ISSUES IN MAINTAINING A SISTER-SCHOOL COACHING COLLABORATIVE

BY

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DISSEION TATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction
in the Graduate College of
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of coaching as a form of professional development for classroom teachers is becoming more and more accepted. Knight (2009a) reminds us, "what coaching offers is authentic learning that provides differentiated support for professional learning" (p. 2). Approached from a sociocultural foundation of *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998a) this research study provides a lens into the practice of three elementary school instructional coaches working together as a collaborative unit. This work offers an in-depth understanding of how outside factors influenced the coaches’ negotiation of the multiple roles and responsibilities of their position. A case study approach was used in this year-long qualitative research project, focusing on the collaborative work of instructional coaches. In this study the researcher positioned herself as a potential change agent, approaching the research from an insider position.

The three coaches in this study worked together in a collaborative coaching unit, conceived of and created by their district administration. Each coach was housed on a daily basis in her own elementary building. Throughout the first year of the coaching collaborative coaches were responsible for providing professional development, focused on literacy instruction, to K-3 classroom teachers from the coaches' respective home schools. During the year of this study coaches' roles and responsibilities shifted as the district adopted new math and ELA curriculum and outside consultants became responsible for the professional development K-5. At the same time coaches’ focus on classroom instruction shifted significantly to support student testing as the district implemented a new nationally normed testing screener, as well as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test. Ultimately these outside factors, in addition to multiple interpretations of the coaching position by
administration, affected the coaches' ability to define their identity as coaches and as a collaborative unit.

This study shifts the focus of current coaching research from a results-based/outcomes approach to a focus on who coaches are as professionals, how they navigate outside influences, and the subsequent development of their identities as coaches. The implications call for understanding the need for instructional coaches to have access to collaborative processes that are both casual and formal. The study suggests that opportunities for coaches to convene on a regular basis to develop their coaching practice from a *professional learning community* (DuFour, 2004) stance would be beneficial on multiple levels. Additionally, this work revealed the need for coaches to gather on an informal basis to share coaching stories and offer support to one another. This new perspective on instructional coaching offers important information into the professional needs of coaches and ways in which administration can support their work.
This work is dedicated to my family for their constant love and support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my participants, Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn who allowed me to become the fourth member of their coaching collaborative for a year. I would like to recognize their immense talents and accomplishments, their extensive knowledge of instructional practices and their commitment to supporting teachers and students. I appreciate Jodi's enthusiasm for coaching, Carolyn's calm and lighthearted approach to her work, and Kaitlyn's quiet reflective nature. I sincerely enjoyed my time with this talented group of coaches. I would like to thank the district for allowing me to spend a year studying the work of this coaching collaborative.

I want to thank my amazing advisor and committee members. Professor Sarah McCarthey has been more than an advisor, she is a mentor, colleague, and friend. Without her guidance and support I never would have realized this accomplishment. To my committee, Associate Professor Karla Möller, Professor Marilyn Parsons, and Professor Lisa Monda-Amaya I thank you for your guidance. I owe my understanding of theory to Professor Möller, who initially introduced me to Etienne Wenger and Paulo Freire. Professor Parsons introduced me to the art of narrative academic writing and engaged me in conversations around teacher training and support that would later inform not only my research but my professional work as a district curriculum coordinator. I first met Professor Monda-Amaya through my work connected with The Center for Small Urban Communities, supporting the collaborative coaching work in the Champaign and Urbana schools. As a team, my committee members challenged me to focus my research and analysis in meaningful ways.

I would like to recognize my family and friends who have supported my many educational endeavors over the years. My husband, who always believes in me, is my rock and
my constant support. My daughter, a teacher herself, has been my quiet cheerleader. I so enjoy our conversations about her students' successes as she challenges herself to implement new and innovative instructional strategies. My dearest life-long friend Sue Grey who has stood by my side for over 40 years, thanks for always being there. My close friends and mentors Sunday Cummins, Haeny Yoon, and Grace Kang. Sunday and I have an extensive history working together supporting teacher practice. Our research work together in my third grade classroom strongly influenced my decision to apply to the PhD program at the U of I. Sunday also initially introduced me to Professor McCarthey, and for that I am forever grateful. Haeny Yoon and I met during her work at The Center for Small Urban Communities. We became colleagues in the workplace as well as on campus as candidates in the PhD program. I first met Grace Kang when she asked me to participate in one of her studies. We eventually became writing partners, keeping each other focused and accountable to our work.

Finally I would like to thank my father, August 11, 1926-March 5, 2009, who was a professor of civil engineering at the University of Illinois for over 40 years. His scholarly example and enthusiasm for teaching and learning were instrumental factors in my decision to pursue a career in education. His loyalty to the U of I was unrivaled. Growing up here in Champaign-Urbana I never imagined studying anywhere but at the University of Illinois. I know he is proud.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade coaching has surfaced as a promising form of embedded professional development (PD) in education (Knight, 2009a; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). While the concept of coaching itself is not new, Knight (2009a) refers to an "explosion" of recent national conference programs citing the word "coach" (p. 1). In one conference, for example, there was a 10-fold increase in the number of presentations that incorporated the word coach, coaching, or coaches into their titles.

As school districts become more and more pressured to produce increased test scores, educators are striving for more targeted teacher support grounded in research-based, classroom instructional practices. Coaching has the potential to support such an initiative. Hawley and Valli (1999) contend that with advances in expectations in global knowledge, higher standards for education and student learning have surfaced. In keeping with this philosophy Borko and Putnam (1995) contend,

Virtually all reform efforts are calling for changes in our education system that will help students to develop rich understandings of important content, think critically, construct and solve problems, synthesize information, invent, create, express themselves proficiently, and leave school prepared to be responsible citizens and lifelong learners (p. 132).

As a result of this proposed perspective on student education, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) focus on the need for teachers to be able to address curricular content from positions of problem-solving, higher-order questioning, and the ability to both think about and understand concepts flexibly and critically. They contend that this new approach to thinking about
curriculum must at the same time facilitate a new way of teaching and learning; thus there is need for continuing PD embedded into teachers' daily routines and grounded in a model of ongoing support. Knight and van Nieuwerburgh (2012) believe that instructional coaching, viewed as a powerful strategy for supporting both teacher and student learning, is the potential answer to questions and issues around successfully supporting teachers with continuing PD.

**Defining Coaching**

Current research on coaching presents several different approaches and models to include, literacy coaching, cognitive coaching, content coaching, and instructional coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Knight, 2009a; Sweeney, 2011; Toll, 2009; West & Cameron, 2013). Each coaching model is tailored to provide instructional support with specific outcomes in mind and each definition has its own nuances and interpretations. Sailors and Shanklin (2010) broadly define coaching as,

sustained classroom-based support from a qualified and knowledgeable individual who models research based strategies and explores with teachers how to incorporate these practices using the teacher’s own students—within the need for viable means of professional development for classroom teachers that lead to improved schooling for children (p. 1).

Poglinco and Bach (2004) offer a similar definition focused on embedded teacher support offered by a teacher leader. They explain coaching as, "a process whereby seasoned teachers provide instructional support, PD opportunities, feedback, and materials to classroom teachers – as a central means to improve instruction and build the capacity of school staff members" (p.398).
Throughout the research, definitions of coaching present several philosophies of this embedded support. Studies that approach coaching from a teacher leader perspective focus on encouraging best practice with the ultimate intention of increasing student knowledge (Biancarosa & Byrk, 2011; Foltos, 2015; IRA, 2010; Knight, 2009; Steiner & Kowal, 2015). In these cases the coaches' primary role is to provide PD. Research also supports an understanding of coaching as a potential force in implementing and supporting systemic change in schools and across districts (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). From this perspective coaches are intimately involved in school reform projects and act as change agents.

Knight (2009b) specifically focuses on the work of instructional coaching. He approaches the definition of instructional coaching from a detailed descriptive stance. He presents an initial theory of partnership stating, "ICs partner with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices into their teaching" (p. 30). He then expands on his statement, detailing the characteristics of strong instructional coaches.

They are skilled communicators, or relationship builders, with a repertoire of excellent communication skills that enable them to empathize, listen, and build trusting relationships...Instructional coaches deeply understand many scientifically proven instructional practices...ICs help teachers choose appropriate approaches to teaching for the different kinds of learning students are experiencing (pp. 30-31).

Processing through the many titles of and definitions for coaching it becomes increasingly apparent that the lines are blurred. This blurring of titles and definitions often creates confusion around the roles and responsibilities of coaches resulting in a less impactful position (Toll, 2009). Steiner and Kowal (2015) argue that there are significant variations in the interpretation and implementation of coaching as well as variations in hiring practices,
qualification expectations, purposes for implementing a coaching program, and responsibilities that coaches may be asked to perform. They contend, "There is not a standard model or uniform definition of an instructional coach" (p. 2).

   What the research does agree on is the need to continue the work of coaches in an effort to provide administrators, teachers, and ultimately students with embedded instructional support. Lieberman and Miller (2007) state, "The need for continuous professional development of teachers may be one of the few areas in which policymakers, researchers, professional associations, the public, and school personnel all agree" (p. 99).

**Why Coaches as Professional Development?**

   Until recently PD programs and protocols have concentrated on "one-shot workshops" (Knight, 2009, p. 1). During such PD sessions, teachers are imparted with information about instructional practices; however, one of the downfalls of this format is that teachers do not receive follow-up support. In a five-year longitudinal study of PD implementation practices, Bush (1984) determined the rate of informational transfer into classroom practices following an isolated PD workshop to be 10%. On the other hand when teachers are supported with workshop models of PD where there are opportunities for modeling, practice, feedback, and future embedded classroom support by way of an instructional leader, the transfer is lifted to 95%.

   Coaches can play key roles in supporting a school community of learners as well as building capacity within and beyond district level partnerships. Killion (2009) defines ten roles of coaching that are supported across literature and research: data coach, resource provider, mentor, curriculum specialist, instructional specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner. At issue here is the fact that one coach alone cannot perform all ten of the defined coaching roles let alone half of them and do them well.
Walpole and McKenna (2013) remark, "We don't know any individual coaches who can do all of these things! We can't do them all ourselves" (p. 12). It is with this in mind that Killion (2009) reminds coaches to maintain a clear focus for targeted support throughout their schedule.

Without a clear framework for their day, coaches find that their time is fragmented. When coaches’ work is so expansive, the potential exists that coaches will take on too many roles and, as a result, dilute the impact of their work (p. 9).

While each definition of coach has its own nuances, overall researchers agree with the broad statements defining coaches and their work. Across the research on coaching there is a commonality supported by a deeper understanding of providing teachers with proven successful PD opportunities. Professional development components that resonate in the research as impactful include: school-based, embedded, collaborative, teacher and student focused, and data driven. When PD models incorporate classroom support provided by a coach, partnering to offer assistance with curriculum implementation and instructional practices, both teacher and student benefit. Regardless of the multiple definitions and explanations of coaching, the work of coaches serves to support teachers in refining their teaching practice with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.

**Statement of the Problem**

Regardless of the myriad of research that supports definitions of the various roles and responsibilities of coaches, the negotiation of an individual coaching identity is complex. Rainville and Jones (2008) state, "like all social practices, coaching is situated and will take on new and different relational dynamics in different contexts" (p. 440). Coaches need time to individually and collaboratively reflect on their practice. Feger, Woleck, and Hickman (2004) suggest that coaches "objectively reflect on their own coaching work, to examine the coaching
strategies they use and the effects on teacher growth, progress over time, the work's overall focus, and next steps for their work" (p. 17). This ability to understand the dynamics of various coaching interactions within diverse social contexts takes time and support.

Hunt and Handsfield (2013) attempt to move research beyond the roles and responsibilities of coaches by focusing on the social complexity of coaching to include the emotional and political positioning of coaches. They contend that when we understand the issues of power, identity, and political positioning we can begin to support the PD needs of coaches that in turn will produce an overall productive approach to school based PD and increased success for student achievement.

Recent emphasis in coaching research, although scarce, focuses on the needs of the coach as learner and reflective practitioner (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008). Because coaches are expected to support teachers with research-based strategies that are ultimately responsible for student achievement, time for their own PD and reflection must be a priority (IRA, 2010; Knight, 2009; Walpole & McKenna, 2013). As an example, Walpole and McKenna (2013) contend that literacy coaches must understand the developmental process of reading and writing itself in order to support teachers in appropriate PD opportunities that will move their practice forward. With this in mind Walpole and McKenna call for "a substantial and permanent commitment" (p. 3) by coaches to engage in ongoing professional learning. However, without administrative support this becomes a difficult challenge.

**Administrative Interpretations of Coaching Roles and Responsibilities**

Research on coaching embraces the idea that a shift toward supporting coaches more fully will have to include a deeper understanding on the part of administration regarding not only
the roles and responsibilities of coaches but what it means to be a coach in a broader sense. Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, and Zigmond (2010) contend that "coaches vary greatly in how they view and implement their role, and such variation is influenced by contextual and administrative factors" (p. 90). Foltos (2015) states, "Successful coaches know their effectiveness in collaborating with peers to improve teaching and learning hinges on the support of principals who control the budget and other key resources" (p. 49).

Administrative support is identified in the coaching research as a critical component to the success of coaching programs (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Pankake & Moller, 2007). Neufeld and Roper (2003) state, "It is up to the district to make clear to principals what is and is not acceptable for them to assign as coach work, and the district must hold principals accountable for maintaining those guidelines" (p. 18). Coaches and principals must work together collaboratively, creating action plans that support teachers and coaches in the understanding and implementation of research-based instructional practices (Pankake & Moller, 2007).

**Negotiating Curriculum Support and Implementation**

What education experienced in the 20th century was a system that relied heavily on a bureaucratic notion that achievement would increase as a result of prescribed curricula, along with textbooks and tests. The underlying assumption was that if these prescribed processes were carried out in an efficient manner, student achievement would rise (Darling-Hammond, 2009).

With this historic perspective in mind, it will be increasingly important for coaches to take their collaborative experiences and pedagogical understandings and translate them into PD opportunities that are meaningful for classroom teachers. In an educational world
challenged by continuous testing, boxed programs, and scripted curricula coaches face many challenges.

The work of Au (2012) reminds us, "Whether they are student teachers or classroom veterans, the refrain they hear from district, state, and federal officials has been maddeningly consistent these last years: more standards, more tests, more pacing guides, more scripted instruction, more administrative threats" (p. 30). These are the daily challenges that coaches face as they attempt to negotiate both support for classroom teachers concerning curricular and student needs, and the demands of district mandates regarding implementation of adopted curriculum.

Research Implications

Coaching research in general is sparse and somewhat disjointed. Research focused on understanding the comprehensive nature of coaching as a practice is virtually non-existent. At a time when administrators are pushing for evidence of correlations between coaching and teacher shifts as well as student achievement, additional research that brings a more inclusive view of coaching would be beneficial. The work of Hunt and Handsfield (2013) as well as Rainville and Jones (2008) allows us a glimpse of the importance of such work.

There is a need for further research in the area of coaching, specifically focused on how coaches negotiate outside influences and how those influences affect the development of coaches' identities. A deeper understanding of the coach-administrator relationship and outside influences at the district, state, and national level would benefit our understanding of how to effectively prepare and support coaches. Because the practice of coaching is often isolated, information regarding the power of collaborative processes among coaches would
benefit districts in the development of supportive coaching teams. Coaching is more than addressing the needs of classroom teachers; a broader base of research will bring a greater understanding of the practice as whole.

**Purpose of the Study**

In response to the need for research focused on coaches and their practice from a holistic perspective I studied three coaches, connected through their interactions as participants in a district initiated coaching collaborative. The purpose of this study was to understand how instructional coaches’ collaborative experiences supported them in developing a deeper understanding of coaching as a practice. I particularly focused on the coaches’ interactions during collaboration as well as during PD sessions with classroom teachers. In this way I was able to document their development of identities as individual coaches and as a collaborative unit.

As the coaches struggled to negotiate multiple coaching identities and solidify their work as a collaborative unit, I observed how outside influences created additional complexity to the dimensions of coaching and affected their interpretation of and ability to collaborate effectively. As a result of this process I was able to better understand the struggle that coaches encounter in defining themselves as coaches within the school system as a whole.

In the future it will be important to build on the work of collaboration among coaches as a vehicle for supporting coaches within professional learning communities. Of particular importance will be the need to acknowledge and understand that PD providers, particularly instructional coaches, struggle with issues of identity, power, and positioning (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). My goal is to create a vision for how these new understandings translate
beyond coaches' work within coaching collaboratives to their positions within the field of education, within the political, environmental, and administrative contexts they face.

**Research Questions**

In order to understand how coaches' participation in a collaborative community influenced their definition of personal identity as well as their understandings of collaboration, I pose three questions:

1. What is the nature of a sister-school professional development collaborative?
   A. What do the three coaching participants bring to the coaching collaborative?
   B. What do the coaches value?
   C. How did the coaches develop relationships with one another?

2. How did the coaches construct their identities during collaborative interactions?

3. How did external factors influence coaches' identities?

**Overview of Chapters**

**Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

In this chapter I present a theoretical framework grounded in a socio-cultural approach to our understanding of education. I then present effective models of PD framed around adult learning theory (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986). Key components to successful PD models are reviewed. I present the research on coaching as a means of PD highlighting roles and responsibilities of coaches, the impact of coaching on student learning and teacher practice, issues of power and positioning, and the importance of administrative support. Finally I present a theory of collaboration based on an understanding of communities of practice and the development of knowledge as situated (Bruner, 1990; Wenger, 1998a).
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In Chapter three the foundational information for the research design and methodology as well as support for a case study approach to this work is presented. I develop an historical context for the study, presenting the history and development of coaching at the research site. I explain the concept of coaching collaboratives as a model of coaching support across the school district. I summarize the PD support model implemented at the research site. The participants are introduced and methods for data collection and analysis are discussed. I present my position as researcher and briefly discuss the potential implications of my position. Finally I present my research questions.

Chapter 4: Coaches and the Collaborative Context

Chapter four opens with an in depth look at my personal history with coaching at the research site and an insiders’ perspective on the initial inception and implementation of coaching collaboratives. I then dive deeply into the personalities of the three participant coaches presenting their histories in the field of education, their coaching philosophies, as well as their individual strengths and personal goals. Finally I present the coaches as a collaborative unit and begin to address the nature of their collaborative. This discussion focuses on the development of trusting, respectful relationships built on the coaches’ core values regarding educational practices.

Chapter 5: Identity under Construction

In Chapter five I focus on the coaches and their individual and collective identities. I explain the shift in their positioning during PD as a result of outside forces and the implementation of new protocols. I discuss the ways that this new format for the delivery of PD created tension for the coaches as they negotiated between expert and co-learner. I develop an
understanding of the how these coaches negotiated multiple roles and responsibilities as a result of outside influences and the effect on their collaborative process. In closing I present the coaches' perspectives on the benefits of the coaching collaboration despite a lack of focus due to outside influences.

Chapter 6: Outside Influences that Impact and Frame Coaching Identities

In this chapter I focus on three outside influences that directly affected the coaches as they attempted to negotiate their individual and collective identities: (a) their relationships with administration along with administrative job interpretations and requests, (b) the amount of time, energy, and stress that test administration and support added to their job, and (c) the new curriculum adoption and implementation. I discuss the importance of a clear administrative vision of coaching at all levels and the implications for effective coaching in light of administrative support or lack thereof. I close by presenting the coaches' overall reflections on their year and their goals for the future.

Chapter 7: Summary and Implications

In closing I synthesize the findings of this study. I present an understanding of the nature of the coaching collaborative and discuss what the coaches valued, what individual strengths they brought to the collaborative and how they developed relationships with one another as a result. I discuss the construction of individual identities as well as their identity as a collaborative unit. I review outside influences that affected the development of their coaching identities and their work as a collaborative. I reflect on my role as researcher/change agent and potential implications for analysis of the findings. Implications for both coaches and administration are presented in light of the findings. Limitations of the study are presented.
Finally, I discuss the significance that this study holds and the needs of future research surrounding coaching.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I define key terms that will be used throughout the study. I then present a theoretical framework for understanding professional development (PD) and the work of school-based coaches. I frame the study outlining effective models of PD and key components that drive success. I review the literature on coaching as a model of PD, defining the various perspectives on roles and responsibilities as well as the impact that coaching potentially has (or not) on student learning and teachers' classroom practices. I discuss the political issues of coaching and the issues of power, positioning and identity. Finally I explore a framework for communities of practice as a medium for PD.

Key Terms and Definitions

The following definitions are presented as a means to ensure common understandings of key terminology.

- Coaching – a developmental process in education where one person (typically a teacher) is supported by an "expert other" while achieving new instructional competencies.

- Collaborative – a particular set of named individuals working together toward and achieving shared goals.

- Collaboration – a team of people, in this case instructional coaches, "...working together to create a shared vision, mission, and purpose, as well as collaborative ways to accomplish their goals" (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, p. 6).

- Learning Community – a group of people who typically share common values or beliefs and are actively engaged in learning together.
• Networks – The interconnection of people or systems allowing for the exchange of information. A set of actors and the direct or indirect ties that exist among them (de Lima, 2010).

• Professional development (PD) – Teacher learning opportunities to include but not limited to college coursework, professional learning communities, book clubs, and coaching preferably situated in practice.

• Sister-School Coaching Collaborative – The title given to the elementary school coaching partnerships in this study. This concept will be explained in detail in Chapter 3.

**A Socio-Cultural Approach to Learning**

The work of teaching is, for the most part, still considered an isolated event. Teachers remain behind "closed" doors, individually responsible for the academic success of their students. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) remind us, "As a profession, teaching is primarily defined by what teachers do when they are not with other teachers" (p. 301). Teachers are evaluated individually and teacher contracts are developed based on individual teaching hours and release time. "In fact, when teachers are out of their classrooms or talking to other teachers, they are often perceived by administrators, parents, and sometimes even by teachers themselves as not working" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, p. 301). These researchers further contend that this isolation cannot always be blamed on outside perceptions. Often teachers protect their isolation as a means to safeguard themselves from revealing potential failures or uncertainties. Likewise, as a profession, teachers are not encouraged to openly discuss frustrations, failures, or concerns. The veteran teacher is often looked up to and considered the expert purely based on seniority.
The isolation of teaching is not a natural human state nor one that facilitates growth for teachers or students. Bruner (1990) refers to the development of culture as a result of the symbolic systems used by individuals to construct meaning. The process of constructing these meanings is a direct reflection of the community in which we participate. Without this participation and construction of meaning we are as Geertz (1973) describes, "incomplete."

Wenger (1998a) contends that we are social beings. By social he means that people have specific ways of engaging with the world, "concerned with everyday activity and real-life settings, but with an emphasis on the social systems of shared resources by which groups organize and coordinate their activities, mutual relationships, and interpretations of the world" (p. 13). Similarly, Bruner (1990) argues that meaning is created by the participants in social situations based on the dialogue that has taken place in advance, in the moment, as well as after the encounter. Adults learn and construct meaning across multiple settings, activities, and circumstances while connecting with numerous communities of people (Brown & Duguid, 2000; Richardson, 1997; Smylie, 1995).

With this in mind it is our cultural contexts that shape our understandings of particular situations and bring meaning to events (Bruner, 1990). Our cultural interactions shape who we are, how our lives transpire as well as how our minds develop (Bruner, 1990; Wertsch, 1991). Bruner defines our behaviors as "situated action – action situated in a cultural setting, and in the mutually interacting intentional states of the participants" (p. 19). Wertsch refers to cultural interactions as "situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (p. 15). In thinking about the classroom, the school, and the PD opportunity as "situated" it is important to keep in mind that this is a cultural setting to be navigated. It is an institution with its own history.
Likewise each individual involved in that setting holds a personal understanding of "self" as situated within that framework from a particular lens.

**Social Influences on Identity**

In understanding the impact of identity in education it is important to consider social and cultural forces acting upon the development of individual identity. Britzman (2003) contends that identity in education reveals a struggle for voice within the "institutional structures, biography, and emotions" (p. 22). She continues, "The struggle for voice is a struggle for narrative, not authenticity or adaptation into a preexisting identity" (p. 22). This claim is supported by the work of Mishler (1999) who presents an argument for narrative as a vehicle for realizing identity. He proposes, "culturally defined categories, repertoires, and trajectories for identity are 'realized' by individuals in various ways" (p. 51). Thus identity is a product of our narratives and the ways in which we present ourselves in particular contexts. He states, "narrative accounts are not simply expressions of a story, the *one* true story already and always inside the person. Rather, all 'stories' are situated retellings" (p. 51). In this way personal narratives become a "particularly significant genre for representing identity and its multiple guises in different discursive contexts" (Mishler, 1999, p.111).

Clarke (2007) presents a model for understanding what he refers to as "identity work" (p. 187). In his work he claims that teacher identity is ongoing along four "ethico political axes" (p. 191). In developing identity teachers must consider: (a) their "intellectual and emotional" (p. 191) being, (b) issues of "power and politics" (p. 191), (c) their "knowledge and thinking" (p. 191) and finally (d) their ultimate objective or aim which Clarke names the "telos" (p. 191) of teacher identity. In his work Clarke argues that identity is "relational" (p.192). For example, "being recognized" (p. 192) by students as a teacher is crucial to the development of teacher
identity. This stance in recognizing identity as relational and contingent upon how others view individual identity can be applied to the relationships that coaches develop with teachers and administrators.

It is important to realize that identities are both developed and "assigned" (Clarke, 1999, p. 186). Lin (2008a) contends the study and use of identity to frame social encounters must not fall victim as "just another chic term" (p. 2). She addresses the importance of understanding how dominant cultures have the power to impose identities on less dominant participants. In this way individuals run the risk of having identities "forced" (p. 2) upon them. She suggests that participants focus on the social nature of their identities, asking,

Who I am or what I make out my identity to be (to myself and others) at a certain moment (which can be relatively transient or lengthened) seems to be always situated in a consideration of where I am speaking from and to whom (Lin, 2008b, p. 203).

In this way, as individuals, we must be responsible for our identity formation and the communities in which we participate as potentially influencing our identity (Britzman, 2004; Clarke, 1999; Wenger, 1998a). This identity formation is "intimately related to the discourses and the communities that we work within" (Clarke, 1999, p. 187). Wenger (1998a) contends that education itself is a place where individuals must "strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self" (p. 263). He believes that the development of identity formation becomes "a lifelong process whose phases and rhythms change as the world changes" (Wenger, 1998a, p. 263).

Social Influences on Communities

As social beings we are surrounded by communities of practice. Throughout our lifetime we will belong to multiple communities of practice ourselves which will inevitably change and
impact us along the way (Wenger, 1998a). However, Wenger clearly states that these communities are different from interest groups or geographical communities. Those groups do not imply a shared "practice" (Wenger, 1998b, p. 2). A community of practice is defined by Wenger as a joint enterprise that is constantly renegotiated through the mutual engagement of relationships and shared repertoire, developed over time by the members. Wenger believes that our participation in these communities is key to our learning and knowing about the world we live in. He states that for individuals, communities, and organizations alike this holds particular meaning and responsibilities.

- For **individuals**, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities.
- For **communities**, it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members.
- For **organizations**, it means that learning is an issue of sustaining interconnected communities of practice through which an organization knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valued as an organization (Wenger, 1998a, p. 7, 8)

Originally conceived by Lave and Wenger (1991) for analytical purposes, Wenger (2006) makes it clear that to simply gather as a group is not to become a community of practice.

The term community of practice was coined to refer to the community that acts as a living curriculum for the apprentice. Once the concept was articulated, we started to see these communities everywhere, even when no formal apprenticeship system existed. And of course, learning in a community of practice is not limited to novices. The practice of a community is dynamic and involves learning on the part of everyone (p. 3).
Rogoff (1994) interprets learning in communities as "a process of transformation of participation itself" (p. 209). She argues that as people participate in activities within communities they begin to understand themselves and the role they play as a social being. In this way learning is seen as a social process not merely information to be gleaned from an expert other at a particular time and place (Brown & Duguid, 2000; Rogoff, 1994). Communities of practice offer opportunities for multiple social experiences including participation in storytelling, conversation, coaching, and apprenticeship (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

This idea of participation is key to the learning environment and outcomes within the communities. At the inception of a new community it is critical that the participants believe they have enough common ground to stay connected, moving forward in ways that are valuable and meaningful to all. Value lies not only in what we think of as "tangibles" (p. 15) but often in what we define as "intangibles" (p. 15) such as relationship building, a sense of belonging, a passion for the inquiry process, and self confidence as a result of positive interactions (Wenger et al., 2002).

Applications to Education

In applying this theoretical perspective to education we must bear in mind that "changing the learning theory is a much deeper transformation. This will inevitably take longer" (Wenger, 2006, p. 4). This perspective of learning and education challenges both the practicing classroom teacher and PD provider because it views learning not as information to be handed out, taken in, and neatly stored. This focus on knowledge as opposed to information creates a shift in the way we approach PD (Brown & Duguid, 2000). Allowing teachers to be situated in just such an environment may begin to break the barriers of isolation and pool the resources of novice and veteran teachers alike, creating positive learning situations for both students and teachers.
Educators are challenged to perceive of the development of *knowledge* as opposed to *information*. Brown and Duguid (2000) define information as "self-contained" (p. 120) whereas knowledge must involve a "knower" (p. 119). "That is, where people treat information as independent and more-or-less self sufficient, they seem more inclined to associate knowledge with someone" (p. 119). Therein lies the connection to the social aspects of learners and the need for communities of learners to engage in practices that allow its members to not merely acquire new information but to create new knowledge by the processes in which the information is assimilated over time (Brown & Duguid, 2000).

At the same time, Brown and Duguid (2000) argue that "While knowledge is often not all that hard to search, it can be difficult to retrieve, if by *retrieve* people mean detach from one knower and attach to another" (p. 124). They contend that there is a progression from knowledge to practice to groups of practitioners suggesting again the need for communities of practice and effective models of PD.

**Effective Models of Professional Development**

In an effort to understand and reveal effective characteristics of various PD models, Guskey (2003) reviewed 13 different lists from various resources across the country. In his review he argues that the models "vary widely and that the research that supports them is inconsistent and often contradictory" (p. 748). His analysis is grounded in the fact that the research "typically involves surveys of the opinions of researchers and educators. In other words, researchers and practitioners generally favor these characteristics and believe they are important, despite the lack of verifying evidence" (Guskey, 2003, p. 749). Perhaps his strongest argument concerns the lack of research that links teacher PD success specifically to successful student outcomes. He states,
In considering their development, I concluded that most of the lists could be described as 'research-based.' But that research rarely includes rigorous investigations of the relationship between the noted characteristics and improvements in instructional practice or student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2003, p. 749).

Guskey (1986) presents a model of teacher change grounded in a change in student learning. The model presents four key steps in achieving both change in student learning and shifts in teacher beliefs and attitudes. Initially teachers experience a form of staff development that propels them to attempt changes in their classroom practice. These changes in practice must result in change in student learning outcomes in order for teachers' belief systems and attitudes to change as well. Teachers themselves must experience the change in student learning in order to fully realize the impact of their pedagogical moves. This realization in turn solidifies their beliefs and attitudes about the new practice.

Desimone (2009) addresses Guskey's (1986) concerns regarding student achievement and embraces the core concepts of solid PD opportunities. She combines both central components of effective PD and components that are tied to theories of how PD influences both teacher and student outcomes. While Guskey's (2003) argument for inconsistency and variety is compelling, what it calls for, perhaps as Desimone (2009) suggests, is a different perspective on viewing the results. While student outcomes must be the ultimate goal, I also believe that it is important to ask if the key factors that are surfacing in the research might imply a shift in student outcomes due to the nature of the shifts in teachers' belief systems.

In support of Desimone's (2009) work Crawford, Killingsworth-Roberts, and Hickman (2008) asked teachers to reflect in a summative survey at the end of a three-year study using open-ended questions. In response to the question, "What did you like about participating in the
professional development program?” (p. 94) participants overwhelmingly responded that they appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues.

Joyce and Showers (2002) build a case for a philosophy of staff development to enhance teacher growth and student achievement. They name four essential elements that must be the focus if student achievement is to be the ultimate outcome.

1. A community of professionals comes together who study together, put into practice what they are learning, and share the results.

2. The content of staff development develops around curricular and instructional strategies selected because they have a high probability of affecting student learning – and, as important, student ability to learn.

3. The magnitude of change generated is sufficient that the students' gain in knowledge and skill is palpable. What is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school have to change to the degree that the increase in student ability to learn is manifest.

4. The processes of staff development enable educators to develop the skill to implement what they are learning. (p. 4)

The challenge for educators is to think beyond the confines of the classroom, the building, and themselves to embrace information processes and learning structures as a community endeavor. In this way Wenger's theory of learning defies the isolation of the typical classroom as well as the typical PD model. With this in mind Kahan (2004) argues for Wenger's perspective,

Many associations recognize that the old model of learning is fading. Professionals often resist attending old-style learning events that promise a lineup of the latest gurus.
dispensing knowledge...Many would say that – in addition to having access to relevant, timely information – people also want an 'experience,' and that experience often involves feeling like an integral part of a community rather than feeling like a student attending a lecture (Kahan, 2004, p. 31).

At issue, in part, is the fact that most U.S. adults were raised under the old format of an "adult-run" model of instruction. This model is in direct conflict with a "communities of learners" approach (Rogoff, 1994).

Many middle-class US adults have 'grown up' with models of how people learn that are based on ideas of learners acquiring or experts transmitting pieces of knowledge, and they often seem to have difficulty understanding a participation perspective like that embodied in the idea of a community of learners (Rogoff, 1994, p. 209).

**Professional Development as Shared Responsibility**

The work of Dewey (1933) reminds us "there is danger of the isolation of intellectual activity from the ordinary affairs of life. Teacher and student alike tend to set up a chasm between logical thought, as something abstract and remote, and the specific and concrete demands of everyday events" (p. 62). Dewey calls for us to recognize our purpose within the larger society and to be responsible to that end.

Education must provide for the development of the individual and for his participation in society. It cannot do this by neglecting individuality by forcing rigid patterns of socially approved behavior upon him, for if it does it will prevent him from being creative, and hence block the only avenue for his eventual contribution to the society (Dewey, 1964, p. xxi).
And still the issue of teacher isolation remains (Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2009) as well as sheer lack of opportunity for PD (Joyce, Bush, & McKibbin, 1981; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Joyce et al. (1981) state that the average staff development in-service teachers receive is less than 3 days per school-year. Hargreaves (1995) states,

To understand teacher development at the turn of the millennium is to understand it in a peculiarly exhilarating and terrifying time of accelerating change, intense compression of time and space, cultural diversity, economic flexibility, technological complexity, organizational fluidity, moral and scientific uncertainty, and national insecurity (A. Hargreaves, 1994). Only when we know what learning is for or what people think it is for can we know and imagine what teacher development might be for. This is why critical judgments about the changing social context of learning are so central to the teacher development agenda (p. 13).

The PD growth processes discussed by multiple researchers are grounded in collaboration and collegiality (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Heibert & Morris, 2012; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Little, 2007). I believe that the development of collaboration and community are key to the future of successful PD in education. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1999) state, "A phenomenon little appreciated in earlier eras of school reform is that professional communities are key agents in shaping teachers' norms and knowledge and in sustaining change" (p. 381).

In their work on learning communities Lieberman and Miller (2011) state, "Learning communities create and maintain an environment that fosters collaboration, honest talk, and commitment to the growth and development of individual members and to the group as a whole"
McCarthey, Woodard, and Kang (2011) report that teachers' perceptions of PD were most positive when it allowed them opportunities to develop relationships with both peers and providers.

**Key Components That Drive Successful Professional Development**

In keeping with Joyce and Showers' (2002) approach, there are several key factors in the research that surface with regularity, are relevant to this study, and that merit consideration in continuing to fine tune PD. Those factors include, (a) working relationships including developing community with colleagues, (b) content-driven programs (c) authentic work viewed as connected and embedded in every day practices, (d) focus on duration as opposed to one shot opportunities, (e) active engagement during developmental opportunities, and (f) opportunities for ongoing continued support.

**Communities of collaboration and working relationships.** An overarching concept that surfaces in the research is the notion of collaborative communities and the importance of the development of positive working relationships within PD communities. Professional development participants are viewed as benefiting from an atmosphere where teachers are encouraged to foster discussions around teaching practices (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Borko, 2004; Crawford et al., 2008; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Jaquith, Mindich, Chung Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010; Levine, 2010; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Youngs, Holdgreve-Resendez, & Qian, 2011).

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) believe that in order to best serve teachers' needs, opportunities for sharing, engaging in cooperative experiences, and reflecting together as professionals are necessary in a strong PD program. "Structures that break down isolation, that empower teachers with professional tasks, and that provide arenas for thinking through standards
of practice are central to this kind of professional growth” (p. 84). Darling-Hammond and
McLaughlin call for multiple forms of collaboration to include, school-university partnerships,
teacher-to-teacher and school-to-school partnerships, school and neighborhood partnerships, as
well as teacher partnerships with district, regional, and national programs. These collaborative
forums are all relevant within a coaching collaborative setting.

**Content driven development embedded in authentic activities.** The feature that
surfaces nearly as often as collaborative communities is PD that is clearly connected and driven
by curriculum content (Birman et al., 2000; Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al.,
2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Heibert & Morris, 2012; Wayne, Yoon,
Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). At the same time these activities must be authentic and meaningful
(Birman et al., 2000; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Jaquith et al., 2010; Wayne et al.,
2008; Youngs et al., 2011). Meaningful activities are critical in an era where teachers are being
overwhelmed by new curriculum and boxed programs seen as a quick fix to raising test scores
and supporting struggling readers.

Garet et al. (2001) warn that content must be interpreted in multiple ways if researchers
are to gain meaningful data. These researchers state, "The available descriptive research
suggests that the content covered during professional development activities varies along at least
four dimensions” (p. 923). These dimensions include: subject matter and teaching methods,
changes in teaching practice that may revolve around new curriculum, goals for student learning,
and the ways students may learn particular subjects (Garet et al., 2001). In their work reviewing
the research on PD Wayne et al. (2008) determined that programs that focus on content
knowledge of the curriculum and how the students actually learn subject matter tend to show
greater influence than those focusing on teachers' behaviors in presenting that content itself.
In their study of novice teachers and work with mentors, Youngs et al. (2011) reveal that when content and district curriculum were aligned with PD, the quality of teaching was enhanced. I believe an additional advantage to this philosophy is that new teachers will not only benefit from the increased knowledge in their pedagogical practice but they may be more inclined to remain in the profession when supported with collaborative PD opportunities.

In their national survey of over 1,000 teachers who participated in the Eisenhower Professional Development Program sponsored by the federal government, Birman et al. (2000) identified content focus and coherence with curriculum standards as two of three core features characterizing a successful program. Birman et al. recommend reform activities (defined for example as mentoring, coaching, and PLC's) because the longer duration naturally lends itself to more time for content focus and coherence. "Teachers do not find generic professional development that focuses on teaching techniques without emphasizing content to be effective" (Birman et al., p. 30). These researchers show, "In our study, the coherence of professional development with policies and other professional experiences is directly related to increased teacher learning and improved classroom practice" (p. 30).

**Duration envisioned as long-lasting to include ongoing support.** Professional development opportunities that invite teachers to participate in regular, frequent, ongoing work are viewed as more beneficial (Birman et al., 2000; Borko, 2004; Crawford et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 1986; Jaquith et al., 2010; Joyce & Showers, 1988). In particular Desimone (2009) sums up research stating, "Research shows that intellectual and pedagogical change requires PD activities to be of sufficient duration, including both span of time over which the activity is spread and the number of hours spent in the activity" (p. 184)
In their work to develop "Master Teachers" (p. 92) over the course of a three-year PD plan Crawford et al. (2008) realize overwhelming success. The key here might well be the longevity of the program. At the end of the program one teacher remarked, "[I have] confidence and validation to try new ideas based on research and a philosophy for learning rather than [on] a mixture of activities that have no common thread" (p. 94). I believe that a common thread can only be woven through PD activities and opportunities over time with ongoing support.

Garet et al. (2001) suggest that recent studies confirm duration of PD can be related to significant teacher change. In their own work analyzing data from the Teacher Activity Survey, part of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, they remark, "Time span and contact hours have a substantial positive influence on opportunities for active learning" (p. 933). Garet et al. determine that both time span and contact hours showed significant effects which can be interpreted to mean that when PD opportunities offer both it is considered to be of "high quality" (p. 933).

Guskey (1986) reminds us that an important component of teacher change is to "recognize that change is a gradual and difficult process for teachers" (p. 9). With this in mind I believe that it is important to realize that change does not take place overnight or after one encounter. For this same reason Guskey continues, "Teachers must receive regular feedback on the effects of these changes on student learning" (p. 9). Without time for processing, experimentation, implementation, and continued support, initial PD opportunities will quickly fall short of expectations.

**Active engagement.** Research recommends that PD actively engage teachers in participating in the learning and change process (Birman et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond &
McLaughlin, 2011; Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Active learning is broadly defined by Garet et al. (2001) as the state during PD when participants "become actively engaged in meaningful discussion, planning, and practice" (p. 925). Several components of PD are defined as active engagement:

- Observe or be observed – this typically involves expert teachers
- Plan how new curriculum materials and new teaching methods will be used in the classroom
- Review student work
- Lead discussions
- Engage in the writing process (Birman et al., 2000; Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001).

In their study, when teachers from the same school, subject area, or grade level were actively engaged in PD, Garet et al. (2001) saw improvements in teacher knowledge and skills and therefore positive changes in classroom practice followed. Similarly Birman et al. (2000) state, "In our national study, teachers whose professional development includes opportunities for active learning report increased knowledge and skills and changed classroom practice" (p. 30). Clearly this ties in with the frameworks presented earlier by both Guskey (1986) and Desimone (2009). Teachers must actively engage in the change process if we are to see shifts in skills, attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately student outcomes.

**Coaching as Professional Development**

Educational coaches are broadly defined as "school-based professional development specialists who work with individuals and teams to design and facilitate appropriate learning experiences, provide feedback and support, and assist with implementation challenges" (Killion,
Beyond this definition coaches specialize in many forms of coaching support. Knight (2009a) presents instructional, literacy, cognitive, content, leadership, differentiated, as well as classroom management forms of coaching. Peer coaching is yet another form of coaching used in the educational forum (Joyce & Showers, 1988, 2002; Kohler, McCollough-Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Toll, 2005).

A great majority of the research on coaching focuses on the work of literacy coaches (Atteberry & Byrk, 2011; Bean, 2004; Biancarosa & Byrk, 2011; Biancarosa, Byrk, & Dexter, 2010; Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Dole, Liang, Watkins, & Wiggins, 2006; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010).

Within the current body of work researchers look at coaching from many perspectives to include, roles and responsibilities, student achievement, teacher participation, power and positioning struggles, as well as policy implications. A very small portion of the research focuses on coaches themselves and how to support them in their own PD.

**Coaches' Qualifications, Roles, and Responsibilities**

The goal of coaching as school embedded PD is to influence teacher practices in a way that ultimately shifts the course of student learning and achievement.

Spurred by the need to raise literacy levels, schools added coaches without the benefit of a strong research base from which to draw recommendations. Coaches were left to invent their own roles or rely on books about the craft of coaching with little or no support from research on coaching practices (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010, p. 2).

In theory, there is agreement about the responsibilities and qualifications of coaches. They include but are not limited to the following:
• modeling and/or co-teaching lessons
• data analysis
• observation and feedback
• resource/research provider
• study group facilitator

Toll (2005) emphatically presents a definition of responsibilities that steers clear of any implications of "fixing problem situations or teachers" (p. 4). In practice, however, the understanding of these responsibilities varies greatly depending on administrative interpretation and policy implementation (Calo et al., 2015; Foltos, 2015; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Pankake & Moller, 2007).

According to the International Reading Association (IRA) (2010), now called the International Literacy Association (ILA), literacy coaches may provide PD, work collaboratively with educational professionals, work with individual and groups of students, model classroom instruction, and coordinate district reading and writing programs. The IRA recommends that these coaches hold a valid teaching license, have a master's degree with a concentration in reading or writing education, have experience working with programs related to coaching teachers and leading school reading programs, and have completed 21-27 graduate hours in reading/language arts coursework as well as having completed the equivalent of a supervised practicum experience of 6 graduate semester hours. Dole et al. (2006) strongly support the IRA recommendations and requirements for coaches.
In their essay on effective literacy coaching in the Chicago Public Schools, Blachowicz et al. (2005) contend that the success of coaching is contingent upon connecting coaching work to teachers’ current practice. Coaches are encouraged to focus on choosing generative practices and establishing credentials by modeling and co-teaching. Relying on a repertoire of coaching strategies to meet the needs of all teachers while focusing on student learning creates learning opportunities for everyone involved. Toll (2005) contends that this type of focused coaching develops a "culture of collaboration and trust" (p. 6). In turn this leads to the development of respectful relationships and "greater opportunities for educators to interact" (p. 6).

Rush (2013) concludes that individual coaching conversations and modeling of literacy strategies surfaces consistently across her statewide examination of literacy coaches' roles and responsibilities in Wyoming High Schools. Data collection, management, and analysis are also key roles in coaches' responsibilities. Two other areas that surface with frequency are content area coaching and providing staff development.

In their findings Bean et al., (2010) determine that teacher-coach conversations surface as the most common coaching activity. Driven by data, these conversations focus on ways in which teachers could better serve the needs of their students by individualizing and differentiating instruction. Modeling and observations are more infrequently used coaching strategies, and a popular topic, "coaching cycles," (p. 104) were never implemented. While increased student learning is always the desired outcome, teachers and coaches rarely engage in specific conversations reflecting on teacher practice.

Bean et al. (2010) reveal that coaching qualifications were of little consequence in relationship to student achievement. However, a significant correlation could be made between student achievement and the amount of coaching that took place in a particular school building.
Most importantly, coaching success was contingent upon the role of the coach as defined by the school and district, and the coaches' beliefs about their roles. This reinforces the notion that coaching itself is situational (Bean et al., 2010).

In their report on the roles of literacy coaches in the federal Reading First program Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) also found that the reality of how coaches spend their time "coaching" is more complicated than they had originally expected. Coaches in the program were mostly experienced teachers, however, inexperienced at coaching. As part of the Reading First program coaches were asked to spend 60 to 80% of their time working with teachers either in individual coaching conversations or in the classroom supporting instruction. In reality, coaches spent on average 28% of their time working in this capacity with teachers (Deussen et al., 2007). In analyzing the disparity of time spent on specific tasks, the influence of state authority was found to have the greatest impact on coaches' roles and responsibilities.

Thus states, or any agency implementing educational initiatives using coaches, have both a great deal of responsibility and a great opportunity to influence what type of coach they employ to work in their schools and districts (Deussen et al., 2007, p. IV).

**Impact of Coaching on Student Learning**

Ultimately gains in student achievement are at the heart of coaching. Recent studies are beginning to show positive correlations between coaching and student gains. In a four-year longitudinal study of 17 schools involved in a Literacy Collaborative program Biancarosa et al. (2010) and Biancarosa and Byrk (2011) reveal significant gains in student literacy scores. These researchers, using a value added effect, note a 16% increase in student learning the first year and as much as a 32% increase by the third year. Additionally teachers who participated with the LC
coaches in amounts above the average were found to implement practices tied to coaching with greater frequency.

In their two-year study with coaches in Title One schools, Walpole and Blamey (2008) show a rise in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures from 80% achievement of the 20 schools involved after the first year, to 100% achievement the year after the study was completed compared with 83% achievement of schools statewide. They attribute this growth to the development and implementation of coaching in these schools.

Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) examined literacy coaching and K-3 student reading gains at a school district that received a Reading First grant. The researchers determined that the amount of time teachers spent with literacy coaches and specific types of coaching behaviors may be related to student reading gains. At the kindergarten and second grade levels the amount of conferencing hours the coach spent engaged with a teacher was a significant indicator of student total gains. Furthermore at first grade it approached significance. Other areas of coaching that were identified in the study as potential predictors of student gains include modeling lessons, and observing teachers.

**Impact of Coaching on Teachers**

Because coaching is embedded, it is thought to play a significant role in changing teachers’ practice (Atteberry & Byrk, 2011; Bean, 2004; Biancarosa & Byrk, 2011; Blachowicz et al., 2005; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). In their study of a Literacy Collaborative where coaching was a key component, Biancarosa and Byrk (2011) reveal that teachers benefit from the opportunity to work with a "more expert other" (p. 25) in analyzing their instruction. These researchers promote coaching as a process that supports teachers in a professional philosophy of continual improvement.
Ippolito (2010) suggests that coaches can successfully shift teachers' practice using three key components: (1) moving in and out of responsive and directive coaching approaches, (2) using protocols during individual coaching sessions, and (3) sharing roles of leadership that align with administrative, coaching, and teacher goals (p. 169). In this study coaches' ability to balance both responsive and directive coaching was defined as the ability to create and support relationships with teachers and focus on specific instructional strategies as necessary. This balance is viewed as critical in shifting teachers' practice. At the same time the use of protocols as well as the distribution of leadership roles facilitates shifts in teacher practice. Roadblocks in shifting teacher practice were revealed as well.

Future research must focus simultaneously on individual coaching behaviors in relationship to organizational factors such as the number of teachers assigned to each coach, the amount of available common planning time, the degree of collegiality among teachers, the degree to which teachers feel accountable to one another for their work, and the amount of trust teachers place in school leaders. These and other organizational factors may act as possible supports or barriers to balanced coaching (Ippolito, 2010, p. 186).

In their research on increasing teacher efficacy Cantrell and Hughes (2008) contend, "coaching appears to provide support for teachers as they gain mastery experiences with new techniques" (p. 120). Furthermore they contend that a "team approach" (p. 119) to PD builds a collective sense of efficacy for teachers involved. "Engaging teams of teachers in collaborative work over the course of an entire school-year strengthened teachers’ sense that their faculties could influence students’ literacy achievement" (p. 119). According to the findings in this
research, two important factors in shifting teachers' practice and sense of efficacy over time were *coaching* and *collaboration*.

Walpole et al. (2010) also found that collaboration between coaches and teachers within and across grade levels is a significant indicator of success. "Coaches who collaborated more frequently were associated with teams with a higher frequency of small-group work, effective reading instruction, and effective management" (p. 135). Additionally teachers value time to reflect with coaches on data as well as discuss feedback on instructional observations. This reflective time serves to shift teachers' work from curriculum-centered to student-focused (Walpole et al, 2010).

School commitment appears to be yet another key variable in shifting teachers' practice. In their 4 year-long study of coaching implementation Atteberry and Byrk (2011) reveal that an overall supportive school environment is critical to actively engaging teachers in change and coaching activities. Teachers’ willingness to try new approaches and engage in the coaching process is viewed as a key component to shifting practice.

Vanderberg and Stephens (2010) studied teacher-coach interactions in the South Carolina Reading Initiative. These researchers sought to understand what coaching strategies teachers considered helpful, as well as what specific changes teachers made in their beliefs or practices about the teaching of reading or writing as a direct result of coaches' actions. In their findings researchers discovered that coaches “(1) created ways for teachers to collaborate, (2) provided teachers with ongoing support, and (3) taught teachers about research-based teaching practices” (p. 148).

Teachers and coaches in this same study met and worked in learning collaboratives over the course of three years. Interviews with teachers reveal that teachers realized the power of
their collaborative teams (Vanderberg & Stephens, 2010). Teachers began to feel a strong sense of community and less isolation. This deprivatization of their practice led to more sharing of ideas and materials on a daily basis. Vanderberg and Stephens (2010) identified four types of change for teachers as a result of their experiences with coaches: "(1) teachers felt empowered to try new teaching practices, (2) teachers used more authentic assessments, (3) teachers expanded their use of educational theory and research, and (4) teachers more often based instruction on students' needs" (p. 154). Overall teachers felt empowered by their work with coaches to take on new risks and new teaching strategies.

The same group of teachers and coaches from the South Carolina Reading Initiative were the focus of a study by Stephens et al., 2011. In their work they found that coaches had a significant impact on all teachers in the study.

Teachers who were initially considered inconsistent not only significantly increased their understanding in this area (p = .0012) but also became more consistent in their use of instructional materials (p = .0017), tried more new ideas (p = .0020), and were better able to name the theories and research that informed their practices (p = .0078) (Stephens et al., p. 233, 234).

Limitations to these findings as reported by the researchers include the fact that the survey is a self-reporting instrument and, that over time teachers' beliefs and understandings as they relate to the survey questions changed and took on new meanings. Furthermore the survey instrument did not discriminate for coaches in their 3rd year while it did discriminate for pilot group teachers and coaches in years one and two. What became clear as a result of this study was that coaches needed more support in learning how to actually coach (Stephens et al, 2011).
Power, Positioning, and Policy

Coaches face unique issues of identity and power not realized by other PD providers. While the research appears to clearly define the role of coaches, the reality in schools is that principals and teachers have individual interpretations of what those roles might look like and how that plays out in schools (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Outside factors have a direct influence on how coaches are positioned and the power they have to create change (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008).

Principal – coach partnership. In her research on the dynamics between principals and "teacher leaders" (p. 320) Mangin (2007) contends that while research highlights the significance of strong principal-teacher leader relationships, specifics around what that might look like are currently undefined. In her findings she discusses the "link between principals' level of support and their combined knowledge of the teacher leadership role and interaction with teacher leaders" (p. 349). She contends that teacher leaders are more supported when principals have higher levels of knowledge regarding leadership roles and interact frequently with those leaders.

The work of Walpole et al. (2010) reveals the importance of the collaborative relationship between coach and principal. Active support between coach and principal as well as participation in PD activities within the teaching and learning community are of greatest significance in terms of relationships to teaching.

The relationship between leadership support and small-group work was particularly telling: principals who had strong partnerships with their coaches, encouraged lesson planning, and built their own knowledge of reading research and instruction had grade-level teams with more frequent small group instruction at all grade levels (p. 135).
In their work on supporting coaching as a "strategy for developing instructional capacity" (p. 15) Neufeld and Roper (2003) name administrative support as "essential" (p. 16). They explain the need for administration at all levels to be invested in and knowledgeable about support for coaching programs. Clarity of roles and responsibilities, school cultures that enable coaching, and administrative respect for coaching roles are named specifically in their work as non-negotiable. In particular they state,

Because schools are often short-staffed and have myriad tasks that are not clearly in either the principal's or teachers' domain, coaches often find themselves asked to "pitch in" in inappropriate ways that interfere with their ability to coach (pp. 17, 18).

Neufeld and Roper (2003) believe that successful planning, implementation, and monitoring of coaching programs can result in an effective means of teacher support and development.

In keeping with the understanding of a need for administrative support for coaches, Poglinco and Bach (2004) name principals as integral to the success of coaching programs. They state, "Just as the coaches' in-school support is crucial to the teachers, so is the support of principals and other external partners vital to the coaches" (p. 400). They argue for a partnership approach to coaching where there is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Pankake and Moller (2007) also support a clearly defined context for coaches' work. They warn,

Rather than involving coaches in operational tasks, such as inventoring textbooks, substituting for the principal at meetings out of the building, or dealing with discipline referrals, coaches should be involved in activities directly related to improving teaching and learning (p. 34).

In their work researching instructional coaching at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, King et al., (n.d.) suggest that districts provide conditions for coaching that are "clearly
articulated" (p. 9) and supported by a district-wide commitment to success. They suggest districts ask several questions before they determine if coaching is right for them. Some of those questions include:

- What, specifically, is the central office role in support of coaching?
- How will the central office demonstrate the system's support of coaching?
- What is the district's message about how coaching fits into the spectrum of reform efforts?
- What kinds of professional learning opportunities will coaches, teachers, and district personnel be offered or lead to support coaching? (p. 11)

King et al., (n.d.) support the work of instructional coaches; however, they are vigilant in their belief that district level administration must be involved if coaching programs are to be effective. In their work compiling and analyzing the findings of 270 coaching surveys across the country Calo et al. (2015) find administrative support to be a key factor in the success of coaching programs. One coach in their work is quoted, remarking about the importance of administrative support. The coach said, "I feel the most important thing a literacy coach needs is good administration above them who will support and participate in the role of the coach" (p. 7).

Identity of a coach. The roles and responsibilities that coaches take on influence and define their view of themselves as coaches. In her study analyzing the roles of literacy coaches, Rush (2013) determined four levels of coaching descriptors and definitions. She described the work of coaches as independent, lightly embedded, embedded, or deeply embedded (p. 283). Coaches in the independent category work in schools or districts where there is no built-in structure for collaboration with teachers. Coaches may meet with administrators although it is not a requirement. In this scenario "the coach is left to his or her own devices to get work done.
toward school and teacher improvement" (p. 283). At the opposite end the deeply embedded coach played an integral part in school leadership and "provides/structures all professional development" (p. 283).

At the same time Rush (2013) analyzed coaches' "enrollment" or access to teachers and their classrooms. Coaches who were fully enrolled as well as deeply embedded attribute their success to the support provided by their administrators. Coaches who were not supported by administration related feelings of "isolation and abandonment" (p. 287). These teachers had low efficacy and low enrollment as well as low embeddedness (p. 282). One such coach from the study remarked, "I go out hooking, too. I say I prostitute myself. I go out and troll the streets" (p. 287).

Rainville and Jones (2008) focused on the different identities that coaches take on in different situations. They believe, "Like all social practices, coaching is situated and will take on new and different relational dynamics in different contexts" (p. 440). During their study the researchers observed the focal coach strategically positioning herself with the ultimate intention of shifting teachers' thinking about reading instruction. During different coaching interactions the coach took on the role of friend, co-learner, expert and sometimes outsider.

Rainville and Jones (2008) recommend that coaching preparation programs and ongoing PD support include, role-playing scenarios, analyzing audio and viewing videos of coach-teacher interactions with a focus on power and positioning issues, and explicitly working through authentic scenarios presented by colleagues. These researchers remind us that there is certainly more involved in coaching than an understanding of the curriculum and knowledge of instructional practices.
Coaching as political. Policy is another area only recently surfacing as a potential area of research as it pertains to coaching. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) studied the policy implications of implementation of a Reading First grant. They clearly acknowledge the complications this may present for literacy coaches entangled in the process of implementing a new program. Findings reveal that coaches navigate several roles as policy shifts.

In this study, under the auspices of "the grant" or "the principal" coaches invoked a sense of power to pressure teachers to undertake a new program. At the same time coaches persuaded teachers to use the new program because it was really not that different from the old. Finally coaches buffered teachers by guiding them to ignore some of the information as a way to keep teachers on board (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). This study revealed that teachers responded to 52% of messages about the program that involved the coach in some way, as opposed to responding to only 15% of messages that did not involve the coach (Coburn & Woulfin). While this study appears to be successful in terms of implementation of The Reading First Program it places the coach in a difficult position as negotiator between teachers and administrators.

Moving Beyond the Roles

Hunt and Handsfield (2013) present a compelling argument for stepping back from the current research on defined roles and student achievement expectations and "Rather than viewing literacy coaches' role as characterized by what they do, these studies present the role as who the literacy coaches are in relation to others' expectations" (p. 49). Coaches expressed feelings of frustration and defeat and at the same time a strong desire to be successful in sharing their knowledge, to build trust, and to work collaboratively with their teachers (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). This study reveals the emotional side of coaching, a reality not addressed to any degree in the research.
**Supports for coaches.** Based on the numerous responsibilities and positions that are imposed on coaches, research suggests it is the responsibility of districts to in turn support coaches with ongoing PD. Feger et al., (2004) contend that coaches need supportive networks that allow them to "reflect on and improve their practice" (p. 16). They suggest districts create learning communities "where coaches can share their experiences and insights" (p. 16). In this way coaches would have opportunities to develop new content knowledge, find new PD resources, study coaching strategies, and be reflective about their practice and their effects on teacher growth and student learning (Feger, et al., 2004).

In their work on instructional coaching Steiner and Kowal (2007) present an argument for coaches’ preparation and ongoing training. They contend, "coaches need training, too" (p. 4). Several key focus areas of ongoing coach training are named. Areas of focus include; increasing coaches content knowledge and training in effective methods of PD implementation and presentation. Poglinco and Bach (2004) assert that coaches' skills and understandings of instructional practices are "critical" (p. 399) to successful coaching. They contend that this idea encourages district efforts to support coaches in creating and maintaining "a solid repertoire of techniques" (p. 399).

Foltos (2015) names ongoing professional learning for coaches as one of many key components that support a successful coaching program. Grounded in the collaborative approach to PD, these researchers present a model for coaching based on a strong culture of collaboration. These researchers believe that a successful model of PD that is grounded in the work of instructional coaching and collaboration is a means to collectively assuring success for teachers and students.
Collaborative Communities of Practice

With a culture of collaboration as a catalyst for successful coaching and PD opportunities, spaces for sharing, engaging in cooperative experiences, and reflecting together as professionals are key components in developing a strong PD program that will serve the current needs of teachers and students. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011), state, "Structures that break down isolation, that empower teachers with professional tasks, and that provide arenas for thinking through standards of practice are central to this kind of professional growth" (p. 84).

While Stoll and Louis (2007) believe that there is no one collective definition of professional learning communities, they do believe that there is a general understanding in the research that when a group of teachers gather to share and critically evaluate their practice over time a learning community has formed. Furthermore the basis for these learning communities must remain student focused. Professional learning communities are grounded in the belief that through regular meetings and communication teachers will increase both their own and students' learning (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many 2010; Lieberman & Miller, 2007, 2011).

Teachers in professional learning communities strive to work collaboratively to develop a trusting environment where novice-expert relationships are broken down (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, 1999). Teachers in professional learning communities must learn to take their concerns, questions, and celebrations into a public forum for critiques, suggestions, and celebrations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; DuFour et al., 2010; Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 2008a, 2008b). Within these communities and collaboratives the role of dialogue, culture, and leadership are dynamic components that must be understood and addressed for meaningful "thinking together" to take place (Stoll & Louis, 2007, p. 6).
Borko (2004) draws upon a sociocultural framework of communities of practice to analyze teacher PD. She believes that teacher discussions must be fostered and focused by leaders to facilitate trust, develop community norms, and promote critical analysis of teaching. She states, "Norms that promote supportive yet challenging conversations about teaching are one of some most important features of successful communities" (p. 7).

Levine (2010) specifically calls for a shift from the isolation of the historically traditional classroom to one of collaboration and the development of what he borrows from McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) "teacher professional communities" (p. 109). Levine (2010) contends that collaboration among teachers ultimately leads to improved teaching and therefore learning for students. Levine, like Borko (2004), believes in setting norms and protocols for group collaboration as a means to developing trust and setting the groundwork for productive critical conversations.

The National Staff Development Council, now known as Learning Forward defines learning communities on their website as,

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment. Professional learning within communities requires continuous improvement, promotes collective responsibility, and supports alignment of individual, team, school, and school system goals. Learning communities convene regularly and frequently during the workday to engage in collaborative professional learning to strengthen their practice and increase student results. Learning community members are accountable to one another to achieve the shared goals of the school and
school system and work in transparent, authentic settings that support their improvement (2012).

In her work Rogoff (1994) defines working in a community of learners as a "distinct instructional model" (p. 212) not a blending of multiple approaches. From her perspective the power in this model is held in the diversity of members where all learners are perceived as active no matter their level of expertise. In this way "emphasis is on the process of learning (rather than just finished products) in activity-based learning situations with meaningful purposes, with emphasis on conceptual thinking including both problem finding and problem solving" (p.221).

Ball and Cohen (1999) present a pedagogy of PD grounded in participation in communities of practice. They believe in the need for teachers to broaden their circle of colleagues in an effort to expand resources that would inform and support instruction. These researchers present a model of PD grounded in "situating professional discussion in concrete tasks or artifacts of practice" (p. 17).

Rather than centering as it does currently on a 'rhetoric of conclusions,' the discourse would emphasize more the 'narrative of inquiry.' Instead of a definitiveness of answers and fixes, the focus would be on possibilities, methods of reasoning, alternative conjectures, and supporting evidence and arguments (pp. 16, 17).

In their work Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) present three views of teacher learning: knowledge for, knowledge in, and knowledge of practice. Knowledge for practice defines the kinds of knowledge that researchers produce and that can be presented to teachers for use during PD presentations. Knowledge in practice represents the work that is embedded in daily practice. For PD purposes this might represent what teachers are asked to focus on in terms of classroom projects or what might be more applicable on a daily basis. Knowledge of practice has
implications for professional learning communities in that it refers to the learning that takes place when teachers collaboratively ask critical questions about teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

**The Language of Learning Communities**

The concept of knowledge of practice is mimicked in the work of Lieberman and Mace (2009) who discuss the importance of teachers learning how to talk about their practice. Conversations that allow for understanding and acknowledging the ideas of others, of research, and of literature are realized when teachers are open to collaborative interactions. This realization that opportunities for discussions around instructional practice benefit all participants affirms the power of learning communities as a new source of knowledge.

Within communities of practice as a means of PD language becomes a critical attribute. Our language interactions not only define the situation, they define who we are and how the situation unfolds. The language of education is defined from a sociocultural point of view. Hymes (1972) defines this as the "speech event." In this definition he is using language for a particular purpose, in a particular time, in a particular place. Events would include but not be limited to classrooms, debates, storytelling, jokes, greetings, and questioning.

In any speech event there are many considerations that come into play – purpose, setting, participants, roles, status, and identity to name a few. Hymes (1972) therefore is combining linguistic competence and social knowledge. This combination allows one the ability to communicate appropriately in a variety of situations. For this reason Hymes would then argue that language should be studied in its social context. When we understand how language is used for a particular language community then we can better understand the language interaction itself.
Bloome and Clark (2006) discuss the phenomenon of "discourse-in-use." This concept focuses on who is using language and for what purposes, in what situations, with what outcomes. This perspective takes into account cultural practices and responses to and from a local, institutional, and historical perspective. Bloome and Clark (2006) view learning as taking place both within and outside the classroom setting. These ideas are directly in line with the theoretical framework of Wenger (1998a) who views learning in communities within and beyond the classroom as well. In this way the work of Bloome and Clark (2006) contributes to our understanding of the language of teacher communities and professional development.

**Administrative Support for Learning Communities**

The role of school leadership at the building, district, and even state level in supporting communities of practice is well documented in the research (de Lima, 2008; Halverson, 2007; Kruse & Louis, 2007; Stoll & Louis, 2007). School leaders are instrumental in creating structures through scheduling, physical space, trust-building efforts, developing instructional goals and data assessment to name a few. Yet there is a delicate balance between creating structures and understanding that teachers must take ownership of the learning within the collaborative communities. However, Kruse and Louis (2007) make a strong case for "top-down initiatives" (p. 116). In their work they highlight not only the initiative of a district staff member, but the support from the superintendent and school board as well in creating and sustaining successful learning communities in their schools.

In their work in the Papillion-La Vista Public Schools in Nebraska, Johnston, Knight, and Miller (2007) found that administrative support is key to developing a strong structural foundation that allows teachers time to work collaboratively in teams. District leaders realized that in order to implement initiatives driven by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, improve
instruction, and ultimately student achievement they would have to begin with developing a new schedule to incorporate time for teacher collaboration. Ultimately this consistent time for collaboration allowed teachers to build relationships and "held one another accountable for taking active steps toward reaching individual classroom goals" (Johnston et al., 2007, p. 16).

The effort by administration at all levels enabled teachers to shift from a mindset of isolation to one of collegiality and a focus on student achievement as well as realizing a new energy for professional learning.

Irwin and Farr (2004) support a collaborative community that encourages "power-with" not "power-over" (p. 344). When teachers have power to connect with one another in ways that are respectful of all voices they develop meaningful relationships. These collaborative communities work because they are grounded in "nonhierarchical" (p. 345) conversations that shift practice. "This is not to suggest total freedom: rather, it values the work of teachers and empowers educators to approach problems without administrative restrictions" (p. 352). Ultimately this study reveals again that a supportive administration is a key factor in developing successful collaborative teacher communities.

**Concerns and Considerations within Collaborative Communities**

Communities of practice are not without difficulties. It is not uncommon for individuals to bring negative histories of work surrounding community endeavors. Likewise communities of practice can become marginalized. "Marginality and discontent can create strong bonds between members, but the lack of effectiveness in making a difference is likely to become a drain on their energy and willingness to invest themselves" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 141). At the same time the tightness that can bond a community can also be an obstacle to outside individuals interested in participating.
It takes leadership inside communities to keep questioning the status quo, see what is possible in a domain, connect the people who care about it, and help develop an effective practice together. It takes leadership at the boundaries of communities so they remain open to the outside. Finally, it takes organizational leadership to provide an environment that is both supportive and challenging (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 159).

An additional roadblock to this type of PD is that in this fast paced world of education where policy makers and administrators are demanding to see results, professional learning communities work too slowly. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) state,

Norms of collective responsibility and collaborative teaching practice develop slowly, yet high-stakes accountability systems demand fast, significant improvement in student achievement. The press for immediate gains in test scores pushes a pace of change that can undermine the development of school learning communities (p. 62).

Because the norm for PD has been something imposed from the outside it is difficult to shift school culture to one of collaboration and collegiality (Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Little, 2007). In her essay on collaboration and communication Little (2007) contends that if schools develop more of an atmosphere of collaboration teachers will regularly "communicate about the progress of students, develop curriculum or assessments together, and spend time in one another's classrooms" (p. 55). This would be a place where professional learning communities could flourish.

Under the auspices of moving student work forward, professional learning communities have shifted from places where teachers feel comfortable asking the critical questions to a place where conversations are driven by data and high stakes testing results (DuFour et al., 2010; Hargreaves, 2007). "Instead of being intelligently informed by evidence in deep and demanding
cultures of trusted relationships that press for success, PLCs are turning into add-on teams that are driven by data in cultures of fear that demand instant results" (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 183).

In a compelling essay on the multiple components of "networks" (p. 1) in education de Lima (2010) dives deeply into the need for further empirical research. First and foremost de Lima cautions organizations and researchers to be mindful of the terms by which these networks are referred to including, "alliances, coalitions, collaborations/collaboratives, clusters, consortia, development groups, families, partnerships, federations, groupings, territories, trusts, and zones" (p. 3). He contends that while each title appears to be innocent, indeed each choice carries with it a particular "set of meanings" (p. 3) that may or may not in fact define the group itself.

He continues by defining "key dimensions" (p. 4) of networks within the educational field as well as discussing their potential pitfalls within those networks. Issues of motivation and access are critical components for teachers. de Lima (2010) presents an argument for a lack of ownership among teacher networks drawing on research to state that they are often "externally sponsored" (p. 4) or motivated to drive changes or reform. In this way teachers’ reasons for "joining" (p. 4) are quite different from a network that might be considered grass-roots.

Effectiveness is another dimension that should be considered carefully. de Lima (2010) believes we should be asking the tough questions when it comes to effectiveness.

How do we know that a given network is making a difference? How does the network affect the actions and performance of its members and of those with whom they interact: How strong is the evidence, for example, of tangible changes in classroom practice and in student learning as a result of the activities undertaken at the network level (p. 9)? de Lima (2010) challenges researchers to concentrate more on the complexities of networks as defined in his paper and less on the popularity and oversimplification of their implementation.
Collaborative Communities and Coaching

Communities of practice, networks, professional development teams, and coaches are all at the forefront of studies as researchers seek to discover the appropriate formula for increasing teacher efficacy and student achievement. Extensive research on communities of practice is available (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998a; Wenger, 1998b) as well as theoretical frames defining successful models of professional development (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986).

At the same time Knight (2009a) reminds us that coaching has becoming an increasingly popular topic in the field of research. This current research on coaching, although sparse, focuses on the work of literacy coaches and their impact on teachers and/or shifts in student learning and data outcomes. What is not available is research focusing on coaches as developing, reflective practitioners. Current research is not focused on who coaches are and how they refine their skills, rather it is focused on what they do.

In a shift from previous research this study seeks to understand how the data on communities of practice and professional development can be understood through the lens of coaches working together within a collaborative environment. Addressing the issues of isolation, identity, and outside factors this study presents the potential for a new understanding of coaching. In this study I seek to understand the nature of a coaching collaborative from the perspective of the instructional coaches. In order to understand this process more deeply I pose three questions:

1. What is the nature of a sister-school professional development collaborative?
   A. What do the three coaching participants bring to the coaching collaborative?
   B. What do the coaches value?
   C. How did the coaches develop relationships with one another?
2. How did the coaches construct their identities during collaborative interactions?

3. How did external factors influence coaches' identities?

To answer these questions, I have framed the study using a case study methodology described in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"We must understand what it means culturally and personally...That we are trying to notice something that is not usually noticed and then articulate it." Bresler, 2012

This research is a qualitative study focused on instructional coaches' daily lives, interactions, and experiences. A qualitative methodological approach that highlights the use of natural settings, interpretation of reality grounded in the empirical world, construction of meaning through interaction with participants, and descriptive analysis of multiple forms of data collection was appropriate for this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). I attempted to discover the participants' understanding of their roles as instructional coaches, how they negotiated those roles, and the impact that their interactions together within their coaching collaborative community had on their identities. I intentionally positioned myself as an "insider," becoming a member of the coaching collaborative as a means to "forming an accurate appraisal of human group life" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380).

I chose a case study approach for this project. According to Dyson and Genishi (2005), "In their case studies, qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning people make of their lives in very particular contexts" (p. 9). I specifically focused on three individual coaches who together made up one sister-school coaching collaborative, the "context" for this study. Each coach was viewed as a "unit" (p. 3) of study, integral to the collaborative as a whole. Together these coaches' experiences became a case study. Their common experiences within the collaborative united them as a whole. Through the use of qualitative methods I attempted to understand, analyze, and explain how these coaches negotiated their positions in particular social contexts (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).
Qualitative researchers in education seek to find answers from people they are studying as a way to discover new perspectives and experiences from the participants' points of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study I attempted to uncover individual coaching personalities and the ways that outside forces had an impact not only on their views of self as coach but how outside forces influenced the coaching roles of the three participants. I focused particularly on the dynamics among the coaches as they worked to define not only themselves as coaches but understand how their participation in a collaborative coaching community could support their practice.

Stake (1995) clarifies the study of human participants and their behavior stating, "We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories" (p. 1). In this study the participants processed their roles and responsibilities as they shared experiences with one another and told stories of coaching interactions. At the same time, Dyson and Genishi (2005) remind us that it is important to realize that "historical, economic, and cultural forces" (p. 8) intersect during a time of shared experiences. Because these influences impact who speaks, who is heard, how meetings unfold, and what is determined to be appropriate conversation during collaborative communication, I specifically attended to the dynamics of group interactions among the coaches.

Current research on coaching remains focused on roles and responsibilities and the potential impact of coaching on student success but does not take into account the outside forces that influence coaches' roles and responsibilities on a daily basis. I contend that there is a need to move research studies beyond the list of roles and responsibilities to the specific cultural and political events, and subsequent interactions that influence coaches' identities and as a result their practice.
Context for the Study

Scottsville School District is located in a small urban community in the Midwest situated in close proximity to a major university. The district consists of one Pre-K building, eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, and an alternative school. There are approximately 9,600 students attending those schools and 1,500 teachers, administrators, and support personnel working in that educational environment. Across the district 60% of the students are low income, with a mobility rate of 17%. Student composition includes 41% Caucasian, 35% Black, 10% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 5% 2 or more races, .3% Native American, and .1% Pacific Islander. The district has been in a state of growth for the past ten years, rebuilding and remodeling buildings to accommodate more students and new programs.

Introduction of Coaching in the District

The Scottsville School District committed itself to coaching as a form of professional development (PD) over 15 years ago. In the summer of 2000 the district hired two elementary literacy coaches. These district coaching positions were split between K-2 and 3-5. The K-2 district coaching position was full time. The 3-5 coach worked half time as a district coach and half time as a classroom teacher. These two coaches oversaw all classroom literacy instruction in addition to overseeing a group of classroom teachers who worked as building literacy coaches in addition to their regular classroom duties. These dual classroom teacher/coaches taught full time in their classrooms and coached specific grade levels at different buildings across the district. These coaches reported to and worked with the district coaches respectively based on their grade level focus.

During these early coaching years the district hired Dr. Jan Richardson, author of The Next Step in Guided Reading (2009), to support the literacy coaching efforts in kindergarten
through second grade. Professional development in the area of literacy was grounded in Richardson's visits. Richardson modeled best practices in guided reading instruction, focusing on students who were reading below grade level. During her visits she worked at different elementary building sites throughout the district. Teachers from various buildings convened at a particular school site to observe Richardson. Following the model lesson teachers engaged in reflective conversations with Richardson.

Follow-up PD opportunities were created by the district coaches who worked closely with coaches to determine classroom needs and potential areas for growth based on Richardson's model. District and classroom coaches worked together to provide afterschool PD at various building sites. A typical afterschool PD might include: a short presentation by the district coach, a video observation and reflection, and a study/planning session following the initial presentation. Coaches supported individual or small groups of teachers during the presentation.

Individual district coaching opportunities took on various forms. Coaches arranged classroom visits and after school meetings with individual teachers specifically assigned to them. After school sessions often involved one-on-one coaching or small group coaching sessions. Occasionally coaches made classroom coaching visits during the day. On these occasions the coach was allotted a substitute to cover their own classroom. In turn classroom teachers were allotted substitutes, which allowed them to visit their coach in his/her classroom. The nature of this model allowed for a limited amount of embedded coaching work to happen.

**District Coaching Position Transitions**

One of the downfalls of the early coaching program was the lack of flexibility in the availability of the coaches. It was difficult to fulfill the demands of being a classroom teacher as well as coach several colleagues at different building sites. In 2003 these coach positions were
eliminated and several full time district literacy coaching positions were added to allow for more
teacher embedded professional development support across the elementary buildings. These
district coaches were assigned to specific buildings and were available for individual school
trainings, grade level collaborations during the day and/or after school, as well as one-on-one
teacher coaching cycles. However, this model was short lived as the district administration
turned over. The new administration eliminated district coaches. In place of coaches,
curriculum coordinator positions were created. For a brief time the district did not have any
coaches as defined in this paper.

In the 2008-09 school-year a new model of literacy coaching emerged in the district.
Each individual elementary building interviewed for and appointed a half time literacy coach,
half time interventionist, as a combined full time literacy position. This combination position
was the result of research surrounding the work of reading interventionists and specialists.
Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) recommend that reading specialists in schools not only serve
students with reading difficulties but that they also have the capacity to support classroom
discovered that many reading specialists, "are performing additional duties such as staff
development, assessment responsibilities for the entire school, and serving as a resource to
teachers" (pp. 740-741). In 2010 the International Reading Association (IRA), now the
International Literacy Association (ILA), redefined the role of reading specialist/literacy coach
into one document.

This new group of literacy coaches/interventionists trained together at a week-long
comprehensive literacy institute held out of state during the summer of 2008. Two district
literacy coordinators accompanied the new coaches to the training. These coordinators brought
coherence to the work of the literacy coaches/interventionists. Regularly scheduled monthly coaching meetings and additional trainings were set up by the literacy coordinators to ensure appropriate training in the area of both literacy coaching and literacy intervention work.

This new coaching model was grounded in the philosophy of "voice and choice." Teachers were free to choose whether or not they wanted to work with their building coach. Knight (2007) explains the underlying philosophies of teacher choice as "what makes someone a professional." He states,

True partners choose to work together, that is a defining characteristic of a partnership. Partners enter more or less as equals. Partners are people who have a say, who guide the direction of whatever endeavor they share, who have the right to say yes and no and make choices, as long as they are partners (p. 42).

All too often as both Knight (2007) and Block (2002, 2003) contend, traditional PD models force teachers to sit through trainings that are in one way or another not relevant to them. "Not surprisingly, many teachers resist being forced to change. Like a partner who has not been listened to, they turn away, saying enough is enough" (Knight, 2007, p. 42). These researchers contend that the power of coaching lies in the power of teacher choice.

Grounded in a "voice and choice" philosophy, literacy coaches in the district were introduced to classroom teachers as an opportunity to enhance their practice; however, no one was required to work with the coach. Coaches offered teachers a menu of support (see Figure 1) as well as providing staff development in the area of language and literacy, and collaborating
with teachers at grade-level meetings embedded throughout the school day.

Menu of Support

I have a question/concern/need help with:

- Guided Reading
- Words Their Way
- Units of Study (Galkins)
- Making Meaning
- Running Records (administering)
- Running Records (analyzing)
- Other ____________

- Scheduling
- Quick Reads
- DRA
- Particular student
- Management
- Daily 5/CAFE

The best time to reach me would be:

- Before school
- Plan time
- Other ______
- After school
- Lunch

Name ________________________________

Figure 1. Coaches' Menu of Support

These literacy coaches offered focused support in the areas of reading and writing instruction. One-on-one teacher coaching support included: co-planning, modeling lessons, co-teaching, and data analysis. Coaches also worked with principals at grade level collaborations. They also presented PD at staff meetings focused on literacy instruction. At the same time, coaches spent half their day instructing developing readers in small individualized reading groups. This work served to support students at risk in the area of reading and writing with a second daily literacy lesson.

The lack of flexibility in this model negatively impacted coaches' ability to meet the needs of teachers. Because reading group times were static, coaches were unable to meet and
work with classroom teachers during specific times of the day. In some cases this completely eliminated their ability to work in particular classrooms or with specific grade levels.

**Instructional Coaches Emerge**

In 2011-12 district administration turned over once again and a new philosophy of coaching developed. The new superintendent requested a meeting with key literacy coaches to discuss a transition from literacy coach/interventionist to a full time instructional coaching position. The force behind this change was grounded in feedback from the district elementary literacy coaches regarding the lack of flexibility as well as research on instructional coaching and the possibilities for expanding the coaching program into other curricular areas.

A district committee including administrators, literacy coaches, and district coordinators gathered on several occasions to rewrite the job description from literacy coach/interventionist to instructional coach. The committee researched instructional coach job descriptions in the Midwest as a means to support their work. The new job description included performance responsibilities in the areas of Instruction, Assessment, Content Knowledge, Classroom Management, Data Analysis, and Specific Staff and Professional Tasks.

Qualifications for the position in the Scottsville School District included: a minimum of five years successful classroom teaching experience, a solid understanding of research-based instructional strategies and the ability to model these practices, knowledge in a variety of content areas (especially math, reading, and writing), knowledge of adult learning theory and applications to practice, as well as the knowledge of data collection and analysis with diverse populations. A Master's Degree or National Board Certificate was a preferred qualification (see Appendix A).
The new instructional coach job description and position were negotiated with the union. As a result of that re-negotiation for a change in job description, coaches in the literacy coaching/intervention positions were required to re-apply and interview for the job if they wanted to continue coaching. Several of the literacy coaches at that time opted out of the application and interview process for instructional coach and shifted their practice back to the classroom or to other educational opportunities. A new group of coaches emerged for the 2012-13 school-year.

**Collaborative Coaching Work Begins**

Simultaneously a restructuring of district coordinators took place. The coordinator overseeing the work and PD of the literacy coaches also made a choice to return to the classroom. This left the new instructional coaches with no full time district support to help focus and maintain their work. A new elementary district administrator took notice and together with several coordinators created a concept for sister-school coaching collaboratives to support both instructional coaches as well as teachers. Two to three elementary schools were grouped into 4 separate coaching collaboratives. The schools in each collaborative became "sister schools." Pairings were created based on school day start and end times, and the number of students per building. A PD schedule for these collaboratives was created for the following school-year.

In the first year of its inception the coaching collaboratives provided PD for teachers in grades K-3. Each collaborative was assigned multiple dates throughout the year to gather individual grade level teachers together for PD. This PD took place at school sites within the collaborative grouping. The instructional coaches from these buildings were charged with working collaboratively to provide PD for teachers from each grade level in the sister-school collaborative on a regular basis. Grade level groups of teachers in the collaborative were
scheduled to meet five to six times a year with the instructional coaches for half day sessions of PD focusing on specific literacy topics. The schedule below is a sample of the PD charts that were created (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Schedule of Sister-School Collaborative Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>School Participants</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sub Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>3 school cohort 2nd Grade</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Subs needed 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>3 school cohort 3rd Grade</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 cohorts joined 1st Grade</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 cohorts joined Kindergarten</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 school cohort 1st Grade</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 school cohort Kindergarten</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 cohorts joined 2nd Grade</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>2 cohorts joined 3rd Grade</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>3 school cohort 2nd Grade</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>Guided Rdg.</td>
<td>3 school cohort 3rd Grade</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a further means to support the work of the coaches, each collaborative was assigned to work with a district coordinator. The role of the district coordinator in the collaborative was to work with coaches during the planning phase of the PD cycle, keep coaches informed of district initiatives, and work alongside coaches at PD sessions. Dr. Jan Richardson also returned to work with the district as an elementary literacy consultant. Richardson worked with several collaboratives at specific PD sessions throughout the year.

Coaches from each collaborative met prior to the PD dates, typically with their assigned district coordinator, to discuss and organize the PD. Occasionally coaches worked with outside presenters. Often the coaches worked with teachers in their building prior to the PD to prepare
for a model lesson presentation or to gather student work artifacts for the session. During the PD coaches were responsible for various portions of the session. After the PD session coaches typically debriefed on site or set up a time to reflect on the days' work. These conversations served as a resource to drive the topic of the next PD session. This collaborative coaching cycle continued throughout the year (see Figure 2). This coaching cycle is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

Figure 2. Sister-School Coaching Collaborative Cycle

Coaches and coordinators also began meeting on a regular basis. Once a month coaches and coordinators convened to discuss PD within the collaboratives. Coaches shared professional development ideas and discussed roadblocks. These meetings also became an avenue for district coordinators to provide additional PD to the coaches themselves.

Once a month, coaches and coordinators also met as a group joined by elementary building principals. These meetings supported a common understanding of instructional coaching and allowed coaches and principals time away from the building to collaborate and plan. Coaches and principals often were presented with new curricular information, PD strategies, and district updates. Research supports the importance of administration partnering with coaches to create and maintain a positive learning environment in schools (Bean, 2004; Knight, 2015; Pankake and Moller, 2007). One of the 7 strategic supports named by Knight
(2015) is clearly defined meetings between the coach and principal. "There are few principals who want to have more meetings. However, one of the most important ways principals can support coaches is by meeting with them frequently" (p. 1).

Year three of the coaching collaboratives, 2014-15, brought more changes and new challenges. Once again the district coordinator positions were realigned. Coaching collaboratives were no longer assigned to work with a specific coordinator. Coaches continued meeting twice a month, once with the new coordinators and once with both coordinators and their building principal. A new PD schedule was created for the coaching collaboratives. The focus of this PD schedule was centered around supporting classroom teachers as they took on a new reading resource. At the same time Richardson continued supporting K-2 guided reading instruction across the year. Dr. Sunday Cummins was hired by the district to support best practices in "close reading."

This shift in PD created a shift in the role of the instructional coaches before, during, and after each PD session. Coaches were no longer charged with creating a PD session as the trainings were facilitated by outside consultants. Occasionally two sister-school collaboratives joined together at a particular training. Joint trainings sometimes consisted of as many as 25 participants compared to the intimate individual collaborative trainings that typically supported anywhere from 8-12 teacher participants. This new protocol left coaches to rethink their role during trainings.

Dr. Jan Richardson's Work in the Scottsville District

During the 2012-13 school-year Richardson worked primarily at schools within the Scottsville District that served a high number of students defined as “at risk” to include students reading below grade level as well as students struggling to make progress in particular areas of
reading. Her work expanded during the 2013-14 school-year. All teachers had the opportunity to work with Richardson during at least one PD session. A typical visit included work with 2 different groups of students, modeling a guided reading lesson for the attending teachers and then reflecting on the instructional practices. K-2 teachers in the district received a copy of her book, *The Next Step in Guided Reading* (2009). Teachers were exposed to guided reading lesson planning focusing on Richardson's 5 levels of reading plans. These plans included; pre-A, emergent, early, transitional and fluent reading lesson plans. Each plan targets a particular range of readers focusing on specific research based instructional strategies. Teachers began referring to these plans as "Jan Plans."

Instructional coaches worked with the district coordinators to prepare for visits with Richardson. Initially the coaches connected with classroom teachers to identify instructional groups of students. Next the coaches supported classroom teachers in gathering student assessments to be reviewed during the PD session. All assessments were sent to Richardson. After the assessments were complete and reading levels were determined instructional coaches gathered sets of guided reading books to be used on the day of the PD. Finally, instructional coaches prepared all materials needed for instruction at the guided reading table and finalized a schedule for the day. On PD days, coaches acted as host to Richardson, making themselves available for any last minute needs.

**Dr. Sunday Cummins' Work in the Scottsville District**

Cummins was added as an outside consultant in the 2013-14 school-year. Cummins' PD focused on "close reading." During her visits she worked with third through fifth grade teachers from all of the elementary buildings. Each of these classroom teachers received a copy of Cummins' book, *Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades*
During her visits Cummins worked in host teacher classrooms, modeling either whole group instruction or close reading instruction during guided reading.

Prior to Cummins' visits instructional coaches worked with host classroom teachers gathering and sending student artifacts to Cummins as a means to support preparation for model lessons. Coaches were responsible for creating an agenda for the PD session and preparing all materials that might be needed during the lesson presentation. These materials included supporting information used with teachers during planning and reflection phases of the PD session. This focus on the context of the study sets the stage for understanding the participants in the study.

**Methods for Data Collection**

**Participant Selection**

In the spring of 2014 I presented the elementary instructional coaches in the Scottsville School District with the idea of studying the sister-school coaching collaboratives as a way to tell their story. I explained that I wanted to interview them individually to discuss their personal coaching work as well as observe them interact together as a coaching collaborative. All but 2 of the 12 elementary coaches at that time agreed to participate.

Because I was interested in focusing on one complete coaching collaborative, I narrowed my selection to collaboratives where all of the coaches had agreed to participate. I chose a collaborative group of coaches who I knew offered both individually diverse backgrounds as well as diverse school work settings. All of the coaches in this study are female Caucasians. They range in age from mid 30's to mid 50's. The following chart offers foundational background information on each of the three coaches in the collaborative studied (see Table 2).
In depth information regarding individual, and group personalities and dynamics is revealed in Chapter 4.

Table 2. Coach Participants’ Educational History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Coach</th>
<th>Degrees/Certificates/Endorsements</th>
<th>Positions Held</th>
<th>Years Exp. In Education</th>
<th>Years Coaching Exp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>B.S. in Sped LD Cert. B.S. in El. Ed. M.S. in reading with the endorsement Reading Recovery trained</td>
<td>Special Ed. teacher Dept. Chair College Instructor</td>
<td>In her 30th year</td>
<td>Currently 3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodi</td>
<td>B.S. in Early Childhood, Health and P.E. and English El. Ed. Cert. M.S. in C&amp;I</td>
<td>Teacher: 1st/2nd grade combined 2nd grade 3rd grade Reading Intervention</td>
<td>In her 14th year</td>
<td>Currently 3th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlyn</td>
<td>B.S. in English Literature. M.S. in Education Cert. in H.S. English with endorsements in: German, SS, Speech, Journalism, &amp; Reading K-12 Reading Specialist Elementary Cert.</td>
<td>Teacher: H.S. English German Title 1 Adult English Intervention</td>
<td>In her 12th year</td>
<td>Currently 5th year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coaches in this study have participated in various trainings depending on their histories within the Scottsville and other districts in which they have been employed. The following chart reveals their involvement in professional development that supports their coaching practice (see Table 3).
Table 3. Coach Participants’ Professional Development Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Carolyn     | Reading Recovery® Conference Participant – Chicago, Illinois (5 times)  
Professional Development work with:  
Sunday Cummins, Jan Richardson, Jim Knight  
The Adaptive School® Training  
Cognitive Coaching® Training |
| Jodi        | District Coursework in Guided Reading (outside the Scottsville District)  
Magnet Schools Training (3 years)  
Steven Covey Lighthouse Leadership Training  
Reading Recovery® Conference Participant – Chicago, Illinois (1 time)  
Professional Learning Communities™ Training, DuFour  
The Adaptive School® Training  
Cognitive Coaching® Training  
Positive Behavior Facilitation Training |
| Kaitlyn     | The Next Steps in Guided Reading book study  
Reading Recovery® Conference Participant – Chicago, Illinois (1 time)  
Cognitive Coaching®  
High Impact Instruction Workshop, Jim Knight  
Professional Learning Communities™ Training, DuFour (2 times)  
Gretchen Courtney Training |

The coaches in this study worked at schools that each offered unique dynamics and student populations that were distinct to their buildings (see Table 4). Jodi served 22 classroom teachers while Kaitlyn served 16. Carolyn's school had the largest class size of the three buildings and at the same time the lowest percentage of low-income students. Jodi's building served the largest population of students with the largest percentage of low-income students. Kaitlyn's school housed several classrooms that served gifted program students. At the same time her school served 69% low-income students. In chapter 5 the coaches discuss the differences among their buildings and the impact those differences had on their work as a collaborative.
Table 4. Coach-School Affiliation Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School by Coach</th>
<th>Ave. Class size</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>ELL students</th>
<th>Students with disabilities</th>
<th>Gifted Program</th>
<th>No. classroom teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jodi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlyn</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of the Researcher

I am a white female educator, born and raised in the Midwest. I come from a family where education was highly regarded and literacy in particular was strongly emphasized. My role in this work stems from my personal experience and involvement as both an elementary literacy coach and instructional coach in the Scottsville School District. During the 2013-14 school-year I was actively involved as an instructional coach in one of the sister-school coaching collaboratives. I develop my personal history of coaching in more depth in Chapter 4. In my current position as a district level Prek-5 Teaching and Learning Coordinator in the Scottsville School District I work closely with the elementary instructional coaches. In this relatively new position I do not supervise or evaluate the instructional coaches nor do I have any administrative powers over any of the coaches. I am however deeply committed to the coaching process and to genuinely understanding the opportunity and impact this type of PD might afford practicing teachers. I am interested in understanding how to best support instructional coaches in my current role with the district. I bring my own understanding of coaching and coach identity to this work. My personal commitment to understanding the needs of and supports for instructional coaches in the Scottsville School District led me to this study.

During my year of interactions and data collection with the participant coaches I became an "active member" of the study (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380). Adler and Adler define active membership as an insider's perspective that "is vital to forming an accurate appraisal of human
group life" (p. 380). At times I took opportunities to "advance the group" (p. 380) and yet at the same time pulled back when necessary to allow the coaches to create their own values and goals as a collaborative. For example, in late November when I realized that the three focal coaches in this study had not yet met as a collaborative entity, I suggested the need to set a meeting date. The coaches were happy to have been pushed forward by this suggestion, commenting that their time together was always valuable.

In January I also attempted to become a force in shifting the nature of their collaborative actions so as to support them in creating more focused and meaningful coaching conversations. This was a delicate balance of naming the need to be goal oriented during their collaborations and pulling back to allow them to name and own their goals as a community of practice. I acted in keeping with Adler and Adler's (1994) stance that a researcher as an active member "observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (p. 380).

Sources of Data and Processes

Data collection for this study focused primarily on interviews and observations in naturally occurring settings. Coaches participated in initial audio-taped interviews held in the early fall of 2014. Coaches were formally interviewed again at the end of the 2014-15 school-year. I observed and audio-taped the coaches' four collaborative meetings, one in the first semester and three in the spring semester. Observations of coaches' behaviors and interactions during sister-school PD sessions took place on an ongoing basis across the year. On four occasions I audio-taped and observed lunch conversations during district PD days (see Table 5). All identities are protected by pseudonyms including the school district name. Permission was granted from Dr. Jan Richardson and Dr. Sunday Cummins to use their real names.
Table 5. Overview of Data Sources and Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Collection Methods</th>
<th>Number of Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual coach interviews</td>
<td>Audio recorded and transcribed</td>
<td>-1 Interview at the beginning of the study (fall 2014) with each of 3 focal coach participants. (Ave. 45 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1 Interview at the end of the study (spring 2015) with each of 3 focal coach participants. (Ave. 1 hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-school coaching collaborative meetings</td>
<td>Audio recorded and transcribed</td>
<td>-4 – 1 hour meetings across the year (Dec., Jan., Feb., April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with focus coach group only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation at district professional development</td>
<td>Observations, anecdotal field notes,</td>
<td>-3 – 7 hour PD sessions with focal group coaches and PD provider only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td>-7 – 7 hour PD sessions with focal group, additional coaching group, and PD provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-school coaching collaborative conversations</td>
<td>Audio recorded, anecdotal field notes,</td>
<td>-1 lunch conversation with focal study group only and PD provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with consultants which took place during lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 lunch conversations with focal study group, additional coaching group, and PD provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breaks in between morning and afternoon professional development sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study the coaches collaborative meetings took place at the same location three out of the four times they met. The coaches chose locations outside of the school setting as a way to allow them the freedom to speak and work without interruptions, and as a means to support the protection of their identity as coach participants in this study. Several of the initial and final interviews took place in the same location as the collaborative meetings. In this way the "meeting" place became a consistent, comfortable place to connect. Collaborative PD sessions typically took place at one of the three participating sister-school buildings. However, occasionally when collaboratives were combined for scheduling purposes, the PD session took place at a school outside of the three specific collaborative buildings involved in this study.

The location of interviews and PD sessions was of importance as it potentially shifted the level of familiarity and comfort for the coaches involved. The ease in which coaches in this study were able to negotiate their positions and openly discuss coaching agendas was of
particular importance to me. At the same time Geertz (1973) reminds us that while we may study different things in multiple locations, the study is not about the place, rather it is about the people and the moments that happen in those places that define people within their specific context. I considered the importance of this balance as I approached the data in this study.

**Observations.** The objective of observations within the natural setting was to examine collaborative interactions among the instructional coach participants. The majority of the observations took place during collaborative meetings among the three coaches and during PD sessions with specific grade levels. In addition to documenting specific coach interactions as well as audio-taping and transcribing specific conversations, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) advise the researcher to focus on the following key components: be concrete about sensory details, record easily forgettable but key observations, and record general impressions and feelings in the moment. With this suggestion in mind, my goal was to observe specific collaborative interactions within and among the coaching team. These observations served to further my understanding of the nature of the focal collaborative coaching team and cross reference behaviors with transcriptions at a later date.

**Interviews.** Interviews offer a unique window into the perspectives and lives of participants. I approached the initial interviews with prepared questions focused on the following three categories; (a) developing a sense of background information on each coach as it pertained to educational experiences, (b) developing an understanding of individual coaching experiences and philosophies, and (d) developing an understanding of each coaches' experiences and perceptions with collaborative work (see Appendix B). Kvale (1996) suggests that researchers prepare themselves with an interview guide that focuses on particular themes with an understanding that the prepared questions are only guidelines. With this in mind I followed the
lead of the interviewee as our conversations during interviews unfolded. This meant that some
prepared questions did not get asked as they became irrelevant to the lived experience unfolding
during the interview (Kvale, 1996).

At the end of the second semester 2015, I conducted closing interviews. Similar to the
opening interviews I had specific questions pre-planned (see Appendix C). Before I conducted
the final interviews I personalized them based on a review of initial interview transcripts as well
as reviews of observation data and collaborative meeting data transcripts. This process allowed
me to be more intentional with my interview questions, connecting with each coach on a deeper
level. This progression is directly linked to the work of Kvale (1996) who suggests that the
qualitative interview be viewed as a special kind of conversation between researcher and
participant. Therefore, intense attention must be given to the interview process itself. This
process supported a deeper understanding of interview information during analysis.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis started as soon as data collection began. A continuous
process of reviewing, re-evaluating, and re-organizing data was implemented soon after the first
interviews were transcribed. Audio-taped information from initial interviews and collaborative
meetings was transcribed immediately after the conversations took place. With an ear for
recurring and repetitive themes I began the process of open coding (Bernard & Ryan, 2010;
Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

I created individual charts for each of the three coaches in the study focused on personal
characteristics shared during their initial interviews. I was able to build on this information
throughout the year triangulating data from collaborative meeting conversations and professional
development sessions. In this way I was able to create a profile of each coach.
As I listened to audio tapes of collaborative meetings and repeatedly read through the transcripts I initially noted potential coding categories directly on to the transcripts. Initial categories included; trust, respect, openness, camaraderie, support, and storytelling. This process was somewhat difficult as interpretations and intuition impacted the process of determining categories. It is for this exact reason that Mishler (1999) cautions against the use of coding as a form of narrative analysis. He contends that coding requires the analyst to isolate questions, responses, and comments when in fact they are surely impacted by the ongoing exchange of information during discussions. As a result of this process I realized the need to create several different sets of data charts.

I initially created charts based on collaborative meeting interactions, organized by themes in an attempt to define how the coaches related to each other as a unit. Initial general coding categories that surfaced over time included, outside influences, identity construction, storytelling, support/respect, coaching strategies, and shared responsibilities. Each time I created a new chart I was able to compare themes from one meeting with themes from previous meetings. In this way I was able to see emerging patterns. These charts are available upon request.

This process led me to a deeper investigation of the topics and flow of conversation during each collaborative meeting. I created a detailed chronological flow chart of topics and time on task for each of the collaborative meeting conversations among the coaches. In this chart I began by listing key topics of discussion in order from the beginning of the meeting to the end of the meeting. I then added in sub-topics that arose during conversations and time spent on each topic. This process allowed me to understand the nature of the coaches' dialogue during collaborative conversations. This window into their collaborative process benefited my analysis greatly. I was able to observe the flow of conversations concretely and verify topics that
appeared to be influencing the coaches’ ability to coach as well as develop a secure sense of self (see Appendix D).

Finally I organized and charted information based on my research questions. This further analysis supported my initial interpretations of key topics that developed across settings; interviews, collaborative meetings, and professional development sessions. The creation of these foundational charts supported the organization of information that allowed for further analysis and triangulation of data. As I created all of these charts, they supported the development of my understanding of the nature of the coaching collaborative, processes of the construction of coaching identities, and outside factors that influenced the development of individual coaches as well as the collaborative as a unit.

Reworking research questions. Bernard and Ryan (2010) explain the need for continually chunking experiences into recordable units and using this text to discover and rediscover themes and subthemes, linking them to theoretical models. This process is what Stake (1995) refers to as pulling apart the data and putting it back together in a more meaningful way. As I continued to analyze data across multiple settings, interpreting and re-interpreting the information based on my research questions, I realized the need to re-work my research questions. My questions initially read as follows:

1. What is the nature of a sister-school professional development collaborative?
2. What do coaches learn about the practice of coaching as a result of their participation in the Collaborative?
3. What do coaches learn about collaboration as a vehicle for learning?

In an effort to focus my analysis on the nature of the collaborative I added three sub-questions. As I considered my second question I realized that I was not able to interpret the data
based on what coaches had learned, rather I was able to interpret the data based on how the coaches re-negotiated their positions during collaborative interactions. Finally, data analysis revealed a strong influence of outside factors in coaches' development and negotiation of self. With this in mind I re-focused my third question to support a discussion of the external factors that influenced the coaches' identities. I therefore changed my questions to reflect what had actually unfolded in the study. My reconstructed research questions are as follows:

1. What is the nature of a sister-school professional development collaborative?
   A. What do the three coaching participants bring to the coaching collaborative?
   B. What do the coaches value?
   C. How did the coaches develop relationships with one another?

2. How did the coaches construct their identities during collaborative interactions?

3. How did external factors influence coaches’ identities?

This rewriting of the research questions is supported by the work of Adler and Adler (1994) who contend, "At any point in the process, observers are free to alter the problems and questions they are pursuing as they gain greater knowledge of their subjects" (p. 382). Erickson (1986) also calls for a process of deliberate inquiry in which the researcher views data collection and analysis as "progressive problem solving, in which issues of sampling, hypothesis generation, and hypothesis testing go hand in hand" (p. 140).

**Personal connections and perspectives.** My own situated perspectives, understandings, and biases of the coaching process as an insider must be considered as I reflect on the analytic process. In an effort to continually focus on the research process I repeatedly reflected on my own understandings of emerging themes, possible ethical struggles, insider/outsider reflections,
and methodological questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). While Bresler (1997) reminds us to immerse ourselves in a particular situation as a means to developing a deeper understanding of our subject(s), she also warns against getting caught up in judgments about what people are doing. Bresler states, "We are responsible for portraying the studied phenomena in its complexity as well as representing multiple perspectives with empathic understanding" (p. 18).

While I did not enter into this work with strong personal connections to the participants, based on my history of coaching in the Scottsville School District and my deep understanding of coaching as a practice, some may view my work here as biased or subjective. Adler and Adler (1994) remark that validity and subjectivity are both "criticisms leveled against observational research" (p. 381). I did, across this year of research, develop relationships with my participants. Additionally in my position as Teaching and Learning Coordinator I had opportunities to interact with these coaches outside of the research study. I believe that my relationships with the participants as well as my knowledge and passion for coaching as a form of PD only served to support my ability to analyze the data. My connections to the focal coaches increased my desire to accurately reconstruct the coaches' dialogue and develop accurate portraits of participants and their interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

**Member checking.** When I began working with these coaches I told them that it was my intent to tell their story with grace and integrity. I felt that it was important that someone recognize their challenges and successes as they negotiated their positions and their work as a collaborative coaching community. In the winter of 2015-16 I contacted Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn to conduct member checking meetings. Stake (1995) reminds us that, "All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention to what they consider worthy
of attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients" (p. 49).

I personally met with each coach individually. I presented them with my interpretations of collaborative interactions and an overview of the significant findings. Each of the coaches took the opportunity to read their individual and collaborative profiles presented in Chapter 4. Together we reviewed and discussed the data charts that I created around their collaborative interactions. In my discussion of the findings in Chapter 7 I include their reactions to the analysis. I would like to have had the opportunity to speak with the coaches together as a collaborative; however, the differences in their new schedules did not lend itself to such a meeting. Based on the individual conversations that I had with Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn, I believe that to the best of my abilities I have portrayed the coaches and their collaborative work accurately.

**Developing Coaching Identities**

Coaching can be a powerful tool for implementing on-site PD as a means to shift teacher practice and support student learning (Killion and Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007; Poglinco and Bach, 2004). Poglinco and Bach (2004) contend that the success of a coaching program is contingent on the "capacity and experience" (p. 400) of the coaches. While this may in part be true, I contend that coaches' identities in relation to the many roles and responsibilities that are imposed on them may have an impact on their ability to effect change. Additionally coaches may be influenced by the amount and types of support they are afforded in terms of personal learning opportunities and district commitment to their position.

With this in mind this study attempts to understand the impact of outside factors on the development of coaches’ identities and their abilities to fulfill the roles and responsibilities
named in the research. The coaches in this study attempted to negotiate political and procedural pressures during their work as a collaborative, a community of practice. In this way the coaches were able to address the issue of isolation as they defined themselves.

This study focuses on understanding how coaching identities are developed and the outside influences that surrounds the work of coaches. Social interaction as an important factor in coaches' development will be fleshed out as the notion of communities of practice remains an underlying focus throughout the study. With the current trends in professional development shifting toward a more collaborative community of practice approach, this study will inform future practices in coaching and professional development implementation.
CHAPTER 4

COACHES AND THE COLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS

In this chapter I present foundational information regarding coaching collaboratives in the Scottsville School District. I begin with a description of my own experience as a member of a sister-school collaborative in Scottsville. The purpose of this information is to set the stage around the experiences of the three coaches in the coaching collaborative studied in this body of work. I discuss the shift that took place in 2014-15 regarding district policy as it related to the implementation of professional development (PD) and the role of the instructional coaches in Sister-School Collaboratives. I then present the three coaches as individuals, and then as an integral entity that constituted one sister-school coaching collaborative.

A Personal Connection to Coaching Collaboratives

During the 2013-14 school-year I was a member of one of the first of four elementary coaching collaboratives in the Scottsville School District. The concept of sister-school coaching collaboratives emerged during what turned out to be my last year as an instructional coach in the district. My collaborative consisted of myself and two coaches with whom I had worked previously in multiple capacities. Each of us represented our own individual elementary school within the collaborative. The concept of a coaching collaborative was new to all of us; however, because we had experiences working together in the past we immediately formed a collegial relationship.

District administrators and coordinators initially presented the idea of sister-school coaching collaboratives to the instructional coaches in the spring of 2013. Instructional coaches were assigned school collaborative partners and charged with developing and supporting PD in the area of literacy instruction for kindergarten through third grade teachers in their collective
buildings. The district leaders set a professional development schedule that included session locations and timeframes for all collaboratives. Substitute teachers were secured across the upcoming school-year to release teachers from their classrooms for participation. As collaborative coaches it was our responsibility to determine what specific literacy topics to cover and how to present the information. Ultimately, we were responsible for all aspects of the PD opportunities including implementation.

**Coaching focused on guided reading.** As a district, elementary reading instruction focused on guided reading had previously been grounded in the work of Dr. Jan Richardson. Due to shifts and changes over time in district leadership and teacher work force, this grounded work had not only slipped off in some buildings, it had all but disappeared in others. We knew as instructional coaches that a large part of our work needed to be focused on securing teachers' understanding of best practice “at the guided reading table” (Richardson, 2009, p. 12).

At the same time several elementary schools in the district were in the process of piloting new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. These curriculum resources were published programs that included lessons for all aspects of ELA. One of the schools in my collaborative was piloting a new curriculum, the other two were not. We knew this would create a challenge for us in terms of modeling strategies and asking teachers to implement new instructional moves modeled and discussed at our PD sessions.

**Beginning our work as a collaborative.** We first met as a collaborative, my coaching partners, a district coordinator, and myself, early in the school-year of 2013-14 to discuss our understanding of what the PD should look like for the teachers in our buildings and how we wanted to organize ourselves. Our initial meeting was held at an outside venue, not directly tied to any of the school buildings. We believed that this afforded us the opportunity to speak openly
and freely about our beliefs around reading instruction, our building needs, and any concerns with the PD process itself.

At our initial meeting we discussed the needs of the teachers in our respective buildings and determined a focus for our first PD session. We decided to open our first PD session with an activity that would allow teachers to discuss potential literacy focal topics for future PD sessions. This information supported us in our decision-making moving forward across the year. We also agreed to use Dr. Richardson's lesson plan templates for emergent, early, and transitional readers. These plans are often referred to in the district as "Jan Plans." Using the Jan Plans allowed us to focus our work in research-based instruction at the guided reading table and at the same time zoom in on specific plans and/or components of lesson plans.

Our PD planning process together included conversations around goals and outcomes for each PD session. The instructional coach at the host building site often shared insights concerning teachers who might be willing and able to model small group guided reading instruction. As part of this discussion we determined what was needed to support classroom teachers in preparing to present a focal lesson for their colleagues. Occasionally, we chose to use a Jan Richardson video viewing as an alternative to a live demonstration.

Together we determined what instructional information the observing teachers would need. This might include structured work in Richardson's book, *The Next Step in Guided Reading* (2009), or student assessment samples to include running records for group analysis. We drew from our work with *The Adaptive School®* model (Garmston & Wellman, 2013) and *Groups at Work* (Lipton & Wellman, 2011) to create opportunities for teachers to engage meaningfully in the PD. Finally, we assigned tasks. We determined who was in charge of
creating the agenda, who would create the materials needed for teacher engagement opportunities, and who would bring refreshments.

On the days of PD we all gathered at the host building site early enough to review our plan for the day and make sure that everything from room set-up to paperwork, to refreshments was ready to go. In between the morning and afternoon sessions we ate lunch together, debriefing the morning session and taking notes on possible teacher supports moving forward. At the end of the afternoon session we again took time to evaluate teacher engagement and the success of our day together. Before we left for the day we reviewed the schedule for upcoming PD sessions and marked our calendars for our next planning meeting as a coaching collaborative.

Our collaborative meetings were focused and productive. As we each developed clarity around our coaching practice, we worked together to support not only our understanding of coaching as it related to our PD sessions, but also as it related to our own understanding of pedagogy. In between meetings we emailed, texted, and phoned each other to stay connected. This continuous process of staying connected to one another helped break the cycle of isolation and solidified our work as a collaborative.

As the year progressed our coaching collaborative fell into a comfortable cycle of collaboration, presentation, and reflection (see Figure 3). We grounded ourselves in a cyclical process of coaching support. As a coaching unit we controlled the topic for PD and the presentation methods. Together we implemented strategies from Cognitive Coaching® and Adaptive Schools® training. We offered support to each other as coaching colleagues. Our focused goals and desired outcomes helped us maintain a collaborative coaching lens.
Figure 3. Sister-School Coaching Collaborative Cycle

**A Shift in District Focus**

Prior to the start of the 2014-15 school-year the Scottsville School District adopted a new elementary ELA curriculum. The publishing company provided PD as part of the implementation process. At the same time, the district teaching and learning team arranged for additional support for 3rd through 5th grade teachers from Dr. Sunday Cummins and additional support for kindergarten through 2nd grade teachers from Dr. Jan Richardson. The combined efforts of these two consultants along with support from McGraw-Hill accounted for all of the PD opportunities for elementary teachers provided by the district for the 2014-15 school-year.

Sister-school collaborative groupings remained together as originally conceptualized. However, the shift in PD formatting took the instructional coaches out of the planning and implementation phases. Coaches re-framed their identity during PD sessions and were viewed as "hosts" and/or "co-learners." Occasionally, to accommodate outside consultant schedules, the district PD schedule joined two collaborative groups together for a specific PD opportunity. During these sessions "host" coaches prepared for as many as 25 participants.
Renegotiating identity. As a result of the district's reorganization of PD, instructional coaches found themselves renegotiating their identity as individual coaches and as a collaborative unit. There was an immediate noticeable shift in how and why coaches collaborated outside of regularly scheduled district coach meetings. During the first year of the sister-school collaboratives, 2013-14, coaches met and communicated regularly, planning for PD sessions. With the responsibility of PD removed from their repertoire in 2014-15, instructional coaches no longer needed to connect with each other on an ongoing basis.

Instructional coaches were forced to reposition themselves before, during, and after PD sessions. The district decision to dictate PD topics meant that instructional coaches were no longer in control of the content covered during PD sessions. The new format left the instructional coaches largely uninformed regarding goals and objectives of PD sessions. This lack of knowledge put coaches at a disadvantage in preparing teachers for upcoming PD opportunities and often repositioned them during sessions as "co-learners."

This new identity also created a disconnection from their positioning the year before during PD as “expert-other.” Instructional coaches had to re-negotiate established relationships built on an "expert-other" philosophy. Suddenly coach and teacher were positioned equally during PD. In some cases this shift impacted coaches' credibility. Coaches also had to negotiate their position with new teachers who had no prior experience with coaching. Again as co-learner, coaches now had to establish credibility with new teachers before partnering in a coaching relationship.

Because instructional coaches no longer had the power to determine the focus of PD for the teachers, they had lost the ability to target teachers' instructional needs. As a result instructional coaches were also placed in the position of fielding comments from disgruntled
classroom teachers who felt that their PD needs had not been met. Coaches found themselves persuading teachers to use resources and strategies that they potentially were not ready to take on or were already versed in.

The shift to a "top down" structure for PD affected the instructional coaches in ways that had not been anticipated. Perhaps the most dramatic impact: instructional coaches now had little to no reason to collaborate among themselves. The groundwork for the development of working relationships between coaches was stymied. Efforts to remove the isolation issue for coaches had been lost. The sense of teamwork within collaboratives was inadvertently diminished. As a result coaches did not see the need to convene as a collaborative. However, when invited, the coaches in this study were pleased to have the opportunity to gather as a unit. They intentionally carved out time for four hour long meetings throughout the year. During final interviews they all named their meeting experiences as valuable sharing time, integral to their development as coaches.

**Instructional Coaches**

In this study I seek to understand the nature of a coaching collaborative and how coaches constructed their identities during interactions with their collaborative coaching colleagues and how outside factors influenced those identities. The three individual instructional coaches presented in this work, together made up one coaching collaborative in the Scottsville District. In order to understand how coaches experienced their work together in the Sister-School coaching collaborative, I first needed to orient myself in who my participants were as individuals. This perspective supported my understanding of individual identity in relation to their identity as a member of a coaching collaborative.
Kaitlyn

Watching Kaitlyn enter a PD opportunity with video equipment draped over her shoulder, she exudes a kind of quiet confidence. She is not flashy in her appearance. She is soft spoken and her comments are thoughtful and carefully crafted. Many of the participants are not aware of the wealth of knowledge and range of experiences she brings with her to the coaching position.

Disillusioned her senior year in college by her student colleagues' lack of understanding about the inequalities in education, Kaitlyn pulled out of the department of education and finished her B.S. instead in English literature. She returned to school a semester later, determined to become a "change agent", receiving a Master's Degree in education as well as a secondary teaching certificate in English with endorsements in German, social studies, journalism, and reading. Kaitlyn also took the National Teacher Exams, which expanded her reading endorsement to include K-12. As one can imagine, this education afforded her many opportunities. She taught high school English and German in the U.S. before teaching adult literacy abroad for several years.

Upon returning to the States Kaitlyn landed in the Scottsville School District Area. She decided to shift her professional attention to the elementary schools. In order to transfer her teaching endorsements into the elementary system, she first took the state K-12 reading specialist test along with the basic skills test, which was not required earlier in her career. Kaitlyn began her work in the Scottsville School District as a reading interventionist and extended day learning teacher. However, after she began working in the district funding became tight and her position was in jeopardy. In order to move forward and maintain her position she would have to show that she had an elementary teaching certificate as well. Perseverance must be her middle name.
because in the following year and a half, while still teaching part time, Kaitlyn attended two different higher education facilities to complete 30 hours of course work and receive her elementary teaching certificate. "That was a crazy year," says Kaitlyn. The next year Kaitlyn interviewed for and was hired into the instructional coach position.

Kaitlyn as Coach

Kaitlyn participated in multiple trainings and several book studies on the road to developing and fine tuning her coaching abilities. She attended a Reading Recovery® Conference in Chicago, a Jim Knight training on High Impact Instruction, Cognitive Coaching® training, as well as Professional Learning Communities™ (PLC) training with Dufour two years in a row. She grounds her literacy work in the practices of Jan Richardson, having participated in two different studies of Richardson's (2009) book, The Next Step in Guided Reading. "So that book kind of became my bible. I saw the power of it and for the classroom teacher too."

Focus on Dr. Jan Richardson. During an interview with Kaitlyn she discussed her deep understanding of Richardson's instructional practices at the guided reading table. Kaitlyn's identity as a coach was grounded in her expertise at the guided reading table and her extensive knowledge of Richardson's work in literacy instruction. Kaitlyn realized that being an expert in one particular area created challenging situations for her as a coach. She explained, "Well, I think enough people recognized it that that's what most people wanted to work with me on, which was good and bad." Kaitlyn continued,

I don't think they ever saw me as much of a resource for math as I can be. And so I would have liked to do a lot more Number Talks or something like that....but when I was working with people with the Jan [Richardson approach] they all saw the improvements
that they were looking for in their students' reading. So that was good. And then they wanted to work on it more. Or they told their colleagues.

Kaitlyn's reputation as a strong "literacy" coach became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Her coaching practice was defined by her knowledge of guided reading instruction. She discovered that the teachers she worked with viewed her exclusively as a literacy coach, perhaps even a Jan Richardson coach. They did not see her as an Instructional coach. For this reason, Kaitlyn did not coach into other instructional areas as much as she would have liked.

Kaitlyn was comfortable sharing her coaching experiences at the guided reading table with Jodi and Carolyn during Collaborative meetings. She revealed her comfort and expertise with the Jan Richardson model as well as her frustrations as "expert other." Kaitlyn reflected, "... being that good, you know I couldn't help but [think], 'How could you do that, I would never have done that.'" Kaitlyn realized that the instructional behaviors she was questioning "weren't big things." She talked about reminding herself that her classroom teachers had a range of understanding and expertise at the guided reading table. She commented, "They need to be encouraged where they are."

Kaitlyn realized the need to understand her teachers' level of instructional practices at the guided reading table and how to focus her coaching appropriately. At the same time she struggled with an administrator who did not understand the full range of possibilities at the guided reading table using Jan Richardson's approach. This lack of knowledge at the administrative level created difficult coaching situations for Kaitlyn. At the December Sister-School Collaboration she shared her frustrations with Jodi and Carolyn.

I think in our building that there's a clear message...that K-2 [teachers] do 'Jan Plans' but 3rd through 5th it's [not the case]. Sometimes I struggle with how much can I walk in
and say, 'Because these kids are Transitional (a specific reading stage including levels J-P) you should do a 'Jan Plan.'

Kaitlyn revealed her understanding of specific reading instruction that students need to be successful at different reading levels. At the same time she presented her frustrations with figuring out how to coach into classrooms where teachers lacked the understanding of instructional practices to support all students at the guided reading table. Kaitlyn also revealed her frustration with an administrator who did not specifically advocate for using the Jan Richardson instructional approach at all grade levels.

Throughout the year Kaitlyn regularly shared coaching stories that involved her work around the Richardson model of guided reading instruction. During their January collaborative meeting Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn shared ideas for an upcoming building level PD day in February for 2nd and 3rd grade teachers. Prior to this date in the 2014-15 school-year, all PD sessions were planned and implemented by outside consultants. The February PD session offered coaches a rare opportunity to individually plan and implement PD for their own teachers. Kaitlyn told Jodi and Carolyn that she intended to use part of the training to focus on Richardson's guided reading instructional approach. In February the coaches shared their experiences from this PD day. Kaitlyn shared information regarding her intention to focus on Richardson’s model (see Table 6).
Table 6. Quotes that Kaitlyn shared about her professional development planning and implementation for the February training day, focused on Richardson's model of guided reading instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 23, 2015</td>
<td>I think it would be nice to tie some conversations about Jan [Richardson] into data days and how to use the [curriculum] materials to have an idea what level your kids are at....K-2 [teachers] could have a lot more specific conversations about where their students are, sharing strategies and ideas with Jan [Richardson]. But 3rd-5th not really. They're not always sure where [their students read].</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11, 2015</td>
<td>We talked about using the Jan [Richardson] lessons in a more targeted intentional way. Looking at running records to determine teaching points and strategy focus to move kids. It's pretty consistent K-2 that the teachers are using the 'Jan Plans' and they have all of the major pieces. But the teaching point sometimes doesn't get in there....Third grade was a little different because they have some students that have been released from intervention groups. The interventionists said they need to be in a 'Jan Plan' but the teachers weren't necessarily doing that. So that [PD session] was more going back over the plan.</td>
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Kaitlyn explained to Jodi and Carolyn at the January meeting that her 3rd through 5th grade teachers did not always know what specific reading level their students were performing at and what level of instruction from the Jan Richardson model they should be using to instruct. She revealed the need to teach the teachers how to determine what levels their students were reading at and then coach them on how to use the appropriate plan.
The kindergarten through second grade teachers at Kaitlyn's school were using the appropriate lesson plans from Jan Richardson's model and taking running records regularly. These primary teachers needed support around understanding the importance of taking the time to analyze the running records and using that information to intentionally plan for instruction. Kaitlyn's expertise in using Richardson's model to support student growth was revealed as she shared her coaching approach here.

**A technology leader.** Kaitlyn is also known among the coaches for her technology skills. She frequently offered to record PD opportunities with Jan Richardson and Sunday Cummins and was often behind the video camera at these PD meetings. Kaitlyn's video-taped scenarios were posted and shared in the instructional coaches' Google drive. This added bonus of video-taping the PD session was a way for Kaitlyn to make the information accessible to anyone from the three schools who was unable to attend for any reason. The videos also were available for other coaches to use as a means of extending the PD opportunities.

Kaitlyn often shared insights and strategies around technology use in the schools. At the January collaborative meeting she opened up a discussion around the online math games available to teachers. "I had a first grade teacher yesterday tell me that she couldn't get it (online math games) to work." Kaitlyn continued to share information around how she tried to problem solve the situation. "So I tried to go in as a student because I don't have a class. I told her I would work with her after school today and we would look at it together."

Kaitlyn presented this information to Jodi and Carolyn as a way to inquire about what they knew about the online games and to compare experiences with the new math technology. Kaitlyn was often the leader or instigator of conversations around technology. A strong
component of her identity as a coach was grounded in her knowledge and comfort with the use of technology.

**Personal coaching beliefs and goals.** Kaitlyn believed that coaching cycles were the key to successful coaching. In recalling meaningful coaching cycles, which Kaitlyn believes are "the most impactful for people who have done them," she specifically remarked that her coaching cycles around *The Next Step in Guided Reading* by Jan Richardson (2009) have been the most successful. "The teacher would come to me and say 'okay I have this part down. I want to get this part down and I need your help.'"

Kaitlyn talked specifically about what her coaching cycles looked like in these situations. She shared that she began with observations of instruction at the guided reading table. She would then be better positioned to co-plan with the teacher, model a lesson for them, and coach into the classroom teacher's instruction at the guided reading table. "So I'll observe and then co-plan....I may model the next lesson for them and then they may do it." Kaitlyn discussed the reflection stage as the link between instruction and moving forward with targeted planning. Kaitlyn also offered information on the power of working in *The Next Step in Guided Reading* (2009) with the classroom teacher. "I come in for that group everyday and we pull out the Jan book and the reading books and we plan." Kaitlyn shared that this cyclical process was repeated over the course of several weeks. She remarked, "I think that's where I've seen the most success."

During our initial interview Kaitlyn spoke about a previous coaching experience when she was able to combine her knowledge and use of technology to support a coaching cycle around the Jan Richardson model of instruction at the guided reading table. "With one teacher the [student] behaviors were coming into play and so we showed them [the students] the Jan
video of what the group should look like... but just a chunk at a time." Kaitlyn explained that she and the teacher had a sense of urgency around moving these students in the right direction as they were still significantly below grade level in the spring of the year.

We showed them (the students) the quick writing. Just that clip of the Jan video and had them watch the kids in the video and pay attention to how the kids were finished before the timer went off. So we said, 'Can you guys beat the timer?' We also told them that we could take a video of them when they were ready and that they could be the model for other kids to see this.

Kaitlyn continued working with the classroom teacher and students on each component of a guided reading lesson including, book introductions and word work. Each time the students achieved an appropriate level of success, Kaitlyn video-taped them in action. Kaitlyn and the classroom teacher then showed the video to the students for discussion and reflection. "It was amazing," Kaitlyn said. "The last video we took of them went through a whole lesson." In the fall of 2014 Kaitlyn and the classroom teacher presented the videos and strategies used during this particular coaching cycle to the staff at their building. Kaitlyn concluded, "It was really neat."

In this example Kaitlyn moved flexibly between technology coach, behavior coach, and literacy coach. Her expertise in both technology and guided reading formed a solid foundation for a successful coaching cycle. Kaitlyn exuded a kind of contagious energy as she revealed her accomplishment. It was clear in that moment that both technology and guided reading were not only her areas of strength but energizing for her as well.

**Contemplating career possibilities.** While Kaitlyn clearly brought a wealth of knowledge and experiences to the instructional coach position, the one thing she did not have on
her extensive resume was the title of elementary classroom teacher. She revealed, "So sometimes I wonder when a teacher doesn't come to me to work with me if that's not why, and I don't know that they would ever say, but..." Kaitlyn continued, "I do often consider going into the classroom." Her thoughts of shifting from coach to classroom teacher were grounded in her beliefs about who a coach should be and what experiences they should have on their resume. Kaitlyn believed that she would be a more well rounded and perhaps more credible in her work as an instructional coach with the added experience of classroom teacher.

During our spring interview Kaitlyn also expressed a desire to focus her future work with teachers and students solely around the Jan Richardson model of guided reading instruction. Kaitlyn discussed an interest in working as a specialist outside of her current district, possibly supporting multiple districts on a consultant basis. She commented, "Sometimes I think doing what Jan does would be fun. I feel like I would be comfortable going and looking at the data on kids at some strange district and just teaching them a Jan lesson." Kaitlyn's aspirations to focus solely on this component of classroom instruction speaks to both her comfort level and philosophical grounding in her practice at the guided reading table.

To a great degree Kaitlyn's identity is grounded in her work around guided reading. She revealed a desire to work in other curricular areas with teachers but also enthusiastically shared her work in literacy with Jodi, Carolyn, and me. Her technological expertise also surfaced throughout the year as another comfortable focus in her coaching practice. Kaitlyn understood how her lack of classroom experiences potentially had a negative impact on her ability to coach into all classrooms. At the same time she repeatedly revealed a love for and desire to further her work around literacy instruction at the guided reading table.
Jodi

Jodi has been described by some of her coworkers as having a "big personality." Perhaps she first developed her spunk when she decided she could teach better than her second grade teacher. Jodi attended a very small elementary school growing up, 16 students in combined grade classes. According to Jodi her second grade teacher was "exceptionally mean." She remembered thinking, "If you are teaching you shouldn't be mean....I should be teaching because I can do better than she does." Jodi's positive inspiration came in 5th and 6th grade. Her teacher, who also worked at a zoo, brought animals to class. Jodi remarked that she could vividly remember that teacher "the best." As it turns out, Jodi's heart is still in the intermediate grades.

Jodi attended a "tiny" Liberal Arts College in the Northern United States where she did not follow a traditional teacher education path. She graduated with three minor degrees, Early Childhood Education, Health & P.E., and English. She received an elementary teaching certificate as part of her studies. Jodi taught for 5 years in that same state before achieving a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at a larger northern state university. Jodi reflected on her early teaching practice. "When I finished my Master's degree...before I moved, even teaching in the classroom, there was always something that I wanted to do, something else.

Jodi explained that she was frustrated with what she referred to as "mundane" classroom activities. Fieldtrips, lunch count, and discipline referrals, "Things that have nothing to do with instructing kids" were all activities that drove her "crazy." When Jodi encountered teachers who had been teaching at a particular grade level for "27 years," she knew by her internal reaction that she didn't want to do the exact same thing for 27 years. "I always knew I wanted to do something else." She remarked. Jodi has considered Reading Recovery® training and
administration. "I think I thought I wanted to do administration...and then got into it and was like never, never ever."

Immediately following her advanced studies Jodi moved to the Scottsville School District area. Her goal was to find something in the area of curriculum and instruction and not in the classroom. Unfortunately, not knowing the area, she didn't know where to begin and took a teaching position at the same school where she is now the instructional coach.

Her first year at Harrison Elementary School, Jodi was one of 19 new hires. She held several different positions at the school before the instructional coaching position was developed. "So when this position came up and it required teaching longevity and a Master's degree I knew...this is what I want to do and I've wanted to do it for a long time and the timing was right! Eight years later Jodi remarked, "I like it. I like the people a lot. I like the kids...It's an interesting fit."

**Jodi as Coach**

Jodi’s coaching knowledge and style really began developing early on in her teaching career. Her first teaching experience was in a small elementary school that housed only one classroom each of grades kindergarten through five. "We had really good relationship building as far as mentoring teachers. I helped when we had a new teacher." Jodi took advantage of the fact that her district provided teachers with a lot of extra coursework around balanced literacy and guided reading. She and the other teachers who attended the coursework shared the new information on guided reading instructional practices at staff meetings with the rest of the staff.

Since Jodi arrived at the Scottsville School District she has taken advantage of many professional development opportunities to enhance and support her own growth as a teacher and an instructional coach. She participated in school focused professional development with her
staff three summers in a row. Her building also participated in the Steven Covey Lighthouse Leadership Training which she took part in. Jodi attended the Annual Reading Recovery® Conference with her fellow coaches. She also participated in Professional Learning Communities™ (PLC) training, Adaptive Schools® training, Cognitive Coach® training, and Positive Behavior Facilitation (PBF) summer trainings.

**A confident and passionate attitude.** Jodi's strong conviction for supporting best practice was easily recognized when she talked about coaching. "I'm really guilty of walking into a room that doesn't have guided reading set and saying, 'Okay, so you're going to have five groups and see everybody like this.'" She remarked that she often takes her coaching encounters to the "Nth level" which she admitted was not best practice. Jodi realized that her work was more productive when she started with one thing at a time, "having materials at the [guided reading] table," then moving on to another practice.

Jodi admitted that she was working on "...being able to step back and do things one at a time [with teachers]. This was somewhat of a struggle for Jodi as she is a self proclaimed "bombarder." During the April collaborative coach meeting Carolyn shared a story about a frustrating coaching cycle. Carolyn remarked, "I can't bombard her [the teacher] with everything that needs to be done." Jodi interjected emphatically, "I'm a total bombarder!"

At our first interview in the fall Jodi reflected on the diverse coaching styles in her Collaborative. She commented, "They [Kaitlyn and Carolyn] just come at problems really differently. Whereas I'm like kind of a bull in a china shop." Jodi viewed the work of coaching as muddled at times. She described her approach as "Let's get messy and we'll figure it out." Jodi recognized that her style of coaching was bolder than Kaitlyn and Carolyn's style. She
appreciated the differences and reflected on the impact that her style had on teachers in her building.

During our final interview Jodi remarked, "I get crazy. I get into the melee....But it's a detriment to people who don't know where to take it." Jodi recognized that her approach was to meet the work head on. "I'm here, let's do it." She remarked, understanding that some teachers were more in the place of "I don't know what to do, where to go?" Jodi respected the teachers in her building and understood the fact that some teachers were hesitant to get involved in a coaching cycle. At the same time she recognized that her approach to coaching and her passions for good solid instruction sometimes hindered her ability to connect with teachers.

**Personal coaching beliefs and goals.** At our initial interview Jodi reflected on the importance of honesty and focusing on authentic work grounded in student needs. She commented that she believed honesty was one of the most critical components of a successful coaching experience. As Jodi discussed her ability to get into classrooms she commented,

> It's really hard for me to get in to some classrooms because teachers are saying I'm fine. And maybe they do think that they are fine or they just don't want to admit things that they are struggling with. So I think if we start out by saying it's about the kids or the curriculum or the data, we try to start somewhere to get in.

Jodi added that this approach also made her work "authentic."

As Jodi reflected on her coaching beliefs she added realistic expectations as another key component. "Realistic expectations is a really big part of it [coaching cycles] too. And knowing we're not going to solve every single problem in the two or three weeks we're together.” She believed that focusing on one teaching strategy at a time was most productive. She encouraged
teachers to reflect, 'This is what I struggle with. This is my hardest part.' Jodi regarded this as an important component of her job as instructional coach.

Jodi shared her desire to support teachers emotionally by "empowering" them. She believed that by helping teachers set realistic goals and working together to develop new or more appropriate instructional strategies teachers had the power to shift their practice in meaningful ways. Jodi commented that she also wanted to help teachers believe that they could take on new instructional practices. She explained that often teachers commented that a particular strategy worked because Jodi was the one implementing it during a model lesson. Jodi's goal was to support teachers in understanding, "It's not just happening because I'm doing it! You can do it too." This approach again reflected Jodi's desire to empower teachers.

**Wrestling with "voice and choice."** Philosophically Jodi understood the district administration's decision to ground the instructional coaching practice in a "voice and choice" protocol. In essence, teachers had a choice as to whether or not they wanted to engage in partnership work with the instructional coach in their building. Instructional coaches were to wait to be asked by a teacher for support. Jodi believed that all teachers should actively participate in the coaching program. She was still trying to problem solve this approach. Jodi shared her frustration with getting into all classrooms. "Here's my other problem, waiting to be asked! I'm really not good at waiting to be asked." While the coaching program in Scottsville was based on a "voice and choice" protocol, Jodi reflected that this philosophy was difficult for her to negotiate.

In response to the roadblocks that voice and choice presented, Jodi shared a coaching strategy that she referred to as "going in through the back door." She talked about asking teachers, "What have you tried with guided writing?...That was the sample lesson that we
worked on [during professional development]." In this way she hoped to open up conversations around instruction that may eventually get her into classrooms.

Jodi had her own philosophy of how the coaching program could be presented in a way that involved all teachers in coaching cycles throughout the year. Her ideas were grounded in the concept that, "There needs to be some sort of dynamic with administration and coaching and teachers." She suggested a monthly grade level focus. "In October we're really going to focus in on second grade. Second grade teachers you're going to pick a curricular area to do a [coaching] cycle [in] because it's your month and your turn." She believed that a combination of a focused time frame along with a choice of what to work on would be a "non-aggressive" way to approach coaching cycles. "Something to just kind of get those doors open and then the choice is, you get to pick what you want to work on." Jodi was firmly grounded in the belief that teachers should not get the choice of whether or not to participate in the coaching program.

**Using student data to drive coaching cycles.** As Jodi reflected on her coaching cycles during our fall interview she talked about her personal desire to use more student assessment data with teachers to determine instructional moves. This grounding in student data is strongly suggested in the works of Sweeney (2011) and West and Cameron (2013). In their continuum of student-centered coaching, West and Cameron define an impactful coaching approach where the, “focus is on using data and student work to analyze student learning and collaborate to make informed decisions about instruction” (p. 9).

Jodi's concern surfaced from her knowledge of how and why teachers were grouping students for reading instruction. "I think a lot of times we group kids based on convenience instead of where they really are." Jodi realized that intermediate teachers were often grouping students based on nationally normed fluency scores. She commented, "Just because students can
word call means nothing about reading....They (the students) have no idea what they're talking about or how to connect it to anything else." Jodi recognized that understanding this realization was "an eye opener for me and for [the teacher].” She discussed the need to work with intermediate teachers on using multiple reading assessments to determine a child's instructional needs.

Jodi reflected that as she worked with teachers on the specific information gleaned from each assessment, she developed a deeper understanding herself. As an example she talked about her recent work with a third grade teacher who was creating student reading groups on AIMSweb® fluency scores. Jodi suggested that they look at comprehension components of additional assessments and analyze reading patterns at the same time. The teacher asked her, "Why do we need all this stuff?" Jodi was able to show him, using additional assessments, that creating reading groups based solely on fluency scores could in fact result in inaccurate groupings. In this way the more Jodi worked with multiple sources of assessment data the more she was able to support teachers with their understanding of how to use the information to inform instruction.

*Growing in new areas.* Jodi was interested in stretching herself over the course of the 2014-15 school-year, gaining more knowledge in areas other than her typical comfort zone. "I know that I would rather go in and teach reading and social studies with people every single day than math. But we have a need for math [coaching support]."

Jodi realized that with the district focused on reading instruction during PD, she would have to educate herself on the new math curriculum. She commented, "I need to be purposeful....I'm trying to set aside time during the day which usually never happens. I'm trying to give myself freedom for that learning during the day." In this statement Jodi raised common
issues with coaching – scheduling and transparency. Coaches' work in general is more visible than classroom work. Research suggests that coaches post their schedules in a visible space in an effort to be transparent about their work (Killion & Harrison, 2006)). Jodi struggled with the need to justify time during the school day working in her office as "researcher," as opposed to spending all of her time in classrooms and with teachers.

All things to everyone. With 23 new staff members in her building, Jodi felt that she needed to be available to everybody. Early on in the year she commented that she wasn't sure she had made any progress. At the same time she recognized that perhaps her thinking was a result of her "unrealistic expectations" of herself as a coach. Jodi reflected on her efforts to support all of the teachers in her building. "I just wish there was a way to figure out kind of equitably." While attempting to support all teachers Jodi once again recognized the effects that a "voice and choice" approach to coaching had on her practice. She referred to it as "the boulder in the stream."

Jodi told me that she had shared her concerns with a district colleague who advised her to, "Stop life-rafting all these people." Jodi realized that she was "life-rafting" in classrooms for a couple of weeks and then leaving that classroom to work in another. When she stopped working with a teacher, she was concerned that the work was not continuing without her. She realized that her attempt to see everyone was in reality not moving anyone forward. She said that she "really took to heart" advice from a colleague to focus her energy on spending time working with people who wanted to "propel" their practice forward.

Jodi's coaching practice was grounded in her passion for impactful classroom instruction and, consequently, positive student learning outcomes. Her belief system was grounded in solid researched-based components of good coaching and supportive PD. Jodi believed in facilitating
honest, trusting teacher-coach relationships. She focused on authentic, embedded PD work. Her zeal for instructional coaching naturally surfaced as she discussed her work with her collaborative colleagues.

**Carolyn**

Carolyn would have perhaps been deemed least likely to become a teacher in her high school yearbook – perhaps even least likely to go to college. "Really I didn't like school at all. No I would have stayed home if I could have in elementary and junior high definitely." She continued explaining that she didn't mind high school so much, although she enjoyed the social aspects of it more than the academics.

When it came to considering college she remarked, "Me going to college was not even a thought. I didn't even think about going to college really. It wasn't something that was said in my family." Carolyn's father was a farmer and her mother had a two year degree in nursing. "My grandparents had never been to college." As a result, college was never something that Carolyn thought about until her friends started talking about going out to Colorado to study. So Carolyn decided she would go to Colorado too. In actuality she landed at a small college in western Illinois. She remarked, "It was as far west as I could get."

Carolyn has an undergraduate degree in special education working with emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted students. After she completed her undergraduate degree Carolyn went back to school to add a Learning Disability (LD) certificate. This allowed her to teach special education from Pre-K to high school. She also has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's in reading, including a reading endorsement.

Carolyn found special education quite by accident. When she arrived at college she was enrolled in the Elementary Education department but soon realized that she was one of
"hundreds of kids." She thought to herself, "I'm never going to get a job. I have to do something." This led her to the special education bulletin board. "They (the course offerings) had all the different categories. I thought, social emotionally disturbed, that sounds interesting." She took the course and loved it. "It was the kids that I identified with somehow. I like those kids, I like their spunk. I like their spirit."

Now in her 30th year of teaching, Carolyn spent 27 of those years working in special education in some capacity. Her experience spans elementary, middle, and high school, as well as college instruction. To date she has taught in the areas of Emotionally Disturbed, Cross Categorical, and Self-Contained. Most recently she completed Reading Recovery® training. "I like books," she says. "I always liked books." Carolyn's work as a half time Reading Recovery® teacher and half time special education teacher led her to the position of Instructional Coach which she has held for the past three years.

Carolyn as Coach

As a coach Carolyn immediately embraced every opportunity for learning her new craft. In our first interview she commented, "Well the minute I found out I got the job... I started Googling. I started reading. I got books immediately from [a district coordinator] and everybody else. I took it to heart and read a lot."

As part of the Reading Recovery® program Carolyn has regularly attended the annual conference in Chicago. She was also trained in Cognitive Coaching® and the Adaptive Schools® strategies. Carolyn belongs to the International Reading Association, now named International Literacy Association (ILA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). She regularly reads their journals and newsletters.
As a new coach Carolyn appreciated the numerous opportunities she had for developing her coaching practice. "Through coaching I just get a ton of support and opportunities for growth." She named several coaching book studies as instrumental in developing her understanding of content and instructional coaching; Close Reading, Cummins (2013), Lemons to Lemonade, Garmston and Zimmerman (2013), High Impact Instruction, Knight (2013), The Next Step in Guided Reading, Richardson (2009), Agents of Change West and DeCameron (2013).

Carolyn grounded her coaching practice in the use of multiple professional resources. She used books, journals, videos, and conference information regularly in her practice. She referred to these resources for specific information to support teachers with new and appropriate instructional strategies. At our fall interview Carolyn cited several coaching situations where her specific use of readings came into play. She referred to a particular coaching cycle focused on non-fiction instruction. She explained that she carefully read Close Reading by Cummins (2013) in order to be able to "go back and refer to it when I'm talking to the teacher."

Carolyn also shared a scenario when she used resources from High Impact Instruction by Knight (2013) "I do go back to that book sometimes. There are times when I'll look back through that and...there’re certain things in there that I will pick up." During the February collaborative meeting with Jodi and Kaitlyn, Carolyn shared how she had used both High Impact Instruction (2013) as well as resources from the Teaching Channel at a recent building level professional development session with classroom teachers.

I showed videos out of the High Impact Jim Knight book. The short ones on higher level questioning. I showed short videos from the Teaching Channel. We talked about how
this will fit in your classroom and how would you like to introduce it into your classroom.

Carolyn realized the power for teachers of seeing instructional strategies in practice. Using videos was one way Carolyn allowed teachers to observe and discuss teaching moves in the moment. The use of videos also removed the personalization of watching a live lesson, either modeled by Carolyn or classroom teachers. Using resources in this manner opened up new opportunities for teachers. After Carolyn used the resources during PD work, teachers were linked to the resources and could use them on their own as needed and as time allowed.

**A special education teacher at heart.** In addition to her current trainings, Carolyn's special education focus definitely had an impact on how she approached coaching. "Well, I had 27 years of special ed. so it had to impact me" she remarked. Carolyn explained her shift in thinking when she became an instructional coach. "When I think of myself now I think of myself as an adult educator whereas before it was the kids. It was the students. You know they were my kids." This comment revealed Carolyn's understanding of the need to shift her mindset from student-centered work to adult-centered work. It also revealed her struggle with letting go of viewing the students she worked with as "my kids."

She continued to explain that her work with classroom teachers focused on "the whole child," a lens she developed as a special educator. "I see the kids now... and where are they going, and how do we get them there." This special education framework, married with adult learning theory created a unique lens through which Carolyn approached her coaching.

During Carolyn's interactions with Jodi and Kaitlyn she occasionally referred to her Special Education background. In February the coaches shared information about their recent building level PD sessions. Carolyn remarked that teachers at a specific grade level had asked
for support focusing on social skills with their students. As she told Jodi and Kaitlyn about her interaction with the teachers she shared, "They (the students) need to know how to play a game in a social group. And being the Special Ed. teacher that I am, I totally agree." Carolyn continued with her story about the PD. She added, "I think they (the teachers) want some 'touch math' which is right up my alley so that's good. So we'll get that done."

Carolyn's extensive special education foundation allowed her to support classroom teachers in ways that other coaches were unable to. She brought with her a repertoire of teaching strategies and knowledge of programs that allow classroom teachers to differentiate more fluidly. The resource TouchMath® is a multisensory approach to working with numbers and developing number sense grounded in the visual images of numerals.

During Jodi's fall interview she reflected on Carolyn's unique coaching approaches. Jodi shared what she had learned about coaching as a result of their partnership in the sister-school collaborative. "I think the thing that I learned the most from the other ladies in the cohort is just that...we all came from such different places." She specifically remarked that she never approached a coaching situation from a special education perspective. "I would hear Carolyn say things like that, because that's where she came from. I would never come to that [special education perspective] because that's never where I was!" Jodi valued Carolyn's knowledge of special education "So to be able to hear her, how she was talking through things, and giving advice in that way.... Just the way she comes to problems was different for me." Jodi's remarks showed a deep sense of respect for Carolyn's perspective and expertise with instructional differentiation.

The impact of Reading Recovery®. Carolyn also believed that her Reading Recovery® training impacted her approach to coaching. Grounded in a deep understanding of how children
learn to read, Carolyn knew the importance of focused instruction. She had experienced the significance of using carefully chosen targeted strategies, building on student strengths. Because Reading Recovery® teachers have only 16 to 20 weeks with each of their students, they have a keen sense of timing and develop a strong sense of urgency. Carolyn shared,

Reading Recovery® impacted me definitely. How I approached coaching reading definitely was impacted because the training was so intense for Reading Recovery®.

That sense of urgency....I want that sense of urgency for the teachers.

Carolyn's own sense of urgency as an instructional coach is revealed in this statement. Situated in a Reading Recovery® perspective, Carolyn aspired to work efficiently and effectively with teachers around reading instruction. She discussed coaching teachers who were not attending to student behaviors during reading lessons, simply moving through the lesson plan. Carolyn shared that she asked a teacher, "Is it quality or is it how much quantity you can get into the lesson?" The teacher's response surprised her, "It was quantity!" Carolyn admitted that she told the teacher she had to slow down. "I told her that, 'SLOW IT DOWN.'" Carolyn then discussed how she helped the teacher focus on teaching points to create a scaffolded, targeted lesson focused on student needs.

Again at the April collaborative meeting Carolyn had a conversation with Jodi and Kaitlyn about supporting teachers' work at the guided reading table. She had given a teacher specific PD videos to watch in support of her instructional work on reading instruction. "I gave her the videos and she [said] I'll get to them." Carolyn was clearly frustrated by this reaction from the teacher. Carolyn remarked that the use of videos should be the "easiest" thing to do. "No one's looking over your shoulder." She said. "Anyway, [the teacher] finally did watch the videos and we talked about those."
What Carolyn revealed was an understanding that students cannot afford for their teachers to be complacent about instruction. Carolyn wanted her teachers to embody her same sense of urgency and desire to use both preparation time and instructional time as efficiently as possible.

**Personal coaching beliefs and goals.** Carolyn named several significant coaching components that she believed in. She discussed the importance of the coach-teacher relationship, a solid focus on the critical components of a strong coaching cycle. She stated, "You have to have a beginning, the objective, [a] relationship, the agreement to some extent, [and] reflection... When the teacher is good with you stepping back." Carolyn also emphasized the importance of the teacher's voice in the planning and implementation stages.

In Carolyn's opinion the working relationship between the teacher and coach is vital to successful coaching. She stated that the initial phase is to support the teacher in deciding what his or her objective is for the coaching cycle. "What is it the teacher wants from you and then how can you keep that teacher's voice and not carry it over into yours." Carolyn realized that as a coach her job was not to problem solve for the teacher, but to allow the teacher opportunities to think critically about instructional practices. "I think that's big for a coach." She said. "I can help them solve their problems. It doesn't have to be a problem even.... Whatever it is they choose. But keep the teacher voice in whatever it is that's happening." Trained in a Cognitive Coaching® approach, Carolyn realized that this philosophy was directly in line with her training; allow the teacher to realize what is needed and plan from there.

Carolyn realized that her coaching interactions included anything from a "conversation to a full blown coaching cycle." She also prided herself in working through a coaching cycle grounded in each phase of the process. "So you have to have a beginning, the objective, that
relationship, steps in the agreement to some extent, reflection of when it's going to end or when the teacher is good with you stepping back." Carolyn believed in acknowledging every step along the way no matter how small or extensive the coaching cycle was.

Carolyn shared a specific coaching cycle experience as a way to explain her thinking more deeply. "[A teacher] was asking about how to get students engaged in their text. And so I said let's try this...let's try the Close Reading." Carolyn offered to "practice" the new strategies with students from the teachers' classroom as a way to work out the information together. "So anyway that's what we did. We planned together, [and] picked books together. Carolyn initially led the instruction, modeling how to use the new strategies. When the teacher was comfortable with the instruction she jumped in. "It took a while." Carolyn said. "I probably did it a couple of times and then she felt a little more comfortable putting her voice into it and then we probably did that for maybe a week, 5/7 days." At that point the classroom teacher took on more of the instruction as Carolyn backed off. "Finally it was her doing it and me being on the outskirts and watching the kids."

At the same time that Carolyn worked with her classroom teacher she worked with another instructional coach studying the "close reading" materials from Dr. Cummins. "I enjoyed that, the planning with the coach because that's a different level than working with a teacher or a different aspect." This self extension speaks to Carolyn's desire to connect with other coaches and stretch her own understanding of instructional practices.

**A focus on coaching cycles.** During our initial fall interview Carolyn shared a desire to specifically work on coaching through an entire cycle. Her goal was to include a more powerful reflection at the end of her coaching cycles as well as more thorough documentation of her work within the coaching cycle.
I would really like to do some more whole sessions with someone, cycles. Really meaningful. I'm thinking more for me so that I can learn to do a whole cycle. And do it well. Because I think I miss steps along the way. I do a quick concluding thing instead of really having a deep conversation and learn what the teacher learned.

Carolyn remarked that the potential to achieve her goal was very real. "I have a lot of teachers who are willing to work with me because they are growers. They want to grow and become better....I have great opportunities so I just have to step up and do it."

**A lighthearted style.** What was refreshing about Carolyn's style was her balance between thoughtful, focused, intentional coaching and her lightheartedness. Her laughter often graced our interviews as well as interactions during conversations with her sister-school coaches and at professional development with the entire collaborative. As she reflected on her own professional development you could often catch a little laugh. Carolyn remarked at our initial interview about her Cognitive Coaching® and Adaptive Schools® training. She talked about the variety of strategies that she took back to her coaching practice. She talked about, "...keeping your mouth shut, not using 'I' all the time. I still do, but I try not to." She said while laughing. Carolyn realized the importance of all of these strategies during coaching conversations and at the same time could laugh at herself for having trouble acquiring those specific skills.

Carolyn typically had a positive perspective when she talked about her experiences in coaching cycles. At our final interview in May she reflected. "I got into the classrooms with Jan's [plan]... You know, knocking on doors and saying 'What do you [need]?'" Then she stopped to laugh at the thought of herself poking cautiously into classrooms.

She also laughed at her own organizational struggles. As she talked about her communication with Jodi and Kaitlyn she remarked that the three of them would email each
other, asking for information that the coordinators had already sent but that could not be found. "We say, 'You know what, I can't find the email for X, do you have it?'" She then stopped to laugh at herself. "Because it's easier emailing each other than emailing Cate and [other district coordinators]. It's much easier doing that." Carolyn laughed again after she reflected on keeping track of information.

As a coach Carolyn was able to draw on 30 years of educational experience. Her deep understanding of instructional practices grounded in special education and Reading Recovery® enabled her to support teachers on multiple levels. Carolyn's quiet approach to her work with teachers afforded her many coaching opportunities. Her coaching approach was balanced between driving forward with a sense of urgency while at the same time maintaining a sense of humor.

**Coming Together as a Collaborative**

Together the coaches in this study sought to create a supportive collaborative network of their own, embedded within the greater district coaching structure. It was clear from interviews, collaborative conversations, as well as informal observations during PD that these three coaches had developed supportive, trusting, respectful relationships. They appreciated their time together sharing stories of coaching experiences and supporting each other through discussions around coaching strategies. As a result of their connections the coaches felt less isolated, driven by a common purpose, supporting teachers and students. As I was allowed to become a "member" of this collaborative community I witnessed a sense of open, honest communication.

**Defeating the Isolation Issue**

The collaborative offered the coaches an avenue to connect with each other. Because coaches must maintain a level of confidentiality in their work, meeting together as a
collaborative helped relieve some of the burden of negotiating this principle. Connecting with each other to share, problem.solve, and de.compress became an important component of their collaborative meetings. Block (2008, 2009) reminds us,

> In the small group discussion we discover that our own concerns are more universal than we imagined. This discovery that we are not alone, that others can at least understand what is on our mind, if not agree with us, is what creates the feeling of belonging (p. 95).

The feeling of belonging that Block (2008, 2009) refers to was in many ways present among the coaches in this collaborative. As Jodi reflected on the collaborative she remarked, “I feel like having the collaborative changed the feeling of isolation. I think just having those cohorts, makes you feel like you're not existing in isolation.” Jodi referred to the early years of the coaching program when coaches worked without collaboratives. She appreciated the fact that the collaborative offered built in support from her colleagues and that she no longer felt like coaches worked on "their own islands."

Jodi also commented on the challenges of being the only coach in a building. For example, maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality and still being able to problem solve across instructional issues was a challenge. Jodi referenced the collaborative power of having two coaches in one building. “I think the big buildings who have two coaches, you know, they're able to do that work together.” Because the coaches in this collaborative all worked independently in their buildings, the collaborative offered a solution to the issue of isolation.

Kaitlyn also realized the power of the collaborative in removing the feeling of isolation. She revealed an appreciation for the collaborative structure that allowed her to realize, "Okay, I'm not alone in this kind of stuff." She noted that it was helpful to hear about other buildings having the same "issues that we were having and we didn't know." She remarked that she would
sometimes ask herself, “Is it just us?” The collaborative gave her an opportunity to answer that question.

Kaitlyn readily admitted, "I do get very building focused. I think it can be both [good and bad] at times." She continued to explain that it was important to have an individual building vision but at the same time she commented on the importance of connecting with other coaches and getting into other buildings. "I don't think I network as much as could be helpful. I certainly wasn't [networking] before the collaborative started. I wasn't meeting with other coaches the way that I was able to with the Sister-Schools."

Carolyn reflected on how the collaborative had supported her by connecting her with other coaches. She remarked that one benefit of the collaborative was, "Knowing that you are not alone, knowing that you are not the only one maybe having difficulty getting into a classroom." The connectedness that the collaborative offered allowed her to feel like more of a team and less like an individual coach, responsible for figuring everything out on her own. Carolyn added "Seeing what others are doing, opens your eyes." She explained how in isolation she was more likely to have "tunnel vision" focused on "what I think is right." Participation in the collaborative helped her open herself up to new ways of thinking about coaching.

**Creating a Broader Lens**

This new appreciation of educational issues across the district helped the coaches shift their understanding of and approach to coaching in general. As a member of a collaborative, Jodi revealed a more grounded perspective on issues surfacing at all of the buildings in the District. "Everybody is struggling with something." She talked about the perspective from her building in particular. "It's really easy for us to fall into, 'Oh poor us we have low kids, we have [students who have] low SES (socio-economic status),’ or 'we have new teachers.'” Jodi
recognized that it was easy to make excuses about instruction when your lens was only from one perspective.

Jodi talked about the benefit of having the sister-school PD opportunities. She appreciated watching students from all buildings engaged in model lessons during PD with consultants and/or master teachers. She referred to the experience as "the most powerful way to see what is possible." This realization helped her ground her coaching conversations with teachers around student potential with a new and different lens.

During our fall interview Kaitlyn discussed the power of the collaborative from strictly a coaching perspective. She talked about the support that conversations with Carolyn and Jodi offered. “I think [Carolyn] and [Jodi] and I had some helpful conversations.” Kaitlyn talked about the times the three coaches had lunch together in between morning and afternoon PD sessions. “Then we would have some really good conversations. Especially when we got to eat with Jan Richardson and talk with her. I think we got a lot of ideas from each other and from her that we took back to our buildings.” Kaitlyn saw the power in taking the time to have those conversations.

Carolyn appreciated the time spent with Jodi and Kaitlyn. Their work together helped her maintain perspective on the coaching position. “Well [realizing] that I'm not as totally off the mark as compared to everybody else. I'm not all by myself over there. Which is nice.” Carolyn said she often wondered, "Am I the only one with these problems? Am I the only one that's not getting into these classrooms?" With only two years of coaching experience at the time of this fall interview, Carolyn was still working through the issue of isolation. She still found herself questioning her practice, asking herself, "Am I the only one? Because you don't want to be the only one."
Carolyn talked about the benefits of working with Jodi and Kaitlyn. "I think talking with [Jodi] and [Kaitlyn] and other coaches, just knowing that we're all in on the same page. That helps. A lot!" She remarked that her connection with Jodi and Kaitlyn helped her keep a perspective on her own coaching practice. She realized that they all didn't have to approach situations the same way. "We can learn from each other doing the same thing. That's what I like. It's okay to learn from each other....I like that."

As Carolyn and I discussed what she had learned from her experiences in the collaborative over the past two years, I asked her if she could imagine her coaching work without the collaborative. Her response was emphatic. "Oh, no, no. I couldn't. No, no, no! I can't even imagine doing any of that. I can't imagine doing this just on my own and not having someone to bounce ideas off of or having the trainings."

**A Sense of Trust and Mutual Respect**

Trust in schools is named in research and theory as a key criterion for not only student growth but teacher and administrator growth as well (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Knight, 2007; Psencik, 2015; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). In their 2007 issue brief, Steiner and Kowal refer to a 2003 survey of 31 PD coaches in which some of the most frequently named characteristics for effective coaches include, "the ability to build relationships" and "establish trust and credibility" (p. 3). In his work on social capital in schools, Coleman (1988) states,

Just as physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity, social capital does as well. For example, a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust (p. S101).
Bryk and Schneider (2002) maintain, "Each party in a social exchange has some personal disposition to trust (or not trust) the other" (p. 14). The benefit of developing a trusting relationship then is that individuals come to see themselves as connected, resulting in more meaningful interactions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Freire (2004) names a "climate of mutual trust" (p. 91) as the foundation that "leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world" (p. 91).

During her interviews Jodi acknowledged that she respected the other two coaches in the collaborative for the uniqueness and personal strengths that they brought to coaching and to coaching conversations. She explained how she had benefited from Kaitlyn's insight. "Kaitlyn is interesting because I feel like our population of students is very similar but their teacher base is different. Jodi explained the difference. She noted that Kaitlyn’s teachers appeared "more rooted into their patterns" whereas Jodi worked with a large population of new teachers. At the same time Jodi recognized that Kaitlyn was relatively new to her building as a coach and Jodi had a history in her building. "It was interesting to hear how she [Kaitlyn] would make inroads with teachers who had been there a really long time and she was more like a new person in the building comparatively." Jodi was impressed with the fact that "teachers just put their name on the [Kaitlyn's] daily schedule."

Jodi also appreciated Kaitlyn's strategies for encouraging more coaching cycles in her building. She explained that Kaitlyn shared how she would ask teachers if she could try out for example a "cool technology thing" as a way in to classrooms. Jodi remarked that she thought that strategy was "genius." She continued, "I snuck in the rooms using that advice ALL the time."
Carolyn agreed with Jodi's perspective on benefitting from each participant's uniqueness and strengths. "I think we each have our strengths which we can build on." She remarked about Kaitlyn's expertise in the area of technology. "Kaitlyn has her tech part down. My God, I question her all the [time]. I'm always asking her for things." Carolyn also commented on Jodi's knowledge of the new ELA curriculum. "She (Jodi) had piloted it. So she had a lot of background knowledge. I initially asked her questions. I would email her. She's just a fountain of information for that."

Carolyn also commented that Jodi's knowledge of the classroom surfaced for her as a strength within the collaborative. Given that both Kaitlyn and Carolyn had never taught as classroom teachers, they respected Jodi's expertise in this area and tapped into it as necessary. As Carolyn reflected at our final interview on her experience in the collaborative, she recognized Jodi's classroom experience and remarked about the influence it had on her coaching. "I was never in a regular classroom....I have the training to do it, the cert to do it, but never did it....Jodi has been in the classroom." Carolyn appreciated Jodi's perspective as a former classroom teacher during collaborative discussions. Carolyn respected Jodi's ability to bring that "background" to the conversations.

At her initial interview Kaitlyn remarked that the work with Jodi and Carolyn was "beneficial" to negotiating the coaching process as a whole. At the same time she reflected that the amount of district initiatives made that difficult. She said, "I think partly there are so many different things that are going on at the district level that it's kind of hard to have a cohesive view of ...Like with Sunday and Wonders (the new curriculum) and Jan ...there's just so many." She remarked that she would like for the three of them to be more cohesive, "I think it's probably more a matter of just the three of us seeing ourselves more as a team."
Kaitlyn shared a story clarifying her thinking. She talked about Jodi having to model so many lessons for PD the previous year. She suggested, "I wondered...I thought I would have happily volunteered to do this but then I didn't want that to make her look like, you know she couldn't do it." Kaitlyn thought that Jodi may have "taken her up on that" but on the other hand she didn't want to put Jodi in a questionable position with her teachers or other coaches. She did not want to be disrespectful in any way.

**Relationship Building**

As the coaches developed trust and respect for each other they set a foundation for enduring relationships. It is with this in mind that we understand more deeply the development of their intimate collaborative community. Block (2008, 2009) reminds us that community building is "complex" (p. 9) and develops as a result of an "infinite number of small steps" (p. 9). He continues, "It calls for us to treat as important many things that we thought were incidental" (p. 9). This perspective on community building supports the need to recognize all of the interactions that took place among Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn as essential.

During the course of their time together as a collaborative unit, Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn developed a strong sense of shared responsibility for the professional growth of all of their teachers. In the process of sharing this responsibility the coaches developed a rapport with each other. Their work around supporting teachers connected them to each other in a unique way, creating a collective feeling of responsibility for the teachers' success.

During interviews and collaborative interactions the coaches explained how they supported each other, sharing information about difficult coaching situations and asking for help from one another. Opportunities to support each other often arose during PD sessions when for example Carolyn or Kaitlyn might have worked with one of Jodi's teachers, suggesting
instructional options based on a prior conversation with Jodi. In this way the coaches collectively became responsible for coaching opportunities during PD. In this way the coaches developed a strong bond.

The coaches also built relationships through storytelling. In particular during collaborative meetings the coaches often shared lengthy stories about specific coaching situations. Sometimes they shared their struggles and sometimes they shared celebrations. Often their stories were complex and involved coaching experiences with one teacher over time. Carolyn shared a story at the April collaborative meeting about her frustrations supporting a teacher with guided reading instructional practices. She explained how she had tried numerous coaching strategies and yet the teacher had not shifted her practice. Kaitlyn told a similar story about working with teachers on specific instructional strategies and facing the issue of teacher stamina in continuing to shift instructional practices even when Kaitlyn was not in the room. Kaitlyn specifically asked Jodi and Kaitlyn for suggestions on how to approach the situation in an alternate way. Throughout the year the coaches took every opportunity to share coaching stories with one another. This sharing of stories was foundational in the formation of strong relationships between Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn. More of these stories are revealed in chapter 5.

With a strong foundation of individual strengths, trusting respectful relationships, and a desire to connect with one another, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn negotiated their understanding of a solid instructional coaching practice. Together they met the challenges of shifts in the presentation of PD along with new district ELA and math curriculum, test administration, as well as issues of administrative interpretations around the coaching position. These coaches reinvented themselves daily as they negotiated their roles as instructional coaches. At the same
time they strove to develop themselves as a collaborative. This development topic is addressed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
IDENTITY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

In this chapter I set the stage for understanding how the coaches in this study constructed their identities. I present the shift in district professional development (PD) that occurred in 2014-15 and the influence it had on the way Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn participated in PD sessions. I share the coaches' struggles with positioning as they negotiated multiple identities during PD sessions. In particular I focus on their navigation between an expert and co-learner stance. I present the coaches' multiple responsibilities and roles during the 2014-15 school-year that affected not only their identity and ability to coach, but also their interactions as a collaborative. In this way I begin to make a case for the influence of outside factors.

Educational policies, from state and national demands to specific district initiatives, all impact how coaches are able to negotiate their positions (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Rush, 2013). However, as Coburn and Woulfin (2012) remind us, "Research has paid little attention to the role of instructional coaches in this process" (p. 5). For the coaches in the collaborative studied here, the most impactful policies and procedures revolved around the district restructuring of PD as a result of the adoption of a new ELA curriculum. This shift created tension for the coaches as they negotiated between the role of expert and/or co-learner.

Throughout the 2014-15 school-year, in contrast to the previous year, the coaches in this study felt the need to be able to fully support shifts in content area subject matter both during PD sessions and in the classroom. They supported new math curriculum in kindergarten through second grades and a dramatic shift in literacy instruction with the implementation of a structured new curriculum to include the use of guided and close reading instructional strategies, multiple test taking procedures and administration, as well as technology connected with the new
In addition to the introduction of a "boxed" ELA curriculum the coaches were expected to support the work of outside consultants, Dr. Jan Richardson and Dr. Sunday Cummins.

During the first year of the sister-school coaching collaboratives, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn worked with a district coordinator to determine a specific literacy focus for each grade-level PD session. Focus for PD was based on the coaches' understandings of what their teachers needed, and what support teachers were asking for in combination with district goals for instruction in both reading and writing. Professional development topics included; word work, teacher language and student prompting, book selection, writing about reading, and strategic analysis of student work. Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn were responsible for working with their teachers prior to the PD sessions, supporting teachers as they prepared to model guided reading strategies. On the day of the PD sessions, Kaitlyn, Carolyn, and Jodi were jointly responsible for facilitating the content as well as all logistical preparations to include room set-up, refreshments, agendas, and handouts.

In the first year of the sister-school coaching collaborative program, as Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn planned for and presented PD sessions, they developed a sense of trust and respect for one another. Jodi reflected on the development of her relationship with Kaitlyn and Carolyn at our initial interview in the fall. She commented, "It took a while for us to get our rhythm." However, she noted that because all three coaches were "all really type A," it was eventually easy to work together. As a result she remarked with confidence, "I know if Kaitlyn says she's going to do this, I know it's going to happen. I don't have to worry about it."

Jodi explained that once the PD instructional focus had been determined and a plan for presenting content was complete the coaches divided up the remaining responsibilities. "One
person will do the agenda and then whoever is hosting will make sure the environment is ready and sometimes the third person would do like refreshments or posters." She added that depending on which of their three buildings the PD was presented at, coaches’ responsibilities changed. "It just was really natural. "It always just kind of really flowed. Everyone is always saying, 'How can I help with this?' 'How can I do this?'"

Carolyn also reflected on the first year of the collaborative work during her early fall interview. She echoed Jodi’s sentiments saying, "It's very smooth. We all step up to take a portion of the responsibilities, work that has to done. We're not afraid to be responsible for something." Carolyn added that she, Jodi, and Kaitlyn each had particular strengths that they brought to the PD sessions. "It works out well because there are certain people that speak really well with a group. Others do [or] get everything together." In this respect Carolyn remarked that the work feels portioned out equally, "I don't believe any one person is carrying the full load more so than another."

At our fall interview Jodi had anticipated moving forward smoothly into the 2014-15 school-year as a collaborative. "We just already know how when we move forward that everybody's going to bring their piece of the puzzle and we're not going to have to sweat it out." As Jodi described the collaborative she revealed a sense of embedded respect and trust that had developed over the course of the first year of the collaborative.

**Shifts in Positioning**

In reality, the 2014-15 school-year brought dramatic changes to the PD format for the sister-school collaboratives. Of great significance was the fact that coaches were no longer responsible for planning PD. A decision was made at the administrative level to bring in outside consultants to support and enhance the adoption of the new reading curriculum. These
consultants worked mainly with district curriculum coordinators to plan and implement PD sessions. Instructional coaches supported the work of the consultants and coordinators as necessary, gathering student data for model lessons and preparing the PD site. The coaches no longer gathered as a collaborative to plan for PD. The responsibility for planning had shifted to the coordinators and the outside consultants. This reorganization of district PD had in essence left the coaches believing there was little to no reason to gather outside of PD sessions or monthly, required coach meetings.

As a result of the shift in the PD format Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn started out the 2014-15 school-year primarily connecting with each other only during sister-school PD sessions or monthly district coach meetings. By the end of November the coaches still had not met as an independent entity. In late November of 2014 I approached the three coaches in this study and presented the idea for gathering as a collaborative to discuss the PD to date, as well as share and plan for ongoing coaching issues in their buildings. They were happy to have been offered the opportunity. Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn met for the first time as a collaborative during the 2014-15 school-year on Dec. 8th.

During the December 8th collaborative meeting, the coaches discussed the shift in PD protocols from the previous year to the current 2014-15 school-year and the implications those shifts had on their positioning during PD sessions as well as their coaching practices. They talked about the difficulty during the previous year of trying to meet the needs of all the teachers, as well as make all the teachers happy. Carolyn remarked, "I do like the structure, us not having to plan for everybody. I think that was a lot of energy, a lot of work. Trying to please everybody."
Jodi agreed with Carolyn stating, "I was just going to say, trying to give everybody what they needed [was difficult]." Jodi explained that during the previous year she experienced teachers asking for PD to focus on "low readers," "high readers," and "ESL" students. The coaches analyzed the pros and cons of the shift in PD presentation and acknowledged their relief at not having to please everyone during those sessions. These reflections revealed a great deal about the stress of previously developing the PD, providing the PD, and creating an environment on the day of PD that invited all learners.

The coaches appeared comfortable as they discussed the positive implications of shifts in the PD format. They were relieved that it was no longer their responsibility to create the professional learning opportunities for teachers. Pleasing all of the teachers was no longer a burden that they owned during PD. About fifteen minutes into the collaborative conversation on December 8th, I interjected that so far it sounded like the new PD format had helped them get into more classrooms and support teachers in a more targeted way. Jodi responded that she was able "to begin conversations" as a result of the new format. Carolyn shared her perspective.

I think for me [it happened] in a different way. What I'm thinking is, when we were planning I was part of the hosting and I wasn't sitting down with my group. Where this year I'm actually sitting with my group and hearing the conversation with them...And I feel more in touch with them. Most of the time.

At the same time the coaches discussed how their positioning with one another had changed. Jodi offered a brief explanation "It isn't so much of like trouble shooting." She explained further that the past year they constantly stayed connected with each other as they established their identity as PD providers. She revealed that during planning conversations they would often ask, "Okay so when you (another coach) do this, what do I need to think
about?...What do we need to remember? What are your teachers saying [they want]?

She concluded that as a result of not being responsible for the PD anymore the conversations had shifted. "Our communication is with the presenter instead of with one another." Kaitlyn agreed with Jodi that the three of them weren't communicating as much with each other as they were with the consultants. Kaitlyn said, "Sunday comes and talks with us." Carolyn added, "We're not emailing as often." She commented that they spoke to each other about basic PD needs in a more casual way asking each other, "Hey, do you need anything?...But usually it's all taken care of." This shift positioned the coaches as partners with the outside consultants more than with each other.

The coaches attributed part of this shift to the fact that the district coordinators played a significant role in organizing and preparing the PD sessions in 2014-15 compared to the previous year. Jodi commented, "Well because we're freed up from the other things that now it's not such a big deal to [get ready for professional development]." At the same time they recognized that the shift in PD had negatively affected their communication as a coaching collaborative. They openly considered why they had not gathered to date. Jodi remarked, "I think a lot of it just hinges on making time for it because we can get bogged down with all of these things. But if I have a coaches' meeting from 12-2, that's where I go!" She suggested building in scheduled meetings with each other once a month. "So if we build [meetings] in once a month, that's our schedule. That's our calendar." Again she referred to "honoring" their time together. "I think it's just committing to once a month or whatever it is....It's feasible. Right?" As she talked about the feasibility of getting together, she directed her last comment in the form of a question to Carolyn and Kaitlyn. Carolyn responded to Jodi's comment, focusing on the benefit of getting together.
"I think it's nice to hear what other people are doing in the schools because...it gets you thinking differently too."

This conversation at the December collaborative meeting had helped these three coaches develop an understanding that regardless of time constraints and what seemed to be overwhelming responsibilities, the need to support each other was significant in developing their coaching skills and identities as coaches. Before leaving the December meeting Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn made a commitment to each other to continue to gather regularly as a collaborative throughout the school-year.

**Re-Negotiating Identities**

Coaches’ identities are not static but rather dynamic as they encounter new and different coaching situations. Rainville and Jones (2008) refer to this constant re-positioning of coaches as "situated" (p. 440). Hunt and Handsfield (2013) contend that we must "move beyond fixed and oversimplified definitions of roles and how they should be enacted" (p. 52). Rather we must focus on the understanding of how coaches construct their identity and position themselves. Hunt and Handsfield contend, "Roles are just one of the many ways that people can position themselves or be positioned by others" (p. 53). With this understanding in mind coaches negotiate multiple identities as they position themselves within their work as expert, co-teacher, co-learner, and friend. Theirs is not a fixed positioning but rather one that is, based on a multiplicity of identities that draw on, but are not fully determined by, a wide variety of social contexts such as race, class, gender, age, religion, job assignment, parental status, and so on (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013, p. 53).

During the first year of the sister-school collaborative all of the instructional coaches were responsible not only for the planning of PD days with their teachers, they were often put in
a position where they were demonstrating model lessons. These model lessons were the focal point of the PD discussions and positioned the coaches as experts. This positioning often resulted in contentious encounters between coaches and teachers. Knight (2004) reminds us that when PD providers, in this case instructional coaches, are viewed as experts, “they are doomed to fail before they begin” (p. 37). Knight contends that shifts in teacher practice are a product of partnerships where coaches and teachers regard each other as equals.

Kaitlyn reflected about this shift during our final interview in the spring. "We had to plan for those [PD sessions] before and this year we didn't. When we came this year, I felt more like a participant." I asked Kaitlyn how that resonated with her. Since her response did not reveal whether the shift was positive or negative, I asked her if the shift was good or bad. She responded, "It was both in different ways. I think for some of the people (teachers) they felt more comfortable." Kaitlyn explained that since the coaches weren't presenting the PD anymore, some teachers had relaxed. Not being viewed as an expert began opening more doors for coaching. She felt that in the past, when coaches modeled lessons and presented information, some teachers were turned off because they felt as though the coach was judging them from an expert lens.

On the other hand, Kaitlyn noticed that for some teachers the shift was an excuse not to work with the coach. "Why should I work with her? She's not the expert. She doesn't know more than me!" Kaitlyn remarked, "That's something you have to juggle all the time in your building." She explained that there were adults who would seek her out as an expert in the building and there were adults who wanted to work with her only if she took a more "team" approach to coaching.
In contrast to Kaitlyn's thinking, Jodi believed that the shift from expert to participant this year had been a positive one for her. This was a significant change for her from the previous year when she was often forced into the role of expert. At the December collaborative meeting Jodi shared her thought process. "I just had so much trouble last year getting teacher volunteers [to present model lessons at PD] and I ended up doing it. It didn't help anybody really learn anything because I was doing all the leg work. So this year I just appreciate watching the experts."

During the planning phase of PD sessions in the 2013-14 school-year if none of the classroom teachers volunteered to teach a model lesson, the responsibility fell on the coaches. Kaitlyn recalled the difficulty Jodi had the previous year recruiting teachers. "Well and you (Jodi) had more situations at your building where you were having to do it [model lessons]." Jodi confirmed Kaitlyn's recollection and commented, "Right and then once that precedent was set then everyone else [said], 'Well they didn't have to do it, so I'm not.'" Carolyn asked Jodi how many times she modeled the previous year. Jodi replied, "Every time!! Except for kindergarten."

Jodi's frustration with modeling on a consistent basis the previous year was grounded in two beliefs: First, she did not want to be viewed as the expert. Secondly, she wanted teachers to embrace the PD opportunities as their own. Her expectation was that teachers would take the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching as a result of their PD experiences. From this perspective Jodi would have been positioned as a supporter and co-learner. As their coach, she would then have been able to position herself in a way that potentially led to coaching cycles with teachers, focused on the topic presented at the PD.

Jodi commented in December of 2014 that she felt like she had a little more "momentum" than in the previous year. She explained that she liked the way the PD was "more specific."
This more targeted format along with her repositioning during PD sessions allowed her to approach teachers and say, "We saw this [at PD]. Are you ready to work on it?" She remarked that the PD was helpful in that it created more opportunities to connect with teachers. "I've started more conversations and work in classrooms based on it (the PD)."

Carolyn also stated that she appreciated the new format based on her increased ability to support teachers. She believed that this was a direct result of the shift in her positioning during PD. "I've had great conversations about Sunday (close reading)." Carolyn talked about "getting into" nearly every classroom involved in the fall PD on close reading. "I've gotten to classrooms, not everyone, but they have all talked about [it], at [grade level] collabs especially." Carolyn's approach was similar to Jodi's. She remarked, "I'll say, 'What did you do? What do you think? How are you bringing this back?'") Carolyn attributed her success with teachers to the new, more "structured" approach of PD and her re-positioning as co-learner.

Kaitlyn revealed that she was "feeling like more of a participant than a presenter." I knew from previous conversations with her that this definitely held positives and negatives for her. As an expert in the Jan Richardson model of guided reading it appeared difficult for her to take on the role of participant. Carolyn responded to Kaitlyn's comment, "I'm not sure if that's good or bad, but at least I hear what they're saying and we're having a conversation together." Jodi added her opinion, "Well I think it's interesting, for lack of a better explanation, to be on the same side of the table. You know, watching in for what Sunday is doing, or for what the [ELA consultant] is doing." Jodi continued to explain that she appreciated having "side-by-side" conversations with teachers instead of trying to generate feedback after she modeled a lesson. "I don't want to be on the stage all the time because then it turns into 'Well you know how to do it
so you're going to tell me to do it the way you're doing it.'" Jodi appreciated her new positioning. "I would rather be on this side saying, 'Did you notice this?' or 'I wonder?'"

As the conversation continued the coaches briefly revisited the structure from the previous year. Jodi in particular revealed how during the previous year she felt as though she was, "forced into these expert roles of modeling." Although Kaitlyn revealed some reservations about the shift in PD, she did see the benefits of having an outside consultant present information and model lessons. Kaitlyn remarked, "I think that really helps having someone [from the outside] come and work with your kids." Jodi agreed. She commented that it was interesting for everyone to observe "what your kids can do" with an outside expert.

What was discovered during this exchange of opinions was the importance of how coaches positioned themselves with teachers based on the new PD structure. The coaches realized the need to strike a balance between being the expert and supporting the work of outside consultants, positioned as experts themselves. The coaches also learned how to create a new space for themselves acting as a co-learner in the PD process. Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn had already developed a strong understanding that for different teachers in different situations they would have to navigate between both of these identities.

**New identities evolve during PD sessions.** During the 2014-15 PD sessions Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn typically *physically* positioned themselves among their teachers. In this way they became participants in the conversations that took place regarding curriculum implementation and instructional strategies. At the same time this allowed them to "coach" into conversations. The coaches were often engaged in reviewing teacher manuals and curricular technology information with their teachers during PD sessions. At one of the September ELA
trainings Carolyn intentionally positioned herself with her teachers all around her. She remarked that she felt like she needed to sit among them because they were "a little bit of a tricky group."

A typical PD scenario included, for example, Jodi working with teachers on her computer, turning it to show her teachers what a particular assessment page looked like that the speaker was referring to, and how to find it. Kaitlyn was also engaged in a conversation about online assessments with teachers, supporting one particular teacher in finding specific information on his computer. At the same time Carolyn worked with her teachers on finding the corresponding page in the manual that supported the conversation around assessments. As the coaches supported teachers in learning the new curriculum and finding information online, they positioned themselves as both co/learner and expert.

The coaches also conferred with one another during PD sessions, supporting both their understanding of the materials presented and discussing coaching opportunities. At an early fall PD session Jodi and Carolyn engaged in a conversation around fluency norms that Jodi had pulled up on her computer. The two had a brief conversation about how that information could be used to support teacher understanding of text complexity. At another PD session in November Kaitlyn and Jodi positioned themselves among their teachers and in close enough proximity to one another to collaborate. At one point Kaitlyn and Jodi moved closer together sharing a teaching manual. In this way they were able to review the new curriculum and discuss potential coaching support.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn were also able to support each other during PD sessions concerning difficult coaching situations. At their December collaborative meeting they talked about "frontloading" information with each other so that messages about instruction came from different coaching voices during the PD. If one coach were having difficulty with a particular
teacher, she would inform the other coaches prior to the PD session. Jodi revealed that if she knew she needed additional support with a particular teacher during the session, she might say to Carolyn or Kaitlyn, "I already know this and this is going to come up..." asking for their support in addressing that issue. This sharing allowed the coaches to "plant" questions and inform their next steps at future PD sessions with those same teachers.

An example of this coaching support took place at one of the fall PD sessions. One of Jodi’s classroom teachers read a book while the consultant taught the model lesson. On that same day during the morning break Jodi approached Carolyn and Kaitlyn to discuss how to handle the situation. She revealed that the teachers’ "I already know this" attitude about PD was an ongoing source of tension. Carolyn and Kaitlyn affirmed Jodi’s efforts to pull him back into the PD conversations. Jodi attempted to position herself as co-learner. She provided short, brief side conversations with her teachers in an effort to build on the presenters’ information and at the same time draw the teacher in question into the conversation asking for his opinion.

Jodi was clearly frustrated by the situation, struggling to position herself in a way that allowed her to successfully engage that particular teacher. She re-introduced the topic at lunch. Carolyn and Kaitlyn recognized Jodi’s emotionally charged comments and responded with affirmations of their intentions to support Jodi in coaching that same teacher at future PD sessions. In this situation Jodi struggled with navigating between expert and co-learner. This was not an atypical situation: Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn all had teachers who were resistant to new information as well as resistant to coaching.

**Positioning with consultants.** While Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn appreciated the opportunity to work with outside consultants, they could often be found cleaning tables, preparing snacks, and stepping out to make fresh coffee during PD sessions. In addition to
preparing and coordinating PD logistics, the coaches were also responsible for making sure that consultants had access to appropriate supplies and paperwork and work effectively to support teacher participants. The coaches, then, were re-positioned during PD sessions as hostesses and assistants to the consultants as well as stepping in and out of participant/expert roles with teachers.

During the first fall PD session with Jan Richardson, held at Jodi's school, it was apparent that Jodi was somewhat frustrated with her role as "assistant." As Jan began to discuss book selection for guided reading lessons she stopped and asked where the books for discussion were. Jodi had forgotten to gather a selection of books and quickly stepped into the literacy library to gather several options. Later during the model guided reading lesson Jan paused, looking around for sentence strips. Again, with a look of desperation, Jodi quickly went across the hall to a kindergarten classroom and gathered sentence strips for Jan. Shortly after these interactions Kaitlyn and Jodi connected at the side of the room, leaning on the bookcases, conferring about the PD. They both smiled and grimaced as they spoke.

Acting as an assistant to outside PD consultants was a new role for the coaches. During the first year of the sister-school coaching collaboratives Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn would have planned for not only what information was being presented but they also made sure everything was prepared. Being taken out of the planning phase placed the coaches at a distinct disadvantage during the PD sessions. This shift in PD session protocols had not only taken the coaches out of the planning phases, it inadvertently affected their identity as instructional coaches as they negotiated among hostess, assistant, expert, and co-learner.

The coaches did, however, reveal an appreciation for the opportunity to work with consultants to develop their own personal understanding of instruction. Acting as more of a
participant in the PD than an expert allowed them to grow in their understanding of each topic presented. Kaitlyn reflected on her new learning as a result of PD with Jan Richardson. She commented that Jan provided "such good explanations." Kaitlyn recalled a specific interaction with Jan, who had explained the reasoning behind limiting the number of magnetic letters students should have during word work activities. She said:

I still remember her (Jan) saying, 'They (students) have to have fewer [magnetic] letters because then they are limited to have to think about those letters. When they are working on the white board then they are thinking about the whole alphabet and so it scaffolded them to have the exact letters. And then when they are going to write, and write a big word, there is a gradual release. Then they'll get the information to think about it with all the letters.'

As a result of that PD interaction, Kaitlyn learned more about the underlying philosophy related to teacher scaffolding during the "word work" portion of guided reading instruction. This would in turn allow her to better support teachers in their understanding and implementation of those activities. Carolyn and Jodi agreed as Kaitlyn spoke. Jodi added that when she heard explanations from Jan Richardson, "It makes sense."

The tension between negotiating the role of expert vs. co-learner was palpable throughout the year. On the one hand, the coaches realized that their interactions with the outside consultants often supported their development of content materials and supporting instructional practices. They also agreed that there were significant pressures in being positioned as experts. On the other hand they recognized that positioning themselves as co-learners brought the need to rely on new and different set of coaching skills. Rush (2013) reminds us of the delicate balance
that coaches must strike in positioning themselves so as to "fully enroll" (p. 285) teachers in coaching cycles.

The shift from expert to co-learner also inadvertently created a disconnect from the instructional coach job description which clearly defined an "expert" candidate, requiring applicants to have "the ability to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of content areas, especially math, reading, and writing" and have "knowledge of adult learning theory and its application to practice," to name a few requirements. Clearly the district expectations for strong candidates were grounded in the idea that "expert" qualities were requirements for those who aspired to take on the position of elementary instructional coach.

**Balancing Multiple Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of an instructional coach is an ever-changing and developing position. Research on coaching in schools focuses on the specific roles of the coach often broken down into a lengthy list of jobs and responsibilities (Ippolito, 2010; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Killion (2009) presents a list of coaching roles and responsibilities to include, "resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner" (p. 28). These are presented with the understanding that a specific skill set and knowledge base are required for each role and that each role carries a "distinctive set of challenges" (Killion, 2009, p. 9).

It is important to note that the interpretation of these roles often differs considerably from school to school. Killion and Harrison (2006) remind us that coaches frequently fill more than one role in one given situation.

Depending on their job descriptions and their agreements with principals, district supervisors, and teachers whom they serve, coaches may fill some or all of the roles in a
typical day. The complexity and challenge of determining what roles to fill, when, and where, are the most difficult aspects of a coach’s work (Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 29).

The coaches in this study negotiated many roles. They revealed work including providing resources, supporting data analysis, offering one-on-one coaching, group coaching, math coaching, and literacy coaching. They acted as test administrators, meeting facilitators, substitute teachers, and more. As a result of the adoption of new curriculum in both math and ELA, and the subsequent shift in coaches' identities during district PD sessions, the coaches in this study specifically negotiated the job of content/literacy coach on an ongoing basis.

Furthermore, with the shift from administering the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) to the new PARRC test Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn spent a significant amount of their time not only data coaching, but acting as test administrators, proctors, and trouble shooters. As they shared their experiences with each other during collaborative meetings and PD sessions they were able to see and hear different perspectives on negotiating the multiple roles and responsibilities embedded within their position.

After their initial December collaborative meeting, Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn met three more times throughout the year as a collaborative in January, February, and April. They scheduled January and February meetings around PD opportunities for teachers as originally discussed at the December meeting. While the meetings were scheduled with the intent to allow for more focused conversations around PD sessions and subsequent opportunities for coaching, these hour-long meetings lacked focus. Their conversations reflected the multiple identities and myriad of roles and responsibilities that they were expected to fulfill as instructional coaches.

During their four collaborative meetings across the school-year the coaches discussed:

• implementation of the new math curriculum in kindergarten through second grade
• math instruction as it pertained to third through fifth graders preparing for the PARRC exam
• guided reading instruction grounded in Jan Richardson's philosophy of instruction
• close reading based on Sunday Cummins' work
• test administration to include proctoring MAP® and PARCC as well as support for weekly AIMSweb® monitoring and weekly ELA tests as part of the new curriculum
• professional development opportunities
• substitute teaching
• positioning as a "cure" for struggling teachers rather than a coach to all.

Each of the conversation topics that the coaches engaged in presented unique issues for identity and positioning as they relate to coaching strategies.

**Acting as math coaches.** The position of math coach falls under the definition of content coaching. West (2009) describes the practice of content coaching as "sophisticated and nuanced" (p. 115). The work of a content coach involves extensive knowledge of specific disciplines and requires coaches to be well prepared for such coaching engagements. West states,

Content coaches possess knowledge and understanding of the content of their discipline, awareness of which concepts within that discipline are appropriate for students at various stages, knowledge of current learning theories, a varied repertoire of instructional strategies aligned with those theories, and an understanding of organizations as living, dynamic systems (p. 115).

With the understanding that content coaching requires coaches to stay abreast of evolving instructional practices within particular subject areas, the need for coaches to receive extensive
PD on the content and supporting instructional practices becomes critical to developing strong content coaches.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn opened their January collaborative meeting discussing their support of math instruction. They focused on the needs of kindergarten through second grade teachers as it related to supporting implementation of the new math curriculum. I supported the conversation as needed, sharing district intentions and agendas for upcoming PD sessions that would incorporate some work in math. The discussion revolved primarily around the difficulties with the accompanying technology. The coaches all shared specific examples of what was causing teachers trouble. These technology issues focused on teachers not being able to access planning information online and the unavailability of access to online math games.

The coaches revealed that they had worked with district technology support personnel as well as the help line associated with the curriculum. Jodi shared a comment that one of her primary teachers had made in reference to the technology difficulties with the new math curriculum. She quoted, "There are times that I try, and I do try, but I'm not going to keep trying if it's still not doing what it's supposed to be doing. I'm just going to do what I know." The teacher was referring to using her teacher's manual as opposed to her online math tools. This incident reveals the tension coaches encountered while trying to support a district initiative and at the same time, support the classroom teachers grounded in the daily realities of implementing a new curriculum.

The coaches also discussed supporting third through fifth grade teachers in the area of math instruction. The conversation focused on instructional strategies and support as they related to the upcoming PARRC assessment. Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn were pleased when I
informed them that there would be a short focused math/PARRC component at the upcoming January PD session.

All of the sister-school collaborative PD sessions had focused on literacy. The only math PD opportunity that the coaches had attended to-date during the 2014-15 school-year was a one-day session in the fall presented by a publisher consultant. Coaches attended that session with one classroom teacher selected from the primary grades at their building. There had not yet been an opportunity for coaches or third through fifth grade classroom teachers to attend a PD session focused on math content and strategies. The fact that the instructional coaches had not had any PD or training themselves in the area of support for math in general or focused on the new math program is in direct conflict with the work presented by West (2009) expressly naming content PD for coaches as a critical component for success.

The coaches revisited the topic of math instruction and math assessment again at their February collaborative meeting as well as off and on during the year at PD sessions, monthly coaching meetings, and regularly scheduled, principal-coach meetings. In particular Carolyn revisited the topic of using math games as an instructional strategy during the February collaborative meeting. She had recently worked with her second grade teachers on determining how to best infuse math games into their lessons. Carolyn remarked that she had repeatedly suggested ways to implement math games into the math block while working with a new teacher. She revealed that she had not been able to make any headway in creating instructional change. Comments and suggestions from her "seasoned" teachers at a recent grade level meeting were ultimately what influenced the new teachers' thinking about the possibility of an instructional shift. As Carolyn shared her experience, she revealed her understanding that her position as coach had not afforded her a significant level of "expertise" in the eyes of the new teacher.
Carolyn noted that she was appreciative of the power of collaborative conversations at grade-levels and the support of the veteran teachers.

**A focus on literacy coaching.** The coaches spent a significant amount of time during the 2014-15 school-year focusing on literacy instruction and support. Their collaborative conversations often revolved around literacy work and flowed between addressing implementation of the new ELA curriculum, guided reading instruction grounded in Jan Richardson's work, and close reading supported by Dr. Sunday Cummins. Toll (2009) defines the concept of literacy coaching as a "category of instructional coaching that focuses on literacy and related aspects of teaching and learning" (p. 57). She contends that there is confusion around the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches in part due to the multiple titles and subsequent job descriptions associated with literacy coaching.

While the Scottsville School District had changed the name of the elementary coaches from "literacy" to "instructional" there was still confusion about the delineation between the two as well as a lack of specific support for coaches in developing a repertoire of literacy coaching strategies. During the 2014-15 school-year coaches were expected to support an extensive new ELA curriculum as well as understand how to help teachers navigate guided reading and close reading instructional strategies as presented by Richardson and Cummins. The coaches supported this shift in ELA instruction without participating in any PD themselves prior to the roll out of the new curriculum materials and/or specific coaching work with Richardson or Cummins.

At the opening PD session in September with Dr. Sunday Cummins the coaches had the opportunity to talk with Sunday at lunch. During their conversation Sunday specifically addressed each of the coaches in terms of teachers’ needs and possible support moving forward.
For example she addressed Kaitlyn, asking about her new teacher. Sunday asked, "What was happening for you all over here? (gesturing to where they had been sitting) What was good? What do we still need to hit?" Kaitlyn shared that she appreciated Sunday’s focus on student "turn and talk" as well as the importance of modeling appropriate teacher language. She revealed that her new teacher was still working on her "teacher voice" and engaging students in lessons. Jodi added that for her teachers there was power in seeing some "tricky" students engage in productive conversations around content and comprehension as well.

Sunday engaged the coaches as a whole in debriefing the model lesson with her. Carolyn commented that she appreciated the way Sunday maintained the focus of the lesson. She added that asking teachers to take note of lesson pacing, use of language, and teacher scaffolds supported the participating teachers in structured and meaningful engagement during the PD. She remarked, "Those are all things that are extremely important." Finally the coaches and Sunday took the opportunity to discuss how to diffuse any confusions teachers had about incorporating close reading strategies into the new ELA curriculum instruction. This opportunity afforded the coaches much needed support from Sunday as they developed their own understanding of the process of close reading and a repertoire of appropriate coaching strategies.

During the January collaborative meeting the coaches discussed preparations for yet another upcoming PD session with Dr. Cummins. They discussed everything from logistics for the session itself and what Sunday would need to questions around disseminating the lessons Sunday wrote for teachers, and supporting teachers in the actual implementation of those lessons. All three coaches shared their experiences around lesson implementation. This led to a discussion on the issue of lesson sequencing and the integration of the ELA curriculum with the social studies curriculum. Jodi supported Carolyn in understanding this connection from a
classroom teacher standpoint. In this way the coaches worked together to continue to develop their own understanding of close reading, implementation, and coaching approaches.

At the February collaborative meeting the coaches focused on sharing ideas around guided reading implementation. They discussed preparation procedures for their upcoming PD session with Dr. Richardson. What unfolded was an exchange between the three coaches that wove in and out of discussing logistics around the PD with Dr. Richardson and guided reading coaching experiences. Carolyn was particularly concerned with preparations for Dr. Richardson's upcoming PD session as her school would be hosting. After a brief interaction about the logistics of the upcoming Richardson PD, Jodi shared a new approach to guided reading instruction in the kindergartens at her building. Jodi explained,

Something else we just started talking about in K is...dividing struggling kids....We're going to try to figure out logistically pulling all 18 (struggling students) into one room for the entire 90 minute block and dissolving the other kids into the other rooms and incorporating them into the other groups.

Jodi briefly added information on targeted 10 minute lessons that would be implemented as a part of this plan. She offered to bring back more information at the next collaborative meeting. As a part of this work she explained that she was supporting a kindergarten teacher who was not familiar with the Jan Richardson approach to guided reading. She said, "That would just be an interesting conversation cause she's (the classroom teacher) new to Jan."

Jodi's idea appeared to spark some thinking on Carolyn's part around "struggling" readers as she returned to the topic of PD preparations and how to choose the appropriate students for Richardson. Carolyn shifted the conversation. "Often our strugglers have behaviors that get in the way and do we want that kind of kid [for Jan to work with]? Jodi supported Carolyn in
working through this preparatory issue. Jodi responded, "The thing is, everyone has behavior strugglers." She recommended that Carolyn not worry about behaviors as much as focusing on students who need help with reading. Jodi’s comments helped Carolyn re-frame her thinking about the children that she was considering as participants for working with Jan.

At the February PD session with Jan Richardson, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn were joined by another coaching collaborative. The entire coaching group along with two district coordinators had the opportunity to have lunch with Jan and discuss classroom implementation and coaching support of guided reading. During this lunch conversation Kaitlyn and Jodi became very involved in a conversation with Jan. They discussed the implementation of guided reading as it related to maintaining a learning focus for children at the table and at the same time engaging the rest of the children in various independent literacy activities. Jan offered several ideas for re-thinking work at the guided reading table as well as suggestions for ways to support "tricky" kids during the literacy block. The coaches walked away from this discussion with a new lens for supporting their teachers.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn recognized and repeatedly discussed the need to navigate between "expert" and "co-learner" at PD sessions and at the guided reading table. This consideration of positioning was critical if the coaches were to successfully support teachers in coaching cycles focused on reading instruction. Toll (2009) suggests a partnership approach to literacy coaching. She states, "Fresh alternative literacy coaches are partners with teachers, working alongside them as coequals who first listen and learn from teachers, then assist them in goal setting and planning for action" (p. 59). Together over the course of the year the coaches continued to negotiate their positions as "literacy coaches" acting as literacy curriculum specialists, classroom literacy support providers, as well as co-learners at literacy PD sessions.
Professional development provider. The role of professional development provider is named in the research as one responsibility that coaches frequently take on in their practice. Killion (2009) states, "coaching is professional development" (p. 12). She explains, "In this role, coaches may lead a book study, coordinate action research teams, hold a workshop on new instructional strategies, [or] engage a team in lesson study..." (p. 12). One challenge that coaches face in their work as PD providers is meeting the needs of a diverse group of adult learners (Killion, 2009). The coaches in this study were all too familiar with this challenge.

During the second half of the January collaborative meeting the coaches focused on developing plans for an upcoming PD opportunity for second and third grade teachers in their buildings. Originally this PD day had been designated as a "district" day where district coordinators were to determine and direct the PD sessions. However, a shift in thinking at the district administrative level had recently placed the decision-making process for this PD back to the buildings. Outside consultants were not involved in this PD day. Each individual coach was given the freedom to work with their administration to create a building-level PD experience that best served the needs of the specific grade levels involved. This was the only time during the 2014-15 school-year that the coaches were responsible for PD.

The coaches shared stories with each other focused on the planning interactions they had had so far with their principals. Multiple topics surfaced as the coaches shared their ideas. As potential PD topics were revealed, the conversation shifted significantly seven times. The coaches discussed focusing on MAP® data, vertical grade-level planning, math instruction, guided reading instruction based on Jan Richardson's model, and the implementation of the new ELA curriculum. At the same time they discussed potential roadblocks including the fact that their designated PD date overlapped with National African American Parent Involvement Day
(NAAPID). This overlap concerned the coaches as they understood that classroom teachers would be hesitant to turn their classrooms over to substitutes on that particular day. Classroom teachers would be conflicted by their desire to be in their classrooms and available to speak with parents who stopped by and have the opportunity to work collaboratively with each other and their instructional coaches.

As the coaches shared stories, concerns, and potential plans for this PD opportunity I was struck by the energy they brought to this new opportunity. After being positioned as participants, in an overwhelming number of PD sessions, the coaches were pleased to be planning for time alone with their teachers. This opportunity afforded the coaches to cater to and support their teachers’ immediate needs. The number of topics that they felt compelled to support in such a short span of time, however, continued to reveal the responsibility these coaches felt to support teachers in a myriad of ways.

**Data coaching.** "A data coach assists individual teachers or teams of teachers in examining student achievement data and in using these data to design instruction that addresses student learning needs" (Killion, 2009, p. 10). The ultimate goal of a data coach is to support teachers in analyzing appropriate data sources to determine future instructional practices that will best meet the needs of the students in question (Killion, 2009). The coaches in this study navigated between fulfilling the role of data coach and becoming the test administrator/proctor. Test administration and proctoring are an interruption to the roles and responsibilities of coaches (West & Cameron, 2013). Administering nationally normed and state mandated testing removes coaches from time and space that could be used in productive ways to support teachers’ instructional practices.
Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn only occasionally shared their thoughts about supporting teachers in meaningful uses of data to inform instruction. They reflected on the use of both formative and summative assessments. The new K-2 math and new K-5 ELA curriculum included multiple, ongoing student assessments. The coaches often grappled with supporting teachers in meaningful ways with the overwhelming number of assessments available.

During the February collaborative meeting Jodi and Carolyn began an exchange about having teachers bring data to grade level collaborations from weekly student ELA assessments. Carolyn remarked, "We started this year having them bring the weekly assessments from Wonders (the new ELA curriculum)." She continued to explain that teachers were initially asked to simply bring their assessments and discuss the administration process. Eventually, during grade level collaborations Carolyn was able to engage teachers in beginning to look at and discuss data from those assessments. Finally, she remarked that the teachers were beginning to notice student growth. She was clearly relieved to be at this point in the discussions about assessment and data. She remarked, "Initially it wasn't a happy meeting!"

Administering weekly ELA assessments was a shift for not only teachers but for students as well. Kaitlyn shared successful strategies that some of her teachers were using during the ELA assessments to strengthen student engagement. Jodi and Carolyn both remarked that they were interested in trying out Kaitlyn's suggestions. This discussion led to a brief conversation around the technical issues that had appeared throughout the year with gathering and viewing student data from online assessments. Successfully fulfilling the role of data coach was clearly a frustration.

The coaches also spent time at their collaborative meetings discussing the upcoming PARRC assessment. Their conversation around PARRC testing began with sharing logistical
information on how to get to the print copy of the third grade test. Carolyn shared, "I went to PARRC online and [then] you go to assessments...I don't know what the tab is but you can print out the paper copy for third, fourth, and fifth [grades]. As the coaches discussed practice and preparation for the PARRC test, Jodi expressed her frustration with fourth grade student performance on recent practice tests. With a tone of resolution Jodi commented, "It is what we have, so we have to go with it!" The conversation around practice and preparation led Carolyn to share how they were supporting PARRC preparation at her school – students at her school had performed skits for each other focused on navigating the test.

Throughout the school-year the coaches shared what they had learned about testing systems, successful implementation, as well as strategies for troubleshooting online difficulties. What became increasingly clear was that the coaches were spending an inordinate amount of time supporting teachers and students with assessments. This topic is addressed in more depth in chapter six.

**Substitute teaching.** At the first collaborative gathering in December Kaitlyn shared with Jodi and Carolyn, "For me it's just nice to talk about coaching just in general and be able to say, 'Well with this teacher we're working on this.' Because otherwise I don't feel like I'm a coach at all!!" Kaitlyn had been pulled from her coaching duties to take on the role of substitute teacher on so many occasions during the first semester that she had not had the opportunity to establish herself as a coach. Kaitlyn simply appreciated her time with Jodi and Carolyn to discuss coaching work. Through these discussions her identity as a coach was re-affirmed.

As Jodi and Carolyn attempted to engage in a conversation at that same December meeting around plans for future collaborative meetings Kaitlyn's voice was noticeably missing. Finally she interjected, "That's a huge challenge!" The kind of pre-planning that Jodi and
Carolyn were suggesting was too difficult for Kaitlyn to envision based on her coaching experiences during the fall of 2014. Previously during one of the fall PD session lunch breaks Kaitlyn had shared with Jodi and Carolyn that when she arrived at school on a daily basis, she did not know what her schedule was going to look like. She had not been able to commit to and plan for coaching cycles with teachers because of her involvement with substitute teaching. Kaitlyn was not able to fulfill her day-to-day coaching responsibilities let alone plan ahead of time for collaborative conversations. She was not able to consider planning for and bringing coaching artifacts to support collaborative coaching conversations.

Jodi and Carolyn both knew of Kaitlyn's struggle with being asked to substitute teach in her building on a regular basis during the fall 2014 months; however, they were not fully aware how intensely it had affected Kaitlyn's perception of herself as a coach. As Kaitlyn began to reveal her difficulty planning for future collaborative meetings Jodi interjected a clarifying comment, "Because you're an internal sub?" This prompted Kaitlyn to open up about how difficult the first few months of coaching during the 2014-15 school-year had been. She shared extensive details regarding her role as a substitute teacher in her building. This lack of vision on the part of the administration regarding the roles and responsibilities of a successful coach had negatively affected Kaitlyn both professionally and emotionally. West and Cameron (2013) specifically warn against the utilization of coaches for roles and responsibilities not directly connected with teacher support that leads to increased student learning. I address this topic in more depth in chapter six as it relates to administrative interpretations and visions for coaching.

The introduction of new math curriculum in the primary grades along with an extensive new K-5 ELA curriculum resulted in an enormous amount of content coaching on the part of the instructional coaches. Additionally the new ELA curriculum combined with the addition of
guided reading instruction grounded in Jan Richardson's approach and close reading as defined by the work of Sunday Cummins brought many new challenges for coaches related to teacher and student support. Implementation of the new PARRC assessment during the same school-year created additional and varied responsibilities for instructional coaches as the administration utilized them as "test coaches," helping teachers prepare students, as well as acting as support personnel during testing. These curricular challenges along with diverse interpretations of coaching as it pertained to coaches' roles and responsibilities affected the way in which coaches’ knowledge and talents were utilized.

Killion (2009) discusses the need for school districts to ground their interpretations of coaching in a strong job description. She states, "When asking the question about balancing the roles, coaches first look to their clear job descriptions and role expectations." (p. 14). At the same time Killion notes the importance of specific goals for coaching programs. "The clearer the goals of the coaching program, the easier it is for coaches to prioritize the many requests they receive for services and to say no to what isn't related to the goal and yes to what is" (p. 15).

While the Scottsville School District had an extensive and detailed job description for elementary instructional coaches, there were no specifically defined goals for administrators and coaches. As a result, the instructional coaches in the Scottsville School District were not in a position to say "no" to requests for their time. Coaches were expected to support virtually every aspect of daily routines in elementary buildings. Many of those roles and responsibilities were often in direct conflict with the main goal of coaching, instructional leadership that affects teacher practice and increases student learning outcomes.
Multiple Identities, Roles, and Responsibilities Influence Collaboration

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn defined themselves as coaches in many ways. They considered themselves to be content coaches, data coaches, PD providers and support hostesses, substitute teachers, and sometimes as defined by Jodi "assistant, assistant, administrators." Their definition of self was greatly impacted by the district curriculum adoption, implementation, and PD support processes. This shift created a domino effect, influencing their teacher interactions and feedback during PD sessions, and administrative support and interpretation of the coaching position. As a result of these overlapping and sometimes conflicting perspectives the coaches struggled with multiple coaching identities.

Poglinco and Bach (2004) advocate for ongoing opportunities for coaches to refine and expand their repertoire of coaching as a way to support the varied situations they encounter. They recommend that coaches work constantly to develop both their interpersonal skills as well as knowledge of content and instructional practices. Refinement and expansion of their practice supports coaches as they re-invent themselves across multiple coaching situations (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

One way that individuals can be afforded the opportunity to extend their learning is through work in a community of practice or community of learners (Kahan, 2004). The development of the sister-school coaching collaborative in the Scottsville School District was created specifically for this purpose. The underlying concept was that instructional coaches would collaborate within their sister-school partnerships as a means to share, construct, and support a more extensive coaching repertoire. In turn, this would facilitate stronger and more effective teacher support.
In reality, the district vision for sister-school collaboratives was vague and unclear as it pertained to coaches’ participation in PD and their ongoing work together as a collaborative. The shift in PD session presentations and focus during the 2014-15 school-year nullified the need for coaches in a sister-school collaborative to meet as a community. While the school groupings remained constant, the fact that coaches were no longer planning for or presenting PD sessions released them from the need to gather as a planning entity. While the district administration supported the coaches in meeting together outside of their buildings as a collaborative, they were not required or encouraged to meet outside of regularly scheduled PD or coach meetings. What the district did encourage was joining their teachers at PD sessions in an effort to support learning the new curriculum and/or instructional practices.

Additionally, while the Scottsville School District had a specific job description for elementary instructional coaches, it did not have detailed goals for coaches and principals to ground the work of coaching. Principals were left to interpret coaching roles and responsibilities based on their personal interpretations of coaching in conjunction with the daily needs for classroom support in their individual buildings. Considering the different teacher and student populations in each of the buildings, this created inconsistent "use" of coaches' skills and talents. As a result, the inconsistent interpretations of and lack of vision for sister-school collaboratives adversely affected the coaches as they attempted to navigate their roles and responsibilities as a collaborative.

One adverse affect was the fact that the coaches did not consider convening as a collaborative during the 2014-15 school-year until I made the suggestion. While the coaches were pleased to take the time to meet with one another, understandably, they lacked focus when they convened as a collaborative. What was revealed during these conversations was a varied
and vague interpretation of coaches' roles and responsibilities on the part of the administration at the coaches' individual buildings. This dissonance in addition to a lack of district vision for sister-school coaches resulted in the ensuing struggles that the coaches in this study encountered when they gathered throughout the year.

**Defining collaboration.** During their fall interviews I asked Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn to discuss their understanding of "collaboration." Each of the coaches defined collaboration a little differently. Jodi defined it as, "Many minds solving many problems. Coming up with many ways to do the same old thing." Carolyn defined it as, "Coming together and sharing ideas. Working out ideas. Planning. Reflecting on ideas to improve or to increase your knowledge." Kaitlyn referred to the work of the collaborative as "networking."

The coaches' definitions reflected their own interpretation and yet they overlapped in many respects. They all included the understanding that participants come together in some capacity to connect with each other and share ideas. Jodi presented collaboration from a problem solving perspective. Carolyn referred to the act of collaboration as a situation where knowledge is increased. These ideas are connected in that one might easily lead to the other. As one progresses through the steps in problem resolution, new learning often takes place. Likewise, as one increases knowledge about instruction, problems are potentially solved. Kaitlyn's simple reference to networking embodies an understanding of exchanging ideas or information with others, connecting with others who can potentially support you in your position.

All of their definitions included key understandings about the nature of collaboration. They recognized that the underlying purpose of their collaborative gatherings was to support each other in working to increase teacher capacity. The product or goal of this work was to ultimately impact student learning outcomes. The coaches viewed this as a shared responsibility.
During an interview Carolyn commented, "I think the collaboration has been insightful. I think people bring up things that I'm not thinking about and hopefully I can bring up things that they're not thinking about, so it's a shared atmosphere."

During her fall interview Kaitlyn was eager to share a story about a successful grade level collaboration experience she had in 2012-13 when Jan Richardson came to the district to provide PD. She shared that as teachers had the opportunity to engage in PD with Jan Richardson, she was able to support that same work in collaboration. "We spent the whole year in collaboration working on running records. We really saw growth with the teachers that year." As Kaitlyn continued with her story she celebrated stating, "Some of the teachers were like, 'I finally understand!' So that was really neat."

In response to the district piloting and adopting new ELA curriculum, teachers at Kaitlyn's collaborative meetings began asking, "How do we integrate these together?" Kaitlyn realized the need to "continue to talk" about the work around guided reading instruction. "So that's been a focus for this year....facilitating that through collaboration." Kaitlyn’s information about collaboration efforts in her building clearly revealed her understanding of the need for collaborative work to be grounded in a specific long-term goal, through continued use of data.

Carolyn also shared her growing understanding of collaboration. During her fall interview she remarked about the work of collaboration from a school-based perspective.

In the school the collaboration is getting better for me. The first year I wasn't sure what my role was. The principal was taking charge and was the leader of it....So this year…we are tying our collaborations with our professional development and there's a lot of connections that weren't there that first year.
Carolyn revealed a conceptual understanding that collaboration is a shared opportunity to focus on specific goals and intentional outcomes. The fact that she spoke about tying collaboration to district PD revealed her understanding of the need to thread a consistent focus throughout the collaborative opportunities.

Jodi spoke at a couple of the collaborative meetings about the inconsistencies of grade level collaboration efforts in her building. She admitted that she encountered administrative roadblocks with consistently threading teacher PD opportunities through school collaborations. "Sometimes we don't circle it back into collab." She revealed a concerted effort moving forward to dive deeper into the district PD during grade level collaborations. Jodi remarked that "Everything gets [in the way] like PARRC, and this and that and it (a district PD topic) just falls away." She told Carolyn and Kaitlyn that something that she had already discussed with her administration was to have teachers "...start bringing artifacts. We aren't using collab to bring student data as much as it's designed for. We just haven't." Jodi described the current collaboration style in her building as "mini staff meetings."

As Jodi discussed her roadblocks with grade level collaborations in her building it became apparent that she understood the importance of focused, meaningful conversations. She understood that without a focus for collaboration participants were easily sidetracked with other topics of conversation. Her goal of continuing discussions related to teachers’ most recent PD experiences along with the use of relevant data spoke to her understanding of successful collaboration.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn all revealed a solid understanding of the important elements of collaboration as they shared their experiences working with grade levels. They all commented about tying school-based collaborations into district PD experiences as a way to create
meaningful conversations. They all revealed the need to ground collaborative conversations in student data to inform instructional decisions. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) refer to this type of work within communities as "systematic intentional inquiry" (p. 317). This systematic process of presenting and evaluating information together is typically the objective of collaboration. A clear vision for what is possible is the basis of productive collaboration (Akhavan, 2005; Block, 2008, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

**Lack of vision impacts sister-school coaching collaboration processes.** During their work together as a collaborative, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn presented a deep understanding of collaboration based on their work with grade-level groups in their individual schools. In contrast to this understanding, when Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn gathered as a collaborative they did not create common goals around collecting data. While they did eventually time their collaborative meetings in between PD sessions, they did not take the opportunity to dive deeply into coaching approaches and implementation of new strategies. Without a clear administrative vision for the work of coaches within coaching collaboratives it is not surprising that their meetings were unorganized and lacked focus.

As the December collaborative meeting drew to a close Jodi commented that she believed future meetings could be scheduled in a timely manner to support each other in aiding teachers at professional development. She suggested scheduling around the PD schedule, referring to the timing as "touchstone moments." Carolyn agreed. She commented that the coaches could discuss how the PD was transferring into everyday practice for teachers and how the coaches could support each other in supporting that transfer and implementation of instructional strategies.
This vision presented the groundwork for the collaborative to be more focused in their work together. By expressing the need to ground themselves in teacher PD opportunities and then how to thread that work throughout the days in between, the coaches revealed an understanding of what collaboration could look like. Jodi and Carolyn alluded to the fact that they could collectively set a focus for themselves and then bring data around teacher practice as a way to share coaching ideas, and ultimately support each other in expanding their coaching practice. Kaitlyn had a different perspective on the collaborative meetings. She remarked that when she was with Jodi and Carolyn she enjoyed the camaraderie; however, the thought of creating more focused conversations that would involve preparation for the meetings only added to her already burdensome circumstances thus far. When the December meeting ended the coaches had not come to a consensus on how to move forward as a collaborative. They had, however, committed to getting together again in January. A seed had been planted for all the coaches to consider, how could they proceed together in a more supportive and collaborative manner?

In the first thirty five minutes of the January meeting the coaches discussed six major topics which led to a total of ten sub-topics. All together during this one hour meeting Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn discussed nine major topics and 21 sub-topics. One thought after another led to an additional issue worthy of discussion. One topic often lent itself to multiple issues. This type of interaction revealed how stretched Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn were in terms of coaching roles, responsibilities, and identities. Without a focus for collaboration no resolution or strategic plan for coaching into their particular situations unfolded.

What became clear was the need for coaches to have time together to decompress. Their apparent continued isolation revealed the need for time to simply share their experiences with
each other. The complexity of their coaching roles and responsibilities challenged them to maintain a focused collaboration which in turn would help them focus their coaching practice. Because the coaches were wrestling with multiple responsibilities they likewise struggled to focus on a given topic when they convened as a collaborative.

What was apparent was the need for an outside entity to keep the coaches focused and moving forward with a supportive structure for their collaboration. At the end of the January meeting I suggested to Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn that they might want to think about scheduling their next meeting around Jan Richardson's upcoming PD session. This was my attempt to help them create a specific intention for their next meeting and ground them in a particular goal, coaching into Jan Richardson's work with teachers. They were agreeable. The date for the next collaborative meeting was set for February 11th.

Halfway through the February meeting the coaches had not yet addressed a focus or goal around the upcoming PD with Jan Richardson. I reminded the coaches of and acknowledged their work around collaboration with teachers, recognizing their understanding of the importance of setting a goal, bringing artifacts, assessing progress, and setting a new goal based on shared information. During the ensuing discussion the coaches reflected on their previous meetings and encounters. They acknowledged that a typical interaction at their collaborative meetings included a somewhat random exchange of coaching situations embedded with supportive coaching suggestions. This discussion about their current style of interactions was followed by a quiet pause before the coaches resumed talking about various coaching topics. The coaches left the February meeting without a concrete plan for gathering artifacts and data at the upcoming PD with Jan Richardson. The overall consensus was that they would make a decision after the PD session.
Late in February Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn gathered with their teachers for PD with Jan Richardson. All three coaches were very engaged in the session throughout the day. Occasionally Jodi and Kaitlyn were grouped together with teachers, sometimes Carolyn and Kaitlyn were paired up with teachers. Kaitlyn video-taped Jan's instruction as usual. The coaches did not however confer after the PD session to discuss a potential data collection plan or goals for their April collaborative meeting.

On April 10th I decided to send an email to Carolyn, Jodi, and Kaitlyn. In the email I suggested that the coaches spend some time journaling before their upcoming collaborative meeting scheduled for the next week. I suggested that their journal entries focus on their experiences coaching into guided reading since the Jan Richardson PD in February. I encouraged them to specifically consider coaching moves that they had struggled with as well as those that were successful. Even though Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn had not determined a specific focus for their collaborative, journaling had the potential to focus their interactions when they gathered. My hope was that this gentle nudge would propel the coaches forward into reflecting on their work as coaches and help them focus at the very least on one main topic, guided reading instruction. I suggested that they bring their journals with them to the April collaborative meeting as "artifacts" to share.

Each of the three coaches arrived at the April 16th collaborative meeting with her journal entry. All of the coaches agreed that the journaling was beneficial; however, when I invited them to share their thoughts there was hesitancy. At the first three meetings the coaches typically began with talking about whatever was on their mind. They were not accustomed to sitting down to a focused conversation.
As the discussion slowly opened Jodi commented on the use of journaling as a practice for focused reflection. "It was actually really good to reflect on previous things and then popping in and seeing where they are going or not going and then reflect on that." Jodi had written about her work with teachers as it related to guided reading instruction. Her reflective lens was grounded in using a Jan Richardson framework for instruction. Her journaling was separated by grade levels regarding work that she had engaged in either over time or recently. When she shared her thoughts with the collaborative she focused only on her first page of reflections, her work with a third grade teacher (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Jodi's reflection pages on coaching into guided reading instruction based on Jan Richardson's framework. April, 2015.
Jodi shared a story about working with a classroom teacher who was new to Jan Richardson's philosophy and approach to guided reading instruction. "We worked together this fall using the apprentice level guided reading books but Jan was like a foreign language with the teacher." Jodi continued explaining that together they started working on all components of guided reading, one item at a time. She reflected, "All of our interactions, classroom interactions, planning interactions were always really good and really positive." Jodi then shared that she was concerned with the teachers' lack of progress in taking on the strategies based on the amount of work that they had done together. She struggled to understand the breakdown. She commented as if speaking with the teacher, "You (the teacher) see how it works, where are we losing traction here."

Jodi considered coaching strategies as she shared with Carolyn and Kaitlyn admitting again that she struggled with a voice and choice approach. "I'm really not good at that waiting to be asked thing." She decided that her coaching approach would involve asking the teacher about guided writing work since the last professional development. She was pleased that the new PD format afforded her what she called a "re-entry point." By this Jodi meant that she could refer back to PD opportunities that she and the teacher had participated in together as a way to re-engage the teacher in a familiar strategy or conversation.

Carolyn had reflected on her work with a new teacher. Her writing included a list of coaching strategies that she had already tried, a reflection on her concerns moving forward, and what might be getting in the way of teacher shifts (see Figure 5).
Carolyn began by sharing her frustrations with the large amount of coaching support she had provided in contrast with the slow implementation of new strategies during guided reading instruction. Carolyn reviewed with Jodi and Kaitlyn all of the different coaching strategies that she had tried to date including modeling lessons and assessment protocols, sharing videos, creating opportunities for observations of other teachers, and observing and reflecting with the teacher.

Eventually the issue of voice and choice came up for the second time during the meeting. Carolyn remarked, "The thing is she doesn't come to me. I go to her all the time. So that closed door, open door policy you know....It's always me going to her." When asked about the issue of voice and choice Carolyn responded that she was unsure why it was an issue in this partnership. She speculated, "She's new...She's very quiet."
As Carolyn continued to openly process her coaching strategies she remarked, "She's seen the videos. She's seen Jan. She's seen me. Now what is it that she needs? Now what is it she takes away from this? That's the conversation." In response Jodi suggested to Carolyn that she could also go back to the Jan Richardson videos. Jodi remarked, "The Jan videos, oh my, you could watch them again and again....You don't have to just keep getting new resources but use a new lens for seeing the same thing." Carolyn and Kaitlyn both agreed in the power of using the same video repeatedly. Carolyn then shared with Jodi and Kaitlyn multiple coaching options and perspectives that she had considered. In sharing her strategies and thought processes all of the coaches were able to focus more on a discussion around coaching approaches rather than on the teacher. This lifted the conversation to a new, more productive level.

Kaitlyn did not focus on one particular coaching situation like Jodi and Carolyn had. Her journal writing centered on a recurring frustration surrounding her work with teachers' inability to reflect on their focus for instruction. Kaitlyn told Jodi and Carolyn that in her experiences coaching teachers in guided reading she tried to offer support by helping them see the importance of setting a focus for instruction. This in turn would allow Kaitlyn to target her support. Kaitlyn had had trouble using this strategy successfully and specifically asked Jodi and Carolyn for ideas to support her work moving forward (see Figure 6).
Kaitlyn revealed that she often worked with teachers who asked her for help with specific students, stuck in a particular way with their reading progress. Often the teachers had tried to teach one particular strategy and the student was not picking it up. Kaitlyn shared her approach. "So we'll look at what they're [both teacher and student] doing so far and we'll plan and target lessons for that." After the planning and implementation Kaitlyn would ask the teacher how the lesson(s) went. She stated that when the teachers reflected they had a tendency to remark, "I wasn't happy with this and that." Kaitlyn shared, "But 'this and that' wasn't the target of our lesson." Kaitlyn continued,
So I think that's a really big issue for the teacher. That they plan their focus and they teach to it but then later when they think about it they get distracted by the other things that aren't going well and they attack those instead of sticking with the thing that they taught that the kids were actually learning.

Kaitlyn was frustrated with the fact that no matter how often she worked with a particular teacher in this way the follow through on focused instruction and reflection had not happened. "If I'm not in there to remind them that that's the focus..." At that point Jodi finished her sentence, "They take it somewhere else." Kaitlyn emphatically agreed with Jodi and remarked, "I would love any suggestions for how to help, help them when they're on their own." The fact that Kaitlyn specifically asked Jodi and Carolyn for help spoke to the amount of trust and respect that had developed within their collaborative. It also revealed a strong desire on the part of Kaitlyn to develop more effective coaching strategies to support teacher practice.

**Finding a shared coaching focus.** The April collaborative meeting among Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn was more focused than any of the previous three meetings. Each coach presented a unique set of coaching circumstances and yet at the same time there was cohesiveness as they discussed coaching into guided reading, grounded in Jan Richardson's instructional practices. The coaches realized that they were all experiencing an overwhelming frustration with issues of voice and choice as well as a lack of follow through or teacher progress when they removed themselves from the classroom instruction. This sense of cohesion during the meeting allowed the coaches to walk away with less of a sense of isolation and a stronger feeling of camaraderie and shared purpose.
Benefits of Coaching Collaboration Despite Difficulty with Focus

The coaches in this study did benefit from the opportunities they created to engage in conversations around coaching. These conversations supported their negotiation of the many roles and responsibilities of instructional coaching as interpreted by their administration. Together the coaches navigated a shift in PD protocols and as a result supported each other in reconciling a shift in positioning from expert to co-learner. Throughout the year they revealed to each other their struggles with identity and positioning in their buildings. They engaged in conversations around administrative support as well as coaching roadblocks that surfaced on an ongoing basis. In this way they constructed and re-constructed their identities as instructional coaches.

As Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn shared narrative accounts of their coaching experiences with one another, they benefitted from shared suggestions and offerings of emotional support. Mishler (1999) discusses the importance of recognizing the ways in which "both parties enter into the production of the story" (p. 51). In this case Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn entered into a shared space where coaching identities were named, evaluated, and re-created, sometimes subtly and other times more directly. These three coaches were constantly negotiating their positions based on their own histories and experiences, the uniqueness of their individual building make-up, the expectations for their coaching position as named in the job description, and the ever changing demands of district initiatives.
CHAPTER 6

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES THAT IMPACT AND FRAME COACHING IDENTITIES

In their study of the impact of policy and practice Coburn and Woulfin (2012) name national, state, and district mandates as influences that affect coaching. These researchers suggest that more coaching studies should focus specifically on the way that educational and political actions impact coaching. Tung, Ouimette, and Feldman (2004) suggest that coaches hold "the vision of the reform for teachers, and face the challenge of simultaneously implementing multiple changes that are structural and cultural, and instructional" (p. 2). The three coaches in the current study were influenced considerably by outside factors.

In this chapter I discuss three major outside factors that influenced the development of the coaches' identities. These three major categories include, (a) the coaches' relationships with administration as a result of administrative requests and interpretations of the coaching position; (b) the amount of time, energy, and stress that test administration and support added to their jobs; and (c) the new curriculum adoption, implementation and professional development (PD) support model. Finally I present the coaches' end-of-year reflections on the collaborative process as a support and influence on their identities.

Three significant coaching challenges surfaced during the course of this year of study that significantly impacted Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn's identities as coaches: (a) their relationships with administration along with administrative job interpretations and requests, (b) the amount of time, energy, and stress that test administration and support added to their job, and (c) the new curriculum adoption and implementation. The day-to-day responsibilities of the instructional coaches in addition to the adoption of new ELA curriculum and the burden of multiple student assessments imposed by national, state, and district mandates created significant additional
pressures to the coaching program. At the same time administrative inconsistency and varied interpretations around instructional coaching added to the stresses of an already extensively defined position.

**Importance of a Clear Administrative Vision**

A clear administrative vision for instructional coaching practices sets the tone for successful coaching. An administration's understanding of a successful coaching program also has the potential to support coaches' identities or create chaos around coaches' identities. Foltos (2015) contends that successful coaching takes place when the principal and coach create an “interdependent relationship” (p. 49). The outcome of close and effective collaboration between coaches and administration is a strong coaching program grounded in administrative support. This common shared vision of coaching often leads to expansion of coaching programs.

Today, the baseline for effective coaching is a school with a principal and coaches who have a clear plan that aligns the work of the coach and learning partners to the school’s educational goals and provides ongoing support. But the bar is being raised. The new model for schools to work toward is one where school leaders encourage coaches to serve as catalysts for a collaborative culture and create the collective capacity essential to assure success for all teachers and students (Foltos, 2015, p. 61).

**Coach – principal relationship.** The partnership with their principal and his/her understanding of the instructional coaching position greatly impacted the coaches' identities in this study. Across interviews and collaborative interactions the coaches often made reference to particular encounters with administration that significantly impacted their coaching practice. On several occasions they worked side-by-side with their principals or assistant principals at PD sessions. During these occasions they acted as partners in the learning process. The coaches
also frequently mentioned administrative requests that conflicted with their own understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach. On several occasions Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn discussed these discrepancies.

Early in the year Jodi framed her relationship with her principal as one of growing respect. She commented on the fact that whenever she presented a request to her principal to spend time outside of the building with her collaborative or with the instructional coaches as a whole, the response was always positive. At the same time, Jodi revealed that she was frustrated with her principals wavering and inconsistent vision for the coaching program across the year. She noted that at the beginning of each year the principal's vision for coaching in the building was, "Let's get this up and running." Because this “vision” was not clearly defined in terms of specific goals embedded in student learning, Jodi expressed frustration as she noted that the vision continually shifted as the year progressed.

Jodi remarked that in December of any given year the focus for coaching shifted depending on what was actually happening instructionally in the building. "Another coach and I used to talk about how we both felt with ... certain staff things that we were like assistant, assistant principals.... I don't want to be the administrator." She continued that it's not about becoming a disciplinarian in the building, a traditional assistant principal role, but rather how it turns into "putting fires out instead of [coaching]." Without a clear administrative vision, Jodi’s work of coaching became tangled in non-coaching activities.

Jodi shared an example of what that lack of focus looked like. During the previous year she had planned to run a particular grade level collaboration but the administration pulled her from that at the last minute to support MAP® testing. She remarked as if speaking with her principal, "Oh so I can't do collab." Her principal responded by clarifying what she needed Jodi
to do instead of coaching into a grade level collaboration. Jodi realized that this shift in assignment repositioned her as a test administrator and proctor as opposed to an instructional coach. Jodi noted that administering a universal screener to students instead of running a grade level collaboration was a result of a lack of vision for the coaching position and one that she often struggled with.

Jodi was however quick to add, "But she's honored the fact that, 'you're not a sub. You don't do lunchroom duty.' We've made a lot of headway... it's more directed than it used to be."

On several occasions throughout the year Jodi's school hosted PD. On those days Jodi's principal would help out with cleaning tables and setting up early in the morning prior to the session. During these times Jodi's principal joined in the discussion around whatever pertinent curricular topic was the focus for the day. Jodi's principal also sat in on the PD sessions as her schedule allowed. This physical presence was an outward sign of her desire to know the curriculum, and support Jodi in supporting her teachers.

During her final interview Jodi revealed a desire to move forward into the coming year with a more focused structure for her weekly meetings with her principal, in addition to a partnership approach to grade-level collaborations. She explained that they had already confirmed their coach-principal meeting schedule for the year 2015-16. Because Jodi and her principal had quite a few years of experience together, they were steadily making progress toward a shared definition and understanding of Jodi's role and responsibilities in the building as an instructional coach.

Carolyn reflected at the January collaborative meeting that together, over the last three years, she and her principal had developed a shared understanding of coaching at her building. "I think he has more of a vision now than he did the first year. The first year we were both
scattered." Carolyn was somewhat cautious during this conversation between the coaches. She appeared hesitant to share any specific details about her relationship with her principal. She did not reveal anything particularly outstanding or negative pertaining to their relationship or the principal's understanding of coaching. During PD sessions at Carolyn's building the principal was only occasionally involved, checking in to make sure that she had everything she needed to ensure a successful day.

In contrast Kaitlyn shared with Jodi and Carolyn at both a December PD session and in more detail at their December collaborative meeting how difficult it had been for her to establish herself as a coach during the 2014-15 school-year to date. During lunch at the December PD session she told Jodi and Carolyn, "I have subbed and covered in classrooms more this year than I ever have in the past years." She explained that her recent absences from PD were due to the fact that the principal had requested her support in the form of substituting and supporting substitutes. She jokingly remarked during lunch that day about how the 3rd grade open teaching position in her building was looking "enticing." She explained that at least she would know she was going to be in 3rd grade every day.

Again at the December collaborative meeting Kaitlyn told Jodi and Carolyn, "I've subbed more this year than I did all of last year even though there's four of us who can sub now." At this meeting Kaitlyn gave a detailed explanation of her experiences with being used as a substitute teacher in the fall of 2014. Of significance was the fact that Kaitlyn was late to a recent PD session with Jodi and Carolyn because she had been asked to support a substitute in her building. Kaitlyn explained, "Last week [the specialty coach] and I were co-subbing with subs all week. That's why I wasn't there [at PD] on Monday!" Jodi and Carolyn responded in disbelief asking for clarification that Kaitlyn had actually been coaching a substitute teacher instead of working
with her classroom teachers at PD. Kaitlyn replied, "Yes I was. We were asked to coach a sub all day, to be available on Monday to stay in the building and not come to PD." Kaitlyn continued, "I spent the better part of the month [November] supporting subs."

As a result of this situation Kaitlyn not only struggled with her identity as a coach, she struggled with her ability to substitute successfully. She described a particularly "tricky" class where she had acted as their substitute on more than one occasion. "I had a terrible day and I was talking to [the principal] about... how it's so [difficult] and why maybe that was." Kaitlyn shared that the principal suggested that she spend time with a school specialist who was particularly strong in the area of classroom management. This suggestion frustrated Kaitlyn even more. She continued, "[The specialist] can walk in to any room, all the kids know her, all the kids have been reset by her, have been disciplined [by her]."

Thinking that she was supporting Kaitlyn, the principal then told Kaitlyn that she was welcome to begin working in the cafeteria during lunch room duty with the specialist as a way to hone her skills around behavior management. This suggestion offended Kaitlyn who shared passionately, "I shouldn't be doing lunch duty! Spend two hours...IN THE CAFETERIA. That's not what I'm supposed to do!" Kaitlyn revealed more layers of frustrations as a result of acting as a classroom substitute including issues with the union and compensation for her time as a substitute during the day. There was a distinct intensity to this conversation as Kaitlyn revealed her struggles with developing a coaching identity in the building in addition to addressing her identity as a competent classroom teacher.

Kaitlyn continued to share her story shifting from reflecting on the current year to comparing it to her previous coaching years under a different principal. She remarked that the atmosphere was different, especially as it pertained to literacy work. Kaitlyn expressed a desire
to not only have the support of her principal but "some [literacy] guidelines district-wide that would help." She continued, "I could just say [to a classroom teacher], 'Are there any kids you're concerned about Jan plans for? Let's get them together.'" Jodi and Carolyn supported Kaitlyn's thinking. Jodi remarked that the focus on literacy "can't only come from you." Carolyn finished Jodi's comment stating that support had to come from "administration." During the second half of the year Kaitlyn and her principal did attend several PD sessions together, working side-by-side with classroom teachers.

**Coach as cure.** Knight (2011) refers to instructional coaching as a PD support based on "partnership principles" (p. 97). He explains that this is a delicate balance of both "top down" and bottom up" (p. 97) perspectives. Coaches must create relationships with teachers based on trust and a common understanding of the teacher-coach partnership. At the same time it is the responsibility of the principal to present themselves as an instructional leader who supports an environment where adults can safely embrace coaching. Knight states, "Telling teachers that they must work with an IC actually makes it more difficult for ICs to enroll teachers in instructional coaching" (p. 97).

During the April collaborative meeting Jodi noted how frustrating it can be to have a teacher say, "So and so said I should work with you." The "so and so" referring to an administrator. Often when Jodi asked what the teacher wanted to focus on she heard, "I don't know! So and so said I had to work with you." She continued, "I don't know where to take that! I wasn't in the observation! I don't know what you're working on!! I don't know what your areas of concern [are]...You know that's not my space...We have growth to do there still."

Jodi's final statement, "We have growth to do there still" was in reference to district administration as a whole and their understanding that coaches are not supposed to be positioned
"fixers." She explained, "I think it's becoming very familiar though. Another coach and I had lunch together on Tuesday. It's very familiar...coaching isn't what coaching should be. Across the district." Carolyn replied, "And every school is different." Jodi continued, "And every administrative style is different, it's just hard. It's just really hard to try to keep boundaries when you know it's going to turn into, you're the band aid. You're the tourniquet. It's not what I'm supposed to do."

At the end of the April collaborative meeting Kaitlyn reflected on her situation as it pertained to "fixing" teachers. She remarked, "Now I'm in two of the rooms from now until the end of the year that I've never been in before...because they have a professional learning plan and they were told to work with the coach. Kaitlyn shared that as she worked with one teacher in particular it became apparent that her instructional practices were on target. What had happened was that the teacher had not understood the expectations for providing evidence of instruction on the new district teacher evaluation tool.

In response to Kaitlyn's comment about teacher evaluations, Jodi exclaimed, "Just wait till evaluations are based on student growth because that's where we're going." The coaches briefly speculated about how that would impact their evaluations in the future. Kaitlyn commented, "That would be the worst combination for my situation next year, being assigned to teachers who are, never would have approached me on their own, don't want to work with me and now I'm forced to." In closing, the coaches described this approach to coaching as "terrifying."

When coaching is presented to teachers as a program for fixing unsuccessful teachers, the coaching program as a whole suffers. The result is that teachers become hesitant to engage in work with the coach. Two of the coaches in this study specifically encountered this message
from their administration on occasion. Toll (2005) reminds us of the pitfalls of seeing coaching as the "'cure' for ineffective teaching" (p. 8). Toll continues, "Some educators advocate for coaching to fix the problem of teachers who are doing a poor job" (p. 11). This approach not only frames the coaching program in a negative light, it also puts coaches in a difficult position.

**Negotiating the Role of Test Administrator vs. Coach**

Another concern for the instructional coaches in this study was maintaining their identity as coach in relation to the amount of time they spent administering and supporting standardized testing. The coaches in this study specifically administered the Partnership for Assessment of College and Careers Readiness, (PARCC) and Measures of Academic Progress, (MAP®). The MAP® testing, a universal screener, takes place three times a year, fall, winter, and spring, for 2nd-5th graders. Students are tested in the areas of math, reading, and writing.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn discussed district, state, and national testing across the year in different venues including monthly coach meetings, PD sessions, and at Collaborative meetings. As early as their October PD session the coaches began discussing the PARRC assessment. During a brief PD follow-up conversation with Dr. Cummins the coaches asked her what she might know and share about the written portion of the PARRC assessment to be administered in the spring of 2015. The coaches were eager to gain some insights around direction for student instruction as well as ways to support teachers with instructional strategies.

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn spent quite a bit of time during their collaborative coaching meetings discussing their involvement in testing. During their January conversation the coaches spoke extensively about their involvement in student assessments. All together the coaches spent roughly a third of the January collaborative meeting discussing test administration. Together they talked about everything from student test preparation and motivation, to the actual
technology students used during test administration, and the specific difficulties of different test formats.

Jodi was pleased during the meeting to hear that PARCC would be a focus during an upcoming PD session for classroom teachers, including information about the hand-written test for 3rd grade. "Oh Nice!" she commented. Professional development around PARRC for teachers would mean that coaches could push into conversations around preparing students for testing. It also meant alleviating some of the pressure to be an expert in this area.

At that same January collaborative meeting the intersection of PARRC and MAP® became apparent as Carolyn and Jodi engaged in a short conversation around accessing the third grade practice test. Carolyn had printed out a copy of the third grade test from an online PARRC site and wondered if she had found the correct test. Jodi replied that the test could be found at the website recently shared in an email by the presenter of the upcoming PD. Jodi remarked, "The tab is still open on my computer. I've been doing MAP® testing all week and I keep thinking 'oh I'm going to look at this.'" The fact that Jodi was too busy with one test, MAP®, to find time to prepare for another test, PARRC, was an example of the juggling that coaches did to support testing. It also confirmed that the coaches in this study traded off coaching time for time involved with testing.

Carolyn revisited the topic of assessment later in the meeting as she talked with Jodi and Kaitlyn about her ideas for the upcoming PD opportunity with third grade teachers. She talked through what it might look like to dig into student MAP® data with teachers as a springboard to conversations around instruction. "So my thought is I would love to do something on MAP®. How to get into it. What to pull up. What the data says to them (teachers).” During this part of the conversation both Jodi and Kaitlyn offered information on how to get to different reports on
the MAP® site for possible use with teachers. While research specifically names data analysis as a potential responsibility for coaching, the coaches in this study not only worked as data coaches, they also administered/proctored tests. Neufeld and Roper (2003) specifically name "proctoring" (p. 18) as unacceptable work for coaches.

During that same meeting Kaitlyn brought up the issue around administering make-up tests. "When we had AIMSweb® make-up testing everyone would pitch in, but with MAP® testing only a couple of us have an administrator access so we're doing it all." This led to an in-depth conversation around the actual test administration. Carolyn inquired about testing first graders. "We didn't do first grade, did you do first grade? We talked about doing it for spring." Jodi confirmed, "I think we have to in the spring, but winter is optional." Jodi then continued, telling a story about her experience working with first grade testing. She had set up all of the tests for each individual child in two first grade classrooms while they were at their "specials" classes. By the time they all returned, more than twenty minutes later, the assessment program on every computer had shut down and she had to log all the students back into the program before they could begin testing. This is an example of a coach spending nearly an entire day administering assessments as opposed to spending the majority of the day coaching.

As the conversation continued the coaches untangled more issues surrounding test administration. Kaitlyn asked Jodi about setting up for the different tests. This conversation included how to provide students at each grade level appropriate online access, testing multiple grade levels at the same time, physical set-up locations, and frustrations with wireless access. All three coaches shared information about what set up strategies worked well and those that did not.
In all the coaches covered eight different issues around the topic of assessment during the January collaborative meeting. The fact that the topic of testing took up so much of their time and energy during one meeting alone was a testament to how much time and energy it took away from coaching. In the Scottsville district principals and assistant principals are key players in developing building level plans for testing procedures and administration. The principal or assistant principal determine whether or not coaches are utilized in that process and to what degree. This situation gives credence to the work of Killion (2009) who reminds us, "How principals view coaching influences the roles coaches fill" (p. 17).

West and Cameron (2013) present a case for the importance of principal-coach partnerships and a clear understanding of their role. In their work with coaching they have determined,

Coaches across the country complain of becoming the ‘catch all’ person in the school, assigned to do anything such as covering classes when substitutes are not available, lunch duty, administering tests, ordering and distributing materials, paperwork, or working with struggling students. None of these (mis)uses of a coach’s time will help to cultivate an adult learning culture that will upgrade teaching capacity systemwide to the degree that student learning will substantially improve, which is the primary function of coaching in educational settings (pp. xv, xvi).

In the spring of 2015 the MAP® testing window for the district nearly backed up against the PARCC testing window. Instructional coaches in the Scottsville district were involved in all of this testing. The result of all of this test administration and support is weeks and weeks of lost coaching across the year. Knight (2011) reminds us that lost coaching is all too familiar a scenario. “It is not uncommon for coaches to report that they spend less than 25 percent of their
time, often less than 10 percent of their time, on coaching. If coaches are essential for professional learning, and coaches aren’t coaching, then not much professional learning will take place” (Knight, 2011, p. 99).

**Coaching Support for New Curriculum**

During the 2014-15 school-year the instructional coaches supported the adoption of a new ELA curriculum as well as the implementation of a newly rewritten math curriculum at K-2nd. The district calendar for supporting ELA PD included a total of 61 days. Of those 61 days Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn’s collaborative met a total of 22 times (see Table 7). One additional PD day for math took place in the fall of 2014. That day involved all instructional coaches accompanied by one classroom teacher from the primary grades. Each ELA PD day specifically targeted one grade level in the a.m. and a different grade level in the p.m. Coaches were expected to attend all PD opportunities with their classroom teachers.

**Table 7. Break-out of Total PD Sessions for Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn’s Collaborative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD Topic – Consultant</th>
<th>Total PD Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New ELA Curriculum</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading – Sunday Cummins</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Reading – Jan Richardson</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Choice – Instructional Coaches</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Math Curriculum K-2nd</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their research on the impact of reading coaches during the implementation of a new Reading First policy, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) determined that coaches can play a role in influencing teachers’ practice around policies. Coburn and Woulfin presented a case for coaches influencing teachers as they assimilated the new information into their individual classroom instruction and routines. The study also reveals that coaches "pressured" and "persuaded"
teachers during implementation. This same phenomenon was visible across the year in the work of the three coaches in this study.

The enormous and often overwhelming task of supporting these new curricula resulted in the coaches taking on new identities that they previously had not negotiated in their work. Like the coaches in Coburn and Woulfin's (2012) study, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn "pressured" and "persuaded" their classroom teachers to implement the new curriculum. Often vocal about their frustrations and displeasure, classroom teachers’ dispositions regarding the new curriculum presented these coaches with new adult learning scenarios.

The amount of time that they dedicated to this PD itself impacted their vision of "self" as a coach. In essence they became the PD support personnel. They took this task on in addition to all of the other "roles" that played out in their individual buildings. The result was a somewhat haphazard year of running from one thing to the next.

During one particular PD day in January the burden to be all things to everyone became apparent. The PD session focusing on the new ELA curriculum, began at 7:30 a.m. without Carolyn who began her day at her own school supporting a classroom teacher in preparation for the next week's PD with Dr. Cummins. Carolyn arrived at the PD session at 9:00 a.m. At 9:30 Kaitlyn left the PD session, returning to her building to also support a classroom teacher who was preparing for the upcoming PD with Dr. Cummins. By 11:30 Jodi gathered up her belongings and left for the day, heading to Chicago for a reading conference. Shortly after Jodi left, Kaitlyn returned for the rest of the afternoon. Kaitlyn then left immediately at the end of the PD session to join Jodi at the conference in Chicago. Carolyn was left to thank the consultant and gather up the PD supplies.
This somewhat frenetic schedule exemplified how the coaches in this study were challenged to support the new district curriculum. In an effort to support classroom teachers with curriculum implementation alone, the coaches operated within a hectic and sometimes chaotic schedule on a day-to-day basis during the 2014-15 school-year. The result of this kind of a coaching schedule appeared to directly impact their collaborative meetings as they discussed multiple topics and coaching approaches, continually negotiating their roles and identities.

**Reflecting on the Year and Looking to the Future**

During final interviews, which took place at the end of the 2014-15 school-year, the coaches each had the opportunity to reflect on both their personal goals for the year as well as their work with each other in the collaborative. When asked specifically to talk about the collaborative process among the three of them the coaches spoke in generalities about the benefits of their time together, occasionally specifically referring to the benefits of sharing coaching strategies. While they revealed an appreciation for their time together, they struggled to name specific personal coaching shifts and outcomes as a result of their ongoing collaborative interactions. Kaitlyn and Jodi specifically reflected on their collective ability to collaborate as defined by the research in this paper (Wenger, 1998a; DuFour, 2004; DuFour et al., 2010).

**A general sense of support.** When the coaches were asked to discuss specific ways the collaborative process had supported them, they all mentioned the issue of isolation and the fact that the collaborative served to combat that feeling. For instance, Jodi commented, "I feel like having the collaborative changed the feeling of isolation because it's so hard to only have one person per building.... But it's just always knowing that other people, you could always talk. So I think just having those cohorts makes you feel like you're not existing in isolation....So it was helpful." Carolyn talked about not being "alone" in the process. Kaitlyn reflected on being
"alone" in her building and the benefits of time spent with Jodi and Carolyn. She viewed the four collaborative meetings across the year as "beneficial." She continued to explain, "When you're alone in your building you just get entrenched in what's going on there." All three coaches had touched on an important concept behind the inception of the sister-school coaching collaboratives, removing the isolation issue and developing a supportive network for coaches.

**Surprising Responses.** During her final interview I asked Carolyn to reflect on what she learned about coaching as a result of her interactions with Jodi and Kaitlyn. She commented, "I think talking with Jodi and Kaitlyn...just knowing that we're all on the same page....we're not too far off the mark. And we're all growing at somewhat the same speed. That helps. A lot!" I probed further asking Carolyn if she could give some examples of coaching strategies she tried as a result of her conversations with Jodi and Kaitlyn. This question was followed by a long pause. Eventually Carolyn remarked, "I can't think of anything right now, but I'm sure there is." She continued to explain that the exchange of ideas was "constant." She explained, "When you go to those meetings (with Jodi and Kaitlyn)... you write something down. You [say] "...that sounds interesting, I'm going to write that down." Carolyn told me that she did that "all the time" and then when she went back to her building she did use that information as she encountered different coaching situations.

As Carolyn continued to reflect on her year she revealed work with her teachers around guided reading that still had her somewhat puzzled. When I asked Carolyn specifically if she had consulted with Kaitlyn she responded, "I haven't talked to Kaitlyn. So it would be interesting to know [what she thought]." I was surprised that Carolyn had not sought out the support and expertise of Kaitlyn considering Kaitlyn's depth of knowledge in guided reading.
instruction. The purpose of the collaborative was to support the coaches in their practice. In this instance Carolyn had not tapped into the knowledge from the coaches in her collaborative.

During Kaitlyn's end of the year interview she remarked, "I don't think we really collaborated much." She went on to explain, "At some of the coaches meetings we would sit as collaboratives, but we never met outside of meeting with you or the coaching meetings." Kaitlyn attributed the lack of collaboration to the fact that each of the three coaches had different areas that they each focused on in their respective schools. She commented, "It was nice to get together and talk about what we were doing. Certain aspects of the coaching part of it are the same but the specifics of it were different." As Kaitlyn reflected she acknowledged, "We weren't as motivated to get together and collaborate because we weren't planning the same things, we weren't doing the same things."

When Jodi reflected on the collaborative process among the three coaches she remarked that she felt like they were always "putting out everyone else's problems" during their collaborative meetings. She believed that they spent more time discussing teacher issues rather than focusing their conversations around ways to improve their own coaching practice. I asked her if the reflective journaling activity for the April collaborative meeting had been helpful in terms of supporting a more focused conversation around coaching strategies and personal growth. Surprisingly she replied by offering a suggestion of how to use it with teachers, not how to continue to build on it as a coach. She commented, "I think that [journaling] can move forward into having teachers reflect on things before we start [grade-level collaboration]....I think that could focus a lot of our work moving forward." Jodi had reflected on the journaling as something to transfer to her work with teachers, not a strategy for diving deeper into her coaching practice.
Seeing value in dissimilarities. The second concept that surfaced was the recognition of how different each of the coaches was and how different their buildings were. The coaches spoke about the benefits and challenges that their differences posed to the collaborative. Not only did Kaitlyn, Carolyn, and Jodi work with different populations of teachers and students, they had very different personalities as coaches. Jodi was confident and vocal. These strengths served her well in a building with high teacher turnover and diverse student needs. Carolyn was able to draw on her many years of experience in education, a large portion of which were spent working with students with special needs. She was quiet and steady. She worked in a building that might also be described as quiet and steady. Kaitlyn was intensely focused on work around literacy. At times she appeared to be disconnected when in fact she was very reflective. These qualities served her well as she worked with a veteran staff of teachers and a high population of at risk students.

When I asked Carolyn about challenges for the collaborative she reflected, "Well they are different schools maybe. They are very different schools." Carolyn addressed the fact that it was perhaps "interesting" how the buildings were different. She explained, "They have a different climate. They have different types of diversity. That would be a possible challenge because the coaches have different challenges within the schools." While Carolyn recognized the differences she also celebrated them and said, "But then again that's why we are together, so we can brainstorm and come up with ideas for each other. I think we each have our strengths which we can build on."

Kaitlyn clarified that not only were their buildings different, "We're different, our areas of expertise [are different]." She elaborated, "When we talked I really appreciated that we had similar... the coaching aspect of it was similar struggles. I got good suggestions that were helpful
from both of them." Kaitlyn commented that she benefited more from coaching suggestions but that in her opinion there were not enough opportunities to work through specific curriculum and instruction issues. This perspective affirmed the need to support coaches with general coaching practices as well as content area coaching strategies.

**Making a Change**

Shortly before these final interviews Kaitlyn announced that she was returning to teaching in the 2015-16 school-year, hoping for a placement as an interventionist. This shift was in line with the goals she named for herself at the start of the year and with comments made across the year. During her fall interview she remarked, "I do often consider going into the classroom.... I do miss working with kids more directly." Again in December she commented about the appeal of a classroom opening. Her remark was made in conjunction with a conversation about the amount of substitute teaching she had done and the fact that she didn't really feel much like a coach.

At her final interview she explained that her work with the behavior specialist in her building "really had me thinking about actually going back into the classroom as a classroom teacher." She remarked again about her frustrations with acting as a substitute and how that really slowed down her ability to coach the way she wanted to. "I guess a lot of the coaching that I did after that (the substituting in the fall) was like tech related or (ST) Math® (Spatial Temporal) or number talks." On the positive side she admitted, "I also continued to do quite a bit of PD and coaching around Jan and that's part of why I'm still interested in being an interventionist."

Carolyn announced her retirement shortly before her final interview as well. When asked about her long term goals in the fall of 2015 Carolyn had responded, "This is my 30th year
teaching. Actually my husband and I are wondering when it's going to be retirement time."

Carolyn explained her vision for retirement including continuing work around reading
instruction or student teachers. She said, "I think that would be interesting. That would be
something I would look into possibly."

During Jodi's final interview she remarked, "It'll be interesting to build new relationships
with all these new people....On one hand I'm really excited to see what kind of people are coming
or if they have other experience in leadership spaces like some new thoughts, new ideas, and
things like that." A replacement for Carolyn had already been named by the time of Jodi's final
interview. "I feel like that is positive already." She remarked, having some past experience with
the newly named coach. Jodi was cautiously optimistic about the work of the collaborative and
coaching in general in the 2015-16 school-year.
CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The intention behind this study was to understand the collaborative interactions of the three coach participants and how those interactions supported the development of their individual and collective coaching practices. I sought to understand the nature of a coaching collaborative and how the coaches utilized the sister-school coaching collaborative as a vehicle for constructing and deepening their understanding of coaching. The three questions that guided the focus of data collection and analysis are:

1. What is the nature of a sister-school professional development collaborative?
   A. What do the three coaching participants bring to the coaching collaborative?
   B. What do the coaches value?
   C. How did the coaches develop relationships with one another?

2. How did the coaches construct their identities during collaborative interactions?

3. How did external factors influence coaches’ identities?

In this chapter I synthesize the findings by research question and support those findings based on research and theory. I explore the implications for coaches as well as for administration in relation to coaches and coaching programs. I present suggestions for changes in the structure of the Scottsville sister-school coaching collaborative. I discuss my role as researcher/change agent and how I struggled to navigate between my role as researcher and district curriculum coordinator. I reflect on how my actions potentially shifted the course of the coaching collaborative. I then present the limitations of this study. Finally I suggest recommendations for future research.
The Nature of a Sister-School Coaching Collaborative

I approached this study with the understanding that cultural contexts drive our understanding of particular social interactions and support our ability to construct meaning of our situations (Bruner, 1990). Across this year of interactions the coaches in this study negotiated their understanding of participation in the sister-school coaching collaborative, originally conceived of as social network that would support coaches' individual identities as well as their identity as a collaborative team. For Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn the sister-school coaching collaborative was defined by:

- The development of trust and respect
- An appreciation of coaches' histories and experiences
- An appreciation of content knowledge and coaching practices
- Participation in a shared ownership of teacher success
- The opportunity to defeat issues of isolation
- The acquisition of new coaching perspectives and strategies

Trust and respect. The coaches in this study strongly articulated a sense of respect and trust in one another's abilities. A sincere appreciation for individual strengths was viewed as critical to the successful formation and subsequent success of their collaborative. Without hesitation each coach named strengths that the other coaches brought to their collective professional development sessions and collaborative conversations.

In addition to respecting each other for their personal strengths these coaches had developed an underlying sense of trust. Throughout the year as the coaches reflected on and continued to develop collaborative experiences they approached their relationships with confidence. Jodi explained during her first interview that "just knowing we have this little triad"
is supportive. She continued to explain that trust had developed over time. She said, "I know if Kaitlyn says she's going to do this, I know it's going to happen and I don't have to worry about it." At the same time during Kaitlyn's absence from a few PD sessions in the fall both Carolyn and Jodi supported her teachers without hesitation. Upon realizing how Carolyn and Jodi had stepped in to "coach" her teachers Kaitlyn immediately sent an email thanking them for their efforts. Byrk and Schneider (2004) refer to this phenomenon as "personal integrity." Trust is developed when individuals perceive that others are acting with integrity in any given situation (Byrk & Schneider, 2004).

**Histories, content knowledge, and coaching practices.** The coaches in this study brought a strong repertoire of educational backgrounds, trainings, and experiences. Instructional experiences in regular education and special education supported conversations regarding curriculum implementation. History with Reading Recovery® instruction and extensive PD in literacy supported the coaches with a strong sense of best practice techniques in guided reading. Ongoing participation in the development of school cultures and collaborative practices grounded the coaches in an understanding of sound engagement practices as they worked with both individual and groups of teachers. Each of the coaches offered a strong resume of specialized talents and an intense commitment to their position.

Kaitlyn was viewed within the collaborative as the "expert" on guided reading based on Richardson's (2009) instructional model. She often discussed her coaching approaches and techniques regarding guided reading instruction in great detail with Jodi and Carolyn. She was also a strong support for Carolyn and Jodi due to her extensive knowledge of technology. In addition to her understanding of technological curricular resources, she often video-taped professional development experiences as a resource for further coaching opportunities.
Carolyn was valued for her knowledge of and problem solving perspective grounded in special education strategies. One advantage of Carolyn's unique background in special education was her ability to see situations from a different perspective. Carolyn defined her perspective as one of embracing the "whole child" as a learner. She used this perspective in approaching adult learning as well, often coaching into situations from a broader approach. She took into consideration the multiple layers and complexities of learning. Both Jodi and Kaitlyn recognized this perspective as beneficial to collaborative conversations focused on both adult learners and instructional strategies that support student learning. Carolyn readily admitted during her final interview that after 27 years of special education work she couldn't help but approach situations from that perspective.

Carolyn and Kaitlyn both recognized the benefits of Jodi’s ability to bring a strong history of classroom instruction. Jodi’s classroom perspective supported several conversations during the course of the year regarding coaching support for instructional strategies. As an example, during the January collaborative meeting, Jodi was able to offer clarity and suggestions for the instructional flow of close reading lessons connected to the new ELA curriculum. She offered specific suggestions around incorporating ELA lessons into science or social studies content areas. She advised, "If you [the teacher] know something that's coming up in social studies or science, and you want to start a precursor to start building everybody's knowledge in it, take this time and space to really hit something hard." In this way Jodi supported collaborative conversations with Carolyn and Kaitlyn grounded in her knowledge of classroom practices and perspectives.

Jodi remarked that she particularly appreciated the different approaches and perspectives of both instructional strategies and coaching techniques that each coach brought to the
collaborative. She believed that when it came to “problem solving,” the fact that they "all came from such different places” actually supported stronger conversations. This perspective is supported by Wenger's (1998b) model of a community of practice, where relationships are built on member participation and the mutual sharing of knowledge. From this stance, Wenger offers insight into the nature of the development of this coaching collaborative. In recognizing the coaching collaborative as a community of practice, these coaches engaged in the process of a shared experience where knowledge was developed over time.

The development of the collaborative involved an emotional investment on the part of each of these three coaches. In their findings Hunt and Handsfield (2013) refer to the emotional aspects of coaching and the need for coaches to be able to rely on supportive environments for success. Crafton and Kaiser (2011) contend that communities of practice “require a kind of coherence” (p. 111) among members as they interact and engage with each other. Because the three coaches in this study developed trusting, respectful relationships they were able to be open and honest with each other about their coaching experiences in their home schools. This relationship building was grounded in a commitment to teacher and student success.

**Shared ownership of teacher success.** The coaches conveyed a sense of responsibility to the teachers and the students that they worked with as a collaborative. They developed a kind of shared accountability for the success of all of their teachers. As previously discussed they often explained particular coaching situations to each other prior to the teachers gathering for PD. They frequently asked each other for support in suggesting instructional strategies to teachers that they were having difficulty coaching. Additionally, when the teachers gathered with the coaches, there was never a hesitation to support and work with all teachers, those from
their individual building as well as those of their colleagues. In this way they developed supportive relationships with teachers across school buildings and grade levels.

This sense of collective responsibility stemmed from their own personal commitment to supporting teachers. Carolyn remarked about this sense of accountability to teachers during her interview in the fall. She remarked, "You'll touch a teacher possibly every single day....And that's where....coaching is different than [being] a teacher." She continued to explain her interpretation and understanding of her primary role as a coach. She said, "I think it goes back to knowing that you are doing it for the students and the growth of the kids, BUT, you are actually teaching adults." Carolyn revealed her understanding of the process of coaching. She understood that she had a responsibility to support students by way of her work and interactions with teachers. Her relationship with Jodi and Kaitlyn in turn supported this work.

Kaitlyn revealed a similar sense of commitment when she discussed her focused work with teachers around guided reading. As she shared information about her specific coaching strategies she embedded statements that revealed a sense of pride and responsibility for teachers' success. During a collaborative conversation Kaitlyn referred to a coaching cycle around guided reading. She shared, "The classroom teacher felt like she was understanding more how to teach guided reading explicitly and directly." She continued to explain, "We spent the whole year in collaboration working on running records...and [by the end of the year] some of the teachers were like, 'I finally understand!' So that was really neat."

Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn each brought a strong foundational history of skills and knowledge around instructional practices. Together they developed a trusting, supportive network for their coaching work with teachers. They valued their time together as a collaborative to share their experiences which, in turn, allowed them to have a deeper
understanding of coaching across buildings and contexts. Grounded in a strong sense of responsibility to teachers, they naturally supported each other during collaborative meetings and professional development sessions.

**Defeating issues of isolation.** The coaches in this study all reflected on the benefits of participating in the collaborative as a means to address the issues of isolation. Coaching is a position grounded in confidentiality. In order to build trusting open relationships with teachers, coaches must maintain a level of confidentiality as it pertains to teachers’ successes and challenges. This creates an inherently isolated position as coaches are often encouraged not to discuss their work with teachers publicly. Knight (2009b) warns coaches about the consequences of indiscretions. He states, "If coaches or others are careless with their comments or suggestions about teachers' practices in the classroom, they run the risk of offending teachers, damaging relationships, or at the very least, not being heard" (p. 52). The very nature of maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality in and of itself increases the isolation of coaches.

Working in this solitary position, in this case one coach per building, creates the added potential to develop a kind of tunnel vision as coaches remain focused on supporting individual teachers in their buildings. In response to this perspective Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn all revealed appreciation for their work together. Jodi specifically named the issue of "isolation" as a struggle. She remarked about the opportunity to lean on Carolyn and Kaitlyn for support, especially with difficult coaching situations. As she reflected on their time together during PD sessions she commented, "Sometimes it's just another voice to say [to a teacher at PD], 'Oh maybe you can try this.'" In this way the same message coming from another coach was viewed by Jodi as a benefit of working closely with trusted coaching colleagues.
As Kaitlyn referred to the benefits of the collaborative, she appreciated the opportunity to collectively discuss coaching with Jodi and Carolyn as opposed to planning or problem solving by herself. She talked about being very "building focused" prior to her involvement in the collaborative. Kaitlyn also remarked that an added benefit of addressing the isolation of coaching was the opportunity to develop a new understanding of how her daily experiences compared to Jodi and Carolyn's experiences in their elementary buildings. As a result of her work with Jodi and Carolyn, Kaitlyn realized that she was not "alone" in her coaching experiences.

When I met with Carolyn at the end of the year she was emphatic in her remarks about the benefits of working with Jodi and Kaitlyn as a coaching collaborative. She remarked, "I can't imagine doing any of this just on my own." Similar to Kaitlyn and Jodi, Carolyn appreciated seeing and hearing about coaching interactions taking place at the other two buildings within the collaborative. While she acknowledged that each of the three coaches had "different challenges within the schools," she also realized their similarities. She recognized the value of time together to "brainstorm" and "come up with different ideas for each other."

Freire (2004) contends that such relationships are a result of the dialogue that is shared over time. He presents a theory for developing a "climate of mutual trust" (p. 91). Over time dialogic interactions draw the participants to a "closer partnership in naming the world" (p. 91). The coaches in this study developed trusting, respectful relationships with each other as a result of their supporting words and actions over time. These opportunities to interact with one another also helped to alleviate the feeling of isolation and affirm their coaching experiences.

**Expanded coaching perspectives and strategies.** An additional benefit of breaking the isolation issue was that the coaches developed an expanded sense and appreciation for coaching
in the district beyond their focused daily interactions at their individual buildings. As Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn shared stories around coaching experiences they came to realize that they often dealt with similar situations. As a result of collaborative interactions with Carolyn and Kaitlyn, Jodi was able to recognize that "Everybody is struggling with something." This affirmation was particularly reassuring to Jodi considering the fact that she worked in a building with a large population of high needs students and a high rate of teacher turnover.

During her fall interview Carolyn remarked "Seeing what others are doing, opens your eyes." This statement was in reference to PD sessions where both teachers and coaches had opportunities to observe students from each of their buildings working successfully with outside consultants during modeled instruction. Jodi also commented about this phenomenon. She explained that the opportunity to observe students across buildings is "the most powerful way to see what it possible."

Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn also realized that they shared similar experiences around the implementation of the new ELA and math curricula, as well as technical issues surfacing with new online curricular resources. Because of these common situations the coaches were able to support one another, generating ideas for solutions to common concerns. The coaches also shared similar experiences around test administration. They were able to offer advice and insight to one another as it pertained to test scheduling, administration, and direct student support.

**Construction of Coaching Identities**

The coaches in this study interacted across the year during professional development sessions, bi-monthly district coach meetings, and four times as a collaborative unit. While the intention of all of these occasions was to support the coaches in their development and understanding of coaching strategies, these coaches struggled to focus their energies. This was
in part a direct result of a lack of district vision for sister-school collaboratives as well as multiple outside influences that resulted in vague and varied interpretations of the instructional coach position in the Scottsville School District.

The district adoption of two new core curriculum resources in addition to the subsequent shift in PD session layout and design during the 2014-15 school-year immediately affected the coaches in this study. The shift in PD protocols directly influenced the way they perceived themselves as coaches and as a collaborative. Because Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn were no longer responsible for working together to plan and implement professional development for their teachers, the concept of sister-school coaching collaboratives was essentially nullified. Professional development was instead imposed upon them as well as their teachers. There was in fact little to no reason for the coaches to convene as a collaborative outside of regularly scheduled coach meetings and PD sessions. The result of this shift positioned Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn more as hostesses and participants than coaches.

Modifications to the PD protocols inadvertently affected Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn's definition of self as coach and created tension as they navigated their new positions. The new protocols specifically shifted the coaches' roles during PD from expert to co-learner. This shift directly influenced the way in which they perceived their ability to connect with teachers. The coaches discussed the benefits and challenges of this shift in great detail during their first collaborative meeting. While Jodi appreciated being released from her role as expert, Kaitlyn struggled with shifting from expert to co-learner. Kaitlyn talked about the potential loss of credibility and how this influenced a teachers' decision to work with her or not. This shift forced the coaches to reframe their understanding of teacher support.
At the same time the shift in PD presentation structure directly influenced not only how the coaches collaborated but left them questioning why to collaborate. When the coaches finally convened as a collaborative in December they clearly appreciated the time to debrief coaching experiences with each other. Collaborative meetings over the course of the year evolved into a time and place to support one another as they revealed coaching frustrations and shared possibilities for implementing new strategies.

What became most noticeable over the course of this year-long study was that when the coaches convened as a collaborative they had difficulty focusing their conversations. This lack of focus indirectly affected their ability to strategically and efficiently share and create new knowledge around the practice of coaching. DuFour et al. (2010) believe that members of a collaborative team are able to “develop new skills and capabilities” (p. 12) grounded in the process of “collective inquiry” (p. 11). As members of a team share information, their awareness of new skills and processes is heightened and “transforms into fundamental shifts in attitudes, beliefs, and habits that, over time, transform the culture of the school” (p. 12). The coaches in this study did not engage in a formal process of “collective inquiry” when they convened. The coaches did however, benefit from the sense of camaraderie and in the sharing of coaching situations through storytelling.

**Storytelling as a means of information processing.** In defining communities of practice storytelling is one experience that is viewed as a medium for participants to share experiences (Wenger et al., 2002). As a means to negotiate their multiple identities the coaches in this collaborative told stories. Through storytelling and problem-solving conversations these coaches attempted to define their roles and positions. This storytelling acted as the vehicle by which coaches developed an understanding of experiences with teachers, sought advice from
their peers, and in essence supported the continued construction of their identities as instructional coaches.

Luttrell (2003) believes that through storytelling we represent ourselves and the world around us as we experience it. Storytelling allows us to conceive of ourselves in multiple ways. For example, storytellers may present themselves as the "victim" or as "having agency and assuming control over events" (p. 114). This theory of storytelling held true for the coaches in this collaborative. At times the coaches revealed themselves as victims of the system in which they worked, and at times they revealed their agency as instructional coaches.

The repertoire of stories that coaches shared and the chaotic nature of their storytelling exposed the multiple layers and levels of coaching complexity. One individual coaching story often included the sharing of the development of situations over time and multiple attempts to offer support with varied coaching strategies. As the coaches told stories they often layered in additional short stories and exchanges. While one coach was telling a story, frequently another coach interjected with a connecting story or coaching suggestion. To the outside observer storytelling often appeared to be unfocused and unproductive.

On the contrary storytelling allowed the coaches to step in and out of their situations as they negotiated an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Storytelling often shifted back and forth between reflecting on teacher practice, offering coaching moves, revealing roadblocks, and problem solving. Stories were a means for the coaches to understand their job, gain new insights into what other coaches were doing around similar situations, and build support through problem solving.

The coaches often engaged in storytelling when they discussed experiences around PD opportunities and/or preparations for upcoming PD. Grounding the conversation in coaching
around PD allowed the coaches to frame their experiences during the PD as well as develop a deeper understanding of coaching possibilities with teachers moving forward. de Certeau (1984) defines this process as a means of "transportation" (p. 115) moving us across space and time. He contends that stories incorporate our history as well as creating a "foundation" (p. 123) for what is to come after.

While stories allowed the coaches to process specific coaching situations, they seldom led to focused conversations on particular coaching strategies. Very little forward momentum was established as a result of storytelling. I believe this difficulty was to a great degree a result of the district shift in PD implementation. The coaches needed a space and time to connect with each other as a means to simply process their experiences. Crafton and Kaiser (2011) contend, "When group participants do not have collective ownership over all parts and processes of inquiry, the narrowing of their roles can impact the quality of collaborative interactions and the knowledge they produce" (p. 108).

A haphazard conversational flow. When these three coaches convened they did not ground their conversations in research-based, collaborative protocols. They were not able to determine a collective focus for their conversations nor did they bring data to drive their discussions. The coaches' conversations typically progressed with a constant flow of ideas. They shifted frequently from one topic to another during discussions, sharing coaching successes and challenges. During the April meeting, as an example, Kaitlyn remarked, "While we're talking about the videos, that was reminding me...I had used Jan videos in PD." This interjection segued into a new story about a PD opportunity that Kaitlyn had created for her teachers. This was a common pattern of conversational flow during collaborative meetings.
Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn's demeanor was casual and relaxed when they met. They did not develop agendas or bring coaching artifacts for sharing. This informal approach to collaboration was in direct conflict with what they conveyed about grade level collaboration in their buildings. One must ask then why a more rigorous collaborative process did not take hold when they themselves gathered as a practicing community of coaches. I believe that the combination of outside factors coupled with a lack of district support resulted in the apparent unfocused collaborative conversations among the coaches. As a result of their complicated coaching situations, the coaches simply appreciated, as Kaitlyn remarked, "feeling like coaches" when they were together.

Additionally Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn found it difficult to determine a specific focus that met all of their coaching needs. I believe this speaks to the differences in their building make-up and subsequently the different coaching needs of their teachers. Carolyn and Kaitlyn coached in buildings with a large number of veteran teachers. Jodi's challenge was coaching an ever changing population of teachers. Her building had dealt with high teacher turnover for several consecutive years. Carolyn and Jodi both worked with populations of students that included a significant number of students who spoke English as a second language. In contrast to Carolyn's school, Kaitlyn and Jodi both worked in schools with high numbers of children from low-income families. Kaitlyn and Jodi also spoke of coaching teachers on establishing well designed learning environments in part by developing a positive classroom climate and culture. Kaitlyn and Jodi's schools both housed classrooms that supported students in the district gifted program. Jodi's school also supported a life skills program offered by the district special education department. During final interviews Carolyn and Kaitlyn specifically mentioned "differences" as a potential challenge, discussing the need to be mindful during collaborative
interactions regarding the differences between their buildings and tailoring coaching styles to those building needs.

The coaches also struggled to shift to a more focused collaborative experience due to the fact that they were trying to support multiple initiatives at the same time they were supporting both individual classroom teachers and grade level teams. In addition to their coaching cycle responsibilities with teachers they supported building administrators with test administration and substitute teaching. Killion and Harrison (2006) state, "When school-based coaches appear to be everywhere doing everything all the time within a school, it's possible that that image is accurate" (p. 30). These researchers contend that it is critical that both administrative teams and coaches have a common shared understanding of coaching roles and responsibilities. A disconnect with administration and the imposition of new district PD protocols had affected the coaches' ability to focus. Jodi remarked during the April collaboration meeting, "I'm constantly making lists and checking off lists." This subtle inference spoke volumes about the number of responsibilities Jodi encountered on a regular basis.

During her final interview Jodi suggested an idea that might support more focused collaborative meetings. She suggested that the collaborative could schedule their meetings strategically before district PD sessions and building grade level collaborations. This would afford the coaches the opportunity to talk about data and patterns in the data. Jodi believed that this approach could potentially allow the coaches to "...talk about what particular item we want to focus on during this next month's meeting." Jodi commented that a more focused collaborative style was "possible."

Freire (2004) would argue that the coaches were somewhat frozen in their situations. He contends that people find themselves "rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them
and which they also mark" (p. 109). From this perspective the coaches were "rooted" in both their personal coaching practice and their subsequent definition of membership within a collaborative coaching unit that realistically had lost its meaning and purpose. As a result Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn used their time together to reflect on their individual "situationality” (p. 109). For them there was merit in simply having time for these conversations. Freire challenges us all to consider the implications of conversation without praxis. He states, "Human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it." (p. 109).

**External Factors Influence Coaches' Identities**

The coaches in this study negotiated multiple roles and responsibilities across the year to include, substitute teacher, test assessor/proctor, expert other, and co-learner. Occasionally the coaches negotiated situations where administration had stepped into a teaching situation and classroom teachers had been told to work with the coach in an effort to support a teacher intervention plan. These situations caused tension for coaches and teachers and are in direct opposition to a voice and choice approach to coaching. The intersection of these multiple identities coupled with district initiatives and shifts in PD protocols directly influenced the coaches' personal definition of self which, in turn, affected the way they communicated as a collaborative unit.

Wenger (1998a) notes that as participants engage in the learning process within a community of practice, their interactions are embedded in culture and history. In this way communities of practice combine an understanding of social practices and individual identity formation. This understanding of the communication process within a community of practice supports the analysis of the interactions that transpired during collaborative coaching meetings.
Considering the coaching collaborative as a community of practice, the coaches in this study met as a unit, and attempted to navigate the imposition of outside influences and, at the same time, develop their own sense of self as coaches and as a collaborative.

In the process of data analysis three main outside forces surfaced as strong influences on the coaches’ construction of their identities, the way in which they interacted during collaborative conversations, and as a result, their understanding of coaching as a practice. Those outside forces included: (a) administrative interpretations of the role of coach, (b) time and energy invested in test administration, and (c) a shift in PD support as a result of new curriculum adoption and implementation protocols.

During member checking conversations all three coaches agreed that these three components directly affected their ability to spend time coaching as defined in the research. Knight (2007) defines instructional coaches as "full-time professional developers, on-site in schools" (p. 12). He contends that their primary role is to work with teachers, assisting them in incorporating "research-based instructional practices" (p. 12). Knight names several areas of potential focus for the instructional coach including: "classroom management, content enhancement, specific teaching practices, or formative assessment" (p. 13). This definition is grounded in an understanding that coaches’ work should be focused on instructional practices and subsequent teacher support.

The reality is that coaching is affected by outside factors that influence how coaches actually spend their time on a daily basis. This understanding is confirmed by the work of Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) who address the fact that outside influences affect a coaches’ ability to navigate roles and responsibilities. The significance of this phenomenon cannot be overlooked. How school districts respond to this understanding becomes critical if they are to
promote and support coaching programs that allow coaches to move forward in productive ways. When the coaches in this study convened as a collaborative unit, they spent their time together untangling the complexities of their roles and responsibilities as it pertained to their individual building needs and district initiatives. It became more and more apparent that these coaches defined themselves less as instructional coaches and more as substitute teachers, test administrators, curriculum developers, and "assistant, assistant principals" to quote Jodi.

**Administrative support.** The coaches in this study struggled with their identities in large part due to their partnership with their direct administrator as well as direction from district level administration. In their study of literacy coaches' perspectives of themselves and their practice, Calo et al., (2015) found, "The most important thing a literacy coach needs is good administration above them who will support and participate in the role of coach" (p.7). They continue to explain that the efficacy of a coaching program is contingent on the level of administrative support. They noted, "Without explicit administrative support, the coach could not do his or her job well" (p. 7).

Mangin and Stoelinga (2007) present a framework of coaching that supports the notion that coaches should not be viewed as "solitary leaders" (p. 26) in their buildings. They contend that "Coaching needs to be considered within the full distribution of leadership. Principal leadership serves as either a supporting or constraining context for coach work "(p. 26). This focus on administrative support for coaches is specifically named in research as critical to the success of coaching programs (Foltos, 2015; Knight, 2009b; Pankake & Moller, 2007; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Shanklin, 2007). Knight (2015) states, "If coaches are asked to write reports, develop school improvement plans, oversee assessments, deal with student behavior, do bus and cafeteria duty, and substitute teach, they'll have little time left to partner with teachers" (p. 1).
The coaches in this study all spoke highly of their administrators and, at the same time they encountered specific situations where they were asked to perform duties that did not directly align to supporting teachers with instructional practices. When I met with Kaitlyn for member checking she specifically reacted to the finding that administrative understanding of the coaching position surfaced as a force that had the power to negatively or positively influence the coaches’ ability to coach effectively. During the December meeting Kaitlyn told an extensive story regarding her relationship with her principal and Kaitlyn's overutilization as a building substitute. This story was filled with passion and emotion as Kaitlyn remarked, "I've already subbed more this year than I did all of last year even though there's four of us who can sub now."

Foltos (2015) believes, “One proven way to assure school support is for the coach and principal to work together to shape a plan to implement coaching in the school” (p. 49). Without this partnership and a clear understanding of the coaches’ roles, the ability to implement targeted support successfully is deeply diminished. Jodi spoke to this point during collaborative meetings with Carolyn and Kaitlyn, and during her interviews. At the April collaborative meeting Jodi was very vocal about the tensions between enacting coaching practices that she knew to be supportive of teacher learning and administrative requests. She used strong language as she referred to additional responsibilities as "saving everybody" and becoming the "band aid" or "tourniquet" for solving problems beyond her control and outside of her coaching role. She talked about," keeping "boundaries" and that she did not want to be an "assistant, assistant administrator."

Kaitlyn affirmed Jodi's thoughts remarking that she was not happy about being asked to support teachers at the request of the principal. She talked about the inconsistent use of Richardson's guided reading protocols and strategies across classrooms in her building. As she
shared her frustrations she commented, "They don't want to work with me [on guided reading] until an administrator tells them they have to and then it's just strained." She continued, "I'm not going to spend my time working with people who don't want to work with me....It's stressful enough. I'm responsible for getting in there (into classrooms)." As discussed in Chapter 5 there is a danger in positioning coaches as the "cure" for a teacher who is struggling with classroom instruction. Kaitlyn, Jodi, and Carolyn were all concerned with the implications of being viewed as "fixer" vs. coach.

**Test administration.** While the role of test administrator is not found in research definitions of coaching, Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn's administrators all required that they support multiple testing initiatives in each of their buildings. These three coaches dedicated an inordinate amount of time during their interactions to the topic of test assessment. With the understanding that the directive to support testing initiatives came from their administrators, I believe that due to the amount of time and energy the coaches devoted to test taking it merited its own separate category of analysis. During member checking both Carolyn and Jodi commented that the amount of testing they were asked to support and administer directly affected the amount of time that they were able to commit to coaching.

Conversations around testing began taking place among these three coaches early in the 2014-15 school-year. Repeated conversations around testing continued until the end of the year. The coaches discussed testing during PD sessions with teachers and consultants. They discussed it during collaborative meetings. They discussed it during bi-monthly district coaching meetings. Virtually every form of elementary district testing affected them – weekly ELA assessments, online math assessments, AIMSweb® progress monitoring, MAP® universal screener, and PARRC.
It appeared that the coaches were caught between the need to know what the tests measured and how they were administered and actually spending time acting as test proctors. Knowing what the tests measured and how it was measured would support the coaches’ role as data coach, analyzing student information with teachers to inform instructional practices. However, proctoring and trouble-shooting technological issues during testing served only to support test implementation, not the ability to use the data in meaningful ways.

All of this involvement with testing affected their coaching schedules and available coaching time. It was a topic of discussion nearly every time they were together. They shared information and strategies around assessment administration; setting up, trouble shooting, and supporting student navigation of technology. As a collaborative they shared ideas and experiences around school-based student testing incentives and preparation. Finally, the coaches discussed ways to support teachers in analyzing and utilizing student data from all of these tests.

During their January collaborative meeting in particular the coaches spent roughly a third of their meeting discussing their involvement with student testing. When I revealed this information to the coaches during member checking their initial reactions were surprised, and yet they all quickly noted that their work around assessment was a significant part of their responsibilities. Carolyn in particular noted she recently had a conversation with an instructional coach regarding the continued amount of testing support that is required of the coaches. And yet the research on coaching clearly discourages using coaches as assessment administrators (Knight, 2015).

**Implementation and support of new curriculum.** The district adoption of new elementary ELA curriculum paired with implementation in K-2 of newly updated math resources created additional responsibilities for the instructional coaches that could not have been
anticipated. Professional development for the new curriculum paired with supporting PD with outside consultants took the coaches out of their buildings in all, 22 times throughout the 2014-15 school-year.

All three coaches confirmed that the amount of PD that they attended, focused on the new ELA curriculum, paired with the amount of time invested in their buildings supporting classroom teachers with instructional implementation of that same curriculum was a major outside force that affected their coaching practice. Tung et al., (2004) contend that coaches strike a "delicate balance" (p. 2) between empowering teachers with new curricular information and pushing new curriculum on teachers as a change agent for district reform. The coaches in this study negotiated this subtle balance throughout the 2014-15 school-year.

Additionally the change in PD support and implementation dramatically shifted the coaches’ responsibilities. This shift was particularly reflected in the way coaches perceived their role during PD and subsequently the support they were able to provide before and after PD sessions. As the coaches transitioned from an "expert" role during the 2013-14 school-year to "learning partner" in the 2014-15 school-year, they were somewhat ill prepared to re-negotiate their relationships with teachers in their buildings.

While Knight (2004) discourages coaches from positioning themselves as "expert" (p. 37) the reality for Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn was that during the first year of the sister-school collaborative PD structure they had been repeatedly positioned as expert other. Rainville and Jones (2008) contend that coaches need to be flexible in regards to how they position themselves acting as "friend, colleague, authority, expert, learner, and so forth" (p. 441). They support an interpretation of identity and positioning as fluid and shifting, "always operating" (p. 441) as coaches engage in different situations. Of importance, as Johnston (2004) reminds us, is how we
name the practice. Choosing to define a coach as "expert," "colleague," or "learning partner" directly impacts the way in which they are viewed and received by those they are hoping to partner with. "Language...is not merely representational (although it is that); it is also constitutive...It actually creates realities and invites identities" (Johnston, 2004, p. 9).

Kaitlyn confirmed this perspective on positioning as she discussed the balance between negotiating an identity of expert or co-learner. She particularly noted that for her some teachers were not interested in working with a coach who was not an expert. In fact she remarked that for some teachers it was an excuse not to work with the coach. At the same time she realized that some teachers in her building appreciated a team approach to coaching, one based on a co-learner model. Kaitlyn shared that she regularly toggled back and forth between expert and co-learner in her practice.

Jodi on the other hand praised the shift in PD protocols that positioned the coaches more as co-learners, as she struggled to connect with teachers during the 2014-15 school-year positioned as the expert. At the first collaborative meeting of the year in December Jodi revealed that her position the previous year as expert was stressful. She had struggled to respond to teachers who remarked, "Well you know how to do it so you're going to tell me to do it the way you're doing it." She believed that she benefited this year from being positioned "more on a level playing field." She welcomed the shift to co-learner even though it meant re-negotiating relationships in her building.

In their work on coaches’ identities and positioning, Hunt and Handsfield (2013) found that during PD sessions, despite coaches assertions that they were in fact not the experts, coaches in their study all felt “pressured to present themselves as knowledgeable and competent” (p. 70). This idea of positioning oneself as “expert” or “co-learner” surfaced as a significant influence on
the coaches’ practice in this study. With this in mind, what was missing for coaches in terms of district support was a way for coaches to study, process, and understand how to negotiate positioning. This topic could easily be incorporated into monthly coach meetings, addressing ways to navigate successfully between the two positions.

Grounded in a solid understanding of the collaborative process and an established atmosphere of trust and respect, the coaches in this study could not have anticipated the way in which district-imposed shifts around PD would affect their definition of self and their ability to function as a collaborative unit. Deeply entrenched in supporting the implementation of new curriculum during the fall of 2014-15, the Scottsville School District failed to create and support a space for coaching collaboratives to grow and develop in meaningful ways. The fact that the coaches did not convene as a collaborative unit until I invited them to meet in early December is a testament to the lack of supporting structures and frenetic pace.

**Implications for Coaches**

Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn benefited from time and space to simply dialogue about their coaching situations. The format of dialogue during collaborative interactions, grounded in the process of verbalizing their situations proved to be both significant and supportive in their development of a coaching identity. This dialogue also served to support their sense of self as instructional coaches. During final interviews the coaches all stated that their time together as a unit was particularly supportive as they negotiated the shift in PD, the implementation of new curriculum, and subsequently their coaching identities.

Bruner (1990) presents a theory for understanding participation in such communities of practice. He wrote, “Our culturally adapted way of life depends on shared meanings and shared concepts and depends as well upon shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in
meaning and interpretation” (p. 13). Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn used their collaborative interactions to share concepts and create meaning around coaching experiences. The collaborative conversations they engaged in offered them a space to share coaching information as they negotiated their positions. This realization rationalizes the time and format that these coaches took in their approach to collaboration.

Understanding of the need for this kind of “coach talk” supports the idea that coaches need time and space to decompress without the added pressure of technical collaborative protocols as defined by DuFour et al. (2010). At the same time these coaches might have benefited from additional structured time to process specific coaching goals grounded in supporting data. Freire challenges the learner to engage in what he names "true dialogue” (p. 92) which,

cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking...thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involve (p. 92).

In keeping with the findings of Hunt and Handsfield (2013) the instructional coaches in this study may have benefited from systemic supports to aide them in their development of identities by providing both time and specific supports for construction of more meaningful dialogue.

Coaches need ongoing professional learning to sharpen their craft and fuel continued growth. That learning might come from routine collaboration among a school’s coaches. Some districts provide ongoing professional learning for their coaches…Without this kind of careful planning, coaches might find they have the same feelings as coaches at a
recent gathering who reported they felt “overworked,” and at times felt “ineffective.”

(Foltos, 2015, p. 50)

At the same time Freire (2004) warns of falling victim to oppression. I am not suggesting that the coaches gather as a result of a district coaching initiative, imposed as a means of controlling collaboration between coaches. In considering the misuse of coaches for example as substitutes, quasi-administrators, and test proctors, the first step is for the oppressor and the oppressed to recognize the situation. Freire contends, "To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (p. 47). The coaches realized that multiple outside factors had negatively influenced their personal identities as coaches. As a result, the coaches struggled to move forward together in productive ways. They were confident with their understandings of the definition of coaching. They were personally committed to act on what they knew to be supportive of classroom instruction. However, without a shared vision of how their time, energies, and talents should be spent, their work was often difficult to negotiate.

During member checking conversations the coaches suggested that two different types of meetings might be more supportive moving forward. They agreed that their collaborative conversations were haphazard and often flowed as a result of emotional reactions to personal or collective situations. With this in mind they affirmed the need for outside support to focus their conversations and ground their practice in a more research-based form of collaboration. At the same time they appreciated the opportunity to connect with one another in a more informal manner. The daily pressures of meeting the needs of teachers, students, and administrators necessitated in their minds the need for time to share their stories and affirm one another as they
negotiated their coaching roles and responsibilities. Jodi suggested that a solution may be as simple as getting together occasionally to have lunch. This realization brings us to the discussion of how school districts might support such opportunities for instructional coaches.

**Implications for Building and District Administration**

In their work on coaching, West and Cameron (2013) have found that very few school districts have figured out a way to “fully support coach development and training to the degree necessary to impact teaching practice systemwide” (p. xv). These researchers claim, “It is important to set aside time for coaches to receive ongoing training in a collaborative coaching community” (p. 31). While the coaches in this study did eventually gather as a collaborative unit on multiple occasions, there were no district systems in place to embrace, encourage, or support these meetings.

Freire (2004) states, "One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people" (p. 95). In this way Freire would argue for a support system that embraced the needs and challenges of coaches and included their voices in planning and implementation of such communities. District administration must partner with coaches to provide appropriate, supportive opportunities for collaboration and professional training. It is important that coaches, in partnership with administration, develop group protocols for collaborative meetings that allow coaches to identify and process information around important “domains of coaching” (West & Cameron, 2013, p. 31).

In his discussion on the development of supportive conversational protocols and engagement activities, Block (2008, 2009) contends that the way in which collaborative meetings are set up is critical to the success of the discussion. He reminds us, "Without a clear setup, each
and every time, citizens will revert to the default conversation” (p. 107). He describes the default conversation as discussions that focus on issues that are often out of our control as well as non-productive in terms of creating new learning opportunities and shifts in practice. He believes that the responsibility for setting up productive collaborative protocols "is an essential task of leadership" (p. 107). Block (2008, 2009) is not suggesting that we tie the participants to a protocol that addresses the needs of leadership, rather one that allows participants to shift from conversations that are "satisfying" (p. 111) to interactions that are productive in nature. I would contend that a partnership approach to this development would result in more meaningful protocols for participants.

If school districts are to embrace a position that supports a professional learning community approach, coaching collaborative teams should be viewed as an integral part of the process as a whole. DuFour et al. (2010) contend,

While collaborative teams are an essential part of the PLC process, the sum is greater than the individual parts. Much of the work of a PLC cannot be done by a team but instead requires a school-wide or district-wide effort (p. 10).

From this perspective district support for collaborative communities of practice is key in furthering their ongoing influences on classroom instruction as well as encouraging a culture and climate of adult learners.

Research on coaching supports the idea that coaches need ongoing training to increase their capacity to support teachers as well as each other (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007, 2009b; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2015; West & Cameron, 2013). Intentional planning around PD for coaches and support for regular meetings that allow for collaborative groups of coaches to dialogue and unpack the nuances of their
practice should be a priority for administration. Neufeld and Roper (2003) contend that district support at all levels, from the top down, "is particularly critical" (p. 16) to the success of a coaching program.

Steiner and Kowal (2015) suggest that coaches need specific ongoing development in the following areas: (a) content area knowledge, (b) specific instructional practices, and (c) general coaching strategies and approaches. Additionally Hunt and Handsfield (2013) contend that literacy coaching training needs to openly acknowledge positioning, power, and identity and give coaches opportunities to grapple with these issues. "It is not sufficient to provide literacy coaches with a 'tool kit' of 'best practices,' which assumes that knowledge is absolute and simply transmitted from coaches to teachers” (p. 73). The data in this study are consistent with the suggestions made by these researchers. The coaches in this study would have greatly benefited from specific district support in all of these areas. Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) effectively summarize the need for coaching support.

In summary the promising practice of coaching is most likely to be effective when placed in a context of complementary leadership, coordinated professional development, coherent reform policy, supportive norms, and adequate resources (p. 28).

A Call to Re-Structure Coaching Support

I believe the findings in this study reveal the need to re-define the intentions for elementary instructional coaching and sister-school coaching collaboratives in the Scottsville School District. A clearly defined set of goals for elementary instructional coaches would ground district leaders and coaches alike in a clear understanding of how coaching fits into the work of supporting classroom instruction and student learning outcomes. The intention for this work should focus on carefully defining appropriate coaching roles and responsibilities as well
as increasing the amount of internal support for instructional coaches. Clearly defined goals for coaches and collaboratives may alleviate the pressure that coaches feel to spend their days taking care of everyone and everything. It should also serve to support administrators in more carefully considering how they utilize coaches on a daily basis. The goal for this restructuring would be to allow for open and honest conversations between coaches and administration focused on pre-determined coaching goals.

A regrouping of sister-school collaboratives would also begin to address the issues that Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn faced in terms of different coaching needs. Teacher and student populations would be the first consideration in creating school partnerships. This would allow for collaborative coaches to be grounded in more targeted meaningful conversations around coaching strategies. As part of this re-grouping coaches could support one another in creating "lab classrooms" based on the work of Kazemi and Gibbons (2015). In this model coaches and teachers engage in collaborative lesson planning based on current curricular timelines and student needs. Teachers then teach the co-planned lesson in front of their peers with options for pausing during the lesson to reflect and re-group as necessary. In this way coaches are able to coach into the instruction "in the moment" and teachers benefit from on the spot coaching. This type of coaching model grounds coaches in focusing specifically on teacher and student support.

Coaches would benefit from semi-structured time and space to meet and confer as collaboratives. The support of a district coordinator at these meetings would serve to inform coaches regarding district initiatives as well as provide a framework for data analysis and planning conversations. Together the coaches would determine the needs for coaching based on teachers’ instructional goals and requests as well as district curricular foci. Additionally the district must support coaches with ongoing PD opportunities that support both their content
knowledge and their ongoing acquisition of targeted coaching strategies. This PD would ideally be presented by content area and coaching experts outside the district. Coaches would benefit from attending these PD opportunities as a team. This would allow for collaboration and planning conversations based on newly acquired information.

Collectively the coaches should continue to meet monthly. At these meetings coaches would benefit from learning and discussing theoretical and practical information on negotiating their roles and responsibilities. In this way the topic of positioning could be addressed. Allowing coaches to problem solve using simulated coaching vignettes would offer them opportunities to reflect on positioning including conversations on negotiating the roles of expert vs. co-learner. Coaches should have opportunities to role play and reflect together around difficult coaching situations.

Knight (2009b) contends that instructional coaches "need to understand the interventions they are sharing, and they need to understand how to productively employ the coaching process" (p. 51). Knight suggests two key PD areas for coaches. He suggests that first and foremost coaches need training designed to enhance their coaching skills. Additionally he believes coaches benefit from PD that deepens their knowledge around instructional practices. These are the kinds of PD support that I am suggesting that the coaches in the Scottsville School District would benefit from on a regular basis.

Coaches would also benefit from time together to simply debrief their experiences, share stories, and connect on a more informal basis. Similar to the findings of Hunt and Handsfield (2013), the coaches in this study felt a great sense of responsibility to support teachers and students to the best of their ability. With that sense of responsibility comes a level of
emotionally charged stress. Advocating for coaches to convene in a casual way without the pressures of planning would serve to support an outlet for reducing the pressures of coaching.

At the same time administrators must define and support a program that focuses on consistent and appropriate work of coaches. Continued ongoing meetings among coaches and principals should incorporate information on the importance of coaching roles and responsibilities that support teacher growth and increased student learning outcomes. District administration must support building principals in successfully filling substitute teacher needs. This would alleviate the temptation to default to coaches as substitutes.

Principals also need support in negotiating appropriate teacher evaluation conversations that offer classroom teachers the option of working with the instructional coach but not requiring it. It is important that administration understand the implications of positioning coaches as a "cure" for teachers who score in the "needs improvement" category of evaluations. Knight (2009b) warns administration of positioning coaches as "punishment" (p. 40) rather they must understand the benefits of offering coaching support as a "lifeline, someone who provides a meaningful support for teachers doing this important and complex work in the classroom" (p. 40).

Reflections on Researcher as Change Agent

In reflecting on my position as researcher/change agent I must consider the effect that I had on the nature of this collaborative. Initial interviews clearly confirmed the fact that Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn had worked together to create a network that was supportive for the three of them. These coaches had already established relationships based on trust and respect. They had developed systems of protocols for PD that particularly worked for their collaborative unit.
Inserting myself into this situation in and of itself changed the dynamics of their interactions, defined by Adler and Adler (1994) as “observer effects” (p. 382).

Block (2008, 2009) reminds us that on the occasion of any gathering that is called by outside participants, there are questions around the intention of the meeting. He presents the argument that those who have been invited to attend bring an "unspoken belief that whoever called the meeting has something in mind for us" (p. 128). I must reflect on this perspective when I consider my interactions with the coaches. While I had no particular agenda in mind when I suggested the collaborative meetings, I will never fully know how the coaches processed that invitation. Additionally, in my role as a coordinator, I do not evaluate or report on the work of the coaches. My work is focused on supporting coaches, offering them opportunities to grow and enhance their practice. It was with this framework in mind that I initially invited the coaches to convene.

What surprised me, based on my initial interviews and observations was the fact that by November Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn had not met as a collaborative unit and appeared to have made no plans to convene any time in the near future. As I considered this more deeply I realized that the need to convene had been nullified as a result of the dramatic shifts around PD session delivery and protocols. Still, I was curious see if and when they might gather together to dive more deeply into coaching conversations, in particular discussions related to PD sessions and subsequent teacher support. Feger et al., (2004) specifically present the development of learning communities, “where coaches can share their experiences and insights” (p. 16) as an integral component for coaches who strive to continually build on their repertoire of coaching strategies.
I perhaps did not fully realize the magnitude of the pressures these coaches faced to support district initiatives, building directives, and individual teachers. The weight of responsibility that they all felt in supporting teachers and students was perhaps greater than I could have imagined considering the shifts in district PD. Early on in the year at the December collaborative meeting Kaitlyn remarked that the thought of scheduling additional meetings around PD sessions was more than she could handle in that moment. At the April collaborative meeting as the coaches discussed the magnitude of their roles and responsibilities Carolyn remarked that she had struggled with the belief that it was her job to "save everybody." Jodi added, "All at once!" Carolyn then replied, "Exactly, and I can't do it!"

Without a deep understanding of Jodi, Carolyn, and Kaitlyn’s day-to-day responsibilities, I had imposed my perspective of how a collaborative should work and how as a district coordinator and researcher I might be able to support them in shifting toward more focused, productive interactions as a collaborative unit. As I consider my role in this research I must ask myself, therefore, what would have happened had I not intervened to ask the coaches to gather in December? What would have happened if I had not asked them to consider a focus around specific coaching goals at the January meeting? What if I had not asked them to journal about their experiences connected to recent guided reading instruction, coaching, and professional development provided by Richardson? All of these questions must be considered if I am to fully analyze the outcomes of this research study.

I justify my actions based on the work of Neufeld and Roper (2003) who present the idea of continued support for coaching programs. They claim, “Without question, the most important condition for successful coaching is district support for coaches’ work” (p. 16). At the same time Wenger (1998a) presents a model of “mutual engagement” (p.73) for communities of practice.
whereby members interact on a regular basis as a way to develop identity. My intention for imposing myself into this collaborative situation as both district coordinator and researcher was to support the development of collaborative coaching encounters grounded in theory and research.

As I reflect on my participation during the study with the coaches in this collaborative there were definitely times when I struggled between acting as a district coordinator and a researcher. In an effort to maintain the integrity of the study there were times that I held back from making suggestions. At the same time I felt responsible to support their efforts. It was particularly difficult to listen quietly while the coaches struggled to determine a focus and set coaching goals as a collaborative. It was also troubling to hear Jodi, Kaitlyn, and Carolyn's stories of substitute teaching and their inappropriate positioning by administrators as a quick fix for teachers. Since collecting data during the 2014-15 school-year, I have taken the opportunity on more than one occasion to present principals and coaches alike with research defining coaches' need for administrative support as it relates to implementing appropriate coaching roles and responsibilities.

Limitations

As with all research there were limitations to this study. Focusing on only one sister-school coaching collaborative team certainly offered me a limited perspective of how coaching collaboratives interact. Had I studied more than one coaching collaborative, there would have been more possibilities for generalizing my findings. With a larger pool of participants I would have been able to triangulate the findings between collaboratives, offering a deeper understanding of the nature of a coaching collaborative.
On more than one occasion I wished that I had been able to follow the coaches into their buildings to observe their practice in action. From this school-based coaching perspective, the coaches' shared stories and conversations about their experiences would have come to life in perhaps an even more meaningful way. Following up on coach-teacher interactions after hearing the coaches' collaborative conversations would have offered an additional opportunity to more deeply understand individual coaching identities. This inside point of view would have given me the opportunity to analyze the coaching conversations that took place during PD and collaborative meetings on a different level.

**Significance and Implications for Future Research**

Coaching research to date has focused primarily on the roles and responsibilities of coaches (Bean, 2004; Calo et al., 2015; Deussen et al., 2007; Dole, 2004; Killion, 2009). There appears to be a determined effort to support the notion that coaching directly impacts teacher practice and therefore student achievement (Atteberry & Byrk, 2011; Bean et al., 2010; Biancarosa & Byrk, 2011; Elish-Piper & Allier, 2011). There is some research regarding coaching identities and issues of outside influences that impact the practice (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008). Because of the multiple frames and angles that researchers have used in approaching the work of coaches, the current research lacks a sense of coherence. A more comprehensive approach to understanding coaching would be beneficial.

Research must, as Hunt and Handsfield (2013) contend, move beyond the roles and responsibilities of coaching and pursue a more holistic understanding of who coaches are and how to support their work in a meaningful way. A deeper examination of the way in which outside forces shape coaches' identities is needed. Ultimately an understanding of how coaches'
identities are developed and play out among the myriad of coaching tasks and daily coaching interactions would offer insight into how to support coaches and coaching programs. Information around specific PD opportunities that enhance coaches' identities and increase their abilities to interact with adult learners and create change is needed.

There is a need to understand what supports district and building administration can implement to further the work of coaches. As Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) contend, the definition of coaching is often "unclear" and the roles and responsibilities of coaches are "vague" (p.29). Research that approaches coaching from a more holistic viewpoint could potentially address the lack of clarity that surrounds this position. Future research that offers detailed information on current coaching programs, measured not only by teacher shifts and student achievement but by coaches’ perceptions of their identities as impactful and productive, would serve to influence the future development, implementation, and ongoing support of successful coaching programs.

The suggestions made in this chapter for re-structuring coaching and coaching collaboratives in the Scottsville School District are based mainly on my observations during this study and my analysis of the data presented here. While the interpretations and recommendations are grounded in theory and research, more targeted information is needed to understand collaborative models that appropriately and successfully support instructional coaching.
EPILOGUE

In all, nine coaches resigned from their coaching positions at the end of the 2014-15 school-year. Three coaches retired, five coaches went back to teaching in one capacity or another, and one coach transferred buildings continuing her work as an instructional coach. With the infusion of eight new instructional coaches into the elementary buildings, the need to support coaches increased. I now co-teach a class on leadership that focuses on adult learning and coaching strategies for supporting teachers with their instructional practices. All eight of the new coaches are participants in that class. We also shifted our monthly principal/coach meetings to include elementary literacy interventionists and reading recovery teachers. This shift created a more meaningful collaborative space and supported a more collective approach to teacher and student support systems.

At the same time the sister-school coaching collaboratives shifted. While some original school groupings remained the same, others were switched around based on new building needs. With eight new coaches who bring little to no history of the sister-school collaborative initiative, the idea of meeting as a separate entity has been almost completely lost. The instructional coaches continue to meet monthly as a cohort. They are developing new relationships as together we attempt to move forward marrying our histories and looking to the future.

Dr. Jan Richardson did not commit to work with the district during the 2015-16 school-year and the new ELA curriculum trainings came to a close at the end of 2014-15. Ongoing PD for 2015-16 has focused on the new math curriculum K-5, close reading with Dr. Sunday Cummins, and ongoing guided reading support provided by the district coordinators. The responsibility for nearly all of these professional development opportunities, preparations and
implementation, has fallen back on district coordinators. Only recently has some of the planning been released to the coaches.

In my continued work with Jodi, who is still currently working as an instructional coach in the district, she has conveyed to me on more than one occasion that she misses the connection and camaraderie of the coaching collaborative. During member checking all of the coaches reiterated how supportive their collaborative coaching conversations had been and that they truly miss one another as colleagues and friends.
REFERENCES


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doi:10.1177/0013161X07299438


APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH JOB DESCRIPTION – SCOTTSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Instructional Coach Position

Qualifications:
1. Holds valid, building-appropriate Illinois teacher certification
2. Minimum of five (5) years successful classroom teaching experience
3. Is well versed in effective, research-based instructional strategies
4. Can effectively model, observe, and conference with colleagues
5. Has successful experience working with diverse student populations and with using a variety of resources to meet student needs
6. Has the ability to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of content areas, especially math, reading, and writing
7. Has knowledge of data collection, analysis, and usage to ensure high fidelity implementation of instruction and intervention
8. Master’s Degree or national Board Certification (preferred)

Reports To: Building Principal
Supervises: N/A
Objective: To work as a colleague with faculty and staff to support student learning. The goal of instructional coaching is to build capacity among staff in the effective implementation of research-based/evidence-based instructional practices.

Performance Responsibilities:
1. INSTRUCTION
   A. Conferences with and sets individual goals with teachers.
   B. Co-plans/co-teaches, models and demonstrates lessons, and engages in side-by-side coaching.
   C. Conducts classroom observations with the purpose of providing instructional support and program improvement.

2. ASSESSMENT
   A. Uses meaningful and informal assessments to support differentiation, student engagement, and data-based decision-making across grade levels and disciplines.
   B. Has knowledge of designing performance assessments and provides guidance to teachers in the development of performance assessments.
   C. Assists teachers in gathering and interpreting student assessment data in order to differentiate within the classroom, to facilitate the Response to Intervention process, and to inform instructional practice.

3. CONTENT
   A. Supports teachers in the implementation of District adopted curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies that have proven to increase student achievement.
   B. Assists teachers in the development of differentiated lessons with higher-order learning activities.
C. Plans for and supports building and district professional development and instructional initiatives.
D. Provides staff development focused on effective instructional strategies and data-based decision making support to teams, as well as to small and large groups.

4. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
   A. Assists in organizing and arranging classrooms that facilitate learning.
   B. Assists teachers in creating a classroom culture and climate that is conducive to student engagement and learning.
   C. Models and demonstrates effective classroom management strategies and techniques.

5. STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES
   A. Maintains the confidence and privacy of individual teachers.
   B. Gathers data to report successes and challenges of the program to all stakeholders.
   C. Advocates for and spotlights growth and success of best practices.
   D. Meets regularly with the Principal to discuss the professional learning needs of the building and how these relate to student learning needs and District initiatives.

Terms of Employment: Wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment as stipulated in the collective bargaining agreement with the union
Evaluation: Performance will be evaluated in accordance with the District’s plan for evaluation of Teachers
Status: Created May 5, 2010
         Last revised (with union input and consent) August 1, 2012
APPENDIX B

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Beginning of Study Interview Questions 2014-15

Background Information

- What is your undergraduate degree/graduate degree if applicable and what is your certification and/or endorsements and specializations?

- Did you have a teacher growing up who was an inspiration or mentor? If so explain how that relationship inspired you.

- What positions have you held in the education field?

- How did you come to be an Instructional Coach?

- What are your long term goals in the field of education?

- Is there any other pertinent information about your background in education that you would like to share?

Coaching Experiences

- (a) What Coaching experiences have you participated in connected to language and literacy or professional learning communities? (content, cognitive, literacy, etc.)

  (b) How does your district support you in participating in these types of coaching opportunities?

- Explain a Coaching Cycle experience that impacted your understanding of literacy instruction. How and why did it impact your instruction?

- In your opinion, what are the critical components of a successful Coaching experience? Experience may be defined as but not limited to a coaching cycle, independent coaching session, or collaborative coaching session.

- How do you pursue your own professional growth as a Coach? Has the Collaborative played a part in this development? How and why?

- What are your personal goals in terms of professional development this year as an Instructional Coach?
Collaborative Work

- Talk about collaborative opportunities within your school itself and district as a whole when it comes to Professional Development opportunities.

- What opportunities do you have to work collaboratively with colleagues?

- Talk about your experience working collaboratively with colleagues in the Sister-School Collaborative.

- What is your greatest take away from the first year of the program? (If applicable)

- What did you learn as a coach during the first year of the collaborative?

- What are your goals for your Collaborative for the 2014-15 school-year?

- What are your personal goals as a coach in the Collaborative for the coming school-year?

Finish these statements:

The definition of an Instructional Coach is...

Collaboration means...
APPENDIX C

END OF STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

End of Study Interview Questions 2014-15

Coaching Experiences

- In thinking about your personal professional goals for the 2014-15 school-year as an Instructional Coach:
  - To date, what goals have been realized?
  - What goals are still in progress?
  - What stage of development are those goals in and what processes are in place to allow for success?
  - What roadblocks have you encountered?
  - How has the Collaborative played a part in this?

Sister-School Collaborative Work

Describe your experience as a coach in the Collaborative this year.

- What have you learned about coaching this year as a result of being a participant/member of the Sister-School Coaching Collaborative?

- Tell me about any personal achievements you experienced as a member of a Sister-School Collaborative.

- What challenges have you encountered within your Collaborative? (collectively and personally)
- Tell me about working collaboratively this year as Instructional Coaches within the Collaborative and your practice as a coach.

- How has the PD Collaborative influenced your personal coaching practice?

- How has the PD Collaborative practice influenced your understanding of coaching practices in general?
## APPENDIX D

### JANUARY AND FEBRUARY COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
<th>Topics, Flow, and Time Invested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January 23, 2015   | • Math curriculum (00-10:34)  
|                    |   o Online access/tech issues  
|                    |   • Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) (10:35)  
|                    |   • Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) testing administration support (11:16)  
|                    |   • (PARRC) (11:32)  
|                    |     o Upcoming PD  
|                    |     o Practice test taking with students  
|                    |     o Test taking skills/strategy work with students  
|                    | • Sunday’s PD (14:30)  
|                    |     o Set up needs  
|                    |     o Teacher prep  
|                    |     o Coach responsibilities  
|                    |     o Scheduling issues with multiple PD sessions  
|                    |     o Lesson implementation and ongoing implementation  
|                    |     o Brief vignette around Social Studies issues  
|                    | • AIMSweb® administering make-up tests (33:22)  
|                    | • MAP® test administration (33:44)  
|                    |     o Strategies for implementation  
|                    |     o Set-up  
|                    |     o Bandwidth needs  
|                    |     o Make-up administration  
|                    | • Upcoming building PD (38:40)  
|                    |     o Structure for the day-grade levels, times, location, etc.  
|                    |     o National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID) on the same day as PD  
|                    |     o Data Days on the same day as PD  
|                    |     o Possible topics  
|                    |       • MAP®  
|                    |       • Math  
|                    |       • Aligning with district PD  
|                    |       • Jan Richardson – Guided Reading  
|                    | • Guided Reading (47:09)  
|                    |     o Kaitlyn shared a story  
|                    |     o Carolyn shared a story  
|                    |     o Jodi shared a story  
|                    | • Plan for next Collaborative meeting in February (58:47-1:03.00)  
| February 11, 2015  | • Shared February Building PD experiences  
|                    |     o Jodi (00-6:04)  
|                    |       • Discussed complications- administrative support, |
scheduling, building focus, continuing concerns
  o Carolyn (6:04)
    ▪ Discussed activities and covered – Math, ELA, MAP® data, teachers observations, videos
    ▪ Discussed complications – teacher absences, scheduling
  o Kaitlyn (11:43)
    ▪ MAP® scores review
    ▪ Jan Richardson focus – teacher resistance
• Discussed a possible vision for more focused Collaborative meetings (15:24)
  o Principal support/coaching vision
  o Voice and Choice (22:12)
  o Discussed a possible vision for Collaborative meetings (24:15)
    ▪ Intervention work with teachers
    ▪ Work with Sunday Cummins
• Preparing for upcoming PD with Jan Richardson (30:05)
  o Student choices
  o Level of readers
  o Jodi told a story
• Discussed a possible vision for collaborative meetings (32:15)
• Preparing for upcoming PD with Jan Richardson (33:42)
  o Behavior issues
  o 10 minute lesson plan
• Discussed a possible vision for collaborative meetings (36:25)
  o Jodi offered a goal
  o Carolyn offered a goal
• Carolyn went back to upcoming PD (37:48)
• Possibility of meeting after the upcoming PD to confirm goals (38:07)
  o Jodi offered another goal around collaboration
    ▪ Teacher use of student data
  o Carolyn shared additional information on using student data
  o Kaitlyn shared additional information on administering online student tests in ELA/student motivation/online reports
• Preparation for PD with Jan Richardson (48:06)
  o Offering of support to Carolyn
  o How to frontload information to teachers
• Grade – Level Collaborations (51:00)
• Principal engagement in guided reading professional development (53:00)
• Preparation for PD with Jan Richardson (54:10)
  o Kaitlyn video-taping/preparation/needs/tips
  o Attendance/location
• Close/Revisit possible goals (57:00-58:56)