THE ROLES OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF READING IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION AND ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL AS CASE STUDIES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This research examined the relevance of professional associations to effective reading teaching in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). It looked at the performances of students in meets and exceeds in the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) for third and eight grade students in selected schools in CPS between 1999 and 2004 and how the professional development resources of both the IRA and IRC affected students’ performances by interviewing and conducting a sample survey of CPS reading specialists and literacy coaches.

The study obtained data from public access and compared how third and eighth grade students performed in meets and exceeds category in the ISAT before reading specialists (RS) and literacy coaches (LC) were hired in 2001, and three years after hiring to see if there were any significant improvements in students’ performances in meets and exceeds in ISAT of the third and eighth grade students. The study discovered there was no statistical difference in students’ performances before and after the hiring of the RS and LC.

The analysis of the surveys and interviews with the sample of reading specialists and literacy coaches who were members of the IRA and IRC between 2001 and 2004, revealed that students performances improved in meets and exceeds through the use of IRA/IRC professional development resources.

In conclusion, the study recommended that reading specialists and literacy coaches needed more time to maximize the various benefits they could gain from continued memberships in both the IRA and IRC because the results of the ISAT data did not support the analysis of the surveys and interviews in the improvement in students’ performances in the three years of the Chicago Reading Initiative.
To God Almighty and my family
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Chapter I
Achieving Reading Proficiency in Illinois Public Schools

Introduction

Reading is a basic educational process. From kindergarten through third grade, children learn to read. They also read to learn. Children who read well by third grade achieve high performance in school. On the contrary, those with low reading levels by third grade do poorly; sometimes such third-graders do poorly for the rest of their lives (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 1998, p. 1). Indeed, the kindergarten/elementary years in a child education—especially the first grade—is a pivotal moment in a child’s reading life, and as Ehn, Dreyer, Flugman, and Gross (2007) disclosed, children who fail to acquire adequate reading skills in the first grade are likely to lag behind and unable to catch up with their peers in later life (p. 414).

The most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher and more can be done to improve the level of education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2001, p. 3). As Feathers and Rivers (2004) observed “reading is best taught when integrated into all subjects, that learning how to read never stops, and that reading instruction need not take time from the learning of content” (p. 10). There is the need for teachers of reading to be effective and trained readers themselves before they can be effective teachers of reading in the classroom setting but unfortunately some teachers or prospective teachers of reading are bad readers and this invariably translates to ineffective reading students. According to Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levittet (2008), in a research survey conducted among graduate students of reading and teachers of reading in New York City on Long Island in 2006, 788 respondents were administered the Literacy Habits Questionnaire (LHQ) developed by Applegate and Applegate (2004) to determine the culture of reading among
the participants. Specifically, the questionnaire asked the respondents—comprised of 38% current full-time teachers of reading at various elementary schools and 62% current graduate students of reading—to reply to questions regarding their attitudinal disposition to reading as an intellectual exercise in the following rankings: derive tremendous enjoyment to reading, great, moderate, little, or no enjoyment in reading in that order.

The findings of the survey showed that 29% of the teachers and potential teachers of reading said they were enthusiastic readers of books, while 54% said they placed little emphasis or less enthusiasm on reading. The survey revealed nil statistical significant discoveries between enthusiastic and non-enthusiastic readers, but one significant discovery of the survey was that some of the participants who responded that they were enthusiastic to reading also responded that they rated their early reading experiences in elementary school as positive. Eighty-one percent of the enthusiastic readers among those surveyed also said their early reading experiences in kindergarten and elementary school were responsible (Applegate & Applegate, 2004, p. 319) while 63% who identified themselves as enthusiastic readers disclosed they developed the habit of reading because they had a teacher who shared a love for reading in their formative years (p. 316). For teachers of reading to be effective in the classroom, they must know what to teach and how to teach because reading requires multi-dimensional complexities and this is why professional organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA) and its local affiliate, the Illinois Reading Council (IRC), can serve as invaluable resource guides for teachers of reading and literacy coaches.

Many school districts across the nation do not have uniform curriculum, and there are no standards for student assessment in reading except the No Child Left Behind benchmarks. However, as the largest professional organization for teachers, scholars and other stakeholders,
the IRA has created five basic standards that teaching professionals should use in effective teaching of reading from the kindergarten to the university level (IRA, 2005). These standards are: (a) foundational knowledge; (b) instructional strategies and curriculum materials; (c) assessments, diagnostics and evaluation standards; (d) creating literate learning environments; and (e) professional development. These standards have become annual publications of the IRA developed by the association’s committee on professional standards and ethics that guide school districts, community colleges, and university faculties on teaching reading across the United States.

Teaching is a demanding profession and stress has increased with the intense demands to improve learning with the institution of public policies insisting on improving student test scores. Many educational scholars have advocated for “induction of beginning teacher support” (Darling-Hammond, 1995, p. 10) to serve as learning and coaching grounds for new teachers before thrusting them into a classroom setting to teach reading. A call has also been made for national curriculum standards to assist teachers of reading to improve reading quality and the establishment of emotional and socialization support for beginning teachers across the nation (Sweeny & DeBolt, 2000).

Wang, Odell, and Schwille (2008) advanced three approaches to improve beginning teachers’ quality of reading in the classroom, including exposing beginning teachers to workshops and conferences as instructional activities, along with emphasis on pre-service teaching experience and the use of peer group mentoring through reading specialists and literacy coaches so that such beginning teachers may be able to acquire necessary foci, visions, and skills (p. 145). Such calls by scholars and other stakeholders for national curriculum, instructional
strategies, and assessments have been heeded by the IRA through its annual publication of *Standards for Reading Professionals: A Reference for the Preparation of Educator in the USA*.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was signed into law on January 8, 2002, and the purpose was to ensure that each child in America was able to meet the high learning standards of the state where he or she lived. The overarching goal was for all students to meet or exceed standards in reading and mathematics by 2014. The act was also enacted to redress education imbalance between low-achieving and educationally gifted students, including making education a civil right issue that should be available to every school-age child in America. In addition, the purpose of the act was also to improve the education of children from low socio-economic backgrounds to be able to compete and use their talents toward achieving the American dream through quality education (Sherman, 2008, p. 675). The act has been hailed as the most comprehensive federal legislation on education since 1965 when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson because, unlike any previous federal law on education, NCLB focused more on redressing achievements gaps in the nation’s educational system (Sherman, 2008, p. 675).

Prior to NCLB in 2002, the standards for CPS required that all schools meet at least a 15% average in both reading and mathematics test scores. Chicago public schools that did not meet these state standards were to be placed on academic probation. A probationary status meant that the schools would be closely monitored by the State of Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) and may subsequently be closed and dismantled if the State goals are not met. Before NCLBA was signed into law which necessitated the CPS to implement its provisions in the state, the CPS was once described by then-U.S Secretary of Education William Bennett in 1987 as “the worst in America” (Sander, 2001, p. 27) because of the high rate of drop outs, the low rate of
school graduation, and poor student test scores. During this period, the *Chicago Tribune* did a series of feature articles on the poor state of the school system in the county criticizing the various stakeholders of CPS as selfish, lackadaisical, and politicizing the city’s education, charging that “Chicago schools are so bad, they are hurting so many thousands of children so terribly, they are jeopardizing the future of the city” (March, 1988, p. 2).

According to several studies (Coleman, Coleman, Campbell, Hobson., McPartland., Mood., Weinfield., & York, 1966; Hanushek, 1986), some of the causes of the dismal state of the city’s educational systems at the elementary and secondary levels were inadequate remunerations and incentives for teachers, dearth of resources for education personnel, large class size, and other socio-economic factors unique to Chicago’s demographic profile. Prior to 2002, CPS used what it called the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) as test scores in reading and mathematics for third, sixth, and tenth grade students. The IGAP was the statewide mandate test which nearly 91% students in the CPS must take. This was later replaced by another statewide achievement test because IGAP was considered unreliable in measuring student achievement in reading (Sander, 2007). By the late 1990s, CPS had succeeded in turning around the dismal state of the school system to the extent that then President Clinton singled out CPS for praise in one of his State of the Union addresses, commending the turnaround strategies adopted by CPS to other cities and school districts in the nation. The CPS weathered many storms and faced serious challenges, among which were the responsibilities enunciated for school administrators, teachers, parents, communities, and other vital stakeholders. One of such initiatives was the establishment of the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI).

CPS established the CRI in consonance with the guidelines of NCLB to meet the goals of high scores in reading, mathematics and writing among other objectives. Implementation of the
CRI was to assist teachers and principals in improving reading and mathematics scores to the acceptable standards. However, expectation of the success of the initiative was not guaranteed, thus teachers of reading would be assisted by hiring qualified reading specialists and literacy coaches. There were three components of professional development that CPS needed toward restructuring the school system and classroom settings to be made conducive for teaching of reading, namely: reorganization of instruction, changing power and authority relationships, and finally, building personal relationships among and between school personnel (Lee & Smith, 2001; Manning, Sisserson, Joliffe, Buenrostro, & Jackson, 2008). However, it would require more than mere changing of teachers, school cultures, and adhering to rigid instructional materials for CPS to meet these laudable objectives unless the efforts of reading specialists and literacy coaches were supplemented with aggressive professional developments.

As Snow, Griffin, and Burns (2005) noted, when it comes to the issue of developing and improving the reading capacity of students, the phrase is “it all comes down to the teachers” (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009, p. 533). The role professional development plays in the effective teaching of reading by teachers of reading cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, professional development is *sine qua non* to turning around CPS reading scores for sundry reasons against the backdrop of myriad problems confronting the school system before the enactment of NCLB. One of the provisions of the act was the establishment of Early Reading First which raised the bar for teacher quality (Neumann, 2008), and the implementation of Good Start (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2002), which made it mandatory for teachers to participate in professional development (Neumann & Cunningham, 2009, p. 534).

The reading initiative required that teachers teach only four literacy components: reading comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness and writing. The flexibility of the reading
initiative allowed teachers to teach using strategies addressing the literacy components within a two hour literacy instruction block. Schools were not limited to adhering to a proscribed scripted program. Although the CRI was initially confusing to some school administrators and teachers in the district, many liked the flexibility. “I like the program. It doesn’t limit you,” said Lawson, principal of Price Elementary School on his assessment of the goals of the CRI (Kelleher, 2002).

Under NCLBA, teacher qualification was a concern. If school children were to succeed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science, there must be qualified teachers to instruct them. Standards would be required to help direct schools towards common academic goals and unite the community for reform and achievement. Standards have gone through controversy to necessity. As previously stated, one of the goals of the CRI was to support its staff of teachers with the addition of reading specialists and literacy coaches to a probationary school’s staff. Reading specialists trained in understanding their roles as change agents. However, in the 2002-2003 academic school years, another component was added into the initiative: professional development. It would be within professional development sessions that schools would share resources and ideas on the best way to promote learning. Teachers must have the support to make changes, including professional development and pre-service training, materials, and time (Dickinson, McCabe, & Anastasopoulos, 2002).

Administrators must have the training and skills to bring school communities together to reach the required standards. Parents and communities must be informed about these policies and be included in their implementation. If real reform is to be achieved, what must ultimately matter was teaching and learning in everyday learning process (Mickelson & Wadsworth, 1996). It had been noted that the change process was complex and more “rolling” than linear (Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993, p. 120). Specifically, changing behaviors involves collective,
innovative action, and constant assessment of this action (Joyce et al., 1993). The process for change will involve all constituents and because change is systemic, it will be important to focus on the “development and interrelationships of all the main components of the system simultaneously: curriculum, teaching and teacher development, counselors, administrators, teacher’s union, parents and community support systems” (Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993, p. 120).

In the past, schools that were placed on academic probation found it difficult to reach the objectives of the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Learning Standards. Many teachers and principals tried to resolve their schools’ academic problems without success. Because of schools not meeting the state standards, some schools were closed and later re-opened under new names and with new staff. The initiative required all schools with reading scores below minimum national average be assisted by in-house reading specialists. However, there was a lot at stake and many individuals would lose if this initiative failed: Reading specialists hired to oversee the program at the probationary schools would be displaced and given new assignments; and children would continue to flounder in a school system that could not create a formula for educating them or give them the education they deserved. The school board and the city’s mayor have invested enormous amount of tax payer’s money to administer this initiative, and if the initiative failed, the stakeholders: teachers, parents, communities and the general public desirous of a purposeful and meaningful education of children in CPS would have wasted both time and scarce resources.

**Problem Statement**

The need for reading specialists and literacy coaches to have access to sound professional developmental resources in order to assist teachers of reading in CPS system cannot be over-
emphasized. The objective of achieving reading proficiency for third and eighth grade students in elementary schools within CPS would not be realized if major stakeholders in this task lack the resources needed to achieve this objective. There are sundry professional development opportunities available to reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading to assist them in carrying out the task of insuring students achieve reading proficiency early in elementary school, but the effectiveness of these professional development resources have not been analyzed or assessed. The two largest professional organizations that offer professional development to reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading are the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) and the International Reading Association (IRA)—the two largest professional organizations for teachers of reading in Illinois State and the nation, and 90% of all reading professionals in Illinois are paid members. In addition to assisting members in achieving professional fulfillment, the two organizations provide professional resources such as books, brochures, conferences, media resources, journal articles, training, conferences, research publications, and workshops, to assist teachers in the task of achieving reading proficiency for their students thus meeting the state’s reading goals.

This study examined the effectiveness of the many professional developmental resources provided by the IRC and IRA to reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading, and the developmental resources’ overall effect on the performances of third and eighth grade students in selected Chicago Public Schools between 1999 and 2004.

**Research Questions**

In addition to professional fulfillment as members of the IRC and IRA, what reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading who participated actively in both organizations desired to gain from the workshops, conferences, relevant books, journal articles,
and networking to help their task of teaching reading more effectively in the classrooms was examined. Consequently, this research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How many reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading in Chicago Public Schools were paid and active members of the IRC and IRA, and why did he or she join both organizations?

2. What were some of the benefits that accrued to the reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading from membership in both organizations in their professional challenges?

3. How many professional developmental resources were offered by the organizations, what was the level of participation, and how did the reading specialists, literacy coaches and teachers benefit from such resources?

4. How often did reading specialists and literacy coaches access the professional development resources provided by the IRA and IRC, and how beneficial were such professional resources to reading specialists and literacy coaches in their teaching of reading to third and eighth grade students?

5. What was the relationship between such professional developmental resources on the overall performances of third and eighth grade students in the ISAT?

**Purpose of the Study**

The research achieved the following objectives: (a) reviewed the percentages of student performances of third and eighth grade students in meets and exceeds category in the ISAT in 32 selected schools in CPS between 1999 and 2004, and used the information to compare and contrast improvements in students’ reading performances before and after the hiring of reading specialists/literacy coaches in the 32 schools; (b) examined the likely effect the addition of reading specialists/literary coaches who identified themselves as paid members of the IRC and IRA had on the reading performances of third and eighth grade students in the 32 schools; (c) reviewed and discussed ISAT data meets and exceeds and their relationship to yearly progress from 1999-2004 in ISAT reading in Chicago Public Schools; (d) reviewed, discussed, and analyzed the ISAT data to determine whether or not the hiring of reading professionals who were members of the IRC and IRA and similarly, how teachers of reading in third and eighth grades
who identified themselves as paid members of the IRC and IRA benefited from professional resources offered by those organizations; (e) reviewed, discussed, and analyzed whether teachers with organization memberships were factors in third and eighth grade students’ overall performances in reading between 1999 and 2004.

**Personal and Professional Relevance**

The list of stakeholders interested in the success of the hiring of reading specialists and literacy coaches to supplement the efforts of teachers of reading at the elementary schools in CPS system is long. Some teachers and principals have lost their jobs due to CPS reform policies, and its insistence on high performance and unwavering commitment to academic progress in the school district. There is much to lose if this initiative proves to be unsuccessful. The Chicago Reading Initiative has changed since the beginning of its inception. There is a standards based movement sweeping the nation and the need for comprehensive school-wide reform to close achievement gaps is hotly debated. Test scores have improved significantly and many schools have made adequate yearly progress in the past few years, however, there is concern that children will continue to flounder in a school system that is unable to create a formula for educating them. It would be a waste of resources if there is no appreciable increase in the reading performances of elementary school students after the hiring of reading specialists/literacy coaches by CPS. The enormous capital and human resources invested in reading by CPS would have been wasted and many reading professionals would lose their jobs because of non-improvement in the reading performances of students, especially at the elementary level.

In addition, the two professional organizations—IRC and IRA—would have no justification for existence and rationale for expending human and material resources on their
members, if such resources have not had positive effects on the overall performances of students in reading. This is even more important because both organizations stated as their mission improving student reading performances in both elementary and post elementary tiers of education in the State of Illinois and the nation respectively, by offering professional development material and resources to their members.

**Limitations of the Study**

This research is a case study, thus the potential limitation of its findings is that it may be difficult to apply to other professional organizations in other disciplines and over large populations. However, the approach used in studying the particular professional associations involved—IRA and IRC—and the effects of their professional development resources on reading specialists, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers in CPS, and the performances of third and eighth grade students may be innovative for those wishing to study other school districts.

**Importance to the Field (Justification of the Research)**

The primary roles of reading specialists and literacy coaches as research suggested, was the instruction of students with reading disabilities. However, the new roles of reading specialists and literacy coaches have expanded due to the influence of the federal government and the funding of these positions by Title I monies (Title I is a federally funded program for at-risk students). The criticism of pull-out programs (e.g.; Kennedy, Birman, & Demaline, 1986) and a demand for congruence between classroom and specialized instruction led reading specialists to work alongside teachers in the classroom. Although Kennedy et al. (1986) discovered modest success in student achievement in their Chapter 1 assessment report, they stated that more impact was needed. Specifically, their synthesis of over a decade of Chapter 1 (Title I) evaluation and impact data produced a small positive increase in student achievement
that moved students to the mainstream, only for the modest gain to be erased a few years later (Odder, 1991, p. 127). Consequently, reading specialists and literacy coaches came to play a significant role in sustaining these modest gains. This significant role depends upon the context or setting of a school. Schools that lack or have abandoned reading specialist and literacy coaches’ positions need to re-examine their needs for such specialists in order to ensure that well trained staff are available for intervention with children and for ongoing support to classroom teachers. As Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) noted, every school should ensure that its teachers have access to reading specialists who have specialized training needed to assist students with reading difficulties and capable of offering guidance to classroom teachers (p. 12).

In a response to a national survey conducted by Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis (2002), over 90% U.S. reading specialists indicated that they assisted in the instruction of students on a daily basis; in addition, the same percentage stated that often times they served as a resource to teachers. Curriculum development and working with other professionals such as special educators and psychologists was another aspect of their daily duties. In yet another study conducted by Bean, Trovato, and Hamilton (1995), reading specialists affirmed that they performed many different tasks but expressed a great deal of frustration and confusion about the many tasks that they were asked to perform, although they remained positive. In addition to their instructional role, reading specialists stated that they had more responsibility as a resource and leader. Some felt more prepared to handle these responsibilities than others.

In the same vein, Neuman and Cunningham (2009) conducted a study involving 291 participants across four states to discover the impact of professional development on a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom setting. In their findings, they aligned with other educational experts (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) that content expertise alone cannot
make effective teaching until teachers developed both content and context through sound professional development. In addition, they discovered that through effective professional development, literacy coaches assisted classroom teachers in reflective and goal setting tasks, helped to identify desired outcomes and strategies to achieve those outcomes, and through synergistic collaborations, both could develop action plan for the implementation of new practices that would lead to student reading performance (p. 543). Similarly, teachers whose classroom efforts were augmented by professional development support and resources provided by reading specialists and literacy coaches saw an increase of 5 points in students’ reading test scores post-professional development activities, while the same was recorded for home-based teachers who availed themselves of professional development whereby the students’ test scores increased by 6 points (p. 550).

According to Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) the report of the National Research Council focused on the need for improving the quality and effectiveness of reading programs and instruction for young children. The report also stressed the importance of well-prepared teachers of reading in the classroom and recommended that schools have “reading specialists who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers” (p. 333). In 1985, the IRA also made several important recommendations in an issue paper entitled *Who is Teaching Our Children? Reading Instruction in the Information Age*. In 2000, the organization reiterated this position paper by insisting that the best way the nation’s school children could be taught how to read was emphasizing the role of reading specialists and literacy coaches. There were two measures and recommendations in particular that underscored the importance of using qualified reading specialists to instruct students having difficulty learning how to read: School boards should evaluate whether or not they have
professionals with the strongest background in teaching reading; and reading specialists need to be a part of every classroom where there are students needing help to learn how to read.

According to Valli and Buese (2007), the changing roles of teachers against the backdrop of government policies at the federal, state, and local levels have altered the role expectations of teachers both inside and outside the classroom. The educational policies of the different strata of government now compel teachers to play instructional, institutional, collaborative, and learning roles which—if not handled professionally—may cause teachers to run into problems with students, administrators, parents, and colleagues, thus these new challenges can be met through professional development offered by reading specialists. Reading specialists, like their literacy coaches counterparts, assist teachers to hone their new roles, new work, and new change (p. 520). If teachers are to cope adequately with their role increase, intensification, and expansion, as a result of new demands offered by different educational policies of government (NCLB, AYP, new curriculum, new benchmarks, new test scores), they need external support, professional development resources, and focus in these kaleidoscopic shifting roles through reading specialists and literacy coaches. As Snow, Burns & Griffin. (1998) admonished “every school should have access to specialists . . . reading specialists (who) have special training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers” (p. 330).

Some believe that CPS should mandate using prescribed reading programs to improve reading. However, according to Shanahan, head of the Literacy Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago:

“the notion of somehow constraining people’s choices when other things work just as well doesn’t sit well with me. As soon as you start constraining people’s choices arbitrarily I start to wonder. I’m not willing to tell teachers they can’t use a method I don’t like if it works.” (Berman, 2002)
In 2000, the National Reading Panel study “found no single method (to teach reading) that produced results that clearly indicated unquestionable superiority” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 5.13).

Overview of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, research questions, and an outline of the significance of the study. It also included salient definitions, purpose of the study, and its limitations. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature that was organized into historical overviews of both the IRC and the IRA and a summary.

The methodology of the research project is detailed in Chapter 3, providing information on the research design, population, and a description of the professional development model of the study, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and a summary. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and the research findings are organized according to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Finally, a summary of the study is provided in Chapter 5, which includes a summary of the findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further study and practice.

Definitions of Key Terms/Words

The following terms and words were used throughout this research.

Advanced Reading Development Demonstration Project (ARDDP). The ARDDP is a partnership in which two or more people work together to achieve a goal, learn from and or in serving one another, and discuss how to improve. The state of Illinois developed the ARDDP through six university partnerships and over 2,000 teachers in 70 public elementary schools in Chicago. The coaching consortium is geared toward achieving two goals:
improve significantly the literacy learning and teaching in a substantial number of Chicago public elementary schools, and draw upon the multiple resources of local universities to generate high quality demonstration models of comprehensive school-wide literacy development that can be replicated in other schools (IRA, 2008, p. 674).

The project became a consortium for all stakeholders in the state of Illinois to exchange ideas and bring to the table meaningful and productive ways to improve student performance. Its aim was to help the CPS, the CRI, and other stakeholders, improve literacy performance in CPS through synergistic efforts of reading professionals within the system and the engagement of outside partners which would lead to lasting change and improvement in student performance. To achieve these objectives, the CPS redefined school district-university partnerships which enhanced capacity building at the school and district level the explicit goal of such partnerships. In its determination to ensure improvement in student performance, the ARDDP made capacity building the linchpin for sustainable and ongoing performance improvements (International Reading Association, 2008).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Under No Child Left Behind Act, each state is required to define “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) for its students and to indicate how much progress will be made in student achievement each year until 2014, when all students must be “proficient.” If states meet the yearly target, they are deemed to have met the AYP requirements. Each state, according to the act, establishes its own definition of AYP, which may be annually or other determinant suitable for comprehensive assessment of student’s cum county progress. In Illinois, the State spelt out its timeline to meet this AYP as follows:

Parent notification on Educator Qualifications provisions which had been complied with in spring 2003; Full implementation of School Choice provision of Supplemental Services Provision in Fall, 2003; Full Implementation of Annual State-wide Testing in Fall, 2005; All educator in (the) system must be “Highly Qualified” by Spring, 2006; and finally, by the year 2014, the Illinois State must set Adequate Yearly Progress Measurements to achieve 100 percent proficiency (in reading and writing). (IRA, 2009)
**Benchmark.** Students are promoted based upon certain promotional policies set for grades 3, 6, and 8. These grades are considered benchmark grades. Generally, they are points of reference for measuring the performance levels of students and schools in the vital areas of reading, mathematics, science, and writing. According to the CPS, the reading benchmark assessment consists of one multiple-choice assessment per subject with 45 questions and one extended response prompts for grades 3 through 8. Additionally, one district-wide writing project is included in the test window for each administration. In this instance, students will be assessed three times in the school year, which will be fall, winter, and spring (CPS, 2010)

**Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI).** Chicago Reading Initiative is a literacy initiative that addresses four components of reading using research-based strategies: reading, comprehension, fluency, word knowledge, and phonemic awareness. The CRI was set up as a separate department headed by a qualified reading specialist/literacy coach within CPS to actualize the objectives, goals, and mandates of the NCLB. In addition, the CRI and CPS knew that the goals of achieving word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and writing would be unattainable without effective literacy coaches and qualified reading specialists. Consequently, the CRI explained its second mission was “to provide professional development that models coherent practices to support educators in implementing effective instruction across an integrated curriculum and to provide a network of literacy resources for the larger community” (CPS, 2009)

**Literacy coaching.** The International Reading Association (IRA) defined a literacy coach or a reading coach as a reading specialist who focuses on providing professional development for teachers by giving them the additional support needed to implement various instructional programs and practices. Literacy coaches provide essential leadership for a school’s entire literacy program by helping create and supervise long-term staff development
processes that support both the development and implementation of literacy programs over months and years. These individuals need to have experiences that enable them to provide effective professional development for the teachers in their schools.

**Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT).** The ISAT measures individual students’ achievement relative to Illinois learning standards. The results give parents, teachers, and schools one measure of student learning and school performance. Under the tests, students in grades three through eight are tested in reading, mathematics, science, and writing. Under reading, students are tested in comprehension of two passages of more equal length, 10 multiple-choice items with each passage, and one passage in each session will have an extended response items.

**Illinois Learning Standards (ILS).** This provides a coherent instructional tool for all students in Illinois public schools from grades three through eight regarding what they should know and be able to do in seven key vital areas from elementary to secondary schooling. It was developed in 1997, and contains 30 goals, 98 standards, and over 1,000 benchmarks which measure students’ performances in the following areas: English language and arts, mathematics, science, social science, physical development and health, fine arts, foreign languages, and finally social/emotional learning (SEL). The ILS was developed by more than 270 educators and more than 30,000 citizens from all walks of life who had input to its design in 1997. Today, the standards contained in the system have become so popular that nations such as Spain, Belgium, and Lithuania, have borrowed the templates for their school systems.

**Learning First assessments.** A low stakes assessment on reading and extended response given three times a year—October, January, and May. It was borrowed from the Texas-based Harcourt Assessment and empowers teachers to assess their students from grades
three through eight three times in an academic session. Learning First assessments are also a preparatory ground for students to take the mandatory statewide ISAT, which will provide teachers four areas to ensure that their students succeed in the ISAT: regularly monitor student progress against state standards throughout the year, identify more precise learning needs, guide instruction, and target interventions.

**Literacy team.** This is a group of staff within a school that meets on a regular basis to assess literacy instruction and participate in collaborative professional development. In the CPS system, the office of literacy mandates every school to have a “system for supporting, monitoring and sustaining their literacy plan and program” (CPS, 2010). Consequently, beginning in 2002, every school in the district must establish a literacy team, a group of instructional leaders in each school, which normally comprises of the school principal and key content area teachers. Their responsibilities are threefold: to initiate, implement, and direct the literacy program in each school. They also make vital input into the instructional and professional development of the Chicago reading initiative so that all schools would be operating on the same page in terms of the success of the Illinois’ reading instructional framework and the ILS. A literacy team’s overall goal is to ensure teachers help students succeed. Literacy team, as defined by Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008) is an educational think-tank at the district wide level saddled with the task of generating a sense of shared purpose and goals among the various stakeholders in an educational setting through creating high performance expectations, monitoring organizational performance, and promoting effective communication among members . . . and a school leadership team where there is back-and-forth- kind of collaborations and decision-making. (p. 738)
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This was signed into law on January 8, 2002, which is the latest revision of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and is regarded as the most significant federal education policy initiative in a generation. The general purpose of the law was to guarantee that each child in America was able to meet the high learning standards of their home state, and a minimum reading proficiency or better in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.

Reading Specialist. According to Dole (2004), a reading specialist is:

like a reading coach to the teacher in the classroom (who) provides feedback to the teacher about her (his) teaching . . . (who) assists the teacher in becoming a reflective practitioner – thinking about the lesson, what went well and what to do next . . . who identifies what students need to know and be able to do . . . (and) can identify critically important skills and strategies that students need to learn and know different methods of instructions to teach those students and strategies. (p. 468)

This research will use this definition of reading specialist in addition to ancillary definitions available in extant literature in the literature reviews.

Strategies. Strategies are the mental problem solving behaviors for reading such as predicting, pictures, graphs, anticipating language structures, re-reading, linking new information to prior knowledge, cross checking sources of information, searching, self-correcting, and using analogies. Generally, strategies refer to the “how” questions of things, especially when issues of content are considered toward answering the “what” questions of issues (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2007); thus, when used as a generic term, a strategy connects the how and what of issues together. This research focuses on learning strategies needed for professional development by
reading specialists and literacy coaches for mentoring classroom teachers for student performance in reading.

Learning strategies refer to the activities that “students use to best approach new information and improve their learning . . . (which) include organizing, memorizing, goal setting, planning, help seeking, and reviewing academic materials” (Liu, 2009, p. 313). Learning strategies can be broadly classified into three main categories: cognitive strategies, behavioral learning strategies, and meta-cognitive learning strategies (Harrison, Andrews, & Saklofske, 2003; Pintrich, 2000; Oster, 2001).

**Systemic change.** Systemic change means change within an organization that becomes embedded in the culture of the organization. As Kuhn (1974) stated, a system is any pattern whose elements are related in a sufficiently regular way to justify attention. Systems, according to Mistler and Sherrard (2009), are “constructs which people use to identify elements or entities that are related to each other . . . (they) help us to recognize and understand ways we are connected to each other and help us to track multiple avenues for influence” (p. 77). When applied to an educational setting, it involves the entire educational process and the various stakeholders: teachers, school administrators, district-wide personnel, parents, community, relevant government agencies, and children/students as well.

For the system to function requires a buy-in of all these vital important stakeholders, thus the systemic change explored in this research encompassed four catalysts identified by Zion (2009) as “one that is driven by the needs of the people served by the (educational) system, is based on the people’s beliefs and values, incorporates a shared vision, and requires an evolution of mindsets about the system” (p. 132). In addition, the systemic change advocated in this research involved the abundance use of professional development resources which Desimone
(2009) identified as “workshops, local and national conferences, college courses, special institutes, and centers . . . discourse and community practice to . . . formal or informal learning communities among teachers . . . at both the individual and community levels” (p. 182).

Summary

This chapter looked at the background to the research by establishing the reasons why the research was conducted, the problems investigated and the research questions that the researcher examined. It defined the scope of the research, stated the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research followed by the professional relevance of the research with a conclusion of the different terms used in the research.
Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review begins with the history of the two professional organizations understudy in this research—the International Reading Association and the Illinois Reading Council—why they were established, their aims and objectives, and the different professional development resources offered to their members. The conceptual definition of reading and the theories of reading as a discipline are also explored, including the two stakeholders explored in the research: reading specialists and literacy coaches, and their roles in the act of teaching reading in elementary school.

The literature review then proceeds to examine the different professional developments tailored specifically toward teaching reading in elementary schools, how reading specialists and literacy coaches should utilize such professional development resources, and the extant literature to accomplish this objective. Next, the appropriate methods to coach teachers of reading were examined to show the complexity of teaching reading as a disciplinary craft.

Finally, the literature review concentrates specifically on the history of reading in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), through the inauguration of the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI) in 1999 and how the initiative was aided by the purchase of group memberships in the IRA and IRC for all reading specialists and literacy coaches in the CPS.

Historical Background of Professional Reading Associations

In the 1950s, a group of university scholars, researchers, and lovers of education committed to the promotion of excellence in the teaching of reading met in Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania to set up a nonprofit organization to act as the umbrella professional organization
for those involved in teaching reading to learners of all ages. There were two existing
organizations: the National Association for Remedial Teachers (NART) founded in 1947, and
the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction (ICIRI) founded in 1948.
Both organizations united to become what is today known as the International Reading
Association (IRA) in December, 1955 (Flood, 2003; Jerrolds, 1979). According to Monaghan
and Saul (1987), reading professionals in both the NART and ICIRI instrumental to the
emergence of the IRA out of the unification were motivated by the earlier works of reading
scholars like Gray, Russell, Gates, and several others, who defined and charted a distinct
theoretical base for reading as an academic discipline (Flood, 2003, p. 93).

At that plenary meeting, the association encapsulated its mission, goals and objectives to
“promote reading by continuously advancing the quality of literacy instruction and research
worldwide, (achieve) professional development goal (by) enhancing the professional
development of reading educators worldwide” (IRA, 2009, p. 1) In addition, the organization
would:

organize and support IRA Councils and Affiliates as networks of reading educators,
promote a broad view of literacy . . . help educators to improve the quality of literacy
instruction through publications and conferences . . . prepare educators to assume
different roles as reading professionals . . . provide leadership in the continuously
changing nature of reading in the digital age. (IRA, 2009, p. 2)

Conscious of the enormous challenges the organization faced in achieving its stated goals and
objectives, the association’s movers adumbrated five major areas to concentrate on which would
encompass the interests of all major stakeholders—government, school administrators, fellow
academicians, private think-tanks, and school teachers—involved in the promotion and
enhancement of teaching reading. The major areas were advocacy goals, partnership, research, and literacy development. In order to achieve its advocacy goals, the organization’s leaders pledged to:

foster life-long literacy habits, promote high quality teacher and student learning to improve reading instruction, keep policy makers informed about IRA’s positions, develop policy and position statement, provide members with background information and resources and collaborate with national and international policy makers. (IRA, 2009, p. 3J)

Because other professional organizations would be needed to further the goals and objectives, the IRA delineated four ways to build synergistic alliances with other national and international associations and organizations committed to advancing the teaching of reading in all tiers of education: “Work with governmental, non-governmental, and community agencies; businesses, industries, and donors, develop and support IRA councils and affiliates around the world, collaborate with a range of partners on long-term efforts to improve literacy” (IRA, 2009, p. 3, Jerrolds, 1979).

Knowing that reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading at all tiers of education would need support—both human and professional—along with research and literacy tools, the organization stated its four cardinal research goals: “Support needed research on key literacy issues; communicate research results through conferences and publications; contribute to establishing a research agenda; (and) provide recognition for exemplary literacy research” (IRA, 2009, p. 4). And finally, the International Reading Association, keenly aware that we are in an interdependent world and global resources would be essential to improve reading at all levels of education, promised to achieve three global literacy development goals: Advance literacy
education in all nations; promote coherent and sustainable literacy initiatives informed by local literacy leaders; and promote reading and writing as lifelong habits and endeavors. (IRA, 2009)

In all, the board of the proposed association pledged itself to these seven commitments:

Managing the Association in a manner consistent with the mission and accepted standards for a non-profit organization; providing valued services to individual members, councils, and affiliates, leading to high levels of member satisfaction; maintaining and following a strategic plan; following established procedures to obtain the input of members, councils and affiliates on key issues; ensuring the financial viability of the organization; requiring indicators of progress and accountability for sponsored initiatives; being forward-looking with respect to digital tools for communication. (IRA, 2009, p. 4)

In March, 1953, the IRA was incorporated as a nonprofit professional association in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its bylaws were drafted and approved. It was a small professional association with low budget, few members, and a temporary office/headquarters located in the Reading Laboratory at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The history of the IRA was very interesting. According to Monaghan and Saul (1987, p. 86) reading was never considered an intellectual activity or exercise that should be classified as an academic discipline prior to the publication of the book *Why Johnny Can’t Read* by Flesch in 1955. However, Flesch’s book generated heated debate among reading scholars which served as catalyst for the unification of both the NART and ICIRI to form the IRA. By 1956, most colleges and universities had begun to admit students to study reading as a distinct discipline. By 1960, seven states in the Union began to require certification in reading from reading specialists before they could be hired by the school districts as teachers of reading (Flood, 2003).

The greatest push for reading as a profession came President Johnson’s administration, with the 1965 signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA committed more than $1billion to reading education and a professionalized discipline, including
the need for American children to achieve reading proficiency according to Title I of the ESEA. In addition, ESEA also committed substantial amount of funding to remedial programs in reading for elementary and secondary school students in all 50 states.

To steer the affairs of the IRA, a board of directors was instituted which had power to administer all local, national, and international affiliates, along with a distinct body of executive committee members headed by a president was also instituted to complement the responsibilities and duties of the board of directors. To keep with the spirit of transparency and democratic ideals of the association, the following committees were established: bylaws and resolutions, citations and awards, council and affiliate services, government relations, intellectual freedom, international development, professional standards and ethics, program, publications, studies and research, and ad hoc committees.

Today, the IRA (which moved its international headquarters to Newark, Delaware in the 1970s) has grown to be the largest and most popular professional association for reading professionals in the world. With an annual budget of $20 million, 120 permanent employees, 250 councils, affiliates in 130 countries, and three permanent offices on three continents, the association draws its membership strength from reading specialists, literacy coaches, teachers of English, scholars of reading from kindergarten to the university levels, educational think-tanks, research institutes, and departments of education and educationists in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Oceania. The IRA maintains professional affiliations with more than 40 reading and other allied associations and pressure groups interested in improving the teaching of reading all over the world. The association provides a variety of professional and literacy resources to its members, including books, brochures, audio-visual materials, quality peer-
reviewed journals, workshops, and professional development opportunities through local, state, national, and international conferences. Today, the IRA publishes five academic journals: *The Reading Teacher*, for those working with children to age 12; *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* for teachers of reading to adult learners; *Reading Research Quarterly*, primarily for literacy research; *Lecture y Vida*, for the association’s Spanish-speaking members, and a free online reading journal called *Reading Online*.

At the state level, some IRA members decided to popularize the goals, aims, and objectives of the association by forming the Illinois Reading Council (IRC). In consonance with the objectives of its parent body, the IRC stated its mission was “to provide support and leadership to educators as they promote and teach lifelong literacy” (IRC, 2009). In addition, the IRC proceeded to broaden its goals and objectives to support local reading councils across Illinois in:

- providing a rich variety of resources and programs for its members;
- assist members with quality professional development programs ranging from books, brochures, journal articles, and reading conferences etc;
- support members with strong grant programs and other financial incentives in promoting literacy development. (IRC, 2009, p. 1)

The IRC also pledged itself to accomplish these visionary objectives:

- To improve the quality of reading instruction at all levels;
- To provide a local and statewide network of teachers and administrators associated with literacy issues;
- To support the activities of the local reading councils and provide a concentrated focus about literacy issues;
- To sponsor conferences and meetings to implement the purposes of the council;
- To stimulate and promote literacy research;
- To disseminate knowledge helpful in the solution of problems related to reading;
- To recognize and honor outstanding educators, authors, journalists, and others for significant contributions to reading and language arts; (and) To further all purposes of the International Reading Association. (IRC, 2009, p. 4)

The IRC commenced an aggressive awareness campaign in the state by setting up 14 local reading councils to cater to the needs of its members at the grassroots level, while
committees were also established to liaise with like-minded professional associations and governmental bodies in furtherance of its mission. At the local council chapter levels, the IRC established more than 15 of such reading chapters to cover the whole of Illinois. Today, the IRC, with its state headquarters in Normal, Illinois, has eight board members, four permanent secretarial staff, 27 local councils, 5 special interest statewide councils, and over 6,000 paid members, primarily reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading at all tiers of government statewide.

The IRC provides professional development resources to its members through publications and journals such as *IRC Communicator* (to keep members abreast of activities of the association), *IRC Journal* (articles and essays from members covering reading and other reading-related matters), *IRC Library* (keeps tracks of latest publications such as books and research from its parent body), and the *IRC Training Manual* (a must-have for reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading). In addition, *IRC Legislative Issues* monitors activities of the Illinois State Legislature on major bills and laws pertaining to reading and education in general, with a view to influencing and lobbying lawmakers on the interest of its 6,000 members.

The IRC is also involved in many other activities geared toward promoting reading culture in the state at the prekindergarten, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, adult institutions, and the community at large. It does all these activities through donation of books to public and school libraries, and annual grant endowments to local and special interest councils and members towards inculcating reading culture and promotion of literacy development at the educational and community levels across the state. For example, in the 2009/2010 academic
year, the organization gave $60,000 in grant awards to 10 recipients who have contributed to professional development opportunities to reading and writing instruction at the community level. Other awards instituted by the organization include the Barak Obama Library Award valued at $1,000 to deserving third and eighth grade teachers of reading whose library collection is “culturally relevant for African-American readers; the Illinois Reading Educator of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding teachers making contribution to promoting literacy among students, the school community and professional colleagues” (IRC, 2009).

**What is Reading?**

When we say a child or student is proficient in reading, what do we mean? It is a given that everyone reads. The average citizen walking by the roadside reads advertising billboards, street names, and pedestrian warnings. Every speaker of varied vernacular literacy possesses some basic elements of reading, from greeting cards, grocery lists, church or religious bulletins, to family letters (Barton, 2001, p. 23). In another context, as society becomes more cosmopolitan and technological gadgets become features of citified life, today’s youth reads written materials such as videogame magazines, Pokémon, Yu-Gi-oh cards, and manuals to operate Xboxes, I Pods, stereo sets, and other activities outside the precinct of formal classroom settings (Alvermann, 2001). But are these two sets of people readers?

Reading, according to Williams (2004), is “the ability to recognize letters and decode some words and sentences . . . (the engagement) in an activity that is regarded as more focused, literary, and part of high culture, not daily life” (p. 8). David (2007) defined reading as an activity that children or students engage in which:

straddles the boundary between the classroom and the local community, even though the meaning and function of the term may vary and perhaps be qualitatively different
depending on the contexts/practices in which children participate including different pedagogic cultures in school. (p. 225)

According to David (2007), a re-examination of contextual circumstances in which children live and operate must be taken into consideration when defining reading. These include, but are not limited to, cultural settings, individual identities, the materiality of an individual’s experiences, and classroom norms and practices. Indeed, reading provides a discourse rich in cultural models for children to position themselves in relation to such cultural models. To Wood (2009), reading is the ability of children or students to effectively identify words, distinguish words accurately, the ability to visually process letter sequence and patterns in words, the ability to establish connections between phonemes and graphemes, and an adroit display of phonological and orthographic abilities (p. 97). Oral fluency, vocabulary knowledge, efficient word identifications, attentional focus on comprehension including word decoding, contextual reading and comprehension are some of the attributes of good and effective reading.

Most scholars divide the act of reading into two categories: reading as interpretation of experience and reading as interpretation of symbols (Dechant, 1991, p. 6; Hetzel, 1997). Reading should equip pupils first to experience the world and later read and interpret the symbols that give expression to such experiences and events. Harris and Hodges (1981) defined reading as the fusion of cognitive and linguistic processes that help students “construct meaningful representation” of printed text or the interpretation of symbols by readers to “received knowledge” (p. 35). Reading can also be defined as the interpretation of information or the act of giving signification to printed text (Perfetti, 1999, p. 167). If communication is the sharing of meaning, according to Dechant (1991) reading then becomes how we understand that particular meaning encoded in communicated text.
The IRA—which is the global umbrella organization of the profession—preferred to explain that “reading is a lifelong development process. To flourish and mature, it must be promoted and reinforced at every level from early childhood/elementary school through high school, college and beyond” (IRA, 2009, p. 446). The association went further in its various professional development resources to spell out how reading could be made more effective and enjoyable to students, and the various strategies that reading specialists and literacy coaches, including teachers of reading, could employ to achieve this educational aim.

In the *Transactional Theory of Reading* developed in 1938, Rosenblatt (1981) defined reading as a transactional rather than an interactional process whereby the reader and the text are being shaped by one another. The exegesis of Rosenblatt was not a novel idea, but was based on earlier epistemological assumptions about reading developed by Dewey (Bentley, 1949; Boydston, 1969).

To Dewey, Bentley, and the transactional theorists, reading was a two-way process. A student who reads is not just a passive consumer of information presented to him or her by a writer, an actor, or a communicator through printed works facilitated by paper and ink. The transactional theorists led by Dewey in 1896 rejected the behaviorist analysis of Freudian psychology that readers responded to printed texts in scientific stimulus-response style or approach. The transactional theorists deconstructed the notion that readers only interact with books, arguing that readers have character and chosen environment when it comes to decoding the meaning of words. Unfortunately, they did not define the reading analyzed, thus making their analysis consigned to the realm of elite discourse and nebulous and unhelpful in arriving at a workable definition of reading.
Reading has also been defined as the process of interpreting sense stimuli (Simon & Murphy, 1983) which was similar to the definition of reading adopted by the 11th Reading Conference of the Claremont Reading Association (p. 114) which defined reading as “a process of interpretation of sense stimuli . . . (and an activity) that is performed whenever one experiences sensory stimulation” (Simon & Murphy, 1983, p. 114).

Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman and writer, penned in his celebrated Poor Richard Almanac the elementary definition of reading when he admonished Americans to “read much, but not too many books,” explaining that children should first be readers of experience before they could understand graphic symbols (Dechant, 1991, p. 172). To Franklin, symbols were not abstract objects but depictions of life experiences, and thus reading should encompass those experiences that give meanings to symbols (Dechant, 1991, p. 173). Franklin thought reading was the interpretation of the world and the synthesis or integration of word identification and comprehension.

Mol, Bus, and Jong (2009) divided reading into two main activities: vocabulary recognition and print knowledge. Children must be proficient in both oral language and print knowledge to be described as good readers or literate, and both tasks can be achieved through early exposure to interactive book reading. In a 2007 study was conducted with 2,049 children where they were encouraged to be active before, during, and after interactive book reading in a classroom setting. The children were tested by using variables to discover the reading performance as an interactive exercise in the classroom. Oral language involved how the competency level of the students in expressive vocabulary and receptive vocabulary; print
knowledge tested the students’ alphabet knowledge; and phonological sensitivity and orthographic awareness before, during and after the interactive reading session.

The results of the researchers’ findings showed that the oral language and literacy development of the children participants in the interactive book reading increased by 6% after their participation (Mol, Bus, & Jong, 2009, p. 998) while their verbal responses and expressive vocabulary competences increased by 8%. When the results were translated into a binominal effect size display or success ratio, it showed that the oral language of the participants gained 28% more than their non-participating peers. The participants also showed a 64% improvement in oral language proficiency through the interactive book reading, compared to 36% for the children who did not participate in the interactive book reading research. In *Understanding and Teaching Reading: an Interactive Model*, Dechant (1991) listed three stages of reading process as word identification, visual memory, and association of sound with symbols. To him, the purpose of reading was comprehension of meanings; thus, words were the facilitators of those meanings to communicators. According to Dechant (1991), communication is a dialogic process—a writer is conveying a message or several messages through the employment of written words as information delivery, while the reader is able to master those words that the writer was using for that purpose. Consequently, “good readers . . . are (those) capable of rapid and accurate word recognition. They have sharpened their word-identification skill (by) committing thousands of words to their sight or recognition vocabulary and can easily recognize them instantly with minimum language cues” (Dechant, 1991, p. 177).
Because reading is a complex and basic activity covering all disciplines, it is almost impossible to find an all-encompassing definition that embraces its multi-faceted trajectories. As Chafe (1990) once noted:

Language is surely as complex a phenomenon as humans ever wanted to understand, and so far, we haven’t even come close. We have been retarded in the pursuit by what seems to be a scholarly drive to construct, rather than expand the field of vision. (p. 9)

However, as Rosenblatt (1981) asserted:

Psychologists and reading experts [emphasis added because such descriptive epithet is as problematic as the activity of reading itself] view reading mainly as both a complex cognitive skill, the goal of which is gaining information, and a complex language system. (p. 14)

The main thrust of Rosenblatt definition of reading emphasized the literariness of reading as a tool for textual analysis as opposed to reading as literary activity. As will be seen later in her theory of reading, this literary theoretical aspect of her definition looms large in her transactional theory of reading.

The problem of defining what reading is has a lot to do with the origin of reading as an activity. According to Halliday (1985, 1989), spoken language existed before written language and reading. As people moved from low cultured environments where life initially revolved around subsistence living to more complex and agrarian urban life, the need to have permanent records of events and activities of everyday living gave rise to written language, hence reading. But more importantly, writing and reading were needed for three purposes: for action, for information, and for entertainment (Halliday, 1985, 1989). However, Nunan (1988, 2007) has noted that the differences between written and spoken texts are not absolute as certain
characteristics occur in both activities (1988, p. 9). The reason why reading is so difficult to define is that:

It is quite different from language behavior (and) abstract thinking . . . (because) reading as a recently developed skill involves biologically adapted skills, the interrelationships between which may vary both over the course of an individual’s acquisition of reading, as well as across individuals who have learned to read. (Waternouse, 1980, p. 5)

Students who experience delays in reading and language development show and demonstrate potential risk of school failure because students’ reading level at third grade often proves as an accurate predictor of the overall academic performance of such students (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 1998, p. 1). As Christena and Lynch (2006) noted, the average age of a third grader is 8 years, and during this period,

he/she should have a sight vocabulary of at least 150 words and should be able to decode most short vowel and long-vowel words. . . . By third grade, students should be able to read typical second-grade level books with ease; if not, this is the last best chance to intervene. (p. 31)

Data collected in the mid-1990s showed that failure of students to achieve reading proficiency between the third and ninth grades portend serious political and socio-economic consequences as Fielding et al. (1998) discovered that 49% of incarcerated Americans read at or below the ninth grade level.

Administrators must have the training and skills to bring school communities together to reach the required standards. Parents and communities must be informed about these policies and also be included in the implementation. If real reform is to be achieved, what must ultimately matter is teaching and learning in everyday learning process (Mickelson &Wadsworth, 1996). It has been noted that the expected change process in this connection is a complex one that is more rolling than linear (Joyce et al., 1993). Specifically, changing
behaviors involves collective, innovative action and constant assessment of this act. The process for change will involve all constituents. Because change is systemic, it will be important to focus on the “development and interrelationships of all the main components of the system simultaneously: curriculum, teaching and teacher development, counselors, administrators, teacher’s union, parents and community support systems” (Joyce et al., 1993).

Teachers and reading instructors are formidable players in the overall goal of achieving literacy development through proficient reading by students in elementary and secondary schools at both local and state levels. According to numerous research works, workshops, and investigations conducted on reading, the place teachers and reading specialists occupy are of vital importance, exactly as the NCLB stated. In a popular manual developed by Botel for 13 school systems in Buck County, Pennsylvania in the 1950s, which later came into widespread use in the 1960s, five templates were developed for teachers, supervisors, and administrators on how to work toward achieving reading proficiency for students from the first through the twelfth grades. Titled *A Practical Manual of Classroom-Tested Techniques: How to Teach Reading*, Botel (1963) collaborated with two other policy analysts to design easy to follow templates for special education teachers in the county. His manual soon became popular, and Botel later became a much sought-after speaker at major educational conferences and workshops across the country and became president of the IRA.

Reading—according to Botel (1963)—is about reading and thus teachers and special administrators should read and encourage students to read as well. The raison d’être of reading is to understand printed words so children should be exposed to printed words and books very early in life. In his words, “one condition that helps each student move (sic) effectively toward
reading proficiency is his (her) proper placement in books” (1963, p. 15). In other words, teachers must first decide the right book for each child. This task, according to the manual could be achieved by administering two types of reading tests to a child, standardized and informal, order to determine the reading level of a child. When a teacher had discovered the reading level of a child, this should be communicated to the child’s parents because the teacher needed the assistance of the parents as time goes on in the reading process, and this would ensure both the school and home were working in tandem. Botel (1963) referred to this teacher-parent communication as individual reading progress record.

The second level was the reading mileage of each child or student that involved informal reading techniques whereby a child or student should exposed to a variety of reading and instructional materials. By exposing each child or student to a wide array of books spanning across different disciplines from fiction, science, or mystery to adventure, biographies, and novels, a child or student would eventually develop an eclectic outlook to reading culture and words. To Botel (1963), the reading proficiency level of a child or student was directly proportional to the array of reading tools, books, and instructional materials that were available to each child or student. This exposure, according to the manual, could be achieved through early inculcation of library culture at home, school, and at the local/county levels, along with the active encouragement of independent reading culture, encouraging pro-active membership in book clubs, and the proper use of appropriate incentivized measures.

The third level in Botel’s (1963) manual was the building of the culture of comprehension and interpretation into individual students during reading. Students build their cognitive skills through inquisitorial instincts, and teachers should stimulate such thought
process by using questioning devices on their students. This is akin to the Socratic method that is commonly used in virtually all learning environments. Questions bordering on experiences, thought-starting and thought-developing questions, understanding sequences, and paying attention to detail during silent readings were an indispensable segue to instructional methods and tools toward achieving mental alertness and intellectual curiosity of students.

Students’ acquisition of vocabulary in achieving reading proficiency was the fourth step in Botel’s (1963) manual. This could be done by proper coaching whereby students were trained to pay special attention to certain words, from antonyms, homonyms, synonyms, to definitive questions words and key-word questions: “It is helpful to teach vocabulary as a separate subject . . . to highlight one of these areas of vocabulary (listed above) for an interactive session” (Botel, 1963, p. 40).

Lastly, oral reading was a veritable component of achieving high reading proficiency in students. Teachers should deploy all arrays of teaching devices ranging from using eye contact, posture, and initiating conversation to choral reading, tape recording, and round robin oral reading. According to Botel (1963), round robin reading is a part of oral reading technique that teachers could use to organize students into small groups and then read aloud to each group. Thereafter, each child in a sub-group should lead oral reading and then narrate a real life experience to the rest group of students in the class.

Although Botel’s (1963) manual touched on the whole array of reading pedagogy, but it lacked an overarching model or framework to test the effectiveness of his prescriptions and feedback mechanisms. There are legionary questions posed by such rule of the thumb; for example, what appropriate models should teachers, educators, and reading specialists employ in
In other words, what theoretical framework should undergird the appropriation of reading manuals such as that of Botel (1963) and many others? Such models are plenty as there are many researchers, theoreticians, analysts, and educators. But Tracey and Morrow (2006) cautioned against the indifference reading specialists pay to reading theories. As they noted, there are differences between theories of education in general and theories of reading in specific. While the former explained learning, educational, and teaching phenomena, the latter concentrated on the cognitive explanations of reading such as motivation, behavior, language, and social factors (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 4). If reading is the process of translating printed information into meanings, then there must be a model for teachers and special education practitioners to teach students how to read effectively.

The trio of Cohen, West, and Marsh (2004) developed a set of models known as the models of efficient reading. Cohen, West, and Marsh (2004) developed their models during a four-week summer workshop at the University of Delaware in 1974. Sponsored by the Society for Research in Child Development, with the support of the Grant Foundation of New York, and under the auspices of the University of Delaware Reading and Child Development, the proceedings were later compiled and published by the IRA in Development of the Reading Process. Of note were the trio’s inter-disciplinary methodological approaches to reading by borrowing theories from allied disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and linguistics. While Cohen used psycholinguistic epistemological tools to locate the human eye as the most important organ for effective reading, West employed a theoretically catholic tool, and Marsh preferred a heuristic treatment of an earlier model from an allied discipline. The eye, according to Cohen, performed three basic important functions during reading process: constant-pattern, stimulus
control, and internal control. There was a systemic and mechanical way the human eye operates as a student reads over a text. Many school districts have adopted these templates.

There is optimism about the change of teacher’s attitudes, learning environment, and school pedagogy. These outcomes were apparent in the first three years. The critical thinking skills used in the strategic learning processes within this program were implemented and supported in schools districts that were more affluent than the Chicago urban schools. Teaching all children to read requires that every child receive excellent reading instruction, and that children who are struggling with reading receive additional instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach them. The range of student achievement found in classrooms, including children who have various physical, emotional, and educational needs, requires that we move to different educational models from those of the past. The new strategic learning models present opportunities for teachers, reading specialists, and literacy coaches to collaborate and provide effective reading instruction for all students. In order to provide these services, schools must have reading specialists or literacy coaches who can provide expert instruction, assessment, and leadership for the reading program.

The Role of Reading Specialists

For the purpose of this research, a qualified reading specialist has been be defined as an individual with a minimum of a master’s degree in reading, certified or endorsed in the teaching of reading with additional training in staff development. The IRA (1986), the umbrella organization of all reading instructors in the United States and other parts of the world concerned with the promotion of literacy, with specific emphasis on reading, language, and thinking, has concurred with this definition of a reading specialist by insisting that “although several different
titles could be used to delineate each of the role described for a reading specialist . . . (but) a role description is more important than its title” (IRA, 2000, p. 1). As long as an academic is “qualified, certificated, licensed and credentialed in any assigned reading roles as classroom teachers, reading specialists, reading consultant, reading coordinator, special education teachers, reading professors, administrators and or support service provider” (IRA, 1989, 2000, p. 3). This research has adopted this definition of a reading specialist as promulgated by the IRA.

The primary role of the reading specialist, as research suggested, was the instruction of students with reading disabilities. However, the roles of reading specialists expanded over the years due to the influence of the federal government and the funding of these positions by Title I monies (Title I is a federally funded program for at-risk students). For example, the criticism of pull-out programs (Kennedy, Birman, & Demaline, 1986), and a demand for congruence between classroom and specialized instruction led reading specialists to work alongside teachers in the classroom. As earlier stated, this role depended upon the context or setting of a school. Schools that lacked or abandoned reading specialist positions needed to re-examine their needs for such specialists in order to insure that well-trained staff are available for intervention with children and for on-going support to classroom teachers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 12).

In a response to a national survey conducted in 2002 by Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton and Wallis (2002), over 90% of reading specialists in the United States indicated that they assisted in the instruction of students on a daily basis. In addition, the same percentage stated that often times they served as a resource to teachers. Curriculum development and working with other professionals, such as special educators and psychologists, was another aspect of their daily duties. In yet another study conducted by Bean, Trovato, and Hamilton (1995), reading
specialists affirmed that they performed many different tasks but expressed a great deal of frustration and confusion about many tasks they were asked to perform, although they remained positive. In addition to their instructional role, they stated that they had more responsibilities as resource leaders.

Some felt more prepared to handle these responsibilities than others. The report of the National Research Council (Snow et al., 1998) focused on the need for improving the quality and effectiveness of reading programs and instruction for young children. The report also stressed the importance of well-prepared teachers of reading in the classroom and recommended that schools have “reading specialists who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers” (Snow, et al., p. 333). The IRA, in 1995, also made several important recommendations in an issue paper entitled Who is Teaching Our Children? Reading Instruction in the Information Age. There were two recommendations that underscored the importance of using qualified reading specialists to instruct students having difficulty learning to read: School boards should evaluate whether or not they have professionals with the strongest background in teaching reading; and reading specialists need to be a part of every classroom where there are students needing help to learn how to read.

Bean (2004) listed certain things to do (and not do) for both reading specialists and literacy coaches within the school system. These are as follows: (a) Reading specialists and literacy coaches should first introduce themselves to school administrators and teachers so that they would know that their roles and functions in the school system are to contribute to achieving the same goals and objectives—make teachers’ tasks easier and improve students’ academic performances;(b) they should be able to communicate to all stakeholders in the school system
that they are change agents and thus need to build proper trust with their colleagues (teachers) so they can all work collaboratively to achieve the goals of the school administrators; and (c) reading specialists and literacy coaches should demonstrate the ability to listen carefully to the various concerns of teachers, school administrators, and students, have an open mind, and unimpeded communication style in a collegial atmosphere so that their skills can be displayed in the school system.

According to Bean (2004), things that should not be done are also important for reading specialists and literacy coaches: (a) They should not evaluate teachers with a view to sitting in judgment over their efficiency, methods of teaching, or other professional characteristics; and (b) they should not behave like experts coming to lecture their colleagues on how to deliver instruction, rather they should see themselves as catalysts to achieving the goals and objectives set out by the school administrators and other important stakeholders. According to the IRA (2000), reading specialists are expected to serve as leaders of literacy to teachers and the community because of their unique responsibility for the literacy performance of readers.

The employment of reading specialists became important because of the widespread recognition of the need for teachers to be mentored so that their teaching efficiency could be enhanced in the classroom (Quantroche & Wepner, 2008). In addition, the services of reading specialists are direly needed in our schools across the nation if the goals of the reading first provision of the NCLB are to be achieved, i.e., phonic fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary proficiencies. Personnel in many school districts across the nation knew that reading specialists would act as reading coaches to classroom teachers in the achievement of these laudable objectives. Reading specialists provide professional development to classroom teachers.
(Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005) toward preparing students in grade level one to achieve reading proficiency by the third grade.

In addition, the IRA listed three major leadership roles that reading specialists are supposed to play in the school system: act as resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents; promote staff development; and promote literacy program development and coordination. The responsibilities of reading specialists as resources to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents are not limited to the following: assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies or materials that can enhance instruction and assessment; model strategies or techniques for teachers; serve on instructional support or student personnel teams; support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading; serve as mentors for teachers; and finally, serve as a friendly ear for teachers who want to talk about issues, problems, or ideas about reading instruction and assessment (Bean, Knaub, & Swan, 2000, 2003; IRA, 2004b). Reading specialists are also expected to support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading, conduct administration or collaborative lessons, work with librarians, speech therapists, counselors and psychologists, conduct workshops for parents on how they can work with their children, and provide instructional support and guidance to paraprofessionals (Quantroche & Wepner, 2008).

As for the roles of reading specialists in literacy development and coordination, the IRA listed the following responsibilities: help to build home and school connections by working with both parents and teachers; provide instructional guidance to aids, volunteers, and tutors; assist in writing and revising the curriculum; look forward to assist in the selection of new materials, and assist in the piloting of new materials; serve as a leader on curriculum committees; coordinate
schedules for reading specialists and classroom teachers; maintain a literacy center or location for various literacy materials; assist in the development and selection of assessment instrument; coordinate teaching schedules; share results of assessment with the public; write proposals for funding; communicate information about the reading program to various audiences and faculty; and finally, observe and conference with classroom teachers (IRA, 2002).

The Role of Literacy Coaches

The goal of literacy coaching was to assist teachers and educators build individual learning strategies and institutional support needed to notch up students to higher achievement. The IRA defined “literacy coaching as a powerful intervention with great potential that would ultimately lead to increase in student literacy achievement” (2004, p. 1). The association proceeded to proffer five criteria that coaching professionals must meet if literacy coaching is to be effective, responsive, and successful.

First, literacy coaches should be seasoned classroom teachers who have distinguished themselves enough to allow those they were mentoring—teachers and educators—to drink from their wealth of knowledge. Second, literacy coaches must be change agents with the capacity to become role models for teachers they were mentoring in the classroom and allow the necessary feedback from such teachers. Third, literacy coaches must possess the essential ingredients necessary in processing, acquiring, assessing, and instructing reading pedagogy. Four, literacy coaches must have hands-on knowledge of interacting with classroom teachers in the areas of instructional practices and leadership.

Literacy coaches must be adept at leading workshops and instructional presentations. Literacy coaches also help to foster the spirit of collegiality in the school learning environment
by listening to teachers, asking probing questions that yield helpful hints and answers that could facilitate flawless instructional delivery and knowledge, and “act as mirror for a teacher” (Toll, 2005 p. 138), collect data at the school-wide level(both teacher data and data on self), and lastly, “provide assistance such as relevant books and teaching aids which can help teachers in their classroom work” (Toll, 2005, p. 136).

Literacy coaching was a strategy to build instructional capacity. The role of literacy coach was intentionally focused on advancing CPS vision of literacy development. Coaches could assist in the facilitation of professional development by working with teachers individually in their classrooms, helping to organize and lead teacher collaboration and learning, and addressing the site specific needs of the school with intentional resources from research (Stein & D’Amico, 1998). Coaches develop instructional capacity when they assist the teachers in a consistent knowledge of their practice.

Literacy coaches provide theoretical comprehensive professional developments to teachers, and demonstrate or practice such professional development avenues for feedback. Their overall goal in the school setting is to build teachers’ knowledge so that the performance of students can increase (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Literacy coaches foster relationships through collaborative work outside the classroom, act as curriculum experts, researchers, and then strategize with teachers to chart an effective path toward students’ achievements (Bean, 2004). Walpole and Blamey (2008) listed seven roles and responsibilities literacy coaches perform in the school: mentors, directors, formative observers, modelers, assessors, teachers, curriculum managers, and trainers (p. 227), while the IRA (2007) sees literacy coaches as mentors or directors who work directly with teachers to facilitate improvements in one area of curriculum.
There are six layers literacy coaches design and participate in professional development for classroom teachers, according to Neuman and Cunningham (2009). First, on-site coaching where literacy coaches meet with teachers where they are, that is, the classroom or appropriate venue designated to provide learners with demonstrating practices. The second is balanced and sustained coaching which involves constant on-going continuing education as opposed to ad-hoc and temporary professional development. Facilitative of reflection, good and effective literacy coaches listen, observe, and support instructional development instead of dictating the right answer. Highly interactive professional development between the literacy coach and the instructor toward building trust, mutual respect, and synergistic efforts between both professionals which eventually lead or translate to children’s or students’ benefits. Corrective feedback that entails literacy coaches to provide non-evaluative or judgmental assessment of their peer-instructors, but instead provide descriptive feedback based on observations that lead to collaborative efforts at removing the impediments to better students’ performances. Lastly, prioritization which enjoins literacy coaches to assist teachers in identifying areas of priorities in the curriculum with a view to developing action plan to improve children’s or students’ reading and language cognition (Neumann & Cunningham, 2009, p. 542).

**Professional Development**

The importance of a quality professional development program for teachers has been well established as a necessity for overall school improvement (Guskey, 2000; Howe & Stubbs, 1996). The overwhelming evidence reinforces the idea that professional development is one part of the reform efforts within a school that can positively influence a teacher’s instruction within the classroom (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).
There is a connection between professional development and school reform that supports the educational change process. The purpose of professional development was to bring change (Kruse, Louis, & Byrk, 1995). It has been asserted that a professional learning community provides support for systemic change (Little, 1993), and when schools established professional learning communities, teachers constantly search for new ways of making improvements (Fullan, 2001, p. 60; Newman, King, & Youns, 2001).

Rogers and Pinnell (2002) stressed the importance of “developing internal systems for learning while teaching and teaching while learning” (p. 8). Participation in professional development had focused mainly on the teacher. It was noted that professional development for administrators did not receive much attention in most school districts, and many districts did not require or even encourage principals to engage in professional development activities (Hallinger & Greenblatt, 1989; Rodgers, Rodgers, & Pinnell, 2007). This was very much the case for Chicago in the beginning stages of the initiative; however, beginning in 2001 all school principals and instructional officers were required by the central office to attend professional development; as leaders, they must also understand the reform that was taking place within their district. This was an attempt to encourage principals to commit to professional development opportunities that would help them grow and learn (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Seyfarth, 1996).

The rapidly growing knowledge base in the education field makes the professional development of teachers extremely important. Research has further indicated that improving a teacher’s knowledge of core subjects and instructional strategies was an effective method of improving student learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Sparks & Hirsch, 2000), and “researchers have agreed that appropriate professional development for teachers could and
should produce higher reading achievement in students” (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, & Klinger, 2002, p. 10). A two-year study of urban teachers and how mentoring and self-reflection had impacted the implementation of guided reading and interactive writing revealed that most of the in-service training or staff development the teachers were exposed to were more formal in nature. And as Lieberman (1996) asserted, “such formal staff development trainings were unconnected to classroom life because they were often a variety of abstract ideas that paid little attention to ongoing support of continuous learning and changed practices” (p. 592).

The review of the research supported the significance of collaboration and reflection as characteristics of professional development that changed instruction and improved student achievement (Bernhardt, 2002; DuFour & Eaker; 1998; Joyce & Showers, 1995). Dorn and Soffos (2001) found that “when teachers develop the habit of collaborating around teaching and learning issues, this drives their professional development” (p. 90). Professional development became embedded into the school’s day-to-day activities when collaboration and reflection were included. The professional development activities included teacher leaders, action research, mentoring, and coaching (Bernhardt, 2002; Dorn, & Soffos, 2001; Lieberman, 1996). Coaching resulted in 95% transfer of new teaching strategies to classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 1988). It has also been noted that when teachers and coaches collaborated together, they formed communities of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991).

In recent years, school districts across the nation have used literacy coaches to build capacity. In the late 1980s in New York City’s Community District, coaches were hired as a strategy for improving literacy instruction (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Coaches were former teachers from within the district (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Imitating this publicized District 2
model, districts around the country from San Diego to Boston began to invest in coaches not only in literacy, but also in other domains of school change. CPS agreed to use coaches in a few schools in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago between 1999 and 2001. The strategy was then accepted throughout the 114 schools in the district in 2002 and expanded until 2006 when school funding declined.

In a more recent report by the Advanced Reading Development Demonstration Project (ARDDP)—a school-based professional development initiative in CPS—identified and broadly defined seven interrelated dimensions of school practice associated with high student literacy achievement: (a) effective literacy leadership; (b) infrastructure that supports sustainability and continuous improvement; (c) high quality in-school professional development; (d) exemplary assessment practices; (e) coherent and effective literacy curriculum and instruction; (f) professional literacy communities; and (g) learning-oriented student literacy achievement, behavior, and attitudes. In its report, ARDDP strongly supported the use of literacy coaches in the effort to help change schools in becoming effective literacy communities.

Every professional development for teachers of reading must be relevant, meaningful, and sustainable, and some of the ways and methods teachers can transfer professional development resources to classroom settings include mentoring initiatives from reading specialists and literacy coaches, practitioner research projects, study circles and online refresher courses (Cafferella, 2002). Such transference of learning from training sessions to classroom settings would afford teachers of reading to be able to apply, reflect, and inform on the various professional development resources to which they were.
Johnson (2009) gave some advice on how to use workshops, seminars, and conferences for professional development for teachers from personal experience as coordinator of Adult Basic Education Teaching and Learning Advancement System (ATLAS) based in the School of Education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. She stated that every literacy coach should use two questions while presenting professional development materials to classroom teachers: “how can teachers be encouraged to take action on learning once they leave a professional development workshop?” and “how do literacy coaches evaluate the effectiveness of their professional development efforts once (teacher) participants have left?” (Johnson, 2009, p. 110).

According to Johnson (2009), classroom teachers should be given assignments to take home to their schools by asking them to provide their students with student-response questionnaire or discuss the impact of the professional development on what they have learned. In other words, professional development should include the ultimate target audience of professional development—the students—through feedback mechanisms back to the literacy coaches through classroom teachers who should allow their students fill out questionnaires asking them to evaluate their teachers on the impact of the professional development on their teachers’ teaching and their reading performances.

While the debate on the best and most effective way to conduct professional development among educators continues, Herrington, Herrington, Hoban, and Reid (2009) suggested a new radical approach through the use of online professional learning and development to help classroom teachers of reading teach effectively which may lead to student performance. According to Herrington et al. (2009), educational technology can be used for professional
development for teachers in the classroom to achieve replicative and applicative knowledge, that is; knowing how and also to knowing with (p. 190). In their research which drew 170 teacher-participants from 85 schools in a state-based educational system, the teachers were asked to complete six tasks as part of their professional development activities by using computers in the classroom to complete an online self-paced module lasting approximately 2 hours; design a sequence of lessons integrating an aspect of an instructional computer technology application such as Microsoft PowerPoint, iMove, or Excel into their teaching and learning practice; teach the sequence of lessons; refine the sequence of lessons after teaching; submit the sequence of lessons to the project manager; submit three student work samples generated from the lessons; evaluate the module using the template provided; and finally, complete a written evaluation form.

The research technology involved telephone surveys and online interviews with the teacher-participants with a view to answering two questions: what was the impact of teacher professional learning on the students when instructional computer technology was used for professional development; and secondly, what conditions supported teachers to expand the use of instructional computer technology in their teaching and professional learning/development? Their findings revealed mixed results. In the first instance, when integrating technology into professional development, it was discovered that it enhanced teaching efficiency, teachers’ preparedness, and opportunities to learn new skills, but some of the teachers were ambivalent regarding the impact of integrating technology into professional development as it was a waste of precious time they could have used teaching their students, and thus unhelpful in their teaching methods and efficiency (Herrington, Herrington,, Hoban,, & Reid, p. 190).
Measuring Effective Professional Development

It was important to know the effect professional development had on teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom, and if such professional development impacted the students’ performance against the backdrop of enormous resources and dollar amount invested on professional development by the local, state, county, and federal governments. For instance, the U.S government spent over $1.5 billion on professional development for teachers in the 2004/2005 academic year alone (Birman, LeFloch, Klekotka, Ludwig, & Taylor, 2007).

The main question posited by this research is a conceptual one raised by Desimone (2009): How can we best measure professional development and its effects on teachers and students, toward the end of improving professional development programs and policies to foster better instruction and student achievement? (p. 182)

Before answering this question, it is important to explain that the researcher has been referring to the type of professional development defined by Borko (2004):

For teachers (where) learning occurs in many different aspects of practice, including their classrooms; their school communities and professional development courses or workshops. It can occur in a brief hallway conversation with a colleague, or after school when counseling a troubled child. To understand teacher learning, we must study it within these multiple contexts, taking into account both the individual teacher-learners in the school system in which they are participants. (p. 4)

While it is indeed problematic to measure what counts as professional development offered by the IRA and IRC to reading specialists and literacy coaches, Desimone (2009) had argued that rather than focus on the structure of the activity that counts as professional development, it is indeed possible to look at the features of professional development (p. 183). Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) identified five features of professional development that organizations such as the IRA and IRC may offer to reading specialists and
literacy coaches, but Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, and Garet (2008) cautioned that it was impossible to make causal relationship between such professional development resources offered and improvement in student learning and performance. These features are: (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) direction, and (e) collective participation.

The core features of professional development listed and their effects on increased teacher knowledge leading to change orientation, and ultimately improved student learning and performances can be graphically represented thus:

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<th>A →</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development content focus:</td>
<td>Increased teacher knowledge and skills, change in attitudes and beliefs</td>
<td>Change instruction</td>
<td>Improved student learning and performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- Active learning
- Coherence
- Duration
- Collective participation

*Figure 1.* The core features of professional development according to Penuel, Fishman, Yamagushi, & Gallagher (2007).

**Coaching of Teachers**

Research conducted on the effectiveness of different forms of staff development training concluded that regular (i.e., weekly) seminars enabled teachers to better practice and implement what they were learning (Joyce & Showers, 1980). The implementation of what was learned by teachers increased dramatically through such sessions. Modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom combined with feedback (Joyce & Showers, 1982) had
been found to be the most productive training tactics. Consequently, staff development programs that were spaced over time and included such training tactics had an impact on teaching behavior. Numerous articles and studies had been published which focused on using coaching to improve teaching performance.

Many studies had been done with in-service teachers from a variety of areas (Kohler, McCullough, & Buchan, 1995; Kohler, McCullough-Crille, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Kovic, 1996; Munro & Elliott, 1987; Petersen-Miller, Harris, & Watanabe, 1991; Phillips & Glickman, 1991; Vail, Tschantz, & Bevill, 1997; Williamson & Russell, 1990) which supported the assertion that teaching performance could be highly enhanced through coaching. According to Kohler, McCullough, & Buchan (1995), there were more studies relative to the effects of coaching with in-service teachers at the elementary and secondary levels than at the early childhood level. However, with the knowledge base in early childhood education slowly expanding and the paucity of teacher coaching research in this area, the need for more work had been suggested. But despite the lack of research using teacher coaching with early childhood education teachers, the evidence reported thus far suggested that similar positive results had also been reported (Kohler et al., 1995) relative to improvement in teaching. Findings from studies with both groups of teachers (early childhood and elementary/secondary) had suggested that coaching with in-service teachers could promote effective teaching, improve collegiality, decrease feelings of isolation, and enhance the confidence levels of teachers to try new techniques without feeling threatened (Kohler, McCullough, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Kohler, McCullough, & Buchan, 1995; Vail, Tschantz, & Bevill, 1997).
Teacher coaching had also helped to improve dialogue between general education and special education personnel (Kovic, 1996). Such an approach has had an even more positive means of providing support for teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes. There was little in the literature about the use of teacher coaching at the pre-service teacher level and at present, even less about the use of teacher coaching with educators. Only one article had addressed the use of peer coaching in education (Batesky, 1991). However, despite the paucity of literature on the use of teacher coaching with preservice teachers, results so far have been very similar to that of in-service teachers. Effective teaching behaviors (e.g., instructional presentation) could be increased and ineffective teaching behaviors (e.g., incorrect assessment procedures) could equally be decreased because of coaching (Englert & Sugai, 1983; Hasbrouck, 1997; Maeda, 1999; Monagahm & Saul 1987; Rolider, McNeil-Pierce, Van Houten, Molcho, & Ylevitch, 1985).

Moxley and Taylor (2006) listed the following as some of the ways literacy coaches can assist school administrators and teachers in achieving their goals and objectives within the school system: organizing workshops that introduce teachers to how to use teaching materials, new strategies and concepts; the use of large and small group participation for discussions and professional development; and using mentoring through periodic sessions with teachers and study groups to make teaching more effective and instructional delivery easier for all stakeholders (p. 78).

**Coaching in Action**

According to Toll (2005), literacy coaches revolutionized reading pedagogy in the classroom by adding the element of personalization, human touch. Assisting teachers of reading
to achieve greater efficiency was not more knowledge per se because there is traditionally availability of quantum of knowledge and information out there for educators; however, the human touch had been missing in the classroom setting and that human touch-relationship was first and foremost the veritable contribution of literacy coaches to reading:

I find that knowledge is to coaching like a car is to driving. It’s what propels the activity forward, but it won’t happen successfully unless the person behind the wheel is skilled in steering it. A literacy coach who knows a great deal about the literacy instruction but cannot develop relationships, build trust, and work with the non knowledge related issues of teaching will fail. (Toll, 2005, p. 53)

Take the following three examples given by Toll (2005) to illustrate the non-knowledge-related issues that literacy coaches bring to the classroom setting. Bob, Melinda, and Sally (not real names) were fifth grade, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers respectively. Bob knows that as a teacher of reading, he should read aloud in his class to his students as recommended by the various workshops he has attended. However, he didn’t want his students to feel insulted so he refused to read aloud to them. For her kindergarteners, Melinda knew that teachers of reading have been specifically instructed by the National Reading Panel (NRP) as recommended by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) that, after careful meta-analysis of research, teachers should engage in direct and systematic instruction in phonics in the classroom. However, Melinda discovered that majority of her students already had strong phonics knowledge developed from home so she abandoned the NRI phonics manual. On her part, Sally was supposed to make sure that each of her first grade students devoted at least 15 minutes every evening at home to reading. Each student was given a slip to take home for an adult to sign attesting to this program. Michael, one of Sally’s students, lived with his grandmother because his mother worked in the day. Sally knew the grandmother speaks Spanish
but was fluent in English and could help Michael at his reading but did nothing. Instead, Sally ostracized Michael and gave him an incomplete on his reading assignments.

In these three scenarios, one thing was definitely lacking according to Toll (2005): human relationship. Bob lacked perception; Melinda substituted her own opinion for policy, while Sally displayed poor judgment. Literacy coaches supply these three values in the classroom.

The use of peer coaching may also occur between new and veteran physical education teachers. Such a practice had been reported to be beneficial in reducing the reality shock beginning teachers often face during their initial years of teaching (Moffett, St. John, & Isken, 1987). While coaching may appear to be one approach to improving teacher performance, it was not without inherent challenges. Time, support from administrators and other factors could influence how successfully such a practice would be implemented. Successful coaching must be based on trust, the premises of teacher coaching, and its characteristics.

**Literature of Professional Associations and Teaching of Reading in Chicago**

In the seven years prior to 2001, CPS had seen a decline in the academic performance of its students. The district school board solicited external partners, book publishers, and numerous reading and mathematics programs to work within the public school system. Chico and Vallas, who both led the school board for six years, enforced a controversial grade retention policy in 1997. They had hoped that a get-tough policy would induce students to learn. Children at the benchmark grades of third, sixth, and eighth, who failed to reach grade level on the Iowa Basic Skills Achievement Test were retained and then required to attend summer school. The first year proved successful; however, in the second year and thereafter, test scores began to decline once again.
In 2001, the city’s mayor appointed a new school board. Along with the school board, the Chicago Reading Initiative was introduced and spearheaded by Shanahan, head of the Literacy Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It was a constructivist approach to learning that allowed students to make sense out of reading through teacher guidance and reading strategies. To ensure its success, Shanahan was appointed the Education Director of Reading for CPS. Shanahan based his initiative on proven research methods and reading strategies that made it mandatory for students in the state to receive at least two to three hours of reading instruction daily. The block of time comprised of instruction in the four reading components of word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Reading instruction also focused on the content areas as well in meeting guidelines stipulated (National Board Reading Council, 2000).

To ensure that teachers at the 104 low-achieving and probationary schools received proper training, reading specialists and literacy coaches were hired and appointed to work at each of the schools to mentor in-service teachers and monitor the literacy initiative. Many lacked the experience in staff development training that was considered an important component to the change process.

**The Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI)**

The CRI was the brainchild of Duncan, former CEO of CPS and then Secretary of Education under the Obama Administration. The initiative was set up during the 2001-2002 academic sessions, the same year the school district made it mandatory for all low-achieving schools in reading to employ the services of reading specialists and literary coaches to supplement the efforts of traditional teachers of reading within the school system. The CRI was established to achieve the following six basic objectives:
Teacher Training: Implement literacy specialists in all participating schools, offer Saturday workshops, train school-funded literacy and curriculum coordinators, and provide workshops for primary teachers.

Principal Training: Conduct principal training presentations at conferences held by the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, try out new observation forms, and view videotapes of exemplary teaching.

Instructional Materials: Offer teachers more choices when selecting books for classroom libraries in primary grades and offer schools more choices about where to spend money for instructional materials.

Educating Others: Involve community groups and present strategies to special education, bilingual, and ESL administrators.

Monitoring: Require accountability for literacy specialists through weekly summary reports and outside observations.

The CRI was managed by the Office of Literacy under the CPS system. It also included four cardinal aims and objectives which were to “focus on the four components of the Reading Instructional Framework namely: word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing—(meant) to meet the diverse needs of all (Chicago Public School) students” (CPS, 2010, p. 10). Under the program, it was expected that students in all CPS, from pre K-3 primary level and fourth to eighth grades at the intermediate-upper level and ninth to twelfth grades at the secondary school levels, should be exposed to two to three hours of reading and writing every school day. In addition, all students were to read or be read to at least 100 minutes per week and each student should be able to read a total of 25 books per year—an average of two books per month.

The reading instructional framework focused on the four essential elements of word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and writing of each student. Students would learn phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, structural analysis, sight vocabulary, and meaning as ways to develop their work knowledge. Comprehension prepares students to listen and read for
specific types of information, know text organization, and study composition strategies while fluency development focuses on rate, accuracy, phrasing, and expectation of oral and sight reading. Finally, students were to be taught how to map out writing strategies by knowing the why-purpose, the- who-audience, the how-process, and strategies of written production.

To achieve these objectives, the state formulated a uniform reading instructional manual for teachers and reading specialists. Undoubtedly, the CRI is one of the boldest and comprehensive programs in the nation aimed at helping students attain the literacy goals of the NCLB. However, it will require more than mere changing of teachers, school cultures, and adhering to tougher standards in order for this systemic school reform to succeed.

The flexibility of the reading initiative allows teachers to teach reading by using strategies that address the literacy components within a two-hour block of literacy instruction. Schools were not limited to adhering to a prescribed scripted program. Although confusing to some in the district, many expressed fondness for the initiative, especially its flexibility. Under the NCLB, the qualification of teachers was a concern, and Chicago needed to find qualified reading specialists and literacy coaches. Once in the literacy coach position, the coach must figure out how to define and develop the literacy coaching program for a building. If school children were to succeed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science, there must be qualified teachers to instruct them. Standards would be required to help direct schools towards common academic goals and unite the community for reform and achievement. Standards have gone through controversy to necessity.

The most interesting finding in a report of the IRA (Roller, 2006) was that coaches overwhelmingly reported that they felt prepared to conduct the activities required for their
position. Many coaches were required to have only a bachelor’s degree and teaching certification for the position. Literacy coaches at this level depended on professional development sessions to help hone their knowledge base.

As previously stated, one of the goals of the CRI was to support its staff of teachers with the addition of reading specialists or literacy coaches to the probationary school’s staff. Individuals hired as reading specialists or literacy coaches were given training in understanding their roles as literacy leaders and change agents. The question of whether or not the common acceptance of using special teachers to meet the needs of children in low-performing schools was highlighted by Arlington (2006). He supported change from within the system, while stating that there was no particular method or right way to accelerate literacy learning for children. However, in the 2002 and 2003 academic school years, CPS added another component into the initiative: professional development. It would be within the professional development sessions that schools would share resources and ideas on the best way to promote learning.

Teachers must have the support to make changes, including professional development and pre-service training, materials, and time (Anastasopoulos, Dickinson, &McCabe, 2002). This model stemmed from the professional development research literature of the 1980s that gradually was adapted to the literacy concept and changed the terminology of reading specialists to coaches. Other observers thought it may have sounded friendlier to some ears than the term mentor. This model was introduced in various schools within the district where reading specialists and literacy coaches worked extensively with teachers as coaches and professional development providers in low performing schools.
Summary

From the above literature review, the history of the IRA and IRC emphasized the importance of reading and how best to teach reading as a discipline through the use of menageries of professional development offered to members of both organizations. By clearly delineating the act of reading from reading as a professional craft, the extant literature reviewed in this section analyzed the various theories germane to the effective teaching of reading especially at the elementary school level as the starting point. In addition, the literature explicated more on the core features of coaching and mentoring of teachers by reading specialists and literacy coaches who remain the nuclei of effective teaching of reading in our nation’s schools and why CPS created the positions of the reading specialist and literacy coach to teach in low-performing schools in the school district through its CRI of 2001. And finally, the literature concluded by restating the kernel of the research which is the CRI would not achieve its aims and objectives if the reading specialists and literacy coaches under the program did not avail themselves of the many professional development resources offered through their memberships in both the IRA and IRC.
Chapter III

Professional Development and Reading Personnel in Chicago Public Schools

Case Study Approach

This research was a case study on the importance of professional development offered by two professional organizations: the International Reading Association (IRA) and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC), to teachers of reading, reading specialists and literacy coaches in the overall performances of students of reading at the Chicago Public School (CPS) System. A case study, as Bromley (1990) asserted, is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events that aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest (p. 302). This research conducted a systematic inquiry into the effect of professional development offered by the IRA and IRC to reading specialists and literacy coaches in third and eighth grades in CPS between 1999 and 2004. The phenomenon of interest was the effect of such professional development resources offered by the IRA and IRC to teachers and the performances of third and eighth grade students in reading in the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) between 1999 and 2004.

There are several sources from which a case study can draw data and information (Yin, 2003), ranging from archival materials, documented resources, the use of interviews from participants, and/or questionnaires to elicit responses to participant observations. The case study methodology was chosen for this research because it is a useful tool to study the multi-faceted aspects of professional development offered by professional organizations to their members—in this case, the IRA and the IRC—and their likely effects on the number of student performances in the meets and exceeds category in the ISAT.
This case study followed the protocol suggested by Simons (1980), Stake (1995), and Yin (2003), by approaching the research questions on how the different professional development resources—workshops, conferences, books, lectures, seminars, etc.—offered by both the IRA and IRC to reading specialists and literacy coaches in the CPS have led to the teachers teaching more effectively which translate to higher percentages of their third and eighth grade students in the ISAT between 2001 and 2004.

**Setting for the Case Study**

Prior to 2000, many schools within CPS did not meet the AYP benchmarks when compared with other school districts in the metropolitan Chicago area. For example, CPS lagged behind the rest of the six counties in AYP, while suburban Chicago, with 586 schools—the highest in the region—recorded 71.5% AYP; DuPage (232 schools) achieved 84.1% AYP and was the highest in the entire region; Kane (144 schools) had 62.5% AYP; Lake (175 schools) recorded 72.1% AYP; McHenry (69 schools) achieved 79.9% AYP; and Will (76 schools) recorded 67.1% AYP. CPS—with the second largest number of schools, 550—recorded the lowest AYP at 31.8% (Schwartz, 2005). A survey conducted by the Chicago Sun-Times in 1988 discovered most kindergarteners in CPS performed poorly in reading compared with their counterparts nationwide, while research conducted by the State Board of Education in 1995 revealed similar results (Duffon, 2000).

The ISAT reading performance of students in third and eighth grade ran within the single digits. The district school board solicited external partners, book publishers, and numerous reading and mathematics programs to work within the schools. Chico and Vallas, who led the school board for six years, enforced a controversial grade retention policy in 1997 (Chico was
the chief executive officer of Chicago Board of Education, and Vallas was the chief education officer during the same period). They had hoped that a get-tough policy would induce students to learn. Children at the benchmark grades of three, six, and eight, who failed to reach grade level on the Iowa Basic Skills Achievement Test, were retained and then required to attend summer school. The first year proved successful for the Chicago School Board; however, in the second year and thereafter, test scores began to decline once again.

In 2001, the city’s mayor, Daley, appointed a new school board. Along with the new school board, a new Chicago Reading Initiative was introduced and spearheaded by Shanahan, head of the literacy department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It was a constructivist approach to learning that allowed students to make sense out of reading through teacher guidance and reading strategies. To ensure its success, Shanahan was appointed the Education Director of Reading for CPS.

Shanahan based this initiative on proven research methods and reading strategies that made it mandatory for students in the state to receive at least two to three hours of reading instruction daily (Kelleher, 2002). The block of time included instruction in the four reading components of word knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Reading instruction also focused on the content areas as well. To ensure that teachers at the 104 low achieving schools received proper training, reading specialists and literacy coaches were appointed to work at each of the schools to mentor, in-service teachers, and monitor their literacy initiative. Many lacked the experience in staff development training, which was an important component to the change process.
CRI Background

In the beginning of the CRI, 50 reading specialists and literacy coaches were selected to work in 100 low performing schools, later in the year more reading specialists and literacy coaches were hired which then totaled to 114 (Catalyst, 2002). The schools for this research were reviewed based upon this list of schools and the criterion set by CPS.

The research drew reading specialists and literacy coaches as participants from selected schools in Chicago and used existing data in the publicly accessed from ISAT scores administered between 1999 and 2004 to third and eighth grade students to determine the students’ reading performance in the meets and exceeds category. Next, the researcher prepared a set of questionnaires focusing on the professional development resources offered by both the IRC and IRA to reading specialists and literacy coaches in the selected CPS schools (see Appendix 3). And finally, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches who had worked in CPS between 2001 and 2004 when the CRI was introduced. The 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches were asked to comment on their assessments of the professional development resources provided to them by the IRA and IRC in some of the selected schools for this research (see Appendix A for transcripts of the interviews).

The performances of the third and eighth grade students in the selected 32 schools in category in ISAT were then analyzed using SPSS. Similarly, the survey results and interviews were also analyzed by the researcher to discover the level of changes in the students’ performances in meets and exceeds category of ISAT of the third and eighth grade students in three years (1999-2001) before reading specialists and literacy coaches were hired and three years (2002-2004) after they were hired. The percentages of students performances in third and
eighth grade in meet and exceeds category in ISAT from the two time periods were then compared.

This case study is important because of the paucity of research that exists on the relationship between professional development offered by professional associations in reading and the performances of students in reading. Thus, as Stake (1995) stated:

We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (p. xi)

Consequently, in order to discover the effectiveness of professional resources offered by the IRC and IRA to reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading in third and eighth grades, and the likely outcome such professional development may have had on the reading performances of students in ISAT meets and exceeds between 1999 and 2004, the researcher used a qualitative method.

The researcher used the percentages of student performances in third grade reading because, as Christena and Lynch (2000) noted, third grade is the grade point when an average child should be developing vocabulary and reading skills. The percentages of student performances in eighth grade were used because by the eighth grade, Ilg, Ames, and Baker (1974) showed that this was when the vocabulary and reading skills of an average child/student were being developed into adulthood.

Selection of ISAT

The percentages of student performances in ISAT meets and exceeds in reading that were used for this research were obtained from the open source databases of CPS kept by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The ISAT was identified as the most commonly available test
in assessing third and eighth grade students’ performances in the state of Illinois. This test is the high stakes assessment that determines student promotion in grades three, six, and eight. The ISAT is also used to measure whether a school meets adequate yearly progress (AYP), and each year the meets and exceeds used to measure a school’s success increases making AYP often difficult to attain. The percentages of student performances in ISAT of third and eighth grade students in CPS used for the research were obtained from the public domain after the researcher had contacted the University of Illinois Internal Review Board Number 45cfr46.116 (D).

**Selection of Research Years 1999-2004**

The years 1999 to 2004 were chosen for this research because in 2001 CPS made it mandatory for all non-performing elementary schools to hire reading specialists/literacy coaches to supplement the efforts of traditional teachers of reading in the 100 low performing schools. To understand the effectiveness of professional development offered by the IRA and IRC to the newly hired reading specialist and literacy coaches in the probationary schools, this research analyzed the percentages of student performances in meets and exceeds in ISAT in 32 schools three years prior to the hiring of reading specialists/literacy coaches. The years 1999 to 2001 are important because Chicago public schools were failing and showed little progress on the ISAT. The three years with reading specialists and literacy coaches were used for comparison of the effectiveness of the professional development offered by the IRA and IRC to the teachers of reading and impact on student ISAT scores.

Teachers of reading in third and eighth grades who identified themselves as members of the IRC and IRA were interviewed by the researcher because they were the beneficiaries of all professional development resources that could be provided by reading specialists/literacy
coaches to improve student reading scores. These professional development resources included books, journals, workshops, research seminars, conferences, and lectures. The IRC and IRA have been identified as the largest professional organizations for teachers of reading, reading specialists and literacy coaches both nationally and in the state of Illinois. In addition, both organizations were resource providers for all reading professionals and among their leading members are parents, grandparents, scholars of reading, media librarians, university professors, researchers, and school administrators, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2000, p. 89).

The researcher surveyed 33 reading specialists and literacy coaches who served in the schools that were low performing and did a comparative analysis of the different professional development resources provided by both the IRA and IRC between 1999 and 2004, with a view to determining the effect of such professional development on the overall ISAT performances of third and eighth grade students during the years under study. For this case study, the researcher interviewed 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches who also served in the selected schools for this research in order to discover their level of satisfaction with the different professional development resources provided by the IRA and IRC between 1999 and 2004. In addition, the case study used the ISAT scores obtained from the public access and then compared the performances of third and eighth grade students taught by these reading specialists and literacy coaches in the 32 selected schools between 2001 and 2004, to discover the effect the professional development resources had on students’ ISAT scores.
**Participation and Methods of Subject Selection**

The focus of this research was the effect of professional development offered by the IRA and IRC on the effectiveness of teaching reading by reading specialists and literacy coaches, three criteria were used to identify participants for the study:

1. The reading specialists/literacy coaches were teachers of reading or assisted teachers of reading in the classroom for, as Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, and Klinger (2002) noted, when reading specialists/literacy coaches team up with teachers for professional development, the results of such collaboration can be deduced from the overall performances of their students.

2. The reading specialists/literacy coaches were members of either the IRA and/or IRC in 2001, the year CPS made it mandatory that low-achieving schools should hire reading professionals to improve the reading performances of their students.

3. The reading specialists/literacy coaches had attended several professional development services provided by both organizations after 2001, which the members were able to utilize in the classroom because both organizations are the largest, famous and well-known organizations that provide the most comprehensive and far-reaching professional development services to reading specialists/literacy coaches both nationwide and statewide (U.S Department of Education, 1999).

After the researcher received approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB), the researcher contacted officials of the IRC at Springfield, Illinois, for a list of members of the IRA and IRC in Chicago. Thereafter, letters were mailed to all the members requesting those who were reading specialists and literacy coaches in CPS between 1999 and 2004 disclose their identity in order to ascertain the membership statuses of the 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches interviewed by the researcher, although their real names were not disclosed but were simply addressed as RS/LC 1 through 10 (see Appendix I). The researcher used the criterion sampling method (Patton, 2003) by selecting members of the IRA and the IRC who identified themselves as reading specialists and literacy coaches in CPS between 1999 and 2004 to fill out a set of questionnaires (see Appendix II) through Survey Monkey. In total, 33 respondents filled
out the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaires formed part of the researcher’s analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

**Selection of Research Participants: Reading Specialists and Literacy Coaches**

In order to maintain the focus and integrity of this case study, this research used a criterion sampling method (Creswell, 2007), which meant a set of predetermined measures of importance in selecting the participants:

First, the researcher contacted the Illinois Reading Council for a list of reading specialists and literacy coaches who were members of both the IRA/IRC, who lived and worked in the Chicago School District, and were reading specialists and literacy coaches in third and eighth grades between 2001 and 2004.

Second, a list of 273 IRC members was sent to the researcher as requested, but not all of them were listed members of IRA. The criteria used in selecting the reading specialists and literacy coaches that were drawn from the population as research participants were: the length of time in CPS as reading specialists and literacy coaches between 2001 and 2004; employees of CPS and maintained membership affiliations with the IRA and IRC between 2001 and 2004.

Third, the researcher contacted the 273 reading specialists and literacy coaches obtained from the IRC by postal mail for this case study. The researcher used criterion sampling method (Creswell, 2007) to draw the participants from the overall population which essentially meant that only the reading specialists and literacy coaches that met the requirements stated above were included as research participants.

Fourth, after receiving responses from those 51 of the 273 potential participants contacted, the researcher sent letters to those 51 reading specialists and literacy coaches with
specific questions to determine if they met the requirements in order to participate in the research.

In response to the letter sent to the 51 IRC members 37 responded and identified themselves as members of both organizations, members of one of the two organizations, and employed by CPS as reading specialists and literacy coaches.

Fifth, the researcher then sent a set of questionnaires to the 37 reading specialists and literacy coaches. They would have worked in most of the 32 schools understudy. There were 33 responses to the questionnaires through Survey Monkey link.

Finally, the researcher went back to the initial letters sent to the 37 reading specialists and literacy coaches based on the list obtained from the IRC and used purposeful sampling method (Creswell, 2003, p. 185) to select 10 out of the 37 reading specialists and literacy coaches to interview for the research. The 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches must have completed the survey to be considered for the interview. The transcripts of the interviews conducted with the 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches are part of the analysis for the research.

Selection of the 32 CPS Schools

Similarly, the sample for this research is the criterion sampling method (Creswell, 2007), which used a set of predetermined measures of importance in selecting the schools, specifically the schools used for this research were those adjudged as low-performing by CPS in 1999 and in need of the services of reading specialists and literacy coaches to turn around the performances of their students in the ISAT. Second, the schools were where the reading specialists and literacy coaches were posted to at the beginning of the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI) in the school year of 2001/2002, and third, the reading specialists and literacy coaches mentioned some of the
schools as their primary assignments between 2001 and 2004 when they were members of the IRA and IRC.

**The Researcher’s Role**

According to Stake (1995), an investigator conducting research into a case study wears many hats as a biographer, teacher, interpreter, and advocate. Consequently, the researcher in this case study, having been a classroom teacher of reading for nine years, a literacy coach for nine years, an area reading coach for CPS for three years, a member and council member of both the IRA and IRC for five years, and President of the Chicago Area Reading Association for one year, discovered that she embodied some of these roles during the duration of this research. This research had profound personal and professional significance for the researcher, but the researcher was extremely careful to adhere to the highest level of professional excellence by separating her personal views, preconceived notions, and emotional feelings during this study. First, the research was not connected with the schools that were selected for the research. Second, the reading specialists and literacy coaches surveyed and interviewed were from the membership list provided by the IRA and IRC.

It has been noted in qualitative research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) that it is oftentimes difficult for a researcher to separate herself from the research, but this researcher tried to avoid any conflicts of interest during the research and in the overall findings of this research. The 33 reading specialists and literacy coaches surveyed for this research participated voluntarily; the nature of the research and its importance to reading professionals was explained, and finally during the interview process they had the right to ask questions as well as have their privacy
respected by assigning codes to the participants. Signatures of the 30 participants were obtained during the research (Creswell, 2003, p. 64).

There are five attitudinal dispositions that a researcher conducting a case study must display in order to mitigate potential biases (Yin, 2003), which this researcher painstakingly observed: ability to ask pungent questions while developing questionnaires and good interpreting responses; ability to eliminate personal agendas, preconceived ideas, and potential biases interfering with his/her research findings; ability to be adaptive, to be at alert to anticipate logical questions which all build up to a systemic whole; ability to understand the multi-faceted aspects of the subject that is being studied, and the possession of matured professional knowledge and intellectual training that would give him or her the proficiency to eliminate irrelevant information; and finally, the ability to spot contradictory evidence in respondents’ feedback, responsiveness to biases, and acute sensitivity to distortions. Before and during the survey, the researcher had no contact with the participants. Communication was accomplished through traditional mail and electronic mail contacts. During the interview, the researcher attended professional development sessions that most CPS reading professionals were required to attend (Sieber, 1992, p. 38).

The issue of representativeness cannot and should not be ignored when conducting a case study, but a truly representative case study is often difficult (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Thus, what the researcher did in this research was to ensure that the number of participants who were interviewed for the research were members of both the IRA and IRC between 2001 and 2004, and had participated in the various workshops, conferences, lectures, and other activities offered by both organizations. Money was also another issue affecting representativeness, as some
reading specialists and literacy coaches who could have been participants did not join the two organizations between 1999 and 2003, but were now members. Access was also another factor that affected representativeness, but the 33 reading specialists and literacy coaches surveyed and interviewed for this research were representative enough based on the total number of reading specialists and literacy coaches who were members of both organizations between 2001 and 2004. The participants represented more than half of the total number of reading specialists and literacy coaches in CPS who were members of both IRA and IRC between 2001 and 2004, which was indeed statistically significant (50 percent).

**ISAT**

The ISAT is an annual test in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, and is administered to all elementary school students by the Illinois State Board of Education in the Chicago public school system. The ISAT scores of third and eighth grade students were obtained from CPS through the public domain and used for this study. The researcher selected 32 schools for this research because of convenience (Creswell, 2003 p. 156), and the responses of the reading specialists and literacy coaches prior and during their interviews as they identified schools in which they worked as reading specialist and literacy coaches.

Four rubrics were used by the Illinois State Board of Education to access students’ reading performances in third and eighth grades: academic warning, which means a student’s work demonstrates limited knowledge and skills in the subject and because of major gaps in learning, the student, applies knowledge and skills ineffectively. Exceeds standards means a student’s work demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills in the subject, and the student creatively applies knowledge and skills to solve problems and evaluate the results. Below
standard is when a student’s work demonstrates basic knowledge and skills in the subject, but because of gaps in learning, the student applies knowledge and skills in limited ways. Meets standards means that a student’s work demonstrates proficient knowledge and skills in the subject, and the student can effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems. Meets and exceeds was used for this research.

The percentage of students in ISAT for each school for the years 1999-2004 was listed and the number of students tested for third and eighth grades including the total means scores for the 32 schools per year was calculated by the researcher using SPSS (see appendix D). It was important to determine the mean scores of each year in order to compare the progress of third and eighth grade students in the 32 schools in the ISAT before and after the hiring of reading specialists and literacy coaches in CPS. Once the mean percentages of students’ performances were calculated, a table and a graph were created to measure any progress or changes in the percentages of students’ performances in meets and exceeds category of third and eighth grade students in ISAT between 1999 and 2004. Finally, the statistical significance of students’ performances in meets and exceeds category in ISAT were calculated during the six years (1999-2004) to determine the progress of the third and eighth grade student in the 32 school in ISAT.

Survey

The second set of data contained surveys. The surveys (see Appendices B and F) asked the respondents to disclose whether he or she was a member of the IRA and/or the IRC; how long he or she had been a member of either organization; the number of times he or she had attended or participated in professional development offered by either or both organizations; and his or her overall assessments of the relevance of such professional development.
In the survey section the participants were asked to address the effectiveness of professional development provided by the IRA and IRC, including their overall impression of such professional development, 0 to 5 Likert ranges (Hord., Rutherford., Huling-Austing, & Hall, 1987), subsequently scored by computer. The responses were analyzed through Survey Monkey™, a web-based survey service (see Appendix B).

The 33 reading specialists and literacy coaches who benefited from professional development resources offered by both the IRA and IRC participated in answering the survey for the research, worked in the 32 selected schools, and 10 of the surveyed RS/LC were interviewed.

Interviews

After the researcher had interviewed 10 participants, the responses were immediately transcribed in a word processing document (see Appendix A), and the subsequent analysis of the ISAT scores, interviews, and responses to the surveys formed the findings and results of the research.

The 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches interviewed disclosed they had utilized the same professional development exposure gained from both the IRA and IRC to aid teachers of reading in CPS schools. The 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches interviewed were teachers who had worked in the selected schools at one time or the other between 2001 and 2004.

Participant Benefits and Compensation

The teachers of reading, reading specialists, and literacy coaches that participated in this research were informed of the potential benefits of this research to their profession, and other benefits which may have included the awareness of the professional development of their membership in the IRA and IRC. Participants were reminded that their membership in both
professional organizations was essential and they may be able to gauge the effectiveness of attending conferences organized by the IRA and IRC, and the effect such attendance may have on reading scores in CPS. It was additionally emphasized to participants that participation was completely voluntary.

No monetary compensation or any other compensation were promised or given to participants in this research. For those RS/LCs that were contacted by traditional mail, stamped envelopes were provided for feedback.

**Safeguards and Confidentiality of Data**

This research involved no human subjects and all reading specialists and literacy coaches that participated in the survey had their data confidentiality maintained through the use of numeric identifiers were used for direct quotes. All data of participants such as names, consent forms, email, and telephone contacts were locked in a file cabinet in the researcher’s office at 4655 South Dearborn, 4th Floor, Chicago, Illinois, where they will be kept for a period of no less than three years as required by law.
Chapter IV

Research Findings

Introduction

This study examined the effectiveness of some of the professional developmental resources provided by the IRC and IRA to reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading, and the overall effects of the professional developmental resources on the performances of third and eighth grade students in selected CPS between 1999 and 2004.

A purposeful sampling method was used (Creswell, 2003), and the data from 32 academically low-performing schools in the CPS were reviewed for this case study. The CPS definition of a low-performing school is one a school that performed poorly on the ISAT (scoring 25% or lower) and showed little progress in scores (Kelleher, 2001). For the purpose of this research analysis, the ISAT reading scores of third and eighth grade students between 1999 and 2004 were analyzed in 32 schools, 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches were interviewed, and 33 reading specialists and literacy coaches were surveyed with questionnaire consisting of 21 questions.

When CPS introduced the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI) in 2001 to turn around the academically low-performing schools in the school district, one of the strategies used to assist the newly hired reading specialists and reading coaches was to purchase group memberships in IRC and IRA for these professionals. The purpose of the group memberships in both the IRA and IRC by CPS in 2001 was to provide quality professional development by both organizations for the newly-hired reading specialists and literacy coaches (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, & Klinger, 2002, p. 10).
Research Questions (Survey)

1. How many reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading in Chicago Public Schools were paid and active members of the IRC and IRA, and why did the reading specialist and literacy coaches join both professional organizations?

The research showed that in the beginning of CRI in 2001, all the reading specialists and literacy coaches—114 in CPS—were members of the IRA based on the paid group membership of the CPS. That represented 100% of total number of reading specialists and reading coaches. The group membership was paid for by CPS until 2002. During the following two years, 2003 through 2004, CPS could not maintain the group memberships because of budgetary constraints; however, stipends for attending IRA/IRC professional development opportunities were available. The survey showed that 31(93%) RS/LC maintained their memberships in both the IRA/IRC when CPS no longer paid group membership.

2. What were some of the benefits that accrued to the reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading from memberships in both organizations in their professional challenges?

The reading specialists and literacy coaches who continued their memberships in the IRA and IRC after 2002 revealed in the surveys that they derived some benefits such as acquiring materials and ideas for their own professional development and other materials to assist teacher of reading. The survey showed that 31 reading specialists and literacy coaches responded that membership in both organizations assisted in providing professional development to the teachers in their various schools. Another set showed that 31 (93%) disclosed that they had attended conferences provided by both organizations. Furthermore, 10 (30%) disclosed that they benefited from using the templates provided by both organizations when planning professional development in their respective schools. Two (6%) of reading specialist/literacy coaches said
they did not benefit from the professional development resources provided by the IRA/IRC; 20 (60%) said they benefited sometimes and 1 (3%) responded that they used non-IRA/IRC professional development resources. In all, 31 responded that they benefited from using the templates provided by both organizations in planning professional development in their respective schools in CPS.

3. How many professional developmental resources were offered by the organizations, what was the level of participation, and how did the reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers benefit from such resources?

Those surveyed listed the following as the resources provided for by the IRA/IRC: conferences (regional, local, and world); a variety of publications including books, journals, newsletters, and book clubs; journals published by the organizations including *Reading Teacher, Reading Today, Reading Research Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*; along with websites, webinars, workshops, and reading councils. In the surveys, 31 (93.9%) disclosed that they participated in the professional development resources offered by both organizations, while 2 (6%) had not participated. For the level of participation in the professional development resource offered by the two organizations, 14 (42%) attended one to three times, 13 (39%) attended four times, 4 (12%) attended 10 or more times, while 2 (6%) attended six to nine times.

In the surveys, 10 (30%) disclosed that they used materials from the IRA and IRC when planning professional development in their various schools; 20 (60%) sometimes used IRA and IRC resources in their professional development planning, and 2 (6%) did not use IRA or IRC resources. Only 1 (3%) used other non-IRA/IRC resources when planning professional resources as a reading specialist or literacy coach in CPS.
4. How often did reading specialists and literacy coaches access the professional development resources provided by the IRA and IRC, and how beneficial were such professional resources to reading specialists and literacy coaches in their teaching of reading to third and eighth grade students?

To maximize the benefits offered by the IRA and IRC, 30 (90.9%) of the reading specialists and reading coaches surveyed for this study disclosed that they accessed the professional development resources offered by both organizations—both within and outside the school systems—in order to use those resources to develop their personal knowledge and careers. According to the survey responses, 20 (60%) said they sometimes used ideas and materials from the IRA and IRC when planning professional development for teachers in their school, 10 (30%) said they affirmed using IRA and IRC resources, 2 (6%) said they never used IRA or IRC professional resources, and 1 (3%) said he or she used other resources.

5. What was the relationship between such professional developmental resources on the overall performances of third and eighth grade students in the ISAT?

From the 33 responses, 31 (93%) revealed that the professional development resources from the IRA and IRC were useful to teachers in their classroom instructions, while 2 (6%) offered other as their response.

From the survey analyses, it could be deduced from the high level of participation in IRA and IRC there may be a relationship between the professional development resources offered by IRA and IRC, and the professional development resources provided by reading specialist and literacy coaches to teachers of reading during CRI in CPS. Consequently, there may be an indirect relationship between such instruction and the overall performances of third and eight students in the ISAT scores of students in the 32 low-performing schools used in the research.
The result of the survey conducted with the 33 RS/LC for the research questions is graphically represented:

Table 1

*Survey Results of Reading Specialists and Literacy Coaches - N=33*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>IRA/IRC Members N</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Number of RS/LC who were members of IRA/IRA</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Benefits to RS/LC of Professional Development resources offered by IRA/IRC</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) What was the level of participation of RS/LC in professional development resources offered by IRA/IRC to RS/LC</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) How often RS/LC access professional development resource provided by IRA/IRC</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Relationship between professional resources provided by IRA/IRC and teacher’s instruction in third and eighth grade performances</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions (Interviews)

1. How many reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading in Chicago Public Schools were paid and active members of the IRC and IRA, and why did the reading specialist and literacy coaches join both professional organizations?

The 10 reading specialists and literacy coaches interviewed by the researcher disclosed that they were members of both the IRA or IRC during the period of 1999 through 2001. When asked if they continued their memberships after CPS no longer paid, only 9 responded that they did continue membership in both IRA or IRC.

According to RS/LC 1:

“I actually joined the reading organizations at that time in order to be a part of a conference. I did go for a conference in which I stayed for a week and I went to various seminars about reading.” RS/LC 4 said that her membership dated back to her college years and she has maintained it for over 10 years now.

According to her:

“I had been a member of both organizations even before I obtained my Reading Degree, but I think one of my professors mandated we join I think the IRA. . . . Now about IRC, I think a reading person I met at a meeting, she mentioned it to me and said I hoped you will. . . anyway, she told me about a local organization and as a result of that, they recommended we joined the IRC.”

In other words, RS/LC 4 became a member of IRA before joining CRI and during and after she was employed by CPS, because of the various professional development resources she was exposed to from the two organizations. In the case of RS/LC 5, in 2001 her desire to deepen her knowledge base in pedagogical practices informed her joining both organizations even before CRI: “Oh yes, I have been a member of both of IRA and IRC for years because I have always had the desire to deepen my knowledge base.”
She continued to maintain her membership up to the present.

2. What were some of the benefits that accrued to the reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers of reading from memberships in both organizations in their professional challenges?

The interviews revealed that 10 RS/LC stated they benefited from their memberships of both IRA and IRC. RS/LC 1 said: “I got information about successful reading programs. I also listened to various speakers who were experts in literacy and reading and I was able to bring back materials which I did share with the teachers.”

Similarly, RS/LC 2 placed much emphasis on the invaluable benefits the journals published by the IRA/IRC: “I have used the resources, especially the journals. They have been extremely beneficial, extremely helpful, easy to read and easy to keep up abreast with the new research that is coming up in reading.”

On her part, RS/LC 4 gained much from the newsletters published for members by IRA/IRC: “I really liked the newspaper . . . The Reading Today from the IRA. It’s a newspaper . . . I have used The Reading Teacher Quarterly.”

The benefits that RS/LC 5 gained from her membership of IRA began before CRI in the CPS, and she continued to avail herself of those benefits up to the present:

“For a long time I went to different conferences and there so many things and so many speakers, people (authors) of books that I have read and they gave you (me) all the practical practices of information about their findings. It came about for me to gain more knowledge and they have been beneficial to me.”

To RS/LC 6, the benefits she gained from IRA were the application of the reading and research strategies taught to her at IRA conferences:

“The evidence showed itself in our meetings very often some comments would come up about certain research projects and concerns about trying some of these things out that we
have read about certain subjects and some of these things we have read in the classrooms in which reading specialists were working in. So yes, it was very beneficial.”

According to RS/LC 7—one of the pioneering reading specialists, area coach, and manager at the inception of CRI in CPS—other stakeholders benefited from the memberships of the two organizations at the organizations level. This RS/LC looked at the benefits of memberships of both organizations from a management perspective:

“It gave us (reading specialist/literacy coaches) additional tools and resources and support to share and I think it also enlightened what we are reading because it was light at the end of the tunnel which gave us hope. We were seeing what was working and trying out what was working in our schools as stated out there by the organizations (IRA and IRC) and I also thought and I also remember that we also know now that some of the reading specialists have now become principals and assistant principals playing leadership roles at CPS. And so it helped them (reading specialists and literacy coaches).”

There may be benefits in moving reading specialists/literacy coaches to higher leadership roles in CPS, and consequently this may lead to higher student performances in students’ scores in CPS.

3. How many professional developmental resources were offered by the organizations, what was the level of participation, and how did the reading specialists, literacy coaches, and teachers benefit from such resources?

In the interviews, RS/LC 1 said she used mostly IRA or IRC articles for planning her professional development:

“There was (sic) specific graphic organizers (sic) provided by the IRA for members at conferences that were new to my school, which we were able to use. Also some of the literature that I brought back to the teachers and I did notice many of the strategies presented (to us at the IRC and IRA conferences) were used by the teachers at the classroom.”

RS/LC 4 specifically mentioned the different journals published by the IRA as the most valuable resource acquire from the IRA professional development resources:
“Oh yes, I used them, basically what I used were may be articles from may be *The Reading Teacher*, I have articles for, eh not so much for PD but for grade level meetings and may be occasionally for PD if we had time, you know, if I presented it to, if the topic was . . . eh whatever the topic was at that time. I have done that.”

4. How often did reading specialists and literacy coaches access the professional development resources provided by the IRA and IRC, and how beneficial were such professional resources to reading specialists and literacy coaches in their teaching of reading to third and eighth grade students?

To maximize the benefits offered by the IRA and IRC, 31 (93%) of the reading specialists and literacy coaches surveyed and 10 (90%) reading specialists and literacy coaches interviewed for this study disclosed that they often accessed the professional development resources offered by both organizations—both within and outside the school systems—in order to use those resources to develop their personal knowledge and careers. Furthermore, constant access of such professional development resources assisted them greatly in developing the mental, professional, and career capabilities of classroom teachers in their various schools.

The responses revealed that reading and literacy coaches benefited from the professional development resources offered by the IRA and IRC. For RS/LC 1 the professional development resources she gained from both the IRA and IRC were the current reading practices that became beneficial in the classroom setting:

“I remember going to sessions about best practices in reading instruction and also I got information about successful reading programs. I also listened to various speakers who were experts in literacy and reading and I was able to bring back materials which I did share with the teachers and I also share the information which I got from the experts which I integrated into the professional development at the schools.”

RS/LC 6 witnessed the benefits of professional development resources in both classroom and organizational settings:

“Yes, I think it was very beneficial. The evidence showed itself in our meetings very often some comments would come up about certain research projects and concerns about
trying some of these things out that we have read about certain subjects and some of these things we have read in the classrooms in which Reading Specialist were working in. So yes, it was very beneficial.”

RS/LC 2 explained that these benefits did not occur by direct application from IRA workshops and conferences. Individual reading specialists and literacy coaches needed to model the techniques to assist teachers in understanding how to utilize those resources: “Yes (the IRA resources were beneficial) but I don’t think it was the resources alone but I think it’s the way you use them in conjunction with other professional development.”

RS/LC 10 agreed with RS/LC 2: “We took them (professional development resources of IRA/IRC) back to the schools and use them in the different grade levels of our schools.”

5. What was the relationship between such professional developmental resources on the overall performances of third and eighth grade students in the ISAT?

From the interviews conducted for the research, 8-RS/LC said the professional resources that teachers of reading in the 32 low-performing schools used in the research gained from reading specialists and literacy coaches who were IRA/IRC members had positive effects on the overall performances of third and eight grade students in the ISAT. RS/LC 1 said she noticed improvements in students’ scores during CRI between 2002 and 2004 in as the teachers in her school began to utilize the professional development resources from the IRA and IRC: “Actually we do (sic) (see) an increase in the reading scores of (third and eighth grade students) that year (2003) and I am sure some of the materials we brought back (from the IRC and IRA conferences) contributed to that.”

RS/LC 2 explained that initially there was no noticeable change in students’ ISAT scores, but by the second year when CRI began, students’ scores increased: “Yes, but the improvement
in students’ achievements tests (ISAT) did not just happen after one or two exposure to these resources. What can I say, after continuous exposure to professional development from IRC/IRA and you continue to use these resources, you do see a difference.”

Similarly, RS/LC 3 observed the same improvement over time in her schools: “Yes, they’ve gone up (ISAT scores of third and eighth grade students). Although initially we don’t have a way to go but we were off track but finally made it even though it took us a little bit longer.” In RS/LC 4 summation, she disclosed slight a improvement in students’ ISAT scores, but no one could predict if the modest gains would be sustained because the school was slated for closure by CPS: “there was a slight change (in students’ scores in reading) then the school closed, changed, it was a slight gain but . . . the school was slated to close even with making some gains.”

For RS/LC 5 parents in some of the low performing schools saw noticeable improvements in the reading performances of their third and eighth grade children after reading specialists and literacy coaches began using professional development resources from the IRA and IRC between 2002 and 2004: “Yes, I did (see improvement in students’ ISAT) scores, I also had the parents’ component in Chicago. Parents would come back to tell me they noticed improvement in their children’s (ISAT) scores.”

RS/LC 6 found it difficult to connect the improvement in student ISAT scores with the professional development resources offered to the reading specialists and literacy coaches in her school by the IRA and IRC even though the teachers of reading benefited from such professional development:

“I don’t know if I can directly tie (improvement in the students’ ISAT) reading scores to the promotion of methods of teaching reading but certainly the reading specialists that
were progressive enough to look at new strategies and new ways of teaching usually the scores look very better than the average reading specialist.”

RS/LC 7 said there was no doubt the ISAT scores of third and eighth grade students in some of the 32 low performing schools improved after teachers of reading in those schools began to utilize the professional development resources offered to them by reading specialists and literacy coaches who were IRA and IRC members. However, RS/LC 8 did not observe any relationship between students’ ISAT performances and IRA or IRC professional development, but she disclosed that teachers of reading in her school utilized IRA and IRC professional development resources provided to them by reading specialist and literacy coaches: “No I see it more from the professional development (angle-students’ ISAT performances).”

For RS/LC 9 there was direct positive effect between third and eighth grade students’ ISAT scores between 2002 and 2004 and the IRA and IRC professional development resources:

“Most definitely (students’ ISAT scores did improve during CRI). When I was at the school I was at that time for six years, there was definitely an increase in reading scores and I believe it was because of the great format of the professional development that were provided and there was evidence of students’ performance in the classroom.”

Finally, RS/LC 10 did not only disclose that students’ ISAT scores improved as a result of professional development resources teachers in her school gained from the IRA or IRC through their reading specialist and literacy professionals, but added there was a yearly increase of at least 5%: “Our reading scores have been . . . (increasing yearly) well, I have been at the same school for 20 years and since I have been here as a reading coach for 7 and 8 years we have seen increases here every year, at least an increase of at least 5% and in the last 8 years, we have gained 10 to 13%.”
**Survey and Interviews**

The survey results and interviews showed that the professional development resources of both the IRA and IRC were beneficial to reading specialists and literacy coaches who maintained their memberships of both organizations from 2001 through 2004. The benefits as disclosed above occurred as the reading specialists and literacy coaches worked with teachers, school principals, students, parents, and other major stakeholders in the learning environments in CPS. The respondents to the surveys and interviews disclosed that the different conferences and seminars the IRA/IRC organized afforded the opportunity to network, meet experts, and keep abreast of the latest research in the field of reading, among other benefits. These professional development resources had not been available to them until they became members of both organizations. The respondents stated that student performances improved on ISAT with the knowledge they acquired and shared with teachers at their schools in grades third and eighth.

**ISAT DATA Analysis**

5. What was the relationship between such professional developmental resources on the overall performances of third and eighth grade students in the ISAT?

Thirty-two schools participated in the study. The study used data obtained through public access from CPS to compare third and eighth grade students performance on the ISAT before reading specialists were hired in 2001 with data two years after reading specialists were hired to discover if there were any significant improvements in the ISAT meets and exceeds category. The pre-hire percentage of students falling into the meets and exceed category was determined by taking each school’s percent of students in the ISAT meets and exceeds category during the years 1999, 2000, and 2001, and averaging them per school. The post-hire percent of students who met or exceeded achievement was determined by taking each school’s percent of meets or
exceeds ISAT scores for 2002, 2003, and 2004 and averaging them per school. This was done at both the third and eighth grade levels.

For the pre-hiring third grade students, the minimum meets and exceeds percentage was 12.0 and the maximum meets and exceeds percentage was 47.67 \((M = 24.11, SD = 8.79)\); post-hiring the minimum meets and exceeds percentage was 14.67 and the maximum meets and exceeds percentage was 40.67 \((M = 24.93, SD = 8.03)\). For the pre-hiring eighth grade students, the minimum meets and exceeds percentage was 13.00 and the maximum meets and exceeds percentage was 54.33 \((M = 39.29, SD = 8.87)\), while the post-hiring minimum meets and exceeds percentage was 16.33 and the maximum meets and exceeds percentage was 55.67 \((M = 39.66, SD = 9.86)\). Means and standard deviations for pre and post-hiring meets and exceeds percent for third and eighth graders are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Pre and Post-hiring Meets and Exceeds Percent on the ISAT by School in Grades 3 and 8 (N = 32)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-hiring</th>
<th>Post-hiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third grade ISAT percent meets and exceeds</td>
<td>24.11</td>
<td>8.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth grade ISAT percent meets and exceeds</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>8.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine if there was a statistically significant difference in percent of third graders meets and exceeds ISAT among 32 schools at pre and post-hiring, as measured using the average percent of each school’s meets and exceeds ISAT scores, a dependent samples \( t \)-test was conducted. The dependent sample \( t \)-test was not statistically significant, \( t (31) = -0.55, p = 0.589, d = 0.10, 95\% \text{ CI } [-3.84, 2.22] \). The effect size of .10 suggests a smaller than typical effect size, indicating a smaller than typical strength of the relationship. The mean difference was -.81 with a 95% confidence interval of -3.84 and 2.22 points. Results of the dependent sample \( t \)-test are presented in Table 3.
Table 3

Dependent Sample t-Test on Percent of Third Grade ISAT Meets and Exceeds by Time (Pre vs. Post-hiring)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-hiring</th>
<th>Post-hiring</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t(31)</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third grade ISAT percent meets and exceeds</td>
<td>24.11</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>24.93</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>-.55</td>
<td>.589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference in percent of eighth graders ISAT meets and exceeds among 32 schools at pre and post-hiring of reading specialists and literacy coaches, as measured using the average percent of each schools’ meets and exceeds ISAT, a dependent samples t-test was conducted. The dependent sample t-test was not statistically significant, \( t(31) = -0.29, p = .774, d = .04 \), 95% CI [-2.93, 2.21]. The effect size of .04 suggests a smaller than typical effect size, indicating a smaller than typical strength of the relationship. The mean difference was -.36 with a 95% confidence interval of -2.93 and 2.21 points. Results of the dependent sample t-test are presented in Table 4.
Table 4

Dependent Sample t-Test on Percent of Eighth Grade ISAT Meets and Exceeds by Time (Pre-hiring vs. Post-hiring)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-hiring</th>
<th>Post-hiring</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth grade ISAT percent meets and exceeds</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>8.87</td>
<td>39.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Research Findings

From the above tables and figures, the performances of third and eighth grade students in meets and exceeds in ISAT in the 32 schools used for this research did not change between 1999 and 2001 before CPS hired reading specialists and literacy coaches under CRI and three years: 2002, 2003 and 2004 after they were hired and one-year memberships of the IRA/IRC were purchased for the reading specialists and literacy coaches.
Chapter V

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the findings in this research have shown, the reading specialists and literacy coaches hired under the CRI by CPS and in the hope of turning around the ISAT performances of third and eighth grade students were aware that the changes required would eventually be positive, based on the interviews conducted with the reading specialists and literacy coaches by the researcher (see full transcripts of interviews in Appendix A). But as Fullan (2001) noted, change is a double-edged sword; it can also be a messy process which sometimes occurs in a disorganized environment. Fullan (2001) further stated that no one could predict the outcome of a change in an organization, so the pioneer reading specialists and literacy coaches whose group memberships in the IRA and IRC paid for by the CPS in 2002 had preconceived positive notions of the benefits of the professional developments they would gain from both organizations. However, the initial positive optimism by the literacy coaches and reading specialists did not translate into higher percentage of student performances in the ISAT as shown in the statistical analysis in chapter 4. Other factors could also be attributed to the lack of changed performances in the ISAT scores such as inadequate time for the desired change to be recorded; perhaps an ineffective use or transference of professional development resources to classroom teachers by reading specialists and literacy coaches, or a lack of willingness by classroom teachers to change their pedagogies in the early years of CRI.

As Desimone (2009) noted, reading proficiency is very important for students if they are to perform well later in all facets of educational activities, including at the higher education level and in future life careers in general. The foundation for reading proficiency begins at the
elementary level and the third grade is the starting point. The CPS understood the need to begin these early building blocks at the elementary levels from the critical stages of kindergarten through third grades when Shanahan of the University of Illinois in Chicago was hired in 2001 as the school district’s Director of Reading. Shanahan developed the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI) and the main significant components of the new initiative was the hiring of reading specialists and literacy coaches to mentor and coach teachers of reading in the classrooms through professional development, resource assistance, support systems, and other collaborative efforts. The envisaged cumulative effects of these efforts were a teacher’s effectiveness and improvements in student scores at ISAT.

The CRI resulted in no improvement in student performances in the meets and exceeds category of the ISAT in the years under study (2002, 2003, and 2004), which prompts the question: What accounted for the non-performances of third and eighth grade students in the meets and exceeds category of the ISAT scores between 2002 and 2004 according to the ISAT data analyst in this research? The following recommendations may be considered in view of the survey and interview findings in this research.

Based on the findings of surveys, interviews, and ISAT data analysis, professional development resources offered by IRA and IRC to the reading specialists and literacy coaches should be uniformed and targeted to the needs of a metropolitan urban school district such as Chicago.

There is the need for CPS to put in place a district-wide uniform curriculum so that all teachers, instructors, and support groups do not operate at cross purposes when all students are assessed using the same instruments and standards. The ISAT examinations are uniformly taken
by third and eighth grade students, so the curriculum in reading should be harmonized to ensure uniformity. No school district in the United States has yet been able to achieve a well-defined curriculum, but if test scores are to improve—especially in reading—a unified and over-arching curriculum is *sine qua non* (Doyle, 2003). In fact, virtually all stakeholders in education have emphasized the need for uniformity in curriculum at the district level. Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York and Chancellor for New York State Higher Education Joel Kevin made the same call; Paul Vallas, Superintendent of CPS during the 1990s made the same call, so also Beverly Hall, Superintendent of Atlanta Public School Systems, and many more (Doyle, 2003). The New York City Department of Education, Los Angeles Unified Public School System, Chicago Public Schools, Miami-Dade, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Texas are some of the districts recognizing and emphasizing the advantages of unified curriculum at the district level (Doyle, 2003).

Some of the advantages of unified curriculum are continuity, consistency, intellectual coherence, appropriate scope, sequence, and assistance to disadvantaged minority students. Although some have argued that students have different learning styles and that curriculum uniformity will limit a teacher’s creativity, educational psychologists are divided on what essentially constitutes learning styles, with some arguing that there is no evidence for learning styles of students and the phrase learning preference would be most appropriate (Viadero, 2010). Consequently, a unified curriculum will end the controversy surrounding learning styles and learning preferences.

If ISAT test scores are the main strategies for appraising educational outcomes in the CPS, then it makes sense to re-emphasize once again the need for the content of the reading
curriculum in the district to become uniform because when curriculum reform consists of different content, then one uniform ISAT test will be an ineffective strategy for measuring educational outcomes. The professional resources offered by the IRA and IRC will be effective for reading specialists and literacy coaches if they are tailored to meet CPS and Illinois State learning standards.

Another recommendation for the stakeholders in CPS is the need to place more emphasis on remediation. When CPS began the CRI in 2001 and new reading specialists and literacy coaches were hired as part of its full implementation, some disadvantaged minority students in eighth grade who were lagging behind in performances were offered summer remedial programs. Known as the Step Up to High School program, its aim was to reduce the failure rate of eighth grade students in reading and also inculcate hopes of high school and college education into minority students. The program was an inquiry-based literacy program serving incoming freshmen who scored between the 35th and 49th percentile in reading in the seventh grade. The program’s components involved a four-week program beginning at the end of June 28 and running four hours a day with 90 minutes of reading instructions and 45 minutes of team building daily. The program was effective because CPS reported after July 2004 that:

Students who attended the Step Up to High School Program the previous year—2003—showed significantly lower rates of failure and those who attended said it afforded them the opportunity to make friends, increase the expectation of high schools and become familiar with the staff, teachers, fellow students and the curriculum. (CPS/CRI, 2010, p. 2)

If the Step Up to High School program was effective according to admission by the CPS, could the program be extended to all failing schools district-wide? This was exactly what the state of
Florida did during the same period when CPS was implementing its Step Up to High School program in 2003 (Chicago Public Schools, 2010).

Following the dismal performances of students in reading in many school districts across the United States in 2003, many school districts decided to introduce remedial programs for their third grade students (CBSTV, 2008). Many of the school districts targeted only students and schools having difficulties, but the state of Florida went a bit further by introducing statewide remedial programs targeted to disadvantaged minority students where all schools whose students participated in the state-administered standardized test, the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), were required to participate. The state set aside $25 million for the 2003 remedial program which became an annual program, as opposed to a one time program as seen in some school districts across the nation (CBSTV, 2008). The CPS needs to adopt the Florida Remediation Program.

The advantages of an annual, well-founded, and district-wide remedial program like Florida’s are many. For the students, a remedial program can reduce anxiety and instill confidence for taking standardized tests because there is adequate preparation as a result of more hours of instruction; encourages discipline; enhances reasoning abilities; teaches time management skills (necessary for standardized tests); and finally, helps students in seventh grade transitioning to eighth grade to acquire skills that will lead to successful transition into high school. Collegiality among teachers can also be increased.

As findings from the surveys and interviews with reading specialists and literacy coaches have shown, as less than 100% of the reading specialists maintained their memberships, the need for more money to be allocated to education in general and the money allocated to Reading First
in particular cannot be over-emphasized. Reading First is a pivotal area of the federal government’s No Child Left Behind program and every state and school districts are supposed to devote certain amounts of their annual budget to funding Reading First programs (Chicago Public Schools, 2010). However, there have been reports that some school districts have not been using the funds devoted to Reading First programs adequately and many school districts have diverted such funds to other uses (Berman, 2002). Shanahan sounded this alarm in 2002 while he was Director of Reading at CPS and implementing the school district’s CRI:

In these tight budget times, many states (and districts) are tempted to use Reading First as replacement money for current programs. The thinking goes something like, “If cuts have to be made, maybe we could cut the areas where federal money will be available—such as reading?” This is a bad idea given the narrow eligibility and accountability requirements of this law. The feds are not trying to shift reading responsibility from states and local districts to the federal government, but to supplement those local efforts with additional support so that real improvement is made in the neediest schools. Using Reading First money as a replacement for current efforts is unlikely to improve achievement and that may jeopardize future funds. (Berman, 2002, p. 2)

The financial situation in the CPS and funds meant for Reading First have since gone from bad to worse eight years after Shanahan gave those warnings. Budgets on virtually every areas of CPS have been slashed and re-slashed, and many teachers of reading, reading specialists, literacy coaches, and other professional and support groups vital to reading have been laid off in the district (Berman, 2002). While more reading specialists and literacy coaches should be hired and posted to low-achieving schools, with those in schools retained and given more incentives so teachers of reading can teach effectively so students would perform better in ISAT, the opposite has become the case (Berman, 2002).

This researcher believes there is no shortcut to achieving reading proficiency in third and eighth grades in CPS unless the school district commits more funds to the CRI and hires more
reading specialists and literacy coaches. Financial support must also be followed with emotional and administrative support because reading specialist and literacy coaches can do little if the school principals in their schools do not give them the support necessary to improve students’ performances as RS/LC 4 said:

“Personally, I didn’t feel I got the support that I needed and there were so many changes which the office of reading (did) . . . I was able to share them (professional development resources from IRA/IRC) with principals, two principals actually; you know I was at Coleman (Elementary School) also and I go to one school one week and alternate the other week. One principal was more progressive and more into research and best practices so I would give her articles that I thought she would be interested in but the other principal was more traditional so I basically used them for my own end basically to help teachers.”

The researcher will also recommend the need to maintain continuity in leadership both at CPS and CRI. Continuity in leadership here also refers to policy formulation and policy implementations. The different and changing news and information coming from CPS about schools to be closed and later to be reconstituted definitely affected the emotional and psychological mindsets of both teachers and students in those schools.

A case in point was Abbott Elementary School. In 2001, when reading specialists and literacy coaches were posted to the school, the new professionals did all they could to increase students performances in the meets and exceeds category of the ISAT. As disclosed by RS/LC 4 but this improvement did not impress the decision-makers at CPS who went ahead and announced the impending closure of the school. That was at a time the new reading specialists and literacy coaches were building capacity within the school and a new sense of confidence was being instilled into the students. In addition, a new school culture was evolving which needed time and patience to fully take root in this school made up of 99% African-Americans. Yet the CPS peremptorily announced it was closing the school. As RS/LC 4 who was one of the newly-
hired reading specialists at Abbott Elementary School at that time disclosed in an interview, “teacher morale fell and many of the students were crying.” The learning community at the school could not understand why CPS was closing the school at a time the school was likely to see a turnaround in student performances. It took protests by teachers, students, and parents to prevail on CPS to rescind its plan to close the school.

There should be more collaborative efforts between the IRA, IRC, and the CRI at both the institutional and professional levels. The lack of improvements in third and eighth grade student reading performances in the meets and exceeds category of the ISAT in the schools in this study showed that the group membership of both IRA and IRC for the pioneer reading specialists and literacy coaches did not change in subsequent years with group membership. Some of the reasons may be attributed to the lack of time needed for the literary coaches and reading specialists to adjust to the new school environment, lack of experience in adult coaching or the teachers of reading needed time to change their pedagogies through coaching by the reading specialists and literacy coaches.

The RS/LCs interviews for this research emphasized over and over again the invaluable help, assistance, and support received from membership in both professional organizations. As RS/LC 10 disclosed when asked if the resources provided by the IRA affected students’ performances:

“A lot of the strategies that were addressed that we brought back to the schools; I mean a lot of PD [professional development] and grade level development and there was a lot of modeling and coaching. Therefore, a lot of strategies that we gained when we went back into the classrooms; we modeled them and followed up on it [sic] then we used all those strategies in conferences.”
The survey also revealed the impact of the professional development resources gained by
the reading specialists and literacy coaches from their memberships in the IRA and IRC. Of the
93% of the reading specialists and literacy coaches surveyed and who identified themselves as
paid members of the IRA and IRC, 82% described the professional development resources they
gained from IRA and IRC as excellent and good, yet the data showed no statistical difference in
the ISAT test scores in meets and exceeds.

It may be difficult from this study to conclude that the lack of improvements in students' performances in ISAT meets and exceeds category between 2002 and 2004 could be attributed to lack of effective professional resources provided by the IRA and IRC to the reading specialists and literacy coaches in the schools understudy. However, it could be extrapolated that the professional development resources the IRA and IRC membership provided affected the performances of the reading specialists and literacy coaches who worked with the teachers of the third and eighth grade students to improve teacher's knowledge and pedagogy in the teaching of reading. Perhaps the improvements in students' performances expressed by the reading specialists and literacy coaches in the interviews only helped improve students' performances in the warning and below warnings categories in third and eighth grade students in ISAT instead of improvements in meets and exceeds category in ISAT between 2002 and 2004.

Finally, as Desimone (2009) stated, our conceptual framework regarding the impact of professional development on teachers’ effectiveness and students’ performances in standardized tests should not be based solely on interviews, surveys, and observations, but some features can be looked into when conducting research into professional development impact studies (p. 1811) Research has shown that continuous professional development for teachers can affect and impact
students’ performances (Desimone, Smith, Baker, & Ueno, 2005). While Desimone, Smith, Baker & Uno. (2005) have argued that measuring the impact of professional development on teachers’ teaching effectiveness—in this case reading specialists and literacy coaches—on student achievements in causal studies poses a difficult challenge in research, it is possible to use some core features of professional development to measure professional development impact on student performances such as coherence, duration, collective participation, content focus, and active learning. Perhaps the features of effective professional development listed above by Desimone, Smith, Baker, & Ueno, (2005) were lacking in the delivery of professional development resources by the literary coaches and reading specialists in this study.

RS/LC 8 explained the reasons CPS decided to purchase group memberships for the reading specialist and literacy coaches recruited for the CRI in 2001:

“There was no common language at the CPS. There were many lights, Christmas tree effects here and there, no strands, it was all individualized and we really needed something to bring us together, some common purpose and some common goals and sharing. Again it was the common language, somewhere, somehow for us to be together.”

As Desimone (2009) has pointed out, this need for collective participation and coherence by reading specialists and literacy coaches at CPS in 2001 was achieved through group memberships of IRA and IRC under the leadership of Shanahan. RS/LC 5 echoed the same need and how the professional development resources built a spirit of collegiality among the reading specialists and literacy coaches in CPS: “All the materials, I would take that and share them with my colleagues, share them with the principals, administrators and any one of my students.”

Unfortunately, these efforts did not translate into high student performances on ISAT meets and exceeds between 2002 and 2004.
In conclusion, this study will be a heuristic tool for further research into the impact of professional development on teaching and student achievements while the recommendations aforementioned are undoubtedly germane to turning around poor student performances in failing schools and how other stakeholders can be involved in improving student performances, not only on the ISAT, but in the CPS and other school districts across the nation.
References


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Appendix A: Information Letter for Participation in Research

Project

Title of Project: The Roles of Professional Organizations in the Effective Teaching of Reading in Selected Chicago Public Schools (CPS): Illinois Reading Council and International Reading Association as Case Studies

This study is being conducted by Margie Neal, an Ed. D student in Education and Organizational Leadership at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Ms. Neal and her advisor, Dr. Lizanne DeStefano are requesting your participation in a research project about the effectiveness of attending International Reading Association and Illinois Reading Council conferences and the effect it may have on reading scores in the Chicago Public Schools. Your participation is completely voluntary and they hope that the results of the research will be helpful for future research in the roles of professional organizations in selective Chicago Public Schools.

Please see more details noted below.

1. The approximate time to complete the questionnaire is about 20 minutes. Questionnaires will be provided to teachers wanting to participate in this research.

2. There are no foreseeable risks with this research. The main potential benefit is in contributing to additional knowledge on this topic that may be useful for improving the effectiveness of Reading Specialists/Literacy Coaches.

3. No cost or payment is associated with participating in the study.

4. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may terminate involvement at any time without penalty.

5. All the data will be kept confidential and secure. The questionnaire is carefully designed to limit any personal information.

6. All data is for research purposes only and will not affect your employment.

7. The results of the research may be shared in a journal article, dissertation or educational presentation.

8. If you have questions about the research, or you would like to receive a copy of the summary of findings of the study when it is complete, you can contact the researcher by calling Margie M. Neal at 773 660-8917 or email moonglories2@comcast.net, or Dr. Lizanne DeStefano at 217-333-3023 or email destefan@uiuc.edu.
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@uiuc.edu or the Bureau of Educational Research at arobrtsn@uiuc.edu.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Please put the completed questionnaire in the stamped, addressed envelope provided and place it in the mail.