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Examination of the Development, Implementation, and Monitoring of One Instructional Coaching Program in an Urban, Title I, Elementary School

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING OF ONE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM IN AN URBAN, TITLE I, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, by JOSEPH D. SANFILIPPO, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING
OF ONE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM IN AN
URBAN TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

JOSEPH D. SANFILIPPO

Under the Direction of Nicholas J. Sauer, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Some schools and school districts have implemented instructional coaching programs to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement. A review of the literature revealed the varying roles of instructional coaches including building relationships with teachers, improving teaching practices, and providing feedback to teachers. Additionally, literature examined highlighted the important role that school leaders play in planning and preparation when implementing an instructional coaching program, and the importance of careful hiring, training, and financial considerations. This qualitative research study examined the decisions that one Title I elementary school principal made when designing, implementing, monitoring and

evaluating an instructional coaching program. The theoretical framework of instructional leadership anchored and organized this study.

This dissertation study was conducted in one Title I elementary school in an urban school district that has made gains in student achievement over the past three years. Participants included the principal, two assistant principals who are involved in the instructional coaching program, two instructional coaches, and four teachers who have worked with an instructional coach or coaches. Data collected includes interviews with all participants, observations of interactions between participants, and the collection of artifacts.

The key themes that emerged after the triangulation of the data were (a) instructional leadership driven decision-making, (b) instructional coaching support in the classroom, and (c) collaboration and preparation for collaboration. As more schools and principals consider instructional coaching as a framework for improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement, a sound understanding of the key instructional leadership driven decisions becomes increasingly essential. By gaining a full understanding of the practices of an effective instructional coaching program, school leaders have the potential of significantly and positively improving their school's performance.

INDEX WORDS: Coaching, Instructional Coaching, Instructional Leadership, Elementary School

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JOSEPH D. SANFILIPPO

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in

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DEDICATION

For my parents, who always believed in the value of education.

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CHAPTER 1

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Some schools and districts are increasing teacher retention and effectiveness through the implementation of instructional coaching programs (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014). Teacher effectiveness is the cornerstone to student achievement and some school leaders implement instructional coaching programs to help improve teacher performance (Heck, 2009). Instructional coaches serve as instructional leaders, providing direct feedback and support to teachers, without the burden of evaluation (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007, 2014; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014). Recent research finds that teachers are leaving the field of education in large numbers in the first year, and in the first few years (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). According to research by Ingersoll, 12 – 18% of math and science teachers left the profession after the first year (2012). Many teachers leaving the field of education report challenges and a lack of support in classroom management, instruction, and organizational management (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). Some principals have implemented instructional coaching programs in an attempt to provide these necessary supports to teachers.

Purpose of the study

Research shows that teachers often leave education feeling unsuccessful and unsupported (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). Teachers often leave because they are unable to implement affective

teaching strategies or positively impact student achievement. Instructional coaching is a method some principals provide to both novice and struggling teachers in order to provide support to them, side by side, in their classroom (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014). However, to date, there has been little formal research into the role the elementary school principal serves in identifying the need for an instructional coaching program, developing an instructional coaching plan, finding teachers to serve as instructional coaches, and the training, monitoring, and evaluation of the instructional coaches as well as the evaluation of the instructional coaching plan.

As school leaders consider whether to place time and resources into an instructional coaching program, it is important for them to understand what factors influenced leaders who were successful in designing and implementing an instructional coaching program. Additionally, school leaders must also understand how to monitor the instructional coaching program, evaluate its effectiveness, and determine when changes are necessary. Consequently, in order to have a successful instructional coaching program, leaders must know what components of an effective instructional coaching program can lead to improved teaching practices and increased student achievement.

This study sought to determine connections between the role of the elementary school principal as instructional leader and an instructional coaching program. The literature on the relationship between the elementary principal and instructional coaching programs is limited, particularly on the decisions that positively affected teaching performance and student achievement.

Guiding Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the leadership decisions and actions of the Title I elementary principal when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating an instructional coaching program?
2. What components of the instructional coaching program does the Title I elementary principal perceive as having been effective?

Review of the Literature

This literature review examines the body of research concerning instructional coaching and its role in the improvement of teaching practices. Instructional coaching is often referred to as a professional development model that can be implemented through a multitude of disciplines (Chval et al., 2010; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007). For the purpose of this study, instructional coaching will be defined as “a way to support teachers in their efforts to provide high quality teaching in the academic areas including reading, math, and science” (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p. 151). This literature review examines the complex role of the instructional coach and the various roles instructional coaches play. Next, this review examines the literature written about the role instructional coaching plays in building relationships with teachers, providing feedback to them, and being a skilled listener. Additionally, I will review the literature written around how instructional coaches help teachers improve instructional practices in their classrooms. The review concludes with an examination of the relationship between the instructional coach and the principal.

The role of the instructional coach.

Much of the literature around instructional coaching suggests that the role of an instructional coach is to work side by side with teachers, in their classrooms, identifying potential areas for improvement, and working with teachers to enact those improvements (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Once an area of improvement is identified, the coach summarizes and synthesizes the teaching strategy they will assist the teacher in implementing, and identifies the most important components of that teaching practice (Devine et al, 2013). Devine (2013) explains that an instructional coach must always work to make a new teaching strategy as easy to understand and implement as possible. Additionally, the coach should remove any potential barriers that might prevent the teacher from implementing that new teaching strategy in their classroom (Devine et al., 2013). It is important to note that the role of the coach is not the same each day, and the role changes based on the needs of the teacher (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Mudzimiri's (2014) research concluded that:

The roles and responsibilities assumed by elementary mathematics coaches, the activities they engage in, and the content of their sessions with teachers vary widely in response to the shifting contexts, audiences, and tasks that arise throughout the day. Evidence from observations shows that coaches work “in the moment” based on teacher and administrator requests, and as a result, they alter their routines frequently. (p. 19)

The complex role of the instructional coach is well defined in the literature reviewed. As instructional leaders, instructional coaches provide teacher mentoring and support through a variety of methods (Dole, 2004; Smith, 2012). Instructional coaches serve as instructional

leaders, assisting teachers in improving their instructional practices (Devine et al., 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015).

Building relationships with teachers.

Instructional coaches have a role in building relationships with teachers, as well as being skilled communicators when providing one-to-one coaching (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Thomas et al., 2015). Smith (2012) discusses the importance of building relationships when it comes to one on one coaching. The instructional coaches' role in developing relationships with teachers is an essential component of the coaching process, and other components of the coaching process will become difficult if relationships are not first established between the coach and classroom teacher.

Another researcher extends Smith's thinking about the importance of building relationships during one-to-one coaching, stating that "without a doubt, the teacher/coach relationship was discussed more ardently by coaches and teachers than any other factor related to successful coaching" (Heineke, 2013, p. 427). The literature states time and time again that without relationship building, it is unlikely that productive coaching can occur (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Knight 2007; Smith, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015). In addition to being good at building relationships with teachers, instructional coaches must be skilled communicators (Thomas et al., 2015). As skilled communicators, instructional coaches share common experiences with teachers, model lessons, observe mentees, and provide feedback (Thomas et al., 2015). One-to-one instructional coaching involves a classroom teacher posing a question or identifying a problem in practice (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Knight, 2007). The instructional coach, a peer, observes the teacher and students in the presence of content, takes notes, and prepares feedback (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015). Instructional coaches engage in

reflective conversations with teachers, using evidence acquired during observations, which facilitates the consideration and reconsideration of the teaching practices (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015). As instructional coaches engage in one-to-one coaching, by listening to teachers' questions or problems, observing them with their students in the presence of content, taking notes, and preparing and providing feedback, they contribute to the improvement of instructional practice (Chval et al., 2010; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015).

Improvement of teaching practices.

Literature around instructional coaching links it directly to improving teaching practices and performance (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthew, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). According to Mudzimiri (2014), ongoing observation is an important factor in ensuring that instructional coaches' work with classroom teachers leads to the improvement of their instructional practices. "Effective coaches need latitude to conduct consistent and ongoing observations of instruction, along with the planning and debriefing that surround those observations" (Mudzimiri et al., 2014, p. 19).

In addition to being an ongoing observer, being a skilled listener is also an important role that the instructional coach plays in improving teachers' instructional practices (Kawinkamolroj et al., 2015). Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, and Thongthew (2015) noted that "attentive listening and listening with interest will relax teachers" (p. 159). Additionally, it is important that instructional coaches remember to not judge any thoughts or feelings that classroom teachers present to them (Kawinkamolroj et al., 2015). Heineke also notes how important it is for instructional coaches to be practiced listeners, explaining that "a foundation for coaching must be

laid by coaches who display a respectful/listening attitude toward teachers, who build credibility with teachers, are available and visible to teachers, and maintain trust/confidentiality with teachers” (2013, p. 427). It is essential that instructional coaches engage in both ongoing observation and skilled listening as they collaborate with teachers in an attempt to improve teaching practices and performance (Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj et al., 2015; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). The improvement of instructional practice is one of the central roles of the instructional coach.

Providing feedback to teachers.

Providing feedback to teachers is an essential component of the coaching process (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Knight, 2007; McCollum et al., 2013). Adams (2011) highlights the fact that feedback is extremely effective in “providing cues to teachers to point out when opportunities to test out new standards-based principles appeared during classroom activities” (p. 56). Feedback prompts teachers to move beyond their past teaching experiences and to implement new learning to their current situations (Adams, 2011). Research by Czajka and McConnell (2016) also concluded that feedback on instructional practice is crucial to impacting teaching practices during instructional coaching situations. Instructional coaches have the unique ability to connect with teachers, because they have served successfully in the teaching role themselves, and can, therefore, provide that crucial feedback to teachers (Knight, 2007; McCollum et al., 2013). “Feedback using examples from their own instruction may even help teachers isolate and understand particular skills” (McCollum et al., 2013, p. 34).

The time that instructional coaches spend providing feedback to teachers is sometimes referred to as coaching conversations (Gibson, 2011). These coaching conversations are integral

as instructional coaches scaffold new instructional knowledge for teachers (Gibson, 2011). Providing feedback is vital to the conversations that instructional coaches have with teachers (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Knight, 2007; McCollum et al., 2013). Instructional coaches serve as instructional leaders for their school and the feedback they provide enhances teaching practices and performance (Knight, 2007).

Positive outcomes of instructional coaching.

Research finds that positive outcomes occur when instructional coaches work alongside classroom teachers (Harms, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Parman, 2015; Sailors & Price, 2015). One researcher's study noted that her "study's findings support the research on coaching as an effective way to increase the transfer of new skills to teachers" (Parman, 2015, p. 166). Instructional coaching can ensure that when teachers are asked to change instructional practices, training and ongoing support is available (Knight, 2009; Parman, 2015). Harms' (2013) research around instructional coaches helping teachers implement a new reading program found that, because of instructional coaching, the teachers were able to implement the new strategies in a safe environment. Similarly, Mudzimiri's (2014) research around the implementation of mathematics instructional coaching found that:

Mathematics coaching programs can have positive effects on schools by improving school culture, sharing teaching knowledge effectively among teachers, and encouraging staff collaboration. We expect that these school effects may also lead to positive impacts on student academic performance over time. (p. 21)

The ongoing support of instructional coaches positively influences the instructional practices of teachers' due to the one on one training and support the coaches offer (Knight, 2009). Sailors and Price (2015), highlight the positive impact instructional coaching had on reading instruction

in their study by illuminating the fact that their “findings indicate that coaching continues to serve as a viable means of improving the instructional practices of reading teachers” (p. 124).

Teachers can learn to be more explicit in their planning and instruction with proper support from instructional coaches (Sailors & Price, 2015). The literature consistently shows that instructional coaching positively impact the practices of classroom teachers (Harms, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2009; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Parman, 2015; Sailors & Price, 2015).

The role of an instructional coach is a complex one, but when implemented, instructional coaching can have a profound impact on classroom teaching practices (Harms, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Parman, 2015; Sailors & Price, 2015). Research finds that effective instructional coaches balance a number of key roles and responsibilities including building relationships with teachers, observing them in their classrooms, being skilled listeners, and providing feedback to teachers on their instructional practices (Chval et al., 2010; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Devine et al., 2013; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2009; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015). One-to-one coaching allows a teacher to participate in professional development with a peer, someone who has also recently served in the role of classroom teacher, and can easily be related to (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015). Additionally, research uncovers the notion that when observation of teaching practices occurs continually through the coaching process, teaching practices can be positively influenced (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Instructional coaching is, by all means, a very feasible way to help teachers improve their instructional practices and in turn, it may even improve student achievement (Sailors & Price, 2015).

The Principal and the instructional coaching program.

Implementing an instructional coaching program is challenging work (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Research by Steiner & Kowal (2007) found there to be a number of major responsibilities, time pressures, interpersonal relationship challenges, and other frustrations when implementing an instructional coaching program. Due to the complexity of instructional coaching and implementing such a program, it is essential that leaders develop a plan for their instructional coaching program, hire carefully, provide adequate training, and allocate necessary funding (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). According to Matsumura, Garnier, and Resnick (2010), principal leadership plays an integral role in implementing an instructional coaching program. As illustrated by Steiner and Kowal (2007), the most important role the leader has when setting out to implement an instructional coaching program is to ensure that its design and fit meets the needs of the school, its faculty, and its students.

Planning and preparation.

According to Steiner and Kowal (2007), establishing a need for an instructional coaching program and then setting goals for the program are critical first steps that leaders must take when setting out to develop an instructional coaching program. Matsumura et. al. (2014) suggest that school leaders assess their readiness to implement an innovative instruction model prior to setting off to develop an instructional coaching program. Steiner and Kowal (2007) found that setting clear, specific goals and then assessing what knowledge and skills teachers will need to meet these goals to be an important first step in determining the need for an instructional coaching program (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Once the leader feels that he or she is prepared to

engage in the work of developing an instructional coaching program, and goals have been established, Steiner and Kowal (2007) suggest leaders define the coaching strategies that will help them reach their goals. These initial first steps help ensure that need for the program has been established and the goals have been realized (Steiner and Kowal, 2007).

Research by Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) found that “many coaches began without even a job description” (p. 169). Leaders must define the role of the coach in the school and provide any necessary training (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009). “Administrators should set clear and consistent guidelines about coaches’ responsibilities and the limits of their responsibilities” (Steiner & Kowal, 2007, p. 2). According to Matsumura et al. (2010), it is important that a clear vision be established for the instructional coaching program and that it be in line with the instructional vision for the school.

Hiring and training instructional coaches.

Poglinco et al. (2003) note that having served as an exemplary teacher does not guarantee success at working effectively when coaching colleagues. Research by Kraft & Gilmour (2016) examined principal time and training in conducting teacher evaluations. Their research concluded a recommendation for principals to hire instructional coaches to provide coaching, feedback and support to teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Many of the principals engaged in Kraft & Gilmour’s (2016) research “saw the need for coaches that were content experts to supplement the general instructional feedback they could provide” (p. 739). Hiring teachers whom had expertise in specific subject areas helped ensure that the feedback and support would be accurate (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). According to Steiner and Kowal (2007), it is essential that school leaders select capable coaches and provide them with appropriate training. School leaders

must be very clear on their school needs and determine who is fit to serve as a coach (Krafte & Gilmour, 2016; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

According to Deussen et al. (2007), coaches in their first year often described the experience as “building the airplane while flying it” (p. 7). Therefore, Duessen (2007) recommends that professional development be provided to new coaches and also be ongoing so that coaches stay abreast of current trends in education. Leaders must be cognizant of the fact that while they may be providing training to coaches as a part of implementation of an instructional coaching program, effectiveness may vary (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009). Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) recommend coaching training that includes professional learning, observation, modeling, and leading study groups. Leaders must avoid the possibility that, “due to the lack of well-defined and articulated models of coaching, coaches may well receive training from multiple sources, each of whom believe “coaching” to be something very different” (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p. 170). This is why defining a clear and well-defined coaching model, mission, and vision for the instructional coaching program is essential (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

According to Matsumura et al. (2010), school leaders must have a focused approach to providing training to instructional coaches. Although there are a number of two and three day workshops available provided by traveling practitioners, “the content of these trainings is normally matched to the coaching approach the trainers or workshop sponsor advocate, and, as noted above, the content and vision of “coaching” can vary dramatically” (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p. 171). School leaders must ensure that adequate training that will meet the needs addressed at the onset of their instructional coaching planning, is provided to new instructional coaches and remains ongoing (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Matsumura et al., 2010).

Implementing the instructional coaching program.

School leaders play an integral role in the implementation of the instructional coaching program (Matsumura et al., 2010). “By actively participating in the program, endorsing the program to teachers, and supporting the coach’s autonomy, principals signaled that change was necessary for improvement, attainable, and in line with the school’s current instructional goals” (Matsumura et al., 2010, p. 266). According to Steiner and Kowal (2007), creating time for coaches to observe classroom practices is relatively easy; however, creating time for coaches and teachers to have discussions outside the classroom can be challenging. “Inadequacy of time frequently is cited and suggests that many administrators fail to set aside regular and sufficient time for coaching tasks (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). It is essential that school leaders provide the coaching and feedback time that teachers will need (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Additionally, school leaders must be vocal advocates of the instructional coaching program (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). School leaders who are transparent about the goals of the instructional coaching program, and provide clear support through their words and actions, make it more likely, those teachers will be receptive to coaching support (Matsumura et al., 2010 Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Research by Matsumura and Wang (2014) found that how principals position the instructional coaching program as an instructional improvement initiative to be essential in initiating the program in its first year. “A natural way for school leaders to take on the role of instructional leader is to serve as a “chief” coach for teachers by designing and supporting strong classroom level instructional coaching” (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Additionally, the leader increases his or her own credibility as an instructional leader (Steinver & Kowal, 2007).

Research by Kraft and Gilmour (2016) concluded that there is a need for a financial promise to instructional coaching. “Without a dedicated financial commitment to coaching, this

approach might simply replace one implementation constraint with another” (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016, p. 739). School leaders who represent a long-term commitment of financial resources to the instructional coaching program, reassure reluctant teachers and encourage their willingness to participate in the coaching process (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). When leaders engage in the process of determining goals and needs, developing coaching roles, and remain committed to the human and capital resources needed to sustain the program, he or she ensures that the instructional coaching program improves instruction and, ultimately, increases student achievement (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Summary.

A great deal of literature has been written about the positive impact that instructional coaching programs can have in schools (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Although the role of the instructional coach is not specifically defined in the literature, many scholars agree on common practices of the instructional coach including building relationships, teacher observations, and feedback (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Much of the literature finds that instructional coaches can positively affect teaching practices and lead to increases in student achievement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). There is limited research into the role the elementary school principal plays in the instructional coaching program. Steiner and Kowal (2007), however, argue that the leader is to serve as the chief coach for teachers. Other research finds

that school leaders must take adequate time to plan and prepare for the implementation of the instructional coaching program and hire and train instructional coaches carefully (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2010; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Mastsumura et al., 2010; Matsumura et. al., 2014; Poglinco et al., 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Instructional coaching programs can make a positive impact on teaching practices and student achievement, but they require a number of considerations by school leadership prior to implementation.

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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Instructional coaching is often referred to as a professional development model that can be implemented through a multitude of disciplines (Chval et al., 2010; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007). For the purpose of this study, instructional coaching will be defined as “a way to support teachers in their efforts to provide high quality teaching in the academic areas including reading, math, and science” (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p. 151). Some school leaders have begun to utilize instructional coaches as a means for improving teacher effectiveness. Many elementary school principals who implement instructional coaching programs say that their program works well because their coaches build relationships with teachers, provide them feedback, and are skilled listeners (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Wang, 2017). Elementary school principals who implement instructional coaching programs are often focused on their role as instructional leader (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter et al., 2014; Wang, 2017).

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this case study was to understand the role the elementary school principal plays in the instructional coaching program in a school in one urban school district. This study explored how one Title I elementary school principal identifies the need for an instructional coaching program, identifies a teacher or teachers who can serve as an instructional coach, and how the principal designs, implements, monitors and evaluates the instructional coaching program. The goal was to explore connections between instructional coaching programs and the role of the elementary school principal as the instructional leader.

Research questions.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the leadership decisions and actions of the Title I elementary principal when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating an instructional coaching program?
2. What components of the instructional coaching program does the Title I elementary principal perceive as having been effective?

Significance of the study.

This study is significant in a number of ways. Instructional coaching can affect teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014). As more and more schools face the challenge of improving student achievement despite socioeconomic, language, and disparity challenges, instructional coaching programs create an opportunity for assistance (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014). However, an elementary school principal cannot implement an instructional coaching program without having a plan in mind (Knight, 2007, Wang, 2017).

It is important that elementary school principals specify the need for an instructional coaching program, prior to deciding to implement one (Barry, 2012; Knight, 2007; Lotter, Yow, & Peters, 2014; Regional Educational Laboratory & International, 2014; Wang, 2017). Although there is a considerable amount of literature regarding instructional coaching, there is less literature about the interaction between the principal and the instructional coaching program. Therefore, this study adds to the limited body of research on the relationship between the elementary principal and the instructional coaching program. As schools and districts allocate

funding and resources to instructional coaching programs it is essential to understand the role the principal serves during the conception and implementation of the instructional coaching program.

Theoretical framework.

This study utilized instructional leadership as the theoretical framework. Instructional leadership is second only to the classroom teacher when it comes to impacting student learning (May, Sirinides, & Supovitz, 2010). Research through the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington determined four core beliefs which uphold the instructional leadership theoretical frame: vision, mission, and learning-focused culture, improvement of instructional practice, allocation of resources, and management of systems and processes (“4 Dimension of Instructional Leadership,” 2015). Utilizing instructional leadership as the theoretical frame for this study helped uncover the connection between the elementary school principal and the instructional coaching program, which is seeking to improve teaching practices and student learning outcomes. This study was conducted through the lens of instructional leadership and the four core beliefs, which support the instructional leadership theoretical frame: vision, mission, and learning-focused culture, improvement of instructional practice, allocation of resources, and management of systems and processes (“4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership,” 2015).

The first core belief of the instructional leadership frame is that instructional leaders develop a vision and mission for the organization and develop a learning-focused culture (“4 Dimension of Instructional Leadership,” 2015). The role of the instructional coach, as described by Knight and other experts in the field, is to collaborate with classroom teachers to enhance their educational craft and improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Devine,

Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). According to Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, Lee, and Shores, (2015) with the organization or initiative's mission and vision clearly defined for all stakeholders, leaders can then communicate goals for improvement. This study examined how elementary school principals, as their school's instructional leader, implemented an instructional coaching program to improve teacher effectiveness.

Improvement of instructional practice, the second core belief, was at the center of this study. In her study around instructional coaching, Sharan A. Gibson (2011) noted that "limited information is available on the specific ways in which effective versus ineffective coaches interact with teachers following lesson observation" (p. 5). According to Salo, Nylund, and Stjernstrom (2015), school leaders must support successful teaching practices while also sharing feedback. In addition to seeking to uncover how school principals identify teachers who have the capacity to serve as instructional coaches, this research examined how an elementary school principal trains and monitors those instructional coaches as they work to help teachers improve their instructional practices.

The third core belief, allocation of resources, is another important role of the elementary school principal and a key lens of this theoretical framework ("4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership," 2015). As noted by Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), "in large numbers of elementary and secondary schools across the United States teachers are being called upon to provide support to colleagues through a process called instructional coaching," (p. 150). The question then is; how do leaders ensure proper allocation of these new instructional coaching resources? This study explored how elementary school principals implement instructional

coaching programs and in-turn, monitor both the instructional coaching program and the instructional coach or coaches.

Management of systems and processes is the fourth and final of the four core beliefs that uphold the instructional leadership theoretical framework (“4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership,” 2015). According to Rigby (2013), school leaders have the role as both instructional leader and manager of their schools. One component of this research sought to find out how school and district leaders not only identify and train instructional coaches, but also how they monitor their practice and performance. The training and monitoring of instructional coaches connects the fourth core belief, with the first core belief, vision, mission, and learning-focused culture (“4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership,” 2015). This research investigated if elementary school principals, who implement an instructional coaching program, create a vision and mission for that program, and if they do, how they monitor the program to ensure that it is implemented effectively. Each of the four core beliefs of the instructional leadership theoretical framework, as outlined by The Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington, provided a lens to examine the case study through and helped to focus the research (“4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership,” 2015).

Methodology

This study was a single case study. Yin (2009) said that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 4). The school site selection section of this dissertation will provide detailed information about the Title I elementary school where this study was conducted. The principal of the school has been in the role for a minimum of three years and over the course of the past six years, the school has seen student achievement growth. Participants included the principal, two assistant principals, two

instructional coaches, and four teachers who have worked with the instructional coaches. The participant section of this dissertation study will include specific information about the participants and the sampling technique used. Data collected included interviews with all participants, observations of the participants working together, and the collection of artifacts from the instructional coaching program. The data collection section of this dissertation details the process that was used to collect all data sources. Once all data was collected, interviews were recorded and transcribed with Temi, and then uploaded to Nvivo. Within Nvivo, data was reviewed, memoed, and classified into three themes. In the data analysis section of this dissertation study, I detail the process I took when analyzing the data. Finally, results, conclusions, and implications for further research were determined.

Research design.

This study employs a case study design. According to Yin (2009), case studies are formed out of the need to understand a multifaceted social occurrence. This study sought to understand the complex role the elementary, Title I principal plays in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of an instructional coaching program. “The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (Ying, 2009, p. 11). This study examined a single case, involving one principal and one instructional coaching program within one Title I elementary school. Although this study was a single case study, “people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do this partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize” (Stake, 1995, p. 85). Merriam (1998), another voice in case study research design said that “a case might also be

selected because it is intrinsically interesting; a researcher should study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible” (p. 28). The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how one elementary principal sets out to implement an instructional coaching program, hire instructional coaches, and monitor and evaluate the instructional coaching program, a clear gap in the literature. The remainder of this section of this dissertation study provides details about the case study design, sample, data collection, data analysis, findings, discussion, implications, and conclusions.

School site selection.

To get at the heart of the research questions laid out in this study, the following criteria for site selection included:

- a Title I elementary school in an urban school district;
- a principal engaged in at least the third year of the instructional coaching program; and
- a school that has made performance gains over the course of the previous three years.

The first criterion was that the school site be a Title I elementary school in an urban school district. Instructional coaching programs are not found in all schools and are often described as an innovative practice for improving teacher effectiveness and increasing student achievement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). As schools face the burden of teachers leaving the field in the first few years, innovative practices become more enticing to school leaders (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). According to Simon and Johnson (2015), teachers working in schools with increased levels of poverty are more likely to leave the teaching profession or transfer to schools

that are more affluent. Due to the challenge of supporting and retaining teachers, Title I schools often seek to implement innovative practices like instructional coaching (Suppes, Holland, Hu, & Vu, 2013). Lincoln Elementary (fictitious name) is indeed a Title I elementary school in an urban school district that is using instructional coaching to support teachers and increase the likelihood that they will improve their teaching practices, see increased student achievement, and desire to remain at the school.

The second criterion for site selection is that the principal be engaged in at least the third year of the instructional coaching program. According to Steiner and Kowal (2007), there are several key steps to developing and implementing an instructional coaching program. This includes assessing needs and goals, selecting a coaching strategy, and implementing the program (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). In order for me to examine the process for determining the need for the instructional coaching program and finding a coach or coaches to serve in the role, it was essential that the principal had already completed this process. According to Elgart (2018), school improvement takes time. Thomas, Peng, and Gray (2007) concurred, noting that change processes take typically three to five years. In order for me to understand the principal's decision making when implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program, it was important for the principal to be well into their journey. Lincoln Elementary's principal is currently in her sixth year in the role and has had an instructional coaching program since becoming principal.

The third criterion is that the school have made performance gains over the course of the previous three years. One of the purposes of instructional coaching is improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp,

2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Therefore, it was essential to examine the practices of a principal and a school that had achieved gains in student achievement over the previous three years. According to the school district's internal ranking system, Lincoln Elementary has made considerable gains in student achievement during the current principal's tenure. The school district uses its Weighted School Assessment (WSA) as a tool for calculating each school's academic performance as well the school's effectiveness, stakeholder perceptions, student engagement, and school management. In 2012, the current principal was hired to lead the school, and at that time, Lincoln Elementary was ranked 77 out of 77 elementary schools. Currently, Lincoln Elementary is ranked 40 out of 80 elementary schools for the 2017-2018 school year. The improvement made by this school is extremely impressive! According to Elgart (2018), continuous quality improvement takes time. However, Lincoln Elementary has made significant performance gains during the short tenure of its current principal.

Lincoln Elementary was selected as the most appropriate school site for this study because it met all three site selection criteria that had been established. It is a Title I school in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. The current principal is serving in her sixth year in the role and has led an instructional coaching program since becoming principal. Lincoln Elementary has made significant performance gains over the course of the principals five and a half years in the role as measured by the school districts' internal ranking system, known as the WSA. It is ranked 40 out of 80 elementary schools in the district. Over the course of the principals six years in the role, Lincoln Elementary has made measured growth. School rankings from 2012 – 2013 school year to the 2017 – 2018 school year are detailed in Table 2. The participants who agreed to participate in this study and provide insight into the decisions the principal made as she designed, implemented, and currently monitors and evaluates the

instructional coaching program are detailed in the following section. Specific information about Lincoln Elementary is described in Table 1.

Table 1

School Information

School Enrollment, Free & Reduced Lunch, and Socio Economics	
Enrollment	1,218
Free/reduced lunch	93%
African-American	28%
Asian	17%
Hispanic or Latino	74%
White	4%
Speakers of other languages	62%
Special Education	10%

Table 2

School Performance Profile

	WSA Ranking					
School Year	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
Ranking (Lincoln's Ranking / Total Schools)	77 / 77	63 / 77	67 / 77	67 / 77	47 / 80	40 / 80

As a fourth year assistant principal at Lincoln Elementary, where this study was conducted, I work closely with the principal, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and many teachers. Conducting this study in the school with which I work afforded both a general understanding of many of the school's functions as well as close proximity to participants. Several limitations and biases become present when conducting research in one's own school. These limitations and biases are addressed in the limitations section.

Participants.

Creswell (2012) notes that the number of variables in the case can influence the size of the sample. Since the purpose of this study was to understand the decisions and actions of the principal, a large sample size was not required. For a qualitative case study, Creswell (2012) suggests conducting several one-on-one interviews. Therefore, for this study, the principal, two assistant principals engaged in the instructional coaching program, two instructional coaches working in the school, and four teachers who have worked with the coach or coaches were invited to participate in the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), researchers should try to gather enough information to saturate, or reach a point where no new information is emerged. This sample size allowed me enough participants to get to the point of saturation and answer the research questions laid out in this study.

Initially I had planned to use purposeful sampling to identify potential subjects. However, once I realized that both the school site selection criterion and the sample aligned with my own school, I moved to convenience sampling. I had not realized that I had been seeking a site like my own school and that it was an ideal site to conduct this research study. Once the principal of my school agreed to participate in the study, and I began to seek out other potential subjects, I used convenience sampling to find assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers who might be willing to participate in this study (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), when employing convenience sampling, the researcher saves time, money, and effort in identifying participants. I used my insider status at the school and my knowledge of the instructional coaching program to seek out assistant principals who had worked with instructional coaches, the two instructional coaches who had most recently worked in the school, and four teachers who had worked closely with instructional coaches in recent years.

Including the perspectives of the assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers who have worked with the instructional coaches was essential to gaining a holistic picture of the

actions and decisions of the principal as it relates to the instructional coaching program. The assistant principals link the principal's perspective and charge for their work to the work of the instructional coaches and how they provide support to teachers. My purpose for including instructional coaches was to investigate their perceptions of the principal's decisions and actions as it relates to the instructional coaching program. Moreover, including teachers who have worked with instructional coaches illuminated how the decisions and actions of the principal, as it relates to the instructional coaching program, filters down to teachers, who are directly impacting student achievement.

The treatment of the participants in this study included “respecting the privacy of those participants and ensuring the consent process is clearly communicated including the right of the participants to withdraw from the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 54). Therefore, I provided each potential participant, including the principal, with a copy of an informed consent letter outlining the purpose of the case study and the criteria for identifying potential participants. The informed consent letter can be found in Appendix A. I explained to each potential participant the purpose of the study and the methods for conducting it. In order to protect each potential human subject, full disclosure was provided about all aspects of the study. Potential participants were informed that they would be protected through anonymity and that pseudonyms such as the Principal, Assistant Principal One, Instructional Coach One, and Teacher One would be used to describe them. Each potential participant was told that they had the right to withdraw from the case study at any time. Once each potential participant finished reviewing the informed consent document, he or she contacted me to let me know whether or not they would be willing to participate in the study. Ultimately, I was able to secure the desired number of participants whose information is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Profiles

Participant	Highest Degree Attained	Years in Education	Years at School Site	Years Working as or with Instructional Coaches
Principal	Doctorate	17	6	9
Assistant Principal 1	Specialist	13	3	5
Assistant Principal 2	Doctorate	33	14	10
Instructional Coach 1	Masters	23	2	13
Instructional Coach 2	Specialist	26	5	2
Teacher 1	Bachelors	2	1	2
Teacher 2	Bachelors	7	4	4
Teacher 3	Bachelors	10	5	3
Teacher 4	Bachelors	19	4	4

The body of research written about instructional coaching concludes that it is an effective practice for improving teacher effectiveness and increasing student achievement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). However, the research into the role of the principal and his or hers impact on the instructional coaching program is limited. Including the principal, two assistant principals, two instructional coaches, and four teachers who have worked with the instructional coaches provided me with an opportunity to gain a comprehensive perspective of the decisions and actions of the principal as she designed, implemented, and monitors and evaluates the instructional coaching program and its practices.

Data collection.

This qualitative case study utilized a number of data collection methods. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), "the researcher collects and integrates many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials" (p. 98). This study's primary research collection tool was individual interviews. "One-to-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably" (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2007), designing and using an interview protocol that includes the questions to be asked, space for notetaking, and serves as a script for what the researcher will say to the participants can benefit the researcher. The interview protocols developed for this dissertation study can be found in Appendixes B-E. During interviews with participants, I followed the interview protocol, which included open-ended questions to garner a wide-range of responses from participants.

Before writing interview questions, I reviewed the literature about instructional coaching and the limited research about connections between school leadership and instructional coaching in order to create astute questions. I also reviewed qualitative case studies that utilized both the instructional leadership theoretical framework, as well as interviews as a data collection method, before developing interview questions. Interview questions were aligned to the four components of the instructional leadership theoretical framework: vision, mission, and learning-focused culture, improvement of instructional practice, allocation of resources, and management of systems and processes ("4 Dimension of Instructional Leadership," 2015). Finally, I reviewed the research questions guiding the study and used them as a guide for developing interview questions for each role examined in the study. Role-specific questions were developed for the principal, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers.

The first six questions for the principal, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and questions two through six for the teachers were created to identify the decisions and actions of the principal as she designed and implemented the instructional coaching program. The remaining questions were designed to garner an understanding of the components of the instructional coaching program that the principal specifically influenced and that she perceives as effective. Some questions were developed to determine how the principal monitors the instructional coaching program and coaches as well as how she evaluates the effectiveness of the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program.

Before beginning the interview process, I conducted mock interviews with a colleague in order to familiarize myself with the process and Temi, the audio recording and transcribing app. Then, based upon feedback from the colleague, some interview questions were slightly modified in order to gain a greater understanding of the viewpoints and experiences of each participant. Individual interviews were scheduled before school, after school, or during a break in the school day. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable location of the participants choosing. An hour was blocked off for each interview and I stayed within those time constraints. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in the electronic recording and transcription app Temi. Member checking was used to confirm the authenticity of the transcriptions. Transcriptions were emailed to each participant, and the transcriptions were deleted from Temi after each participant verified the written transcriptions for accuracy. This ensured the validity and trustworthiness of the transcriptions. One participant requested a change to a transcription and that request was honored. According to Creswell (2012), “in qualitative research you ask open-ended questions so that the participant’s best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher” (p. 218). Therefore, all interview questions were open-ended and role specific to the leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers. As follow up questions became necessary, they were asked of interviewees. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in the electronic recording and transcription app

Temi. Member checking was used to confirm authenticity of the transcriptions. Transcriptions were emailed to each participant and the transcriptions were deleted from Temi after each participant verified the written transcriptions for accuracy. This ensured validity and trustworthiness of the transcriptions. One participant requested a change to a transcription and that request was honored. According to Creswell (2012), “in qualitative research you ask open-ended questions so that the participant’s best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher.” Therefore, all interview questions were open-ended and role specific to the leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers. As follow up questions became necessary, they were asked of interviewees.

The secondary research tool was observation. According to Creswell (2007), researchers should use an observation protocol when conducting observations. Before conducting observations, I developed an observation protocol that would allow me to record the times and descriptive notes. I included a section for reflective notes to add while reviewing the descriptive notes. The observation protocol is included in Appendix G. The principal was asked to provide three, one hour, on-site observation times for me to observe the instructional coach or coaches in practice, teachers the instructional coach or coaches are supporting and the principal when she is working alongside the instructional coach or coaches in the building. The first observation was of a collaborative planning meeting. This meeting was facilitated by one instructional coach and included four reading teachers, three special education resource teachers, one student teacher, the grade-level assistant principal, and the principal. The second observation involved observing an instructional coach as she conducted classroom observations, and provided modeling for teachers, as well as debriefing and feedback. The third observation was of an instructional coach providing pre-scheduled classroom modeling with one first-grade teacher. During observations, while students were present, any incidental information about students was not recorded in any field notes; therefore, parental consent was unnecessary.

Observations focused on developing an understanding of the practices of the instructional coaching program and the instructional coaches that align with the principal's decisions and actions when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the instructional coaching program and how those practices have contributed to the school's improvement. The observations and field notes serve as a tool for uncovering patterns consistent with the interview data and artifacts that were collected (Merriam, 1998).

The third research collection tool was the collection of artifacts. Creswell (2007) noted that researchers could often face challenges locating documentary materials. The principal was asked to provide copies of any documents that were developed through the design and implementation of the instructional coaching program. Artifacts of particular interest included coaching plans, mission and vision statements for the coaching program, criteria for selecting instructional coaches, and any tools that were used to interview and evaluate the coaching program or the coaches. The principal indicated that the school's instructional coaching program did not have mission or vision statements and while she had not developed an instructional coaching plan, there was a list of instructional coaching expectations that she had been developed in conjunction with the school's administrative team. This document along with an instructional coaching application and instructional coaching interview questions were provided to me. Copies of the documents can be found in Appendixes H-J. Analysis of these artifacts for relevance assisted in answering the research questions (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts were analyzed to uncover common themes.

In order to ensure that the data collected was credible, dependable, transferable, and trustworthy I included several safeguards. According to Stake (1995), participants "regularly provide critical observation and interpretations, sometimes making suggestions as to sources of data" (p. 115). Therefore, Stake (1995) suggests that researchers engage in member checking. Once interviews were transcribed, and the participants were no longer engaged in the study, he or she was given an opportunity to review the transcription. Transcripts from the interviews

were emailed individually to participants to check for validity and trustworthiness. This process of member checking ensured that the interview data was reliable and credible. If any participants had questions or concerns about the transcriptions, they were addressed. When conducting observations, I took field notes. For the documents provided by the principal, copies were made. Having voice recordings of the interviews, field notes of observations and hard and digital copies of documents ensured that when analyzing the data and determining themes and findings the data was credible, dependable, reliable, and trustworthy. According to Yin (2009), multiple data sources allow for the development of converging lines of inquiry needed for data triangulation.

Data analysis.

Data analysis in qualitative research requires the researcher to organize, classify, and make sense of the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). NVivo, an electronic coding program, was used to code all data. I began the data analysis process by reviewing the initial set of codes, then repeatedly reviewing and rereading the codes, searching for connections and relationships between them. Braun and Clarke (2006), describe thematic coding as identifying themes, analyzing those themes, and checking themes to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the entire data set. This process, they describe, can be a very beneficial method when researching an under-investigated area, which was the case with this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once all of the interviews and observations had been conducted, and all documents had been collected, I began the process of analyzing the data. "Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 195). Therefore, I began data analysis by reading and memoing the interviews to gain an understanding of the interview data as a whole (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As I read and listened to each individual interview, I made necessary corrections to the interview transcripts. In particular, I paid close attention to acronyms and words or phrases that had been missed. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), "computer programs help with file

management and analysis of tasks” (p. 186). Therefore, once the interviews were transcribed through Temi, I uploaded the transcriptions to NVivo. At the same time, I uploaded the observation field notes and the three artifacts.

After the initial upload of the data to NVivo, 36 nodes (codes) were identified, with each containing anywhere from one to 15 subnodes. Subnodes are subcodes that are characterized by Nvivo, as being connected to each of the 36 nodes. Each of these subnodes provided more detail about the general node. During the second phase of the data analysis, I reviewed each node and subnode. As outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017), I built “detailed descriptions, applied codes, developed themes or dimensions, and provided interpretations” (p. 189). One by one, I read each of the subnodes and its contents. As I reviewed the subnodes, I renamed some of them for clarity, and others that did not add clarity to the node were deleted. Deletions included subnodes such as classroom teacher, literacy, reading, etc. After the second data analysis, 18 codes had emerged. Once this smaller set of codes was identified, I examined the data for common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I reorganized the eighteen nodes into three broader themes (Corbin & Stauss, 1990): instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration. This thematic analysis process assisted me in determining three overarching final themes, which relate to the research questions laid out in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data were then triangulated from the interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts to determine alignment with the themes that had emerged. According to Swanborn (2010), triangulation is typically used to determine whether the perceptions of meanings are actually different. Triangulated data supported the themes generated from the transcribed data: instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration. This process of identifying themes, analyzing those themes, and checking themes ensured that the three themes identified during data analysis were an accurate reflection of the entire data set. Through open-coding in

NVivo, patterns from the words and phrases in participant interview transcripts, observational field notes, and artifacts emerged. The nodes in NVivo were clustered and organized until three final themes relevant to answering the research questions in this study were identified.

Triangulation confirmed that the data collected is not due to circumstance and is valid and reliable. This data analysis process allowed me to examine the findings and answer the research questions.

Findings

This study sought to uncover the decisions and actions of one elementary, Title I principal when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating an instructional coaching program. The findings of this study support the research which finds that instructional coaching programs can influence teaching practices and lead to school improvement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Additionally, findings also align with research which notes that a principal's decision-making can play a critical role in an instructional coaching program (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Data gained from interviews, observations, and artifacts were coded and analyzed. Through data analysis, three major themes emerged: instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration.

Instructional leadership driven decision-making.

Mitchell, Kensler, and Tschannen-Moran (2015) defined instructional leadership as a focus on teaching and learning, teacher professional development, curriculum development, and teacher supervision. During interviews with participants, many spoke of the instructional coaching program as helping teachers improve their teaching practices and in turn student learning. Additionally, several participants discussed the instructional coaches as providers of

professional and curriculum development as well as people who were in their classrooms regularly to provide feedback and support. Interviews also found that participants observed the principal as an instructional leader through her decisions to focus on teaching and learning, provide professional development and curriculum resources, as well as instructional coaches to support teachers in their classrooms. Observational field notes captured instructional coaches in classrooms supporting teachers as well as providing professional learning and curriculum development, alongside the principal and assistant principals, through collaborative planning. The artifacts collected from the principal, including Instructional Coaches Expectations, indicate the principal's expectation that the instructional coaching program be committed to a focus on the improvement of teaching practices, professional and curriculum development, and classroom support for teachers.

The principal described her work in the instructional coaching program, after being named principal of Lincoln Elementary, as challenging due to her lack of prior experience working with instructional coaches.

It was very difficult. But that next year, after the some of the people (instructional coaches) left, it was easier, a little bit easier to kind of create some norms or beliefs when you start interviewing and looking, getting people to buy into your way of doing it.

Assistant Principal One concurred noting that "initially, the principal met with the coaches to let them know like this is the vision I have for your work and then let them know to lean heavily on the content area AP (Assistant Principal) so that they know that they have someone to lean on." When explaining her reasoning for hiring the most recent instructional coach the principal explained that,

She and I worked a lot together about what would be the expectations. And then before she took over the role, I had my, Assistant Principal who is over literacy sit down with her and talk to her about what the charge would be, after we (the Assistant Principal and

Principal) had kind of talked about what we wanted to see happen in the school.

The artifact, Instructional Coaches Expectations, as well as the interview and application questions, highlight the principal's desire to have a coach who serves as an instructional leader, who's focused on helping teachers improve their practices, reviews and responds to data, provides professional development, and collaborates with teachers to develop assessments and curriculum pacing guides. This instructional leadership driven decision-making, on the part of the principal, contributed to creating a successful instructional coaching program.

Several participants described skillset and prior coaching experience as critical reasons for selecting and hiring the right teacher to lead instruction as a coach. Assistant Principal One explained that the principal "took a lot of things into consideration to my understanding. Of course, did they work in that certain field or area? Did they have success as well?" Based upon Assistant Principal Two's experience with hiring teachers to lead as instructional coaches the principal considered "the skillset, which coach would have had to prove that they are an exemplary teacher themselves based on their classroom observations as well as their students' data to show that there is a direct link between effective instructional strategies and students' achievement level." Instructional Coach Two explained why she thought she had been selected to coach at Lincoln Elementary saying, "I believe my principal chose me because I'm versed in subject matter." The principal agreed with the perception of Instructional Coach Two stating that,

We have one individual who's serving, and in a literacy coach role who I think is doing a really great job. She has been through the coaching endorsement. She's worked with ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) students. She's worked with gifted students. She's worked in high-performance schools. She's worked in schools with challenges. And I believe that her skillset, but more so her ability to influence people, her people skills, you know, people can have great skills, but can they influence people to do the right thing? And her tone, her demeanor, her work ethic, all of those things.

In addition to commentary from interviews, an artifact known as the Instructional Coach Application requires coaching candidates to explain what skillset they believe they would bring as a potential instructional coach. Having a strong skillset and a range of experiences was key to identifying which teachers have the potential to serve as instructional leaders in Lincoln Elementary's instructional coaching program. Focusing on a teacher's skillset was an instructional leadership driven decision of the principal at Lincoln Elementary.

In addition to identifying what skills the principal is looking for in a potential instructional coach, as the principal explained some of the challenges she has had with the instructional coaching program and instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary, she identified skills that some coaches were not well versed in.

Then we'd pick people that were really great teachers that have wanted to be a coach, that you want to give this opportunity to because you want to feel like you're being fair. They've gone through the coaching endorsement and they're really great teachers, but then you pull them out of the classroom and you realize they're not very good coaches. They can't lead people, they can't influence people.

When discussing how and why the current instructional coaches were selected, several participants noted that the ability to build relationships with teachers and others, to be able to lead and influence others and an overall set of people skills are essential to a coach's ability to instructionally lead others. A review of the literature also found the ability to build relationships as essential to the role of the instructional coach. Assistant Principal One's perception of the current instructional coaches included this statement about what the instructional coaches do daily, "They are in classrooms observing, initially building relationships, especially with people in the building that they may not have worked with or supported." Assistant Principal Two echoed a similar statement about how the current coaches were selected, "They would have to show that they have the capacity or the wherewithal to build relationships with teachers because I feel that that is a crucial component or skillset that a

coach must have." Instructional Coach Two explained her viewpoint on her people skills saying that "I know that first, you have to build relationships, you have to get people to trust you and then you actually have to find out where people are at in their craft, like how secure they are." The principal concurred, describing in explicit detail the success of one of the instructional coaches due to her ability to build relationships.

I think she's a fit for the role because she's knowledgeable and she has the people skills. She's generally, she is willing to work with people, not at people. She's not, she doesn't want to just say, okay, go find this. Go find this, this is where this is, this is where this is. She is going to sit with you and help you find it or she's going to bring it to you. She's, her tone, her body language is very approachable. She is not snippy or short with people.

This set of people skills was on full display during the collection of observational field notes. Instructional Coach Two was observed listening intently and when responding to teachers, made it clear that she not only heard what they had said but she also used probing questions to get teachers to think more deeply, as opposed to just telling them what she thought the teacher or teachers should do or say. Instructional Coach Two was also observed giving positive feedback and suggestions for growth. Relationship building was evident in the interview with Teacher One who noted that "I think the instructional coach here is phenomenal. She helped me a lot, and there was a point in time where I really needed a lot of help and so she was there to scaffold." The artifact, Instructional Coaching Interview Questions also includes questions and expected responses about relationship building and trust. Strong people skills and a strong ability to build relationships with others are skills that are of high value to the instructional coaching program and of the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary. Focusing on identifying teachers who have a strong set of people skills and an ability to build relationships with others was an instructional leadership driven-decision by the principal at Lincoln Elementary.

Instructional specialist is an instructional leadership role required of the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary. During document analysis, the Instructional Coaches Expectations resource defined the role of an instructional specialist as someone who, “provides guidance to teachers in the development of lesson plans, interventions, extensions, and assessments for the learning standards.” During the collection of interview data, several participants mentioned the support with curriculum and assessments as an important role of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. The principal explained that she expects the instructional coaches to “make sure the instructional pacing and assessments are aligned and that teachers are using the resources from the State, who creates our assessments.” When asked about any positive feedback she has gotten about the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary the principal stated, “Some of the positive feedback I’ve gotten is definitely the teachers being able to create their own assessments because that was a big thing in the beginning or just being able to pace it out.” Observational field notes included observations of the instructional coach drawing teachers attention to the learning standard and an analyzing of the standard resource to ensure that the teachers had a current and accurate knowledge and understanding of the learning standard they would be teaching the following week. A focus on an alignment between the curriculum, as laid out by the learning standards, and paced out by the teachers with the instructional planning and development of assessments is an essential component of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. As an instructional leader, the principal focuses the instructional coaching program on ensuring that there is an alignment between the curriculum an assessment. This instructional leadership driven decision has positively impacted the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary.

A review of the literature found that a common goal of instructional coaching programs is increasing student achievement (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013; Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Heineke, 2013; Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). The participants, documents, and observational field

notes supported the perception that reviewing and responding to data is an essential component of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. When discussing the principal's decision for having instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary, Assistant Principal Two noted, "It's really based on data. After reviewing our assessment data to see that there are some needs instructionally." Assistant Principal Two concurred explaining, "There was a review of the data, the historical data of the school. As well as looking at current teacher feedback data." Instructional Coach One explained that her role was, "to of course help with student achievement which is the ultimate goal and where we're wanting to go." Instructional Coach Two stated that "I believe my principal decided to develop the instructional coaching program so that teacher capacity could be built and in turn, it will increase student achievement." When discussing how she monitors the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program, the Principal said, "I monitor it basically through our data, if our data is not good in a particular area, then I'm looking to figure out why and how." Teacher Two also believed that the principal used data to monitor the instructional coaching program, "If the instructional coach is helping myself teach theme, is my class showing growth and understanding of theme? So she's going to look at the school's data from the DAs (District Assessments)." The artifact Instructional Coaches Expectations notes that one of the expectations of the instructional coaches is to serve as a data coach. Data as a tool for measuring and responding to student achievement data is a significant component to the instructional leadership of the principal and her work with the instructional coaching program.

Making changes or mid-course corrections were instructional leadership driven decisions that were mentioned by several interview participants. Participants stated that changes and mid-course corrections were often made in response to both assessment and observation data. Assistant Principal Two described the realization by herself and other administrators that there were instructional misconceptions on the part of teachers, "When there were still some struggles going on, and instructional gaps then changes needed to be done, that

mid-course correction so to speak, and then come up with a new plan for moving forward."

Assistant Principal Two concurred explaining that, "And from the administrators' meeting we debrief about the different things we see. So then the content area AP (Assistant Principal) can go back and say, this is our next step; here's how we'll intervene." The instructional coaches also perceived mid-course corrections as essential to the instructional coaching program.

Instructional Coach One explained that "Sometimes the coaches can be in the trenches and then sometimes they have to step back with an administrator and say, okay, what is the big picture again?" Instructional Coach Two noted that feedback from the administrator that supervises her helps inform the changes or mid-course corrections she needs to make, "I'm getting that feedback. It kind of helps me to know, like my next steps or if I need to change something I'm doing." Changes and mid-course corrections are essential instructional leadership driven decisions made between Lincoln Elementary's Principal, Assistant Principals, and Instructional Coaches.

One final instructional leadership driven decision made by the school leadership team and the instructional coaches is the selection and purchasing of resources to support teaching and learning. When asked about resources that are allocated to the instructional coaching program Assistant Principal One explained, "any professional text that is needed, professional learning in the district or outside is paid for by the school as needed." The principal echoed this sentiment noting that,

Any resources that were ever needed, we found ways in our school budget, we would vet those resources, and if it was something that we believed that could help our kids or help our teachers to do their work, to work smarter, not harder, we would purchase those resources for our teachers. Thankfully, we are a Title I school, which means that we usually have money in our budget reserve for professional learning.

Teacher Three and Teacher Four both noted the allocation of funds to purchasing Fountas and Pinell's Leveled Literacy Intervention System and the professional learning that was provided

by instructional coaches on how to use it as extremely beneficial. When asked what resources were allocated to the instructional coaching program Teacher Three stated that "The LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention) Kit. And then along with the support from the reading coach." Teacher Four echoed a similar statement saying that "The F&P (Fountas & Pinnell) kit. That helped me to know that these are characteristics that you need to look for in a book when you're picking it. But, I love the LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention) carts." Assistant Principal Two saw the greatest resource being allocated as, "The human resources, I would say that are available to the coaching program." Assistant Principal One explained the allocation of human resources further saying that the principal, "she got a pulse check from the Admin (administrative) Team, just to make sure that she had input and consistent consensus as well." Instructional Coach Two noted the allocation of human resources to the instructional coaching program after some time without coaches as, "the coaching needed to come back because the student achievement data was much higher when there was coaching." The allocation of human and professional resources are critical instructional leadership driven decisions which influence the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary.

Participant interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts support the perception that school leaders' instructional leadership driven decision-making is crucial to the instructional coaching program. Having a robust instructional skillset, people skills, and the ability to build relationships with others are essential abilities that an instructional coach must possess. Additionally, coaches serve as instructional specialists and assist teachers in gaining a deeper understanding of the curriculum, the learning standards, and how to align the curriculum with the assessments. Instructional leadership driven decision-making also includes regular reviews of assessment data and the flexibility to make mid-course corrections and provide necessary resources.

Instructional coaching support in the classroom.

A theme woven throughout the interviews with participants was the invaluable role that

instructional coaches play in providing time and support to teachers in their classrooms.

According to Mudzimiri et al. (2014), “effective coaching requires that school and district administrators prioritize time spent in classrooms and in one-on-one interactions with teachers” (p. 19). Data analysis finds that Lincoln Elementary devotes a tremendous amount of time to instructional coaching support in classrooms with teachers. As the Principal noted, “Time is the biggest, the biggest factor I think, for an instructional coaching program, giving the person the time they need to kind of meet with people.” At Lincoln Elementary, one of the primary roles of the instructional coach is providing support to teachers in their classrooms.

During interviews, several participants articulated that one of the primary goals of the instructional coaching program and one of the primary responsibilities of the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary is to help teachers improve their ability to provide quality and rigorous instruction to students. While discussing how she encourages struggling teachers on her grade level to determine when in their day they might invite an instructional coach in their classroom to provide support, Assistant Principal Two said,

I would have a list of questions in my mind that would steer that teacher towards thinking, oh, I must have a need in this particular area. So, that will spawn some reflection on their part and then reach out to that coach.

Assistant Principal Two further explained how she works with the instructional coaches to create time to support specific teachers on her grade level, highlighting how conversations with the instructional coach often go.

I'll say, have you noticed, that's how I couch the conversation, have you noticed whatever specific area I'm concerned about? It may be transitioning, or it may be the efficient manner of conducting a mini-lesson within a 10-minute time frame, or it may be the link between the conclusion of the mini-lesson to the next activity that the students will be doing independently or within a group. And then that's how I really frame my conversations with the coach directly by asking them to be mindful or be

looking, be on the lookout for x, y, and z, that I'm concerned about. So, I'll provide the specific domains and the areas of support for that coach.

Instructional Coach Two concurred with Assistant Principal Two stating that "There have been some specific teachers that I've been asked to go in and support." Teacher Three also discussed how instructional coaching has helped her to improve instruction saying, "It has not only helped the students, but it's helped me as a teacher to implement all those strategies to make sure they're successful for the next grade." Teacher Two said, "I've had a coach come in before to observe a lesson and then give me pointers on where to make some tweaks to make it better." During the interview with Instructional Coach One, she described how the principal follows up with teachers, who have received support from instructional coaches,

If you're going into any walkthroughs to see, that those teachers that have been coached, or they're on a continuum of learning themselves and they know that the coach has been doing some work with them. So, you could certainly go walk through and see how they're implementing the practices that they're learning.

Time spent helping teachers improve teaching practices was also evident during the collection of observational field notes. While observing an instructional coach working with a classroom teacher after some modeling had occurred, the coach was heard asking, "What did you see me do with this student?" The coach then listened carefully and scaffolded for the teacher to help her see how to better support her students in writing responses to their reading. A review of the artifacts found that on the Instructional Coaching Application, the question, "Give us an example of a time when you had to motivate other adults to change their behavior and/or practice?" was present. The artifact highlights the role that instructional coaches have spending time in classrooms with teachers helping them to improve their teaching practices. It is evident from the participant interviews, a review of the observation field notes, and the artifacts that time spent working in classrooms, with teachers, to improve their practices, is an essential role of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary.

Observing teachers and giving feedback emerged as a practice that instructional coaches use when supporting teachers in their classrooms. In an interview with Teacher Two, she mentioned, “Small, one on one sessions (with the instructional coach) to look at how to best serve my students just in different areas of need” as being helpful to her as a teacher. Teacher One mentioned feedback that she was given from an instructional coach explaining, “I was using the ice cream method, and there’s nothing wrong with it, but she gave me another strategy which was the, what is it called, the most important thing.” Teacher One elaborated further on her work with an instructional coach and receiving feedback,

She comes to my classroom about twice a week. She leaves me a grow and a glow.

And then she comes back to me on Friday and we have a meeting and then discuss what she observed and what I can do better.

Instructional Coach Two also discussed her role in observing teachers and giving feedback as charged to her by the principal explaining, “She expects observations to happen, modeling to happen, feedback to be given daily, and just supporting teachers and students in whatever they need support in.” Assistant Principal One highlighted some of the principal’s thinking about giving and receiving feedback as part of the instructional coaching program saying, “The people (instructional coaches), before she selected them, how did they respond to feedback when they were a classroom teacher before she pulled them out?” During the collection of observational field data, an instructional coach was observed giving written feedback to a teacher, which included both complimentary statements and growth statements. The artifact Instructional Coaches Expectations includes a statement about feedback in expectation 3.3, which reads, “Provides constructive and frequent feedback to teachers on their progress toward their learning goals.” Observing teaching practices in the classroom and providing feedback to teachers is an essential role of the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary.

Participant interviewees mentioned modeling as a standard component of the instructional coaching that happens in teachers' classrooms. When asked about the daily

practices of the instructional coaching program the principal responded, "Really the expected practices are just to be available, to be knowledgeable, to be available to support, to go in, to be ready to model." This is also mentioned in expectation 3.5 of the artifact Instructional Coaches Expectations, which says, "Models to ensure effective implementation of adopted curriculum." Instructional Coach Two echoed this expectation saying the principal, "expects observations to happen, modeling to happen, and feedback to be given daily." When discussing the benefits of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary Teacher Four said, "Having them (the instructional coaches) come in and model for me and then giving me the opportunity to model myself." Teacher Three described the work of one instructional coach, saying, "She's offering support with modeling reading strategies again and again." Teacher Two mentioned that "the coach came in specifically with writing to look at how my students do writing and also model how to best do writing conferences." An instructional coach was observed, while collecting field notes, modeling, for a first-grade teacher, on how to get her students to read independently. It is evident from the participant interviews, the artifacts, and the observational field notes that modeling is a regular component of the instructional coach's support in the classroom.

Time spent in classrooms supporting new teachers was a theme shared by many participants during interviews. During the interview with the principal, she mentioned new teachers as a reason for having an instructional coaching program explaining, "We constantly have a cadre of new teachers every year. So there was always, you know, someone that needed some support, some modeling." When asked about the practices of the instructional coaching program Assistant Principal Two stated, "There may be more time spent in one grade level, especially with new teachers, a number of new teachers on [sic] the team." When interviewing Teacher One, a teacher new at Lincoln Elementary she responded,

I think that the instructional coach here is phenomenal. She helped me out a lot and there was a point in time where I really needed a lot of help and so she was there to scaffold and now she's kind of letting me like, kind of breaking away a little bit more now. But, I

think at first I really did need her there and so she's phenomenal.

When asked, "So would you say that you, you would not have felt as effective this year if you had not had that support," Teacher One responded, "Yes!" When asked about her experience with instructional coaches Teacher Four responded, "As a new teacher coming in, it benefited me to have someone come in and model lessons for me and give me different ideas." When observing the instructional coach in classrooms and collecting field notes, two of the teachers she was observed supporting were first-year teachers at Lincoln Elementary. It is evident from the participant interviews and observations that instructional coaches focus on spending time supporting new teachers in their classrooms.

Time spent providing instructional coaching support in the classroom includes some specific components of the instructional coaching program. The focus on improving teaching practices is apparent through observation of teaching by instructional coaches and the feedback they provide to teachers. Additionally, modeling support by instructional coaches is available to teachers to help them enhance their teaching craft. Finally, a focus on supporting new teachers ensures that novice teachers are set up for success when coming to Lincoln Elementary.

Collaboration and preparation for collaboration.

Data from interviews revealed collaboration to be perceived as an essential component of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. Instructional coaches collaborate with teachers during twice-weekly collaborative planning; provide professional learning to teachers, and share ideas and resources with them. Instructional coaches also regularly meet with assistant principals and the principal. Time spent preparing to collaborate with teachers ensures that collaboration time is beneficial.

The interview with the Principal revealed, "Before I came, the school didn't have a collaborative learning time, where they met twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday." Subsequent interviews with participants explained how instructional coaches engage in collaborative learning. Assistant Principal One explained that "The coach gets invited to come to the

planning." She elaborated further saying that during planning, "They (the instructional coaches) model [sic] strategies." When discussing collaboration, Instructional Coach One noted, "I'm just thinking about collaborative planning and specifically, just starting to generate a team that functions together collaboratively." When discussing collaboration, Teacher Two responded, "That was mainly with a small group setting, with all the teachers who teach that subject, so reading for instance, and helping us make effective assessments that are going to address the standards." Teacher Three discussed collaborative planning time with the instructional coach explaining, "The coach just yesterday in a collaborative meeting, she came out and emphasized the gradual release, the gradual release model." When asked about the daily practices of the instructional coaches Teacher Four noted that "So planning, I use them as my expertise, because I felt like they are stronger." During the collection of observational field notes an instructional coach was observed providing support to the fifth-grade reading teachers. As they planned lessons, the instructional coach was observed listening attentively, drawing teachers' attention to the learning standard, and providing feedback and suggestions on the lesson. A review of the artifacts collected found that standard 5.2 of the document Instructional Coaches Expectations mentions, "Collaborates and networks with colleagues and community to reach educational decisions that enhance and promote teacher learning." This expectation was evident in both the responses of the interview participants as well as during the collection of observational field notes. Having instructional coaches provide support to teachers during collaborative planning time is a practice of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary that was instituted by the principal and valuable to the classroom teachers.

Professional learning was a practice of the instructional coaching program mentioned by many interview participants. Instructional Coach One said, "Of course there are other professional development aspects that are going to help support instruction. And so we also need to have a balance of professional development along with what they're doing in instructional planning." When asked about the daily practices of the instructional coaches,

Assistant Principal Two noted that,

Part of the day to day interactions of the coach would be looking to see what sort of professional development is needed for, not necessarily that teacher who needs support, but amongst the grade level, developing that professional learning, delivering it to teachers, and then some sort of implementation as a result of that professional learning.

The interview with Instructional Coach Two illuminated the professional development the coach is currently using.

We started an initiative called coaches lab, and it's kind of like job embedded professional development training. So, what happens is a team of teachers with my support, we plan a lesson based on an upcoming standard. And then, one of the teachers will go in and actually teach that standard. We will observe what the teacher's doing as well as what the students are doing. We're really focusing on what the students are doing and then we'll come back, we'll debrief, have a conversation and we'll decide if we need to change what we did in the lesson because the following day the other teachers on the team have to teach that same lesson.

During the interview with the Principal, she noted her excitement about the new professional learning initiative and how it will help teachers to grow.

One of the things that we are implementing right now is a coaching lab, which I think is going to be very, is going to be great because I think it is going to give teachers that opportunity to play in it, model it, see it, or to see it modeled for them, to implement it, then reflect on how it worked.

When reviewing the artifact, the Instructional Coaching Interview Questions, professional learning was found to be a component of the instructional coaching program. Question four asks a potential candidate to, "Describe your experiences developing, delivering, and implementing professional learning and speak to what you believe is most effective." The Instructional Coaches Expectations artifact requires coaches at Lincoln Elementary to,

"Facilitate professional learning opportunities in support of teaching and learning consistent with the philosophy, goals, objectives, and needs of the local school." Interviews and artifacts signal that determining a need for, developing, and delivering professional learning is a crucial component of the collaboration that occurs between instructional coaches and teachers at Lincoln Elementary.

Analysis of interview data found that one of the ways the instructional coaches prepare to collaborate with teachers is through meetings and feedback from the principal and assistant principals. Assistant Principal One discussed meeting with an instructional coach, explaining that instructional coaches are often, "Checking in with the AP (Assistant Principal), how has this person worked for your grade level? How has, just checking in." Assistant Principal Two talked about instructional coaches meeting with the principal, "There were periodic meeting with the coach in terms of getting a pulse of how it is going." The Principal recounted meetings with instructional coaches to discuss purchasing resources,

Any of the instructional coaches that came to me with an actual resource or they went to a meeting and said, hey, well we heard this school was using this or that. Any resources that were needed, we found ways in our school budget.

Instructional Coach Two described meetings with administrators in general, "I have talked to administration and they do, give me feedback from teachers, they've said that teachers feel comfortable and they're glad I'm coming into their classrooms." She then elaborated on meetings with an assistant principal, "I'm getting that feedback. It kind of helps me to know, like my next steps or if I need to change something I'm doing." Regular meetings and feedback with the principal and assistant principals assist instructional coaches in ensuring they are adequately collaborating with individual teachers and teacher teams.

Collaboration and preparation for collaboration emerged as a daily practice of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. Critical roles of the instructional coaches include attending twice-weekly collaborative planning, providing professional learning

to teachers, and sharing ideas and resources with them. Additionally, the instructional coaches frequently spend time preparing to collaborate with teachers.

The major themes that emerged after the triangulation of the interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts were instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration. Participant interviews aligned with each of the themes. Additionally, observational field notes revealed that instructional coaching support in the classroom and collaboration and preparation for collaboration are essential components of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. Finally, examination of artifacts found that instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration have led this school to measured growth.

Discussion.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the decisions and actions of a Title I, elementary school principal in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of an instructional coaching program. Previous research has found that principals should set goals and clear expectations for a coaching program, hire coaches that are content experts, provide coaches with adequate time to work with teachers, and be true advocates for the instructional coaching program (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). My rationale for this study was to investigate the decision-making of one principal and the instructional coaching program in the school, which has achieved the goal of improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement.

Instructional leadership, the theoretical framework, provided scholarly literature to support the methodology used for this dissertations study. A comprehensive review of the literature around instructional coaching revealed the complex role of an instructional coach, how instructional coaching can improve teaching practices and performance, and the role of the

principal in an instructional coaching program (Adams, 2011; Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Gibson, 2011; Knight, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). When discussing her work with an instructional coach Teacher Three stated, “She’s been supporting me with, with reading strategies, to enhance the student’s learning and to make sure they are achieving their reading goals by the end of the year.” When discussing the principal’s decision to put her in the coaching role, Coach Two said, “Looking at the data, I think it led her to believe that coaching might change some of the practices and increase student achievement.” According to Matsumura and Wang (2014), “In some schools, the coaching job is conceptualized as being to work primarily with teachers to improve their practice” (p. 5). Information gathered from interviews with participants, observational field notes, and analysis of artifacts provided the answers to the questions that guided this dissertation study.

The first research question asked: What are the leadership decisions and actions of the Title I elementary principal when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating an instructional coaching program? Considering there was a wide range of leadership decisions and actions of the principal identified by teachers and leaders, there were some commonalities in their perceptions, such as instructional leadership driven decision-making. The triangulation of interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts revealed several instructional leadership driven decisions as essential to an effective instructional coaching program.

When setting out to develop an instructional coaching program, setting expectations and making certain instructional coaches bring a skillset and people skills are crucial instructional leadership driven decisions. One of the charges the principal set out for the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary was to ensure that there is an alignment between the curriculum and the school's assessments. When she found out that an instructional coach was aware of a misalignment, she moved that instructional coach back to the classroom. This change to the instructional coaching program was just one of many that the principal engaged in as she responded to data and made necessary mid-course corrections. Another instructional

leadership driven decision of the principal was to provide requested resources when they align with the work of the instructional coaching program. An instructional leadership driven decision-making approach has served the principal of Lincoln Elementary well as the leader of the instructional coaching program.

Steiner and Kowal (2007) found that principals need to clarify the coaches' role. Many of the participants perceived the principal's role in setting expectations for the instructional coaching program and the instructional coaches' roles and responsibilities as important to a principal's instructional leadership driven decision-making. When asked about what the principal expects of her, Coach Two responded, "Supporting teachers and students in whatever way they need support." In essence, the principal has set clear expectations and communicated those to the instructional coaches at Lincoln Elementary.

When designing and implementing the plan for the instructional coaching program, identifying teachers with the right skillset and people skills were examples of instructional leadership driven decision-making and essential to identifying the right candidate. According to Heineke (2013), the greatest challenge instructional coaches face is building relationships with teachers. During an interview with Assistant Principal Two, she discussed a former instructional coach being moved back to the classroom due to her inability to build relationships with teachers. A subsequent interview with the principal highlighted why a current instructional coach was a good fit for the role. The principal said, "I think she's a good fit for the role because she's knowledgeable and she's got the people skills."

According to Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010), as an instructional leader, the principal should be involved in the design and implementation of the curriculum and assessment. The principal of Lincoln Elementary is an instructional leader who understands the importance of aligning curriculum with the assessments. During an interview with the principal, she shared that when she found a former instructional coach knew that a grade level's curriculum pacing was not aligned to district standards, she decided to place that coach back in

the classroom. The principal responded, "She saw things that were happening that were not correct, and she was not correcting them and leading them on the right path, nor was she, informing the assistant principal that the team is on the wrong path." The principal's role as an instructional leader influences her decisions about the instructional coaching program.

Mitchell et al.'s (2015) research found that principals engage in a regular examination of student test data. Undoubtedly, this practice fit the principal in this study in terms of the descriptions the principal and participants used to describe the effective instructional leadership practice of data-driven decision-making. The principal regularly reviewed district and state assessment data when determining if changes or course corrections needed to be made to the practices of the instructional coaches or the instructional coaching program. When asked how she monitors the practices of the instructional coaches the principal acknowledged, "I monitor it through the data." Surprisingly, one role of an instructional coach at Lincoln Elementary as outlined on the artifact, Instructional Coaches Expectations is that of Data Coach. However, data collected did not find Instructional Coaches at Lincoln Elementary to be reviewers of or responders to the data. Instructional Coach Two said, "I think it's (instructional coaching) helping. Although I don't have any like data evidence at this time." Although the principal engages in the instructional leadership practice of analyzing data and responding to the data by making changes to the coaching program or mid-course corrections, there is no evidence that instructional coaches partake in the same work.

It was clear throughout my interviews with participants and observations of the instructional coaching program in action that the principal leads as an instructional leader and that she expects the instructional coaches to be instructional leaders. She set expectations for the instructional coaching program that were seen being carried out, she selected instructional coaches who had a strong skillset and ability to build relationships with teachers, there was a focus on an alignment between curriculum and assessment, and all decisions regarding the instructional coaching program were data-driven. The principal summed her devotion to the

instructional coaching program now and going forward saying, “I look forward to trying to create it, and build it back to a very rigorous [sic] program, as well as capacity building for teachers to help our students to continue to grow and the teachers to continue to grow.”

The second phase of this study focused on the research question: What components of the instructional coaching program does the Title I elementary principal perceive as having been effective? According to Galey (2016), instructional coaches help teachers improve their practices, while balancing collaboration support. The review of the research on the role of the instructional coach concluded that instructional coaches build relationships with teachers, assist teachers in improving their instructional practices, and provide feedback to teachers on their practices (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthaw, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). The results of the data in this dissertation support the research that instructional coaching support in the classroom is an essential component of an instructional coaching program. What was not revealed through a review of the literature, but was found to be an essential component of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary is collaboration and preparation for collaboration.

All participants deemed instructional coaching support in the classroom to be an effective practice of the instructional coaching program at Lincoln Elementary. Interview participants explained that through observation, feedback, and modeling, instructional coaches were able to help teachers improve their instructional practices, and in particular, that of new teachers. Teacher Two replied, “I’ve had a coach come in before to observe a lesson that I’ve done and then give me pointers on where to make some tweaks to make it better.” Teacher One concurred, explaining how an instructional coach visits her classroom approximately twice a week and leaves positive and constructive feedback, and debriefs with her each Friday. Time spent providing instructional coaching support in the classroom was perceived to be a valuable practice of the instructional coaching program.

Surprisingly, participants perceived collaboration with the instructional coach as a critical component of the instructional coaching program. Participants discussed coaching support during collaborative planning, instructional coaches leading professional learning, and meetings with the instructional coaches and school leaders as valuable practices of the instructional coaching program. Instructional Coach One stated, "I'm just thinking about collaborative planning and specifically, just starting to generate a team that functions together collaboratively instead of just having one or two people being those go to people." Teacher Two concurred, "Helping us make effective assessments that are going to address all the standards and are at a high enough level for the students." Time spent during collaborative planning, supporting teachers in preparing lessons and assessments is an effective component of an instructional coaching program.

The findings in this dissertation study were aligned with the research that instructional leadership driven decision-making can positively impact an instructional coaching program and improve teaching practices (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Additionally, data analysis found instructional coaching support in the classroom to be an effective component of the instructional coaching program (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthaw, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Unexpectedly, collaboration and preparation for collaboration were components of the instructional coaching program perceived as effective by participants.

Limitations.

While this research study gave a voice to the perceptions and experiences of school leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers when working with the instructional coaching program, there were limitations of the study. This dissertation study was conducted in only one

Title I school in a large urban school district with only nine participants. The objective when selecting interview participants was to gain a broad perspective of the decisions and actions of the principal concerning the instructional coaching program and the perceived effective components of the program. Only two assistant principals participated in the study; however, eight assistant principals have worked with instructional coaches during the current principal's tenure. Additionally, only two instructional coaches participated in the study, whereas six instructional coaches have worked at Lincoln Elementary since the principal took the position. Although four teachers participated in the study, 92 certified teachers work in the school. Consequently, two of the teacher participants' interviews were short in length. The brevity of interviews with those two teachers resulted in some respondents being unaware of the principal's decision-making. All teacher participants were general education/classroom teachers. Therefore, the perspectives of special education and special area teachers who may have worked with an instructional coach were not included in this study.

1. Several limitations and biases that are intrinsic to conducting a case study in the same school site in which the researcher works existed in this study. These include:
Although there is a significant amount of literature written about instructional coaching, there is limited literature about the role that the principal plays in the instructional coaching program for me to draw upon.
2. My experience as an instructional coach and my experience working with instructional coaches in my school steered me towards my research interests and questions, which led to the case study design. Conducting a qualitative study means that there is no statistical analysis and therefore empirical generalizations are not possible.
3. This qualitative case study focuses on the beliefs and perceptions of the principal and those working around the instructional coaching program. It did not account for the impact of any other factors (district influences, professional learning, teaching

experience, etc.) that may have influenced participants' perceptions of the principal and the instructional coaching program.

4. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts. Although every effort was made to remove bias and establish an honest rapport, participants may have chosen to configure their responses in a manner they feel that I, as the researcher, desire.
5. As an assistant principal in the school where the study was conducted, I have the advantage of insider status (Merriam, 1998); however, this can potentially increase subjectivity. Therefore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed using Temi and member checking and peer review were used in order to regularly monitor the potential for any bias, which could have negatively affected this study.

Implications.

Future research on leadership decision-making and practices of an instructional coaching program could benefit policymakers, state and district leaders, teacher and leader preparation programs, and local school leaders. A review of the literature for this dissertation study found that instructional coaching is a viable means for teacher development and the improvement of teaching practices (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthaw, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Additionally, research found that school leaders play a critical role in setting goals for the instructional coaching program and hiring teachers who have the skillset to lead as instructional coaches (Denton and Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz 2003; Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

This study contributes to the existing literature on instructional coaching. Furthermore, this dissertation study revealed findings for school leaders as they consider using instructional coaching as a method for improving teacher performance. When developing an instructional

coaching program, school leaders need to make informed decisions and utilize strategic planning. This research study uncovered that instructional leadership driven decision-making is essential to developing, implementing, and monitoring an effective instructional coaching program, which should help school leaders avoid the barriers to sustaining this impactful initiative.

The findings in this dissertation study illuminate several instructional leadership driven decisions, which contributed to a successful instructional coaching program. For school leaders considering an instructional coaching program a strong skillset, people skills, and an ability to align curriculum with assessment should be critical qualities of a potential instructional coach. Setting expectations of the instructional coaches and monitoring the instructional coaches to ensure those expectations are executed is vital. Some classroom teachers were unaware of some of the principal's decision-making when implementing and monitoring the instructional coaching program. Future principals might consider candor and transparency with classroom teachers during these processes. Leaders might include general education/classroom teachers in the instructional coaching interview and selection process. Principals and school leaders could also share the instructional coach expectations with general education/classroom teachers to ensure that there is a common understanding of the coaches' role and responsibilities.

This research study finds that leaders who do not monitor the data to ensure the instructional coaches are positively influencing teaching practices and thus student achievement run the risk of a significant impediment to sustaining growth. Therefore, flexibility and a willingness to make mid-course corrections is an essential component of an effective instructional coaching program. This includes a readiness to purchase new instructional resources as needed. This new knowledge contributes to the limited research around the elementary principal's role in designing, implementing, and monitoring an instructional coaching program. Additionally, this research study did not conclude any findings about the culture of Lincoln Elementary. The first component of the instructional leadership theoretical

framework, vision, mission, and learning-focused culture does not completely align with this study's findings. Although participants noted that, the principal and the instructional coaches focus on teaching and learning, neither a vision or mission for the instructional coaching program nor a learning-focused culture at the school were mentioned by participants. Future research into the impact of missions, visions, and a learning-focused culture in a school and its instructional coaching program could contribute to this field of study.

The study findings also support and extend previous research on the effectiveness of instructional coaching as a tool for improving teaching practices (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthew, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014). As Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) reported, instructional coaching is "a way to support teachers in their efforts to provide high-quality teaching in the academic areas including reading, math, and science" (p.151). Time spent providing instructional coaching support in the classroom was found to be an essential component of the instructional coaching program, as it helps to achieve the goal of improving teaching practices. Observation, feedback, and modeling, particularly with new teachers, were support components perceived as being beneficial to teachers.

The words and actions of the participants in this study indicated collaboration between the instructional coaches and teachers as a practice of the instructional coaching program perceived to be beneficial. A review of the literature had not indicated collaboration between instructional coaches and others as a common practice of instructional coaching programs. According to study participants, instructional coaching support during collaborative planning was instrumental to teacher growth and preparation for quality instruction. Additionally, participants indicated professional learning provided by the instructional coaches as a practice of the instructional coaching program that was integral to teacher growth. Further, many participants discussed collaboration and meeting time between instructional coaches and school leaders as instrumental to the success of the instructional coaching program.

Conclusions

Research finds that teachers continue to leave the profession at alarming rates (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). Teachers report frustrations due to a lack of support in classroom management, instruction, and organizational management (Curtis, 2012, De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Struyven, 2014). In order to support new and struggling teachers, some principals implement instructional coaching programs. These programs can improve teaching practices in the classroom and lead to well trained teachers who can contribute to increased student achievement (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthaw, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014).

As more school leaders implement instructional coaching programs, it is crucial for them to know the factors that influenced leaders who were successful at designing, implementing, and monitoring an instructional coaching program. This study examined and identified several key factors, through personal interviews with teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders, in a school that has been successful in using instructional coaching to increase teacher capacity and student achievement. Interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts also revealed the components of the instructional coaching program that the principal and others perceived to be effective. Data analysis found instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration to be effective components of an instructional coaching program.

This study aligned with the scholarly literature that instructional leadership is vital to creating and sustaining a successful instructional coaching program. Interview data from teachers, instructional coaches, and leaders who participated in this dissertation study perceived the instructional leadership driven decision-making of the principal as highly effective.

Instructional leadership driven decision-making was essential when hiring coaches that have a strong skillset and ability to build relationships, setting expectations for those instructional coaches, aligning curriculum with assessment, regularly reviewing data and making necessary mid-course corrections, and providing necessary resources. One instructional leadership driven-decision not found was instructional coaching training for leaders. During an interview with the principal, she said,

Before coming to this school, I had never worked with coaches, I had never been in a school that had coaches. I had never had a coach. I knew that schools had coaches, but the schools where I had worked as a teacher in the years in the district and the years when I had worked as an assistant principal. None of those schools had coaches. So, I wasn't really familiar.

Before embarking on a journey to develop and implement an instructional coaching program within their school, school and district leaders might consider ensuring that the principal is well trained in the work of instructional coaches.

This investigation found there to be two components most impactful in an effective instructional coaching program: instructional coaching support in the classroom and collaboration and preparation for collaboration. Assistant Principal Two summed up the components of the instructional coaching program perfectly, “There are daily classroom visits, interactions and feedback to teachers and I also expect that the coaching model is being implemented.” This practice of daily classroom support aligns with the scholarly literature that instructional coaches work side by side, in classrooms, on a daily and consistent basis (Adams, 2011; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Kawinkamolroj, Triwaranyu, & Thongthaw, 2015; Knight, 2007; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2013; Mudzimiri et al., 2014).

Collaboration and preparation for collaboration were common practices of the instructional coaching program deemed effective by participants. Surprisingly, this practice

was not revealed during the review of scholarly literature. When discussing collaboration with an instructional coach Teacher Four said,

So planning with, I use them as my expertise, because I felt like they are stronger and I teach math, but just getting ideas from working together, well, okay, I've tried this, you know just working with them and them sharing different ideas with me.

In addition to collaborative planning, support participants mentioned the professional learning that the coaches provide as a valuable component of the instructional coaching program.

Finally, participants noted that time for the instructional coach to collaborate with school leaders was an essential practice of an effective instructional coaching program.

Studying an instructional coaching program to determine the decisions and actions of the principal and the components of the program that are perceived as effective revealed instructional leadership driven decision-making, instructional coaching support in the classroom, and collaboration and preparation for collaboration essential to an effective program. It was clear from the words of the teachers, instructional coaches, and leaders that, considering certain vital factors when designing, implementing, and monitoring an instructional coaching program can lead to success for teachers, students, and school performance. The principal powerfully summarized her perception of the instructional coaching program as it currently stands today,

I look forward to, you know, trying to create it, and develop it back to a very strong and rigorous program, as well as a capacity-building program for our teachers, to help our teachers continue to grow and our students to continue to grow.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

Georgia State University

Informed Consent

Title: Examination of the Development, Implementation, and Monitoring of one Instructional Coaching Program in an Urban Title I Elementary School

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nicholas J. Sauers

Student Principal Investigator: Joseph D. Sanfilippo

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to learn how the decisions made by the elementary school principal as he or she developed an instructional coaching program has led to school improvement. You are invited to take part in this study because you are either the principal or someone who works with the instructional coaching program. A total of 8-11 people will be asked to take part in this study.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will be interviewed to share your experience with the instructional coaching program. Please note:

- The total participation time will not be longer 125 minutes.
- The interview will be held at school and will be at a time and held in a location that is comfortable and convenient for you.
- The interview will last approximately 70 minutes.
- The interview will be recorded to allow the researcher to write out the session.
- You will be allowed to review the written interview in order to be sure that the information recorded truly represents your views. This will take approximately 10 minutes.
- You may be asked if they would be willing to provide the researcher copies of supporting documents. Collection of supporting documents will take approximately 45 minutes.
- You may be asked if they would be willing to be observed working with the instructional coaching program. Participants will be asked to be observed 1-3 times.

Future Research

Researchers will remove information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If we do this, we will not ask for any additional consent for you.

Risks

Although the principal may know that assistant principals, coaches, teachers, and/or staff members may participate in the study, he or she will not know who has decided to participate in the study. In order to protect the identity of participants, names will not be used. Instead, participants will be referred to as Assistant Principal 1, Coach 2, Teacher 3, etc. The assistant superintendent is going to provide the researcher's contact information to principal's in schools that meet the site selection criteria. The researcher will not refer to the principal by name in the study. He will simply refer to him or her as the principal. All other participants will know that the principal has participated in the study.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you. Overall, we hope to gain information about the decisions and actions of the principal as he or she developed an instructional coaching program, which has led to school growth.

Alternatives

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Your choice to take part or not take part in this study will not affect your employment at Hopkins Elementary School.

Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Dr. Nicholas J. Sauers
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

We will use numbers (coach 2, teacher 8 ...) instead of your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored on a password and firewall protected audio recorder and laptop computer. When we share the findings of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you. An audio recorder will be used in order to record the information you share during the interview. The recordings will be written out, but your name will not be included. The audio recordings and transcription will be kept on a password-protected computer. Writings of the recordings will be completed as soon as possible and the recording will then be destroyed to minimize a breach of confidentiality since voices are potentially identifiable to anyone who hears a recording.

Contact Information

Contact Dr. Nicholas J. Sauers and Joseph Sanfilippo at 404-314-3430 or jsanfilippo2@gsu.edu

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant
- if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX B**Principal Interview Protocol**

During this interview, please do not to use any names or share information that can identify specific people.

1. How did you decide that there was a need for an instructional coaching program in your school?
2. What goals did you set for the instructional coaching program when you began designing it?
3. What, if any resources did you decide to allocate to the instructional coaching program?
4. What actions did you take as you developed a plan for your instructional coaching program including expected practices of the instructional coaches?
5. How did you decide on the selection criteria as you screened potential candidates? How did you determine candidate fitness?
6. As you prepared to implement the instructional coaching program, what actions did you take in regards to preparing and/or training the instructional coach or coaches?
7. How many instructional coaches do you currently have in your school and how long have they served in the role?
8. How do you monitor the implementation of the coaching plan and the practices of the instructional coaches?
9. Describe a time when you changed a practice of an instruction coach or the instructional coaching program. Why did you believe this change would be effective?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about the instructional coaching program in your school that I did not ask?

APPENDIX C

Assistant Principal Interview Protocol

During this interview, please do not to use any names or share information that can identify specific people.

1. What is your role in relationship to the instructional coaches and/or the instructional coaching program?
2. What do you understand to be your principal's decision making behind the development of the instructional coaching program?
3. What resources did your principal allocate to the instructional coaching program?
4. What actions do you know that your principal took when designing the instructional coaching program?
5. How as selection criteria developed for potential candidates? How was candidate fitness determined?
6. What actions do you know that your principal took when implementing the instructional coaching program?
7. How would you describe the daily practices of the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program in your school?
8. How does your principal monitor the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program?
9. As you understand it, how does your principal decide when the practices of the instructional coach or coaches and/or the instructional coaching program need to be changed?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about the instructional coaching program in your school that I did not ask?

APPENDIX D

Instructional Coach Interview Protocol

During this interview, please do not to use any names or share information that can identify specific people.

1. What do you understand to be the reason why your principal decided to develop the school's instructional coaching program?
2. What do you understand to be your principal's selection criteria for a potential instructional coach? Why do you think the principal chose you?
3. What actions did you observe your principal take as the instructional coaching program was being implemented?
4. What daily practices does your principal expect of the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program?
5. How would you describe the daily practices of the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program in your school?
6. How does your principal monitor the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program?
7. As you understand it, how does your principal decide when the practices of the instructional coach or coaches and/or the instructional coaching program need to be changed?
8. Who evaluates your performance? How are you evaluated? How are you given feedback on your performance as an instructional coach?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about the instructional coaching program in your school that I did not ask?

APPENDIX F

Teacher & Staff Member Interview Protocol

During this interview, please do not to use any names or share information that can identify specific people.

1. What has been your experience with the instructional coach or coaches and/or the instructional coaching program in your school?
2. What do you understand to be your principal's decision making behind the development of the instructional coaching program?
3. What resources did your principal allocate to the instructional coaching program?
4. What actions do you know that your principal took when designing the instructional coaching program?
5. As you understand it, how were the instructional coaches selected by your principal?
6. What actions do you know that your principal took when implementing the instructional coaching program?
7. From your perspective, what are the daily practices of the instructional coaches in your school?
8. As you understand it, how does your principal monitor the instructional coaches and the instructional coaching program?
9. Do you have any knowledge of your principal's process for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional coach or coaches and/or the instructional coaching program?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about the instructional coaching program in your school that I did not ask?

APPENDIX G

Observation Protocol

Notes are being only being recorded by the researcher, Joe Sanfilippo. Notes will only be recorded about participants in the study. No third party information will be recorded on this form.

Coach(es) _____

Teacher(s)/Staff Member(s) _____

School Leader(s) _____

Grade Level/Subject/Lesson Focus _____

Date _____ Start Time _____ End Time _____

Time	Descriptive Notes	Reflection

APPENDIX H

Instructional Coach Application

1. Tell me a little about yourself and how you prioritize and manage your time.
2. How would you describe the role an Instructional Coach; what unique skill sets do you bring to the role?
3. Tell us about your current role, how do you differentiate Math instruction, and your impact on student achievement?
4. Describe your experiences developing, delivering, and implementing professional learning and speak to what you believe is most effective.
5. Explain how you will use student achievement data to plan your work with teachers and students?
6. Give us an example of a time when you had to motivate other adults to change their behavior and/or practice?
7. Describe how you utilize technology or technology based instructional resources?
8. What goals do you have in mind if you were to step into the role of Instructional Coach?
9. What are your thoughts about the relationship between administrators and coaches to supporting teachers?
10. What is your experience in creating lessons and assessments for others? How do you handle when they don't like what you created? Resistance?

APPENDIX I

Potential Instructional Coach Interview Form

Instructional Literacy Coach Interview Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

Review Position Details:

* Describe the class and/or position.

* Clearly identify the expectations.

*We will discuss the final candidates as an interview team. Once a decision has been made, all candidates will be informed. If applicable, give date of final decision. Please let them know.

*Ask the candidate for their resume & any documentation they brought.

*Remember to make copies of documentation they need back.

Describe your teaching experience.**Describe your teaching experience.**

Points	Experience	Grade Levels	Notes
1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 -3 Years Teaching		
2	<input type="checkbox"/> 4+ Years Teaching		

What do you feel your strengths and areas of development are as a teacher? _____Answers: I don't know (0 pts.) Can name at least one strength and one weakness (1 pt.)

- Can name multiple strengths related to teaching and learning; can name at least one weakness with an explanation of how they plan to work on improving in this area (2 pts.)

Listed Strengths:

Listed Areas of Development:

What is your philosophy on teaching?

Answers:

- I don't really have a philosophy (0 pts)

Possible Answers: (1 pt each)

- All students can learn Set high expectations Differentiating Instruction
 Keep students engaged Make learning fun/multisensory approach
 Curriculum Integration Inquiry Based Learning

	Thoughts (1 pt. per answer)	Description (1 pt. per answer)	Experience (Points-circle)
Math			
Total points:	Promotes small group instruction	Opening: Warm-Up, Calendar Math, Vocabulary Preview, Activating Activity	No experience at all!
_____	Allows me to formatively assess my students	other relevant: _____	Student teaching only
	Promotes differentiated learning	Whole group mini lesson: Teacher focused/Direct instruction, Practice with Teacher, Use of Manipulatives,	1-3 years
	Promotes integration of other content areas		4+ years

	<p>Other relevant answers:</p>	<p>Exemplars, Vocabulary Development, Formative Assessment(s)</p> <p>other relevant: _____</p> <p>Small guided groups: other students engaged in centers, stations, math games, extension</p> <p>other relevant: _____</p> <p>Closing: Journaling, Summarizing Answer EQs, Vocabulary Review</p> <p>other relevant: _____</p>	
<p>Reading</p> <p>Total points: _____</p>	<p>Allows my students to select and read a variety of different genres, authors, and texts</p> <p>Emphasizes independent reading</p> <p>Promotes small group instruction</p> <p>Allows me to formatively assess my students</p> <p>Promotes differentiated learning</p> <p>Promotes integration of other content areas</p> <p>Other relevant answers:</p>	<p>Mini Lesson: Whole group lesson, read aloud, shared reading, warm-up, other relevant: _____</p> <p>Small groups: targeted instruction based on instructional reading level or 1:1 conferencing with the teacher &</p> <p>Independent Reading: student choice, independent reading level, peer conferencing, document reading</p> <p>response in journal, other relevant:</p>	<p>No experience at all!</p> <p>Student teaching only</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>4+ years</p>

		<hr/> <p>Share/Closing: share journal entries or focus for the day, other relevant:</p> <hr/>	
Writing			
Total points: _____	<p>Provides me the opportunity to explicitly model a strategy, approach, or skill with my students.</p> <p>Allows my students the opportunity to write independently and practice the skill that I taught.</p> <p>Promotes small group instruction</p> <p>Allows me to formatively assess my students</p> <p>Promotes differentiated learning</p> <p>Promotes integration of other content areas</p> <p>Other relevant answers:</p>	<p>Mini Lesson: Modeling, whole group instruction, anchor charts, guided practice, other relevant: _____</p> <p>Small groups or conferring 1:1:</p> <p>Independent Practice: independent writing based on interest or needs, peer conferencing, publishing, other relevant: _____</p> <p>Share/Closing: summarize learning, share writing, other relevant: _____</p>	<p>No experience at all!</p> <p>Student teaching only</p> <p>1-3 years</p> <p>4+ years</p>

Other answers aligned with our school focus: _____

What are your thoughts about the Math, Reading, and Writing Workshops? Describe how they will look in your classroom. Do you have any experience with any?

What does the term *coaching* mean to you?

Possible Answers: (1 pt each) Listen For:

- Collaboration
- Partnership
- Learning together
- Focus on working with teachers as clients
- Enhancing teacher capacity
- Job-embedded professional development
- Ultimate goal is greater student success.
- Emphasis on building strengths rather than fixing “weak” teachers
- Coaching is beneficial for all educators
- Other answers aligned with our school

focus: _____

When you think about your typical day as a coach, what kinds of tasks would you be doing?

Possible Answers: (1 pt each) Listen For:

working with teachers Coaching conversations Collaboration with professional learning teams

Demonstration Other appropriate answers: _____

What are the qualities of an effective coaching conversation? Listen For:

	Components	Notes
1 pt. per answer	Coaches listens before speaking Conversation starts where teacher is, not where coach wants teacher to be Questions are open and honest-i.e. coach does not know the answer and wants to hear teacher's answer Problem finding and problem solving Data are used to support claims, understand problems/challenges, plan instructional strategies, and determine effectiveness of changes made. Coach and teacher have adequate time to meet	
0 pts 1 pt.	No knowledge of coaching conversation. Limited Knowledge of coaching conversation.	

If you are successful as a coach in this school, how would I be able to tell that at the end of your first year?

1 pt. each Listen For:

Teachers making decisions informed by data Teacher articulating why they made particular instructional decisions Greater Collaboration among teachers Coach in partnership will all teachers (or with all teachers in the identified grade level and/or area) Other answers aligned to the school focus

How do you see yourself working with professional learning teams? 1 pt each: Listen For:

Possible roles for the coach: facilitator, member, occasional contributor

Partnership Job-embedded Problem finding and problem solving Helping teams works with differences among themselves Purpose of teams is enhanced decision making, inquiry, learning to help our students learn

Other:

As a coach, how would you develop trust with teachers ? Listen For:

	Methods	Notes
1 pt. per answer	<p>Listening</p> <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Providing feedback in the form of paraphrasing to indicate understanding of teacher's perspective</p> <p>No judgment</p> <p>Body Language</p> <p>Separating coaching from supervising</p> <p>Other relevant answers:</p>	

What makes for a successful demonstration lesson? Listen For:

	Methods	Notes
1 pt. per answer	<p>Demonstration lesson grow out of coaching conversation.</p> <p>Demonstration lesson addresses goal/need of teacher.</p> <p>Teacher is interested and engaged during the demonstration.</p> <p>The lesson is in synch with the curricular goals and standards for that class.</p> <p>Teacher and coach discuss the lesson in advance.</p> <p>A debriefing conversation takes place soon after the demonstration.</p> <p>The debriefing conversation discusses not only what was done but also <i>why</i> it was done.</p> <p>Other relevant answers</p>	

What is the role of data in the work of a coach? Listen For:

	Methods	Notes
1 pt. per answer	<p>Data does not drive the work; it is an essential tool.</p> <p>Good questions in the coaching conversation elicit data.</p> <p>Skilled coaches ask questions to help teachers analyze and apply data in decision making.</p> <p>Teachers and coaches together gather a broad range of data.</p> <p>Data are useful in making instructional decisions and in determining whether instructional decisions were effective.</p>	

How do you perceive the relationship of a coach with the school principal? Listen For:

	Methods	Notes
1 pt. per answer	<p>Coach meets regularly with principal.</p> <p>Coach and principal discuss overall direction of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.</p> <p>Coach and principal do not share confidential information about teachers.</p> <p>Coach does not contribute to principal's understanding of individual teachers in a way that would affect the principal's evaluation of those teachers.</p> <p>Coach discusses his/her professional goals with principal.</p> <p>Coach serves as resource to principal in principal's role as learning leader.</p>	

Describe a difficult situation in which you were ultimately successful. Listen For:

- Evidence of stamina
- Evidence of attempts to understand others' perspectives
- Regarding the others with respect
- The ability to work with someone who has a different perspective
- The ability to take problem-solving stance and work toward a solution

Describe a time when you worked collaboratively to make a difference in your school. (1pt each)**Listen For:**

- Collaboration that really engaged all participants.
- Evidence problem-solving
- Respect for all participants
- Specific evidence of how the collaboration made a difference

Why do you want to be a literacy coach? Listen For:

	Methods	Notes
1 pt. per answer	Commitment to teachers as colleagues and partners. Commitment to learning-students', teachers', and coaches' Recognition of teachers' strengths Coach desire to form partnerships with teachers and teams. Coach discusses his/her professional goals with principal. Other relevant reasons aligned to school focus.	

Applicant Name: _____**Total Points:** _____Do you think this candidate would be a **perfect fit** for this team? Yes No**Other Notes/Comments:**

APPENDIX J

Instructional Coaches Expectations

1. **Learning Facilitator:** Consistently demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and pedagogical knowledge.

1.1 Addresses appropriate curriculum standards and integrates key content elements.

1.2 Facilitate professional learning opportunities in support of teaching and learning consistent with the philosophy, goals, objectives and needs of the local school.

2. **Data Coach:** Collect and facilitate data discussions using a variety of sources including, but not limited to local, state, national, and standardized testing programs to monitor student achievement and ensure the data drives instructional decisions.

2.1 Utilize data to identify strengths and areas of need of student learning

2.2 Ensures that student data drives instructional decisions at the classroom and school level

3. **Mentor:** Model in classrooms as appropriate and communicate with various parties regarding the growth and development of teachers to help them gain knowledge of the curriculum, best practices, procedures and instructional strategies.

3.1 Create model classrooms as guides for teachers

3.2 Maximize coaching time by assisting colleagues when needed.

3.3 Responds to teacher request for support in a timely manner.

3.4 Provides constructive and frequent feedback to teachers on their progress toward their learning goals.

3.5 Models to ensure effective implementation of adopted curriculum.

3.6 Collect data on teachers being supported, type of support provided, and outcomes of the support

4 Instructional Specialist: Provide guidance to teachers in the development of lesson plans, interventions, extensions, and assessments for the learning standards.

4.1 Aligns student assessments with the established curriculum and benchmarks.

4.2 Expands teachers' use of a variety of resources based on instructional strategies and resources to improve instruction.

4.3 Aligns and ensures implementation of adopted curriculum.

5 Communication: Communicate effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.

5.1 Uses verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to foster positive interactions and promote learning in the classroom and school environment.

5.2 Collaborates and networks with colleagues and community to reach educational decisions that enhance and promote teacher learning.

5.3 Uses precise language, correct vocabulary and grammar, and appropriate forms of oral and written communication.

5.5 Explains directions, concepts, and lesson content to teachers in a logical, sequential, and age-appropriate manner.

5.6 Adheres to school and district policies regarding communication of teacher information.

5.7 Creates a climate of accessibility for teachers by demonstrating a collaborative and approachable style.

5.8 Listens and responds with cultural awareness, empathy, and understanding to the voice and opinions of stakeholders (parents, community, students, and colleagues).

5.9 Uses modes of communication that are appropriate for a given situation.

6 Professionalism: Consistently exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.

6.1 Carries out duties in accordance with federal and state laws, Code of Ethics, and established state and local school board policies, regulations, and practices.

6.2 Maintains professional demeanor and behavior (e.g., appearance, punctuality and attendance).

6.3 Respects and maintains confidentiality.

6.4 Evaluates and identifies areas of personal strengths and weaknesses related to professional skills and their impact on student learning and sets goals for improvement.

6.5 Participates in ongoing professional growth activities based on identified areas for improvement (e.g., mentoring, peer coaching, course work, conferences) and incorporates learning into classroom activities.

6.6 Demonstrates flexibility in adapting to school change.

6.7 Engages in activities outside the classroom intended for school and student enhancement

7 Other duties as assigned by the administration, including but not limited to supporting small group instruction in classrooms and administering assessments.

