The Tale of Two Middle School Literacy Coaches: Implications for Building Coaching Capacity

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THE TALE OF TWO MIDDLE SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING COACHING CAPACITY

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Reading and Language Doctoral Program

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THE TALE OF TWO MIDDLE SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES:

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING COACHING CAPACITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the day to day practices of two middle school literacy coaches. My intention is to capture how coaches continue to build their capacity. Data were gathered through multiple sources, in the form of interviews, observations, a focus group, field notes, reflection journal and artifacts. I then analyzed the data to look for themes. Three major themes emerged through this research and several implications are made for literacy coaches, principals, district leadership, professional development providers, university programs and school systems.
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Chapter One

This study investigates the ways in which literacy coaches build their coaching capacity to guide teachers in improving student achievement. School-based coaching for literacy teachers has assumed an important role in school reform in recent years. However, research in the field of literacy coaching does not sufficiently explore what literacy coaches perceive to be their professional development needs. In fact, little is currently known concerning the assumptions about knowledge, learning and teaching underlying the work of literacy coaches (Marsh, McCombs, and Martorell, 2012). Additionally, there is little research examining the specific attributes of high-quality coaches or the supports needed to foster quality in instructional coaches. Ultimately, not enough is known about reading coaches (Marsh et al, 2012).

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. This chapter provides a context for the study, background information about adolescent reading, and a theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature in literacy coaching and professional development. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology, as well as issues faced by me regarding data collection. Chapter 4 presents the qualitative findings. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, putting them into the context of previous research in literacy coaching. I provide implications for the field of literacy coaching, suggestions and implications for future research, recommendations and the limitations of the study.

Background

The roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches are based on several assumptions related to the demands of their roles and responsibilities. Drawing on my
own experiences as a literacy coach for five years in a large urban school district, teachers and administrators seemed to have held the following assumptions regarding a literacy coach’s qualifications, roles, and responsibilities which included: (a) data coach and interventionist (b) knowledgeable about best practices, (c) able to deliver professional development and provide ongoing support, (d) an ability to work with adults with varying perspectives, motivations, and goals, (e) able to make a measurable difference, (f) teachers would be receptive to professional development, and (g) the work would result in increased test scores, improved curriculum, and improved teacher practices. The teachers and administrators I worked with could not have been more wrong and their expectations could not have been more unrealistic. My observations may indicate that these assumptions are predicated on the fact that literacy coaches have expertise in all areas of curriculum development because they attended college, completed coursework, received a degree and qualifying certificate and that these experiences deem literacy coaches effective and capable of getting results.

Research indicates that literacy coaches are not adequately prepared for the specific job they are required to do (Dole, Liang, Watkins, and Wiggins, 2006; Casey, 2006). My personal experience supports this assertion. While the university course work I took as a graduate student prepared me to be a literacy teacher and leader; it did not however, prepare me for the wide range of roles and responsibilities I was charged with by my administration to meet the needs of teachers.

The reality of being a literacy coach was quite different from the expectations set by my academic studies. My graduate course work in reading and language focused on research in literacy, children and young adult literature, emergent literacy, curriculum and
supervision, and writing instruction. I also spent a semester during my clinical studies developing customized lesson plans, administering diagnostic assessments and performing progress monitoring for a second grade student. As a literacy coach my work primarily consisted of working with teachers in grades K-8 to support the delivery of high quality reading instruction by providing professional development designed to improve the efficacy of instruction through demonstrations, mentoring, coaching and workshops. Additionally, I was responsible for assessing children who had been identified as struggling readers that had not made expected improvement with classroom-based interventions. I was also responsible for monitoring literacy instruction—including content-area literacy instruction and helping teachers analyze and interpret data for the purpose of informing instruction. While my professional training prepared me to be a resource provider and classroom supporter, it did not prepare me to provide pedagogical intervention for teachers, serve as a data analyst or function as a curriculum developer.

Conversations and interviews with other traditionally trained literacy coaches have convinced me that my personal experiences, of which I will provide a glimpse in the following anecdotes, are illustrative of how ill-prepared literacy coaches can be to meet the demands placed upon them. In my role as a first year literacy coach, I was responsible for analyzing teacher practices in an attempt to determine why certain teachers were ineffective and developing prescriptive solutions that would dramatically increase their efficacy. April (pseudonym) taught first grade and would almost never allot time for her students to write even though we were implementing writing workshop and receiving training from an outside expert who had emphasized the importance of giving students time to write in the classroom. April believed it was a waste of
instructional time because her students were not yet writing complete sentences. Amy (pseudonym) taught fourth grade science and did not believe it was her responsibility to teach content area literacy. She focused only on science content and refused to equip students with literacy strategies that would enable them to process and comprehend the content. In both of these cases, despite my training and expertise in literacy, I lacked the ability to change the practices of those resistant teachers. Toll (2005) said it best, “We think the issue is knowledge, but it isn’t. If knowledge were the essential component to behavior change, then we would all be very different” (p. 52).

Utilizing assessment data as a tool for helping teachers raise achievement is another area where my training failed to prepare me to meet the needs of the teachers I was responsible for supporting. A significant amount of my time was devoted to analyzing student data with teachers. In some situations, I was more effective than in others. For instance, I was effective in working with teachers to analyze qualitative assessment data, such as students’ readers’ and writers’ notebooks, but not as effective in analyzing quantitative data, such as Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data or Text Reading Comprehension (TRC). A new kindergarten teacher reached out to me and asked if I could help her to analyze her students’ DIBELS and TRC data. I provided a print out of her DIBELS data and merely showed her how to group her students according to their color-coded (red, yellow, green) level of relative proficiency or deficiency. She had twenty students in the red who were probably in the red for twenty different reasons. Due to my lack of experience with the primary grades and limited capacity for meaningfully interpreting DIBELS and TRC data, I was unable to effectively support the teacher. This era of high stakes testing has forced schools to
become more data-driven and demands that educators use test scores to drive instructional practices. In order to do so, teachers—and those who support them—need to be trained in how to accomplish this complex task successfully (Huffman, Lawrenz, Thomas, and Clarkson, 2006). I had received no such training in how to manage and use the multitude of data I was required to confront on a daily basis.

As a second year literacy coach I was given the task of creating school wide assessments with rubrics and sample units for all grade levels. This work was done in isolation as opposed to in collaboration with teachers, which made it difficult to meet the needs of both teachers and students. These experiences, in large part, reflect my struggles to excel in my job as a school-based literacy coach for five years without the benefit of adequate training or support. In an interview with Nancy Shanklin, David Moore revealed that Shanklin found capacity building to be a concern in a Colorado school district, stating that the district leaders did not have reading specialist or teachers in middle and high schools with the knowledge to write and monitor reading instruction plans or do the teaching that was needed (Shanklin & Moore, 2010). The literary coach is expected to become interventionist, instructional specialist, and catalyst for change (Harrison & Killion, 2006). This research coupled with my experiences as a literacy coach may indicate that sometimes the education a literacy coach receives is not enough.

Although literacy coaching offers promise in regards to improving teacher practices and raising the level of student achievement, it is my position as a district literacy coach that adequate professional development for literacy coaches is needed to improve their efforts to support teachers. Literacy coaches have to be cognizant of the various learning styles and needs of adults. Teachers; as adult learners, bring to the
learning experience a myriad of experiences, skills, and knowledge that influence their receptiveness to new ideas and the degree to which they obtain and implement new skills (Bean, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Working with teachers is distinctly different than working with students because adults bring a wider variety of life experiences and multiple roles and responsibilities to the coaching relationship (Bean, 2009). For instance, they are not only teachers, but they are also parents, students, learners, and so on. They bring the many experiences they have had in their personal lives and work, as well as their emotions associated with past learning experiences (Bean, 2009; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005).

According to Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) there are key characteristics that make teaching adults radically different from teaching students. Since teaching students is different from teaching adults, literacy coaches have to consider the background knowledge and attitude of the teachers they are working with as well as their independence, motivation or lack of motivation and goals they have set for themselves. In addition to these considerations are the needs of adult learners which include: respect of others and self-actualization (Denton, 2005).

**Theoretical Framework**

To better understand the nature of the professional development that two middle school literacy coaches receive and how it is instantiated in their day to day work with teachers, it is necessary to draw from theories related to literacy coaches as learners through professional development. These theories are related to a socio-cultural theoretical framework, socio-cognitive theoretical framework, self-directed learning, situated learning and adult learning theory.
Adult learning theory principles emphasize the process of and approaches to helping adults learn (Blaschke, 2012 and Fenwick, 2008). Andragogy also referred to as adult learning model, stresses the value of the process of learning. For the purpose of this study andragogy will be defined as ways that adults help other adults learn (Zmeyov, 1998). The learner is actively involved in identifying his or her needs and planning how those needs will be satisfied. They become critical agents for change in their own learning (Zmeyov, 1998).

Adult learning theory will aid me in determining how literacy coaches work with each other and teacher to grow professionally. Given the nature of the work the literacy coach is responsible for carrying out I argue it is important that literacy coaches become competent and capable as a result of their learning and professional development and growth.

The notion of job-embedded professional development is situated in a social-cultural theoretical framework. Social-cultural theories assume that learning is situated within everyday social context. One of the assumptions of andragogical adult learning model is that learning occurs in context and its significance relates in part to its impact on those contexts (Harris, 2003). Learning must be organized in the context of the adult’s atmosphere. In essence, the learning that takes place must be centered on the learner’s objectives and must align with their occupation and other everyday factors in their lives (Fenwick, 2008; Harris 2003 & Zmeyov, 1998). This is instrumental to learning about the contextual factors that foster and or limit literacy coaches’ effective collaboration.

Learning is viewed as an ongoing refinement of practices and emerging knowledge embodied in the specific action of a particular community. To add, there
must be immediate application of the new learning, knowledge and skills acquired (Harris, 2003).

The aforementioned theoretical framework will support me in investigating the professional development that literacy coaches in this study seek out to build their capacity when they don’t have the support of their district or school administration. Furthermore, adult learning theory will be used to understand how the literacy coaches diagnose their learning needs and choose professional development, resources, and set goals to address those learning needs.

**Definition of Professional Development**

Bean (2009) defines professional development as efforts to improve capabilities and performances of educators. Professional development is seen as a vehicle for change (Guskey, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Learning forward (2008); a professional organization devoted to educator professional development, in collaboration with advocates defines professional development as “a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (p.1).

Additionally, professional development, according to Learning Forward (2008) fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

1. Is aligned with rigorous state and student academic achievement standards as well as school improvement goals
2. Is conducted among educators at the school level and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders.

3. Primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a continuous cycle of improvement that (a) defines a clear set of educator learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of data, (b) provides job-embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom, (c) regularly assesses the effectiveness of professional development in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting challenging state standards, and (d) informs ongoing improvements in teaching and student learning.

**Standards for Professional Learning**

According to Learning Forward (2008) “For most educators working in schools, professional learning is the singular most accessible means they have to develop the new knowledge, skills and practices necessary to better meet students’ learning needs” (p. 2). The standards for professional learning developed by Learning Forward (2008) along with 40 professional associations and education organizations outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership and improved student achievement. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students as outlined by Learning Forward (2008): (1) occurs within professional learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment, (2) requires prioritizing, monitoring and
coordinating resources for educator learning, (3) integrates theories, research, and models of adult learning to achieve its intended outcomes, (4) aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards, (4) requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning, (5) uses a variety of sources and types of data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning and (6) applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change. The standards make explicit the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. When educators use these standards to plan, facilitate, and evaluate professional learning they heighten the quality of educator learning, performance of all educators and student learning.

These standards signal the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous development and place an emphasis on the learner being an active partner in determining the content of their learning, how their learning occurs and how they evaluate its effectiveness.

**Statement of the Problem**

At the top of the nations’ educational agenda is raising student achievement (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez, 2005). In spite of the efforts by years of reform including Reading First and Striving Readers, children still cannot read in American public schools; not because these efforts have not had an impact on teaching but because they have not focused on developing the instructional expertise of teachers (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust and Shulman, 2005; Cooter, 2004, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995)
Over 8 million adolescents are struggling readers who have not mastered the necessary reading skills to successfully respond to demands of secondary school requirements (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ness 2008; Berkeley, Regan, Southhall, Stagliano, Lindstrom, and Nealy, 2012; Wise, 2009; Hock, Brasseur, Deshler, Catts, Marquis, Mark, and Stbling, 2009). The challenges of adolescent literacy are massive and have been under-addressed (Bumgardner, 2010; Marchand-Martella, Martella, Modderman, Petersen and Pan, 2013). Little progress has been made at the middle and high school levels (Snow & Moje, 2010; Bumgardner, 2010). In spite of this reported lack of progress, talented and amazing teachers have the power to make a difference. These teachers offer effective adolescent literacy instruction by providing explicit comprehension instruction, text-based collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, diverse texts, intensive writing, ongoing formative assessment, extended time for literacy, ongoing summative assessments, motivation and self-directed learning to get results (Marchand-Martella et al, 2013; Lawrence, Rabinowitz, and Perna, 2009; Ness; 2008).

Ensuring that adolescents become literate, productive members of society and teaching them the advanced literacy skills they need to succeed in high school, college and the workplace is not an easy hurdle for teachers to clear. Research indicates there is the need for better instruction in secondary classrooms and more insight into the instructional choices teachers make at their middle school classrooms (Lawrence, Rabinowitz, and Perna, 2009).

Learning within the content areas has become a critical feature of success for adolescent readers (Marchand-Martella et al, 2013; Palumbo and Sanacore, 2009). This is because adolescents require more specialized and complex literacy support and
instruction in content areas (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006; Brinda, 2011). Reading content area text is difficult for students for several reasons. One reason is because they have fewer experiences with expository text, the material is denser than what they are used to reading and the vocabulary is often technical.

With more than 8 million adolescents experiencing difficulty reading at their grade level part of helping adolescents to succeed includes building their textual lineages, engaging adolescents with questions that matter, and tapping into their multiple identities (Gross, 2010 and Tatum, 2008). Middle school offers adolescents a chance to succeed educationally if teachers can figure out how to best combine literacy and curriculum while dealing with the difficulties students encounter as they move through the grades to more subject matter and domain specific vocabulary (Palumbo and Sanacore, 2009). The question is how do teachers help adolescents achieve success in literacy? Palumbo and Sanacore, (2009) and Gross (2010) recommend providing time to read and engage in related sharing, wide reading of different texts, provide opportunities for them to make and share meaning with their peers and teachers, encourage different types of responses to literature from a variety of perspectives to name a few.

Teaching reading has been a challenge for some secondary teachers because they do not see themselves as reading teachers and struggle to find ways to implement reading strategies with content (Lawrence, Rabinowitz and Perna, 2009). Teaching in the content areas requires sophisticated skills and embedding thoughtful knowledge development practices, strategy instruction, text-based discussions, writing to learn in subject matter teaching and to differentiate that instruction to meet the varying needs of adolescents. Middle schools must allow teachers to work with literacy professionals such as coaches
and professional development providers (Snow and Moje, 2010; Sailors, 2009). Since the middle grades are such an important turning point in a young reader’s life, all middle grade educators have a responsibility to go beyond mere reading comprehension and address engagement in literacy across the curriculum (Brinda, 2011 and Witt, 2012). Middle school teachers cannot be expected to suddenly deliver the necessary instruction and programs for students overnight; professional development will be an integral part in helping teachers to succeed (Witt, 2011).

Professional development is effective for teachers when it involves the teachers as learners in the process and at the same time allows them to struggle with the uncertainties of each role (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). Furthermore professional development should be focused on instruction and student outcomes, carefully structured, purposefully directed, provide opportunity for collegial inquiry, assistance and feedback (Guskey, 2003 and Newmann, King and Youngs, 2000).

Children who have not done well in school need teachers and administrations to create a school environment in which they can succeed academically. This requires professional development for teachers in the areas of student outcomes, content, data analysis and high quality instruction, (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2009; Bumgardner, 2010 and Guskey, 2003). While adolescent literacy remains a concern, building teacher’s capacity to provide adolescent literacy instruction is the first step to addressing this concern. According to Wilcox and Angelis (2012) in a study replicated in 20 states, capacity building was found to be one of the most significant factors impacting student achievement in high-performing schools. Newman et al (200) conducted a two year study in nine urban elementary schools on professional development that address school
capacity and found that professional development in schools that addressed teacher’s knowledge, skills, dispositions, professional community and leadership boosted school-wide student achievement. Carpenter (2005) argues there is a need for more experienced, skilled and empathetic professionals trained to deliver high quality instruction that ultimately leads to student achievement and success.

One way to build teachers’ capacity and provide professional development to teachers is through the literacy coach. Without the appropriate knowledge and skill, teachers are unable to demonstrate the ways of thinking that help meet the adaptive challenge of helping every student to reach his or her learning potential (Babiera & Preskell, 2010). Cooter (2004) asserts that without teacher capacity building in effective literacy instruction, up to 20% of urban children can be certain not to succeed in learning to read. Cooter and Cooter (2004) found that a majority of the teachers they observed, during a study for the Dallas Reading Plan, (a) knew little about developmental milestones of reading and writing, (b) how to quickly and efficiently assess children’s reading development, (c) how to group students effectively and (d) ways to adapt the curriculum to meet special needs.

How do school districts help these teachers to be excellent? One support that has been put in place for teachers is a literacy coach. The literacy coach plays a central role in improving literacy teaching and learning (Raphael, Weber, Goldman, Sullivan, & George, 2009; Bean, 2009, Petersen, Taylor, Burnham & Schock, 2009) and is embedded within the school community and able to provide on-site, continuous support; which has the potential to develop an individual professional knowledge base (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al., 2009). Are middle school literacy coaches prepared to help teaches meet
these challenges and succeed? If not, what are they doing about it? How are they preparing to get prepared? Every educator at every level needs to know exactly what they should do for their professional learning (Armstrong, 2012).

The expectations are getting higher and higher for teachers to raise the level of achievement; in some cases without providing teachers the support they need to meet these current demands. In order to assess which teachers need additional support and which teachers are making good strides in spite of the challenges they face, they are evaluated by their building administrators. The purpose the evaluation serves is to capture the accomplished teachers’ ability to impact students’ learning (Norman, 2010).

Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching was intended to provide a clear standard for practice. Empirical studies have shown it is associated with improved student learning (Danielson, 2012; Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Those who observe instruction will need to acquire a number of skills to conduct fair and reliable observations of teaching. They will need training and an assessment of their own skills to ensure they can conduct observations with fidelity. The conversations following an observation are the best opportunity to engage teachers in thinking through how they could strengthen their practice (Danielson, 2012). Are coaches equipped to perform these observations and have these important and critical conversations?

Now, with the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), it seems more important than ever to support teachers. The professional literature provides much elaboration on the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, their impact or lack of impact on teacher and student achievement; however there is little to no research about the support literacy coaches receive to be highly effective in their efforts to
support teachers or what they do to seek out the professional development they need to build their coaching capacity. Although instructional coaches have become increasingly prevalent in United States schools and districts, there is little known about what defines an effective coach and how coaches gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in their instructional support roles (Marsh, McCombs, Martorell, 2012). Because little to no research is available on the professional development that literacy coaches seek out more documentation is needed on the actions they take to address their professional development needs. This dissertation attempts to address how literacy coaches build their capacity around how teachers learn and develop.

My interest in this research stems from my professional practice as a first year middle school literacy teacher, a school based literacy coach, an adjunct professor of reading and language and a district literacy specialist for a large urban school district. In these capacities, I had the opportunity to both observe and experience firsthand the challenges and obstacles literacy coaches encounter as they strive to support teachers and meet performance objectives.

As a first year middle school literacy teacher, I was hired to teach eighth grade reading to a class of 45 students whose reading levels ranged from second grade to ninth grade. Initially, I was confident that my education had prepared me for the demands of my job. Unfortunately, I soon realized I had neither the knowledge nor the skills to meet the literacy needs of my students. Overwhelmed with frustration and desperate to provide my students with the best education possible, I reached out to our school’s literacy coach at the time and asked her to observe my classroom practice and to model
providing remediation, intervention and vocabulary instruction. My requests went unmet for several months.

In my role as a school based literacy coach, I lacked the breadth and depth of curriculum development expertise necessary to fully support all of the adult learners on my roster. I talked to my principal and explained that I needed to fortify my knowledge base in order to fill in the gaps. An external consultant was hired to mentor and train me. My principal also sent me to state and local conferences to help me expand my competency in that area.

For the past three years, I have taught graduate students at a university in the Midwest. Most of my students are employed as either teachers or literacy leaders. A common topic of our class discussions is the lack of adequate support for raising student achievement from school level literacy coaches.

In my current position as a district literacy specialist, I attended a series of four professional development trainings for coaches on implementing the Common Core State Standards and incorporating complex text during instruction. The focus for these trainings was as follows: utilizing the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, close reading, text dependent questions, collaborative learning, annotation, and academic language. These trainings were facilitated by a distinguished literacy expert who is considered one of the world’s foremost experts in our focus areas. During one of our sessions, the facilitator showed a 10-minute excerpt of a 90-minute videotape of a sixth grade teacher leading her students through a close reading of a narrative text. At the conclusion of the video, the facilitator asked: What instructional routines made this close reading possible? The room was silent for what seemed like an extended period of time.
The fact that literacy coaches were not able to immediately articulate an answer to the question underscored that so much attention had been focused on the teacher’s ability to raise student achievement that very little had been directed toward what tools the teacher needed in order to effectuate that objective or how coaches could support teachers in doing so. That became clear to me during those trainings.

Failure to teach children to learn to read is a valid concern that needs to be carefully weighed in order to confront the real problem of teacher and coaching capacity in literacy instruction, a problem that is magnified by lack of support or inadequate support for teachers and coaches. According to Cooter (2004), many schools; especially those in large urban school districts struggle to help all children become fully literate. Building teacher capacity is a complicated task which often requires complex solutions (Cooter, 2003; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Unfortunately, there are no easy answers and solutions to a problem of this magnitude for educators, administrators and researchers who are determined to close the achievement gap; however, this research offers some insight into the need to provide support for literacy coaches as they attempt to support teachers. High quality literacy instruction and support can only be achieved through skilled professionals (Cooter, 2004 & Strickland, 2003).

**Purpose of the Study**

In a collaborative effort, the International Literacy Association (ILA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the National Council for the Social Science (NCSS) created standards for middle and high school literacy coaches (Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole 2009). The standards are
categorized as Leadership Standards and Content Literacy Standards. The leadership standards apply to literacy coaches without regard to the content area in which they are assisting teachers. The content area literacy standards apply to the demands literacy coaches face when assisting in a specific content area such as English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies. The following questions come to mind: (1) Are middle school literacy coaches prepared to fulfill these responsibilities? (2) Do literacy coaches meet these qualifications? (3) What do they identify as their own learning needs within the context of these standards? This study will provide insight into the nature of the professional development two middle school literacy coaches receive and how it is instantiated in their day to day work with teachers. These coaches will need ongoing job-embedded professional development to fulfill all of these standards.

Leadership Standards are as follows: (a) skillful collaborators who are content area literacy coaches skilled in collaborating effectively in middle school and/or high school, (2) skillful job-embedded coaches who are skilled instructional coaches for secondary teachers in the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and social science, and (3) skillful evaluators of literacy needs who are skilled in the literacy needs within various subjects and are able to collaborate with secondary school leadership teams and teachers to interpret and use assessment data to inform instruction (IRA, 2006).

The content area standard is standard four which states the content area literacy coach is a skillful instructional strategist and is an accomplished middle school and high school teacher who is skilled in developing and implementing instructional strategies to
improve academic literacy in the specific content area (IRA, 2006). These standards imply this work is hard. Who are helping literacy coaches do this work well?

There is some existing research about what coaches do, how their work impacts both student achievement and teachers, and how teachers view their coaches (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) but virtually nothing about what professional development literacy coaches seek out to be effective coaches (Blamey, Meyer & Wadpole, 2008). The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of the professional development two middle school literacy coaches receive and the contextual factors that foster their professional growth. The intent of this study is to add to the literature on how middle school literacy coaches grow professionally. We know with a fair degree to certitude what the research says about demands of literacy coaches, changing roles and responsibilities, how to build trusting relationships, but there is a dearth of research on how middle school literacy coaches build their capacity (Blamey, Meyer & Wadpole, 2008). The reason for this may be with the adoption of Common Core State Standards the current focus is on improving the teachers’ instructional practices rather than building coaching capacity.

**Research Questions**

Less research has examined how literacy coaches build their capacity (Blamey, Meyer & Wadpole). Instead research has focused on roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches (Bean, 2009; Bean, Cassidy, Grument, Shelton & Wallis, 2002; and Mraz, Algozzine & Watson, 2008). To address this issue; this study will investigate the following research questions:
(1) What is the nature of the professional development two middle school literacy coaches receive and how is it instantiated in their day to day work with teachers in the District?

(2) How do two middle school literacy coaches in one District work with each other to grow professionally and what are the contextual factors that foster and/or limit their effective collaboration?

(3) If literacy coaches are not provided the professional development they need what do they do about it as evidenced in their daily interactions and decisions in the District in which they work?

**Significance of the Study**

Literacy coaches must be able to manage a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Literacy coaches support many initiatives at the school level but there is little to no support in place for the literacy coaches. If the ultimate goal of professional development is to influence student achievement outcomes, it is crucial to understand how to best prepare literacy coaches to work most effectively with teachers to enhance literacy gains. It supports the notion that new learning developed over time coupled with extensive practice under the guidance of a more knowledgeable coach is the most effective combination to build teacher capacity (Bean, 2009; Petersen et al, 2009 and Cooter, 2004).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, creating competent literacy coaches is critical to ensure that all children receive a rigorous, high quality education. When literacy coaches work to build their capacity, teachers have the opportunity to succeed and to prepare their students to be
successful as well (Cooter, 2003; Allen, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005 & Drago-Severson, 2009)
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

A vast body of research has been conducted on the urgency to raise student achievement in the United States (Gerlach, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Allington & Cunningham, 2007 & Brinda, 2011). This research is central to addressing the need to provide support for literary coaches who support teachers in their efforts to raise student achievement. An important goal for educators and administrators; especially, in the current educational environment, which is dominated by issues of accountability and high stakes testing is the need to develop teacher capacity (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; Huffman, Lawrenz, Thomas & Clarkson, 2006).

The professional literature presented here on literacy coaching covers several topics which are outlined and explained in this review of literature. The review of literature begins with a definition of literacy coaching and the context of literacy coaching in school reform. This is followed by an explanation of the qualities of effective literacy coaches, the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches and the need for literacy coaches. Then issues associated with literacy coaching and teacher efficacy are described followed by a conclusion about the role of the literacy coach in building teacher capacity and the professional development literacy coaches engage in to build their own capacity.

Literacy Coaching Defined

Toll (2005) defines the literacy coach as “One who helps teachers to recognize what they know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more” (p.4). In this definition, there is a significant emphasis on teachers. While the
teachers’ outcome is to raise the achievement of students, the literacy coach is there to help teachers achieve that goal. This definition also places the literacy coach in a supporting role. In essence, the teachers are responsible for strengthening their capacities and the literacy coach is there to assist teachers in their efforts. In other words, literacy coaches focus their attention on improving student achievement by working directly with teachers.

Hasbrouck & Denton (2005) define literacy coaching, also called Student-Focused Coaching (SFC), as a “Cooperative, ideally collaborative relationship with parties mutually engaged in efforts to provide better services for student” (p.2). They define a literacy coach as an experienced teacher who has strong and sufficient knowledge base in reading and experience providing effective and quality reading instruction to students, especially struggling readers or students who are less proficient than their peers. Additionally, the literacy coach has received training in how to work effectively with their peers and colleagues to help them improve their students’ reading outcomes as well as receive support in the school for providing coaching to other teachers, instructional assistants and leaders, parents and administrators (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005).

Other researchers define literacy coaches as one with expertise who provides guidance, support or feedback that enables someone else to become more proficient at teaching literacy (Bean, 2009; Walpole and Blamey, 2008; Dole et al, 2006). The job of the literacy coach is to work with teachers in their schools and help them to do their very best to facilitate student achievement (Bean, 2009; Peterson et al, 2009 and Gersten, Morvant & Brengelman, 1995). Casey (2006) argues there is no uniform definition of
literacy coaches because their roles and responsibilities vary across the country but describes several types of coaches: school based coach, teacher leader, district coach and consultant. The school based coach may work with the entire teaching staff using a particular curriculum. In contrast the teacher leader is a classroom teacher who coaches colleagues periodically throughout the week during the school year. The district coach works for one district and is responsible for multiple schools in the district. A consultant may work with schools in a number of districts providing district wide professional development sessions for teachers or literacy coaches or both (Casey, 2006).

West & Cameron (2013) define a coach as “Anyone whose job description or informal interactions (e.g., collaborative planning with colleagues) involves assisting teachers and/or principals in improving teacher performance, either part-time or full-time, in the service of improving student learning” (p.11). Like Hansbrouck & Denton (2005), West and Cameron have acknowledged the work literacy coaches do with school administrators in their definition. In some cases literacy coaches not only assist and support teachers but they also work closely with principals and other building administrators.

While all four definitions presented here do not exactly mirror each other, the key words in all definitions are focused on better instruction for students and provide important insight into coaching; illustrating that coaching is complex. For the purpose of this study, I will define a literacy coach as a knowledgeable other who provides professional development to teachers to improve teaching and learning.

Literacy Coaching in the Context of School Reform
The need for literacy coaching is evident across the United States at all levels of schooling and in many educational settings and remains one of the hottest topics in reading education today (Mraz, Algozzine & Watson, 2008). Literacy coaching has become such a promising element in school reform because of the potential to improve instructional practices and student achievement across academic content areas (Bean, 2009; Steckel, 2009 and Gersten et al, 1995). Having literacy coaches in schools providing guidance and support to teachers and addressing students’ literacy issues has become widely accepted (Mraz, Algozzine and Watson, 2008; Dole, Liang, Watkins and Wiggins, 2006). Literacy coaching is a critical component of many major school-wide reading improvement efforts in the nation today and is seen as an important method for improving literacy instruction and literacy achievement (Toll, 2005; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham & Schock, 2009).

The literacy coach provides support to teachers in implementing strategies that they would otherwise struggle to achieve because the ongoing support provided by the literacy coach is not achieved in professional development programs (Bean, 2009). According to West & Cameron (2013) “Coaching has the potential to transform schooling as we presently know it” (p.19). Marsh (2012) reports that literacy coaching has become the centerpiece of literacy reform policies in many school districts and in some states.

**Qualities of Effective Literacy Coaches**

The International Reading Association (2006) along with researchers and policy makers has considered the knowledge and skills that effective literacy coaches need (Wadpole & Blamey, 2008; Blamey, Meyer and Walpole, 2009). Wadpole and Blamey
have listed some of those qualities for literacy coaches as: (a) the characteristics of excellent classroom teachers, (b) knowledge of reading development, (c) knowledge of assessments used for varied purposes as well as the interpretation of that data at the teacher, school and classroom level, (d) well versed in instruction and materials, (e) and the ability to raise the achievement level of struggling readers. Furthermore, literacy coaches need to be well versed in the research, theory, and practices of literacy instruction coupled with a sound understanding of teaching, learning, and child development (Bean, 2009; Toll, 2005 and Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Knowing literacy practices and being able to coach from actual classroom experience and not just theory will go a long way with teachers. In addition, literacy coaches need knowledge of adult learning and teachers’ professional development, strong interpersonal skills, and proficiency in planning and organizing (Toll, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Bean (2009) and Lyons and Pinnell (2001) would agree with the aforementioned statement arguing that teaching students is radically different from teaching adults. According to Toll (2005), a literacy coach who is also trustworthy, loyal, and has knowledge of the coaching processes would make the literacy coach particularly strong. Literacy coaches strive to improve student achievement by supporting teaching and learning. This is accomplished by applying what they know about best practices to their coaching work (Casey, 2006; Kiener, 2010).

Effective literacy coaches learn and teach effective decision making, and literacy and pedagogical content knowledge (Casey, 2006; Bean et al, 2002). Additionally, effective literacy coaches learn how to be effective teachers of adults, strive to build teacher and leadership capacity, embrace resistance, are effective communicators, and are
evaluators of literacy needs (Casey, 2006; Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009). According to Casey (2006) and Bean et al (2002) the decisions and actions of the literacy coach should aim to improve the quality of teaching in order to improve the quality of student learning. This reaffirms the aforementioned definitions of the literacy coach as defined by researchers and literacy experts. This can lead one to the conclusion that literacy coaching is not about the literacy coach or the teacher but about the literacy lives of students that coaches indirectly serve through the support they provide to teachers in their efforts to improve student achievement.

According to Allen (2006), essential coaching strategies are those grounded in inquiry, reflection, and collaborative exchange of knowledge between educators. These strategies also include focusing on teachers as a community, providing sustained, ongoing, and intensive, support through modeling and coaching that is derived from teachers’ work with their students (Bean, 2009; Bean et al, 2002; Gersten et al, 1995). Lastly, essential coaching strategies are those that engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, and whose work is connected to other aspects of school change (Peterson et al, 2009; Blachowicz, Obrochta & Fogelberg, 2005).

Bean (2009) contends there are four characteristics of effective coaches: (1) excellent, up-to-date knowledge of literacy instruction and assessment, (2) experience, (3) ability to work with adults and (4) effective interpersonal and leadership skills. In Beans explanation of these characteristics she explains that coaches need knowledge of literacy instruction in order to analyze lessons they observe. Observing the work of teachers and providing feedback are one of the most effective approaches to professional development (Bean, 2009; Blachowicz et al, 2005). In this approach to learning, the
literacy coach intercedes, provides reinforcement and augments the teaching approaches of those observed. Bean (2009) further argues that in order for literacy coaches to have this level of knowledge requires them to become learners themselves, reading the current literature and research. In addition to staying abreast of the most current research through the reading of professional literature, literacy coaches can also increase their knowledge base by attending conferences and workshops.

Furthermore, literacy coaches are more effective in their practice when they have experience as successful reading teachers (Bean, 2009; Bean et al, 2002; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). When literacy coaches bring experience to the work, they earn more credibility with teachers and this in turn enables teachers to trust the teachings of the literacy coach. This implies that a literacy coach may be less credible and less effective in building a trusting relationship with teachers when his or her work is based on theory alone. Since working with children is radically different from working with adults, Bean (2009) acknowledges that effective literacy coaches possess the ability to work with adult learners, stating that “An understanding of adult learning is essential” (p.119).

One characteristic of effective coaches is effective interpersonal and leadership skills (Bean, 2009). Since one of the roles of the literacy coach is to observe lessons and provide feedback, the literacy coach will need excellent interpersonal and communication skills (Bean, 2009). This means that coaches have to be excellent listeners. When coaches lack the ability to listen, they are unable to effectively aid teachers in their efforts. Part of the communication that takes places involves the literacy coach providing balanced feedback that yields improved teaching practices and provides ideas for improvement (Bean, 2009; Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009).
Some maintain that coaching activities at the heart of literacy coaching are sharing plans and ideas with teachers, obtaining teacher input, providing necessary support and taking time to develop the trust needed to be an effective coach (Bean, 2009; Allen, 2006). The literacy coach shares the plans and ideas with teachers to provide an understanding of the benefit to their students. Listening is essential because the literacy coach needs to hear the teachers’ concerns in order to respond appropriately and address their specific needs to improve practice and raise the achievement level of students. To add, it is important that the literacy coach is able to provide teachers with resources to make the necessary changes in their instruction. In essence, when a teacher identifies a need the literacy coach must also provide the teacher with the support needed to do a better job.

While aforementioned researches argue that coaches need to know content and have extensive pedagogical repertoire, West and Cameron (2013) contend that quality coaches also know to give teachers permission to think deeply, experiment intelligently and analyze their results systematically in order to make the necessary adjustments to their instruction to ensure student success.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Literacy Coaches**

The literature here describes the range of roles and responsibilities associated with literacy coaching. When it comes to the topic of literacy coaching some researchers readily agree that the role of the literacy coach is a complex one that shifts and changes in response to the culture of the school, the needs of the teachers and the literacy coach’s continual evolving knowledge and skills (Bean, 2009; Casey, 2006; Walpole& Blamey, 2008). Although literacy coaching is generating intense interest in the reading research
community, it has yet to yield a significant amount of empirical research in current literature; especially, about the complexities literacy coaches must negotiate as they move from classroom to classroom, working with different teachers, students and materials (Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Rainville & Jones, 2008).

While coaches are still struggling to adequately define their roles and responsibilities (Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Rainville & Jones, 2008), the research here attempts to show what is documented about the literacy coaches’ current roles and responsibilities. Literacy coaches have a myriad of roles and responsibilities. They include but are not limited to: contributing to building level professional development workshops, advising the principal on literacy-related matters, supporting teachers, providing direct instruction to students primarily when demonstrating for teachers, providing evaluation of students primarily to demonstrate for teachers or to support teachers in their instructional decision making, working directly with teachers in individual and small group meetings, advising building administrators, and working with teachers in response to teachers’ needs and concerns (Bean, 2009; Toll, 2005; Casey, 2006; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009).

According to Hasbrouck and Denton (2005), the literacy coach serves as a facilitator, collaborative problem solver, and teacher leader. In the role of facilitator the reading coach helps effective and skillful teachers continue their success helping professionals in the school work together toward the goal of school-wide success. In the role of collaborative problem solver the reading coach uses a structured systematic problem-solving process to work with teachers in addressing students’ reading problems.
In the role of teacher leader the reading coach shares effective and proven strategies, methods, and techniques with groups of teachers through high quality and sustained professional development (Hasbrouck & Denton 2005; Harrison & Killion, 2007; Otaiba et al, 2008).

Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) list four goals of the reading coach: (1) to improve students’ reading skills and competence, (2) to solve referred problems, (3) to learn from each other, and (4) to prevent future problems. Coaching is an important way to help students because one of the goals of the reading coach is to focus on students’ needs and how the teachers and parents and all others involved in the students’ lives can help each student to become a critical and independent reader, thinker and learner (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Bean et al, 2002). Additionally, the reading coach provides opportunities to share knowledge and expertise and to learn from each other (Peterson et al, 2009; Bean, 2009; Blachowicz et al, 2005 & Gersten et al, 1995)

Another goal or responsibility of the reading coach is to help build teachers’ understanding, knowledge, skills, competence, and confidence in their reading instruction (Peterson, Taylor, Burnham & Schock, 2009; Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009). According to Bean (2009) literacy coaches take on the following roles: (1) coach as mirror, (2) coach as collaborator and (3) coach as expert. In coach as mirror, the literacy coach encourages leadership and teacher self-reflection and in the conference. Issa, Bulusih and Oman et al. (2010) argue that the scholarship of teaching involves a cycle of constant reflection, action and improvement. Teaching, according to Issa, et al. is a scholarly task that is about learning through systematic critical reflection, which can influence learning, understanding, conceptual change and knowledge transfer. Teachers
need a vision that gives them a sense of where they are going and how they are going to get students there. This vision helps teachers reflect on their work, guide their practice and direct their future learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Peterson et al, 2009; Ippolito, 2010). According to Issa et al. putting students at the center of the teacher’s work requires being reflective. Reflective teaching and reflective pedagogy are difficult for even the most seasoned teacher. Issa, et al. declares that reflective teaching is complex, implicit, takes different shapes and forms and has different levels. The first level of reflection is concerned with reporting events and providing reasons for their occurrences. The second level of reflection is about re-evaluating experiences and using prior knowledge to analyze the situation. At this level, teachers search for meaning and come to an understanding and application of new knowledge. In the third level of reflection, teachers allow themselves to be influenced within social, political and cultural contexts. Reflection is complex because it forces teachers to really look at themselves and become aware of their incompetence, growth and ignorance which are sometimes realized during professional development (Senge, 2006). Learning to work with forces of change rather than resist it takes a certain attitude towards learning and growth (Senge, 2006 & Issa et al, 2010). Likewise, effective reflection on teaching and learning that is systematic and public requires a certain mentality (Senge, 2006).

According to Peterson et al (2009) the ultimate goal of working with a literacy coach is to deepen teachers’ understanding of how students learn by facilitating self-reflection to bring about change in classroom instruction which has the potential to lead to increased student achievement. Any teacher’s journey to greatness requires
professional development and commitment. It requires teachers to be change agents with the power and potential to make informed decisions and reflect critically on contexts, analyze and understand the cause of shortcomings and arrive at solutions to such problems (Issa, et al, 2010 & Harris, Lowery-Moore & Farrow, 2008). In addition, reflection enables teachers to develop a rationale for their teaching and take informed specific actions and make sound decisions in the classroom. These decisions include continuing to do what worked and correct what isn’t working (Harris, 2003). Teachers have to continuously reflect and make professional and critical inquiry into their classroom practices if they are to be successful.

Blaschke (2002) conducted a study on three higher education institutions in the UK and found that reflective practice helps learners gain more control over their learning. The study also found that reflecting on the learning experience and relating these experiences to professional practice helped keep learners motivated to learn, to connect with other learners and to continue the reflective process

In the role of coach as collaborator, the literacy coach and teacher work together to determine the strengths and possible weaknesses of the lessons while in the role of expert the literacy coach provides information that helps teachers; especially, novice teachers understand whether they are implementing various strategies or approaches effectively (Bean, 2009). This is the kind of reflection, in my view, that translates coaching into professional development and growth for teachers.

A role explained by Ippolito (2010) not mentioned in other research presented here is the role of responsive and directive coach. According to Ippolito the responsive coach focuses on teacher self-reflection while the directive coach assumes the role of
expert and is assertive about what instructional practices teachers must implement. In the responsive relationship teachers sort of guide the coaching process. It can be argued that negotiating these two roles; responding to teaches needs and promoting specific instructional practices, could possibly pose a challenge to the literacy coach; especially, if the literacy coach doesn’t understand how to balance these roles (Ippolito, 2010; Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2009).

To add to the myriad of responsibilities that coaches have, they are also grant writers, helping to design grants to aid in the funding of their positions, school planners working as partners with principals to set up school schedules to provide adequate time for teaching and learning during the school day. Additionally, coaches may be curriculum experts having specific knowledge about the standards and teaching materials that their teachers use as tools to support literacy achievement and researchers, enacting specific instructional strategies with teachers and helping teachers chart their effects on student achievement (Walpole and Blamey, 2008; Harrison & Killion, 2007).

The Need for Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching has great potential for providing meaningful embedded professional development in the authentic, everyday work of a teacher (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). Furthermore, (Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt & Dole 2008; Otaiba et al, 2008) indicate that a part of effective professional development includes the use of literacy coaches considering they are in a position to increase teachers’ knowledge about reading which is an important part of any professional development plan for reading teachers. New teachers have come to rely on literacy coaches to provide weekly support and in-classroom coaching to help them to become competent and effective (Scherer, 2012).
Coaches have a lot to navigate in the context of the school and need to focus simultaneously on cultivating and developing an adult learning culture within the school (West & Cameron, 2009).

Literacy coaching serves many purposes. The demand for literacy coaches has grown rapidly in the past few years (Toll, 2005; Otaiba et al., 2008). According to Toll (2005), there is a need for literacy coaching because literacy coaching: affects the school culture, supports significant change, promotes reflection and decision making, assists teachers in being reflective by providing time, space and encouragement, honors adult learners, and leads to student achievement. The literacy coaching model requires collaboration. A culture of collaboration supports growth for the school and for the individuals involved in the school. Literacy coaching furthers such an atmosphere because coaching leads to stronger relationships and greater opportunities for educators to interact (Toll, 2005; Steckel, 2009).

Some reforms have been put in place and they have not had a significant impact on changing school culture. Conversely, literacy coaching supports significant change because it provides a foundation for teacher reflection, action research, collaboration, and informed decision making (Toll, 2005). When literacy coaching is a part of a coordinated literacy program, educators can work together to create real changes needed to support all struggling readers (Egawa, 2007). One of the reasons why literacy coaching as had an impact on changing school culture is because the focus is on bringing out the best in others as opposed to telling others what to do (Dole, Liang, Watkins & Wiggins, 2006). The literacy coaching processes honors the way adults learn by responding to teachers’ needs (Toll, 2005; Steckel, 2009).
High quality literacy instruction and support can only be achieved through skilled professionals (Cooter, 2004; Strickland, 2003; Steckel, 2009). In some cases children fail due to inadequate instruction or experience rather than any biologically based causes (Strickland, 2003; Cooter, 2004; Allington & Cunningham, 2007). There is no acceptable reason apart from neurological reasons for any 3rd grader to be reading on a level that translates to the middle of 1st grade, or for that matter, a 9th grader to be reading at a level on a par with a student in the 5th grade. According to Cooter (2004), many schools; especially those in large urban school districts struggle to help all children become fully literate.

Issues Associated with Literacy Coaching

The main goal of a coaching initiative is to improve student learning but this is a lofty goal met with the challenge of determining the specific actions that result in student learning (West & Cameron, 2013; Peterson et al, 2009). Furthermore, it is difficult to determine what impact coaching has on student learning because coaches are removed from students. The structure of the coaching cycle as described by West and Cameron (2013) can be a challenge. The coaches work to improve student learning by assisting teachers to learn more about teaching, student learning, and content through the practice of planning, teaching, and reflecting on lessons. Teachers in turn assist students to learn about their learning and about the content under study (West & Cameron).

Other issues associated with literacy coaching are the elements of professional development. Although the grade level team and literacy coaching collaborative models are a type of professional development offered during the school day one of the issues teachers face with this model is not having enough time to discuss matters of urgency and
topics that may be salient. In addition to the literacy coaches having to deal with non-receptive teachers there is the issue of time. There is a need to allow teachers time to discuss frustrations, obstacles, and successes faced during implementation of professional development (Klein & Riordan, 2009).

In some cases the literacy coach wears many hats. Their roles and responsibilities range from working with teachers, to facilitating grade level and team meetings, to ordering resources, to administrative duties, to name a few (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al). Juggling all of these responsibilities, prioritizing tasks and finding the time to commit to every aspect of the job can be frustrating for a literacy coach. According to Allington & Cunningham (2007) finding time for professional development is always problematic, given all the other demands placed on teachers but without more time teachers are unable to puzzle through new ideas together. Wilcox and Angelis (2012) argue that “Scheduling meeting time is the most prevalent support for building the capacity to collaborate to improve student performance” (p.45).

A second issue with the grade level teams and literacy coaching collaborative model is mandating teachers to meet. If teachers are forced to take part in professional development that is not meaningful or relevant to their needs it is ineffective professional development. Allington and Cunningham (2007) argue that mandating collaboration does not work well because collaboration is a complex activity. It is complex because team learning requires thinking insightfully about complex issues, acting in ways that allow teachers to complement each other and consider the role of team members on other team members (Senge, 2006).
A third issue with the grade level teams and literacy coaching is lack of structure. One of the cultural practices of grade level teams and literacy coaching models needs to be a structure that allows for collaboration that matters. Key to teachers’ professional growth are structures for collaboration that break down isolation and empower teachers with professional task and a platform for thinking through standards and practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

One of the recurrent interactions for grade level teams in the school is looking at student work. The current approach to collaborative examining of student work does not allow teachers to do this work in a meaningful way. For example, teachers meet and have a round robin conversation about their students’ work, as was the case in my building. According to Roberts & Pruitt (2003) it is not enough for teachers to get together and just look at students’ work. A better structure is needed that allows for meaningful dialogue and discourse for analyzing student work. Structures and process of interactions need to be put in place to achieve common goals and understanding, problem solve, make decisions and make the most out of the time that is allowed.

The literacy coach has to create a structure for working with teachers one on one and in small groups. There are a number of things that have to be considered: (1) achieving a common goal, (2) cultural and reasoning practices, and (3) structure and process of interactions (Senge, 2006). Without these structures, time is not utilized well and nothing is ever accomplished.

Some issues specific to literacy coaching that are important to mention are (1) dealing with resistant teachers and (2) balancing roles and responsibilities (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al, 2009). Not all teachers are receptive to exposing their own thinking and
making their thinking open to influence others and to be influenced by others (Senge, 2006). This may be due to lack of mistrust by teachers or lack of commitment to professional growth (Casey, 2006; Senge, 2006).

Finally and probably the most important issue facing literacy coaches is not being adequately prepared for the specific job they are required to do (Dole et al, 2006; Casey, 2006). Literacy coaches need to have a deep literacy content knowledge in order to aid teachers in developing literacy content knowledge. Without this knowledge, teachers may lack confidence in the literacy coaches’ ability to be useful (Casey, 2006).

**Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher’s efficacy to educate students successfully has been the subject of considerable inquiry (Goddard, 2001). Despite the plethora of research conducted on teacher efficacy and teacher commitment (Coladarci, 1992), there is no recent research that examines the depth and breadth of teacher efficacy (Klassen et al, 2010; Goddard, 2001; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

Teacher efficacy is the confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007; Cantrel & Hughes, 2008; Klassen et al, 2011). Teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy grounded in the idea that teachers are adversely affected by their beliefs about their potential to impact student learning and those beliefs are directly related to their effort and persistence with students (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008).

Teachers play an important role in deciding whether they will be successful during the teaching process or fail at the teaching process (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Chi,
Yeh, & Choum, 2013). At the core of teaching efficacy is the effective teaching methods teachers use (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Chi et al, 2013). Furthermore, teachers’ sense of efficacy exerts significant influence on student achievement by promoting teacher behaviors that enhance learning (Coladarci, 1992; Goddard, 2001; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Self-efficacy in knowing how to learn and continuously reflect on the learning process is vital for teachers (Coladarci, 1992; Goddard, 2001; Gross, 2010).

Due to the nature of the work of a literacy coach, one could argue that the literacy coach can possibly promote and or influence a teacher’s sense of self efficacy given that at the heart of self-efficacy is ones sense of what they are capable of accomplishing (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). This can be accomplished when literacy coaches support teachers, provide feedback, provide opportunities to collaborate, include them in on the decision making process and work hard to cultivate and help teachers develop as competent teachers (Ware and Kitsantas, 2007; Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Teachers’ perception of the capability of the literacy coach and other school staff to execute actions that will yield positive results in student achievement is fueled by their collective efficacy (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Goddard, 2001; Chi et al, 2013).

According to Joyce and Showers (1984) when teachers are coached, able to observe a new teaching strategy and practice with feedback, they will implement newly learned skills. Without the coaching support, observation of what is being demonstrated, and opportunities for feedback, teachers’ self-efficacy will be lower (Joyce & Showers, 1984 and Cantrell & Hughes, 2008).

Finding ways to develop and enhance a teacher’s sense of efficacy is critical (Dembo & Gibson, 1985); especially with all the new demands placed on teachers due to
fluctuating trends in theory and practice (Gross, 2010). Literacy coaches will need to understand teacher’s efficacy because efforts to influence teacher’s efficacy should be based on the type of efficacy a teacher is experiencing (Dembo & Gison, 1985; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). For instance, a teacher who is confident in her ability to teach but doesn’t believe his or her students are capable of learning would require different support from the literacy coach than the teacher who is not confident in his or her ability to teach but believes his or her students are capable of learning (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Is it imperative teachers are prepared to deal with student failure accordingly and the uncertainty and doubt they feel about whether or not they are having an impact on student achievement (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). This is where the literacy coach can intervene and help teachers figure out where their lack of efficacy lies and work to enhance teachers’ self-efficacy.

Research investigations on teacher efficacy show that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to plan appropriate activities, persists when students falter, use appropriate materials and resources, and remain committed and devoted to the work in spite of the challenges and difficulties that may arise (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007; Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

In synthesizing the research on teacher efficacy, it can be inferred that in order to enhance teachers’ efficacy, literacy coaches will have to be prepared to help teachers feel confident about their teaching abilities and provide teachers with opportunities and experiences in the coaching relationship that will help teachers thrive. According to Gross (2010), the learning process in literacy coaching is reciprocal and is designed to develop and cultivate teacher independence and flexible thinking. With all things
considered, one can also conclude that the efficacy of literacy coaches must be high as well in order for literacy coaches to be successful in increasing the efficacy of the teachers they support and reaching the ultimate goal of increasing teacher reflection and agency (Gross, 2010). Successful literacy coaches take into account teacher’s perspectives and the role of approximation on teachers’ growth (Gross, 2010).

**Professional Development: Building Capacity through Literacy Coaching**

The literacy coach plays a central role in improving literacy teaching and learning (Raphael et al, 2009). The literacy coach is embedded within the school community and able to provide on-site, continuous support which has the potential to develop individual professional knowledge base (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al, 2009). The research presented here argues for the importance of providing teachers with high quality models of professional development, one of which is the coaching model. In the literacy coach model, there is consistent feedback and support, and opportunities for reflection and collaboration between the teacher and the literacy coach unlike efforts that are standardized, based on transformation of information and short term and irrelevant professional development that does little to improve teacher practices (Bean, 2009; Raphael et al, 2009). Teachers need better training if they expect to experience success in the classroom; they need training in how to instruct reading and writing (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995 and Gross, 2010). This type of training can be provided through professional development in the form of literacy coaching. Literacy coaching is intended to widen teachers’ instructional practices and student engagement and serves as a type of professional growth through inquiry (Gross, 2010). Teachers need the knowledge, skills and supported practice that will enable their teaching to be
successful (Perkins, 2004; Cooter, 2004). Allington and Cunningham (2007) argue that “Only by investing in classroom teachers can any school hope to become a school where all children learn to read and write” (p.193). In order to have successful schools that offer a curriculum that gives every student an opportunity to achieve academic success will require teachers to become agents for change; change that will only come when teachers make adjustments in their practices; however teachers need support in their efforts to provide effective literacy instruction (Senge, 1990). Teachers will have to possess the essential aspiration for professional growth in regard to the most effective ways to educate students. Preventing reading failure for, at risk youth, can be achieved by putting highly trained teachers in classrooms. Teachers will have to become equipped to respond to the needs of children successfully in a variety of settings because failure can no longer be an option.

Cooter, 2004 and Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1985 suggests these additional steps for building teacher capacity: (a) make staff development a major focus, (b) allow teachers opportunities to grow professionally and mentor others, and (c) provide strong mentor/coach relationships. There are set standards and guidelines that safeguard against ineffective classroom practice, with that; the child’s chances of learning are never compromised. The learner’s needs are identified and instruction is student focused. There is accountability for ensuring students have some success and reading failures cease to exist (Allington, 2001).

A second suggested step is to implement annual professional development opportunities focused on each teacher’s specific needs, literacy coaching and peer coaching to ensure implementation of best teaching practices and provide teachers with
materials to support their instruction (Cooter, 2004). Practice with coaching is an essential step in teacher capacity-building (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Cooter, 2003; Gross, 2010). A key feature in deep training + coaching capacity building model as explained by (Cooter, 2004) is distributed learning over time. It supports the notion that new learning developed over time coupled with extensive practice under the guidance of a more knowledgeable coach is the most effective combination (Cooter, 2004; Snow et al, 1998).

The literacy coach leads and provides professional development in the form of small and large workshops to provide information about effective literacy instruction and in the form of grade level team meetings to help teachers think about the specific grade level and academic subject in which they provide instruction (Bean, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Some researchers argue that teachers may initially have difficulty using newly introduced ideas and that without support and ongoing feedback, these new approaches to instruction may not be implemented (Bean, 2009; Fullan, 1991).

Teachers must obtain training to identify children’s reading and writing development and to target intervention to meet those needs (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). In a model such as the one described above teachers in the Dallas Reading Plan were involved in vertical teams coaching model that focused on training in research based practices, skills instruction, direct comprehension instruction, reading benchmarks, graphic organizers, higher order thinking, teacher read alouds, guided reading, running records, oral language development, shared and independent reading, classroom design and management, assessment, lesson planning, and grouping for instruction (Thompson,
This ongoing learning occurred for a period of five years with the assistance of a skilled and effective literacy coach.

Cooter (2004) describes the following as pillars of reading success: (a) teachers must know the basic reading skills to be taught, (b) teachers must know how to assess each student’s knowledge of basic reading skills, and (c) teachers must know the best ways to teach each reading skill. He asserts that these pillars help teachers in their efforts to help students become successful readers. This is where the assistance of the coach is valuable. When teachers lack the capacity to help students develop as readers, writers, thinkers and learners, the literacy coach is there to assist and help to develop and cultivate teachers’ ability in the pillars of reading success.

Zimmerman (2007) contends that teacher capacity’s starting point is identifying or defining outcomes for children. The outcome must come first because it determines the professional development needed in order to achieve these outcomes. This concept is similar to the way children are taught where teachers first determine what they expect students to learn, or be able to accomplish, and then they devise a plan to achieve the desired results. The literacy coach through classroom observations and coaching conversations is able to discern what professional development would be most responsive to the needs of teachers to ensure children reach desired outcomes.

Zimmerman (2007) found that this approach to building teacher capacity through professional development was effective because “It promotes the use of best available research integrated with wisdom and values and empowers teachers to deliver the most effective interventions on behalf of the children and their families” (p. 4). When
teachers use best practice strategies coupled with knowledge and values, students will be successful in school.

Professional development for teachers is an essential component to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in today’s schools and classrooms (Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavers, 2005). The foundation of any successful school is the teacher’s unyielding commitment, knowledge and expertise much of which is gained from ongoing professional development after graduation from teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Literacy coaches providing professional development for teachers must be certain they have selected the appropriate content for teachers to learn for a particular context. Literacy coaches must also develop and implement processes that recognize the nature of adult learning (Bean, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Some standards specific to literacy are content, context, and processes (Bean, 2009).

Literacy coaches consult several resources to aid them in their planning of professional development for teachers. These resources are based on research about literacy instruction and the standards developed and mandated by local school districts. Effective professional development for teachers provided by the literacy coach must be planned based on the context in which it is to be presented (Bean, 2009; Sailors, 2009). Questions literacy coaches will need to have in mind are as follows: What are the experiences, skills, and abilities of the teachers? Will teachers be eager and receptive to change? What are teachers’ attitudes about change? What are the characteristics and needs of the students in the context? What resources are available (Bean, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001)?
Professional development that generates teacher change has several process related characteristics. Among them are: duration, opportunities for feedback, professional development embedded into classroom practices of teachers, and professional development that has a sense of recognition (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Taylor et al 2005; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Effective professional development is long-term and sustained. There are opportunities for teachers to talk about what they are implementing, ask questions, and provide their concerns about what they are implementing (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Taylor et al 2005; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Literacy coaches with expertise follow up with teachers, visit their classrooms and support them in implementing new strategies. The professional development efforts employed by literacy coaches are related to what teachers do every day in teaching and assessing their students. It is important to acknowledge teachers for the work they do and recognize they have expertise that can contribute to the growth and professional development of other teachers.

Effective professional development models are needed in order to increase the possibility of having impact on teachers’ behaviors and student achievement (Good, Miller & Gassenheimer, 2004; Guskey, 2003; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Kazempour (2009) recommends that professional development programs be directed more by the participating teachers and based on teachers’ long-term reflections of their own conceptions and practices. The relationship the coach has established with teachers puts him or her in a better position to influence changes in teacher practice and encourage teacher reflection. Bean (2009) argues that professional development offered by literacy coaches should be based on the standards mandated by the state or local school districts.
The rationale for this argument is that the district standards are often developed by teachers in the district and closely align to state standards. Bean goes on to argue that providing professional development based on the state and district standards provides important guidance for planning professional development for teachers in a specific school.

Although single session workshop and conferences are not usually constructed to support teachers beyond the session, they remain the most common format for delivery of professional development (Dunst & Raab, 2010; Johnson, 2009). Unlike the literacy coaching model for professional development, the workshop model tends to be disconnected from workplace learning and unable to support continuous professional learning (Raphael et al, 2009). The challenge becomes helping teachers to connect new information and ideas from the workshop to classroom practice. Most professional development programs fail to distinguish among even the broadest differences in teachers unlike the coaching model which provides training based on the need of the individual teacher. When the one-size fits all approach is used to change teacher practices, it undermines the potential that many professional-development activities like the literacy coaching model has to offer (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert). On the other hand Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) would argue that the workshop model can be highly effective if the literacy coach has done adequate and sufficient planning. The framework suggested for effective workshops include: establishing a purpose for the session, providing modeling and demonstration of instructional strategies, planning for active involvement, and encouraging self-reflection and helping teachers become problem solvers.
Literacy coaches can set the purpose for learning by talking to teachers about the benefits of a strategy, linking the content to the needs of teachers, focusing on student outcomes, creating links to research and making the new strategy or approach to teaching practical (Bean, 2009 and Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). Modeling a new or unfamiliar strategy by the coach or a successful teacher will accomplish part two of the framework suggested by Hasbrouck and Denton for effective workshops for teachers.

Active planning is also a part of the framework for effective workshops. This is accomplished by the literacy coach when time is allotted for teacher discussions. These teacher discussions can take place in many forms. During the workshops teachers can: role play strategies, practice developing strategies, provide their students with opportunities to practice skills, practice grouping students according to assessment needs, and create sample lesson plans. Teachers can reflect and practice being problem-solvers by observing and discussing videotaped lessons and engage in discourse about what is working in their classrooms (Bean, 2009; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005).

Bean (2009) argues that effective professional development for teachers provided by literacy coaches should focus on the subject matter being taught, include learning opportunities that are aligned with real work experiences of teachers, provide adequate time for extended opportunities to learn, emphasize observing and analyzing student’s understandings of the subject and should include ongoing evaluation of the impact of the professional development. One can argue this is also a way for the literacy coach to growth and build his or her capacity as a literacy leader and supporter of teachers. This also means that literacy coaches providing professional development to teachers must
come to realize the importance of differentiating professional development for teachers in different stages of their career.

The research presented here is consistent with long standing research findings about the importance of teacher collaboration. Collaborative models for professional development take place in many forms. Observation of colleagues, coaching, grade level teams, professional learning communities, critical friends groups and study groups are all forms of the collaborative model. Meaningful professional development is characterized as an ongoing collaborative effort among faculty and staff, with emphasis on student needs and learning, student work, data, instructional practices and assessment techniques (Caskey & Carpenter, 2012; Patrick & Reinhartz, 1999; Good, Miller & Gassenheimer, 2004). According to Good et al (2004) collective learning by an entire faculty that promotes change among school community is essential and argues that it can be achieved by allowing members of a faculty the opportunity to share, interact, and collaborate with each other. This ongoing dialogue gives teachers an opportunity to construct their own knowledge, hear other perspectives and provide support and encouragement (Patrick & Reinhartz, 1999).

While grade level teams are a valuable collaborative model it is important to recognize the influence of the literacy coaching model on teacher professional development. The literacy coach plays a central role in improving literacy teaching and learning (Raphael et al, 2009). The literacy coach is embedded within the school community and able to provide on-site, continuous support which has the potential to develop individual professional knowledge base (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al, 2009). In
the literacy coach model, there is consistent feedback and support, and opportunities for reflection and collaboration between the teacher and the literacy coach.

Teachers find value in different models of professional development. Although teachers can attest that not all professional development models can be defined as successful and effective, but Kazempour (2009) argues that professional development that is abounding has the power to challenge teaching and learning in hopes of creating a paradigm shift and pedagogical awareness that will inform teaching practices and guide the transformation from mediocre teacher to extraordinary teacher. In my view, based on the research presented on literacy coaching, that is what it is intended to do for teachers. According to Klein and Riordan (2009) high quality professional development grounds teachers in both pedagogy and content, offers them opportunities to practice ideas in contexts similar to their classrooms, is sustained over time, and offers a community of peers and coaches that provide support and opportunities to collaborate.

Research conducted by (Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavers, 2005) supports the notion that professional learning is more likely to improve student learning outcomes if: (1) it increases teachers’ understanding of the content they teach, (2) encourages reflection on their current practices in relation to professional standards, (3) provides opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback (4) leads teachers to closely examine their students’ work, (5) and provides follow-up support for teachers during implementation. According to the research presented here, that is what the literacy coach provides for teachers.

When a teacher’s level of engagement and excitement about professional development experiences are positive so is the application to their own practice (Klein &
Riordan, 2009). Teachers need a vision that gives them a sense of where they are going and how they are going to get students there. This vision helps teachers reflect on their work, guide their practice and direct their future teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

According to Klein and Riordan (2009) adequate professional development is the key to successful schools. They explain that schools need to design relevant and deep professional development models that do the following: (a) meet the needs of teachers as learners, (b) acknowledge their prior experiences, (c) differentiate and allows for opportunities for continued professional growth, (d) provide opportunities for teachers to connect to their own classroom content and time to practice new pedagogical strategies (Klein & Riordan, 2009).

Teachers should also be involved in conversations about how professional development is being implemented in their classrooms. This will help everyone reflect on how implementation occurs and how to better support teachers in more consistent implementation (Klein & Riordan, 2009). Professional development experiences such as those in the collaborative model must allow teachers to collectively decide upon direction and goals. This would increase the possibility of teacher effectiveness and the likelihood that teachers will apply the learning to their classroom practice (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Gersten et al, 1995).

If teachers are going to have more positive attitudes toward teaching, professional development experiences need to involve active participation and allow teachers opportunities for continuous reflection on their beliefs and practices during the professional development and in their classrooms (Senge, 2006). A teacher’s practice
reflects what he or she values and even more importantly, quite often determines student achievement.

According to Allen (2006), high quality professional development prepares teachers for the specific challenges when it is of sufficient length, frequent and intense, revolves around helping teachers move their students towards mastery of state performance standards, gives teachers a central role in planning their own professional development; and provides teachers with adequate opportunities to practice and approximate the new learned skills and activities.

Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) define professional development as “Going beyond the traditional workshop and includes meeting with small groups of teachers, study groups and observation and coaching of individual teachers as they learn to integrate effective instruction into their everyday teaching routines” (p.69).

When literacy coaches provide effective professional development to teachers one of the things they do is provide instruction that is responsive to the needs of teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Peterson et al, 2009, Bean 2009; Gersten et al, 1995). The literacy coach assesses the needs of the teacher or collects data on the needs of the teacher by meeting with teachers to talk about their needs, observing classroom instruction, questionnaires or even more formal assessment procedures (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). The key to providing effective professional development to teachers is being conscious of the needs of the teachers in the school and knowing how the teachers’ needs connect to the students’ needs. It is not sufficient for literacy coaches to have teachers practice new ways of teaching but it needs to be coupled with ongoing support
and feedback as they apply what they have learned in different teaching situations (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Bean 2009; Peterson et al, 2009; Gersten et al, 1995).

Professional Development for Literacy Coaches

It is important to note that literacy coaches, among all the other role and responsibilities they have, are also learners seeking new information in professional readings and relationships. The expectations for literacy coaches to play a role in the professional development efforts of teachers to improve reading instruction; thereby, improve reading achievement for struggling readers is getting greater and greater (Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt & Dole, 2008). Therefore, it is also worthy to note that few literacy coaches would meet all the standards outlined by the International Reading Association for literacy professionals (Dole et al, 2006) and for that reason, it is imperative that literacy coaches participate in self-reflection to guide their continued professional learning at the same time they are learning on the job (Walpole & Blamey, 2008;). Given the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches mentioned in this research, it is critical for literacy coaches to receive adequate preparation and support. The aforementioned research mentions all the roles and responsibilities coaches have in their day to day work with teacher and students.

According to Bean (2009) literacy coaches can build their capacity by engaging in professional development in different ways: (1) study groups with other coaches to discuss a specific book pertinent to educational concerns and goals, (2) continue their formal education by taking classes at the university level, (3) attend professional meetings, (4) join and become active in one or more professional organizations, (4) continue to read professional journals and books as a means to keeping current about
reading instruction and assessment but to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the political and social climate in which they work. Additionally, Bean recommends that literacy coaches set an attainable goal and identify activities that facilitate its achievement. A deadline should be set in place for accomplishing this goal.

Understanding the professional development needs of literacy coaches can shed some light on how to prepare literacy coaches to build these strong relationships with teachers with the goal of leveraging pedagogical change and positively affecting student learning (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). Literacy coaches responsible for providing professional development must be certain they have selected the appropriate content for teachers to learn for a particular context (Bean, 2009). This requires the literacy coach to develop and implement processes that recognize the nature of adult learning (Bean, 2009). According to Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavers (2005) professional development for teachers is a vital component of policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in today’s schools and classrooms. Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) contends that it is essential that each reading coach participate in professional development that provides him or her with a firm grounding in reading instruction that has been supported by scientific research. Hasbrouck and Denton found that reading coaches must have the capacity to identify the potential stumbling blocks to becoming a successful reader, identify the principles of effective instruction for struggling readers and describe successful reading programs. Hasbrouck and Denton also argue that anyone who cares about teaching students to read needs to know about high quality instruction provided in the early years of school can prevent reading difficulties for many children and that most older, struggling readers can learn to read albeit it becomes difficult as students fall
progressively further behind their classmates. Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) believe that the coach is both and teacher and learner and that as a learner literacy coaches have the responsibility to keep learning about practices supported by the best possible research in reading instruction. This can be done by continuing to read and study, seek out professional development opportunities, and access the support of colleagues and outside resources (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). In a study conducted on the state of reading professionals in the United States researchers found that literacy coaches have may not be adequately prepared for their specific duties (Dole et al, 2006).

Bean (2009) and Cooter (2004) would agree with the aforementioned research about building the capacity of literacy coaches and would add that it is essential for literacy coaches to develop their own content knowledge so that they can help develop the literacy content knowledge of the teachers they work with. Being a successful classroom teacher doesn’t necessarily mean that one will make a successful literacy coach, or can successfully lead others or has the sufficient knowledge based to do well as a literacy coach as in my experience as a literacy coach.

For this reason, this research argues for the importance of building literacy coaches capacity in effective reading instruction. According to Wilcox and Angelis (2012) in a study replicated in 20 states, capacity building was found to be one of the most significant factors impacting student achievement in high-performing schools. Hasbrouck and Denton (2005) contend that effective professional development focuses on student outcomes, promote instructional practices that are based on the best available research and is planned in a purposeful and unified way. Marsh (2012) found that possessing strong reading knowledge and instructional expertise in literacy is vital but
may not be sufficient. Marsh also found that there is little known about how literacy coaches gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in their instructional support roles. Wade and Ferriter (2007) argue that “Accomplished teachers of children aren’t automatically accomplished teachers of adults” (p.66).

If teachers are going to have more positive attitudes toward teaching, professional development experiences need to involve active participation and allow teachers opportunities for continuous reflection on their beliefs and practices during the professional development and in their classrooms (Senge, 2006). A teacher’s practice reflects what he or she values and even more importantly, quite often determines student achievement. The process of educators reflecting on their teaching experiences is a valuable learning tool that leads to change. It also encourages teachers to continue what worked and correct what isn’t working (Harris, 2003).

When literacy coaches provide effective professional development to teachers one of the things they do is provide instruction that is responsive to the needs of teachers. The literacy coach looking to teach assesses the needs of the reading teachers in the school (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). The literacy coach assesses the needs of the teacher or collects data on the needs of the teacher by meeting with teachers to talk about their needs, observing classroom instruction, questionnaires or even more formal assessment procedures (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005).

According to Hasbrouck and Denton, the key to providing effective professional development to teachers is being conscious of the needs of the teachers in the school and knowing how the teachers’ needs connect to the students’ needs. It is not sufficient for literacy coaches to have teachers practice new ways of teaching but it needs to be coupled
with ongoing support and feedback as they apply what they have learned in different teaching situations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while literacy coaches face many challenges and issues in their roles and responsibilities, they can be effective when working with teachers when they have the necessary skills and knowledge base (West & Cameron, 2013; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Hall & Simeral 2008; Cooter, 2003). In their roles, they must consider teacher efficacy and their own professional development to ensure that their work is having an impact not only on the teachers they are responsible for training but on student achievement as well (Perkins & Cooter, 2013; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007; Ingvarson et al, 2005; Goddard, 2001).
Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I provide a description of the research context and the plan of inquiry I followed to answer my research questions. The chapter provides a description of the primary method used in this research study: instrumental collective case study. I provide a brief overview of how case study method was used to collect data. Next, I provide a description of the school sites and community context as well as a description of the student body, participants, ethical considerations, data collection and sources. The chapter concludes with an overview of my analysis.

This research begins to fill in the gaps in literature on the professional development literacy coaches seek out and engage in to continue to build their capacity. This was addressed through an instrumental collective case study focusing on the context in which two middle school literacy coaches work in their school district. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the design and data collection methods I used for the research study in order to address my research questions which evolved during my study. The top-down assumptions I previously held about how literacy coaches are developed undergirded my original questions and were not appropriate for this study.

The purpose of raising the questions I have is not to seek definitive answers, but rather to provide insight into what literacy coaches do to grow professionally and how they continue to build their capacity.

Data was gathered through multiple sources: interviews, observations, a focus group, examination of professional development documents, field notes and my reflection journal. I interpreted and analyzed the data as well as looked for trends and common
themes. Additionally, I used and looked at the variety of data sources from multiple perspectives given that each coach had some different experiences and ideologies about professional development and how it is acquired. Then this information was categorized based on common themes and similarities and differences in perspectives that were extracted from these sources of data collection.

**Case Study**

Qualitative research is an appropriate way to understand an individual’s feelings, viewpoints and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). According to Merriam (1988) “Case study is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2). Given that this study focused on the perspective of two peer coaches and attempted to provide insight into their professional development needs and experiences, the appropriate qualitative tradition is instrumental collective case study. Stake (2000) defines case study as bounded systems. Stake differentiates between an intrinsic case study, an instrumental case study and a collective case study. He describes an intrinsic case study as one in which a researcher seeks a better understanding of the case under study. In essence, the case illustrates a problem and is of interest to the person conducting the study. In contrast, Stake (2000) describes an instrumental case study as one to be examined primarily to provide insight into an issue. A collective case study is defined by Stake as a study of a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon. I chose to conduct an instrumental collective case study because it allowed me to focus on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of the participants (Merriam, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). The instrumental collective case is bound by a small group of participants within one school district.
Within this district I followed two middle school literacy coaches that were chosen for convenience and also because they represent and speak to the characteristics of effective literacy coaches as outlined in chapter two.

Furthermore, instrumental collective case study helped me to learn about and provided insight into how the literacy coaches use their day to day interactions, experiences, duties and decisions to grow professionally. To add, case study allowed me to collect data through interviews and direct observations, which facilitated identifying answers to my research questions.

**School Community Setting**

The school district community for this study is a pre-K through 8 grade school district serving more than 7,000 students from a diverse suburb of a large urban school district. All schools in the District offer the same curriculum, use the same texts and materials and are taught by highly qualified educational professionals, most with a Master’s Degree and above. School staff works in cooperation with students and their families and the larger community to foster academic achievement and positive character development. Teachers in this District have opportunities for continued learning to keep them current in best educational practices.

**Research Sites**

The study took place in two middle schools in a diverse suburb of a large urban school district. Collins and Nance Middle School (pseudonyms) are the home to approximately 550 students in grades six through eight. These schools were identified by the literacy coaches who are participants in this study based on the fact that they provide
coaching support in these schools. Students at Collins and Nance Middle School have opportunities to explore their creative interests and advanced learning needs.

Students rotate through a schedule that includes reading/language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, fine arts, physical education, and library media curriculum. There are opportunities for students to pursue individual interests through safe online databases, advanced technologies that support the curriculum, reference materials, enrichment opportunities, and after-school clubs and activities.

Collins Middle School demographics are broken down as follows: 28.8% White, 38.5% Black, 26.9% Hispanic, 5.6% Asian, and 6.1% two or more races. At Collins Middle School, 57% of students are low income, 18.3% with disabilities, 8% are homeless and 9.2% are English learners. Nance Middle School demographics are broken down as follows: 48.7% White, 21.4% Black, 17% Hispanic, 3.5% Asian, .2% American Indian, and 9.2% two or more races. At Nance Middle School, 37.6% of students are low income, 12.7% with disabilities, 5% are homeless, and 4.3% are English learners.

Participants

The participants in this study include a convenience sample of two middle school literacy coaches in a diverse suburb of a large urban school district. I inquired about effective literacy coaches through colleagues, literacy leaders, and college professors. Recommendations were made based on each coach’s years of experience and content knowledge. I sought out literacy coaches who work in a school district with documented success. Additionally, I wanted to work with middle school literacy coaches who seek
out education opportunities, who are active members of the literacy profession, present at conferences, and bring a breadth of experience to the profession.

**Ethical Considerations**

During this study, I made every effort to respect the participants’ privacy by exercising a strict code of ethics. I recruited participants through email, at which time I provided some information about the purpose, context, and design of my study. I also met with the participants through a personal meeting at one of the school sites. I made staff members and participants fully aware that they will be audio-recorded. Lastly, I asked them to sign an informed consent form to obtain permission to record the participants during their interviews, teacher team meetings, professional development, one on one coaching sessions, and modeled lessons. In addition, I obtained informed consent forms from the Literacy Director, principals at the school sites and teachers. I informed the Literacy Director and principals they would be audio-recorded during the interview and I informed teachers their conversations during teacher team meeting and coaching sessions would be audio-recorded. Issues of confidentiality were discussed, and while confidentiality was assured, anonymity was not. I attempted to maintain as much anonymity as possible, and removed all identifying information in the data analysis and write up. However, there may be some information about the relevant context of the schools and the literacy coaches that were included which may threaten anonymity, but I made every attempt to minimize the risk. I informed participants that I changed all identifying information, used pseudonyms and stored personal information in a locked cabinet in my home. Furthermore, I avoided probing regarding sensitive issues, i.e., questions regarding their relationships with teachers, areas of capacity and growth that
they did not want to discuss, etc. and that were not relevant to the data analysis or purpose of the study. I provided the participants with a draft of my study that revealed how they were presented, quoted and interpreted. I provided opportunities for their feedback. In addition, I made sure that all participants knew my intent by informing them of what I did and how the information I gather was used.

**Theoretical Framework**

To better understand the nature of the professional development that two middle school literacy coaches receive and how it is instantiated in their day to day work with teachers, it is necessary to draw from theories related to literacy coaches as learners through professional development. These theories are related to a socio-cultural theoretical framework, socio-cognitive theoretical framework, self-directed learning, situated learning and adult learning theory.

Adult learning theory principles emphasize the process of and approaches to helping adults learn (Blaschke, 2012 & Fenwick, 2008). The tenets of adult learning theory highlight how adults facilitate their own learning and the learning of other adults (Blaschke, 2012; Finn, 2011; Harris, 2003; & Zmeyov, 1998). Andragogy also referred to as adult learning model, stresses the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative (Zmeyov, 1998 & McGrath, 2009). For the purpose of this study andragogy will be defined as ways that adults help other adults learn (Zmeyov, 1998). Andragogy has many assumptions: (1) the learning of an adult is largely determined by his or her life context, (2) the adult learning process is characterized by the leading role of the learner, and (3) the learner and the teacher co-operate in all stages of learning such as planning, evaluation, and
correction of the learning process (Zmeyov, 1998 & Blaschke, 2012). The learner is actively involved in identifying his or her needs and planning how those needs will be satisfied. In short, andragogy considers the learner as the real subject of his or her learning process. Furthermore, learners in an andragogical model are self-directed, motivated, take responsibility for their own learning and become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something (Harris, 2003; Zmeyov, 1998; Blaschke, 2012, McGrath, 2009 & Finn, 2011). They become critical agents in their own learning.

Adult learning theory aided me in determining the literacy coaches’ perception of their professional growth and development. Given the nature of the work the literacy coach is responsible for carrying out, it is important that literacy coaches become competent and capable as a result of their learning and professional development and growth.

The notion of job-embedded professional development is situated in a social-cultural theoretical framework. Social-cultural theories assume that learning is situated within everyday social context. One of the assumptions of andragogical adult learning model is that learning occurs in context and its significance relates in part to its impact on those contexts (Harris, 2003). According to Zmeyov (1998) learners who receive and process a large volume of information are influenced by the culture and the society in which the learning is taking place. Learning must be organized in the context of the adult’s atmosphere. In essence, the learning that takes place must be centered around the learner’s objectives and must align with their occupation and other everyday factors in their lives (Zmeyov, 1998, Fenwick, 2008 & Harris 2003). Learning is viewed as an ongoing refinement of practices and emerging knowledge embodied in the specific action
of a particular community. The learning takes place as the learner participates in everyday activity within the community (Fenwick, 2008 & Harris, 2003). This compels the adult learner to make decisions and assume their own attitudes toward the environment. To add, there must be immediate application of the new learning, knowledge and skills acquired (Harris, 2003). Zmeyov goes on to say that, “Adults need to constantly raise the level of their competence (p.104).” It can be argued that lifelong learning is a necessity for educators.

The aforementioned theoretical framework supported me in investigating the professional development that literacy coaches in this study seek out to continuously build their capacity. Furthermore, adult learning theory was used to understand how the literacy coaches diagnose their learning needs and choose professional development, resources, and set goals to address those learning needs.

In synthesizing the theories, this study considered that literacy coaches are active shapers of their lives (Goddard, 2001) and they are self-motivated to growth professionally.

**Data Collection**

As noted in Figure 1 below, data was collected from the literacy coach from each of the above named schools. Each data collection tool is described in greater detail. Data collection occurred February 2015 through May 2015 in the setting described above along with generalizations about the actions of the literacy coaches. The perceptions of the literacy coaches’ professional development needs and how they continue to build their capacity were also studied. I interviewed the literacy coaches first in an individual interview at the start of the study, interviewed them again after each observation where
appropriate, and then interviewed them in a focus group setting and individually toward the end of the study. I also interviewed the literacy director at the end of the study. I was not able to interview either principal. I provided appropriate verbal transitions from one question to the next. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006). I followed a semi-structured interview process because I wanted to ask the literacy coaches the same core questions to compare their responses. I also wanted the flexibility to be able to ask follow up questions that build on the responses received and delve more deeply into topics related to my research questions. While I had a defined set of questions that align to the purpose of my study and my research questions, I allowed for the conversation and questions to follow the context and line of thought of the participants. There were follow up questions that emerged from the individual interview and focus group interview that I asked which could not be anticipated from the interview protocol. When this occurred, I asked participants to explore a topic or idea further.

In addition to audio recording of all interviews, coaching sessions and teacher team meetings led by both coaches, I made note of expressions, actions and body language that could not be captured with an audio recording. This was done so that I would have nonverbal data that would provide me with more insight into the literacy coaches’ interactions with teachers. The audio recording was used to allow me to have a record of the participants’ actual words. Reflection notes were constructed by jotting down, in some detail, instances that reveal learning practices, structure, process of interaction and how dialogue and discussion was used. Additionally, I wanted to discover what I could learn from studying the day to day practices of the literacy coaches
and consider my own practice as a literacy coach. Site documents such as PowerPoint and agenda from the end of year meeting with teachers, coaching note template, sample unit plan, sample lesson plan and list of resources, were collected to contribute to the overall understanding how literacy coaches build their capacity through their coaching relationships. As I read and reread the data, I looked for themes that emerged from my observation, field notes and reflection journal. I focused my attention only on material that was pertinent to answering the research questions.

**Interviews**

**Interview with literacy coach.** Each literacy coach was interviewed throughout the course of this study. I conducted an initial interview at the start of the study, an interview at the end of the study, and approximately four to six in between. The middle interviews were conducted after an observation. The purpose of these follow-up interviews was to have coaches reflect on their practice or for me to get clarity on what I observed. The first interview focused on the role of the coach at his or her school and the ways in which the coach engages with teachers as well as the ways in which the coaches spent their time. The second interview was conducted after all other data from the coaches had been obtained. This interview focused on the ways in which the coaches engage in their own professional development. (See Appendix C for interview questions). I asked approximately 10 open-ended questions that allowed the literacy coaches to provide their perspective in their own words. Questions took this form to adhere to the need for the literacy coaches to be able to share their experiences without being stifled by structured questions and to provide me with in depth responses (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006).
I worked from a set of sequenced questions. These questions were asked in the order in which they were written. The structure of the interview was open-ended and semi-structured to allow me to obtain the depth of response required to address the research questions and to extend and clarify the responses through probing (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006). The literacy coaches were asked the same core questions. I asked follow up questions when appropriate for the purpose of building on the response received. The literacy coaches were encouraged to speak expansively about their current experiences and expertise. Longer questions were asked first to set the tone of the interview. Questions that required shorter response were asked toward the end of the interview. It is customary with open ended questions to begin the interview with big questions and work down to details (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006). All interviews were transcribed.

The interview questions are broken down into three categories or subgroups: (1) literacy coaches’ capacity, (2) expertise and (3) collaboration with teachers. Some sample interview questions are:

(1) What professional development do you seek out or engage in to build your capacity?

(2) Who and/or what influences your work with teachers?

(3) How do you prepare to work effectively with teachers?

**Interview with principal.** The principals who were a part of this study serve as the instructional leader at each of the two middle schools that were the research sites for this study. I reached out to the principals in the study several times to set up a time to interview them but was not successful. One principal made an appointment and
cancelled due to a meeting. Another interview time was never set up (See Appendix E for interview questions). The interview questions can be broken down into two categories or subgroups: (1) role as an instructional leader, (2) support for literacy coaches. Some sample interview questions are:

1. What type of support do you provide for literacy coaches?
2. How would you describe your work with the literacy coach in your building?
3. What are some of your expectations for the literacy coach’s professional growth?

**Interview with literacy director.** I interviewed the director once at the end of the study for the purpose of investigating how the work of the literacy coaches aligns with the District’s goals and expectations (See Appendix D for interview questions). Some sample questions are:

1. What are the districts expectations for middle school literacy coaches?
2. What are the districts expectations aligned to the work literacy coaches actually do?
3. How do you support the professional development of middle school literacy coaches?

**Observation of literacy coaches.** Observation was a part of my process. My purpose for conducting observations was to discover how literacy coaches in the study interact with each other and the teachers they support. In essence, I wanted to see how closely does the work participants actually do reflect what they say they do. Literacy coaches were observed in the following contexts: key planning session with teachers, coaching sessions, demonstration lesson, and delivery of professional development. During the course of the study each literacy coach was observed 16 times. These observations were
conducted to give me a sense of what literacy coaches and teachers talk about and to gain insight into their collaborative practices.

There was a focus on the support and guidance literacy coaches provide to teachers and the frequency of guidance and support given to teachers. The language used was documented and analyzed. I captured the purpose of the language being used during the coaches’ interactions with teachers. For example, I documented if the language was being used to offer encouragement and support to teachers, provide insight for a need to change practice, solve a problem, build coaches own capacity, or provide critical feedback. I also captured interactions between the coach and the teacher and how does that fit with what literacy coaches do in their team meetings and expectations from the director.

Field Notes

Field notes were a part of my process to contribute to my overall analysis of the research (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Field notes were used to record specific events I observed and to aid me in describing the literacy coaches’ experiences and my observations. The events I observed were: key planning session between the literacy coaches and teachers, one on one coaching sessions, a demonstration lesson, and delivery of professional development. After observing each event, I recorded in my filed notes data that was relevant to my study.

Reflection journal

After each encounter I wrote my reflection, so that my thinking was a part of the data. I didn’t want to just report findings. As a former literacy coach, I wanted to reflect on my own learning from this study. My reflection included notes about experiences,
learning or even hunches. Other information that was recorded included the physical setting, activities, and my own reactions. The earlier observational sessions were sessions in which I took a few notes and simply observed. This was done to get a sense of the norms of behavior between the literacy coaches and teachers and to get an understanding of their work with teachers so that I could have something to truly reflect on once I was familiar with their coaching practices.

**Focus group**

The focus group interview followed a semi structured interview protocol (See Appendix A for interview questions). Its purpose was to capture the shared experiences of the two middle school literacy coaches. Although I worked from a written sequence of questions, the interview protocol was semi-structured to allow for follow up on unexpected responses and individual differences that emerged during the interview (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006). Focus groups constitute spaces for generating collective testimonies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I provided an opportunity for each coach to speak and ensure that neither of them was passed over. After each question, each coach provided a response. Some sample group interview questions are:

1. How do you facilitate teacher learning?
2. How do you determine the goals for teachers and content of your coaching session?
3. How has your work with teachers helped to build your capacity?

I collected professional development materials such as an agenda, differentiated instruction lesson plan template, materials for modeling a fluency lesson, results based coaching tool, unit plan and list of resources as a part of data collection. The documents
were examined for content, and how they are used to facilitate learning for the literacy coach and the teachers. No additional materials were collected.

**Data Collection**

Figure 1: Guiding Questions and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Areas of Focus; Methods For Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What can be learned about the professional development two middle school literacy coaches receive in order to build capacity and how is it instantiated in their day to day work with teachers and decisions? | Interviews with literacy coaches  
Observation of literacy coaches interactions with teachers  
Observation of literacy coaches PD (i.e., one-on-one coaching)  
Artifacts (i.e., agendas, power-point slides, Field notes  
Audio recordings  
Reflection Journal | Coding across interviews for themes and trends  
Coding across field notes, and audio data for themes and trends in participation |
| How do two middle school literacy coaches work with each other to grow professionally? | Interviews with literacy coaches  
Focus Group  
Field Notes  
Audio recordings  
Reflection Journal | Coding across audio data for themes and trends |
| At what point do these coaches realize there is a gap in their capacity and what do they do about it? | Interviews with literacy coaches  
Focus groups  
Field Notes  
Audio recordings  
Reflection Journal | Coding across interviews and audio recordings for themes and trends |

**Data Analysis and Coding**

Before and after the interviews were audio recorded, perceptions, reflections and interpretations were documented in a journal to capture that which was not captured on audio. Initially, I looked for the literacy coaches’ responses that speak to their
professional beliefs about learning and growing professionally to be able to teach others. The complete data set was then analyzed to determine the ways participants are similar in how they build their capacity as literacy coaches.

In order to ensure that my study is valid and reliable, I completed member checks consistently throughout the data analysis process (Gardiner & Lorch, 2015). For example, I restated or summarized the information and questioned participants to determine accuracy. I also shared my ongoing analysis with my participants so that they can affirm the accuracy and completeness of my analysis.

The analysis of data began with a preliminary coding to identify common themes among those interviewed. I coded the data using selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Selective coding allowed me to capture the phenomena of my study. As I continued to read and reread the data, applying constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), I identified codes that included: effective collaboration, building capacity and support system. In my constant comparison, I looked to develop and elaborate upon the codes by looking for both commonalities and salient differences.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined my research design which included the methods and data collection and analysis that was used to address my research questions. I included a description of the school district, participants under study along with an explanation of how and why they were chosen for this study.

I believe literacy coaches are instrumental in helping teachers to develop professionally and ensuring that all students reach their full potential in today’s classrooms. Literacy coaches are also responsible for their own professional growth as a
way to prepare to support teachers in their efforts to help students succeed. Therefore, the effectiveness of literacy coaches to do their jobs well is a must. As such, the purposes of this study is to investigate how two middle school literacy coaches in one middle school district build their capacity and grow professionally to ensure teachers and children succeed. Through my methods of data collection and analysis, I was able to gain more insight into how two successful middle school literacy coaches grow professionally during the day to day demands of job.
Chapter Four: Findings

In this research I endeavored to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the nature of the professional development two middle school literacy coaches receive and how is it instantiated in their day to day work with teachers in the District? (2) How do two middle school literacy coaches in one District work with each other to grow professionally and what are the contextual factors that foster and/or limit their effective collaboration? (3) If literacy coaches are not provided the professional development they need what do they do about it as evidenced in their daily interactions and decisions in the District in which they work? As is often in the case of qualitative research my questions shifted. Cresswell describes “Emergent Design” as one of the characteristics of qualitative research. He describes emergent design as:

The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the research process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect their data. For example, the questions may change, the forms of data collections may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified. (p. 39).

Research question one evolved to: What do two middle school literacy coaches do in their day to day practice? This questioned emerged from the study because what I observed; weekly, were two middle school literacy coaches working in the capacity of mentor, coach, supporter, curriculum developer, leader, learner, collaborator, and thought partner. They would carry out these practices on any given day for an intended purpose. As I observed their work and discussed their practice with them, I realized that their work was informed by a more holistic and complex learning process and that is was not important to make explicit connections to their professional development as the original
question suggest. They were continuously growing and developing in the time they spent their time with teachers and other coaches in addition to formal professional development. Research question two evolved to: How do two middle school literacy coaches continuously build their capacity? Originally, research question two focused on how the literacy coaches in the study collaborate with other coaches as a way to grow professionally, but I realized this question was too narrow and did not address other ways coaches grow. While collecting data for this research, I learned that literacy coaches in this study, in addition to collaborating with other coaches, also work with teachers, read professional literature, attend and present at local and state conferences as a way to continuously build their capacity. Research question three evolved to: What do the supports schools and the District provide to two middle school literacy coaches look like? The original research question makes an assumption that the literacy coaches do not receive the professional development they need. I realized during my research that the coaches were supported in a number of ways at the school and district level and; therefore, removed the part of the question that assumed they didn’t.

In retrospect, I realized that my questions were too tightly focused and imposed limits on the learning from my study. The revised questions are: (1) what do two middle school literacy coaches do in their day to day practice? (2) How do two middle school literacy coaches continuously build their capacity? (3) What do the supports schools and the District provide to two middle school literacy coaches look like?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through interviews, a focus group, observations and artifacts. The data were analyzed to create a description of the context and the coaches’ practices,
to identify themes and make connections to literature. In this chapter I present the findings of my study of two middle school literacy coaches. I have chosen to present the findings of this study by themes as opposed to the research questions. The purpose of this structure is to tell the story of what I learned from two middle school literacy coaches. Through interviewing and observing the participants, I have uncovered the following themes: effective collaboration, capacity building and support system. Below I begin their story with an overview of the coaching in the District, followed by a description of the coaches and what they do. Next, I highlight each theme in depth by explaining what the themes mean and how they connect to what I learned. Finally, I provide concluding thoughts.

**District Coaching Overview**

Currently, the district employs two middle school literacy coaches. Working in conjunction with the Literacy Director, the coaches meet at the beginning of the year to divide responsibilities for the Literature/Language Arts teachers serving five middle school buildings in the district. Their coaching model is student-centered and results based designed around the work of Sweeny (2013); (See Appendix H). The coaches meet with grade-level teams as well as individual teachers to plan and implement instruction based on the district curriculum. They are also responsible for providing district-wide professional development for the Literature/Language Arts department during some of the half-day professional development release days provided by the district.

The District’s goals influence decisions regarding the professional development provided to teachers. This year the District had three goals: (1) building teacher capacity to use portfolios, making them more student friendly in order for students to reflect on
their own writing and take charge of their portfolios, (2) building literacy coach and teacher capacity in disciplinary literacy and (3) improving students’ grammar.

The push to build teacher capacity in portfolios was influenced by a need for students to take ownership of their learning; specifically, in writing. Based on analysis of student reflections, teachers noticed that there was a need for students to take ownership in their own writing. Teachers wanted students to be able to look at their writing and decide what they need to do as a writer and start setting their own goals. Grammar became a District initiative because students’ grammar and conventions showed a need for growth based on district writing rubrics. The focus was on how to teach grammar in more meaningful ways as opposed to teaching grammar in isolation. The disciplinary literacy goal is a result of collaboration between the middle school district and the high school district. While the District’s high schools are separate from their middle schools, the districts often work together to set common goals. The work in the area of disciplinary literacy was to build habits of mind and to teach students to read critically within each discipline. Professional development is designed with these goals in mind.

In addition to the District’s goals, professional development for teachers and literacy coaches is also based on teacher surveys taken at the beginning of the year; end of the year and throughout the year. Two years ago the District adopted a distributed leadership model in schools. In the past, the literacy coaches were responsible for all monthly professional development. With the distributed leadership model, professional development for teachers is determined by each school’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) every other month. The literacy coaches are now responsible for district-wide
professional development three or four times per year, as opposed to once per month when the professional development was determined by the district.

**Professional Credentials, Experiences and Affiliations**

One of the coaches in this study is Katie (pseudonym). Katie worked as a teacher for four years and has worked in the capacity of a literacy coach for six years. Her highest degree received is a Master’s Degree as a Reading Specialist and a Type 75 certification. She is a member of several local literacy organizations, one of which she holds the position as president. Other literacy leadership roles include her work with a local writing project, and several other leadership and internship programs. In addition, she worked on Striving Readers, an organization intended to improve adolescent literacy skills. Katie also supervises the mentoring program in her district where she supports mentors and new teachers in professional development. Lastly, she presents at a university based institute made up of literacy leaders from school districts all over the area and is heavily involved in a local branch of the International Literacy Association.

Lauren (pseudonym), the other coach in this study taught for eight years and has served in the capacity of literacy coach for six years. She holds a Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) as a Reading Specialist. She is a member of several local literacy organizations. She is also a frequent presenter at the annual conference of a local council and attends and presents at a university based institute made up of literacy leaders from school districts all over the area. Lauren works with 20-25 teachers across three schools as well as all middle school language arts teachers district-wide and provides monthly half day professional development.
A Day in the Life of Katie and Lauren

Katie and Lauren work with students and teachers with the goal of the implementation and instruction of the middle school curriculum. A normal day for Katie and Lauren involves meeting with teachers in grade level meetings and small department meetings. During these meetings, they help teachers to plan and discuss next steps based on student work. Katie and Lauren may plan an entire unit or a lesson with teachers depending on where teachers are in the process and the support they need at the time. They work with teachers in several capacities. In addition to meeting with teachers to plan, Katie and Lauren also work with teachers in their classrooms during which time they may confer with students, work with a small group, model a lesson, co-teach or observe a lesson and provide feedback. The nature and focus of their work is determined collaboratively with teachers based on analysis of student work or data. There are also times when Katie and Lauren meet with teachers to write curriculum.

Katie, Lauren and the other coaches in their district meet weekly to collaborate and talk about how things are going across schools. They also take care of issues of concern at this time. In addition, in Katie’s role as a literacy coach she is also a mentor supervisor for a mentoring program that supports new teachers by pairing them with a veteran teacher. Her responsibility is to work with mentor teachers and train them to work with new teachers. She is responsible for providing professional development for mentor teachers and new teachers. Katie works with different facilitators who are responsible for facilitating new teacher meetings. Meetings focus on teachers’ curriculum supports for new teachers, and new district initiatives. Teachers may sign up to work with the coaches over the summer to create curriculum. This affords teachers the
opportunity to create their own units and get paid for the work they do (See Appendix F for a sample unit).

When speaking to Katie and Lauren about their day to day practice, Katie responded by describing their actual work which I outlined in the aforementioned paragraph whereas, Lauren’s responses were often influenced by principles that come from their work. In an interview, Lauren said, “I’m driven by [the fact that] I really think all kids can learn. So when I am working with teachers I am always trying to keep in my head what I want students to be able to achieve.” Lauren talked in detail about teachers’ implementation of best practice instruction and differentiation to meet the needs of all students. From her perspective, standardized assessments only give one snapshot of what students are capable of doing. Her concern is that teachers will be inclined to teach to the test and she wants what is beneficial to students’ long term learning. She stated, “I work with teachers who are smart people working to do what is best for kids and I don’t think a standardized test capture that. As teachers, we do the best work we can. It comes from your own practice, from a desire to help the kids. That motivates me too because the teachers are motivated to work for the kids.” Both Lauren and Katie provided important information that helped me understand their work.

So far, I have presented the District’s coaching overview, the literacy coach’s credentials, experiences and affiliation with professional organizations, a description of their day to day practices and some of the principles that guide Lauren’s work. Next, I present the findings from the study organized around the major themes that emerged from the data. To reiterate, the major themes are: effective collaboration, capacity building and support system.
Major Themes Emerging from the Data

Effective Collaboration

The first theme that emerged from the data is effective collaboration. For the purpose of this study, I will define effective collaboration as a group of people learning together and working together to accomplish a goal successfully. Collaborative models for continuous professional growth take place in many forms. I observed ongoing collaborative practices in the form of one on one coaching and weekly grade level team meetings. Coaches placed an emphasis on student needs and learning, student work, instructional practices and curriculum. There was consistent feedback and support, and opportunities for reflection and collaboration between the teachers and the literacy coaches. During this ongoing collaboration teachers and the literacy coaches focused on curriculum development, teaching practices and reviewing student work. As part of their collaboration, coaches ensured full inclusion for all teachers which I am calling access and equity. There was also a focus on building and fostering trusting relationships. I provide more detail about these collaborative practices below.

Curriculum Development. During my interview I asked Katie to tell me about her work. In response, Katie explained that four years ago she and Lauren and other teachers in the District worked on revamping their writing curriculum. The teachers came together to work and create rubrics for each of the writing units. This process was based in the realization that the school’s reading needed to be reciprocal to their writing. Whatever teachers have students reading, students also write in that genre. According to Katie, year two was the biggest curriculum project. During this phase, Katie and Lauren, along with teachers, took all the standards and collaborated with a company to unpack all
the standards which was a critical part of the work. The unpacked standards were used to create the six units of study and a launch lesson that teachers now have. Another curriculum team came together last summer and coaches and the teachers they support revised the curriculum and created a launch unit (See Appendix F for sample unit) so they could build new units of study. This work took place during the third and fourth year.

When meeting with teachers Katie and Lauren guide the conversation by participating in it substantively. Case in point, during a conversation with teachers about units that needed to be revised Katie offered her support when teachers stressed they needed assistance organizing the big ideas, selecting texts, and creating task for the units on genocide and propaganda: Katie stated, “I did this unit with Mary (pseudonym) last year so we can look through a lot of resources we used…”

I attended a professional development (See Appendix M for PowerPoint) facilitated by Katie and Lauren in which middle school teachers from five schools attended. The agenda for the day (See Appendix L) was focused on discussion and reflection on the past year’s curriculum. Katie and Lauren started the afternoon by reiterating the strategic plan for the district to develop a series of curriculum maps which included specifying the order and pace of units and standards taught at each grade level. The curriculum maps are a part of the district’s instructional framework and provide greater specificity than the district’s existing scope and sequence. Teachers worked in grade level teams facilitated by Katie and Lauren to do the following: discuss the current order of the units in their schools, decide how to order the units based on grade level consensus and create a grade level Google calendar. Some of the units teachers discussed
and ordered are genocide, dystopian, poetry, Middle Eastern and surviving and overcoming obstacles (See Appendix I for texts). Teachers returned back to a whole group setting to share how they ordered the units.

Katie has been working on disciplinary literacy with six science and social science teachers during which time they created integrated units of study around social science and language arts. She stated:

“We may do something this summer with disciplinary literacy because right now what we thought was disciplinary literacy is really kind of changing as we learn more about it. It doesn’t need to be literacy and social science teachers working together; it needs to be more like focused on the discipline itself.”

The District first rolled Common Core State Standards out in 2011. The literacy coaches and teachers wrote their own curriculum, and continue to work collaboratively to make revisions to the rubrics. The rubrics have gone through several revisions as teachers continue to grow in their knowledge. Essential questions and enduring understandings drive the units of study in both content and process. Part of the buy-in from teachers is that they worked in grade level teams to create the enduring understandings which have been evolving over time of both content and process. During the start of my data collection, Katie started to visit classrooms. Katie began working with the 6th grade team on a unit (See Appendix F). Before that she worked with the seventh grade team for a while. Katie opened a discussion with a group of teachers by simply asking, “How are things going?” Each teacher responded and began to collaborate about the current unit of study.

Katie and Lauren work with teachers to create different assessments and performance based task that are given as on demand assessments and ensure that
everybody understands how to administer them. Student’s research, then write a paper on
demand over a three day period. This is done twice a year. Katie and Lauren make sure
all the assessments are ready to go and revisions are made throughout the year if needed.

While teachers are given some parameters decisions are not made without
teachers at the table. Teachers are always a part of the conversation. During a focus
group interview, I asked both Lauren and Katie if they plan together because I noticed
teachers in both schools were teaching the same units and in some cases using the same
literature. Here is an excerpt of that conversation.

Researcher: Do you plan together because it seems like all of your schools are
teaching some of the same units and using the same literature?

Katie: We talk about our units a lot and what we are doing in the units. We really
try to do our planning with teachers.

Lauren: We tend to plan with the team first and then we talk together. Rather than
we plan and take it to them, it’s the other way around.

Katie: Even when we are doing summer curriculum projects, I will work with a
group and Lauren works with a different group and then we share.

During collaboration coaches make references to things they saw in another
classroom to share with a given teacher. For example, during an observation this winter
of Katie working with teachers on a performance task for their poetry unit, Katie shared
what one teacher did with some of her students. During a different observation when
Katie was helping teachers think through their poetry units she shared with the 6th grade
teaches something she advocated that the 7th grade teachers were doing in their classes
for assessment. During a spring observation of Lauren working with a group of teachers
on articles for their unit, Lauren shared what she observed two other teachers do in their classrooms regarding a unit on fairy tales.

**Reviewing Student Work.** The literacy coaches’ collaboration with teachers focuses on student learning and includes reflective dialogue. For example, during one teacher team meeting a teacher shared that her students were having a difficult time identifying prepositional phrases. Here are some of the questions Katie posed to the teacher during that conversation:

1. Based on what you are learning about their prepositions, what do you want them to do differently?
2. Have you found that when they are writing their writing has improved?
3. Why does it matter that they can identify prepositions? Push your advanced kids.

Katie went on to say to the teachers, “I think the main reason we are teaching this is to get them to be more descriptive in their writing. Being able to name it isn’t always the goal as long as they can use it appropriately. Isn’t that why we kind of moved away from grammar?”

Another example of a student centered conversation took place during a conversation Lauren was having with a group of 7th grade teachers about their students writing. She contributed greatly to the conversation providing insight to teachers. Here is what Lauren had to say to a teacher who shared his students were ready to start another book in the unit.

“Your mini lessons (See Appendix J for a sample template) can be about picture collage even for those kids who are just about ready to write their literary analysis. The kids who are working on their picture collage first become a knowledgeable other to help their
classmates who are at a different place. But if you wanted the whole group to work on their picture collage then they could be also working on their picture collage and their literary analysis could be written more towards the end.”

**Other Things Coaches Do.** Sometimes Lauren and Katie collaborate with teachers outside of curriculum. In the case of Lauren’s conversation with teachers about the Orientation Handbook, this is what she had to contribute to the conversation:

“Rachel is starting to work on the 6th grade Orientation Handbook they give to parents and the reading document that is in it. I want to see if you guys find any value in what is in there currently or if you want to change it to something else. I’m wondering what you think about adding our units of study. One suggestion would be to put in our units of study and say this is what we will be doing, this is what we will be reading, and then add the piece about independent reading. We should be able to come up with something we agree on.”

**Access and equity.** I found that access and equity in the way coaches interacted with teachers were central to the coaches and teachers effective collaboration. During my study, I learned that there is equity of voice and thought among the coaches and teachers. This means that all teachers at the table are given an opportunity to provide insight to the discussion. Everyone has a voice. I also learned from my findings that all teachers have access to literacy coaches and resources. How much time any given teacher spends with a coach is based solely on the needs of that teacher. The coaches both have a calendar set up with times to work with specific teachers or groups of teachers, both short term and for the course of the school year. According to Katie, there are teachers that need more support. Katie makes sure to meet with teachers who need the most support weekly or biweekly. In short, meeting with coaches and providing one on one support as needed and allowing teachers to have a voice in the lives of the students they teach allotted full inclusion for all teachers. This allowed for their effective collaboration.
Building Trusting Relationships. Just as providing access and equity to teachers contributes to their effective collaboration, so does building trusting relationships. According to Hall & Simeral (2008/z0, the relationship between teacher and coach are perhaps the most important and most sensitive elements of schools striving for improvement (p. 23). The literacy coaches appreciate the magnitude of the relationships they have established. They both work diligently to maintain those relationships. That is why I have added the subtitle building trusting relationships under the theme of collaboration. An effective coach is aware that relationship building is one of the key factors to helping teachers reach their goals. Katie and Lauren reported that it is important to be a good listener as well as get to know the strengths of each teacher. They spoke about navigating their roles in supporting teachers and principals. The concept of building relationships and trust serves as a reminder that it does not matter how well versed one is in the content; if trust is missing, teachers will not feel comfortable implementing new strategies with the coach.

Katie and Lauren have positive relationships with the teachers they work with. According to Drago-Severson (2009), trusting relationships are fundamental to supporting growth in all human beings. (p. 13). Practice is made public through their weekly team meetings with teachers. Through the coaches’ facilitation, teachers share information freely with each other. Teachers bring student work and discuss the implications for their teaching, and revisions of current lesson plans, assessments, writing tasks and units. According to Katie, what really works well for her is working with teachers that really want to work with her. “I don’t ever force myself in on a teacher’s classroom.” I spoke at lengths with the literacy director about her work with the literacy
coaches and she expressed the need for the coaches and herself; included, to go back in a concrete way just to revisit the practices laid out by Diane Sweeny (2013) and so many others. During my interview with the literacy director she stated:

“We have tried to focus our efforts on coaching the coach and those relationship pieces. We decided that’s the piece we are not experts at because when we do problem solve, that’s usually the piece that’s the hardest. How do we make changes with tough people? That is about the chemistry and the psychology of supporting a professional. I noticed a marked shift in the way Katie and Lauren would come to me and talk to me about what’s going on at the building level because I think the teachers finally saw them as part of the staff; part of the culture. They belong to the school. The relationships they have established have caused less paranoia and skepticism among the teachers than there used to be.”

During my study, I observed Katie and Lauren in a sixth grade classroom conferring with students. In both cases, the coaches were not there to model or train the teacher, they were there to assist teachers. Katie and Lauren shared with me that this type of work is key to building relationships with teachers. In Katie’s case, she was there to honor a promise she made to a teacher to assist with providing feedback to students revising their argument drafts. In Lauren’s case a meeting had been cancelled, she had some extra time and decided to use that time to assist a teacher by providing feedback to students during their revision process.

Katie has been working to build trust and understanding how to work with different types of people who have very different personalities and ways of learning. She admitted it has taken a long time to build some of the relationships. “It wasn’t always like that so it could be finding them resources or hunting down a stapler just to get them to trust me to get to realize I am not someone that’s judging them or ‘a district spy.’”
Literacy coaches attend weekly meetings with peers in which they bring a question or piece of information that needs to be shared. The agenda is loose but conversations are purposeful. The literacy director credits this to the relationships the coaches have with each other. “We respect and appreciate what each one brings to the table. I also think just the collegiality that we have just gathered and built over the years. It is a safe space and everyone gets that.” The school district has had literacy coaching for 10 years during which time it has ebbed and flowed because of funding and directives from upper administration. Prior to assigning coaches to work in schools, coaches were from the district and were not trusted by teachers. The literacy director believes teachers have made a shift and appreciate what Katie and Lauren bring to the table.

One strategy the coaches have used is to encourage teachers to be open about their concerns with the literacy director. This is done in an effort to cultivate a trusting relationship between coaches and teaches. This allows the coaches to use the literacy director’s name safely and provides a certain level of trust and respect. The literacy director said, “I am not here to play got you. This work is too important and too hard. That’s not my goal. My goal is to help the kids.”

One concept that characterizes their relationship is respect. Coaches respect each teacher’s learning curve and provide support in areas of growth that teachers have identified for themselves. During a focus group interview (See Appendix A for focus group protocol) with Lauren and Katie, this is what the coaches said when I asked them do they determine the goals for teachers.

Katie: Teachers create professional goals every year with their principals, as a part of their evaluation. We usually work together to determine these goals
together at the beginning of the year. Each teacher has their own set of goals they are working on.

Lauren: On the other side of that is that we meet with teams regardless.

Another concept that characterizes their relationship is trust. Teachers are acknowledged for their knowledge and level of expertise and are given the choice to select the texts they want in their units. Teachers are not told how to teach, but they have to teach to the Common Core State Standard outlined in the District curriculum map. Teachers follow a curriculum map that outlines what products, standards, and enduring understandings are taught in each unit. Katie believes the reason why teachers are so vested is because they see their voice matters. During an observation of Lauren working with a group of teachers on their current unit, teachers began asking about text. Lauren told teachers about funds available to purchase some of the books on audio through Illinois Reads which provides eBooks. Students would be allowed to check out from the consortium. The school would have the option to buy some of the audio books from Baker and Taylor reserved only for the school. Lauren encouraged teachers to start thinking about books students may want to read. The curriculum was first created five years ago. One important aspect that was considered by the director, coaches and teachers is that not all students in every middle school in every grade needed to study the same unit at the same time or read the same book in a unit. All five middle schools were given the option to select the texts they wanted in their units to honor different perspectives. Teachers were trusted to make those decisions.

During my interview with the literacy director we spoke extensively about this process. The role of the literacy director; at the district level, was to make sure
expectations were set and that everyone was teaching those expectations per the Common Core State Standards. The expectations included processes that students needed to demonstrate. In that interview she stated, “The process needed to be organic and specific to each school because each school has a different population of students, a different team of teachers, a different culture and school climate, and different ways and different times of the year that things happen, should happen or do happen.”

Here I have represented the complex layers of collaboration between teachers and literacy coaches. Their effective collaboration occurs around curriculum, teaching, reviewing student work and involves access and equity as well as trust and respect for all teachers and peers.

**Building Capacity**

The second theme that emerged from this study is building capacity. For the purpose of this study, capacity can be defined as the literacy coaches’ ability to do and understand something well. Capacity building can be defined as the literacy coaches’ processes and experiences that cultivate, develop and strengthen their skills for coaching teachers. During this study, I discovered that literacy coaches don’t build their capacity and then coach teachers, they continuously build their capacity by working with teachers. Here I will illustrate how coaches develop their own capacity and then the capacity of teachers through their work with other coaches, teachers, by being avid readers of current research in the field, and ongoing learning as members of various organizations.

**Learning From Professional Literature.** One way coaches in this study build their capacity is by reading research in the field. When speaking to Katie, I learned that she is an avid reader of *The Reading Teacher* and *Educational Leadership*. Lauren works
to build her capacity to provide teachers with research about best practices and what works for students. This school year teachers constantly asked Lauren how to expand students’ reasoning in their writing. This did not come up with one team but across multiple schools. This prompted Lauren to go digging and immerse herself in reading around this concept. She read Calkins and Cummins to build her own capacity and expertise so she would be able to work more effectively with teachers. During our conversation, Lauren said, “I didn’t have things to offer when teachers struggled with teaching reasoning and now I feel like I’ve got some strategies to say this is what we have been working on and here is what has been working.”

An area of growth for both coaches is in building their capacity in disciplinary literacy. Katie admits that while she is starting to grow in her understanding of disciplinary literacy, she is also thinking about: (1) how a literacy person would read as a literary critic, (2) how a history person would read a historic document or (3) how would a person well versed in science or social science read a book as a scientist or historian.

Learning from Participation in Professional Organization. The coaches pursue growth and learning by attending conferences throughout the year and reading widely and extensively base on what they learn there. Katie; describers the professional development she attends and books she reads:

“We just went to see Jim Knight, speak about instructional coaching. He just gave me a lot to think about. I just ordered this one book he kept referring to. It is called Helping, a book about how to ask, receive and give help. There are these five different principles about why people are resistance to help. So I thought maybe if I could understand people a little better, then I can better reach them as learners. I find that those types of books really help me. I have to think outside of curriculum sometimes and think about the actual people and how people learn.”
In an effort to build the coaches capacity in facilitating the learning of adults and working with them more effectively, they attended a Jim Knight conference in May and learned about his model. The literacy director made the following statement in an interview, “There were certain things that resonated with us in terms of approaching people and embarking on this professional relationship or having to cycle back to people you haven’t been so professional with in the past.” The literacy director described the coaches in this study as skillful and expressed there is constant encouragement for the coaches to challenge each other.

“At their core it is to understand that their role is to improve practice and so they have the content knowledge that earns them the respect into the conversation. Part of it is there is an innate passion for what they do. As much as I try to support them, there is such a natural curiosity. We have a lot of talented teachers in the District who have operated as coaches and who could still, but these coaches, I really believe have the passion and depth of knowledge of content and the constant self-driven need and want to become and be seen as experts. They channel that and so there is a mutual exchange. It is part of the culture.”

**Learning from Other Coaches.** As is the nature of Katie’s and Lauren’s work they have a myriad of opportunities to learn from each other and other coaches. They meet weekly, attend conferences and belong to the same organizations, they plan and deliver professional development together. Katie stated during an interview, “It takes a lot to plan a really effective and thoughtful professional development.” Also in my conversation with Katie she discussed that she and Lauren work together to get teachers to use the writing rubrics that were created in the District. They collectively grade student work using the rubrics to ensure everyone knows and understands the expectation for students at each grade level. “So we have done that work for three years. We call it building inter-rater reliability.”
Providing Professional Development. Katie is on the board of a local branch of the International Literacy Association and one way she builds her capacity is by organizing professional development for their conferences. There are three conferences a year. This summer Kelly Gallagher and Lester Laminack will present at the conference. Just recently SCIRA had Troy Hicks to present on digital learning. Katie shared with me during our conversation that after Troy Hicks presented she had the opportunity to hear from a literacy coach from a suburb in west Chicago who spoke about how she uses digital writing with her teachers. “That was awesome because I got so many technology ideas.”

This year Katie and Lauren will present what they are doing with disciplinary literacy in the District. When the opportunity presents itself, Katie does try what she has learned from professional development in the classroom. This provides her the context to speak about a strategy in practice, not just in theory. This goes a long way with teachers.

Lauren’s work with teachers depends on the needs of teachers or in some cases is determined by the District. In addition to the three goals set by the District, Lauren also hones in on things that bubble up. One exciting thing she shared during our interview is the IPAD Initiative through Digital Promise, a two year grant that provides every student in grades 6-8 with an IPAD at two of the middle schools in the district. Some of the most recent changes Lauren has made to her practice are to integrate research and what is going on in best practice into conversations with teachers. Since teachers are busy and may or may not have time to do the research themselves, Lauren finds professional articles on the concept or strategy teachers are grappling with and pass it on to teachers by sharing practical things based on the author’s work. Teachers are encouraged to try it
out with Lauren’s support. Lauren’s work with teachers is influenced by her observation of teachers’ needs. For example, Lauren and a group of teachers were grading student’s first draft of literary analysis and found that students were struggling with reasoning. Students were repeating the evidence and this sent Lauren hunting for resources. She consulted the work of Sunday Cummins and Lucy Calkins about evidence and reasoning. She then filtered her knowledge to teachers.

“So a part of what I do is constantly learning. When we first started digging into the Common Core and we looked at the different standards we realized as a whole that we really didn’t understand argument writing. The coaches started that process where we went out and started reading everything we could get our hands on about argument writing. We are lucky enough to have that time to be able to sit together and read and really try to understand it ourselves and then we take it to teachers who are willing to take that step with us.”

One of the topics that have been a focus of professional development in addition to the District’s three goals is Response to Intervention (RTI). The administration in the building where Lauren works wanted teachers to think more clearly about implementing small group interventions. In the language arts classrooms students are pulled during independent reading a couple of times per week. This past year Lauren supported a teacher who had concerns that students were not using punctuation in their writing. In response, Lauren did some fluency work with students and found out they didn’t read with fluency either. Lauren researched Rasinski’s work and used her knowledge to support other teachers with the same concern.

Another topic that is a focus for professional development for Lauren is around the concept of reasoning. According to Lauren, she (and the teachers) learned how to better teach students how to write a literary analysis including the structure and
organization of the literary analysis. Lauren admitted that as her understanding of reasoning and the writing of literary analysis developed she and teachers changed how they were grading students’ literary analysis by requiring more of students. Her work with teachers was based on what research says about reasoning. Lauren said her goal was to cultivate and develop student writing by showing them how to think abstractly around explaining their text evidence.

An area of new learning for Lauren the past two years has been understanding how to use Chrome Book and getting on to Google Docs. Since she and other coaches in her District received IPAD’s she has been building her capacity with this technology. “Now I am pretty savvy with being able to use Google Docs because that’s a way I can help teachers to collaborate. I have learned a lot about how to help by getting them to organize their folders and showing them how to share all of their information in there. We can look it up quickly and pull up and share things that we are doing together.” Additionally, Lauren has been working on growing in her ability to bring research into her coaching conversations.

Katie and Lauren also present with teachers at the state reading conference each year. They are a part of university based institute made up of literacy leaders from districts all over the area. There are three professional developments a year. This year the focus is on disciplinary literacy. Katie and Lauren shared their enthusiasm about seeing Doug Buhle for the first time. Other renowned educators and researchers in the field they have had the privilege to learn from include but are not limited to: Gena Servettie, Kate Roberts, Jim Knight and Christopher Leman. They are also frequent attendees at the International Literacy Association. They will attend professional development on
coaching at Northern University this school year. “Our director really values professional development so we are always going.”

Katie and Lauren have collaborated with renowned researchers and educators at a local university. They both consider having the opportunity to work alongside college professors trying out new initiatives, studies and research a huge professional development opportunity for building their capacity and expertise in the field of language and literacy.

**Modeling.** Teachers will sometimes reach out to Katie and Lauren for assistance as opposed to Katie and Lauren making that decision for teachers. This tells me that Katie and Lauren are respected and acknowledged for what they know. For example, a teacher reached out to Katie for help on how to use running records for a student with Williams Syndrome he supports one on one. The teacher recently attended a training that was intended to help him understand running records but did not feel his training was adequate. This prompted the teacher to reach out to Katie for help. During their time together Katie used a leveled text to model for the teacher how to keep running records. Here is an excerpt of that coaching conversation.

Katie: Usually with running records you want to select books around her level. I noticed she likes those Bernstein Bears books. What are some other books you read with her?

Teacher: I try to focus on nonfiction. They have a higher interest.

Katie: You can do running records with either; as long as it is on her level. I have this miscue sheet that I will send to you. You have to make symbols that work for you. At some point we can talk about knowing the level book. Then you would start as she
begins reading you would check as she goes (she models) “It was a warm afternoon day in September”. I like to always write their miscues because that can be really telling.

Teacher: Okay

Katie: You might do whole books depending on how long the book is or just a page. At the end you look at how many she got wrong over how many she got correct and that kind of tells you her accuracy.

Teacher: Okay

Katie: And, you look at their miscues and notice patterns.

Teacher: Yeah, like words per minute

Katie: I also want to show you MSV. I will send this to you to so that you will have it.

Katie works with new teachers all the time. She visits their classrooms twice per week and meets with them regularly. Katie works with one teacher who is teaching reading for the first time this year. For teachers who have been teaching for quite some time, Katie goes in as an observer to learn from their practice. This is one way Katie builds her capacity. There is one teacher; in particular, who is a former literacy coach whose classroom Katie visits. They presented together at the state reading conference. During one of our many conversations about Katie’s practice, she shared this with me, “It’s more about helping teachers develop their craft but learning with them as well.”

Lauren modeled small group instruction on how to build fluency for a teacher who reached out for assistance on how to do this effectively with her students. Lauren sat at a kidney table with four students while the teacher sat close by observing and taking notes. The goal was for students to read fluently. Lauren told students what the objective
was and why reading fluently is important. Students then articulated to Lauren the objective and why it is important for them to be able to read fluently. Lauren spoke softly enough not to disturb the other students working and loudly enough for the teacher and students in the small group to hear. She modeled how to provide individual support in a small group setting. Lauren began the lesson by modeling choppy reading for students reading word for word. She explained to students that her eyes were focused on each word separately and told them she could show them how to train their eyes to look at groups of words at the same time. Then Lauren used a short passage to model how to chunk words for smoothness when reading. She showed students how she groups words in her head before actually reading them. She went on to explain to students that the brain recognizes the meaning of chunks instead of just individual words and it tells the reader how to combine chunks so they make the most sense when you read them aloud. Lauren read an excerpt from the same passage that did not have any punctuation. Then Lauren gave students the excerpt from the passage without any punctuation and told students to read it and add the punctuation. Students were instructed to read the text without punctuation silently and were encouraged to use what they learned about chunking and reading for smoothness to draw in lines ( / ) to separate the sentences in parts of sentences into chunks for smooth reading. Then students took turns reading aloud attempting to mimic the fluency Lauren demonstrated. She helped students to discover their own errors and strengths. Students were encouraged to reflect on their reading fluency. She paid each student a compliment; explicitly telling them what they did well and what improvements they made from the previous week. Then she provided each student with specific next steps to build their fluency. A strategy for building fluency she gave
students to do alone is to listen to text on tape and to follow along with eyes on text. Lauren followed up with the teacher to debrief about what she observed. They discussed a plan for each student that would build their reading fluency. The teacher replicated the lesson with two other small groups.

**Appeal to Authority.** Literacy coaches build their capacity by reading current research and then help to build teachers’ capacity by appealing to authority. They appeal to authority through their ability to make reference to researchers in their work with teachers. Lauren and Katie make reference to researchers whose work may be a current focus. (i.e. “...in Sunday Cummins book she talks about that”, “I want to give you an excerpt from a professional development I just attended with Christopher Leman on Falling in Love with Close Reading”, “I’ve been reading some Calkins lessons and I think it might really work for what you are trying to do.”) These are just a few examples of how both coaches can make reference to current research and researchers in support of their work.

**Growing in Analyzing Student Data.** Katie is working to build her capacity and expertise in how to use student data to inform instruction and how to support teachers in doing the same. In her own practice she is still trying to navigate the best ways to go about getting teachers to look at data. During my research, Katie and teachers she support worked on a combined unit with social studies and generated anthropological field notebooks. Katie’s idea was to take a high, medium and low student and just one good representative of each and look at those to decide what she and teachers need to continue doing. Katie shared this with me during our post research interview (See Appendix C for interview protocol) when asked about areas in her practice where she is trying to stretch
herself, “I am always trying to work on my coaching moves, being more strategic with my language, questioning and trying to get teachers to come to answers on their own.”

Lauren is also focusing on how to use student data, specifically around what student data tells teachers about their instruction. During my conversation with Lauren, she said:

“We are really trying to be intentional on where we see instruction in kids’ writing. I am working; personally, to say that we did all this work, now let’s be deliberate about where we can see our instruction in what the kids are doing and can we name it and highlight what’s working well. So that is my next push forward for myself and the teachers I support. It’s a mindset shift to change to looking at student work to see what it says about instruction. That takes a lot of trust between the people who are working together because you are taking ownership.”

I observed Lauren this spring working with a group of 6th grade teachers. She started the meeting by asking teachers to bring a final draft of students’ literary analyses to share with each other in order to see what could be learned about their instruction around reasoning and text evidence. Lauren commented to teachers:

“So let’s be smart about this then because I already took [data from] a class group from the beginning of the year analysis when I pulled out the total score and I pulled out reasoning because that’s what you were the most interested in. If we could say okay throughout the year this is what we really worked on and these are the strategies that we implemented or this is the instruction we delivered. We could come up with four or five things that we know are working well that we want to start from the get go next year.”

In short, ultimately these literacy coaches are involved in an interconnected learning community where they learn from each other, from teachers, set up situations for teachers to learn from one another, from associations with professional literature, organizations and researchers and from involvement beyond the school. All of this impacts the way they build their own capacity, the capacity of teachers and teachers of students. This is a complex web of learning, rather than the hierarchical learning I
imagined in my original research question. The capacity building is not a linear, hierarchical model, but a process of mutual learning.

**Support System**

The third and final theme that emerged from this data is support system. This theme is based on data taken from interviews where coaches provided insight into the supportive network they engage in. This network gives them a safe place to process their experiences with other coaches and the District’s literacy director.

**Weekly Coaching Meetings.** When speaking with Katie, I learned that she appreciated having a support system in the other coaches in the district; especially, her working relationship with Lauren. According to Katie, she and Lauren have very different coaching styles and bring different experiences to the work. Katie described herself as very big picture and described Lauren as very detailed oriented. Katie admits she is building her capacity in writing rubrics and having Lauren around to provide those small details helps. Katie said to me during one of our many conversations, “So it is so great to have somebody else to talk things through.”

Every Friday the coaches meet together for their weekly meetings during which they come together to problem solve through a situation. Katie and Lauren find these weekly meetings to be helpful. There are two other intermediate level coaches that meet with Katie and Lauren as well on Friday’s. This is an opportunity to receive input from other coaches in the district who may or may not work with the same grade level teachers. Katie made the following statement during our interview. “I love having other people to work with and having that collaboration time. I don’t know if I could do this
job without it. It is very isolating. It’s nice to have someone in your same role that you can just kind of talk with.”

Lauren stated that she has been given a myriad of resources to support her work with teachers. She uses her coaching colleagues and learns from them. She talked about their work with Sweeny and Jennifer Allen.

Researcher: Can you tell me what it has been like to work with other literacy coaches?

Lauren: I think that if I can’t work with other coaches, then it’s very difficult to coach. When I did not have those other coaches to be my support system, it was really hard because you feel very isolated. Having other coaches allows you that group that you can be real learners with and to say I’m really struggling with this or that. Sometimes I need somebody that I can talk to that can help me problem solve and that needs to be my coaching counterparts. That’s invaluable. I don’t know how you are a coach in isolation. In essence, the literacy coaches have come to depend on their weekly meetings as a means of support for their work with each other and with teachers.

**District Support.** In addition to receiving support from peers, the literacy coaches also receive support from the District’s literacy director. One way the director supports the professional development of the coaches in this study is fostering their passion for the work. Here is part of my conversation with the literacy director:

Researcher: What do you do to support the professional development of the coaches in this study?
Literacy director: There really is a kind of organic sense of how we come to support teachers and how they come to support each other. Now what I do try to do though in order to support them and push them is I do my best to see what is out there in terms of literacy workshops. We go to workshops together. The end of last year, I came to them and I said let’s think about our goals for next year as a coaching team. I said you are all experts, you know the content and you are great at developing relationships because I think that’s the hardest piece developing interpersonal relationships with adults.

School Support. I spoke to Katie and Lauren about the ways in which principals support their efforts to facilitate change in adults. Katie felt that having the support of the principal is the key and just as important is having the principal involved. Katie met with the principal but not often due to the busy schedule and day to day responsibilities that principals have to adhere to. Katie and Lauren are cognizant of what they would say when speaking to a principal about their work with teachers. Katie’s process was to always start with a compliment and address one thing she would be working on with any given teacher. Katie found the principals she worked with to be very supportive of her efforts. Given Katie’s coaching responsibility she believes the principal’s role is an enormous one. During my study I reached out to the principals at both Katie and Lauren’s schools which were my research sites to talk to them about their relationship with Katie and Lauren and the support they provide. I was not able to interview the principals to learn more about their role in supporting and building the coaches’ capacity (See Appendix E for interview protocol).
The coaches in this study were able to thrive while engaging in their work with teachers because they were supported by their peers, their principals, and district leadership.

Final thoughts

The coaches in this study learn through and with each other. They have a structure to nurture their professional development. There is time allocated during the day and the school year to support coaches. Their collaboration is a source of individual growth and collective growth. While the coaches offer teachers deep content knowledge and pedagogical expertise, they learn and grow from leading together with teachers. Coaches make sure that teachers have access to programs and resources that benefit them. Coaches’ collaboration, capacity and support system allows them to give teachers the assistance they need and deserve and continue to grow as literacy coaches.
Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, Limitations, Areas for Further Study, and Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I discuss the findings, implications of the study for literacy coaches, districts and for the field, followed by recommendations for literacy coaches, principals, district administrators, school systems, professional development providers and university programs. I then present the limitations of the study followed by areas for further study and conclude with final thoughts.

Discussion

There were three major themes that emerged from the study: effective collaboration, building capacity and support system. Here I discuss the themes in greater detail, explaining how they are connected to current research in the field of literacy coaching.

Effective Collaboration. The first theme that emerged from this study is effective collaboration. One of the effective strategies the literacy coaches in this study used to work with teachers is providing time for teachers to collaborate with each other while they served as a facilitator. This affirms research done by West and Cameron (2013); Allen (2006); Hasbrouck and Denton (2005). During collaboration between the literacy coaches and teachers, they would use their time together to revise curriculum and review student work. They involved teachers in conversations with them about how to implement curriculum in their classrooms. This helped everyone to reflect on how the literacy coaches could better support teachers in more consistent implementation of the curriculum (Wadpole & Blamey 2008; Toll, 2005)
The literacy coaches used norms of behavior rather than agendas to drive their interactions between teachers. I found that the literacy coaches in this study do not use agendas because they believe agendas prevent the conversation from flowing and have the potential to stifle learning. They established structures and systems that allowed for productive and meaningful collaboration and feedback. Through their facilitation and collaboration teachers and coaches learned, improved practice, solved problems, developed action plans, next steps and made decisions about curriculum (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013).

I learned the literacy coaches and teachers had a shared vision for students and improving the current curriculum (Bean 2009; Allen, 2006). According to Senge (2006) one principle vital to any learning organization is shared vision. In this study, the literacy coaches and teachers desired to improve their current units of study. They worked as a team to add quality literature, quality tasks, and quality instruction to their current units of study. These decisions were made by the teachers and literacy coaches during their weekly meetings. The coaches in this study perceived teachers as peers not as insubordinates they were coaching. This perception of teachers made their collaboration effective. They would look at student work together to figure out what they could learn about their instruction and then decide what revisions needed to be made to the curriculum. That connects to research conducted by Hunt (2003) who found that collaboration should include figuring out what has worked and what hasn’t. They would look at the current curriculum with a critical eye and every teacher provided insight that required a change to raise the quality of the units.
Within organizations, team learning has three critical dimensions: a need to think insightfully about complex issues and a need for innovative and coordinated action (Senge, 2000). The teachers and literacy coaches worked collaboratively as a team to achieve the desired goal of developing a rigorous and standards based curriculum. Team learning is the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results the team desires (Senge, 2006).

Shared vision coupled with team learning allowed the literacy coaches and teachers with different points of view to interact more effectively in discussing the curriculum. The vision was to improve the current curriculum. The dialogue and discussion that took place between teachers and literacy coaches put students at the center of the work. Dialogue according to Senge (2006) is to gain insight that cannot be achieved by one individual. It is important to address the importance of discourse-in-use and its power to shift paradigms, improve teaching practices and instruction, build trusting relationships in the learning community and raise the level of student achievement (Toll 2005; Hall & Simeral, 2008). Language enabled the literacy coaches to share meanings with others and to participate in cultural learning. Cazden (2001) argues that discourse with others plays a critical role in learning. Likewise Brunner (1986) argued that “language not only transmits, it creates or constitutes knowledge (p.132).”

Through authentic discourse the teachers and literacy coaches were able to explore and extend each other’s ideas and ultimately grow in their knowledge, understanding, and thinking. The literacy coaches explained that this type of discourse didn’t just happen overnight. I learned from interviews with the literacy coaches it took years to function in this way. The teachers and literacy coaches needed to engage in
discourse to change thinking. They recognized the ways adult learn best (Blaschke, 2012; Finn 2011; Bean, 2009; Harris 2003). The practice of team learning involves mastering the practices of dialogue and discussion, the two distinct ways that teams converse (Senge, 2006). In my observation of several hours of collaboration between the teachers and literacy coaches, each member was allowed to speak about the curriculum and materials with freedom and creativity. There was active and deep listening to one another and no one had their own agenda (West & Cameron, 2013). The coaches in this study appreciated the dialogue they could have with teachers, other literacy coaches and their director. Both coaches, while they brought different perspectives, benefited from the different viewpoints at the table. Learning teams who enter into dialogue regularly develop a deep trust that cannot help but transfer to authentic discussions (Senge, 2006). The literacy coaches and teachers developed a deep understanding of one another’s point of view.

The literacy coaches also did other things for teachers outside of curriculum development, data analysis, coaching and modeling. The coaches in this study assisted teachers with putting up bulletin boards, setting up classroom libraries, making copies, and working with students. This allowed coaches to build and foster trusting relationships with teachers which contributed to their effective collaboration. Building relationships and trust is one strategy the coaches utilized to work with teachers by promoting inclusion for all teachers. What I found in my study affirms that effective coaches are able to build and maintain trusting relationships (Hall and Simeral 2008; Toll 2005). Without trust, the coaches felt they would not be as productive in helping teachers
improve classroom instruction. Both coaches treated teachers as peers by listening to teachers and considering their perspective.

**Building Capacity.** The second theme that emerged from this study is building capacity. The literacy coaches’ capacity to engage in the work with teachers came from reading professional literature, participating in professional organizations, working with other coaches, and providing professional development. This strengthens research conducted by Bean (2009) that states effective literacy coaches see themselves as learners. The professional literature they would read was influenced by multiple factors. Sometime they would read a book or article written by a presenter they heard speak at training, or a recommendation from a peer or teacher, or sometimes they would read about an area in which are trying to build their capacity. For example, both coaches are building their capacity to analyze student work so they have immersed themselves in reading literature about analyzing student data. All literacy coaches in the district are expected to analyze student data with teachers. The coaches in this study came to realize that they faltered in this area and wanted to grow in their capacity to analyze data well (Wadpole & Blamey; 2008). In addition to reading professional literature to build their capacity, they also have active roles in the organizations where they are members. They provide professional development for those organizations (Casey, 2006) and help to secure other speakers and presenters. Another way the literacy coaches build their capacity is through their work with other literacy coaches who have strong content knowledge and are well versed in providing quality instruction and curriculum design. They also found that when modeling lessons for teachers they grew in their capacity not only to demonstrate quality instruction but in their understanding about the content.
Of all the ways the literacy coaches build their capacity they found working with teachers to be the most rewarding and gratifying.

Teachers recognized the literacy coaches for their capacity and expertise. Teachers respect the literacy coaches in this study for what they know and for what they can do. Teachers rely on them to help them to improve their own practice and yield achievement for students at the highest level. In considering the characteristics of the role of a coach, Sweeny (2007) contends that a prerequisite for school-based coaches is a deep understanding of the research around high-quality instruction. They are informal leaders in their schools and, in the end, “are measured by how well they have influenced both teacher and student learning (p. 39).”

One of the things the literacy coaches did was to broker expertise by sharing with teachers what they have learned from an observation or co teaching. The literacy coaches would appeal to authority by making reference to the work of researchers in the field. The literacy coaches were also seen as servant leaders who act as facilitators and put the needs of teachers and students at the center of their work (Hall & Simeral, 2008). This was evident in many interactions with teachers during curriculum development.

**Support System.** The third theme that emerged from this study is support system. The literacy coaches created a supportive network. Coaches received support from their literacy director and peers. This support helped them to do their best work for teachers and students. The study found that literacy coaches depend on cohorts to discuss not only the implementation of professional development for teachers but their underlying beliefs and understandings about how the needs of students and teachers relates to the professional development design (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Bean 2009; Hasbrouch &
Denton, 2005). Through weekly meetings with peers, the literacy coaches were provided time to discuss frustrations, obstacles, and successes faced during their work with teachers and students. These weekly meetings with peers gave the literacy coaches a safe place to engage in reflective practice and attend to their own growth and development. According to Drago-Severson (2009), examining thought and action is one of the most important sources to improve practice.

Implications

There are three potential areas of implication of this study. This study offers implications for literacy coaches, districts and the field of coaching.

First, this study offers new literacy coaches insight into the dimensions of the work of successful literacy coaches. The data illustrates what two successful literacy coaches do, the philosophies and types of practices they engage in with teachers and peers and how they continue to grow and build their capacity. This is important for new literacy coaches because literacy coaching is a relatively new position in schools and literature that provides concrete examples of what literacy coaches do is in short supply.

Second, this research offers the participating school district as well as other districts a basic foundation for supporting literacy coaches in their work with schools and teachers and providing a system and structure for powerful collaboration between teachers and coaches and coaches with other coaches. The data gathered during this study could help guide district- and school-level administrators in their work with coaches in their schools. It also serves as a lesson for principals and district leaders to ensure that coaches and teachers are provided the necessary time to work with each other. Principals play a key role in the effectiveness of the literacy coach. Sometimes the support of the
principal has a direct impact in the success of the coaching program. An effective coach in a school could also serve as a principal’s critical friend or thought partner. It will assist principals and district-level staff in determining how to provide the best possible professional development needed for the coaches in their schools. There are factors at the school level and the district level that contribute to the coaches’ capacity. It is imperative to have a support structure in place for coaches because they, too, are in need of professional learning and growth.

Third, this study contributes to the knowledge base of the field of coaching by providing detailed, descriptive data on coaches and how they build their capacity through interactions with teachers and peers. Chapter two of this study presents a basis of the background, the theories, the challenges, capacity and the qualities that make literacy coaches successful in their craft.

My study makes three major advancements to the literature on literacy coaching. First, is my approach to looking at how coaches’ grow and development in their day to day work with teaches and peers. By observing how coaches use their interactions with teachers and peers for their own reflection and learning I was able to ascertain that coaches’ continue to learn and much of their capacity building happens on the job. They continue to learn while working as literacy coaches. For example, the literacy coaches in this study learned from observing teaches and collaborating with teachers and peers on curriculum, student work samples, or assessments to name a few. Second, the literacy coaches have systems and structures that allow for effective collaboration and equity. During their time with teachers and peers there is a culture in which every one’s voice matters and an expectation that everyone contributes to the learning. This level of
engagement will require a shared vision and a commitment to team learning. Coaches and teachers will have to create the structures for this effective collaboration. Third, coaches take responsibility for building their capacity by making decisions about their professional development that is provided by either the district or school leadership. When the coaches receive professional development provided by their district, they decide to come back and share their new learning with teachers and peers. Sometimes they purchase the texts the presenter makes reference to in order to further build their capacity. When coaches are supported by leadership and provided the professional development they need, they will began to grow in their understanding of the work.

**Recommendations**

I have experiences in another school district that provided me with a comparative framework. This district did many things well. My recommendations draw on what this district did well as well on the broader research that supports their practices. Based on the findings in this study, here are my recommendations for literacy coaches, principals, district administrators, school systems, professional development providers and university programs to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of any literacy coach.

**Literacy Coaches.** My recommendation for literacy coaches is to possess the essential aspiration for professional growth in regard to the most effective ways to support teachers and develop capacity. Literacy coaches are encouraged to research their own practice and foster reflection on their practice. Become equipped to respond to the needs of teachers successfully in a variety of settings and contexts. Create a structure for working with teachers one on one and in small groups. There are a number of things that have to be considered: (1) achieving a common goal, (2) cultural and reasoning
practices, and (3) structure and process of interactions (Senge, 2006). Without these structures, time may not be utilized well. One of the cultural practices of literacy coaching needs to be a structure that allows for collaboration that matters. Key to professional growth are structures for collaboration that break down isolation and empower teachers with professional task and a platform for thinking through standards and practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). One of the recurrent interactions for teacher teams in the school is looking at student work. According to Roberts & Pruitt (2003) it is not enough for teachers and literacy coaches to get together and just look at students’ work. A better structure is needed that allows for meaningful dialogue and discourse for analyzing student work. Structures and process of interactions need to be put in place to achieve common goals and understanding, problem solve, make decisions and make the most out of the time that is allowed. Here are some alternative professional development opportunities recommended by Allington & Cunningham (2007) as some first steps for building capacity: (a) involvement in professional organizations that will extend beyond classroom practices and broaden perspectives on teaching and learning (b) establish professional book clubs to enhance expertise, (c) create data gathering groups, and (e) work with principals and district leaders to develop an action plan for professional development that changes the instructional practices such as involving teachers in planning and gathering data, identifying teachers who want to improve, and allotting time for professional development.

**Principals.** My recommendation for principals is to provide literacy coaches with ongoing professional development and consistently provide support to coaches that will foster productive and effective collaboration with teachers and peers. Second, train
literacy coaches to provide consistent support to teachers based on best practices in every classroom. Third, allow literacy coaches opportunities to grow professionally. Fourth, provide strong mentor/coach relationships. A key feature in deep training + coaching capacity building model as explained by (Cooter, 2004) is distributed learning over time. It supports the notion that new learning developed over time coupled with extensive practice under the guidance of a more knowledgeable coach is the most effective combination (Cooter, 2004). Carpenter argues there is a need for more experienced, skilled and empathetic professionals trained to deliver high quality instruction that ultimately leads to student achievement and success. Capacity building efforts will have to start with coaching training over time to improve how coaches work with teachers and peers. In order to have successful schools that offer a curriculum that gives every student an opportunity to achieve academic success will require literacy coaches to become agents for change; change that will only come when coaches make adjustments in their practices; however coaches need support in their efforts to provide the support teachers need to deliver effective literacy instruction. Provide collaborative models for professional development which can take place in many forms. Observation of colleagues, coaching, grade level teams, professional learning communities, critical friends groups and study groups are all forms of the collaborative model. Meaningful professional development is characterized as an ongoing collaborative effort among faculty and staff, with emphasis on student needs and learning, student work, data, instructional practices and assessment techniques (Caskey & Carpenter, 2012; Patrick & Reinhartz, 1999; Good, Miller & Gassenheimer, 2004). According to Good, Miller & Gassenheimer (2004) collective learning by an entire faculty that promotes change
among school community is essential and argues that it can be achieved by allowing members of a faculty the opportunity to share, interact, and collaborate with each other. While grade level teams are a valuable collaborative model it is important to recognize the influence of the literacy coaching model on teacher professional development. The literacy coach plays a central role in improving literacy teaching and learning (Raphael, Weber, Goldman, Sullivan & George, 2009). The literacy coach is embedded within the school community and able to provide on-site, continuous support which has the potential to develop individual professional knowledge base (Casey, 2006; Raphael et al). In the literacy coach model, there is consistent feedback and support, and opportunities for reflection and collaboration between the teacher and the literacy coach. The literacy coaching collaborative model cannot mandate teachers to meet; otherwise it doesn’t work well. Allington & Cunningham (2007) argue that mandating collaboration does not work well because collaboration is a complex activity. It is complex because team learning requires thinking insightfully about complex issues, acting in ways that allow teachers to complement each other and considering the role of team members on other team members (Senge, 2006). If teachers and literacy coaches are forced to take part in professional development that is not meaningful or relevant to their needs it is ineffective professional development.

**District Leadership.** I recommend district leadership to provide principals with clear-cut job descriptions as well as professional development on how to utilize and collaborate with the coaches in their building. School administrators play a pivotal role in enabling coaches to work effectively in their schools. As such, leaders should continue to provide education and training for administrators not only on the proper role of the coach,
but also on literacy more broadly, to build a common understanding about coaching as well as literacy goals, basic principles and best practices. Without the principal’s training and support, coaches are unable to demonstrate expertise in their interactions with teachers and principals. Likewise, principals are unable to properly support their coaches. As district leaders develop clear guidelines for building coaching capacity they will need to understand in order for change of this magnitude to come to fruition will require a change in the mindset of all involved in this change process. District administrators are encouraged to motivate everyone involved in the change process.

**School Systems.** My recommendation for school systems is to implement an aggressive coaching program that will include a sufficient number of clock hours of deep coaching per year, every year, with a focus on pillars for reading success, annual professional development opportunities focused on each coach’s specific needs and peer coaching to ensure implementation of best practices and provide coaches with materials to support their efforts (Cooter, 2004). When schools or districts lack a solid infrastructure for their coaching program, they depend too heavily on chance for results. A focus of change has to be to introduce an innovation that produces something better (Baskin, 2004). The first step in the change process is to develop a sense of a shared purpose and vision for the change that is desired (Babiera & Preskill, 2010; Senge, 1990; Zimmy, 2004). Another next step is for school systems to gather all stakeholders to discuss successes and failures and determine the reason for those successes and failures. This key component of the change process will allow for reflection on what worked, what didn’t work and why it worked as well as making decisions about next steps.
Professional Development Providers. My recommendation for professional development providers is to provide effective professional development models in order to increase the possibility of having impact on teachers’ behaviors and student achievement (Good, Miller & Gassenheimer, 2004). Kazempour (2009) recommends that professional development programs be directed more by the participating educators and based on the educators’ long-term reflections of their own conceptions and practices. Provide training in research based practices, facilitating adult learning, reflection, data analysis, sound instruction, high expectations, deepening teachers’ conceptual knowledge and changing classroom teaching. When literacy coaches use best practice strategies coupled with knowledge and values, teachers will be successful in school.

University Programs. My recommendation for university programs is to design courses that adequately prepare literacy coaches to work with district leaders, principals, and teachers. My theory for the failure some literacy coaches experience is lack of subsequent professional development provided after they leave college and the initial training of literacy coaches in colleges of education that do not provide sufficient depth to ensure the development of literacy coaches expertise or capacity in facilitating adult learning. There is a requirement for high quality training for literacy coaches in order for them to work effectively in their current roles.

Limitations

This study relied heavily on interviews and observation of coaches’ practice. During my four months of observations, I only observed the literacy coaches interact with teachers with the same focus each time, improving the existing curriculum or looking at student work. I did not have the opportunity to observe coaches providing or receiving
professional development nor did I observe coaches interact with other coaches. All of the data about coaches’ collaboration with coaches is based on my interviews with the coaches in this study.

I also found the coaches were reluctant to discuss their work with principals in the school in detail. Another limitation was the absence of the principal’s perspective. The principals were not interviewed during this study; nor did I observe the literacy coaches interact with the principal or other coaches. This leaves unanswered questions about how principals support literacy coaches in their efforts and the role they play in building coaching capacity.

**Areas for Further Study**

Here I present recommendations for further research. These recommendations stem from the discussions brought forth from the focus group, one-on-one interviews and observation of literacy coaches’ day to day practices, research and my own professional experience.

Building off this study, future research might replicate the study on a larger scale. For researchers looking to build on the findings of this study, may consider using another age group, a different community, a larger school district, or an urban school district. Many additional questions surfaced for me during this study that might provide the focus of future research: Can literacy coaches have the same level of success with teachers during collaboration with an existing curriculum that has been purchased or does this level of success happen only with curriculum written by coaches and teachers? How can a professional learning community be utilized to discover if all literacy coaches or more literacy coaches foster productive collaboration and ensure there is equity and access for
teachers? How do behaviors of literacy coaches relate to how well teachers receive coaching?

Lastly, to further this study, it would be beneficial to explore if the professional development process and approach employed by literacy coaches in this study has a positive impact on teacher professional development and student achievement. Studies could also be conducted to investigate the role literacy coaches’ attitude play on their professional development, growth and student achievement as well as the effects of professional development literacy coaches provide on teachers’ knowledge, practice and efficacy.

**Final Thoughts**

In concluding my analysis of two middle school literacy coaches, I recognize that this research is a small example of a larger population. As such, I know my findings are not inclusive of all middle school literacy coaches in all school districts. However, this study will inform literacy coaches, principals and district administrators on how literacy coaches can work more collaboratively and effectively with teacher teams and peers. Moreover, this study provides insight into the ways two middle school literacy coaches continue to build their capacity. The research highlights the day to day actions and interactions of two successful literacy coaches and provides concrete examples of what they do to continue to learn and development themselves.

I learned some important lessons during this study as a researcher and as a literacy coach. As a researcher, I appreciate the important role of the literacy coach. Drawing on adult learning theory, I understand the importance of literacy coaches knowing how to support adult learners. I brought assumptions into my original research questions
outlined in chapter one from my own setting and experience that weren’t accurate for the setting I entered as a researcher. First, I implied a top down notion of building capacity, but discovered a more collaborative one. Second, I assumed the literacy coaches weren’t getting the support they needed when they actually received a significant amount of support from the District literacy director, their principals, their peers and teachers. I came to understand that coaches work under different sets of constraints and possibilities.

I appreciate the commitment of the literacy coaches in this study to teachers, peers, students and life-long learning. I saw this in the day to day practices of the literacy coaches in this study. They were committed to their own growth and development, the growth and development of the teachers they worked with and more importantly, the growth and development of all students. This is why they were so committed to improving the district’s curriculum and why they stayed abreast of current research in literacy.

As a former middle school literacy coach, I share some of the literacy coaches’ successes, challenges and concerns. This study has given me insight into how to build trust with teachers, collaborate more effectively and build capacity to engage in the work with teachers. In my experience analyzing data with teachers the focus of the conversation was always on students’ deficits. In the four months I observed the literacy coaches in my study, I learned the more meaningful conversation to have with teachers about student work should be about the answers to this question: What does this student work tell me about my teaching?

I believe the success of these literacy coaches is attainable for other coaches if they have a desire for professional growth, capacity and commitment. According to
Senge (2006) everyone must clarify what really matters and be committed to life-long learning, and a cycle of continuous inquiry.
References


Hunt, C.S. & Handsfield, L.J. (2013). The emotional landscapes of literacy coaching:


teaching Frameworks can help schools empower teachers, not just judge them.


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Appendices

Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol

I will ask the two participating literacy coaches to answer questions in a focus group format, in order to learn more about how they work together and learn from each other. The format will be semi-structured; the questions below will serve as a guide, but other questions may arise from these questions.

Focus Group Interview Questions for Coaches in May

1. How has your work with teachers helped to build your capacity?
2. How has your work with each other helped to build your capacity?
3. Tell me about your protocol for collaboration with each other.
4. What are some major issues you face as literacy coaches?
5. How do you facilitate teacher learning?
6. How do you facilitate learning together as a group?
7. How do you determine the goals for teachers and content of your coaching sessions?
8. Can you tell me about occasions when you have worked with groups to promote conversations about instruction?
9. Can you think of anything I should have asked you that I didn’t that will help me understand the work you do?
Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Literacy Coaches

Note: This semi-structured interview is to be done at the beginning of the study, and questions are designed to provide a baseline understanding of the literacy coaches’ job responsibilities and professional preparation. The questions, below, are designed as a guide, but additional questions may come up during the interview.

Individual Interview Questions for Literacy Coaches in February

1. Can you tell me about your work?
2. What challenges do you face on a global scale (i.e., national; state; district; network; school, colleagues)
3. How do you manage your responsibilities?
4. Who or what influences your work with teachers the most?
5. Tell me about the topics of the professional development that you facilitate for the staff at your school? How do you structure your PD? What is it based upon?
6. Can you tell me what it has been like to work with other literacy coaches?
7. What professional development do you seek out for yourself to build your capacity? What influences those decisions?
8. Can you tell me about any changes you have made to your practice as a result of your professional growth?
9. What support do you get for learning how to facilitate change?
10. Can you think of anything you want me to know about your professional growth that I didn’t ask or anything that has not surfaced from our conversation?
Appendix C

Post Research Interview Protocol

Following are questions that will be used when the coaches are interviewed at the end of the study. This interview will also be semi-structured, and additional questions may arise based on responses to the questions below.

1. How have you grown professionally since the beginning of this research?
2. Where are areas where you can still stretch yourself? What is your plan to satisfy that area of growth?
3. Which day to day practices allowed you to grow the most? Explain
Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Literacy Director

This interview is semi-structured. The questions below will guide the discussion, but based on the answer to these questions, additional questions may arise.

Interview Questions for the Literacy Director in May

1. What are the district’s expectations for middle school literacy coaches?
2. How are the district’s expectations aligned to the work literacy coaches actually do?
3. How do you support the professional development of middle school literacy coaches?
4. Can you give me any examples or share documents such as minutes from meetings or schedules that would help me to better understand the work you do with coaches or the work they do with each other?
5. Can you tell me what it has been like to work with the coaches?
6. Do you think the coaches have been influential in helping teachers to make changes?
7. How would you characterize their way of promoting change?
8. In your opinion, how do the coaches go about creating opportunities to work with and learn from each other?
Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Principals
This interview is semi-structured. The questions below will guide the discussion, but based on the answer to these questions, additional questions may arise.

Interview Questions for Principals in May

1. In what capacity does the literacy coach serve in your building?
2. What are some of your expectations for the literacy coach’s professional growth?
3. Do you think that the coach has been influential in helping your staff improve literacy instruction?
4. Can you give me examples of how the coach changed literacy instruction?
5. Has the coach been influential in orchestrating opportunities for faculty members to learn from or with another, to have productive conversations about instruction, or to collaborate in beneficial ways?
6. How would you describe your work with the literacy coach?
7. How do you support the professional development of the literacy coach?
8. What kinds of support should principals provide to literacy coaches (e.g., time, freedom from unrelated duties, resources)?
## Appendix F
### Sample Unit of Study

#### Workshop Launch – Establishing a Community of Readers and Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Launch Duration</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Establishing Community &amp; Developing Routines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>15 days</td>
<td>- MAP - reading&lt;br&gt;- On-Demand – reading &amp; writing&lt;br&gt;- Interest inventories/surveys&lt;br&gt;- Reading levels/stamina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>15 days</td>
<td>- MAP - reading&lt;br&gt;- On-Demand – reading &amp; writing&lt;br&gt;- Interest inventories/surveys&lt;br&gt;- Reading levels/stamina</td>
<td>Establishing Community &amp; Developing Routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>15 days</td>
<td>- MAP - reading&lt;br&gt;- On-Demand – reading &amp; writing&lt;br&gt;- Interest inventories/surveys&lt;br&gt;- Reading levels/stamina</td>
<td>Establishing Community &amp; Developing Routines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Units of Study

**Order to be determined by Site-based Grade Level Teams**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Units Duration</th>
<th>Genre: Short Stories with Drama** component</th>
<th>Reading Product: Literary Analysis*</th>
<th>Writing Product: Narrative (30 instructional days)</th>
<th>Reading Literature: RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7</th>
<th>Writing: W 6.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>30 days each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Literature: RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7</td>
<td>Writing: W 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>30 days each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Literature: RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7</td>
<td>Writing: W 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>30 days each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Literature: RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7</td>
<td>Writing: W 7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Suggested Unit – Traditional Stories with Modern Fiction**

- Reading Literature: Focus: RL 8.6, 8.7, 8.9
- Reinforce: RL 8.1 – 8.3
- Writing: W 8.3, 8.9
- Language: L 8.5
| **Genre:** Realistic Fiction  
| **Non-fiction research**  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Informational/Explanatory (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Disability Awareness or Survival**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 6.6, 6.9  
| Reinforce: RL 6.1 – 6.3  
| **Informational Reading:** RI 6.5  
| **Writing:**  
| W 6.2, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9  
| **Genre:** Fiction  
| **Non-fiction research**  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Informational/Explanatory (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Dystopian novels**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 7.6  
| Reinforce: RL 7.1 – 7.3  
| **Informational Reading:** RI 7.5  
| **Writing:**  
| W 7.2, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9  
| **Genre:** Fiction  
| **Non-fiction research**  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Informational/Explanatory (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Disability Awareness or Survival**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 8.1, 8.2, 8.3  
| **Writing:**  
| W 8.2, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9  
| **Genre:** Poetry and Fiction  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Poetry (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Novels in Verse**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 6.4, 6.5  
| Reinforce: RL 6.1 – 6.2  
| Language: 6.5  
| **Genre:** Poetry and Fiction  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Poetry (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – The Outsiders**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 7.4, 7.5  
| Reinforce: RL 7.1 – 7.2  
| Language: 7.5  
| **Genre:** Poetry and Fiction  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Poetry (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Bronx Masquerade**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 8.1 – 8.2  
| **Language:** 7.5  
| **Genre:** Argument with Research  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Argument (30 instructional days)  
| **Suggested Unit – Bronx Masquerade**  
| **Reading Literature:**  
| Focus: RL 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9  
| **Language:** 8.5  
| **Genre:** Argument with Research  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Argument (30 instructional days)  
| **Reading Informational:** RI 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9  
| **Genre:** Argument with Research  
| **Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*  
| **Writing Product:** Argument (30 instructional days)  
| **Reading Informational:** RI 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 |
| Reading Informational: RI 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 6.4, 6.5, 6.8, 6.9  | Reading Informational: RI 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.8, 7.9  | 8.4, 8.5, 8.8, 8.9  |
| Writing: W 6.1, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9  | Writing: W 7.1, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9  | Writing: W 8.1 8.7, 8.8, 8.9  |

**Genre:** Differentiated Novel Unit – related to cultural focus of social studies

**Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*

**Writing Product:** Informational Explanatory (30 instructional days)

Reading Literature: Reinforce: RL 6.1 – 6.3
Reading Informational: RI 6.4, 6.7, 6.9
Writing: W 6.2, 6.9

Reading Literature: Focus: RL 7.9
Reinforce: RL 7.1 – 7.3
Reading Informational: RI 7.7, 7.9
Writing: W 7.2, 7.9

**Genre:** Differentiated Novel Unit – related to cultural focus of social studies

**Reading Product:** Literary Analysis*

**Writing Product:** Informational Explanatory (30 instructional days)

Reading Literature: Reinforce: RL 8.1 – 8.3
Reading Informational: RI 8.7, 8.9
Writing: W 8.2, 8.9
**Appendix G**

**Differentiated Lesson Plan Template**

**Teacher:** ____________  **School:** ____________________________

**Grade/Subject:** ______________  **Topic/Concept:** ______________

**Focus for the month:** ______________ (specified by your principal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS: (<em>necessary for every lesson, every day</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What big ideas and/or standards are being addressed in this lesson?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING(S)</th>
<th>ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • What 1-2 insights or principles does this lesson target? What inferences should students make?  
  • These should be **complete sentences** and are “possible answers” to the Essential Questions. | • What recurring, thought-provoking question(s)/inquiry(ies) frame the lesson?  
  • These should be aligned with the Understandings. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOW(LEDGE)</th>
<th>SKILLS (DO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • What facts, vocabulary/terms, concepts, how-to’s, and “memorize-able” information should students be able to recall? | • What discrete skills and processes will students learn and use?  
  • List only skills that students will attain, practice, or extend in this lesson—not any and all lesson activities.  
  • Skills start with a **verb** (present or gerund, e.g., analyze/analyzing) |

**ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE:** How will you know that students are making progress towards the lesson goal?  
(*necessary for every lesson, every day*)
### Formative
- Entrance/Exit card prompts
- Survey
- Inventory
- Observation notes
- Conferencing notes
- Homework
- Journal
- Notebook check
- Lab
- Self-assessment
- Quiz/Test
- Diagnostic assessment
- Graphic Organizer
- Other: ____________________

### Summative performance task
- How will students demonstrate their attainment of the goals?
Appendix H

**Results-Based Coaching Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s Name:</th>
<th>Coach’s Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Grade:</td>
<td>Unit of Study:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Cycle Focus:</td>
<td>Dates of Coaching Cycle:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>______________ to ______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(beginning date)</td>
<td>(ending date)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the student-learning goal for this coaching cycle?  What data is this goal based on?

What instructional practices were determined by the coach and teacher to most likely produce the desired student learning goal?

What coaching practices were implemented during this coaching cycle? (check all that apply)

As a result of the coaching cycle, what instructional practices is the teacher now using on a consistent basis?

What is the evidence that students accomplished the desired learning goal?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Goal:</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post Assessment Data:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard:</td>
<td>Demonstration teaching with a prebrief, lesson, and debrief</td>
<td>____ % of students were able to do ______ as determined by the ______ assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline Data:</strong></td>
<td>____ Co-teaching with a prebrief lesson, and debrief</td>
<td>____ Collaborative planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ % of students were able to do ______ as determined by the ______ assessment.</td>
<td>____ Analysis of student work</td>
<td>_____ ____ assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students____</td>
<td>____ Teacher observation with a prebrief, lesson, and debrief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Study group to discuss professional texts that aligns to the student learning goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix I

Middle Eastern Media/ Texts

Foust Link to Blendspace:
https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/V0bi3MxpsSVvIA/world-religions-the-middle-east-and-tolerance

Fox Link to Blendspace:
https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/Pd-sHTaQhB6c9w/multicultural-unit

Mentor Texts:

Texts that teacher will read aloud, close read, and think aloud with students

Bottle in the Gaza Sea- Read aloud in SS
Parts of Israeli/ Palestinian Children Speak- Read aloud/Mentor texts in LLA
I am Malala- Parts as a mentor texts and as an extension for an extra-curricular book club group with Kefira
Various Newspaper Articles/Current Events

Novels:

Students will choose a novel based on “managed choice” (interest level with teacher influence). They will have small group discussion based on these novels. As a culminating activity, students will write an argument essay around a topic in their novel.

Tyrant’s Daughter, by JC Carleson- Iran/Iraq*
Tasting the Sky, by Ibtisam Barakat- Palestinian POV
Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood, by Marjane Satrapi- Iran*
Cat on the Wall, by Deborah Ellis- Palestinian/ Israeli - both perspectives
A Stone in my Hand, by Cathryn Clinton- Palestinian POV
Moon at Nine, by Deborah Ellis- Iran*

Breadwinner (book 1), by Deborah Ellis- Afghanistan- *
  ● Parvana’s Journey (book 2), by Deborah Ellis
  ● Mud City (book 3), by Deborah Ellis
  ● My Name is Parvana (book 4), by Deborah Ellis

I am Malala, How One Girl Stood up for Education and Changed the World, by Malala Yousafazi @ Patricia McCormick

*=all leads to where we are today

Poetry

19 Varieties of Gazelle, by Naomi Shihab Nye
**Media:** *Promises*, B.Z Goldberg

**Websites:**
A Bottle in the Gaza Sea-Valerie Zenatti:
Trailer to Movie:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL8p6FKCPzQ

**Deborah Ellis- Breadwinner:**
Deborah Ellis explain the backstory of Breadwinner and reads an excerpt (3 min)
http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=2305
Deborah Ellis Personal website:
http://perseusbookspromos.com/books/deborahellis.com/?p=4

**Moon at Nine:**
Interview (text) with Deborah Ellis about Moon at Nine:
Deborah Ellis Personal Website:
http://perseusbookspromos.com/books/deborahellis.com/?p=4

**The Cat at the Wall:**
Deborah Ellis Personal Website:
http://perseusbookspromos.com/books/deborahellis.com/?p=4

Picture and Diagram of Temple Mount and The Dome of the Rock:
https://docs.google.com/a/district65.net/document/d/1Gx6kp3c_xlujKUS4wMYtG4ql_Pv8lt9N_OGzkawxyL8/edit

Podcast:
NPR podcast/article- A Rail Line that Crosses Jerusalem’s Divide, but Can’t Unite it:
http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2015/03/16/392817444/a-rail-line-that-crosses-jerusalems-divide-but-cant-unite-it

**Kids of Kabul:**
Deborah Ellis-explains *Kids of Kabul* and reads excerpt:
http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=9516
Deborah Ellis NPR Interview:
http://www.npr.org/2012/08/20/159351584/what-the-future-holds-for-the-kids-of-kabul

**Persepolis- Majane Satrapi:**
Marjane Satrapi explains the backstory for Persepolis:
http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=4986
Pronunciation of Marjane Satrapi:
http://www.teachingbooks.net/pronounce.cgi?aid=3752
NPR Interview on Fresh Air with Majane Satrapi:

**Ibtisam Barakat- *Tasting the Sky***:
Pronunciation of Ibtisam Barakat:
http://www.teachingbooks.net/pronounce.cgi?aid=4307
Personal Website:
http://www.ibtisambarakat.com/

**JC Carleson- *Tyrant’s Daughter***:
Personal Website:
http://www.jccarleson.com/
Audio Excerpt from Tyrant’s Daughter narrated by JC Carleson:
http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=10300

**I Am Malala- Malala Yousafzai**:
Audio Book Excerpt (2:30):
http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=10392
Daily Show (7 min):
http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/u74nck/exclusive---malala-yousafzai-extended-interview-pt--1
PBS Video Clip (10 min):
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/malala-now-i-am-living-a-second-life/
CNN (54 min):
http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2013/10/21/full-interview-malala-yousafzai/

**Other Resources Israeli/Palestinian Conflict**:
Smithsonian Temple Mount Article:
http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-is-beneath-the-temple-mount-920764/?no-ist

John Green explains conflict in Israel and Palestine (13 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wo2TL1Mhiw

Israeli Palestinian Conflict Explained- Mini Documentary by The Daily Conversation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r1EmEni2Rw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjG822Avna8
Appendix J

Mini Lessons

**Essential Questions:**
Do Religions connect people or divide people?
How do you know who is right in war?
What will it take to achieve peace in the Middle East?
Why is important to understand ALL sides of the argument?

**Topics:**
Acceptance, co-existence, stereotypes, feminism, awareness, education (lack of), awareness, corruption, conspiracy-theories, bias, misinformation, propaganda

**End product:** Argument Essay that defends a claim related to their topic from the book they are reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature/Language Arts</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible Lessons</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible Lessons:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monday April 13th - Introduce book trailers for book groups &amp; students will choose books</td>
<td>• <strong>Before Break- World Religion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tuesday April 14th- Join book groups, create calendars, and watch interviews by authors/podcasts that go with books</td>
<td>• THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Research Abrahamic Faiths. Each group researches one faith, takes notes, and decides 10 most important facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Introduce Anthropological Field Notebooks interactive maps (Middle East &amp; Country)</td>
<td>3. Jigsaw - members of groups share info and take notes on all religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wednesday 15th - Think about setting: time, place, &amp; intro to conflict</td>
<td>4. All students complete a religion matrix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interactive map</td>
<td>5. From matrix, all student create a spread on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thursday 16th- Read from Kids of Kabul/ Three Wishes- Character development- Can you see any similarities in your character? What is your character struggling with? How does he/she deal with it? Is there bias?</td>
<td>6. the world religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Review of Hinduism and Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Friday 17th- Students watch videos pertaining to their conflict- What is the conflict? How is the author depicting the conflict so far your book?</td>
<td>• Review map of Middle East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monday 20th- Reading, briefly meet in groups, continue to discuss conflict, &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 21st</td>
<td>Reading MAP Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 22nd</td>
<td>Introduce Blendspace, students explore, begin researching their conflict. Students create guiding questions (open-ended, thick questions) to go with the conflict based off of our essential questions: Do religions divide people or connect people? What will it take to achieve peace in the Middle East? “Faranoz, 14” How has the Taliban influenced peace within Afghanistan? How has the Taliban’s restrictions of education affected peace in the Middle East?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 23rd</td>
<td>“Mustala, 13” SILENT DISCUSSION: Questions for Silent Discussion: The purpose of this activity is not necessarily to reflect on the article, but provide some guided practice for creating research questions for their own book group books Describe the main conflict in this article? How does “Mustala” compare to your book group book? After reading “Mustala 13”, what do you want to learn more about? What questions do you have after reading this article? ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 24th</td>
<td>Create research questions/ introduce blendspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 27th</td>
<td>Research &amp; add articles to Blendspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13th/14th</td>
<td>Go over vocabulary sheet and terrorist groups (building background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday/Thursday: April 15/16</td>
<td>History of each conflict from Passport Series Middle East (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday/Thursday April 29-30</td>
<td>Middle East Research on Google drive and Claim-Evidence practice (Governments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 27th</td>
<td>Geography lessons focusing on the Middle East</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **Tuesday 28th** - Continue to research and begin to document research - choose a graphic organizer
- **Wednesday 29th** - Discussion of book group books and begin conflict maps
- **Thursday 30th** - Continue conflict maps
- **Friday May 1st** - Research

- **May 4th** - Research (exit slip - research graphic organizer)
- **May 5th** - Research (exit slip - research graphic organizer)
- **May 6th** - ½ day
- **May 7th** - Research (exit slip - research graphic organizer)
- **May 8th** - Write Claim

- **May 11th** - Plot diagrams
- **May 12th** - Explosion of themes & Gallery Walk

- **May 13th/14th** - PARCC
- **May 15th** - Explosion of themes/begin writing

- **May 18th** - They Say/I Say (sentence stems)
- For the week - work on reasoning - mid teaching point - model with actual students reasoning

- **Vocab from social studies sheets** - highlight/make a list of words related to your argument topic to possibly use in your paper

- **region**
- Current Events: lessons, articles, and videos of current happenings in the Middle East
- Working with LA to help students create strong claims, evidence and reasoning.
- Researching info as they get into writing their argument essays.
Appendix K

Coaching Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Name:</th>
<th>Coach’s Name: Lori Youngblood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Grade: XXXXX 6th grade</td>
<td>Units of Study: Short Stories through Novels in Verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Cycle Focus: Literary Analysis Essay – using reasoning to support evidence</td>
<td>Dates of Coaching Cycle: 9/18/14 – 3/30/15 – school year focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the student learning goal for this coaching cycle? What data is this goal based on?

What instructional practices were determined by the coach and teacher to most likely produce the desired student-learning goal?

What coaching practices were implemented during this coaching cycle? (check all that apply)

As a result of the coaching cycle, what instructional practices is the teacher now using on a consistent basis?

What is the evidence that students accomplished the desired learning goal?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student Learning Goal:</strong></th>
<th>Meet or exceed standards when writing a fiction literary analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard:</strong> RL 6.1-6.3 – evidence, reasoning, plot, theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline Data: On the October Literary Analysis Essay:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Students:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Targeted mini-lessons for:</strong></th>
<th>Tracking big ideas throughout text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“writing long” to increase reasoning (Calkins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“categorizing” evidence for reasoning (Calkins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Exploding” definitions of big ideas, prompting questions, etc (Cummins) to increase vocabulary for reasoning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using “Say, Mean, Matter” (Gallagher) to extend reasoning in writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **X Co-Teaching with a pre-brief, lesson and debrief** |
| **X Collaborative Planning** |
| **X Analysis of student work** |
| **Teacher Observation with a pre-brief, lesson and debrief** |
| **Critical Friends Group that aligns to the student learning goal** |
| **X Other: Reading chapters from:** |
| *Lucy Calkins – Writing series: The Literary Essay: Analyzing Craft and Theme* |
| *Close Reading of Informational Texts, by Sunday Cummins* |
| *Deeper Reading, by Kelly Gallagher* |

The team agreed on four instructional strategies for increasing reasoning:

- Requiring multiple pieces of textual evidence
- Tracking big ideas with “stop & jot” “buckets” and “charting/collating” – as students read
- Say, Mean Matter – as thinking prompts
- “Exploding a word” – not just As a one-time experience, but as a growing document for key ideas

| **Post Assessment Data: April Literary Analysis Essay:** |
| **Number of Students:** |
Appendix L

LLA Units of Study - Discussion & Reflection
Agenda - May 6, 2015
1:00-3:35pm

Curriculum Mapping - Whole Group Explanation - Chute Library
- Strategic Plan -
  - Where we are in the process
    - Our Roadmap –
    - Pace = 30 instructional day units (and 15 day launch)
    - Standards taught = CCSS
    - Order of Units
- Plan for On-Demand
  - Only Once - in November
  - Argument during 1st trimester
  - Beginning of year would be:
    - Launch = 15 days (no fall on-demand)
    - Argument = 1st full unit after launch (30 instructional days)
    - On-Demand at a standardized time in November – TBD
- Calendar for Units- Google Docs calendar

Curriculum Mapping - Grade Level Groups
- Each grade level will:
  - Discuss current order of units at your buildings
  - Decide how to order the units based on grade-level consensus
  - Create a grade-level google calendar
- Each grade-level will share out to whole group
  - Turn in the chosen order for the units of study to Demetra, Lori, or Kris
    - Number the units on the road map in the order in which your grade level decides

Curriculum Reflection - Grade-level Teams
- Unit Overviews - Using a UBD design
  - Example - Holocaust Memoir Unit
- Chute 8th grade share out - Organizing Google Docs
  - Example - Holocaust Memoir Unit
- Team Time
  - Reflect on Units
    - Organize Google Docs
- My Learning Plan
LLA Units of Study: Discussion & Reflection

May 6, 2015
Where we are in the Process

- Our Roadmap
  - Pace
    - 30 instructional day units
  - Common Core Standards aligned
  - Common thematic units of study
  - Common assessments
Non-Negotiables

- Units of Study
- Final Assessments for each unit
  - Literary Analysis - 1 per trimester as essay
    - Doesn’t have to go through the writing process
  - Writing Product
- 2 units which have book clubs/longer common texts
Plan for On-Demand Next Year

- **Continue with Argument:**
  - Only administered once in November

- **Beginning of the Year:**
  - Launch- 15 instructional days
  - Argument- 30 instructional days
Curriculum Mapping
Grade Level Groups

Determine order of units by grade level
- Create a grade-level google calendar

Come back as a group to share out
Curriculum Reflection: Grade-level Teams

- Unit Overviews - Using a UBD design
  - Example - Holocaust Memoir Unit
- Chute 8th grade share out - Organizing Google Docs
  - Example - Holocaust Memoir Unit
- Team Time
  - Reflect on Units
  - Organize Google Docs
Appendix N

Passage for Fluency Demonstration Lesson, Teacher’s Copy

What would your reaction be if this happened to you? Imagine that you are a man working in your cornfield. You hear rumbling sounds, like thunder. You look up, but the sky is clear. Suddenly, you feel vibrations under your feet. The next thing you know, a crack opens up in the ground right before you. It hisses and gives off awful smell-like rotten eggs. Then to your shock, the ground swells upward. A volcano is being born right before your eyes!

This sounds like fiction, but it actually happened to a man named Dionisio Pulido in 1943. He lived with his wife near the village of Paricutin, about 200 miles from Mexico City.

Mr. Pulido watched smoky dust rise from the entry of the crack. He and his family escaped to Paricutin. Within just 24 hours, material from the chamber’s interior moved upward and created a cone 164 feet high! For the next few days, the Earth delivered tons of material to the surface. A soup-like mixture of ash, rock, and fragments had begun to rain down on the village. But the volcano that formed in a cornfield was just getting started. Its power grew. Explosions that sounded like cannons spewed out tall columns of fiery matter.

A stream of lava began to make its way to Paricutin. Fortunately, it took four months to reach the village. This enabled the people to flee in time. They went to the larger village nearby, but in a few weeks found that they had to flee from there as well. In the next few months, all that was left of these villages were two church towers sticking out of the tons of lava that had buried the towns.

The Paricutin volcano was active for the next nine years. Then, almost as suddenly as it began, the eruption stopped. What was once Dionisio Pulido’s cornfield was now a 1,400 foot-high mountain.
Appendix O

Passage for Fluency Demonstration Lesson Student’s Copy

A stream of lava began to make its way to Paricutin Fortunately it took four months to reach the village This enabled the people to flee in time They went to the larger village nearby but in a few weeks found that they had to flee from there as well In the next few months all that was left of these villages were two church towers sticking out of the tons of lava that had buried the towns