose their tenured status if they do not maintain a proficient effectiveness rating. Without their tenured status, they can be more easily released from their teaching contract. Typically a principal would initiate the process by calling an instructional coach to come and work with the staff member needing assistance.

When this new responsibility became known, there were unclear parameters and few expectations for how principals and coaches should work together. Additionally, there was little understanding of how this work should be prioritized in relation to the other work at hand. Danielle and her colleagues created a protocol so that the parameters and expectations of the coach and the principals would be transparent while they worked together to increase a teacher's effectiveness. Danielle explains the approach to this challenge:

We came up with a little protocol last year that helped with that [role expectations]. I know that I was called into a few situations where I expected something to happen that didn't and it put me in a really bad, uncomfortable place. So, as those things started happening we came up with a plan on how you call in for coaching help, and what principals need to do before they call us and then what are the expectations after we have been called in and who we talk to and what we say then. This helps to build the trust and rapport and so everybody knows who does what.

Danielle elaborated and emphasized why this is so important:

I'm thinking of when we go in specifically because a principal asked us to help. During those times, I feel like, I think part of our expectations is that the principal has set the goals, because they are the ones who are doing the evaluation; they are the ones who have identified that the teacher needs support in a certain area. So, I count on the principal to tell me that this is the specific goal that I am wanted to work on. And, I also expect that the principal has communicated that to the person before I am in the room.

Isabella elaborated about the need to set parameters around the work of the coach. Once a coach is called upon to support a teacher on an improvement plan, a good deal of thought needs to take place analyzing a coach's priorities because there are multiple requests on the plate, multiple schools to support, and high stakes all around. Isabella provided an example of why clarity in expectations and parameters were so important:

We have a good start on that [the protocol] but some things need to be clarified even more. In the situation I was in this morning, the principal was asking for more than I could give, so I needed to call him back and say, "I may have said that I could do this for you, but I need to be really clear that this is what I can share with you and this is what I can't share with you."

As instructional coaches and school principals work together, to support an entire building or just one teacher, it is beneficial to have developed priorities, parameters, and clear expectations for coaching support.

Coaches feel their capacity to increase teacher effectiveness is diminished when principals do not set strong priorities, parameters, and expectations around their coaching

work. Principals may have difficulty prioritizing a coach's work because an innovation is new, such as the teacher improvement plans described by Danielle. Nevertheless, strong prioritization of coaching clearly increases an instructional coach's ability to impact teacher effectiveness. Danielle shares a time-critical situation where a principal's lack of action may diminish her ability to impact teacher effectiveness:

I had an assistant principal tell me two months ago that there were some concerns about this particular teacher and that you know, he mentioned the [improvement plans], and I kept saying, "I'd love to come and if she is willing, I'd love to work with her." I said, "You know the sooner the better, if I don't hear from you until February, there's not a whole lot we can do then." I mean I'm going to try my darndest, but I haven't heard back from that administrator about that teacher. And, maybe he was just reflecting that he was going to have that difficult conversation and having to put those words on the evaluation and I was like, okay, well.

Another reason principals may have difficulty prioritizing the work is because there are many layers of needs across a learning system, such as an entire school district or a single school building. Sometimes coaches are asked to provide staff development for everyone because it is part of a school goal, such as Kaylee's example of a writing focus. Other times coaches are asked to provide individual support, as in Danielle's example. Eve shared an analogy to how it would help to have coaching priorities organized. She compares the layers of teacher needs to the layers of student needs found in a Response to Intervention (RtI) model. In an RtI model, the first layer represents the support that is given to all the students (the green zone). The second and third layers represent the support that is given to some of the students because they have specific, targeted needs (the yellow and red zones). Eve relates her connection to the RtI prioritization model in this way:

It makes me think of RtI, you know staff development for everyone is the green zone, and working with teachers individually is the yellow zone and

at the top. And, I'm thinking there really needs to be identified work at each of the levels.

Eve is attempting to create a structure to assist her with the prioritization of her coaching work. This mental model can be used with the principals she works with to set up parameters around the types of coaching she provides. This will ultimately enhance her capacity to increase teacher effectiveness.

None of the participants revealed specific district expectations related to how often or when coaches should be accessed by teachers. This was an area where the coaches felt their district sponsored instructional coaching programs could provide more clarity to them and their principals. Some of the participants acknowledged the difficulty their district may have mandating coaching due to contractual agreements regarding a teacher's planning period or hiring enough coaches to make a larger impact due to fiscal challenges. Nevertheless, they explained that they would feel more impactful in their work if the district was able to set clear expectations for teachers with regards to coaching. Several postulated that district clarity may increase principal clarity.

In Sunny Park, the instructional coaching program has entered its sixth year. The majority of the coaches work primarily at one or two school buildings and are seen as part of that staff. This is in contrast to the secondary instructional coach model at the High Plains School District where three to four coaches support over 15 secondary schools. Most of the participants in Sunny Park revealed that principals have set clear coaching expectations for the staff with regards to how often and/or when they should be accessed for individualized support. However, one Sunny Park participant felt that her principal has not clearly expressed his expectations regarding how often and/or when teachers should access coaching, this makes coaching feel optional and unimportant.

In the three Sunny Park elementary schools where the use of coaching is clearly expected, the principals have embedded the practice within the supervisory process, detached from the evaluation components of the process. In these school systems, it is assumed that all teachers have individual goals and that the teachers should be accessing the coach to support them through the process. Similar expectations have been set by various principals in High Plains including the expectation to meet with the coach during specific department planning times or data analysis times. Furthermore, some principals in both districts have tied training follow-up to an expectation to access the coach. In both districts, several principals have set expectations for teachers to access coaching through peer observations and lab classroom visits. Kaylee's principal created clarity around the expectations for coaching over time. This made her feel very supported in her role:

I think not requiring some sort of coaching in your building would diminish the support. If it weren't in place in my building, I don't know how much coaching I would do because the first year really was all about training. We did a lot of walkthroughs, but the first year of our district coaching it was like, okay, now we have requirements we have to do the coaching cycle every once in a while. I was having a hard time getting customers. Some of my teachers just thought, "Oh, stay out of my room." But now there are even questions brought into the interview process [for new hires]. One of the questions that's always asked is, "How do you see yourself utilizing the instructional coach?" That sets an expectation.

Kaylee reveals her increased capability to impact teacher effectiveness as the expectations related to accessing instructional coaching in her building became more clear. She identifies shifts in practice, such as interview questions related to instructional coaching that demonstrate how artificial structures became patterns, and those patterns became schoolwide norms.

Cecilia, a secondary principal in Sunny Park, held an expectation that all teachers should access coaching even though there was only one full time coach for a staff of over

fifty certified teachers. Cecilia believes an instructional coach can effectively support a larger staff when the coach is available for one-on-one, small group and large group support. For this type of plan to truly work, a principal and coach need to work collaboratively and know the needs of the staff. Cecilia provides her insights on the interdependency between the role of coach and principal in this way:

One way I think I supported the coach was to be very aware of how teachers were accessing her. A portion of the staff is very receptive. They are naturally eager and they go to her all the time because they are learners. Reflection is a part of who they are. On the other hand, there are some teachers that didn't have a personal learning focus and I felt it was my job as principal to get them thinking about their instructional practices and support them in finding an improvement goal. Then I would connect them with our coach who could provide ongoing support. Still there are other teachers that I have to be more direct with and hold them accountable through the evaluation process. For some of these teachers I would specifically state that working with the coach is part of my expectation.

Cecilia provided clear expectations for how faculty should access coaching. She believes that her practices support a coach's capacity to increase teachers' effectiveness.

Instructional coaches believe their impact to increase teacher effectiveness is leveraged when principals set clear priorities, parameters, and expectations for coaching support. They believe that impact is furthered when principals follow through on their expectations and hold teachers and themselves accountable for continuous improvement. When principals do not engage in the critical action of setting clear priorities, parameters, and expectations for coaching, the effectiveness of the coach is diminished and will have a decreased effect on improving teacher quality.

Critical Action: Holding Self and Others Accountable for Continuous Improvement

Each instructional coach participant acknowledged the theme of accountability and following through on set expectations. The instructional coaches appreciated when

they were held accountable for their results, and they appreciated when those they worked to support were held accountable for theirs. The instructional coach coordinator in Sunny Park held each coach accountable for engaging in the Cognitive Coaching process of planning, reflecting, and problem-resolving conversations (Costa & Garmston, 2002). The instructional coach logs used in Sunny Park hold coaches accountable for how they use their time and how they monitor and adjust the use of their time. Since the instructional coaches are held accountable for student achievement growth in their respective buildings, their time logs give them the ability to document the ways in which they are spending their time. All the instructional coach participants felt impacted when principals followed through and held teachers and themselves accountable in the continuous improvement process.

At Lucille's school, the expectations to access coaching are voluntary except when the principal sets specific individual expectations for teachers to access the coach. When the principal doesn't follow through or hold teachers accountable, Lucille feels her impact on teacher effectiveness is diminished. She shares her perspective:

For example, we've had a couple of teachers in the evaluation process where the principal suggests that they meet with the coach. But then that never happens or balls get dropped, and the coach could help, but the principal never follows through. Again, without being oppressive or negative, I think it doesn't have to be the principal saying, "Well what are you going to do about this?" The suggestion might not require anything to do with the coach and that's fine. But let's say the teacher never tries those suggestions or never accesses the coach and that person is never held accountable. What does that say about how serious we are about improving our practice? So, when staff isn't held accountable for improving their own practice, or expecting that it's a journey and that systemic piece is missing, that feels very unsupportive to a coach. Regardless of the formal roles of individuals within an organization we need a systemic culture of continuous improvement and someone to hold others and themselves responsible for it.

Lucille articulated her belief that holding teachers accountable does not need to feel “oppressive or negative,” although it may take a good deal of practice for principals to do this in such a way that feels positive and encouraging.

Eve also referred to the tension between the idea of accountability and professional respect painting a picture of a delicate balance between push and pull and fast and slow. She describes the tension as, “an odd mix of freedom and accountability” where the push and pull manifest themselves in “what we want our kids to have” and “what we want our teachers to do.” When working with teachers, her preference is to give them time to be involved in the decision-making process related to how they will address a problem:

If it was a quick fix, I mean these are mostly smart, well meaning people, if it was easy, they would have come up with it [a solution] by now. It feels like a pretty disrespectful message not to give the team the time to figure it out.

Eve believes teacher voice is critical to engaging everyone in the process of finding solutions to their own problems. She feels supported by principals who demonstrate this capability when holding their staff accountable for continuous improvement.

When a solution is discovered, it helps to have the principal continue that strategy forward so it becomes a norm. At Kaylee’s elementary school, the shared vision for instruction includes a balanced literacy framework, which was originally funded through a large-scale implementation grant. Working together, Kaylee and her principal devised a plan to ensure that the initial investment was protected with ongoing training and support. This plan has sustained the innovation over the years where there has been much change.

So, after we got all the teachers trained, the next year we had some new teachers and they didn’t have the training so my principal and I sat down together and we came up with a plan to make certain that all the new

teachers we hired got the balanced literacy training. That is when I started teaching the Balanced Literacy class. And now, if you are hired as a new teacher in our school, it's an expectation held by our principal that you will take this class. And, that I think has grown, too because that class has changed over the years. That class has helped us sustain being a balanced literacy school, because we have had a lot of turnover.

Kaylee and her principal worked collaboratively to develop a strategy to hold themselves and others accountable and integrate new staff to their culture of continuous improvement.

Mike has been leading the staff in his school for a number of years. When he began as a principal, he didn't typically hold teachers accountable the way he does now. Over time, he developed a stronger interpersonal style that strengthens the culture of continuous improvement he has built using caring approach and ensuring follow through. Mike compares what it felt like when he first started as a principal to what it feels like now:

I think when I started, I was way too loose, "Yeah, you guys know what to do." But, after a while I think I became more confident and was able to say, "Hey, I think we need to focus a little more over here."

Over the years, he and his assistant principal are more comfortable challenging the status quo and have built strong relationships in their building to do this work effectively. Mike explains his thinking in this way:

I think just getting in there to that point, we feel comfortable going to staff saying, "This is something we need to look at." We'll get their feedback and figure out a plan and work together on it and know that they are not going to get offended, they are not going to be defensive and put up a wall.

Mike has developed strategies to hold himself and others accountable for continuous improvement as he has grown in experience as a principal. His capability to be an effective change catalyst effectively holds others accountable for continuous improvement.

The coaches in this study feel better able to impact teacher effectiveness when they have strategies for monitoring continuous improvement in a measurable way. Prior to instructional coaching and curriculum writing, Isabella's role in the district was to implement and analyze districtwide professional development. She felt confident in her ability to monitor the success of the different implementation projects she coordinated. However, with instructional coaching, sometimes she feels that "in the race to get things done...there is little time for monitoring." For example, sometimes she feels that the only monitoring she has time for is, "Did you get it done? Yes? Good." Fortunately, there are times when clear goals and measurable outcomes are planned for in advance. Isabella believes that having clear, measurable goals increases her ability to impact teacher effectiveness. Her colleague Danielle explained how qualitative and quantitative measures are used monitor the continuous improvement of the teachers she coaches:

It comes back to having clear goals. Like classroom management, you know that is such a big issue that takes a lot of time with new teachers, but sometimes it's [classroom management] hard to measure. Yeah, we can look at classroom data and we do that. But, at the same time it's just how the teacher is feeling. If the teacher is feeling better about it, I count that as a success. Sometimes that is all that comes out of it...I feel that in the long run that will lead to better student performance, I feel that sometimes that is an important first step.

Clear goals and measurable outcomes allow instructional coaches to monitor their effectiveness and hold themselves accountable for their impact on teacher quality. Specifying immediate and long-term outcomes helps to fine-tune this practice.

Principals like Mike understand that his ability to hold himself and others accountable for continuously improving will have a dramatic effect on teacher quality. He admits that there is a whole spectrum of data that he can use to monitor teacher effectiveness, everything from state assessments to district assessments to classroom

assessments. But, for his purposes there is one overarching success indicator that is on his ever-present radar. Mike succinctly describes what he is looking for in this manner:

I mean really, if you are going to boil it all down to one thing it's are those kids stronger students when they leave your classroom compared to when they got there. I think for me, that is the bottom line.

When it comes to holding himself and others accountable, his plan is equally concise, "You have got to celebrate when you hit the target, and when you don't you got to figure out what you are going to do differently."

Cecilia, too, understands that her actions can either support or diminish the ability of a coach to increase teacher effectiveness. Working with various instructional coaches in different schools has deepened her understanding of how she should hold herself and others accountable for continuous improvement. In the beginning of the instructional coach innovation, Cecilia thinks it critical to have realistic expectations for achievement increases; as such an outcome will take time. Cecilia shares her thinking on this topic:

I don't think it is realistic for me as a principal to demand student achievement increases from an instructional coach in the first year of a coaching implementation. First and foremost the thing that a new coach has to do is build relationships with the teachers. They have to create that trust so that teachers are willing to take risks and learn something new.

Once the coach has developed trust, Cecilia looks for change in a teacher's teaching behavior. According to Cecilia, change in teacher practice precedes student achievement gains. She looks for change in practice as a way to hold herself and others accountable.

At Cecilia's school, the instructional coach was integral in developing lab classrooms where teachers could host a peer observation around an inquiry question. The invited participants would support the lab classroom host through his personal learning focus and leave the lab classroom with their own learning goal. The instructional coach

would work with teachers to monitor their change in practice according to these set goals.

Cecilia explains how this concept worked:

Getting our coach to create lab classrooms was some of the best professional development we've ever offered to our teachers. The process starts with a pre-brief where teachers learn about the change in practice the lab host is attempting. Then they observe the lab host teaching his class. The participants help collect data on the lab host's inquiry question. They take notes on what the teacher and student are doing and this becomes part of the reflection process. By the end of the debrief, the participants are really engaged in what the lab host teacher is trying to accomplish. Their ideas spur them on, and they end up making connections to their own practice. The coach works with them to take their new learnings and integrate them into their own classrooms with follow up support.

Using a structure like peer observations allows a principal to hold others accountable for their change in practice and support them in their professional growth.

Unfortunately, not all instructional coaches have had the opportunity to work with principals who have thoughtfully planned how to hold themselves and all of their staff accountable for continuous improvement. Instructional coaches feel better able to increase teacher effectiveness when there is a process in place for identifying the short and long-term success outcomes through progress monitoring. If the principal is solely focused on student achievement gains, he may miss the opportunity to celebrate short wins like teacher and student change in behavior. Coaches feel better able to increase teacher quality when there is a plan in place to hold the school accountable for continuous improvement. This often begins with the principal and the coach collaboratively identifying short-term outcomes. These leading success indicators can be monitored by the instructional coach and the faculty as a whole. After the success indicators are identified the principal can use his formal role of authority to hold himself and others accountable, thereby increasing the coach's ability to improve teacher quality.

Summary

The voices of instructional coaches and the principals who work with them have painted a picture of the principal attitudes and actions necessary to increase an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness. The two foundational principal attitudes, *Coaching is Valuable* and *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation*, create a foundation ripe for instructional coaching within a learning community. The three critical principal actions that increase an instructional coach's impact on teacher effectiveness are *Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching*; *Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support*; and *Holding Others and Self Accountable for Continuous Improvement*. The perspectives and insights of the participants in this study frame a grounded theory that supports educators at the initial or transformational stages of their instructional coaching innovations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Expectations are high for the learners, teachers, and systems held accountable for student learning. Since the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the stage has been set for an ongoing debate about the overall effectiveness of American schools, teachers, and the principals. School systems have responded to the challenge by implementing a multitude of strategies to raise overall student achievement, many of which rest upon improving the effectiveness of teachers. Instructional coaching has been identified as a powerful tool that positively increases teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell, et al 2006; Denton et al, 2007; Guiney, 2001; NRTAC, 2010; Russo, 2004; Stephens et al, 2007). Instructional coaching is an investment in time, energy, and financial resources. Educational systems need empirical evidence to best support their instructional coaching programs. This study has identified two foundational attitudes and three critical behaviors of school principals that can either increase or diminish the instructional coach's impact on teacher effectiveness. This chapter will present a discussion of the research findings, recommendations for educational systems, and opportunities for further study.

Discussion of Findings

Instructional coaches must live up to high expectations, as their role is tied to improving teacher effectiveness. However, it is ultimately the principal who is held

accountable for the effectiveness of the teachers in her school. Coaches draw upon their personal credibility and respect they earn from working with staff. Yet, coaches hold minimal formal authority in the schools where they work. Without the explicit support of their principals, coaches may be undermined by the teachers they attempt to support due to a prevailing culture that allows for continuous personal growth to be considered optional as opposed to an expectation (Donaldson et al., 2008; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). This study found that principal's attitudes and actions greatly impact the work of the instructional coach. When principals demonstrate certain attitudes and actions, instructional coaches feel better able to increase teacher effectiveness. When these attitudes and actions are not present, instructional coaches feel their efforts in raising teacher quality are diminished.

Two foundational attitudes and three critical actions were identified in this grounded theory study that principals could employ to maximize the potential benefit of instructional coaching. When present, the two principal attitudes *Coaching is Valuable* and *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation* create a foundation ripe for instructional coaching within a learning community. A principal who does not demonstrate these attitudes diminishes the instructional coach's potential to increase teacher effectiveness. When the principal engages in the following three critical actions, *Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching*; *Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support*; and *Holding Others and Self Accountable for Continuous Improvement*, an instructional coach feels more able to increase teacher effectiveness. On the other hand, instructional coaches believe their capacity to impact teacher effectiveness is weakened when principals do not employ these actions.

Saxe et al., (2001) found that student achievement increased most when teachers were engaged in sustained, collaborative professional development that specifically focused on deepening teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices. Providing individualized support through an appropriate model was found to be a core school leadership practice as noted by Leithwood and Riehl (2003). Ensuring that one's staff receives the professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs was identified by McREL researchers as one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with impacting student achievement (Waters et al., 2003). A principal who portrays the attitude that *Coaching is Valuable*, demonstrates a mindset that aligns with literature on effective school leadership. In this study both the coaches and the principals believed this attitude to be foundational to the success of instructional coaching in a school system. A principal who believes that coaching is valuable is more likely to make time for coaching efforts, find resources to sustain job-embedded professional development, and spend time modifying schedules to make certain that instructional coaching happens. Principals who value coaching understand that an instructional coach is an extension of the principal's instructional leadership.

Another finding illuminated in this study was the importance of the principal's attitude that *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation*. The literature supports the finding that principals who actively portray an attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation positively impact a coach's ability to increase teacher effectiveness. McREL researchers found that principals who foster continuous improvement by inspiring and leading new and challenging innovations, as well as ensuring their staff is aware of the most current theories by making the discussion of

these a regular aspect of the school culture, are most likely to significantly impact student achievement (Waters et al., 2003). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) reviewed the literature and found that principals should offer continuous intellectual stimulation and ongoing individualized support, as this activity is strongly related to the overall effectiveness of the leader. In this study both the coaches and the principals believed that a principal's attitude that *Continuous Improvement is a Cultural Expectation* is foundational to a coach's potential success in improving teacher effectiveness. A principal who believes that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation is more likely to model his own efforts to continuously improve, make comparisons to experts in other fields that are always looking for a way to get better, and create an atmosphere where teachers are willing to take learning risks. When teachers are less open to change and more resistant to learning new strategies, they see coaches as just another person telling them what to do instead of a support to help them grow in their profession. Principal attitudes have an effect on instructional coaches as well as the faculty they lead, and the attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation is critical to the likelihood of an instructional coach's ability to increase teacher effectiveness.

The literature reveals that when professional development is approached with coherence, embedded as part of the total school reform effort, and seamlessly integrated into the teacher work routine order to limit fragmentation between what teachers learn outside the classroom and what they are intended to implement inside the classroom, teacher quality is more likely to be positively impacted (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007; Supovitz et al., 2000). In their review of core practices school leaders should employ, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) noted that

the principal behaviors of setting a school direction, identifying and articulating a vision, and fostering the acceptance of group goals were critical to overall effective leadership. McREL researchers found that the following principal practices are associated with impacting student achievement, involving staff in the design of improvement plans and important decisions, as well as collaboratively setting school goals and keeping those goals in the forefront of the faculty's attention. The emergent theme, *Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose for Coaching*, supports this literature. When principals work with their staff to develop a shared vision and purpose for coaching, instructional coaches feel more equipped to impact teacher effectiveness. A principal who develops a shared vision and purpose for coaching engages collaboratively with his staff, identifying the needs of the students and the teachers. Together, they align this work with the research so that a change in practice is likely to result in increased achievement. Once this work is done, the deployment of the instructional coaching naturally falls into place. Connecting the vision and the plan for change is like fitting the pieces of a puzzle together. When that work is complete, the principal, the coach, and the faculty understand their personal responsibilities. However, when the school vision is unclear and the purpose for coaching is not set by the principal, the instructional coaches felt less confident in their abilities to impact teacher effectiveness. They don't understand what the goal and they don't understand the pathway. They do their best to support teachers where they can, but they are using their instincts to lead them.

An additional finding raised in this study was the importance of the principal action of *Setting Priorities, Parameters and Expectations for Coaching Support*. Garet (2001) found that effective professional development embeds active learning, as teachers

are more likely to be impacted by professional development that is engaging. According to his research, teachers seek to be actively involved in meaningful discussions, planning, practice, observations, and student work analysis. Setting clear expectations regarding the personal development and growth through the use of the coaching model is congruent with this study's findings. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) noted that the principal behavior of creating high performance expectations for faculty as well as students is a core practice aligned with effective school leadership. The McREL researchers found that the capability of maintaining a focus to be strongly related to effective leadership practices leading to high student achievement (Waters et al., 2003).

A principal who sets priorities, parameters, and expectations for coaching support clearly articulates the manner in which faculty should work with the instructional coach, the frequency of working with the coach, and the topical focus of the work with the coach. These priorities, parameters and expectations assist the instructional coach to make quality decisions related to the type of activities to be planned and the amount of time to allot for those activities. Knowing that the work matches the priorities set by the school is supportive and increases a coach's belief in impacting teacher effectiveness. When the protocol for engaging with a coach is transparent to all parties, the coach feels a synergy and increased productivity through the interdependent work. When the expectations for engaging with the coach are explicit, the coach, who walks a fine line between being the colleague and administrator, is able to sidestep potential landmines and focus on providing the support articulated in the expectations. When the principal does not adequately set priorities, parameters, and expectations for coaching support, the coach feels the capacity to impact teacher effectiveness is diminished. Without explicit

priorities, the coach must make the best inferences related to what is the most important work. Without clear parameters, the instructional coach will do her best to work as an interdependent team member. Without set expectations for coaching, the instructional coach will coach where invited, not necessarily where most needed.

Lastly, the principal action of *Holding Others and Self Accountable for Continuous Improvement* emerged as a culminating finding related to the instructional coach's capability to impact teacher effectiveness. The McREL researchers found that principals who take responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning see significantly higher levels of student achievement (Waters et al., 2003). Furthermore, that same study found that principals who are willing to and actively challenge the status quo are more likely to impact student achievement than those principals who do not, this also includes principals who regularly recognize and reward individual accomplishments and recognize and celebrate school accomplishments and while acknowledging failures (Waters et al., 2003). Pankake and Moller (2007) described their practitioner perspectives on what they perceive school-based coaches to need from their principals. According to these authors, in order to take full advantage of instructional coaches, principals must collaboratively build and monitor an action plan designed to increase student achievement.

Instructional coaches often straddle the world between teacher and administrator; yet hold minimal formal authority in the schools where they work (Donaldson et al., 2008; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). In High Plains, the instructional coaches are not a permanent part of the school faculty, and therefore depend upon the principal to hold others and themselves accountable for continuous improvement. In Sunny Park, the

elementary coaches are site-based, but they are not charged with supervisory duties and hold no authority over other colleagues.

In each district, the instructional coaches use their influence to encourage their colleagues to hold themselves responsible to continuously improve, but ultimately that role rests with the principal. When principals lead by example and hold themselves and others accountable for continuous improvement, instructional coaches feel an increased capacity to positively impact teacher effectiveness. A principal who acts in this manner is more likely to have a strategy for monitoring the progress of her staff, know the behaviors that should observably change through the coaching efforts, celebrate the shifts in practice and gains in achievement as they occur, and figure out alternative strategies when the anticipated results are not observable. A principal who does not hold herself and others accountable for continuous improvement is like an athlete who trains for the sport but doesn't show up for the actual game. Holding oneself and others accountable is the follow through on the good work done previously, demonstrating an attitude that coaching is valuable and continuous improvement is a cultural expectation and developing a shared vision and purpose for coaching and setting priorities, parameters and expectations for coaching within the school setting.

The findings of this study were enhanced by the use of a participatory approach during the focus group at Sunny Park School District. These instructional coach participants created a collaborative conceptualization of the five categories of principal support that strengthen a coach's capability to increase teacher effectiveness. Their visual construct is shown below (Figure 1).

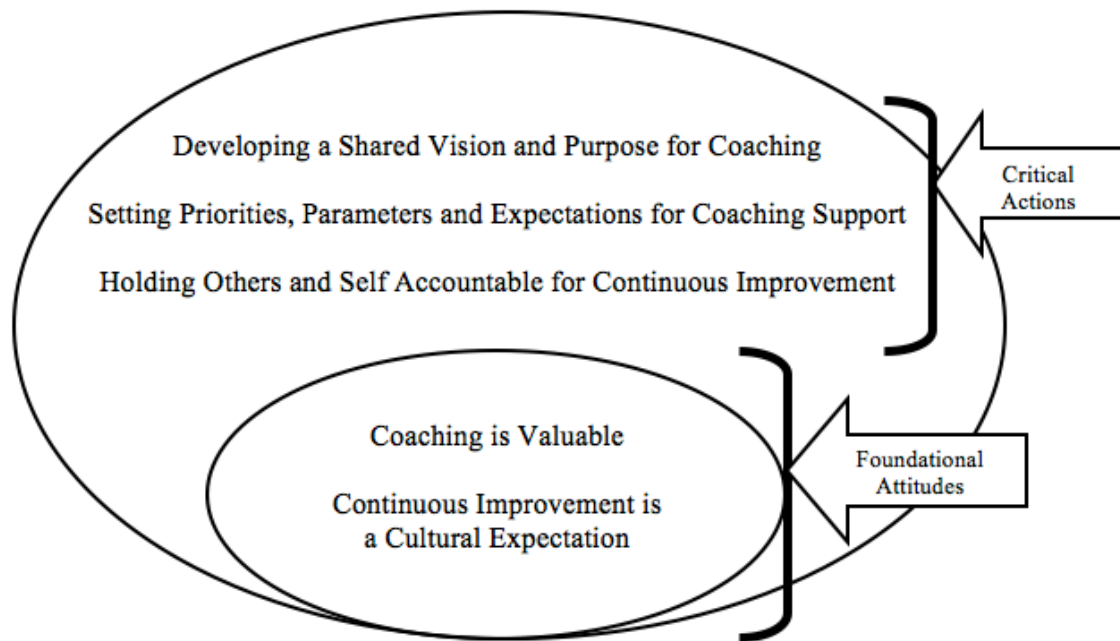


Figure 1 – Actions and Attitudes that Maximize Instructional Coach Impact

These coaches determined that these principal attitudes lie at the heart of how coaches perceive their ability to impact teacher effectiveness. Thus, the attitudes are depicted in the center of the two rings. The coach participants placed the attitudes in the center circle to visually portray their belief that actions follow attitudes. The second concentric ring details the most important actions principals employ to increase the coach’s capacity to increase teacher effectiveness. The participants indicated that all three actions in the second ring are necessary and work synchronously. Their perceptions echoed the old adage “actions speak louder than words.” Collectively they stated that the attitudes are important, but without action, the attitudes alone are ineffectual. Lucille summarized, “Having what’s in the center ring without the critical actions doesn’t really support me as a coach. It’s just lip-service.”

Recommendations

In recent years, the link between teacher quality and student achievement and high quality professional learning to teacher effectiveness has given weight to the instructional coaching model (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Garet et al., 2001; Jordan et al., 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Showers et al., 1987; Wenglinsky, 2000; Wright et al., 1997). The number of teacher leaders in the role of instructional coaches has grown dramatically in the last decade (NRTAC, 2010). Furthermore, the emerging body of research that directly links instructional coaching to increased student achievement has led to the sustained spread of instructional coaches in school systems (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell, et al., 2006; Denton et al., 2007; Guiney, 2001; NRTAC, 2010; Russo, 2004; Stephens et al., 2007).

For these reasons, it is recommended that coordinators of instructional programs take note of the foundational principal attitudes towards the value of coaching and the expectation that continuous improvement is a cultural norm. As this study revealed, instructional coaches feel a greater capacity to increase teacher effectiveness when the principals with whom they work portray these attitudes. It is also recommended that this research be shared directly with principals who work with instructional coaches so that they could reflect upon whether they reveal these attitudes in their words and behaviors. If these attitudes are not overtly present, the coordinators of instructional coach programs and principals can engage in a process to break down the barriers that may prevent positive attitudes from forming. Researchers Olson and Maio (2003) suggest that there are several different components that make up attitudes:

- An Affective Component: The feelings the object produces.
- A Cognitive Component: What you know and believe about the subject.
- A Behavioral Component: A predisposition to act toward the object in a particular way.

Knowing the components that make up attitudes is important for those who are interested in changing them.

A belief that coaching is valuable may be connected to the perceived competence of the coach. If the principal does not believe the coach is competent, the principal may show a negative attitude towards coaching. Principals in this situation should work with their instructional coach coordinators or their supervisors to increase the coach's competency or find another coach that is competent. If a principal does not portray the attitude that continuous improvement is a cultural expectation at the school, instructional coach program coordinators or supervisors can work with principals to analyze the perceived absence of this attitude. Most likely the perceived absence of this attitude is revealed in the lack of overt messaging and/or vulnerability on the principal's part to share how she is a learner herself. To get an individual to change their attitude about something, they must be persuaded. According to Olson & Maio (2003), attitudes are formed by our experiences and the ability to persuade someone to change someone's attitude is dependent on three factors:

- Status of the persuader - Someone of high status who is knowledgeable and genuine is likely to be successful
- Clarity of the message - A clear, concise and accurate argument should be put forward

- Ability to understand the message - The individual being persuaded must be capable of understanding the message

Using the central route to persuasion outlined above will be most effective when principals are motivated and inclined to change their mind based upon the merits of the argument and trust in the person delivering the message (Olson & Zanna; 1993).

While the foundational attitudes of the principal are important for the instructional coach to feel best able to impact teacher effectiveness, it is the actions that may cement most elevated feelings of support felt by instructional coaches. A mismatch in the between attitudes and actions may cause cognitive dissonance in the mind of the person being persuaded due to the introduction of new information affecting the cognitive or affective component. One way to reduce this imbalance is to change their behavior (Nairne, 2009). For these reasons, it is recommended that coordinators of instructional programs and principal supervisors review the three critical actions that foster an increased perceived coach capacity to improve teachers' effectiveness and identify strategies to assist principals in employing these behaviors. Effective principals routinely develop a shared vision for school improvement. Principals may need support and guidance on how to engage in this process. The root cause may be a lack of understanding relative to developing a vision and school goals or implementing a collaborative processes to ensure that the vision and goals developed are shared and owned by all the faculty. Professional development for the principal to learn these collaborative practices may be needed.

Once a shared vision has been created, an instructional coach coordinator or principal supervisor can connect the purpose of coaching with the targeted school goals.

Effective principals routinely set priorities, parameters, and expectations for their staff. Principals may need support and guidance on how to engage in this process. Setting too many goals may create barriers to setting clear priorities. Another challenge to prioritization may be the inability to view the identified goals as interconnected components. Furthermore, parameters may not have been set delineating the roles and responsibilities between the interdependent parties. Again, instructional coach coordinators or principal supervisors can provide professional support for principals to set clearer priorities, look for the interconnectedness of multiple initiatives, and developing clear responsibilities shared between the coach and principal.

Finally, the expectations related to accessing coaching may not be explicitly clear. An instructional coach coordinator or principal supervisor can assist a principal with the prioritization of school goals, the development of parameters and protocols to create synergy between coach and principal, and the boundaries between what expectations can be communicated that are within the bounds of district policy or practice. Effective principals routinely hold others and themselves accountable for continuous improvement. Principals may need support and guidance on how to engage in this process. Follow through is the most critical step for the building leader. All the other work developing a shared vision and expectation setting will not amount to anything if the principal does not follow through. Instructional coach coordinators and principal supervisors can work with a principal to identify the short term and long term changes in practice that should be observable in the classroom. These are leading indicators of future student achievement success. Once the immediate and long-term outcomes are identified, a supporter can work with the principal to devise a progress-monitoring tool to examine the change in practice.

This may take form in a walk-through document or a checklist of classroom look-fors. Teachers may be empowered themselves to collect evidence of their change in behavior through student artifacts, teacher lessons, and or collegial discussions. Once identified, the whole staff, led by the principal, should celebrate these changes in practice.

The third stakeholder group that should be engaged in the review of these findings should be the instructional coaches themselves. Throughout the research process, this researcher observed the participants engaging in the member checking process as well as the focus group to identify the emergent findings and noticed their increasing sense of personal efficacy. While the focus of the study clearly sought to identify the attitudes and actions principals take that maximize or diminish a coach's capacity to increase teacher effectiveness, the coaches in this study were energized by the realization that they could be the catalyst for changed principal attitudes and behaviors. When parameters weren't set that openly delineated the responsibilities between the coach and principal when working with a teacher on an improvement plan, Danielle and her coaching colleagues came together to write a protocol. They worked with the principal to use the protocol and found that their ability to increase teacher effectiveness was impacted. When Isabella noticed that she was unaware of the school improvement goals in the buildings she worked, she determined on her own that this would be important work for her and her principal. She was empowered to make that happen.

During the Sunny Park focus group and active participatory research, Kaylee acknowledged that one of the things she appreciated most about her principal was his consistent follow through and ability to hold himself and others accountable. This researcher asked Kaylee why she thought her principal was so solid in this skill. Kaylee

paused, thought for a moment and said, “I think it is because I never let him not hold anyone accountable.” Kayee elaborates on her idea in the following way:

If our school plan states that every coach should engage in a monthly data conversation, and there are teachers that miss an appointment with the data team, I follow up with my principal to let him know. Our plan states that the teachers should take personal responsibility for their growth and development. He isn't a mind reader. He doesn't know if I don't tell him. When we meet weekly for our principal/coach meeting, I bring an agenda with me. He is so busy, I know he relies on me to help him with the details. We worked with our leadership team to create the walk through document that helps us assess our progress towards our school goal. We wrote that into our school plan, and I know our school plan. If our leadership team forgot to do that work, I know that I can bring it to our team's attention. That's my role as a coach and an instructional leader in the building. I collaborate with my teaching colleagues as well as my principal. If I don't work to help my school move forward, I'm not doing my job as a coach.

Using Kaylee's logic, instructional coaches themselves have the capacity to affect principal attitudes and actions that in turn increase a coach's ability to impact teacher effectiveness. This researcher recommends that these findings be shared with this stakeholder group to empower them in shifting principal attitudes and actions that support instructional coaching.

Suggested Topics for Further Study

Based on the findings, this researcher makes several recommendations related to support structures that could develop the foundational attitudes and critical actions principals should employ in order to maximize an instructional coach's capacity to increase teacher effectiveness. Instructional coaches in this study expressed concern in their ability to manage competing priorities, especially when these priorities were set at the district level. The coaches also spoke to their craftsmanship and training. In some aspects, they felt entirely competent, while in other areas, they admitted their areas of

weakness. For this reason, it is recommended that another area of potential research would be a similar research question posed at the district level. For example, a researcher might ask, “What actions of the district strengthen an instructional coach’s ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?” Or, “What actions of the district diminish an instructional coach’s ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?”

Another recommended topic for inquiry is in the perceptions of the principals regarding what they believe they need to effectively maximize an instructional coach’s capacity to impact teacher effectiveness. In this study, the majority of the participants who were interviewed were instructional coaches. A follow up study that focused on principal participants and their perceptions would deepen these insights and knowledge. This research could provide much needed empirical data for an instructional coach program coordinator or district level supervisor. Such research would add to the base of findings and recommendations identified in this study.

If a school system used the recommendations provided in this study, a follow up study might test the theories of the attitudes and the actions identified by this researcher. A mixed method study might ascertain the level of perceived impact a change in principal attitude or behavior had on the coach’s capacity to positively impact teacher effectiveness using a perception survey prior to working with the principals on their attitudes and actions and the same perception survey after working with the principals. Three different stakeholder groups’ perceptions could be analyzed: the principals’, the district supervisors’ and the instructional coaches’.

It takes a good deal of financial resources to employ instructional coaches. They need to be hired, paid, and trained. During financial times of constraints, school systems

have found that they need to disassemble their instructional coaching programs, as funds are needed elsewhere. An area of study that may be of interest to the field might be how school systems that once utilized instructional coaches are now structuring professional development for their faculty. Teacher effectiveness remains a hot topic in the realm of education policy. How school systems without instructional coaches are maximizing teacher effectiveness without the instructional coach structure would be an intriguing area of study. Would researchers find evidence of school personnel engaging in the same strategies used by a coach without the title and the role? Would those who previously had instructional coaches find this model as effective in increasing teacher quality?

Conclusion

School districts across the United States have been charged with improving student achievement and teacher effectiveness. They have responded to this demand by implementing a wide number of innovations to achieve these accountability goals. Instructional coaching is one of these innovations. Instructional coaching has been identified as a powerful tool that has the likelihood to impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement when implemented successfully. Instructional coaching models require an investment, in time, energy, and financial resources.

By listening to the voices of instructional coaches and principals who work with instructional coaches, this researcher formulated a theory that could be utilized by systems to strengthen their instructional coaching programs. Two foundational principal attitudes and three critical principal actions maximize an instructional coach's capacity to impact teacher effectiveness. This study also found that when principals did not employ these attitudes and actions, instructional coaches felt less likely to impact teacher

effectiveness. It is worth noting that this research was conducted on two different school district sites with similar student populations and instructional coaching models. The significant difference between the models was the number of schools served by each coach. Despite this difference, it is possible to apply the findings across a multitude of school districts with varying instructional coaching models.

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APPENDIX A
EMAIL RECRUITMENT COACH

Research Project:

Developing a Grounded Theory: WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED TO IMPACT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Dear Instructional Coach,

My name is Diane Lauer and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

Because high quality teaching and learning are critical to educating today's young people, I am interested in understanding how school systems work to support educator effectiveness. As an instructional coach, you serve an important function as you support teachers to attain or maintain their effectiveness status.

I am conducting a grounded theory study in order to discover what principals do to support Instructional Coaches in their work to impact teacher effectiveness. My research questions are 1) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as positively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness, and 2) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as negatively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness.

I need four volunteers to participate in a one-on-one interview. I will select the participants randomly from those who volunteer. The data from the interviews and focus group will be shared only using pseudonyms. Individual names of the participants, their school district, or individual school will not appear in any professional report of this research or in side conversations outside this research. The researcher will record each interview using pseudonyms and keep the contents of these digital files private. The digital files will be locked in a secured file cabinet for one year after the research is complete. Only the researcher and research advisor will have access to the recorded responses.

Participants will also have an opportunity to access this study throughout the process. They will have an opportunity review the notes and transcriptions for correctness and review the emerging theory. The final qualitative research will benefit the field. While a growing number of studies demonstrate the positive impact of instructional coaches, few reveal how these coaches are best supported. This study has the potential to positively impact instructional coaching within your region and the field at large.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to me, at dianelauer@mac.com

Sincerely,

Diane Lauer
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT COACH

Informed Consent for Instructional Coach Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title:

Developing a Grounded Theory: WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED TO IMPACT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Researcher: Diane Lauer, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Phone Number: (970) 222-6422

Research Advisor: Linda Vogel

Phone Number: (970)-351-2119

My name is Diane Lauer and I am a doctoral student at UNC in the Education Leadership and Policy Studies department. Because high quality learning is critical to educating today's young people, I am interested in understanding how school systems work to support educator effectiveness. You serve an important need in this context as you coach teachers to attain or maintain their high quality status; Therefore, I am requesting your help.

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to discover how principals impact Instructional Coaches in their work to improve teacher effectiveness. My research questions are 1) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as positively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness, and 2) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as negatively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness.

Participation Requirements –

We will conduct this interview at a place and time convenient for you. This interview will take approximately one hour. Once completed, I will ask you if you would like to participate in a virtual focus group of other instructional coaches, which will take approximately one hour. A copy of the interview questions is attached. Each interview will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in the participants' comments. The interviews will be conducted during the months of October – December 2012. I will begin the focus group by setting norms regarding confidentiality expectations among the group to help maximize confidentiality outside of the group.

Procedures to Protect Confidentiality-

The data that will be collected in each interview will be shared only in anonymous form. Individual names of the participants, their school district, or individual school will not appear in any professional report of this research. Each participant will select a pseudonym which will be used in the published work. We will audiotape each interview and keep the contents of these tapes private. The tapes and transcriptions will be locked

in a secured file cabinet for one years after the research is complete. Only the researchers and research advisor will have access to the data.

Risk and Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant. However, your feelings of security in your place of work are paramount. I understand that Instructional Coaches need to be trusted by those they work with on a daily basis. As researcher, I will do everything in my power to hold the highest levels of confidentiality in order to maintain the trust you have so carefully built.

There are a number of benefits to this study. Through this research I hope to identify a theory of support from the perspective of instructional coaches. It is believed that a by-product of this research will be the benefits derived from the participants as they construct knowledge in this area. The final qualitative research will be shared with your district to address their stakeholder communication, professional development, and central office staff needs, thus enhancing the support you receive. Furthermore, my experience working with instructional coaches and addressing the topic of professional support will be a strong inducement to those who support your instructional coach program and others like it across our nation.

Please feel free to call me (970-222-6422) if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records. By taking part in this interview and/or focus group, participants are providing consent to be part of the study. Thank you for assisting with this research.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS COACH

Interview Questions – Instructional Coach

- Q: How do you define teacher effectiveness?
- Q1: What do you do as an Instructional Coach to impact teacher effectiveness?
- Q2: What principal actions support your impact on teacher effectiveness?
- Q3: How do you believe school principals diminish your impact on teacher effectiveness?
- Q4: What other supports do you need to positively impact teacher effectiveness?

APPENDIX D

EMAIL RECRUITMENT PRINCIPAL

Research Project:
Developing a Grounded Theory: WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED TO
IMPACT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Dear Principal,

My name is Diane Lauer and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Because high quality teaching and learning are critical to educating today's young people, I am interested in understanding how principals can best support instructional coaches impact teacher effectiveness. As a principal that works with instructional coaches, you serve an important function, and for that reason I am requesting your help.

I am conducting a grounded theory study in order to discover the elements that create a sense of support for an Instructional Coach. My research questions are 1) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as positively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness, and 2) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as negatively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness.

I am in need of one volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview. I will select the participant randomly. The data collected from the interviews and focus group will be shared only using pseudonyms. Individual names of the participants, their school district, or individual school will not appear in any professional report of this research or in side conversations outside this research. The researcher will record each interview using pseudonyms and keep the contents of these digital files private. The digital files will be locked in a secured file cabinet for one year after the research is complete. Only the researcher and research advisor will have access to the recorded responses.

Participants will also have an opportunity to access this study throughout the process. They will have an opportunity review the notes and transcriptions for correctness and review the emerging theory. The final qualitative research will benefit the field. While a growing number of studies demonstrate the positive impact of instructional coaches, few reveal how their principals best support these coaches. This study has the potential to positively impact instructional coaching within your region and the field at large.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to me at dianelauer@mac.com

Sincerely,

Diane Lauer
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT PRINCIPAL

Informed Consent for Principal Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title:

Developing a Grounded Theory: WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED TO IMPACT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Researcher: Diane Lauer, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Phone Number: (970) 222-6422

Research Advisor: Linda Vogel

Phone Number: (970)-351-2119

My name is Diane Lauer and I am a doctoral student at UNC in the Education Leadership and Policy Studies department. Because high quality learning is critical to educating today's young people, I am interested in understanding how school systems work to support educator effectiveness. You serve an important need in this context as you supervise instructional coaches who work to impact teacher effectiveness; Therefore, I am requesting your help.

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to discover how Principals impact Instructional Coaches in their work to improve teacher effectiveness. My research questions are 1) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as positively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness, and 2) What actions or behaviors of school principals do instructional coaches perceive as negatively impacting the role of instructional coaches on teacher effectiveness.

Participation Requirements –

We will conduct this interview at a place and time convenient for you. This interview will take approximately one hour. Once completed, I will ask you if you would like to participate in a virtual focus group of other instructional coaches, which will take approximately one hour. A copy of the interview questions is attached. Each interview will be tape recorded to ensure accuracy in the participants' comments. The interviews will be conducted during the months of October-December 2012.

Procedures to Protect Confidentiality-

The data that will be collected in each interview will be shared only in anonymous form. Individual names of the participants, their school district, or individual school will not appear in any professional report of this research. Each participant will select a pseudonym which will be used in the published work. We will audiotape each interview and keep the contents of these tapes private. The tapes and transcriptions will be locked in a secured file cabinet for one year after the research is complete. Only the researchers and research advisor will have access to the data.

Risk and Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant. However, your feelings of security in your place of work are paramount. I understand that Principals need to be trusted by those they work with on a daily basis. As researcher, I will do everything in my power to hold the highest levels of confidentiality in order to maintain the trust you have so carefully built.

There are a number of benefits to this study. Through this research I hope to identify a theory of support from the perspective of instructional coaches. It is believed that a by-product of this research will be the benefits derived from the participants as they construct knowledge in this area. The final qualitative research will be shared with your district to address their stakeholder communication, professional development, and central office staff needs, thus enhancing the support you receive. Furthermore, my experience as a former principal that supervised an instructional coach and current central office director coordinating instructional coaches will be a strong inducement to those who support your instructional coach program and others like it across our nation.

Please feel free to call me (970-222-6422) if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records. By taking part in this interview and/or focus group, participants are providing consent to be part of the study. Thank you for assisting with this research.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PRINCIPAL

Interview Questions – Principal

- Q: How do you define teacher effectiveness?
- Q1: What strategies do you use in your school to impact teacher effectiveness?
- Q1: What strategies does your Instructional Coach use to impact teacher effectiveness?
- Q2: What principal actions do you believe positively impact your Instructional Coach's ability to increase teacher effectiveness?
- Q3: What principal actions do you believe may negatively impact your Instructional Coach's ability to increase teacher effectiveness?
- Q4: What other supports do you need to positively impact teacher effectiveness in your school?

APPENDIX G
IRB APPLICATION

Narrative: UNC IRB Application for Exempt Status

Developing a Grounded Theory: WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES NEED TO IMPACT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

A. Introduction & Purpose

1. Instructional coaches are a type of teacher leader within a PK-12 school setting. They deliver job-embedded, just-in-time training to teachers in order to strengthen instruction so that student achievement is positively impacted. School systems employ instructional coaches because they believe high-quality professional learning, which improves teaching practices, will in turn increase student achievement. Several researchers have linked teacher quality to student achievement and high quality professional learning to teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; NRTAC, 2010).

The body of research regarding the positive impact of instructional coaches is limited but growing as the scope of this type of teacher leadership is still new and being developed (Knight, 2007). Nevertheless, school systems continue to devote financial resources towards the inclusion of instructional coaches in their systems. States like Florida require reading coaches in schools, and certain federal programs like Reading First require the inclusion of instructional literacy coaches in their program design (Rand, 2007; NRTAC, 2010). Several studies have identified the knowledge, skills, and dispositions coaches should have in order to be successful (NRTAC, 2010; Rand, 2007; Knight, 2007).

However, a gap in the research exists regarding what instructional coaches need from their principals to impact teacher effectiveness. School systems with instructional coach programs, particularly the principals of those schools and the central administrators of coaching programs, could benefit from the knowing which support structures foster the success of coaches in their system. Knowing the perceptions of instructional coaches will enable school systems to better understand how principals can enhance the support they provide their instructional coaches.

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand how principals positively or negatively impact the instructional coach's role regarding teacher effectiveness in an educational setting. My research questions are 1) "What actions of school principals strengthen an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?," and 2) "What actions of school principals diminish an instructional coach's ability to positively impact teacher effectiveness?"

2. Category type: Exempt.

The participants will be adult-age instructional coaches and principals employed in two medium-sized PK-12 school districts serving between 9,000-35,000 students within 250 miles radius of a major metropolitan center in a Western state. The qualitative research design will not disrupt or manipulate participants' normal life experiences or incorporate any form of intrusive procedures. Forty-five minute interviews and one focus group for member checking purposes will be arranged during times of mutual agreement. The research will be conducted in established educational settings involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. Participants will select pseudonyms to be used during the research project and in published reports. Their

identities will remain confidential. It is imperative that participants feel confident that sharing sensitive thoughts, ideas, and concerns will not harm them.

B. Methods

1. Participants

Participants will be adult instructional coaches and principals employed in two medium-sized school districts serving 9,000 and 35,000 total students within a 250 mile radius of a major metropolitan center in a Western state. An open invitation to all instructional coaches and principals from the three districts will be delivered via email (See Appendix A and Appendix B). Random sampling methods will be employed to select three Instructional Coaches from two districts for a total of six instructional coaches. One principal from each of the two districts will be randomly selected from those who volunteer by responding to the initial email. In order to create the simple random sample, the researcher will use a simple random sampler computer application.

2. Data Collection Procedures

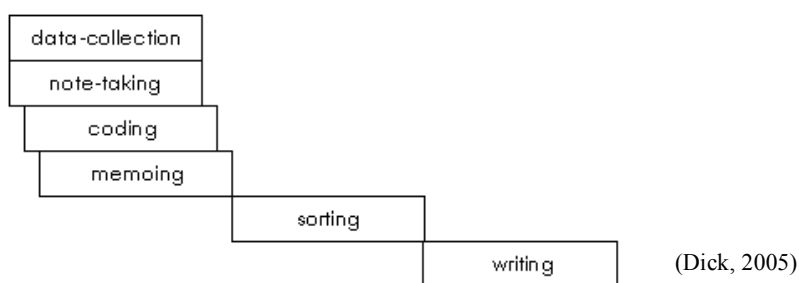
Only after formal consent is given, individual instructional coach and principal participants will receive a follow-up email to identify a mutually agreed upon time to meet with the researcher during one hour, face-to-face, interviews framed with open-ended questions as defined by grounded theorists (Creswell, 2007). Each instructional coach and principal participant will have the option to select the setting from one of three choices: a school setting, an office, a coffee shop. The instructional coach and principal participants will select a pseudonym. The interviews will be digitally recorded. Both principal and instructional coach participants can decide to leave the study at any time. The researcher will also take notes during the individual interviews to provide a foundation for the memoing and theme-building process (Creswell, 2007; Dick, 2005).

In addition, each instructional coach participant will be invited to participate in a follow-up, one-hour virtual focus group for further data collection, using open-ended questioning techniques. Instructional coach participants will be advised that they may select to leave the study at this time if they desire. The instructional coach participants will participate in an electronic phone conference platform to protect confidentiality. The instructional coach focus group participants will sign a consent form within which they will agree not to share each other's names or their discussion with others outside the group.

All participants will be offered an opportunity to review the notes, transcripts, and synthesized writing products from this research. After each interview and focus group gathering, the participants will be debriefed (given information regarding the researcher's next steps in the study, how they may access the study once it is complete, and an additional opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the study and/or their role in the study).

3. Data Analysis Procedures

Throughout the process the researcher will take notes, use axial coding to disaggregate the core themes during the qualitative data analysis, compare information constantly, and begin to generate theory. After the interviews, the researcher will identify categories (themes/variables) and their properties (sub-categories), sort the categories following a process outlined as such:



Research from the present literature will be incorporated as the researcher writes, not before, as recommended by Glaser & Strauss as summarized by Dick (Dick, 2005). A storyline would be written that connects the categories as suggested by Creswell (Creswell, 2007).

4. Data Handling Procedures

Confidentiality will be maximized, as all data collected including informed consent forms, interview audiotapes, researcher notes, and audiotape transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the home office of the researcher. Pseudonyms only will be used during interviews. Research data including notes, audiotapes, and transcripts will be destroyed one year after the study is complete. Participants will be informed that their participation is completely voluntary, and will be told that they can withdraw at anytime. All participants will be offered a summary of the study findings for preview and member checking.

C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks and/or discomforts other than what would normally occur in educational practice and due to the design of this qualitative research. The participants may be concerned about their job status within the school system, as the information they share could be sensitive. However, only volunteers will be accepted, and each will understand the precautions that will be taken to protect their confidentiality. The researcher will inform the participants that the information collected will not be shared with their immediate supervisor, any other school employee, or any other person beyond the researcher's advisor. They will also be made aware that they have the freedom to withdraw from the research study at any time without consequences.

There are potential benefits to the participants for engaging in this study. The constructed knowledge the participants stand to gain from the interview and focus group dialogue will help them make meaning of the ideas related to their work which may enhance their feelings of success and efficacy.

D. Costs and Compensations

This researcher understands the work burden of those in the education field. The generous giving of their time will be in part compensated for with a \$10.00 gift card to a local coffee shop for the interview, and an additional \$10.00 gift card for participation in the focus group.

These materials may include, but are not limited to:

- Consent Documents – Follow the guidelines for construction of consent documents.
- Letters of Permission – Attach written permission from site of data collection if external to UNC.

- Letters or forwarded e-mails should document the permission of appropriate officials to recruit participation from and collect data in schools, child care centers, hospitals, clinics, and other universities.
- Survey Instruments – Copies of widely used standardized tests are not necessary.
- Questionnaires
- Interview Questions/Potential Questions/Protocols/Range of Topics
- Debriefing Materials (if applicable)
- Documentation of IRB Training (required for federally funded research and for full board review protocols)