ADJUSTING THE LENS: LITERACY COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

by

PATRICIA TRACY WALDRIP

(Under the Direction of LINDA LABBO)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways literacy coaches develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work. Seven elementary literacy coaches representing a variety of situations were interviewed. Findings reveal that a variety of factors influence the coaches' relationships, such as district, state, and federal policies, and internal factors such as school culture. Coaches adapted to their unique situations in order to support teachers as best they could. Principals' influence on coaches' relationship was very strong. If principals did not understand the coaches' role or were not supportive, coaches found it difficult to form strong relationships with teachers. Supportive principals could sway resistant teachers to begin to view the coach differently. Using the Coaches' Relationship Lens can help coaches be aware of the influences at schools that may affect their relationships with teachers and principals, and thus their approaches to coaching. Considering the external influences on teachers, as well as the internal influences and the principal's impact, can help coaches begin to plan ways that they can bring the lenses into focus.

INDEX WORDS: Literacy coaches, relationships with teachers, relationships with principals

ADJUSTING THE LENS: LITERACY COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

by

PATRICIA TRACY WALDRIP

AB, The University of Georgia, 1976

MEd, The University of Georgia, 1994

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

ADJUSTING THE LENS: LITERACY COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

by

PATRICIA TRACY WALDRIP

Major Professor: Linda Labbo

Committee: JoBeth Allen
Kathy Roulston

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2011

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my parents, Clair and Helen Tracy, who would have been bursting with pride if they could have been here to see me complete this degree. You were always proud of me and I wish you could be here to share this with me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband Mike: thanks for your support through all this long, long process. I didn't think I would see it through and I'm sure you didn't either. I love you.

To my family: thanks to all of you for not giving up on me and for being proud of me!

To Katharine : I'm so glad to have you in the family, not just because you are another girl, but you challenge me and support me. Thanks for understanding what this means to me!

To Linda Labbo, my major professor: I would definitely not be here if it were not for your help! Thank you so much for your gentle prodding and all your feedback. I cannot thank you enough.

To my committee, JoBeth and Kathy: thank you for coming on board so late in the game and for sharing your insights. You pushed my thinking and I am honored to have worked with you.

To Chad: Since the first time I met you, I knew you would be a great friend. Even though you distracted me with Quest and general carousing, you have been such a big help to me that I can't even begin to thank you. You never were irritated when I called with questions and gave me so many helpful tips. You are amazing!

To Alice: thank you for your prayers and encouragement, and for opening your home to help others preserve their memories!

To Debbie, Jo, Gisela, Harriette: thanks for being wonderful friends and for being proud of me!

To Janna: You were like a breath of fresh air for me when we worked at Gaines together! Having someone to talk to on all our rides home was so inspiring and kept my eyes on the prize. You are so passionate about kids and education that you inspire others as well. When you support someone you do it 110%, and I am so grateful to have been on the receiving end of that support.

You even gave me a job and allowed me to be part of the wonderful endeavor you are building in the Office of School Engagement. You took the time to read my drafts and gave me such good advice. Thank you so much!

To Kathy: I have learned so much from working with you. You have inspired my teaching; I will always find a way to include service-learning (note the hyphen) into my curriculum!

To Michael Todd: I appreciate all your help with my fourth grade class, and for reminding me how that challenging experience was leading to a greater goal! I hope I can do the same for you!

To Carol Jones: having you across the street was such a motivation, because I knew if I saw you, you'd ask me how the dissertation was coming! You are such a caring person, thanks for all your encouragement!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

I worked for seven years as a classroom teacher and a reading specialist at an elementary school with over 80 percent of the students on free and reduced lunch. When I began teaching there, the school was in its third year of participation in a school wide literacy program called Success for All (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992). Despite the promise implied in its title, students continued to struggle with reading and the school's test scores declined more every year.

Eventually the school was considered to be in "needs improvement." We knew that if test scores did not improve, that drastic changes would be imposed. They did not. The next step was to prepare for "reconstruction," when district officials would be involved in our organizational and instructional decisions. It was possible that many of us would lose our jobs. I will never forget the day that someone from the district office visited our school carrying bright yellow posters proclaiming our school to be a failing school in large block letters. These signs were posted throughout the school, in order to make parents aware that they had the right to transfer their children to a more successful school in the district. The added bonus was that we were confronted with our failure whenever we turned a corner.

I began to take graduate classes in literacy education to see if I could figure out how to help our students. At the same time, our school began to work together to examine our beliefs and practices about teaching reading and writing. Eventually we applied for a state grant that

would provide us with resources to improve our teaching and we were excited to learn that our application was successful. This grant, as well as some of the previous programs our school instituted, brought two literacy coaches to our school. I saw that the coaches worked with teachers, planning and guiding instruction, and that they also played an important role in determining the direction of the literacy instruction for the entire school. When one of the positions became available, I applied for it and was hired.

My job as a coach was supported with Title I funds; my position was outside of any of the programs that had been part of our school. As a result, although I had certification as a Reading Specialist, I had received no training in coaching itself and had no idea how to go about this job. At the same time, the school district was becoming very interested in coaching as a way to support teachers throughout the district, so they instituted meetings for the seven literacy coaches at the four schools that had them. I was very excited to get to know these other coaches and perhaps learn from them how to more effectively work with teachers.

As we talked at our regular meetings, I noticed something very different about their work and my own: when these coaches made suggestions to teachers, the teachers implemented them. When I modeled lessons for teachers at my school, they figured that having someone else in front of the class meant that they could take a break. When I visited classrooms to see how different components of the literacy program were going, teachers told me that they had "just finished" those lessons, or that they "just weren't going to get to that today." Even though I believed that I had good personal relationships with all the teachers at my school, I was concerned that they felt quite free to ignore my suggestions, and even to challenge them. When a teacher resigned in the middle of the year due to health reasons, a replacement was found who had just finished her student teaching. I spent time in her classroom helping her organize her

reading instruction. Even though she was new to the profession and new to the school, she also questioned all of my suggestions.

I know from first-hand experience that teachers are incredibly busy. Ever-changing initiatives and shifting pedagogical requirements from the district office are likely to add to their stress. When asked to change a practice they believe has been successful with their students, I understand that it is natural for them to view the change with skepticism. More often than not, it has also been my experience that these changes have been made without teachers' input. Unfortunately, I was the face of those required changes, not the collaborative partner I had hoped to be. As a result, I confess that there were times that I did not follow through with observations, insights or feedback to the teachers I worked with because I feared negative or indifferent reactions.

I also struggled with establishing the solid footing of a trusting relationship with the principal at my school. Mrs. King saw the literacy coach as someone who would handle all of the district mandates and curricular issues at the school, leaving her free to work on other things. I noticed that she seldom visited classrooms, a decision that in my opinion distanced her from being a part of the triumphs and challenges of teachers' classroom lives. Unfortunately, she did not attend professional development sessions led by any of our team of coaches. It is worth noting that she consistently asked the coaches to approach teachers who she felt needed assistance, rather than recommending that the teachers seek help from the coaches. Mrs. King's vision for literacy instruction at our school was a mystery to me because she never shared her goals or insights in that regard. Indeed, weekly meetings between the coaches and the principal were a time for us to sit in the "hot seat," justifying how we spent our time rather than discussing goals or plans. The principal said she was willing for me to meet with her to discuss the district's

curriculum frameworks; however, when I would arrive for our scheduled meetings there was almost always a sudden emergency that took priority over our meeting. It was difficult, if not impossible to reschedule another meeting in a timely manner. Despite my best efforts to forge a professional, working relationship with Mrs. King, I always felt as if I was being held at arms-length.

I returned to the literature to try to understand why at some schools coaches were treated as a "more knowledgeable other" while at others they were ignored. How could I be more effective? What role could relationships with teachers play in my sense of effectiveness? I wondered how the principal should fit into this picture. As a coach, what should be my role and responsibilities in the school's literacy program? How should I be helping the principal and how should she be helping me?

Rationale

My own story illustrates the importance of better understanding how coaches balance their relationships with teachers and with principals. It was my understanding that a coach builds positive relationships with teachers in order to help them change and improve their practice. Even though I felt that I had positive, personal relationships, the professional relationships and sense of mutual respect seemed to be lacking.

Literacy coaches have become an important fixture in schools. They work with teachers, providing on-site professional development that is job-embedded, individualized, and sustained (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). While literacy coaches should have a broad knowledge of both the reading process and effective instructional strategies, it is also important that they have a deep understanding of how they position themselves with teachers and principals in particular contexts (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Clearly, in order to be most effective, literacy coaches must have

positive relationships with both the teachers and principals with whom they work. While research has shed light on some components of coaching, little is known about the role of relationships as they unfold within the school culture. How do coaches negotiate diverse commitments? How do they build effective professional relationships with teachers and with principals? How do they balance the needs of the teacher against the needs of the entire school? What happens when these relationships are not effective?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate literacy coaches' perceptions about the ways they develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work. By addressing this question I hope to contribute to a growing body of knowledge about how and why some coaches are more successful than are others.

Coaches ask teachers to try out new ways of teaching. Trying something new can be risky, so attempts are more likely to be successful if they take place in a safe, trusting environment. Teachers' work is generally solitary (Putnam & Borko, 2000). When trying a new strategy it is a further risk to allow another professional to observe. It must be very clear that the observer is there to support and not evaluate. It is very likely that the first efforts will not be completely successful. In fact, other areas of teaching may suffer while the new approaches are learned and practiced. This can be discouraging, so support and feedback are essential during the process (Joyce & Showers, 1982).

Coaches must also maintain positive relationships with the principals at their schools. The support of the principal is a key factor in the success of ongoing professional development (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Not only is it helpful for the principal to maintain a visible presence as a co-learner along with teachers, he or she can support teachers' participation in professional

learning by controlling outside influences such as scheduling or classroom interruptions. As Lyons and Pinnel (2001) state, "The principal is the most important reason why teachers grow—or are stifled—on the job" (p. 191).

The work of a coach proceeds more smoothly when teachers are motivated and willing to try new approaches, and when the principal is a supportive co-learner along with the faculty (Garmston, 1987). When a coach first begins work at a school, new relationships must be built and trust developed. If a principal does not understand the role of a coach or the importance of ongoing professional learning, it can thwart the coach's efforts. Therefore, it is important to study coaching relationships, both between the coach and the teacher and between the coach and the principal. This can help coaches learn ways to improve their trusting relationships and help them build a school-wide support system for embedding professional development within the school.

Research Questions

There are four research questions guiding this study:

1. How do literacy coaches perceive the role of relationships between and among literacy coaches, principals, and teachers?
2. How do literacy coaches develop relationships with teachers and principals?
3. How do they balance these relationships?
4. How does the quality of these relationships impact their ability to meet their assigned roles and responsibilities?

Theoretical Framework

In conceiving and planning this study, it was my original intention to use social capital (Coleman, 1988) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) theories as frameworks for

analyzing my data. However, as the plans progressed, it became evident that these were not a good fit for the methodology, or research questions that guided my study. Because I would be conducting interviews, I would be learning the perspectives of the coaches themselves about their relationships with teachers and principals. Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) seemed to be better suited for participant observation methodologies, in which the dynamics of the relationships would be observed by me. I realized that this perspective would, however, present my perspective rather than those of the coaches themselves. After careful consideration, I decided that the framework of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) seemed to better fit my needs. In the next section I will define symbolic interactionism and describe how I used it to understand the perspectives of the literacy coaches about their relationships with teachers and principals.

Symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective with roots in American pragmatism and the interpretivism of the Chicago School (Crotty, 1998; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The term describes an approach to the study of human group life and conduct. It was first coined by Herbert Blumer in an article written in 1937 for Man and Society (Blumer, 1969, p. 1), but the foundation of the approach was laid by George Herbert Mead. Blumer compiled Mead's thoughts along with his own perspectives in a set of essays dealing with the interactionist approach and related methodological matters.

As indicated earlier, symbolic interactionism was rooted in the interpretive trajectories of the Chicago School as sociologists attempted to make qualitative inquiry more rigorous and to formalize its methods (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Puddephat, 2009). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) stated the following:

> However, within Chicago School sociology, SI emerged as a distinct way to study urban life. In many ways, SI grew out of the antibehaviorist tradition of American pragmatism with its insistence that humans are purposive agents who encounter a world that must be interpreted rather than a world of stimuli to which they must merely react. (p. 106)

Herbert Blumer (1969) interpreted the thoughts of George Herbert Mead on symbolic interactionism. He described three core premises: (1) that people act toward things, including each other, on the basis of the meanings they have for them; (2) that these meanings are derived through social interaction with others; and (3) that these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and handle the objects that constitute their social worlds (Blumer 1969, p. 2).

According to Blumer, Mead considered human society of paramount importance. Rather than humans living in worlds of self-constituted objects and responding to those objects, consciousness, the mind, and the world of objects develop through human group life. Blumer considered the central matters of human society to be the self, the act, social interaction, objects, and joint action. I will consider the self, the act, and social interaction.

Mead considered that the human being has a self, which can perceive itself, communicate with itself, and interact with itself. This self is a reflexive process rather than a structure, meaning that it acts toward or on itself. Human beings act towards things, rather than simply respond to them.

Human action is formed through a process of self-interaction, rather than reacting to a pre-existing structure. We identify what we want, establish goals, determine a course of action, and contend with the actions of others. We do not always display excellence in determining our courses of action, and are not always successful in implementing them. We miss things of which

we should be aware, or misinterpret those things we do note. However, human actions are still constructed by ourselves based on what we take into account. This view of human action was directly opposite to the prevailing ideas of the psychological and social sciences at the time. These sciences considered human action to be the product of various determining factors which influenced the human being toward a particular behavior.

Human interaction can be symbolic or non-symbolic. In non-symbolic interaction, humans respond directly to one another's gestures or actions. In symbolic interaction, they interpret the gestures based on the meaning yielded by the interpretation. Blumer states, "Symbolic interaction involves *interpretation*, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition*, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act" (Blumer, 1969, p. 66).

Snow (2001) asserts that Blumer's three-pronged conceptualization of symbolic interactionism emphasizes meaning and interpretation at the expense of other relevant topics such as social structure and culture. He suggests four orienting principles implied by Blumer's conceptualization: (1) the principle of interactive determination, (2) the principle of symbolization, (3) the principle of emergence, and (4) the principle of human agency. He asserts that these principles more fully articulate the interactionist perspective.

The interactionist perspective has been influential to researchers since the 1960's, but recently it has come under critical scrutiny by contemporary theorists. It has been criticized as being too conservative and for not taking race, class, and gender into consideration more centrally than it does (Puddephat, 2009). Puddephat contended that Blumer's emphasis on social interaction in the meaning-making process distorts Mead's original ideas and that a resurgence of

interest in Meadian epistemology will allow more contemporary interactionists to dialogue with other interpretive traditions.

Denzin's interpretive interactionism is an attempt to blend traditional symbolic interactionism with critical forms of interpretive inquiry (Denzin, 2001). His work builds on C. Wright Mills' ideas that we can never really know reality, but only study representations of it. These representations mediate and recount people's experiences and take the form of rituals, stories, myths, and performances, among others. Denzin (2001) attempted to make the problematic lived experiences of ordinary people available to others by interpreting their worlds, their meanings, and their representations.

Denzin described six steps in the interpretive process:

1. Framing the research question
2. Deconstructing and analyzing critically prior conceptions of the problem.
3. Capturing the phenomenon
4. Bracketing the phenomenon
5. Constructing the phenomenon
6. Contextualizing the phenomenon

Sundin and Fahey (2008) also critiqued interactionist perspectives for their lack of attention to issues of power. They suggested modifications to Denzin's methodology to make it more consistent with critical and post-structural theories. For example, incorporating the emotional element of human behavior, acknowledging the inherent interconnectedness of human beings as well as the multiple realities of social and cultural systems will move the interactionist paradigm toward the critical paradigm.

They also suggested looking for what is unsaid, for gaps and silences in narrative texts, as well as for gaps in social contexts that keep participants from acting in their own best interests. Including outsider perspectives will allow issues of power to be specifically addressed. They also suggested the approach be modified to acknowledge the less common social processes, the "micro-situations" that constrain us.

The interactionist perspective will be useful in understanding the way coaches build relationships with teachers and principals. I will examine coaches' interactions with others and attempt to understand how they make sense of these interactions based on the meanings they have for them. Bruner (1969), Denzin (2001), and Sundin and Fahy (2008) will guide me as I examine these relationships.

Relevance of the Study

This study is relevant for several stakeholders in the educational field. Different insights drawn from the study inform coaches, principals, school district administrators, and to university faculty about the role and nature of coaching relationships.

Coaches. While it is necessary for a coach to have a background as a successful teacher, the skill set for coaches is much broader (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). In order to provide support for teachers they must first forge trusting relationships (International Reading Association, 2004). This study investigated the ways that coaches do that, and the ways they work to develop or repair relationships with resistant teachers or with unsupportive principals.

Principals. The support of the principal is essential for a coaching program to be successful (Knight, 2009). The more clearly principals understand the coaches' role, the more effectively they can support the coaching program (Bean, 2001; Garmston, 1987).

School district administrators. As coaches become more prevalent in school districts, it is important for the money invested in these personnel to be well spent. School district administrators are eager to have their coaching programs get off to a good start. This study delved below the surface, and explored contextual factors, such as the importance of allowing coaches the time to build relationships with the teachers and administrators at their schools.

University faculties. Universities that develop programs to train and certify coaches will be interested in helping prepare coaches for the variety of roles they will assume (Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This study described successful strategies used by coaches to build relationships. These strategies can be integrated into the content of coursework and professional training so that coaches can be better prepared to support teachers' professional development.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literacy coaching has become a topic of increasing interest over the past ten years. The International Reading Association's list of "hot topics" for 2009 included literacy coaches as "very hot," and it was also considered "very hot" in 2008 (http://www.reading.org/General/Publications/ReadingToday/RTY-0902-hot.aspx). However, most of the literature published about literacy coaches has not been based on empirical research. Rather, many of the published books and articles are practitioner based, educated guesses at what is likely to consist of best coaching practices.

In a review of relevant publications tracked through the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, Shanklin (2007) found that out of a total of 116 publications, 18% (twenty-two) were research studies, 30% (35 texts) were practice-oriented books and 52% (59 publications) were practitioner-oriented articles. This observation supported Walpole and Blamey's (2008) statement that much of what is written about literacy coaches comes from formats outside of peer-reviewed research, and includes books, evaluation reports, and privately funded, anecdotally-based case studies. Nevertheless, we can learn a great deal from these publications, as they provide unique insights drawn from authors' informed work with coaches. See Appendix A for a table/chart of the various types of publications included in my literature review. My research will contribute to this growing research base, especially in the area of coaches' relationships with teachers and principals.

In the first part of this section, I draw from a review of literature to discuss the definitions, required qualifications, and characteristics of exemplary coaches in the United States. In the second part I review relevant aspects of the history of federal programs for reading specialists, as well as coaching's roots in professional development. Then I discuss the differing roles that comprise the work of coaches. Finally, I discuss how relationships with teachers and principals affect a coaches' work.

What Is a Coach?

Gaining a shared understanding of a literacy coach is not a simple undertaking. Indeed, after exploring different definitions and perspectives in the field, I was reminded of the following quote "I may not know much about art but I know it when I see it." Many experts and novices in the field could make a similar statement about coaching. "We may not know much about coaching, but we know coaching when we see it!" In this section, I provide an overview of differing perspectives on literacy coaching and a summary of the threads that run through the perspectives.

A trainer. The Collins English Dictionary defined a coach as "a trainer or instructor" (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/coach).

A collaborator. Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz (2003) provided a different connotation that focuses on the processes utilized while coaching: " ... [Coaching is] a form of inquiry-based learning characterized by collaboration between individuals or groups of teachers and more accomplished peers" (p. 1).

A non-critical supporter. The International Reading Association's position statement on reading coaches described what coaching does:

> Provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is non-threatening and supportive—not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students. (International Reading Association, 2004, p. 1)

A facilitator. The Annenberg Institute on School Reform's (2003) report on instructional coaching described coaches as teacher leaders who facilitate and guide content-focused professional learning for a school's teachers.

A builder of knowledge. Walpole and Blamey (2008) described coaches as serving teachers through ongoing professional development to build teachers' knowledge and skills.

A teacher educator. Pinnell & Lyons (1999) described their literacy coordinators, who served in the role of coaches, as teacher educators.

A peer. Some definitions emphasized the coach as more accomplished than the teachers with whom he or she works, but studies that involve peer coaches defined coaches as colleagues who work together, observe one another, and plan collaboratively (Brandt, 1987; Joyce & Showers, 1982).

These definitions indicated that the main component of a literacy coaches' work is to provide varying levels of pedagogical support for teachers.

While there are several frameworks for describing the nature of coaches' work (Garmston, 1987; Knight, 2009; Shanklin, 2007), two approaches, directive or collegial, represented two very different styles of coaching. Directive coaches saw their major goals as being responsible for helping teachers implement programs and curriculum in a particular, predetermined way. On the other hand, collegial coaches viewed the major goals of their work with teachers as helping them become more reflective practitioners.

Knight (2009) found common threads that run across the various approaches to coaching. These included focusing on professional practice, providing intensive, job-embedded professional development and maintaining dialogical, non-evaluative, confidential and respectful relationships.

Coaches provide pedagogical support for teachers, and help them to become more reflective practitioners. The literature described various approaches to accomplishing these goals, and provided a multi-faceted picture of the many aspects of the coaches' job. Coaches are highly trained professionals who encourage important work with teachers, but none of the work reviewed described how the coach came to be a collaborator or a non-critical supporter of teachers.

Coaching Qualifications

In a recent survey, Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis (2002) found that most of the coaches they surveyed had excellent qualifications. For example, 90% of the literacy coaches they surveyed had earned credentials as certified Reading Specialists. Indeed, not only did most have classroom teaching experience, but 76% had more than five years teaching experience. It should be noted, however, that all of the coaches surveyed were members of the International Reading Association (IRA). These findings may not be representative of the entire population of literacy coaches. In fact, the rapid proliferation of coaches due to federally funded programs which required the addition of literacy coaches has led some to question the qualifications of many coaches (Manzo, 2005). Roller (2006) found that a B.A. and a teaching certificate were the only clear requirements for coaches among those she surveyed. She also raised the concern that many coaches with lower qualifications may not have the depth of knowledge necessary to fine-tune programs in order to help teachers better meet the needs of specific students.

The International Reading Association's recommendations for reading coaches' qualifications are generally accepted in the field (IRA, 2004; Manzo, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). These state that reading coaches should

- be excellent teachers of reading;
- have in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment and instruction;
- have expertise in working with teachers;
- be excellent presenters and group leaders;
- have the ability to model, observe, and provide feedback about instruction.

IRA strongly suggested that all five criteria are crucial for successful coaching.

Dole, Liang, Watkins, and Wiggins (2006) surveyed state departments of education to find out their qualifications for reading teachers, reading specialists and reading coaches. They found the requirements for reading specialists and coaches to be nearly identical: teaching experience, graduate coursework in reading, and in most cases an exit examination such as the Praxis II for Reading Specialists. The IRA suggestion that reading coaches have experience working with teachers and making presentations was not a requirement for most state departments of education as they selected coaches for federally funded literacy programs.

In addition to these qualifications, many authors noted that interpersonal skills are an important qualification for literacy coaches (Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This included the abilities to communicate, establish relationships, and to engage in respectful collaboration. Such skills are implied in the IRA criteria of modeling, observing and providing feedback about instruction, but not stated explicitly. They are also implied in Pinnell and Lyons' (1999) requirement that their Literacy

Coordinators have knowledge of teacher learning, coaching, and mentoring, in addition to the knowledge of pedagogical content and analytical and inferential skills in observation.

The Annenberg Institute on School Reform's (2003) report on instructional coaching stated that coaches must have strong content area knowledge, and also good communication skills and interpersonal skills, consistent follow through with support for teachers, and a willingness to listen and learn. Kee (2006), in an article written for literacy coaches, stated that it is essential for coaches to believe that teachers want to be the best they can be, and to respect the teachers' journey toward this goal. This belief is evident in the coaches' choices of words, building a sense of trust and safety between teachers and coaches.

In summary, the only consistent requirement for becoming a coach is a B.A. and a teaching certificate, although the International Reading Association's recommendations are much more stringent. In fact, as stated earlier, there is some concern that less qualified coaches do not have the depth of knowledge necessary to fine-tune programs and teachers' expertise to meet the needs of all students. In addition to in-depth content area knowledge and experience working with teachers, strong communication skills and the ability to build relationships are also viewed as important.

Exemplary Coaches

Bean (2001) surveyed principals of schools with exemplary reading programs. Findings indicated that coaches were critical to the schools' success. The International Reading Association (2004) suggested that, in addition to meeting their five criteria (see above), exemplary reading coaches should have a background as an excellent classroom teacher. They should be lifelong learners, and should have respectful relationships with their colleagues. Dole (2004) asked experienced and successful coaches about the qualities of excellent literacy

coaches. Their responses also indicated that exemplary coaches have a background as a successful reading teacher. These coaches should also have more expertise than the teachers they coach. The best coaches are reflective about their own practice. Furthermore, they have the ability to articulate what they see happening in a classroom. It is vital that they can support teachers while simultaneously nudging them along in positive directions. Finally, they can plan and organize "on the run," and possess a good sense of humor. Pinnell and Lyons (1999) stated that exemplary literacy coordinators are excellent teachers of children, analyze and reflect on teachers' work, and assist teachers in building their pedagogical knowledge.

In addition to these qualities, another characteristic evident in exemplary coaches was that they engage in their own continuous, professional learning (Brandt, 1987; Knight, 2009). Lapp, Fisher, Flood, and Frey, (2003) specifically recommended professional learning in making effective presentations, active listening, and reflective conversations. Kee (2006) recommended that coaches constantly work to refine the language they use with teachers in order to build confidence and support, and to develop trust.

Exemplary coaches encouraged reflective practice and used their relationships with teachers to create conversations that led to change (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003). Lyons and Pinnell (2001) also noted that exemplary coaches engaged teachers in reflection and created trusting relationships with them, but did not discuss how these relationships are built. Poglinco et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of such "people-skills" as tact, patience, flexibility, and good communication skills.

To sum up, exemplary and effective coaches not only had in-depth content area knowledge, and teaching experience, they also had experience working with adult learners and were learners themselves. They also had the ability to create trusting relationships with the

teachers with whom they work, but there was little discussion of how these relationships are created. Perhaps most importantly, they inspired confidence and encouraged reflection.

Historical Perspective

It is important to review some of the history of federal programs for reading specialists in order to understand how literacy coaches have become a significant addition to schools. In 1965 Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The purpose of this act was to improve reading achievement in schools that had a high percentage of students living in poverty. This was accomplished through Title I funding to schools, which eventually developed into compensatory programs for at-risk students. Title I teachers pulled students out of the classroom to provide compensatory small group instruction. Unfortunately, even though a great deal of time, effort, and money was invested in these programs, (Dole, 2004) study after study showed that they were largely ineffective (see Allington & Walmsley, 1995 for a review).

In 2000, the National Reading Panel published a report of the most effective methods of teaching reading. Recommendations stressed the importance of high-quality, effective instruction and recommended that schools employ reading specialists to help achieve this goal (Bean 2001; Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001). As a result, there was an increased focus on reading achievement at federal, state and local levels (Dole, et al., 2006). Reading instruction became the core of state and federal reading initiatives (IRA, 2004). Funds were invested to develop programs that were more effective than previous ones.

In 2001, Congress revised and reauthorized the ESEA, also called No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The act put new emphasis on school reform, and its requirement that all students be reading on grade level by the third grade gave reading specialists and coaches an important role. The goal remained the same--improved reading and academic achievement for all students. Title

I funds were provided to schools with high percentages of students from low-income households, but the process changed substantially. The focus shifted to high-quality first instruction rather than pull-out programs. In pull-out programs, the instructional focus was intervention for struggling readers. These students would be sent to the reading specialist for supplementary instruction. Under NCLB, the goal is that all teachers, not just reading specialists, will be highly qualified teachers of reading. High-quality first classroom instruction is of foremost importance and is expected to minimize the number of students who need interventions. The reading specialist's role shifted to that of mentoring classroom teachers and helping to monitor students' reading progress (Dole, 2004).

The two premises of the legislation were that 1) the strategies used should be based on scientific research, and 2) assessments should inform instruction (Dole, 2004). Schools that received funds from Reading First grants (through No Child Left Behind) must also provide systematic, explicit instruction (Boyles, 2007; Dole, 2004).

Mandated standardized tests have been the means of holding schools responsible for the academic achievement of their students. Increasingly severe sanctions have been imposed on schools that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Teachers have often felt pressured to make sure that all their students pass these state tests. Because of this pressure, they have been compelled to make changes to their teaching very quickly. Coaches have been employed to help teachers make these changes. Federal funds through Reading First have been provided to schools to pay for professional development to improve reading instruction and to fund literacy coaches (IRA, 2004).

Coaching's Roots in Professional Development

Professional development has occurred as teacher in-service training, usually presented by an outside expert or "hired gun." Although coaches became an increasingly popular fixture in schools as a result of federal legislation, coaching itself also has had strong ties to professional development literature (Garmston, 1987). Bruce Joyce, in an interview with Ronald Brandt, agreed that he and Beverly Showers, were among the first to use the term "coach" to refer to "a relationship that facilitates transfer" (Brandt, 1987). Joyce and Showers (1982) found that, after training, teachers who were coached had a higher rate of transfer of the training to their classrooms than did teachers who received training alone. Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt, and Dole (2008) cited Darling-Hammond's finding:

> The largest variance in student reading achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress was explained by variables related to teacher professional development and training even after controlling for student poverty and language backgrounds. (p. 125)

In other words, professional development helps teachers increase student achievement and coaching helps them translate their training to their classrooms.

WestEd (2000) described the characteristics of effective professional development as experiential, grounded in inquiry, collaborative and interactive, sustained and intensive, and connected both to the teachers' work and to overall school reform efforts. Neufeld and Roper (2003) describe effective teacher professional development as "sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice" (p. 3). Knight (2009) described effective professional development as job-embedded,

intensive and ongoing, collaborative, dialogical, non-evaluative, confidential, and respectful. All of these objectives can be achieved through coaching.

WestEd (2000) examined schools across the United States with exemplary professional development. A common feature was that professional learning was ingrained in the school's culture. Conversations about teaching and learning took place throughout the school day. Professional learning was ongoing and focused, and included a deliberate cultivation of collaborative structures, such as routinely scheduled team meetings and grade level meetings. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) also emphasized the importance of creating a culture of collaboration within a school.

The National Staff Development Council developed standards for professional development (http://www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm). The coaching process aligns well with these standards (Kee, 2006; Manzo, 2005) and offers teachers intense, ongoing instructional support. The Annenberg Institute on School Reform's report (2003) referred to coaching as school-based, job-embedded professional development.

Coaches' Roles

Even though there are various models of coaching, the main role of a coach is to work with teachers (IRA, 2004; Roller, 2006). This work can be formal or informal, ranging from helping teachers develop or increase their knowledge about specific issues to assisting teachers with implementing curriculum (IRA, 2004). Garmston (1987) described three types of work coaches do with teachers: (1) Technical coaching involves the transfer of training to classroom practice, (2) Collegial coaching helps teachers refine their teaching and increase the reflection about their teaching as well as their professional dialogue, (3) Challenge coaching involves collaborative work to solve specific instructional problems.

Some of the work that coaches do with teachers involves modeling instruction and teaching demonstration lessons, as well as leading discussion groups and books study groups (Annenberg Institiute on School Reform, 2003; Brandt, 1987; Dole, 2004; Feger, et al., 2004; Lapp, et al., 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al, 2003; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). The coaching cycle of a pre-conference, observation, and post-conference is a strategy coaches use to encourage teachers in becoming more reflective about their practice and to assist teachers in developing further understandings (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Pinnell & Lyons, 1999).

In addition to their work with teachers, coaches are also responsible for school-wide reform initiatives (Al Otaiba et al, 2008). Neufeld and Roper (2003) described two different kinds of coaches: change coaches and content coaches. Change coaches focus on whole-school organizational improvement, while content coaches help teachers improve their instructional strategies in specific content areas, such as math or science.

Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) pointed out that coaches' roles should evolve as schools' needs change, and as state and/or federal requirements change. While coaches are advised to spend as much as 80% of their time working with teachers, in reality other responsibilities eat into their time. These responsibilities include analyzing assessment results, making curriculum decisions, working with school and district leadership, serving as a resource to parents and colleagues, conducting research, writing grants, as well as being responsible for various administrative and record keeping tasks (Bean, 2001; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Dole, et al., 2006; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Kostin and Haeger (2006) advised coaches to be responsive to teachers' day-to-day concerns while keeping in mind the big picture of school-wide needs. Coaches should make the

effort to understand the school culture so that all voices may be included in decision-making. Buly, Coskie, Robinson, and Egawa (2004) considered coaches as the lead learners in a community of learners. They advised coaches to take a non-evaluative, respectful role in order to develop trust with teachers. Kee (2006) emphasized the importance of language for coaches. They are advised to "speak and listen as if this is the most important conversation you'll ever have with this person" (p. 1).

In summary, while the main role of coaches is to work with teachers, whether increasing their knowledge base about specific issues or assisting in curriculum implementation, many other responsibilities throughout the school often eat into their time. Coaches must balance the day-to-day support of teachers while keeping in mind the big picture of school-wide needs. They are also advised to maintain non-evaluative, respectful relationships with teachers in order to develop trust. The studies reviewed did not discuss how coaches build these relationships, or develop trust with teachers. This study will address this gap.

Trust and Relationships

Kostin and Haeger (2006) emphasized the importance of the relationships the coach builds: "Meaningful transformation challenges the deepest beliefs about teaching and learning in a school community and often creates emotionally charged situations. …Transformation challenges teachers' competence" (p. 31). They pointed out that an outside consultant often has an easier time instigating change, but for long term, permanent changes, it is necessary to establish working relationships within the school community.

Coaches build trust by building relationships. They get to know people and understand the school's dynamics. They serve as valuable resources and build trust by following through on commitments. They encourage communication and dialogue within the school community

(Kostin & Haeger, 2006). These relationships take time to build and require clear communication and clear definitions of the coach's role to teachers (Al Otaiba et al, 2008; Poglinco et al, 2003). Trust is essential for effective and meaningful collaboration. It is the foundation for coaching (Burkins, 2007; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Barkley (2005) pointed out that coaching provides teachers with an opportunity to develop professional relationships and increase collegiality. This enhances self-esteem, improves teaching, and ultimately increases student learning.

Barkley also emphasized the importance of trust in the coach-teacher relationship. When changing teaching practice, there will usually be what Barkley (2005) called The Learning Dip, which means that learning will suffer until the teacher becomes comfortable with the new practice. The teacher can become frustrated and give up. A coach can encourage the teacher to persist, but only if there is a trusting relationship. Teachers must feel safe in allowing another to be a part of their struggles. Effective coaching will provide the teacher with an opportunity for professional conversations and the comfort of knowing they are not going-it alone. Barkley (2005) agreed that in order to maintain the element of trust in the relationship, the coach must not appear to be an evaluator or judge. Evaluation is based on whether one meets criteria set by another and involves a "you" message; coaches share personal observations through an "I" message.

Hammermess et al. (2005) also discussed teachers' learning dip when they point out that "... during the process of learning new strategies, teachers may initially become less efficient than previously, as they let go of techniques that have become comfortable and well practiced for them" (p. 363). They agreed that unlearning routines in favor of new approaches can be difficult and emotionally painful.

Dozier (2006) described an approach to coaching that she calls responsive literacy coaching: "At the core of responsive literacy coaching is developing respectful, caring instructional relationships" (p. 9). Dozier maintained that effective coaching relationships are similar to effective teaching relationships. Coaches should respect teachers' knowledge, understandings, and expertise, just as teachers respect their students. Relationships shape our learning processes and form the foundation of successful pedagogy. Teachers should see themselves as active participants in the learning process, just as they desire their students to participate in their own learning.

Feger, et al. (2004) pointed out the importance of coaches' interpersonal skills. Being sensitive to teachers' concerns or fears, and providing respectful feedback can help build communication and trust. Kee (2006) emphasized the power of language to express care and develop trust. The International Reading Association's (2004) position paper on literacy coaches described building relationships as the least intensive role of a coach that also involves the least risk. But it is important to keep in mind that these relationships are the foundation for the more challenging work that coaches and teachers engage in. Ross (1992) found that student achievement was higher in classrooms where teachers had more extensive interaction with their coaches, and also where teachers had high teacher efficacy beliefs.

In summary, there is no disagreement as to the importance of coaches' forming trusting relationships with the teachers and administrators with whom they work. These trusting relationships are the foundation of more intense collaboration and allow coaches to support teachers in the sometimes difficult process of letting go of familiar techniques in favor of newer ones. It is essential that the coach be perceived by the teacher as a collaborator rather than an evaluator. When the teachers are not interested in extensive interaction with coaches, or do not

respond to the coaches' best efforts, the coaches' work comes to a standstill. This study will investigate how coaches navigate these issues.

Coaches and Administrators

The support of a principal is essential for a coaching program to be successful (Knight, 2009). Principals show support for coaches by selecting the appropriate coaching model, such as technical coaching, which helps teachers develop specific strategies and skills, collegial coaching, which leads teachers to think more deeply about their work, or challenge coaching, which helps teachers solve persistent problems in instruction (Garmston, 1987). Principals demonstrate that they value the coaching program by providing a focus for coaching activity, providing training for the coaches, and by modeling positive coaching behaviors (Garmston, 1987). For example, principals who routinely ask for teachers' feedback on faculty meetings demonstrate their commitment to the coaching process, and their willingness to risk their own vulnerability.

Brandt (1987) stated that principal's support, by unblocking obstacles and by being proactive and affirmative, is crucial for the success of coaching programs. Matsumura, Satoris, Bickel, and Garmier (2009) found that principals' behaviors, such as endorsing the literacy coach as a source of expertise to teachers, were significantly associated with teachers' increased engagement with coaches.

Knight (2009) suggested that principals make sure they understand what coaches do and how they can support them. Bean (2001) found that administrators, when asked about the roles of reading specialists, responded that the reading specialists worked with struggling readers and performed diagnostic testing. The reading specialists themselves, however, described their jobs as including assessment, instruction, conducting professional development, and serving as a

support for teachers, parents, and the school community. Administrators have been urged to make the effort to become active participants in the coaching program (Ippolito, 2009). Clearly, effective leaders set the vision for the school, have high expectations, create a collaborative culture based on students' needs, and promote communication (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Most of the literature on coaching does not dwell on the role of the principal to a great extent, but there is agreement on the importance of the principal in supporting the school's professional development program (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). The principal should understand the new approaches and ideally become a co-learner along with the teachers (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; International Reading Association, 2004; Kral, 2007; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). The principal should be committed to spending time in classrooms sometimes referred to as -"Management by Walking Around" (Walpole & McKenna, 2004, p. 87). The principal also has influence over school processes that support teachers' professional learning, such as scheduling, keeping interruptions to a minimum, and building time for collaborative learning team meetings (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Because of the principal's importance in the success of the literacy coach's efforts, it is vital that the coach build and maintain a successful and supportive relationship with him or her. Ideally, the literacy coach is a part of the administrative team, where collaborative decisions are made about the school's literacy program (Walpole & McKenna, 2004)). But the ideal is seldom the reality, and literacy coaches must then figure out ways to be effective without this support. This study will investigate the ways coaches do that. Ippolito (2009) described a continuum of administrators' behaviors in relation to the coaching program, from neglectful to supportive to

interfering. Neglectful and interfering behaviors represent opposite ends of the spectrum, neither of which is ideal. Clear and constant communication is necessary for coach-principal partnerships to be effective.

In summary, we see that the job of the literacy coach is complex and involves much more than an in-depth knowledge of literacy processes and skills. The literacy coach must be able to forge relationships with both teachers and with administrators in order to successfully effect change. Trusting relationships are vital in order for the coach to be able to encourage teachers to take risks and become more reflective. A strong relationship with the principal is also necessary in order for the coach to be able to help carry out the principal's vision for literacy instruction at their school. This study will investigate how coaches develop these relationships and what they do when faced with less than ideal situations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the purpose of the study, research questions, explanation of why the study is suited for a qualitative approach, description of the design of the study, proposed timeline for the study, research site, sample, sample criteria, and process for sample selection, methods of data collection and analysis, validity and reliability, limitations of the study, researcher role and subjectivity statement, risk and benefits.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways literacy coaches develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work.

Research Questions

There were four research questions guiding this study:

1. How do literacy coaches perceive the role of relationships between and among literacy coaches, principals, and teachers?
2. How do literacy coaches develop relationships with teachers and principals?
3. How do they balance these relationships?
4. How does the quality of these relationships impact their ability to meet their assigned roles and responsibilities?

Why This Study Is Suited for a Qualitative Approach

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways literacy coaches develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work. The

research questions asked how literacy coaches perceive these relationships, how they develop and maintain them, and how these relationships impact their work. Ercikan and Roth (2006) noted that the purpose of research is to generate knowledge. They claimed that both the material world and knowledge about it have qualitative as well as quantitative characteristics, so research questions, rather than the method should drive the research. They suggested that there are three types of questions that are answered by research: "What is happening?," "Is there a systematic effect?," and "Why or how is it happening?" This research study addressed the first type of question because it does not attempt to discover a causal relationship or mechanism. I analyzed and described the responses of a particular group of literacy coaches rather than making inferences about an entire population based on a representative sample.

Design

In this section I will describe the design of this study. First I will report on the timeline I used, and then describe the procedures used.

Timeline. During the month of February, 2010, I selected the pool of coaches from which I invited members to participate in interviews. I wanted to include coaches who had had a variety of experiences in their positions. Specifically I wanted coaches who had experienced one or more of the following situations:

- Supportive principals
- Non-supportive principals
- Resistant teachers
- Accepting teachers (who formed a professional learning community)
- I wanted the participants to represent more than one school district

I also submitted an IRB application and secured institutional approvals. Each participant signed an informed consent form, which can be found in Appendix B. I contacted and invited participants through emails and phone calls. Arrangements for each interview were determined according to the convenience of the participants. See Appendix C for an example of an introductory email with an interview participant.

Between the months of May and August, 2010 I conducted interviews with seven literacy coaches lasting approximately one and one half hours each. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed by me prior to the next interview. In addition, I wrote reflective memos after each interview. I began analysis immediately and made adjustments to questions in order to refine the ongoing data being collected. I conducted follow-up interviews with participants in January and February of 2011 to offer member checks and to provide context for the data collected. I completed a final analysis and discussion of findings during the months of February and March, 2011.

In order to explore the research questions on which this study was based, it was necessary to tap into the opinions and experiences of literacy coaches themselves. Next, I discuss the qualitative interview: what it is and when it is used, how it is structured and planned, and how it is conducted. Then, I discuss the methodology through which I analyzed the data.

Interviews. As humans we naturally attempt to make sense of our world. One of the ways we do this is through language (Seidman, 2006). This unique ability affects the way we study other humans, as contrasted with how we investigate chemicals or natural forces. Since humans have thoughts and opinions and can express them, our research involving humans can make use of this ability.

Seidman (2006) noted that the original paradigm of human inquiry is two people talking and asking questions of each other. He states that "... recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (p. 8). An in-depth interview, therefore, is a preferred, basic method of attempting to understand the lived experiences of another. Charmaz (2006) described an interview as a directed conversation. Rather than answering a specific question or testing a hypothesis, an interviewer's goal is to understand another's lived experience and the meaning they make of it.

Through interviews, we attempt to understand another's actions through the language they use to describe them. We can never totally comprehend another individual, but merely observing their actions will not tell us why they made the choices they did. Interviews allow us access to the context of those actions and the meaning behind them (Seidman, 2006). For example, if we observe a child writing a story about eating a hamburger with a friend, we might notice the picture he drew to accompany the story, his attempts at descriptive language, and his use of invented spelling. We would not realize until we talked with him, however, that his friend did not eat meat and he was attempting to persuade her to give it a try.

Interviews also explore a specific topic. Participants with relevant experiences about the topic describe and reflect on those experiences. The experiences of several participants combine to provide a more complete picture of the topic. This aspect of interviewing demonstrates the importance of the position of the interviewer herself.

The interviewer listens to participants' stories and allows them to do most of the talking (Charmaz, 2006). However, she also directs the conversation and prompts participants to reflect on their experiences. The interviewer probes further into subjects of interest in ways that might be considered too personal for casual conversation. She might stop to explore a particular topic,

return to an earlier topic, or request more details. Rather than simply nodding or tacitly agreeing with the participant, the interviewer might ask for clarification or restate the story to check for accuracy. At the same time, she validates participants' perspectives and assists them to articulate their experiences and reflections.

An interview is both contextual and negotiated. The interviewer and the participant develop a reconstruction of a reality from the participant's point of view. The interviewer must remain attuned to differences in power and status, gender, age or race between the participant and herself that might influence the direction and content of the interview. A powerful participant may take control of the process while a disempowered individual may depend too heavily on the interviewer to direct the discussion. Differences in race, gender, age or culture between interviewers and participants may affect the degree of honesty and reflection that is achieved in the process. Qualitative interviews are "... open-ended yet directive, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28).

In order to better understand literacy coaches' perceptions about their relationships with teachers and with principals, I conducted interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Seidman, 2006) with seven literacy coaches. I met with each coach for one interview of approximately one and one half hours and for a second interview lasting approximately one half hour. I employed theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in selecting the coaches, choosing individuals who had a variety of types of coaching experiences and relationships.

As I met with each participant, we spent the first portion of our time together getting to know one another. This built a measure of trust between us, which was important since they would be sharing personal stories with me. After they signed the consent form I also asked them

to provide some demographic information about their school and their coaching experience. See Appendix D for the demographic information sheet.

I gave participants the opportunity to select a pseudonym to conceal their identity. If they did not choose one, I provided it. I also changed the names of the schools and school districts where the participants worked, as well as the names of the colleagues mentioned in the interviews. See Table 3.1 for information concerning the dates of the interviews as well as the follow-up member checks.

Table 3.1

Participants' Pseudonyms, School Pseudonyms, and Interview Dates

Pseudonym	School (s)	Date interviewed	Length of interview	Follow up member check offered	Date of second interview
Amy	Barrett	September 16, 2010	1h 10min	February 6, 2011	February 11, 2011
Carol	Watson	May 18, 2010	1h 29min	January 27, 2011	February 8, 2011
Debby	Kirkland	June 25, 2010	1h 30min	January 21, 2011	February 8, 2011
Emily	Patton	July 2, 2010	1h 33min	January 23, 2011	n/a
Jane	L. H. Hulsey	May 26, 2010	1h 40min	January 25, 2011	n/a
JoAnn	Atherton, Baker St., Bay Creek, Davis St., Taft, Vinson	August 26, 2010	1h	January 25, 2011	February 15, 2011
Lydia	Milford	August 14, 2010	1h 23min	January 22, 2011	n/a

In this study, I used the recommendations of Charmaz (2006) and Seidman (2006) to construct open-ended questions that invited participants to tell their stories. My goal was to encourage them to reflect on and explore their perceptions about their relationships with teachers

and principals. My goal was to have approximately ten questions with possible follow-up probes as suggested by Charmaz (2006, p. 31). See Appendix E for the interview questions and Appendix F for the follow-up interview questions.

As I conducted the interviews, I listened for clues in the participants' language that might provide insights into their meanings. For example, when they mentioned their principal's support, I asked them to describe what "support" looked like. I developed potential follow-up questions that would encourage participants to expand on the narrative. In most cases, I attempted to keep myself out of the process, letting the participant do most of the talking. But at times we constructed knowledge together, exploring topics and furthering the discussion.

Data Analysis

In this section I describe the coding process through which I analyzed the data. Then I discuss the memos through which I reflected on the data. Finally, I describe the process of creating diagrams to crystallize my ideas.

Coding. The purpose of applying codes to data is to begin to make sense of it, to begin the process of analytic interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). The process begins with open coding and applying temporary labels to all sections of the data. Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) describe three types of codes: open, theoretical, and constant comparative. Open codes are developed directly from the data and are the first step in analysis. As more data are collected and codes are applied, the researcher determines whether similar codes apply, and if so, elaborates their properties.

Initial codes are applied line by line, stick closely to the data and show action. Codes are created by defining what is seen in the data, not by applying a preconceived frame onto it. Initial coding is when we begin to explore the theoretical possibilities in the data.

Initial codes also allow the researcher to see the gaps in the data, where more information is needed. The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis helps the researcher go deeper into the questions being studied. As gaps are revealed, more data can be collected to address those questions (Charmaz, 2006). Careful coding that is based on the data forces the researcher to look at the data in new ways and can help prevent personal issues from coloring the analysis. Charmaz (2006) states,

> Your analytic eye and disciplinary background lead you to look at their statements and actions in ways that may not have occurred to them. By studying the data, you make fundamental processes explicit, render hidden assumptions visible, and give participants new insights (p. 55).

After initial coding, the most significant and/or frequent codes are developed into focused codes. Focused coding begins to explain and synthesize larger amounts of data. The researcher decides which codes explain the data most completely. However, the process is not linear; emerging codes may prompt a return to the data for further analysis. Active involvement with the data and the codes allows the researcher to remain open to new insights and interpretations.

Axial coding is the next step in the development of the categories. It is a further level of abstraction that specifies the properties of the category. Initial coding breaks the data apart into distinct pieces. Axial coding puts the data back together on a conceptual level. It provides a frame through which to further develop categories. It allows the researcher to answer questions about the categories such as who, when, why, where, how, and with what consequences (Charmaz, 2006).

As I completed each interview, I transcribed the tape in my word processing program and printed the document in order to begin initial coding on a hard copy. I read through each

transcript and applied initial codes to each line of the transcript that contained insightful information. I expected theoretical possibilities to leap from the page. They did not. I read through the transcripts again and again, looking for ways to break the data apart.

My first attempts at coding did not go deeply enough into the data. They were more of a summarization. See Appendix G for an example of my early efforts at initial coding. To make matters worse, I had a preconceived notion of the categories I expected to find. I believed that the important ideas from the coaches in the study would concern the category of "support." I searched the transcripts for instances of the word "support" and pulled them out into new documents. See Appendix H for an example of these documents.

I read through the "support" documents, expecting to gain new insights about this category from the coaches' words. I did not. I broke the transcript data apart by the questions I had asked the participants, hoping to find a common thread in their responses. Frustrated, I returned to the literature to see if I could refine my procedures and develop some insights into my data. I decided to read through the transcripts one more time. Eventually I realized that my preconceived notions were preventing me from moving forward. I could not isolate the ideas of "support" or "relationships," but view them as an integral part of the process of change. When I analyzed the transcripts from this aspect, I was able to come to understandings about coaches' perspectives about their relationships with teachers and principals. See Appendix I for an example of my revisiting the transcripts with these new understandings.

Memos. The researcher has many "selves" which connect to the research in ways that may be different from the participants. While this can and should excite passion on the part of the researcher, it can also blind her to aspects of the data (Mills, et al, 2006b). Examination and reflection are ways the researcher makes meaningful connections to the data, and to uncover

underlying assumptions. Memo writing and journaling are ways for the researcher to record her abstract thinking and examine the evolution of her ideas (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Lempert (2007) stated the following:

> Memo writing is the methodological link, the distillation process, through which the researcher transforms data into theory. In the memo writing process, the researcher analytically interprets data. Through sorting, analyzing, and coding the "raw" data in memos, the Grounded Theorist discovers emergent social patterns. By writing memos continuously throughout the research process, the researcher explores, explicates, and theorizes these emergent patterns. (p. 245)

Glaser & Strauss (1967) recommended writing memos from the beginning of the coding and analysis process. The researcher needs time to reflect on the ideas developed from the data, and to resolve conflicts that arise. They suggested writing memos as well as coding directly on one's field notes or transcripts. Giske and Artinian (2007) wrote memos to record thoughts and questions, as well as relationships between interviews and references to themes in the literature. For organizational purposes, each memo was given a heading and a date, and only covered one idea or hypothesis. This allowed the researchers to track the progress of their thinking.

Charmaz (2006) described memos as informal analytic notes and distinguishes between early and advanced memos. They are an intermediate step between data collection and the drafts of papers. Early memos explore and expand qualitative codes. They direct further data collection. Advanced memos are used to identify beliefs and assumptions associated with a category, and to make comparisons within it. Mills et al. (2006) suggested including raw data in memos so that the participants' voices and meanings will remain present in the theoretical outcome.

I began writing memos from the beginning of my data collection and analysis process. As I conducted interviews, I recorded my impressions of what we discussed and reflected on the interview process. As suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) I made notes on the interview transcripts and ideas as they occurred to me.

I also used symbols to identify various categories. I put a star in the margins beside participant comments that concerned their relationships with teachers. As other categories were created, I marked them with different symbols, such as the number one with a circle around it. I wanted a symbol that was eye-catching, and the circles stood out on the transcripts. Not only did this make it easy to review those responses, but I could visually scan the transcripts to see how often the category was mentioned, and look for patterns in when and how it was discussed.

Colors were another tool I used to indicate categories I was identifying. For example, one of the participants seemed not to always answer the questions I asked. Sometimes she seemed to turn the question around so that her response presented her in a positive light. At other times, she gave examples of students' actions rather than teacher actions. I used blue highlighting to indicate these responses in order to go back and look for patterns as to when this occurred.

As it turned out, this was a dead end. No other participant used this response technique, and when I reviewed the highlighted sections, I understood the participant's responses more clearly. For example, I asked her if she could pinpoint a moment when she knew that teachers were beginning to make shifts in their teaching. When she responded, she gave an example of a student using a rubric to check her work. I had expected a response involving a teacher's actions or comments. When I reviewed this response later, I realized that the participant was indicating that the shifts had trickled down into student behaviors. Having these responses marked with highlighting made it easier to review and analyze them.

After I made notations throughout the transcripts, I pulled those notations into separate documents to examine what was said by different participants on each category. I asked questions and made outlines in an attempt to organize logical progressions of my thinking. I also wrote memos on the computer which echoed these processes. At times they were written in traditional paragraphs, at others I used symbols, lists, highlighting, and sections in all capital letters to prod my memory and organize my thinking.

As my analysis became more focused, so did my memos. They also became longer and more complete. In some cases I was able to pull portions of a memo directly into this writing, but for the most part they served as background knowledge to help me more fully understand the concepts and categories I was developing. See Appendices J, K, and L for representative examples of early, mid, and late memo writing.

Diagrams. I have used diagrams to provide concrete images of my ideas (Charmaz, 2006). Diagrams can take the form of charts, maps, flow charts or any other visual representation. For example, Giske and Artinian (2007) created paintings to help them express their understanding of their core concept. This representational device helped them conceptualize the category and explain it to others.

As I reflected on and analyzed the data, creating diagrams helped me crystallize my ideas about the categories and themes that I was identifying. At each stage of my analysis, I refined the diagram to reflect my most recent and more informed thinking. Sometime, revising the diagram itself helped me consider the category in new ways. I present the series of diagrams I created, and the thinking that guided their creation, in the next chapter.

The Current Study

Data analysis in the current study has evolved into two phases. In the first phase, I collected data from participants in the form of interviews. I transcribed the interviews and began analysis by openly coding the transcripts and looking for categories. I then considered each participant and created narrative profiles based on their description of their experiences as coaches. In the second phase, I analyzed the data across the participants and looked for similarities and differences in order to conceptualize generalizations about their experiences. I used the diagrams I constructed to represent and to further my analysis

Denzin's (2001) Interpretive Interactionist methodology with Sundin and Fahy's (2008) modifications guided my analysis in the second phase. The first step, framing the research question, involves both the researcher and the subject. The question begins in experiences in the researcher's own life, who then seeks out individuals who have had the types of experiences she wishes to understand (Denzin, 2001). The current study sprang from questions I had about the difficulties I had in my experiences as a literacy coach. Talking with other coaches about their perspectives about their relationships with teachers and principals provided a way to organize and give meaning to those experiences.

The second step in Denzin's (2001) methodology is deconstruction and critical analysis of prior conceptions of the phenomenon. This involves locating previous conceptions of the phenomenon in the literature. My review of contemporary literature about coaching indicated much of what is written about literacy coaches comes from formats outside of peer-reviewed scholarship, such as books, evaluation reports, and privately funded case studies (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). The main component of coaches' work is to support teachers, whether it is in implementing programs or in becoming more reflective practitioners. They provide professional

development that is job-embedded, intensive and ongoing, with relationships that are dialogical, non-evaluative, confidential and respectful (Knight, 2009).

The job of the literacy coach is complex and involves much more than an in-depth knowledge of literacy processes and skills. The literacy coach must be able to forge relationships with both teachers and with administrators in order to successfully effect change. Trusting relationships are vital in order for the coach to be able to encourage teachers to take risks and become more reflective. A strong relationship with the principal is also necessary in order for the coach to be able to help carry out the principal's vision for literacy instruction at their school.

The next steps in the methodological process involve capturing the phenomenon, bracketing it, constructing it, and contextualizing it. Since these steps involve the analysis of the data collected, I will discuss these steps in the next chapter.

Subjectivity Statement

Quantitative research places the researcher in a position "outside" the research. Attempts are made to diminish the influence of the researcher so that her opinions do not taint the reality that is being discovered.

Qualitative research, however, acknowledges that the researcher cannot be fully removed from the process. It is important to consider what subjectivities the researcher brings to the project.

I am personally connected to this research in ways that could enhance and also possibly detract from the perceptions that are portrayed by the participants. I worked for four years as a literacy coach and struggled to maintain effective relationships with the school principal and with some of the teachers with whom I worked. While I personally had friendly relationships with everyone at the school, there were times when my personal relationships may have affected

teachers' professional behavior. I was not seen as a person with authority. If a teacher did not feel like trying one of my suggestions they felt free to ignore them.

Teachers at the school did not seem motivated to change their practice. This is understandable to some extent because changing one's teaching requires hard work, motivation, and sustained effort. They appreciated the ways I supported them but did not see me as a collaborative partner working together to try new ideas. As a result, I sometimes did not follow through with observations and feedback to teachers because I feared negative and/or indifferent reactions.

I also struggled with a trusting relationship with the principal at my school. She saw the literacy coach as someone who would handle curricular issues, leaving her free to work on other things. She seldom visited classrooms and did not require teachers to work with the coach if she did not see the kind of instruction in their classroom that she wanted. She asked the coach to approach teachers who she felt needed assistance. She did not discuss her plans for the school's literacy program openly with me and assigned me busywork projects or had me fill in when a substitute teacher did not show up.

I believe that my experiences could enhance this research project because I could understand coaches who are in similar situations. I was able to relate to their experiences. I tried to avoid being less objective, however, and layer my meanings over theirs so that the coaches' stories and not their but mine and theirs. I was careful to let their voices be heard.

When I spoke with coaches who have built positive trusting relationships with teachers and principals, I was mindful to allow their stories to come out.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways literacy coaches develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work. In order to better understand literacy coaches' perceptions about their relationships with teachers and with principals, I conducted interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Seidman, 2006) with seven literacy coaches. I met with each coach for one interview of approximately one and one half hours and for a second interview lasting approximately one half hour. I employed theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in selecting the coaches, choosing individuals who had a variety of types of coaching experiences and relationships. Guiding this study were four research questions:

1. How do literacy coaches perceive the role of relationships between and among literacy coaches, principals, and teachers?
2. How do literacy coaches develop relationships with teachers and principals?
3. How do they balance these relationships?
4. How does the quality of these relationships impact their ability to meet their assigned roles and responsibilities?

Data Analysis

Data analysis in the current study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, after I collected data from participants in the form of interviews I transcribed each interview, and began analysis by conducting open-ended coding, and identifying initial categories. I then created

individual narrative profiles of each participant that were drawn from their description of their experiences as coaches.

In the second phase, I analyzed the data across the participants, following Sundin and Fahy's (2008) adaptation of Denzin's (2001) Interpretive Interactionist methodological steps. Sundin and Fahy revised Denzin's methodology to bring in critical and post-structural elements. They kept Denzin's steps but recognized the emotional element of human behavior in data collection and analysis, addressed issues of power, looked for silences and gaps in narratives and social context, and acknowledged the impact of the macro-social world on the micro-situations of a person's experience.

Following the steps allowed me to look for similarities and differences across the participants' perceptions of the role of relationships in coaching. Furthermore, this analysis helped me conceptualize generalizations and create a working series of diagrams that began to visually represent shared and unique factors about their relationship experiences. Denzin described six steps in the interpretive process:

1. Framing the research question
2. Deconstructing and analyzing critically prior conceptions of the problem.
3. Capturing the phenomenon
4. Bracketing the phenomenon
5. Constructing the phenomenon
6. Contextualizing the phenomenon

The first step, framing the research question, involves both the researcher and the subject. The question begins in experiences in the researcher's own life, who then seeks out individuals who have had the types of experiences she wishes to understand (Denzin, 2001). The current

study sprang from questions I had about the difficulties I had in my experiences as a literacy coach. Talking with other coaches about their perspectives about their relationships with teachers and principals provided a way to organize and give meaning to those experiences.

The second step in Denzin's (2001) methodology is deconstruction and critical analysis of prior conceptions of the phenomenon. This involves locating previous conceptions of the phenomenon in the literature. My review of contemporary literature about coaching indicated that the job of the literacy coach is complex and involves much more than an in-depth knowledge of literacy processes and skills. The literacy coach must be able to forge relationships with both teachers and with administrators in order to successfully effect change. Trusting relationships are vital in order for the coach to be able to encourage teachers to take risks and become more reflective. A strong relationship with the principal is also necessary in order for the coach to be able to help carry out the principal's vision for literacy instruction at their school.

The balance of this chapter is devoted to the remaining steps in Denzin's (2001) methodology that has been expanded and adapted by Sundin and Fahy (2008). Capturing the phenomenon involved locating multiple cases of the process of interest. In this section, I describe the participants in this study and present their stories. Then I bracket the phenomenon: deconstructing it and reducing it to its "key factors" (Sundin & Fahy, 2008). These key factors include interactional process factors, which describe the process itself; personal factors, which are those factors that are inherent in the individual which affect the interactions; and contextual factors, which include circumstances surrounding the situation, such as organizational contexts, which could impinge on the interactional situation.

The last two steps in Denzin's methodology, construction and contextualization, involve re-assembling the factors identified in the previous step so that they can be reconceptualized, and

re-situating the explanation in the contemporary social world. In this section I describe general and specific diagrams that represent the coaching relationships at each school.

Capturing the Phenomenon

The third step in Denzin's interpretive interactionist methodology is capturing the phenomenon, or locating and situating the subject in the natural world. Capture involves securing the personal histories of individuals who embody the phenomenon, and personal experience stories about the topic in question. Rather than describing what has been done in the past, it deals with what is happening in the present, in the current study. I present the stories of the coaches with whom I met, situating them in their environments. Having multiple stories of coaches and their relationships allows me to examine their lived experiences, and develop a general understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin, 2001).

The Participants

All seven of the coaches were women who worked in elementary schools in Northeast and Central Georgia. Six of the seven women were white. All of the schools where the coaches worked had a large percentage of students living in poverty (from 48% to 97%); the school populations were very diverse.

The coaches ranged from novice to veteran, having experience ranging from one and one half years to nine years. Their teaching experience ranged from ten to twenty-four years. Three of the coaches have worked at one school only for their entire coaching career, while the other four have worked in more than one setting. One coach's situation is unique in that she works at six elementary schools, representing all of the Title I schools in her district.

Five of the schools are in the same school district, but represent a variety of settings, such as in-town, suburban, and rural. One of the school districts represented comprises both rural and

suburban schools. The third district is located in the center of the state which is a mostly rural area, but a large military base located in the city provides an urban feel.

In the following section, I draw from my analysis of data to provide a descriptive metaphor and a supporting narrative for each of the coaches' situations and perceptions of the role of relationships in conducting their jobs: (1) Amy: Learning to Think Like a Literacy Coach; (2) Carol: Getting Better at Best Practices; (3) Debby: "Lost in Translation"; (4) Emily: "I am not a District Mouthpiece - I AM a Literacy Coach"; (5) Jane: Tread Lightly and Explore; (6) Joann: "It May Not be Camelot, but it IS a Round Table"; (7) Lydia: From "Spyware" and Mixed Messages to Relationships.

Amy: Learning to Think Like a Literacy Coach

This photo of a beautiful cove provides an appropriate metaphor for Amy's experiences in coaching (see Figure 4.1). At times, she was able to draw from her own experiences as a classroom teacher who had received excellent coaching, to avoid running head-on into difficulties. She also found that she could follow the ground rules provided by her principal to enjoy success. However, at other times, she found herself accidentally walking squarely backwards into situations where she wished she had been better prepared to think more like a coach, and less like a teacher. She felt safe in her tranquil, protected setting, but knew that she would be called upon to venture out into a larger ocean. Amy's narrative is a journey of adjusting her view and learning how to think like a coach.

Amy is a K-5 instructional coach at Barrett Elementary, a small but diverse elementary school located in the center of a town in Northeast Georgia (see Table 4.1). The school is one of the oldest in the city but recent renovations have revitalized it; peeling paint and portable classrooms have given way to gleaming wood floors and walls bursting with children's work.

Barrett's small size and family-like atmosphere have made it one of the most desirable schools in the district.

Figure 4.1. Learning to Think Like a Literacy Coach. Retrieved from http://www.istockphoto.com

Amy describes the school as approximately one third African-American, one-third white and one-third Hispanic/Latino. The school is relatively small, with about 300 students and about three classes per grade level. There is also a significant amount of economic diversity in the school's zone and in the population. Children of musicians from the city's trendy music scene attend Barrett along with children of college professors and those living in nearby housing projects.

Getting to know Amy. It's easy to picture Amy walking briskly down the main hallway one morning after breakfast duty, stopping briefly to greet every parent she happens to meet, and reminding them about the upcoming parent coffee. Having worked at a school with very little parent involvement, she wants to make sure that everyone feels welcome at school events. She wants to encourage their participation and support the teachers' efforts to plan a special coffee time for parents (drawn from interview, September 16, 2010).

Table 4.1

Barrett Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	82	4
First grade	75	4
Second grade	60	4
Third grade	62	3
Fourth grade	44	3
Fifth grade	42	2
Total	365	20

Background. This is Amy's first full year as a coach but she has blended into the position easily. The previous coach at Barrett left in January to pursue other opportunities. As a teacher, Amy had felt comfortable working with the coach at her previous school and knew how valuable the coaching relationship could be. Holly Burgess, the coach she replaced, was supportive of Amy as the replacement and Amy has felt welcomed by everyone at the school. Amy was especially appreciative of a supportive conversation she had with the principal immediately after she was offered the position. She says:

> As soon as I was offered the position, the principal called me from his cell phone to my cell phone, and just had a whole conversation with me about how Holly was such a wonderful coach and a wonderful professional, and example and a mentor for me, but at the same time I was hired to be me not to be her. (interview, September 16, 2010)

Coaching role. With no formal coaching training, Amy has had to figure her job out as she goes along. She is thoughtful and reflective in order to be as effective as possible. She tries to do what she calls the "hard work, thinking and reflecting," first thing in the morning when she is

fresh, and saves the more routine tasks such as answering emails, for the afternoon when she is more tired. This is a routine she established when she was a classroom teacher.

She likes to view her work as a coach in the same way as she viewed working with students that she taught. She believes in the importance of listening to teachers and working with them as co-learners because that is the way she functioned best as a teacher. She speaks highly of the teachers at her school, and feels free to concentrate her efforts on working with teachers on issues they find important. For example, she wants teachers to be able to adapt district mandates to fit with their beliefs about what works best for their students, or to improve specific areas of instruction. Being guided by a teacher grass roots-based view has enabled her to avoid pitfalls of a heavily top-down approach.

Relationships. From the very first day on the job, Amy's goal as a coach has been "to help teachers do their jobs better," so whatever furthers that goal is where she places her priority. She credits the principal and assistant principal for the welcoming atmosphere of the school. They "take pride in this place and believe in teachers" which sets the tone for everyone else's interactions. Their respect for teachers is evident to all. She says that the administration distinguishes between the important things and the required things; as much as possible they want to focus on the important things. This approach is something that she valued when she was a classroom teacher. Furthermore, she believes that this support gives her a great deal of freedom to be responsive to teachers as they need it. It also carries over to the teachers in that when they have new requirements from the district they look carefully at it and figure out ways to make them work so they can fulfill the district requirements but still meet the needs of their students.

She feels compatible with the administration on what good instruction looks like, and how to work with teachers to achieve that. The administrators considered her carefully when

deciding to offer her the coaching job, to make certain her beliefs aligned with their philosophy. Amy believes that the fact that their philosophies are in alignment is very important for the culture of the school. She notes that when administrators feel confident in their role, and in how they are viewed by teachers and others, it is easier for them to allow others to support them in that role. They are more willing to share their responsibilities for the betterment of the school.

Amy feels frustrated by outside requirements such as the district imposes, while recognizing their importance. For example, the district has advocated small group guided reading instruction for several years; however they recently adopted a traditional basal reading program for the upper elementary grades, and had withdrawn guided reading instructional support. Amy had to watch her step to avoid the dangers of competing priorities. She says:

> And we never know which way we're going as a district—are we a basal? Are we going to use this? Is this a resource? Is this the curriculum? Is this the standards? Is this aligned? On and on and on and on, when really, it's a basal. It's the same…a basal is a basal is a basal. There's fifteen workbooks, there's a story of the week (laughs), and so teachers being the wonderful people that they are, here, well, and just this being a great place, and really having some challenges thinking through this, decided to kind of take it upon themselves to figure out a way to implement the basal in a way that would satisfy the district requirements but would also be a way that's enriching for them as professionals and enriching for their students and their literacy learning. (interview, September 16, 2010)

She also had to learn to "think like a coach" rather than a teacher, being more detached and learning how to react to all the inside knowledge she was learning about teachers. One Friday afternoon, at the end of the school year when everyone was tired and frustrated, Amy let

her guard down when chatting after school with a teacher. As a coach, Amy was privy to "everyone's dirt," and shared some information about another teacher inappropriately. She says, "We were exhausted, the way teachers sometimes let themselves slip and say things that are unprofessional, and so that came out" (interview, September 16, 2010). It was not until several months later that she realized the damage her slip-up had caused. This type of experience has taught her to carefully watch her step and avoid unmarked dangers. She realized how easy it is to jeopardize her relationships with teachers, and helped her understand that she needed to shift from only thinking like a classroom teacher to thinking like a literacy coach.

Carol: Getting Better at Best Practices

The image of a turtle on a skateboard is an appropriate visual metaphor that describes Carol's perspective on the sometimes chaotic and sometimes easy role of literacy coaching relationships (see Figure 4.2). When a slow moving turtle (school culture) is forced to move at the speed of the skateboard (change initiatives), the progress can be a fast and unexpected wild ride, or it can be a slow, uphill climb.

Figure 4.2. Getting Better at Best Practices. Retrieved from http:www.istockphoto.com

Carol has been a coach for nine years at Watson Elementary, a high-poverty school with a large percentage of children of color (see Table 4.2). Watson is located in a wooded neighborhood off a state highway surrounded by used car lots and car repair shops. While the

neighborhood is in decline, the school has recently been extensively renovated. Parents, teachers, and students are all excited about their beautiful, new building.

Carol coaches kindergarten through second grade teachers in the area of literacy. Her previous work in a neighboring school district as a kindergarten teacher and as a liaison for University of Georgia student teachers led her to make initial contact with teachers at Watson, who recommended her for the coaching position. She became a coach through the America's Choice program, a comprehensive school reform model that emphasizes standards-based instruction. She felt fortunate to receive training and support from them for the first few years of her work as a coach.

Table 4.2

Watson Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	66	3
First grade	58	4
Second grade	48	4
Total	172	11

Getting to know Carol. On a typical day, Carol can be found in the school bookroom, consulting with a primary grade teacher on a selection of Guided Reading materials. Surrounded by book shelves that are loaded with boxes of leveled readers, stacks of teacher read-aloud picture books, and supplemental reading materials, she can literally reach right into the appropriate bin to recommend a specific set of readers or a set of thematically related books. On her way back to her office after the meeting, she notices Kathy Butler's second grade class stopping by the water fountain on their way in from the playground. She has been working with Kathy on her writing workshop mini-lessons so she takes this informal opportunity to check in

with her to see how the lesson had gone. The teacher offers a glowing account of how one child in particular experienced a writing break-through during the last mini-workshop lesson. Carol's easy camaraderie with the teachers and warm personality highlights the trust and respect they have for one another. The skateboard is moving along at an easy pace. However, Carol recalls that things have not always gone so smoothly or well.

Background. Carol has been a coach at Watson for nine years. She has worked with Lynn Wood, the principal, for all nine of those years, although Dr. Wood was the assistant principal that first year. The faculty at Watson, however, has a great deal of turnover each year. They tend to hire young teachers at the beginning of their careers. Carol's demeanor blends professionalism and warmth, which encourages young teachers to view her with trust and respect.

Training. Carol received an extensive amount of training through America's Choice, but, as she explains, there was more emphasis on content knowledge and less on coaching or supervising teachers. She followed the America's Choice guidelines for her coaching, with the support of Dr. Wood. This means that the teachers implemented Writer's Workshop the first year, and moved into Reader's Workshop the next year. The program included standards-based instruction, using America's Choice standards. As the state moved to standards-based instruction, the America's Choice program was phased out at the school.

With the implementation of America's Choice, teachers had to make drastic changes in their teaching in a short period of time. There was no option to ease into the changes slowly, as some might have preferred. Like a turtle on a skateboard, they careened into standards-based instruction whether they wanted to or not. Teachers worked very hard to change their teaching

methods, implementing the Writer's Workshop and meeting with teammates to discuss the literacy standards for their grade level. There was considerable resistance at first.

Over time, however, teachers saw the benefit of the changes they were making. Students in the model classrooms were beginning to learn "in new and different ways." Teachers who believed their students could not learn began to reexamine those beliefs. At the same time, the most resistant teachers left the school. Carol has noticed that, like the turtle on a slow moving skateboard, the school culture has transformed slowly to become more positive.

When Carol first began coaching at her school, she did not worry about district initiatives influencing their work. As an America's Choice school, their directives overrode those from the district. Eventually, however, this changed. The school left the America's Choice program and as standards-based instruction was implemented throughout the state, the district became more assertive in promoting consistent procedures throughout. This forced change made her job more stressful and has resulted in a refocusing of her coaching goals: she only works with primary grade teachers and focuses only on literacy instruction.

Relationships. Now that the changes have been in place for a while, you are likely to find Carol, sitting in her office, a classroom, or the teacher's lounge chatting informally with a new teacher. Younger teachers, in particular, call on Carol often, as a confidante, to share their triumphs and challenges with instruction. She not only takes the time to support their instruction, but she also "listens to the stories about their dogs, and…their recipes" (interview, May 18, 2010.) She believes that her personable approach creates strong and genuine relationships. She tries to identify and build from each teacher's strength, to help them be as successful as possible. Thus, she has been able to identify and make use of certain teacher leaders, whose confidence in

her has led new teachers to trust her too. When coach-teacher relationships are strong, and built on trust, the progress is an easy ride.

Her relationship with the principal has been both positive and negative over the years. Originally Dr. Wood appreciated her advice and expertise. Indeed there seemed to be a meeting of the minds that ensured a positive school culture, administrative support for Carol's coaching approach and a balanced filtering of district initiatives. However, things came to an unexpected, screeching halt. When budget cuts were necessary, the principal did not protect Carol's position, a decision which permanently damaged their relationship. Carol sadly admits that unfortunately the relationship is over. She will be cordial, but nothing more. Carol will not be a coach in the next school year, but will be able to continue to work with primary teachers as a support and resource teacher. She sees this as not totally negative, because she will not be responsible for delivering district information and can concentrate on teachers' and students' needs.

Coaching role. Carol says the two most important things a coach must be able to do in order to be successful are to have strong content knowledge, and to know how to build relationships with teachers. She also believes a coach is only as successful as the principal allows her to be. When the principal does not follow through on initiatives, the projects will not be supported by teachers to their full potential. Watson's Principal's Book of the Month project was such an example; Carol felt that having a school-wide shared text had the potential to inspire deeper learning on many levels, but Dr. Wood did not utilize opportunities to remind students and teachers about it. As a result, many teachers did not take the project seriously and its full potential was not realized.

As an America's Choice coach, Carol was charged with helping teachers learn the America's Choice system. The guidelines and procedures came from them, and the principal's

input was only in relation to those requirements. The America's Choice guidelines also superseded district requirements. She was supportive of the program because so many of the students at her school were not learning to read. She was convinced that what they were doing was not working.

Lack of success was also leading to negative attitudes on the part of the teachers. It angered and frustrated Carol to hear teachers doing what she called "kid-bashing." In her mind, this was like blaming the victim! Making a big change like moving to America's Choice helped bring about fairly quick changes in teacher attitudes about their students, their students' families, and their own work. As a result, the school culture has become more positive over time. Some teachers leave because they do not like all the work that is required there, which has also helped change the culture. Thus, when everyone got on board the skateboard, the progress was smooth, steady, and positive.

Nowadays, the school still follows the America's Choice guidelines, but since they are no longer part of the program, they can be more flexible. Carol is accountable to the principal and to the district more than in the past. She sees her role as helping teachers become more proficient literacy teachers, but she also works to increase the knowledge of the administrators about literacy instruction. She says, "the general philosophy here is best practice…we spent a year just working on best practice: what is best practice, what does that look like and how does that fit in with what we're doing, and how can we get better at it?" (interview, May 18, 2010). In other words, the turtle on the skateboard has made progress; however, the progress and the role of the relationships within the school culture have been uneven. Change, when forced has resulted in either a wild, downhill run or a forced march -pushing that skate board up a hill!

Debby: Lost in Translation

Lost in Translation, a slice of life movie depicting how displaced Americans attempt to communicate with and fit into Japanese culture, is an apt metaphor for Debby's perceptions of her attempts to be an effective literacy coach in differing school cultures (see Figure 4.3). At times, Debby felt that there were unexpected disconnections in coaching relationships that resulted in unintended miscommunications and mistrust.

Figure 4.3. Lost in Translation. Retrieved from http://www.flickr.com/photos/unity_creative/3050228199/

Debby, a coach in the Early Learning program in her school district, works with teachers of three year old and four year old pre-kindergarten students. Some of them are part of federally funded programs like Head Start, while others are supported with local and state funds. Many times the teachers she works with are day care workers, not certified teachers, so she gives them a lot of support to help them meet the requirements of the program. She says these teachers are incredibly dedicated and do the extra work that is required in order to see the benefits for the children they work with.

Getting to know Debby. Bubbly and exuberant during the interview, Debby is passionate about her work. When I met her at her office, she blew lightly into the room. Her hearty laugh announced her slightly late arrival, having been held up at a previous meeting. Then, she excused herself briefly to encourage a PreK teacher who stopped by to share assessment results with her. "You should feel real good about this one," she said pointing to one of the scores. "But you should feel great about this one!" With a grateful smile, and an appreciative nod of her head, the PreK teacher stepped out into the hallway so we could begin the interview.

Background. Before beginning her job with the Office of Early Learning, Debby was a teacher and a coach at Kirkland Elementary, in the same district (see Table 4.3). She taught fifth grade at a school with many highly respected teachers. When she was approached by central office about moving into coaching work, she told the program administrators that she did not want to be a coach at that school. She felt that it would be difficult to make the transition to a coaching role where she had already established collegial relationships with teachers. That was, however, where she was placed.

She worked successfully with the teachers there, however, seeing her role as " helping teachers implement standards-based instruction, being sure that teams had what they needed to do their planning, re-delivering district information, supporting new teachers, that kind of thing." She enjoyed collaborating with teachers to rethink their instruction. She says, "The crux of coaching is that we're all in here trying to figure out a problem, you know…" The teachers at Kirkland were, she said, a real learning community, as were the teachers at her previous school. Clearly, Debby had the expectation that everyone was on the same wavelength, communicating clearly, efficiently and effectively.

Table 4.3

Kirkland Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	93	5
First grade	110	5
Second grade	108	5
Third grade	108	5
Fourth grade	99	4
Fifth grade	104	4
Total	622	28

Set in rolling countryside, Kirkland is one of the largest elementary schools in the district, and has a reputation for excellent instruction and strong parent involvement. Even though the school has a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch (63%), because the percentage is lower than the district average of 78%, some perceive Kirkland as a "rich" school.

Relationships. Debby's relationship with the principal there was not as smooth as it was with teachers. Principal Kate Donaldson was quite young, new to the job and new to the school. Debby liked and supported her immediately. However, in hindsight she realizes that she mistakenly believed they shared the same goals and vision for their relationship. Ms. Donaldson frequently agreed with Debby's ideas, but when the time came to choose an assistant principal, Debby was surprised to find that she was not included in the process. In addition, the choice turned out to be someone for whom Debby did not have a great deal of respect.

According to Debby, on more than one occasion, Helen Bowers, the new assistant principal, had appeared to be more interested in taking the easy way around problems rather than in doing the necessary work to ensure success. While a teacher, Ms. Bowers had frequently expressed disdain for positions such as coaching, declaring them to be "too much work." Debby

felt certain that this attitude would lead her to cut corners as an administrator. Debby wondered if she and Ms. Donaldson had been speaking the same language when they had discussed their goals for the school.

Ms. Donaldson's choice for an assistant principal showed Debby that the principal's goals did not in fact line up with hers. This led her to decide to leave her coaching position at the end of the year. As the school experienced difficulties, and struggled to recover from them, these differences became more pronounced. Over the summer the central office had decided to cut one of their classrooms, yet when school opened they experienced overcrowding while the district decided at which school to open the extra class. In the meantime, a teacher left abruptly as a result of serious personal problems. The staff tried to maintain their positive attitudes but the stress was wearing on everyone. Debby supported the principal but also supported and respected the veteran teachers at the school. Ms. Donaldson, on the other hand, viewed the teachers as an obstacle to school improvement. The tension built and open communication began to shut down.

Later that year, after the situations had been resolved, Debby commented at a district level meeting that in her opinion the school had not handled the challenges as well as they could have. Ms. Donaldson believed Debby had spoken out of turn and called in a district leader to discuss it with her in her school office.

Sitting in the very chair where she had been welcomed, first as a teacher and later as a coach, Debby began to feel like a child in trouble - one who had been called into the principal's office for punishment. As the district administrator scolded Debby for expressing unprofessional and inappropriate comments, she felt like they were speaking two different languages. She felt that she was getting "lost in translation." When the principal remained silent throughout the meeting, Debby knew their relationship was irretrievably broken. She decided at that moment of

realization, that in her next position she would make it clear that she expected to be able to express her opinions without repercussion.

Fortunately, Debby believes that she has been able to establish that understanding in her present position: the program leaders consistently make it clear that they take into consideration everyone's opinions and then make their decisions based on the coaches' and teachers' valuable input. Indeed, she is encouraged and expected to speak up; however, once the decision is made, she is expected to be supportive.

Other experience. As part of her assignment as a district instructional coach, Debby also worked very briefly (one-half day per week) at Eastside Elementary school. In her opinion, the assigned amount of time did not provide enough opportunities to develop strong coaching relationships with teachers. This insight sparked a series of ideas for other ways she could provide assistance, such as organizing a jumbled set of science materials. Once a handful of teachers began to see her as an asset, she was able to do some work with them.

However, as the other teachers resisted her attempts to provide professional development workshops, it became clear that the school culture at Eastside Elementary was very different from that of Kirkland Elementary. Teachers at Kirkland felt a constant sense of obligation to comply with district initiatives, while Eastside teachers felt free to disregard them. Thus, a tension arose when Debby realized that Eastside teachers saw her as someone who was not there to support them but to tell them what the district wanted them to do. Even though she had become accustomed to administrators who seemed to be speaking another language, she had always felt that the teachers understood her efforts. Now, in the new school setting, she felt that the cadre of teachers did not want her help, and this was a new experience for her.

Debby continued to be surprised at other differences in the school culture compared to her other experiences. Rather than overtly striving for excellence and seeking to continually learn to improve instruction, she began to sense that the teachers blamed the kids for their own failures to achieve. Ultimately, their comments led her to believe that the teachers held low expectations for their students' success. This low expectation seemed to set up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once again, Debby found herself getting "lost in translation." She and the teachers might be using the same educational terminology but their mind-sets and philosophies were in very different places.

It is worth noting that Debby is convinced that beginning coaches in the Early Learning program frequently experience the same element of surprise that she did: teachers often move into coaching because of their success in teaching, and they expect that all of the teachers they coach will have the same level of skills and commitment. As a result, many new coaches are shocked when they discover teachers and administrators who exhibit a wide range of skills and commitment.

While not working closely with the principal at Eastside, she believes that much of a school's culture is set by the principal, whether overtly or not. She believes that it is very important for administrators to be well-versed in best practices so that they will know what to look for in classrooms, and how to support teachers. She also believes that instruction should be the main focus for a school. Clearly, communication and relationships between coaches and teachers are influenced by pressures from the district, administrative, and school culture.

Emily: "I Am Not a District Mouthpiece—I Am a Literacy Coach!"

This photograph of a woman with a megaphone is an appropriate visual metaphor for Emily's work as a coach (see Figure 4.4). She strives to maintain positive, professional relationships with the teachers at her school, and wants to be considered a colleague rather than

an administrator. When asked to deliver district initiatives, she often feels like she is shouting them from a mountain top, rather than working closely with individuals in a professional learning community. In the photograph, the woman is not using the megaphone, to represent Emily's resistance to being seen as a district mouthpiece.

Figure 4.4. Not a District Mouthpiece. Retrieved from http://www.flickr.com/photos/thivierr/1177875560/

Emily works as a K-5 literacy coach at Patton Elementary, a school of just over 500 students located in a medium-sized city (see Table 4.4). Because the city is home to a large Air Force base, the student population at her school is quite diverse. About 90% of the students are receiving free and reduced lunch. The school system is quite large, with five high schools and approximately thirty elementary schools. Not all the schools in the district have similar percentages of students living in poverty, and families try to locate near the schools with lower percentages. At Emily's school the population is primarily African-American. The number of ELL students is also increasing.

Table 4.4

Patton Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	99	6
First grade	114	5
Second grade	87	4
Third grade	78	5
Fourth grade	71	5
Fifth grade	92	4
Total	541	29

Getting to know Emily. Upon meeting Emily for the first time, the word that springs to mind immediately is "positive." With her gentle voice and quick laugh, she puts people at ease right away. She is a reassuring source of support, especially for new teachers. She can be found in the hallways at Patton, stopping by Amanda's classroom to see how her guided reading lesson went. Amanda is a first year teacher, and her teammates, veterans who transferred to Patton from another school district, are trying to persuade her to abandon her reading workshop and use a traditional basal. Emily makes it a point to check in with Amanda frequently to answer her questions and help maintain her resolve. They discuss ways Amanda can make the workshop more engaging, yet more rigorous, before Emily heads off to a team meeting with another grade level.

Background and training. Emily worked as a primary grades teacher, and this taught her the importance of a strong foundation in literacy. The lesson came to some extent by accident. Emily had always intended on teaching middle grades, and admits she did not pay attention in her literacy classes. "I won't need this! When they come to me they will know how to read!" she thought naively. When she was hired as a third grade teacher, she came to regret

those words. Noting her soft, gentle voice, her next principal moved her to first grade, which she unexpectedly loved. She credits her son's teacher, however, with showing her the power and potential of a balanced literacy approach.

Working with coaches as a teacher led her to become interested in their work, and to pursue the opportunity for herself when it became available. Her work leading teacher book clubs also stirred her interest in working with adults. Her growing passion for literacy instruction led her to want to share it with others. She would happily have used a megaphone to get the word to as many colleagues as possible.

Emily has worked as a teacher at Patton for four years and has coached at that school for another four years. During her eight years at the school she has worked with three principals. The current principal was the one who hired her as a coach. Several schools in the district were Literacy Collaborative schools, which led them to put coaches in place. Emily did not receive training through this program however, because by the time she was hired the school had moved to using Lucy Calkins (2007) materials rather than the Literacy Collaborative. She did receive extensive content training with Calkins, and coaching training with them and with the school district.

At times the district will ask coaches to deliver professional learning to their schools, and Emily does feel like a district mouthpiece in those situations. Generally, though, the district mandates align with what her school needs, and she feels free to adapt the learning to the needs of her school. She also is glad to have the backing of the district. "But I like it in some ways, because it's something I can fall back on, you know, this isn't Emily saying this, this is the county."

Relationships with teachers and administrators. As a teacher and as a coach, Emily emphasizes the importance of what she calls quality relationships, which she defines as "where you are both able to voice your opinion, learn from each other, grow from each other in a positive environment, where you don't feel threatened or not made to feel like your opinion doesn't matter. It's the same I guess, too, with administrators" (interview, July 2, 2010).

Emily works hard to ensure that the teachers see her as a colleague rather than an administrator. When a teacher jokingly called her "just a spy for the district," she quickly worked to counter that impression, and to make sure the teacher clearly understood Emily's role. She says, "I have to break through that, I don't want her to feel that way, or to spread that through the faculty" (interview, July 2, 2010). She wants to be seen as a literacy coach, not a district mouthpiece.

Instead of positioning herself as the "expert," she prefers to be "just one teacher working with another teacher," and tries to work one on one with teachers as much as possible. She makes teachers aware of her role through an introductory letter in the fall and makes extra time to assist and support new teachers. She tries to make sure she is not seen only with the administration, so that teachers will not associate her with them automatically.

Emily describes her principal as more of a manager than a visionary leader. She is aware of best practices, however, and expects her teachers to follow through with the district initiatives. Emily's relationship with the principal has improved over time because Emily took the initiative to talk with her about ways that she felt she was not being supported. Her support has increased as a result of those conversations. Emily felt she had a responsibility to let the principal know the kinds of support she needed. She has also been more aggressive in seeking time with the assistant principal and as a result they have begun working more closely together.

Coaching role. Emily sees her role as a coach is to build others up, and is most gratified when she can work as a colleague with teachers and allow them to take leadership roles. She has established lab sites at each grade level and works closely with those teachers, who can then serve as peer coaches with their teammates. She also is learning how to pull back with her coaching and allow teachers to try out her suggestions without feeling she needs to be involved every step of the way.

Another aspect of Emily's role as a coach is providing professional learning. She feels that the administration is not as supportive of her efforts in this area as they could be, but they are trying to improve. She tries to reach as many people as possible by offering a variety of formats for professional learning, such as book study groups, lunchtime meetings and traditional professional learning sessions.

Emily tries to stay positive in her relationships with teachers and with the administration. After four years and a lot of hard work and reflection, she has developed a coaching role that is focused on the needs of Patton's teachers and students rather than simply shouting out the words of the district.

Jane: Tread Lightly and Explore

This photograph of an African Jacana, treading lightly on the head of a partially submerged hippo provides an apt metaphor for Jane's perceptions of her experience as a coach (see Figure 4.5). If the Jacana makes a step in the wrong direction, it can mean an untimely end. In the same way, Jane navigates the tricky waters and gently helps teachers make their way toward their goals. For example, with a great many projects and challenges underway at her school, she realizes that she needs to tread lightly, taking care not to push teachers so much that they feel overwhelmed.

Figure 4.5. Tread Lightly. Retrieved with permission from http://outdoorphoto.co.za/forum/photopost/showphoto.php?photo= 105411&cat=517

Jane is a coach at L.H. Holsey, an elementary school that has a very high poverty rate and has a majority Hispanic-Latino population (see Table 4.5). It is a brand new school, having recently completed its first year

The school has other unique features as well: it is a Professional Development School with a large university in the Southeastern United States and is a Renzulli school-wide enrichment model building. (This model develops the talents of all students through the school-wide application of gifted education strategies.) The professional development school relationship provides the school with resources from the university in the form of teacher preparation classes taught at the school and an abundance of interns, student teachers and student volunteers. There are also resources for professional development and mentoring of the school's faculty. The school-wide enrichment model includes the school teaching enrichment clusters with the goal of using gifted education strategies for all students and "discovering gifted abilities in minority student populations."

Table 4.5

L.H. Holsey Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	97	5
First grade	75	5
Second grade	69	4
Third grade	73	3
Fourth grade	75	3
Fifth grade	59	3
Total	448	23

Getting to know Jane. A typical day finds Jane with several projects, in varying stages of completion. She escorts Dr. Allison Green, from L.H. Holsey's university partner, down the hall to meet the first grade team. Dr. Green is providing some extra support for their literacy instruction. On the way, she stops to chat with Timika, a teacher's aide, about the book study meeting being held after school that day. In response to the book they are studying, the aides have been keeping journals about the types of language they use with students. Timika wants to share one of the connections she is making about how her language influences students' actions.

After making sure Dr. Green is settled in with the first grade teachers, she notices Luis, a teacher's aide from Honduras who has been leading a Spanish conversation group for teachers and staff after school. She takes the opportunity to practice a little of this week's lesson and asks him in Spanish how his week is going.

Jane manages to project serenity, despite all the ongoing projects she is juggling. "I love a challenge," she exclaims. The faculty and staff exude pride at their beautiful new building, and for all they have accomplished in such a short time. This pride spills over to the happy faces of

the children in the hallways. Children's hand-lettered signs in English and Spanish welcome visitors and provide directions.

Because the school is new, the entire faculty can be considered new as well. The many new initiatives, along with district directives, have given teachers a lot to learn and think about this year. In addition, many teachers have changed grade levels on coming to the school. This has made Jane tread lightly in how much she asks of teachers so they will not be too overwhelmed. The faculty was chosen for their commitment and energy; they have embraced all the challenges with a positive attitude.

Background and training. Jane moved to this area from a larger city to pursue the opportunity of becoming a coach. Her experience with school-wide enrichment made her a good fit to become the coach at this new school. She has not had formal training in coaching (through a "program"), but participated in district coaching professional development. Reading and discussion with coaching mentors helped her feel confident as a coach: "…after just a little bit of study and reflection, I got it. I got what coaching was supposed to be, I had the vision of what it could be" (interview, May 26, 2010).

Relationships with teachers and administrators. Jane's philosophy as a teacher has carried over to her work as a coach. Just as she believes teachers should step back and guide children through learning, she tries to step back and allow teachers to have "aha" moments about their teaching. She works to set up situations where deep conversations about teaching and learning can occur, rather than taking charge herself. She describes very little resistance on the part of the teachers to all the new initiatives. She trusts and respects the teachers, and this seems to translate into their trust and respect of her. She says:

> If you've got a coach that can open up those conversations, for teachers to process through this, just like you and I are, you get the shift. So ultimately it comes down to, I can't sit here and tell you how to do it. But I can create a conversation when you can discover for yourself there are opportunities you want to explore with your teaching, now comes the coaching. How do I support you as you're exploring this question for yourself and your practice? (interview, May 26, 2010)

Jane speaks very highly of the administration at this school, especially the principal. Mrs. Stephens is very supportive of all her initiatives, and has given Jane the freedom to do what she believes is important. She has also provided the structure for teachers to have the time for the deep conversations they believe are so important.

When the principal asks her to step back on an issue, or go in a different direction, she respects that feedback. Jane trusts that Mrs. Stephens has insights about how much is being asked of teachers; this advice is valuable in helping her keep from pushing teachers too much. The two have regular conversations about teaching and learning, so Jane knows that their goals and vision are in line with each other. The school also has a liaison from the University who takes part in these discussions and provides extra support for teachers, extending Jane's effectiveness.

Jane previously worked as a coach at another school in the district, and also had the experience of having a second school to work with for a short time each week. She agreed that it was difficult to support teachers in such a brief amount of time. She did what she could but did not consider her work there to be true coaching. She says, "I think that coaching is the thing you do in a classroom, with teachers" (interview, May 26, 2010). Jane has brought her passion and

commitment to her coaching work, but has learned to tread lightly and honor the goals and needs of the teachers she works with.

JoAnn: "It's Not Camelot, But It IS a Round Table"

This image of the Knights of the Round Table provides an appropriate metaphor for JoAnn's coaching philosophy (see Figure 4.6). Just as all the knights were given equal status around the table; JoAnn strives to be a resource and support to teachers rather than a voice of authority. However, it is worth noting in the photograph that the king's chair is a throne, which might suggest that his position is superior to the rest of the group. The chairs gathered at JoAnn's round table are all of equal size. This symbolizes her commitment to maintaining a status as a co-learner.

Figure 4.6. The Round Table. Retrieved from http://www.flickr.com/photos/glamhag/1460446172/

JoAnn works as a reading specialist for six schools in Raymond County (see Table 4.6). All the schools receive Title I funding, which is how the position came into being. Last year she only worked for three schools, so her job has doubled this year. She works with approximately

600 teachers. There are nine elementary schools in the district, so three of them are not eligible for Title I funds and receive no coaching services. She holds the only elementary reading specialist position in the district.

Table 4.6

Raymond County School District Title I Schools 2009-2010

School	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Atherton Elementary	504	22
Baker St. Elementary	680	31
Bay Creek Elementary	745	35
Davis St. Elementary	597	27
Taft Elementary	627	30
Vinson Elementary	724	31

There are nine elementary schools in her school district; three receive no support from her. The district as a whole is approximately three-fourths white and one fourth students of color; almost half of the students come from poverty. The six schools where JoAnn coaches reflect this mix, but represent a range of in-town, suburban and rural settings.

Getting to know JoAnn. When JoAnn pulls into the parking lot of Atherton Elementary, it is immediately clear that she is well-suited for this busy lifestyle: portable files are neatly arranged along the back seat of her car, colored sticky note reminders line the dashboard, yet she is remarkably calm and unruffled. Despite only visiting the school once a week, she knows all the teachers by name and finds time on her way to her next team meeting to encourage a second grade teacher who is attempting to differentiate instruction with literacy stations. JoAnn says, "It took a year to get her there…It takes a while" (interview, August 26, 2010).

Background and training. JoAnn has worked in a variety of positions in education, "from birth to adult," as she says. She has been a family literacy coordinator through the Georgia

Reads program and in that position received extensive training. However, in her current position she has received no additional training. The district holds monthly coaches' meetings but she is the only elementary literacy specialist, so the discussions with other coaches are centered on general coaching strategies. Her district is a Learning-Focused district, so her training in that program also guides her coaching. (Learning-Focused is a comprehensive school improvement program based on the work of Max Thompson.)

JoAnn's work as a fifth grade teacher sparked her interest in literacy instruction, because she was seeking ways to help her struggling students. She has always been interested in learning and willing to do extra work to further her knowledge and skills. Her motto, she says, is "Yearn to Learn." Though she loves her job, she realizes it is impossible to provide the support teachers need with so many schools to work with. She relies on the teachers' shared "yearning" and their working together as equals at the round table to achieve their goals.

Coaching role. Because of the number of teachers involved, most of JoAnn's work is done with grade level teams. She visits most schools one day per week; one day each week she visits two schools. However, her work is guided by the goals and parameters of the principal of each school. She would love to have more time to work with individual teachers. Besides grade level professional development, she helps with assessment and guides teachers in setting up literacy centers.

Her success at a school is very dependent on its leadership. She meets with principals to see what direction they would like for her to take, and also looks at data to determine areas of need. If she makes a suggestion to a principal and they do not agree, she does not challenge them, she does what they ask her to do. However, she is not afraid to take the lead and do what

she thinks is in the best interest of the teachers and children if the administration does not give her clear directions.

Relationships with teachers and administrators. Because her time at each school is so limited, it takes longer to build relationships with principals and teachers. When encountering a resistant teacher, she finds that saying she is there to give them ideas helps the teacher see her more as a supporting resource rather than an evaluator. Also, the more she works with a teacher and becomes part of their classroom and gets to know their students the more trust is developed. She finds that many times teachers are resistant because they feel inadequate about trying the methods she recommends. "It's scary, and it's almost like a wall or a façade: 'I know what I'm doing'. But the data doesn't support that they know what they're doing" (interview, August 26, 2010).

Because she works at six schools, she sees a variety of principal-teacher relationships. At one of her schools, in which the principal was very coercive, the teachers were put under a lot of stress and they saw JoAnn as a confidante rather than as an arm of the administration. She made sure they realized that what was said in their meetings would not get back to the principal.

JoAnn says she works very hard to build trust with teachers. She tells them she is not an evaluator. She is a supporter. She also feels that her experience in the district and with teaching in general has helped teachers trust her. She says that principals do not ask her to reveal confidences because they know she would not do that. She does, however, keep principals informed generally about the status of her work. For example, she might tell the administration the number of teachers at a grade level that are resisting her suggestions, but not name them specifically.

Because of the limited time she has at each school, change takes place slowly. She is gratified, however, to see that some of her suggestions, such as learning stations and differentiated instruction, are beginning to be implemented; it makes her feel like she is doing some good for the children in the district.

JoAnn says that being a teacher is at the core of who she is; she works hard to ensure that the teachers see her as a supporter and a confidante. For example, she makes sure that when she conducts professional learning with grade level groups that she sits at the table with them rather than standing in front of them and lecturing.

When she works with teachers and in the same way with entire schools, JoAnn describes what she does as "easing them into" new ideas. She recognizes that change takes time, but that she will get nowhere if she has not built strong trusting relationships to begin with. She recommends "soft" coaching for at least the first year in order to build that trust. Then in the second year a coach can be more direct and advocate for change based on data. JoAnn realizes her job is an almost impossible one, with over 600 teachers, but her round-table approach of supporting and advocating for teachers helps her do as much as she can.

Lydia: From "Spyware" and Mixed Messages to Relationships

This computer-enhanced photograph of a "spying" eye symbolizes Lydia's perceptions of the struggles she has encountered in her coaching career (see Figure 4.7). At the onset of her coaching career, she was seen by the teachers as "spyware"—someone sent from the central office with sinister intentions to report on how well or how poorly they were complying with district initiatives. Teachers' suspicions openly surfaced as they challenged her opinions and her professional knowledge during professional development workshops, grade level meetings, or

even during informal lunch room conversations. Slowly, however, she found ways to overcome the faculty's mistrust and was eventually seen as a supportive resource and colleague.

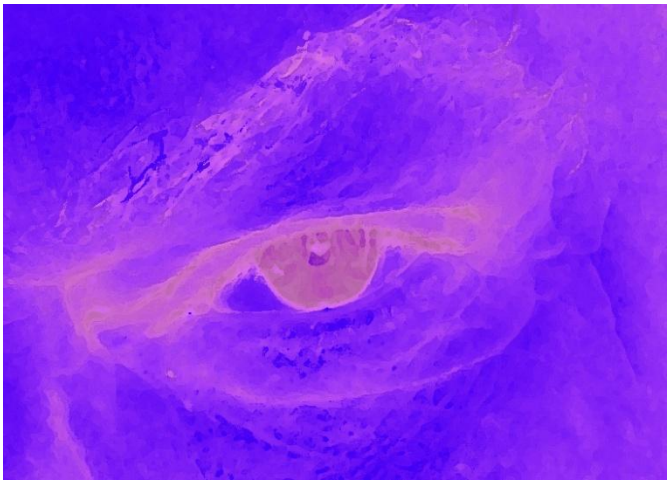


Figure 4.7. Spyware. Photograph by author. Effects added by Klon M. Waldrip.

Lydia worked as an instructional coach at Milford, an elementary school with a fairly high poverty rate (55-65%) (see Tabled 4.7). Even though both the number of students living in poverty and the numbers of minority students exceed the district averages, the school has a reputation of being more of a middle-class school than others in the district. Set in a large field bounded by tall pine forests, Milford is surrounded by large, well-maintained homes.

Getting to know Lydia. With her short, gray hair and southern drawl, one might assume on meeting Lydia that she is a southern little old lady. But after spending five minutes with her, one realizes that nothing could be further from the truth. Thoughtful and reflective, she quickly gets to the heart of an issue, and works efficiently, although she never seems rushed. On a typical day, Lydia prepares a PowerPoint presentation for teachers, and then heads down the hall to chat with Maggie, a coach in the Early Learning Program. Maggie has been compiling data on how students' vocabularies have grown and Lydia checks on what she has learned. They "high-five" each other when they realize how much progress has been made.

Table 4.7

Milford Elementary Students and Teachers 2009-2010

Grade	Number of students	Number of classrooms
Kindergarten	84	4
First grade	79	4
Second grade	70	4
Third grade	66	4
Fourth grade	78	4
Fifth grade	75	4
Total	452	24

Background and training. Lydia had been a preK and kindergarten teacher before becoming an instructional coach. Her relatively narrow experience caused her to doubt her ability to coach upper grade level teachers at first; eventually she realized that "instruction is instruction is instruction." She could observe in an upper elementary classroom and tell if the instruction was good, even if she was not familiar with the content at that grade level.

Lydia had no formal training in coaching other than what the district provided. She was assigned to Milford, a school at which she had not been a teacher. She felt that for this school, coming in as a coach from outside was the best choice, although she knows of situations where coaches have moved to that position from within the faculty very successfully. She believes what makes those coaches successful is the previous relationship they have with their principals.

At Milford, Lydia was placed into a situation where teachers were experiencing a great deal of change. A new standards-based state curriculum was being rolled out and their student population was also changing dramatically, with more students living in poverty and more students for whom English was not their first language. Lydia was seen as "spyware" for the

district, so was not welcomed by teachers at first. Her principal was supportive, but he was uncertain at first about what role she would and could play at the school.

Relationships with teachers and principals. Lydia describes the principal at this school as protective of the teachers. He worked to shield them from district pronouncements so that they could do their jobs with as much freedom as possible. Even though he always was respectful of her and of her position, he "did not know what to do with her" at first, which made her first year at the school very difficult. They both attempted to have regular meetings to discuss her work, but if he had to cancel a meeting he always handled it respectfully. At first they had chats in the hallway or after school, but by the end of the first year they had established a fairly regular meeting schedule.

By the second year, he found a suitable place for her office, and asked her to participate in various school-wide initiatives, which helped teachers see her as an instructional leader. Lydia mentioned that seemingly small things like where her office was located had effects on how she was viewed by teachers. The first year her office was located in the corner of the media center. Even though Lydia understood that it was a temporary placement, when she had a more visible office the next year it not only helped teachers see her as professional support, she was also more accessible to teachers and had a private place to meet with them.

At first, the teachers at this school were not interested in working with her; some of them openly challenged her—not her authority, necessarily, but her professional credentials, which was more hurtful. In those cases, she simply left those teachers alone and found others to work with. She did not attempt to change any teachers' minds, but let them decide for themselves if they wanted to work with her. She let teachers see that she was there to support them, not to report back to the district about them.

She was able to find one or two teachers who were willing to work with her, who needed help with one issue or another, and she chose to focus her time and efforts with them. She did not set up a formal "lab" classroom, but her successful endeavors with teachers made others interested in hearing what she had to say. She took the position of a learner, and worked with teachers to find solutions together; this helped other teachers to also see her as a resource rather than an evaluator. This took time, however; it did not happen overnight. In some cases she worked with new teachers to organize their classrooms or develop management strategies; she considered herself more of a mentor than a coach for these teachers. But developing relationships with these teachers led them to call on her later as other questions arose.

By the second year, she began to conduct school-wide professional learning and book-study groups, which helped teachers to view her as an instructional leader. Topics were chosen by teacher needs and interest; teachers were generally willing to participate in reading and study but were not interested in opening their classrooms to a coach. In part this was because they felt there were mixed messages coming from the district offices.

During her second year at the school, Lydia also began to develop a relationship with the assistant principal. When the principal retired and the assistant principal moved into that position, she already had an established relationship. Teachers saw that the administration trusted and relied on her. When they said that Lydia was going to be leading a study group or chairing a committee, teachers realized that it would in fact happen. Her work on school-wide committees also helped teachers see her as an integral part of the school. The principal conveyed the expectation that teachers would participate in the study groups being set up.

Eventually an opportunity arose for Lydia to return to her roots in early learning; she was offered the position of professional learning coordinator for the Early Reading First program.

She provides professional learning for the teachers and coaches associated with this grant, as well as other early learning programs associated with the school district. While she loves her new job, she is grateful for what she learned as an elementary instructional coach, and especially glad she stayed for her second year so she could see the payoff of her work in building relationships with teachers. While she remains cordial with all the teachers at Milford, there were some with whom she never developed close relationships. But she was gratified that they had come to see her as a coach rather than as spyware. "Relationships take time," she says, "You don't just add water, usually. They're not instant."

In this section I have presented the narratives of the seven coaches who participated in this study. Each participant encountered unique combinations of challenges and positive situations, which contributed to their perceptions of their relationships with teachers and principals. All of them maintained that the ability to develop relationships with teachers and with principals was crucial to their success as a coach. In the next section I will bracket the phenomenon, or reduce it to its key factors (Denzin, 2001).

Bracketing the Phenomenon

In this section I will describe bracketing, or reducing the phenomenon to its "key factors" (Sundin & Fahy, 2008). Denzin (2001) stated that bracketing is a way of holding the phenomenon up for serious inspection, dissecting it and analyzing its elements. The researcher studies the subject matter without preconceptions, confronting it as much as possible on its own terms. Sundin & Fahy (2008) suggested three categories of factors to be analyzed during bracketing: interactional process factors, personal factors, and contextual factors. I will examine each of them in turn.

Interactional process factors. Interactional process factors include factors or aspects of the interaction itself. In this section I examine coaches' relationships with teachers separately from their relationships with principals. I look for similarities and differences across the participants' experiences. In the coaches' relationships with teachers, I analyze the circumstances in which teachers resisted or accepted suggestions or assistance from the coach. Then I examine the relationships coaches had with their principals.

Coach-teacher relationships: resistance. The coaches described very little resistance to their coaching, but most of them encountered some form of it. Resistant teachers would not show up for meetings or professional learning. They would challenge coaches personally and professionally and even blatantly refuse to attempt new initiatives, even if it was mandated by the district.

Carol ("Getting better at best practices") especially encountered a great deal of resistance as she and her fellow coach implemented the America's Choice program at her school. She says, "It was not easy for the teachers. And it, there was a lot of passive-aggressive business going on. We had doors slammed in our faces, and teachers crying" (interview, May 18, 2010). Carol believed that the teachers at Watson felt as if their beliefs about teaching and about their students were being challenged. She worked to demonstrate to them that the new teaching methods would result in their students learning in new and different ways.

Lydia ("From spyware and mixed messages to relationships") said that the teachers at her school were also "reluctant to be coached" when she began working there. She reported that teachers viewed her as "spyware" from the district and as a result did not trust her efforts to gain their acceptance. Some of the teachers challenged not only her position but her personal credentials. She says:

> What made it, I think, the most negative was that it was this constant sort of pushing against me and challenging me, challenging me as an educator, challenging me, you know, what do I know about third grade, I'd only taught preK and kindergarten, that kind of stuff. So they challenged my credentials and my experience and my knowledge. (interview, August 14, 2010)

Lydia chose not to try to change the minds of the teachers who challenged her, but to find others who were willing to work with her. She said that some of the teachers eventually came to see her as a supportive resource, while others only participated in professional development as the principal required.

Emily ("I am not a district mouthpiece, I am a literacy coach!") sometimes had difficulties getting teachers to attend professional development sessions when they were not required. Team meetings were also a source of frustration because teachers had difficulty shifting their focus from their day to day tasks. She says, "the team meetings, I would go in there, that became a running joke. I had this one grade level, I mean, I had to go see my, the counselor before I met with them! Or after, sometimes, both, because, the negativity, they didn't want to be there, they're trying to grade papers…it became difficult" (interview, July 2, 2010). Emily did not attribute this resistance to her coaching, but rather as a function of the time constraints on teachers' days.

Debby ("Lost in Translation") was surprised when she encountered resistance at a school where she was a part time coach. She says:

> Then I went to Eastside and it was like, "Oh, these people don't want me here!" (laughs) I'm supposed to help them and they don't want me here. And I didn't understand that. I

> didn't understand that there are people in the classroom who felt like it was okay to say, "I'm not going to do that." Um, excuse me? (laughs) (interview, June 25, 2010)

In some cases, coaches believed that teachers resisted because they had never worked with a coach. They were not sure that the coach would not run to the principal and betray their confidences. In others, there were many new challenges for teachers to deal with at once, such as changes in the school population, a new state curriculum, new teaching materials, or changes in faculty or administrators. Every school year brings some new challenges, but when there are too many, it can be overwhelming to also attempt big changes in teaching.

Sadly, at some schools there was, as Debby says, "The general feeling that the children were doing about the best that we could expect of them. I was so shocked by that. 'You don't understand our kids…this is the way they are'" (interview, June 25, 2010). Carol also was faced with a lot of what she called "kid-bashing" when she first began working as a coach. She says:

> Blaming the child was notorious in this school….I could not sit in the workroom when teachers were having lunch there, because that's all that was going on, was kid-bashing, kid-bashing. It was, it permeated the culture, the air, the environment, the atmosphere, the everything, of this school, and I found that so repulsive. (interview, May 18, 2010)

At these schools the teachers resist teaching in different ways because they believe that it will make no difference in their students' achievement. Debby and Carol took the time to understand the school dynamics (Kostin & Haeger, 2006; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) in order to build trust with teachers. The teachers at Watson eventually made big shifts working with Carol, but Debby's short time available at Eastside prevented her from building strong relationships with the teachers there.

When the coaches in this study encountered resistant teachers, they simply found other teachers to work with. As Emily put it, "I have other fish to fry, you know?" JoAnn ("It's not Camelot, but it is a round table") mentioned that she explains to teachers that she is there to give them good ideas so that they will see her as a resource instead of an authority figure. As Kee (2006) suggested, her non-evaluative language helped the teachers see her as supportive. The coaches did not ignore resistant teachers' needs, and when possible made sure they got support in other ways, such as from their teammates. Jane says:

> All I can do is stay approachable, and stay open, and continue to extend invitations….I think that when people are in a learning curve, they need to get comfortable with what they're doing before they realize and see a need for help. (interview, May 26, 2010)

In both Carol's and Lydia's cases, the resistance improved over time (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Poglinco et al., 2003). Carol set up lab classrooms at each grade level and worked with those teachers to implement the America's Choice program requirements. Watson teachers saw that the students in the lab classrooms were learning "in new and different ways" and were more successful than teachers expected, which made them more interested in trying new things themselves.

Lydia did not have a formal process such as a lab classroom but did find one or two teachers willing to open their doors to her. Other teachers were able to see the benefits of the coaching relationship and heard the positive comments from teachers who worked with her. Eventually Lydia came to be seen, at least by most teachers, as a supportive resource rather than a district spy. Although she never was completely trusted by the most resistant teachers, she remained cordial and available to them.

In considering the resistance encountered by coaches, it seemed that a visual depiction would help me to understand it and perhaps to see the phenomenon in new ways. Since coaches work to support teachers in making changes (Garmston, 1987; Roller, 2006), I imagined the process of change as a continuum, moving from current methods toward a desired goal. See Figure 4.8.

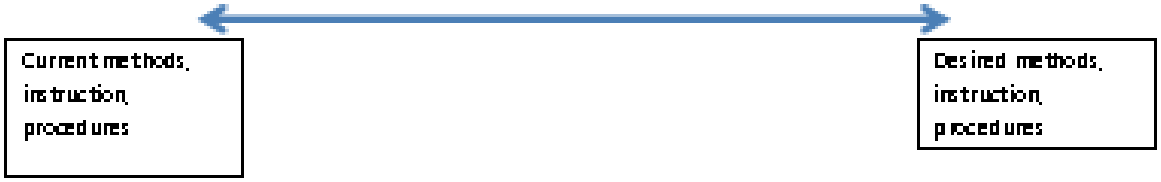


Figure 4.8. Continuum of Teacher Change.

While it portrayed the idea of change and movement, and also that movement could be in either direction, this diagram did not capture all the layers of information the coaches were sharing with me. It did not help me understand what made some teachers resist coaching and others welcome it. I continued on in my quest to create a diagram to represent the complexities of coaching relationships. In the next section I will analyze the coaches' experiences of acceptance.

Coach-teacher relationships: acceptance. The coaches in this study spoke very highly of the teachers at their schools. They described them as dedicated, hard-working professionals who want the best for their students. When the coaches were able to work with teachers on classroom instruction, both coaches and teachers learned from the experience. When I asked the coaches to describe a positive experience they had as a coach, working with teachers as co-learners was their response in every case. Carol appreciated a teacher who was one of the first to ask for her help in implementing America's Choice Writer's Workshop, even though the teacher did not believe it would work, at first. Amy noted that when teachers call her on Sunday afternoons to

talk over their plans for the week, she knows that this means they value what she has to offer them.

Debby had expected bumps in her relationships with teachers because of her experience as a teacher at that school. When she applied for the coaching position she had specifically requested to be placed at a different school, but was placed at Kirkland anyway. She was pleasantly surprised to find the teachers welcoming to her. She says:

> They, every single day of their lives, were active learners, and every single day of their lives, were trying to do what we were asking them to do with excellence. And they were not this 'I've been doing this 30 years, I'm not going to change', they were not like that. They opened their doors to me and they wanted to do what...they wanted to learn about standards-based instruction. (interview, June 25, 2010)

In some schools such as Kirkland, the culture supports the process of growth and inquiry. At others like Watson, where the culture is more rigid, it took a teacher whose personal interest in learning led her to make shifts in her teaching that eventually spread to others. When coaches and teachers become co-learners together, they can work to transform schools into professional learning communities (Dozier, 2006; Kostin & Haeger, 2006). Amy says:

> Being able to build relationships with teachers that are based on…co-learning and co-teaching, and me listening to them and them listening to me about ways that we can grow as professionals, I think enhances their literacy teaching and learning about literacy. (interview, September 16, 2010)

Returning to my diagram of a continuum, I realized that many outside factors influence teachers' willingness and ability to change. Lydia felt that one reason the teachers at her school were "unwilling to be coached" that first year is because there had been several big changes at

their school. Rezoning had brought significant changes to their population, a shift to standards-based instruction, and new instructional materials all contributed to teachers feeling overwhelmed and unwilling to make shifts in other areas. Jane, too, was sensitive to outside influences and stepped back when it seemed teachers had too much to deal with. I attempted to portray these influences in my diagram. See Figure 4.9.

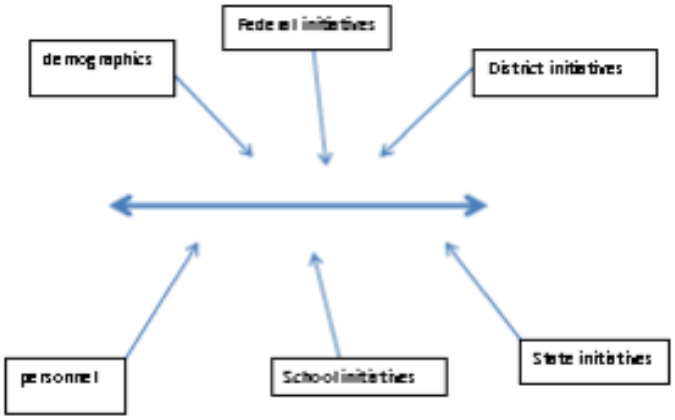


Figure 4.9. Outside Influences on the Change Process.

This diagram portrayed the outside influences that can overwhelm teachers and cause them to resist new ideas. But it still did not tell the entire story. Teachers at some schools took significant changes in stride and opened their doors to the coach's efforts to build a professional learning community, while at other schools they retreated to their classrooms and shut the doors. Some principals were protective of teachers and tried to reduce their stress, while other principals were more detached. I began to realize that a new visualization of my continuum was in order. It seemed that the outside influences served as a sort of filter keeping the coach and teacher apart. This model included the influences of the teachers' philosophies and goals, and also the shared history between the coach and the teacher.

Teachers' philosophies, goals, and aims affected their willingness to make shifts (Barkley, 2005), as did their expectations. When Debby worked at a school where the teachers

had low expectations of students' abilities, they saw little point in making changes in their instruction. As the teachers at Carol's school saw that students were making more progress in the America's Choice classrooms, they became interested in learning more about those methods. At Emily's school, many teachers wanted to use basal readers rather than the reading and writing workshops she was promoting, and she stayed in close touch with new, younger teachers to keep them from being influenced by their older colleagues.

Shared history was evident, for example, with Amy, who although she was a new coach, had worked in the same district as a teacher so was familiar with district initiatives and instructional materials. Lydia was challenged by Milford teachers in part because the veterans there knew the history of the district, and used it to justify their distrust of her. See Figure 4.10.

In reflecting on this diagram, it seemed closer to what I was learning from the participants in this study, but was not yet an accurate depiction of their relationships. I realized that it posed the teacher and coach on opposite ends, almost as adversaries. While some coaches may in fact have felt that teachers thought of them in this way, none of the coaches considered themselves adversaries of the teachers. I also wanted to portray the idea that each coach had a specific, individual situation, with particular challenges and amenities.

I began to think about the image of a camera. When a photographer takes a picture, she makes adjustments in the focus and also in the amount of light that is let into the frame. She also decides what kind of picture she wants to take: is the focus on one particular part of the image, with the rest of the photograph left blurry? Is the entire scene captured, or is the vantage point shifted to bring one particular area into prominence?

Just as the photographer adjusts the settings on the camera to meet her goals, so it seemed that this is what coaches and teachers do with the influences that come their way. The coach

herself did not act alone but as part of the school as a whole (Kostin & Haeger, 2006; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). They may not be able to control the changes that are imposed on them from the outside, but each school chose to deal with them in ways that supported the school's goals and culture. If the principal chose to ignore a district pronouncement, the coach used this decision on which to base her actions. For example, JoAnn's school district did away with benchmark tests in order to increase instructional time. Principals, however, wanted the information provided by these assessments, and asked JoAnn to give them anyway. JoAnn complied with the principals' wishes (and made sure to document their requests) to help the principals realize their vision for their schools.

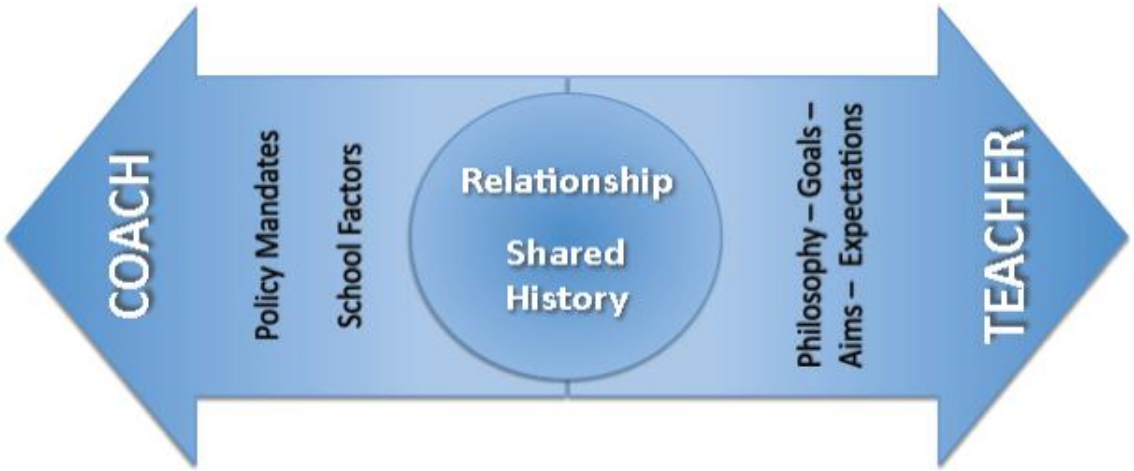


Figure 4.10. Outside Influences and Teachers' Goals' Impact on the Process of Change.

In the same way, each coach and school had internal factors that affected their work. Changes in population, such as an increase in the number of English Language Learners, necessitate shifts in instruction. Personnel changes also affect teachers, coaches, and school culture itself. Teachers transferring into Patton Elementary from other areas attempted to thwart Emily's efforts at promoting a balanced literacy approach. Almost all the teachers at Jane's

school were teaching content or grade levels that were new to them, which added significantly to Jane's workload. Carol found that the negative school culture at Watson Elementary shifted as some teachers left and the principal made a point of hiring more positive ones to replace them.

It seemed that coaches adjusted to the internal and external influences at their school in the same way that photographers adjusted their cameras. I decided to have my diagram resemble a camera lens, with two outer rings representing internal and external influences. While a static diagram cannot actually move, the arrows on the rings indicate that they could move to fit a particular situation. See Figure 4.11.

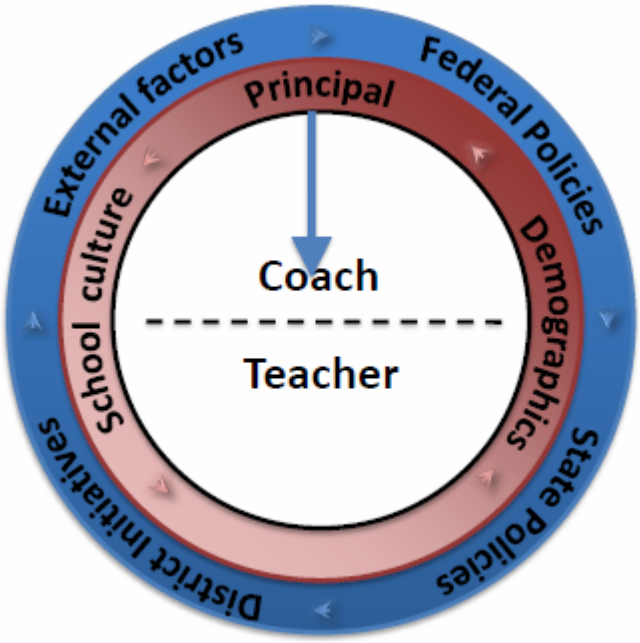


Figure 4.11. Coach-Teacher Relationships Lens.

As I considered the center of the diagram, I was troubled by "coach" above "teacher," when my goal was to depict them as colleagues. However, when I positioned them side by side they appeared to be adversaries, as in my previous diagram, so I decided to keep it as is. In addition, I realized that different types of relationships could be represented in various ways. Debby, Jane, and Amy had close, almost symbiotic relationships with the teachers at their

school. I chose a yin-yang representation for them. However, Debby's relationship with her principal was weaker and less supportive than those of Jane and Amy. I used a dotted line to represent this relationship. See Figure 4.12.

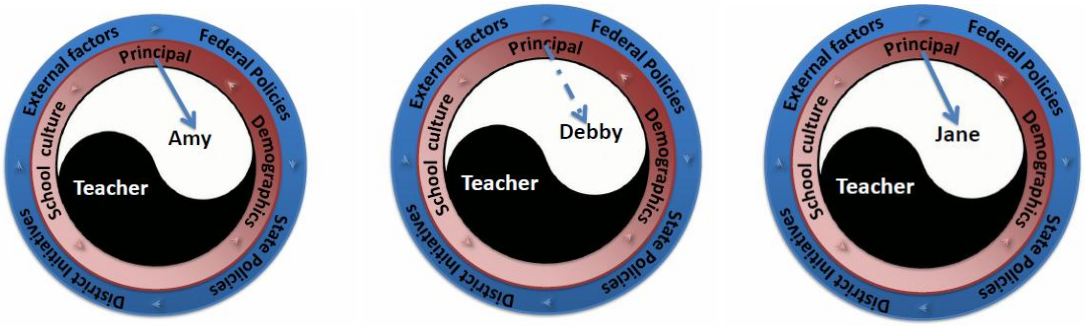


Figure 4.12. Amy, Debby, and Jane's Relationships Lenses

Lydia's relationship with the teachers at her school was more contentious; they considered her "spyware" and challenged her authority and experience. I represented this with a gap in the circle separating Coach and Teacher. She had a strong relationship with her principal. See Figure 4.13.

Carol, Emily, and JoAnn had professional relationships with the teachers at their school, not contentious at all, but not as close as those of Amy, Jane, and Debby. I used a dotted line to show this: each stayed in their domain but the wall was permeable. It was easy to come together when needed. While Emily and JoAnn had stronger relationships with their principals, Carol's was weak. See Figure 4.14.

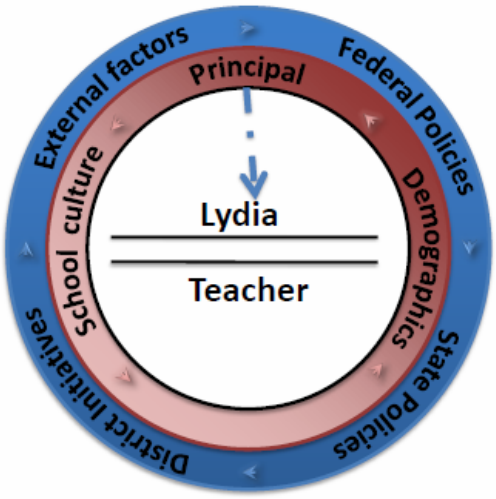


Figure 4.13. Lydia's Relationships Lens

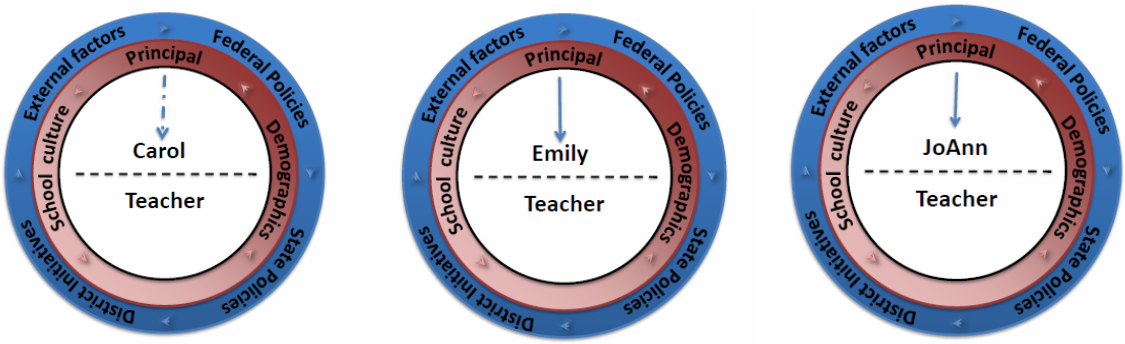


Figure 4.14. Carol, Emily, and JoAnn's Relationships Lenses

As I considered these diagrams further, I was satisfied with some aspects but not with others. The term "demographics" was intended to reflect both changes to the student population and to faculty and staff. These factors seemed to have very different impacts on schools and teachers. I decided that changes in faculty and staff was an aspect of school culture, and changed "demographics" to "student population." I also realized that school district policies can affect schools beyond the impact of specific initiatives. For example, budget cuts may lead to increased class sizes which affects instruction and also increases teachers' stress levels. I decided to add "district policies" to the outer lens of the diagram.

The most troubling aspect of the diagram, however, was the way principals were represented on the inner lens rather than in the circle with the coach and teachers. The principal's influence greatly impacted coaches' ability to effectively support teachers, so the diagram needed to show this. I decided to use a Venn diagram to depict the relationships between the principal, teachers and coaches. See Figure 4.15.

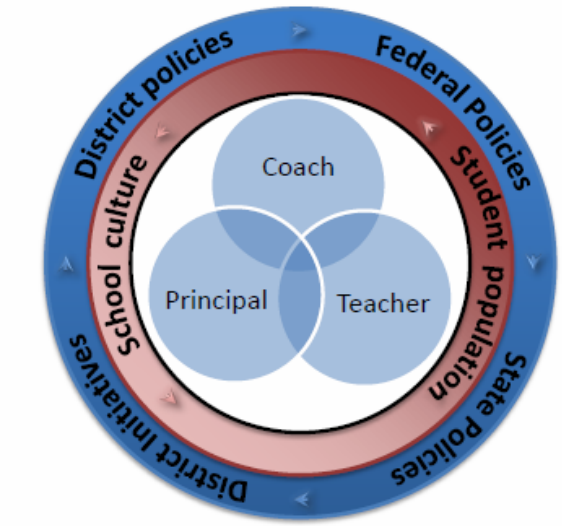


Figure 4.15. Coach-Principal-Teacher (CPT) Relationship Lens.

The intersection of the circles indicates how strong the relationships between the parties are, and the size of the common intersection will indicate how effectively the coach can support teachers and the school. Amy and Jane had supportive relationships with their principals, and with teachers. The principals at their school also had strong relationships with teachers. Both of these coaches felt very positive about the work they were able to do to support teachers at their schools. This is indicated by the large overlap among the three circles. See Figure 4.16.

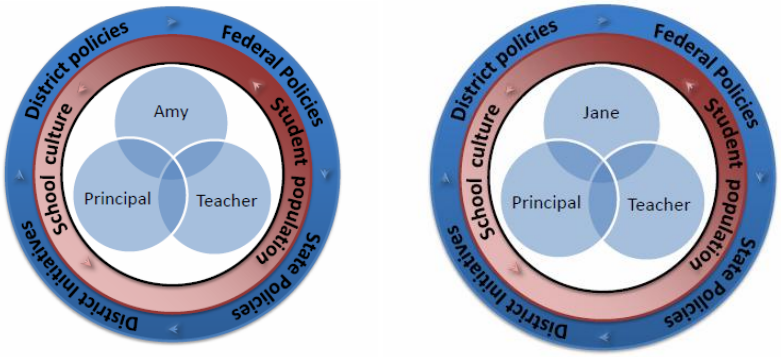


Figure 4.16. Amy and Jane's CPT Relationship Lenses.

Emily and JoAnn also had supportive relationships with teachers and principals, but they did not describe them as totally positive. Sometimes principals did not give them clear directions, or misunderstood how to support their work. Teachers generally were receptive to their support but at times resisted making the shifts they suggested. I indicated these relationships with smaller circles with less overlap. See Figure 4.17.

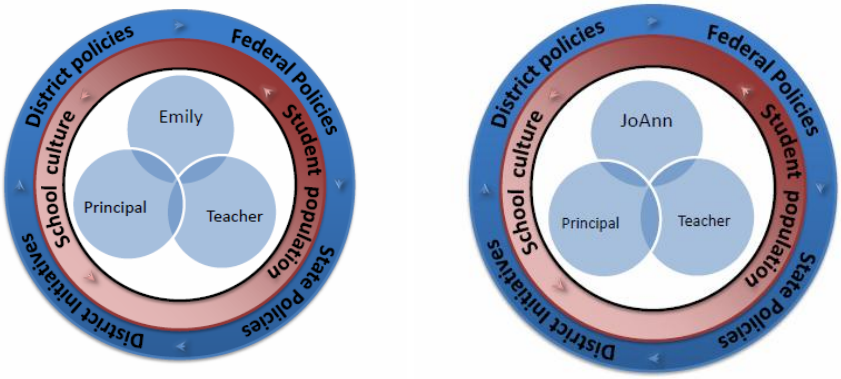


Figure 4.17. Emily and JoAnn's CPT Relationship Lenses.

Carol's relationships with the teachers at her school was very strong. They trusted her knowledge and experience. However, Carol described her relationship with the principal at Watson as "over." She also perceived that the principal's relationships with the teachers was more coercive than supportive. I depicted this by having Carol's circle and the principal's not

overlapping at all, and a small intersection between the principal and the teachers, while the intersection of Carol's and the teachers' circle was large. See Figure 4. 18.

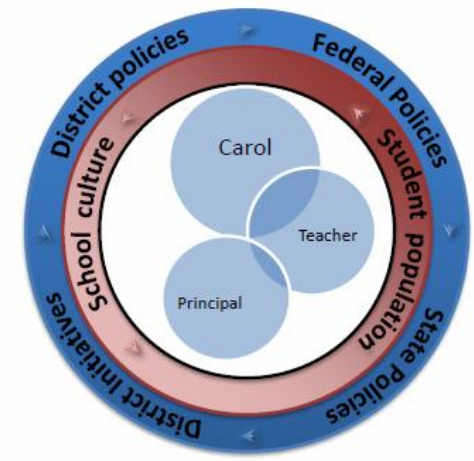


Figure 4.18. Carol's CPT Relationship Lens.

Debby described her relationship with the teachers at her school as very strong and positive. Even though her relationship with the principal led her ultimately to leave the school, she still felt supportive of her. Howver, she described the principal as "cleaning house", and trying to get rid of certain teachers. I depicted these relationships by having a large intersection between Debby's and the teachers' circles, and a small intersection between the principal's and the teachers' circles. I did not completely separate Debby's and the principal's circles to show that Debby continued to support her principal. See Figure 4. 19.

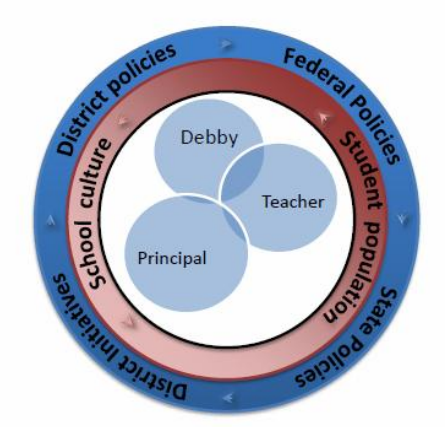


Figure 4.19. Debby's CPT Relationship Lens.

Lydia described the teachers at her school as "reluctant to be coached." They challenged her credentials and considered her a spy for the central office. She had a good relationship with her principal and described him as also having good relationships with teachers. I depicted this by having large overlaps between the principal and teachers, and between Lydia and the principal, but not between Lydia and the teachers. This gap illustrates the difficulty Lydia had in supporting teachers until they began to trust her and accept her help. See Figure 4. 20.

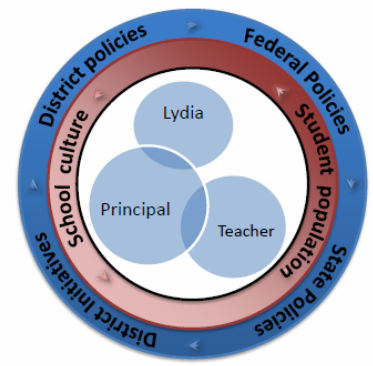


Figure 4.20. Lydia's CPT Relationship Lens.

Coach-principal relationships. While the coaches in this study spoke highly of the teachers with whom they worked, their relationships with principals were more complicated. When administrators supported their efforts, coaches found their jobs to be much easier (Knight,

2009). The converse was also evident: administrators who were either not supportive, had different priorities, or did not follow through with initiatives made coaches' jobs much more difficult.

Jane praised the principal and assistant principal at her school for supporting both her work and the work of teachers. She says:

> She has given me amazing latitude in being creative with my work, pursuing the things that I think are going to make a difference in the long run, and not ham-stringing me with these short-term projects, you know? I've done short term projects, but ultimately everything I've done is with building capacity in this faculty to all be owners in their learning, and to, to really come together in a very collaborative spirit, um, and you know in coaching that's the long term pay-off. (interview, May 26, 2010)

The coaches recognized the principal's importance in setting the tone for the school; their support, or lack of it, had a large influence on the coaches' success at their school (Garmston, 1987). Amy described coaches as being "at the mercy of the principal." Jane said, "The relationship with the principal makes all the difference in the world."

The principal's influence is shown in both small ways and large. Lydia's principal was happy to have her in the building but because the coaching program was new in the district, he "didn't know what to do with [her]." The first year her office was in a corner of the media center workroom. By the second year, he had found a more private setting and ordered her a new desk, which helped teachers see her in a more professional light. Emily had planned professional development sessions for teachers, which the principal approved, but when she refused to make the sessions mandatory, teachers felt free to skip them. The principals' understanding of the role

of the coaches helped them work with teachers more effectively (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Seemingly minor steps by the principal like promoting the coach's work to the faculty, attending professional development sessions, or including the coach in school-wide leadership roles also helped teachers see the coach as a supportive resource. In contrast, when these things did not happen, the coach's work was almost impossible (Brandt, 1987; Matsumura et al., 2009). Jane described a coaching situation made difficult by a lack of support from the principal. She says:

> Classrooms are personal spaces, teaching is a very personal activity. I (teachers) bring myself to this work, I'm totally connected to the work that I do, so a third person coming in, you're like, 'What are you doing here? I'm fine, go away, I don't need you.' If the principal doesn't bless the coach, there's no connecting the coach to the school's mission. (interview, May 26, 2010)

All the coaches had regular meetings with principals, to discuss the direction of their work. In some cases, these were extensive conversations about teaching and learning while in others a quick check-in was all there was time for. Jane's principal assembled a leadership team and held weekly instructional meetings where the group "got to know each other, not only as professionals, but as people." This allowed them to each bring their unique perspectives to school issues, but also to reach consensus on their vision and purpose for the school (Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Carol did not hold such extensive meetings with her principal, but because of Dr. Wood's lack of knowledge of elementary curriculum she relied on Carol to teach her more about literacy

practices. Emily accompanied her principal on classroom visits to help her know what to look for as teachers implemented their balanced literacy program (Matsumura et al., 2009).

All the coaches were careful to not be a part of the evaluation of teachers (Buly et al., 2004). They recognized the difficulty of balancing keeping principals informed about instructional matters while maintaining teachers' privacy, but none of the coaches seemed to find this a problem. For example, JoAnn said that if a principal asked, she might tell him how many teachers at a grade level were resisting her initiatives, but would not provide specific names. None of the coaches reported that their principal asked them to divulge confidences or directed them to work with specific teachers. In addition, none of the coaches reported that the principal had specific directions for them about working on short-term projects or micro-managed their daily and weekly schedules.

Sometimes it happened that a coach misinterpreted the principal's actions or intentions. After her first year of coaching, Emily felt that her principal was not being supportive of her in certain ways. She says:

> After that year, I actually sat down at the end during, you know, in my evaluation and brought up those concerns. And she was so open to them, and that's what made me realize that I was partly to blame, because I'm sitting here complaining, but what am I doing about it? (interview, July 2, 2010)

Debby attended a conference soon after beginning her coaching position which was very meaningful for her. She says:

> I had one of those religious experiences when I was there….These schools in South Carolina, the principal, the vice principal and the coach would be presenting, and you couldn't tell in their presentation who was who. Every person knew instruction. They had

> a common vision for their school, they talked about instruction….I talked with my principal about what I saw, and she said, "that is what I want, that is exactly what I want." So I believed we had a common vision. (interview, June 25, 2010)

But when the assistant principal position became available, Debby learned she had been mistaken. She says:

> I find out that I'm not on the interview team…and then realized that the principal named her friend to be the vice principal….So at that moment, I knew that indeed we did not have the same vision for the school. (interview, June 25, 2010)

This realization ultimately led Debby to seek other opportunities, which ended with her working for the Office of Early Learning.

Carol was faced with more than a misunderstanding from her principal; she considered it a betrayal. After working together closely for nine years, Dr. Wood, faced with budget cuts, chose to allow Carol's job to be cut. She says, "We're in a totally different place right now, but I'm speaking back over, because I've…basically she didn't stand up for me. She didn't keep my job" (interview, May 18, 2010). Carol continues to work at the school as a teacher but says that her relationship with the principal is over.

Most coaches do not work as closely with principals as they do with teachers, but their relationship is no less important (Knight, 2009). When principals understand the role of the coach and take the time to communicate to them their vision and mission for the school, the coaches can help teachers work toward these goals (Matsumura et al., 2009). In contrast, when the principal does not, as Jane says, "bless the coach" teachers not only feel free to resist coaches' efforts, their work is not connected to the school's mission. Lack of communication can

also cause serious misunderstandings that can undermine learning and cause breakdowns in relationships.

Personal factors. I continue the process of bracketing by describing the personal factors that affect coaches' relationships with teachers and principals. Personal factors are those inherent in the individual which affect the interaction. Examples include biographical factors such as age, sex, or race. I also include the personal factor of self-concept in this section. By self-concept I refer to how coaches view themselves professionally. In analyzing these personal factors, I examined the interview transcripts, and looked for what was not said as well as those comments explicitly mentioned (Sundin & Fahy, 2008).

Biographical factors. All of the coaches in this study are women and six of the seven are white. None of the coaches indicated any differences in their relationships with male teachers compared to female teachers. While there was a range of ages and experience, none of the coaches were so young that they found teachers skeptical of their ideas because of their lack of experience. (The skepticism Lydia faced was based on her lack of experience teaching upper elementary grades.)

Carol advised that "the two things that a coach absolutely must be able to do in order to be successful are to have very, very strong content knowledge…and know how to build relationships with teachers." She was confident in her abilities in both these areas, but her twenty-four years of experience also served her when working with young teachers. Lydia and Debby also were able to project a nurturing persona because of their extensive teaching experience.

While Emily, an African-American coach, did notice some differences in relationships at Patton Elementary based on race, she feels that as teachers got to know her, they moved beyond

that issue. Being from the Midwest was also a factor in her relationships with teachers. While Emily's easy laugh and friendly demeanor allow her to relate well to most people she meets, she finds that she "clicks" more easily with teachers from areas outside the South.

While most of the teachers who worked with the coaches in this study were white females, the administrators were more diverse. Amy, Lydia, Emily, and JoAnn all worked with male administrators, while Debby and Jane worked with African-American principals or assistant principals. None of the coaches reported that their relationships with administrators was affected by gender, but since the administrator's role is a more powerful position, it may not have been clear how much to attribute the difference to gender.

Debby speculated, while acknowledging that she was only speculating, that race may have been a factor in her principal's relationships with teachers. She says:

> She was young, extremely young, African-American, lots of things going on there that could not have been comfortable for her….the Kirkland faculty was ridiculously white. There was not a lot of diversity on that certified staff…and it was white senior mamas, there were lots of them, and very powerful white senior mamas….and, um, I don't know if she felt threatened by them. She made a comment in a district meeting one time…that she only had three more to go and she would have cleaned house. And, um, when I knew who those people were that she was cleaning out, I thought, "wow, you know" (laughs), 'cause I was one of 'em! (interview, June 25, 2010)

Participants did not describe the personal factors of age, race, and gender as having a large effect on their relationships with teachers or principals, but they are an important component in the culture of the school. Coaches should keep these factors in mind as they assess

the school culture (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) and build trusting relationships with teachers (Burkins, 2007).

Self-concept. Because the coaches in this study had come to coaching from classroom teaching, they understood the stresses and pressures teachers face. They felt they had more in common with teachers than with administrators. This common background also helped teachers see them as sources of support. JoAnn says the following about working with teachers:

> I let them know right off the bat how much I admire and respect the work that they do. They know that I'm genuine. And many of them, I've taught with at some capacity over my seventeen years, I've been at different schools and different jobs, but I've always been supportive of teachers and will always be a cheerleader and a supporter of teachers. (interview, August 26, 2010)

When moving from the classroom to coaching, a change in perspective is warranted. Amy noted that one of the first things she learned on becoming a coach was to develop a "whole-school" perspective. Emily took a long time to change the label on her name tag from "teacher" to "coach." She said she did not want to be seen by teachers as part of the administration, but a shifting perspective may also be part of the explanation.

Debby described the challenges faced by the new coaches she works with in the Early Learning Program. She says:

> People who come on as new coaches were…the reason they were…considered for the job is because of the excellence in their classrooms. And you live in that very isolated world where you believe everything is like that. The idea that you walk into a situation expecting a certain level of skill, a certain level of background knowledge…and it's not there, they're so confused….We're going to get away from that old idea that they're

> choosing not to, it's that they [teachers] don't know, and so how do we support them in learning and, and to shift that mindset, because people who ran their classrooms in certain ways expect that that's what other people are doing! (interview, June 25, 2010)

Carol says that "the two things that a coach absolutely must be able to do in order to be successful, are to have very, very strong content knowledge…and know how to build relationships with teachers" (interview, May 18, 2010). When coaches move from the classroom into coaching, they generally are chosen for the position because of their strong content knowledge. But if a coach has only had experience in a limited range of grade levels, they may not see themselves as effective coaches in the grade levels outside their experience. Eventually, as in Lydia's case, they realize that "instruction is instruction is instruction."

Of the participants in this study Jane, JoAnn, and Emily had extensive experience with a wide range of grade levels. Amy had only primary experience but did not report any skepticism from teachers and quickly became comfortable working with upper grades. Lydia's experience was solely with prekindergarten and kindergarten, and the challenges she reported from third grade teachers shook her confidence at first. Carol chose to limit her focus to only work with primary teachers, her area of expertise. Debby taught prekindergarten briefly at the beginning of her career but spent the bulk of her time with upper elementary students.

Sometimes, it seemed that the coaches with only preK or kindergarten experience had an easier time learning to understand the upper elementary grades than the reverse. Debby and Lydia both currently work together in the Office of Early Learning, coaching preK teachers, and also teachers of three year olds. They were discussing literacy instruction in those grades, and Debby, who has spent much more time teaching fourth and fifth grades than with younger students, exclaimed, "we're only talking about four year olds, Lydia! How complicated can it

be?" Lydia's response that, "It isn't complicated, Debby, but it is complex" pointedly showed Debby that she had a lot to learn about early literacy, and to come to respect the important work accomplished by these teachers.

Just as coaches develop a school-wide perspective, they also begin to realize that principals must have an even broader perspective (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Emily noted that principals are pulled in many directions, and that teachers' feelings are hurt when their administrator does not make it "to see the puppet show," not realizing they had several other commitments to fulfill.

Lydia described the principal at her school as a protective buffer between teachers and the central office. She says:

> And there's some things that, being in the position that I am now, and seeing administration from a different perspective, that I see how some of that is necessary. Principals and administrators at schools…there's a lot of things that teachers don't even need to know are going on, and if the principals can handle it and get it taken care of, all the better. (interview, August 14, 2010)

Jane was appreciative of the wider perspective held by her principal. Mrs. Stephens was able to advise Jane when she needed to pull back because teachers were becoming overwhelmed.

By looking more closely at some of the personal factors in coaches' relationships with teachers and with principals, we can develop a fuller understanding of those relationships. We can see that biographical factors, self-concept and confidence all contribute to the behavior of coaches, teachers and principals.

Contextual factors. The third interactional process factor is context. Contextual factors refer to circumstances surrounding an interactional situation (Sundin & Fahy, 2008). In this

section I will consider such contextual factors as school culture and organizational changes within a school. I also consider confidence of teachers and principals as a contextual factor.

School culture. The culture of a school encompasses the identity of the school and the individuals who work there. When Jane talks about the vision of teaching and learning at L.H. Holsey Elementary, she means "the spirit of the building, the spirit of the teachers and the children and the families, all coming together. What is it that we're really trying to support here with this work?" A school's culture seems to transcend those who work there at any given time; new faculty coming in can adapt their styles and philosophies to fit in with the prevailing culture.

Debby described her school as "a learning community." She says:

> When you walk in the classroom after school, and people are sitting all over desks. People, teachers, are sitting on desks, facing each other, talking about instruction, and problem solving, and asking each other for resources, and help me with this and how'd you do that…you just think that's the way school works, if that's where you start. (interview, June 25, 2010)

So, while some teachers naturally strive to be learners, others become so because of the examples of their colleagues.

The school district itself can also convey a particular culture. Several coaches, who all worked in the same district, described the district leadership as being inconsistent and as not communicating clearly with teachers. So when the district implemented its coaching program and placed coaches in schools, many teachers did not trust them. Coaches were not seen as support but as someone who would try to "fix" the teachers, tell them what they were doing wrong and report back to the central office. Lydia says, "a lot of folks saw us as 'spyware'." This mistrust contributed to the difficulty she encountered in developing relationships with teachers.

Shifts can be made within an entire school culture, and this was most evident at Carol's school. When she began her work at Watson Elementary as a coach, not only was student achievement low, there was a negative attitude toward the students on the part of the teachers. As she began working with teachers and more and more students became successful, teachers' attitudes began to change. Eventually, many of the teachers with negative attitudes moved on to other schools and the principal worked to replace them with teachers who fit more closely with the new school culture. Carol says, "Quite frankly, the principal got better at hiring people, you know, she started looking for people with positive attitudes." Other negative teachers remained at the school but made shifts in their attitudes.

Structural changes. Many of the coaches in this study described changes the teachers had to deal with over which they had little to no control. A school's population may change because of district rezoning or changes to the community. Lydia, Amy, and Carol all described changes to their school's population of students. Personnel changes at a school can also be noteworthy. All the coaches but Amy (who has only coached for one year) and Jane (whose school was only one year old) had had a change of administration in their years as a coach.

School faculties generally change from year to year, but when there is a significant change in teaching staff, adjustments may be necessary. Emily found her work to be much more stressful when the principal brought in several new teachers with limited experience in literacy instruction. She says:

> My first year coaching they hired, what, like five or six, because remember she had been there one year, so, you know, the turnover, apple cart, you know, um, and all of the new hires, she hired them because they were able to teach math. And so, I was so overwhelmed of trying to support them all. I felt like a chicken with my head cut off, you

> know? I was to the point I felt like I was the classroom teacher. I was just going in, I was doing so much modeling. Just thinking about it!...And was that the best thing for the kids, you know what I mean? (interview, July 2, 2010)

Even though Jane's school was brand new, she faced a similar situation in that many of the teachers at her school were new to their grade level or curriculum area. She says:

> Seventeen of the teachers in my building are new to their content. They've never taught what they're teaching…ever before in their lives. Um, some of them were veterans, shifting to another grade level. I had two teachers coming from middle to elementary school. One of my middle school teachers had never taught reading in her life, okay?...So, that's a huge need. (interview, May 26, 2010)

Other significant areas over which teachers have little control are program changes. These can come from district, state or federal levels, and even at a school level. Carol's school implemented a school-wide improvement program, America's Choice, independently of the rest of the district. JoAnn's entire district utilized Learning Focused methods, and JoAnn looked for evidence of these strategies in her work at schools. Jane and Carol described a planning process put in place by a new superintendent and required for all teachers. Four of the coaches had seen the state move to a standards-based curriculum which was rolled out to schools over several years. Debby and Lydia's work with PreK teachers included their training in the federally funded Head Start and Early Reading First programs.

It is natural that from one year to the next there will be changes of some sort at a school. It seems that some years, however, there are more than usual, or they are more significant than normal. A positive school culture can help teachers cope with excessive changes while a more negative one can magnify the stress.

Confidence. Another personal factor affecting coaches' relationships with teachers and principals is confidence. Confident teachers are more willing to try new things, more open to new ideas. This confidence can help the teacher through the difficult process of change. As they experience frustrations associated with the changes (Barkley, 2005; Hammermess et al., 2005).

Confidence can also be a factor for administrators. Amy noted that administrators who are confident in their role are more willing to be open to sharing responsibilities with coaches. She says:

> If a principal isn't confident in their role as a leader and is self-conscious about the way teachers may or not view him or her, then I think those things come up. If they are good with…if they know who they are as administrators and leaders of the school, they're happy…they feel like I'm facilitating their role, I'm helping the teachers, and so there isn't this…or AP's are, I've heard them be as silly as, "No, it's my job to pass out those textbooks." (interview, September 16, 2010)

The coaches in this study interpreted some of the resistance they encountered from teachers to be related to how confident the teachers felt in making shifts in their teaching. Lydia discussed the difficulties the teachers at her school faced when their population changed from one year to the next. The number of students coming from poverty had dramatically increased, and there was also an increase in the number of English Language Learners. She says:

> And when you're talking about philosophy of teaching and stuff, you know, one of the things that I think about is, 'do you believe all children can learn?' and then the other side of that that I don't think we think about is, 'do you believe you can teach all children?' you know, so it has to do with that teacher confidence, and I think, insecurity coming from, "uhhh, I don't know how to reach these kids, I don't…maybe they can learn,

> maybe they can't, but I don't think I can teach them.' And so what kind of support do we give teachers for that? (interview, August 14, 2010)

JoAnn also attributed some teachers' resistance to a lack of confidence. She says, "I think they felt inadequate, but they were afraid to show their inadequacy, that they didn't know. It's scary, and it's almost like a wall or a façade, 'I know what I'm doing'. But the data doesn't support that they know what they're doing" (interview, August 26, 2010).

Summary

In this chapter I have analyzed and discussed the data I gathered from my interviews with seven elementary literacy coaches. First I captured the phenomenon (Denzin, 2001), and presented narrative accounts of each of the participants. Next, I bracketed the phenomenon, by reducing it to its key factors. These included interactional process factors, personal factors, and contextual factors. I demonstrated how each of these key factors influenced the relationships between coaches, teachers, and principals. I developed diagrams to visually depict the relationships, accounting for these factors. In the next chapter I will further conceptualize these diagrams, and discuss implications and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Interviewing seven female literacy coaches gave me the unique opportunity to get to know these women as individuals. Analysis of the data, from a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969) also gave me the opportunity to design a working diagram to explore the nature of coaching relationships with teachers and principals. I based my working, analytical diagram (see Figure 4.11) on the metaphor of an adjustable camera lens because I came to realize that perceptions of coaching practice are not static, but fluid. A camera lens is adjustable and it is by adjusting the various moveable circles of influence around the lens that coaching relationships may be brought clearly into focus.

As a group, these women I interviewed indicated that they were able to forge various types of relationships with teachers and principals in ways that required small adjustments or large transformations in their coaching approaches. For example, there was Amy, who slightly shifted her perspective on the role of relationships and learned how to think more like a literacy coach and less like a classroom teacher. On the other hand, there was Lydia, who totally transformed her approach to building coaching relationships, when she realized that the teachers she worked with perceived her as a spy who had been sent to report on their levels of compliance with district initiatives. The other coaches each recounted unique memories and stories of coaching in their interviews, but the recurring messages I encountered revolved around flexibility, adaptability, and transformation of coaching practices and approaches.

In the following section, I restate the purpose of the study, list the research questions, address each of those questions in turn, and then discuss the insights I have gained as a result of this study - including new insights on my own experiences as a literacy coach. Finally, I close by discussing the limitations of the study and making recommendations for further research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways literacy coaches develop and maintain positive relationships with the teachers and principals with whom they work. To guide this study I selected four questions:

1. How do literacy coaches perceive the role of relationships between and among literacy coaches, principals, and teachers?
2. How do literacy coaches develop relationships with teachers and principals?
3. How do they balance these relationships?
4. How does the quality of these relationships impact their ability to meet their assigned roles and responsibilities?

How Do Literacy Coaches Perceive the Role of Relationships Between and Among Literacy Coaches, Principals, and Teachers?

Analysis of the data indicates that the participants in this study perceived the role of relationships to be one of the most important aspects of their job. They believed the two most important requirements for effective coaching are strong content knowledge and the ability to form relationships with both teachers and principals.

Teacher relationships. They noted that coaches must create a feeling of trust with teachers before any coaching can take place. The coaches in this study also emphasized the importance of maintaining professional, collegial relationships with teachers. None of the coaches mentioned that they had established friendships with teachers outside of school hours,

but they indicated that they were interested in and cared about teachers' lives. These findings confirm the consensus in the coaching literature about the importance of forming trusting and professional relationships with teachers (Burkins, 2007; Dozier, 2006; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Principal relationships. Coaches interact with teachers more on a day-to-day basis than with principals, but their relationships with principals are no less important. The principal's understanding and support of the coaching program affected the participants in this study in either positive or negative ways. Coaches consistently indicated that when the principal was openly supportive of their work, teachers were more accepting of their efforts. Furthermore, several coaches suggested that indifference or a lack of support from the principal, or even a lack of understanding of the coach's role made the coaches' jobs nearly impossible. The literature on coaching does not address the role of the principal to a great extent. However, many publications in this area do provide "ideal" examples of how principals can provide coaches with high levels of support (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This study indicates that, unlike the ideals explicated in the literature in the field, there is a great deal of variety in coaches' perceptions about principals' levels of support.

How Do Literacy Coaches Develop Relationships With Teachers and Principals?

The coaches in this study reported that much of their initial work at a school involves building relationships with teachers and administrators. They considered it an important first step in developing a community of learners.

Developing teacher relationships. The coaches in this study consistently reported that they took the time to carefully develop their relationships with teachers. Most of the coaches reported that they began informally, by spending time in classrooms - getting to know the

teachers as well as their children, offering to help with word walls, or assisting with student assessments. This level of involvement helped many teachers realize that the coach was willing to help them in any way she could. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) also emphasized the importance of demonstrating a spirit of helpfulness in building coach-teacher trust. They noted that everything one does contributes to the robustness of the learning context, whether it is saying a friendly hello, having lunchtime conversations, or helping teachers organize materials.

The relationships between coaches and teachers were consistently professional rather than personal. Indeed, in many instances they were able to work together regardless of their personal feelings. If it happened that a coach did not especially get along well with a particular teacher, focusing on working collaboratively with the students helped bridge that gap. However, it is worth noting that the coaches did not mention any specific instances where they had difficulty working with a teacher for personal reasons.

Because of their backgrounds as teachers, the coaches in the study indicated that they were very aware that classrooms were teachers' personal spaces. They agreed that teachers should have the authority to grant them access to that space. If they barged in anyway, ignoring the boundaries, they would often be met with resistance. This insight led many of the coaches to respectfully consider how they approached teachers. If a teacher was not interested in receiving help from a coach, the coach was likely to leave them alone, while remaining available if the teacher should change his or her mind. This finding supports Feger et al.'s (2004) emphasis on the importance of coaches' sensitivity to teachers' expectations and the quality of their interpersonal skills.

One important way the coaches I interviewed developed initial relationships with teachers was by stepping back from active involvement and simply listening. The coaches were

happy to sit at the back of a classroom to observe, satisfied in the knowledge that they were part of the learning community and instructional process. They were happy to bestow credit for successful lessons in a nonjudgmental way. When coaches eased into working together as colleagues, they were able to build trust with the teachers, and professional relationships developed between the two. Coaches indicated that this working relationship not only gave teachers a sense of control over what happened in their classroom, but it bolstered their confidence in the coaches' knowledge and experience. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) pointed out that in a community of learners, everyone shares responsibility for discussing issues and all also receiving credit for successes.

Developing relationships with principals. The coaches' relationships with administrators were developed differently from those with teachers. With teachers, the coaches strived to remain on equal footing, working with teachers as colleagues. With principals they felt that they could not be colleagues on equal footing. They indicated that they believed that it was important for the principal to trust the coach, but there did not seem to be as many avenues for the coach to build that trust with principals. Some of the coaches were able to work closely with assistant principals on projects, where their responsibilities overlapped. This was fortunate when it happened that the assistant principal moved into the principal's position. In those instances, they already had a strong foundation for a trusting relationship. If the principal could not or would not take the time to have conversations with the coach, however, there seemed to be little recourse for the coach to bridge the gap. Coaches indicated that principals seemed to hold the invisible time keys to the kingdom. These gatekeeper time keys involved a willingness or lack thereof to spend time: (a) getting to know the coach as a professional and individual, (b) building a shared vision, (c) discussing potential barriers, (d) understanding the coach's plans for working

closely with individual, groups, or grade levels of teachers. Researchers in the field tend to agree that it is important for the principal to understand the coach's role (Bean, 2001; Knight, 2009; Walpole & McKenna, 2004), but the importance of understanding the variety of ways coaches and principals relate has not been specifically addressed.

How Do They Balance These Relationships?

When I considered this question at the outset of the study, I imagined coaches in the center of a teeter totter, with teachers and principals on either end. After talking with the seven coaches who participated in this study, I realized that this image was inaccurate. The coaches did not attempt to keep all the relationships on an equal basis. They consistently tended to position themselves squarely on the side of the teacher. This may have been in part because of their backgrounds as teachers, but it is also likely because they recognized that the classroom is the heart of the school.

The coaches considered themselves as supporters of teachers. Ideally, the principals, coaches and teachers will all share the same goals and work together to achieve them (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Ippolito, 2009; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Of course, this ideal situation was not always the case at all the schools in this study. However, the coaches repeatedly indicated that they never "sold out" a teacher to their principal. Neither did they "sell out" the principal when speaking with teachers. In other words, they did not "tell tales out of school," informing principals of teachers' unhappiness with the principals. They made it a priority to maintain respectful and positive attitudes. Coaches realized that principals needed to be informed about the school climate, but they also expected that they would be in classrooms enough to know about situations themselves rather than relying on the coach to inform them.

How Does the Quality of These Relationships Impact Their Ability to Meet Their Assigned Roles and Responsibilities?

The coaches in this study unanimously agreed that it was impossible for them to be effective coaches without establishing and maintaining relationships of this highest professional quality. The quality of the relationships with principals was equally important to that of the relationships with teachers. Coaches work closely with teachers and need their trust in order to support them, but none of it can happen without the support of the principal.

Open communication seemed to facilitate trusting relationships between coaches and principals as well as between coaches and teachers. Coaches work to support teachers but their efforts can only be partially successful if the principal's support is not evident. In the same way, a principal who is supportive of the coaching program can help resistant teachers become more open to working with a coach. This insight from the study confirms the literature that addresses the importance of the principal to the success of the school's coaching program (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Implications

Each coach in this study had specific influences within and surrounding the school culture that affected their relationships with both teachers and with principals. At some schools, the teachers felt overwhelmed by changes in the school population and an explosion of district initiatives. In these instances, teachers were reluctant to open their doors to the coach. At other schools, changes in school demographics or impending district initiatives were taken in stride. In these instances, the teachers eagerly sought the embedded professional learning offered by the coach. All of the coaches experienced some levels of supportive influences as well as destructive

ones. They were able to make adjustments to their approaches to coaching as they reflected on all these influences and decided how to proceed in order to support teachers in the best way they could.

In this following section I will discuss three insights I gained from analysis of my interviews with the seven participants in this study. The first insight relates to the influence of the principal on the coaches' success, whether positive or negative. The second insight relates to the importance of open communication between coaches and teachers as well as between coaches and principals. The third insight relates to the influence of the school culture on coaches and teachers.

Principal's influence. Most of the literature on coaching does not dwell on the role of the principal to a great extent, but there is agreement on the importance of the principal in supporting the school's professional development program (Annenberg Institute on School Reform, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). This study also emphasized the principal's importance, as either a positive or a negative influence.

In the schools such as Barrett and L.H. Holsey, the teachers felt supported by their principal, and the coach felt trusted. This enabled everyone at these schools to work together to best serve their students. In contrast, when Lydia began working as a coach at Milford Elementary, the teachers felt supported and protected by the principal. The principal indicated that he was glad to have Lydia on board, but because he did not clearly understand her role, his support for her appeared faltering. This gave the teachers tacit permission to challenge Lydia's professional credentials and resist working with her. When the assistant principal became the principal, his public support of Lydia encouraged the teachers to see her as more of a supportive resource.

At Kirkland Elementary, Debby realized that her principal was "cleaning house," or trying to get rid of certain powerful, experienced teachers. She never shared this information with Debby, but her actions spoke louder than words. Indeed, her lack of communication with Debby influenced her decision to leave her coaching position. On the other hand, Carol's principal valued her as an expert resource on literacy instruction, but her lack of follow-through on school initiatives kept them from being as successful as they could have been. Watson teachers did not always feel supported by the principal, and considered Carol a confidante they could go to in order to express their frustrations.

Because she worked with six schools, it was vital for JoAnn to have the principal's support. A high level of support was vital for her to be able to do her job well. She notes:

> Principals must set parameters and remain the instructional leaders of their schools. It is very difficult when principals turn their responsibility as lead learners of their schools over to me. Creating a shared vision of continuous learning and improvement is an important role for principals (interview, February 15, 2011).

Analysis of the data suggests that not all principals fit the ideal picture portrayed in coaching literature. Sometimes they do not have a background in elementary literacy instruction. At other times they do not understand the coach's role. Occasionally they do not follow through on school improvement initiatives. Working with principals in these situations makes coaches' jobs more difficult, but the coaches in this study have shown that they are flexible and resourceful, and able to figure out ways to support teachers in the best way possible.

Open communication. All of the coaches in this study considered themselves to be effective. However, not all of the coaches had the same types of relationships with their principal

and with the teachers at their schools. When the relationships were fluid and trusting, the factor that made the difference was open communication.

Jane spoke highly of her principal, and also of the administrative team at L.H. Holsey Elementary. She pointed out that one reason they worked so well together was that they had taken the time to get to know one another personally and professionally. They devoted this time to ensure that everyone was delivering the same message and they would not be working at cross-purposes. While the group had open communication with one another, it did not mean that the principal had given up her leadership of the school. Jane appreciated that the principal often saw the big picture and knew when to advise her to take things more slowly so that teachers would not be overwhelmed.

Amy also felt that the administrators at Barrett Elementary had a clear vision for their school. She felt that they are all on the same team, speaking the same language. When they included her in conversations about the school, and asked for her input, she felt trusted and supported. She noted that her principal felt confident in his leadership role, which made him more open and willing to allow others to contribute to the efforts.

Conversely, Debby believed she had open communication with her principal but it turned out that she did not. Debby described the coach-administrator teams she had seen at a conference, who had a common vision for their school and had conversations about instruction. The principal agreed that this was also her goal, but her choice for an assistant principal demonstrated to Debby that she had other priorities. This lack of communication contributed to other difficulties and ultimately led Debby to leave that school.

Open communication was equally important between coaches and teachers, although it may not have taken place in the same way. Teachers do not generally have extended time for

holding in-depth conversations about instruction, such as the two and a half hours Jane and the administrative team sometimes spent. Their trust was built more slowly and over a longer period of time.

None of the coaches in this study advocated imposing their ideas about instruction on teachers. They had opinions about what they believed constituted best practices, but nudged teachers in that direction rather than promoting drastic changes. JoAnn told teachers she was there to "give them ideas," which let teachers decide how to put her advice to use. When the coaches described a positive experience, they all mentioned times when they had worked collaboratively with teachers to solve instructional problems.

When Carol began working at Watson Elementary, it was as a coach with the America's Choice program. This program required teachers to make drastic changes to their instruction in a short period of time. These changes were met with a great deal of resistance. But Carol described the long process of meeting with teachers weekly to discuss the standards they would be teaching. As they worked to understand the standards, teachers also had some say in creating formative rubrics for the standards, and deciding what constituted meeting the standard. These conversations honored teachers' professional knowledge, and helped them become more supportive of the program.

The coaches in this study provided examples of open communication, and of a lack of communication between coaches and principals and also between coaches and teachers. When principals and coaches meet regularly for extended conversations about instruction they can develop a common vision for their school. Similarly, when teachers and coaches work together to solve problems rather than teachers simply obeying the coaches' instructions, they can become co-learners in a professional learning community.

School cultures. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) described a culture as consisting of "the ideas, customs, skills, and arts of a group of people" (p. 76). Schools have cultures that are manifestations of the relationships and the values of the people within them. Cultures develop over time, but are not fixed. The cultures at the schools in this study had an impact on their teachers' willingness to change.

At both Kirkland and Milford Elementary schools, a great deal of change took place in a short period of time. At both schools, new standards-based curriculum was introduced and district rezoning brought many new families to the school. Coaches were introduced at both schools to provide professional development for the new curriculum. At Milford, Lydia was met with challenges and resistance, while at Kirkland, Debby was embraced with open arms.

Debby believes that the reason she was accepted so readily was that the culture at Kirkland was one that promoted active learning. She described the teachers at Kirkland as "... trying to do what we were asking them to do with excellence." At Milford, Lydia found teachers who also worked hard and cared about their students, but who were also distrustful of her because she was sent from the school district. Their negative opinions of the central office led them to consider her "spyware" who had come to report back on teachers' actions.

Jane worked at a brand new school, and the teachers were selected purposefully to be able to contribute to the success of all the initiatives planned there. The teachers were indeed flexible and embraced all the challenges eagerly. But not all of the coaches had such a positive climate in which to work. Emily encountered challenges when new teachers from other school districts undermined her efforts to promote a balanced literacy program. Others faced more serious difficulties.

Debby worked at another school in the district for a brief time each week, and was surprised to find a very different school culture from that of Kirkland. The teachers at Eastside openly disregarded district initiatives and gave Debby the impression that they did not want her there. She also found them to have low expectations of their students' abilities and spent more time discussing student management than instruction.

At Watson, however, school culture was most evident as a factor in teacher change. When Carol began working there, she described the atmosphere as being filled with "kid-bashing." This was upsetting and "disgusting" to her, so much so that she avoided the teacher workroom where these conversations were prevalent. Teachers believed that their students were failing because of their low abilities and their poverty.

Carol forged ahead and set up model classrooms using the America's Choice program's methods. When the students in these classrooms began to learn "in new and different ways," teachers were forced to confront their assumptions about the students' abilities. At the same time, teachers who were unhappy with the program left the school and the principal made an effort to replace them with teachers with positive attitudes. Today, Watson's school culture is much more positive because teachers have seen that their students can be successful when instruction is effective. This important shift in the school culture took several years of consistent effort to accomplish.

The examples of the coaches in this study have shown how strong the influence of the school culture can be on change efforts. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) described barriers to change and while they do not specifically list school culture as one of the barriers, they mention several components of it, such as rigid organizational structures and oppressive power relationships. The coaches' stories in this study have shown that another factor that acts as a barrier to change

includes school culture and the teachers' beliefs about student abilities. As Lydia noted, many of the teachers she coached believed that every child could learn, but they did not believe that they could teach every child. In those instances, teachers tended to blame the children, an attitude that resulted in "kid-bashing." These beliefs and culture can change but it takes concerted effort and extended time.

Adjusting the lens. Using the Coaches' Relationship Lens (see Figure 4.11) can help coaches be aware of the influences at schools that may affect their relationships with teachers and principals, and thus their approaches to coaching. Considering the external influences on teachers, as well as the internal influences and the principal's impact, can help coaches begin to plan ways that they can bring the lenses into focus. Building relationships with teachers, and especially with principals, does not just happen. The coaches in this study have shown that it takes time and concerted, thoughtful effort.

The coaches in this study made adjustments in their coaching as they considered the influences affecting their schools. Blumer (1969) describes social interaction as a continuing process of interpretation and definition, and that is what the coaches did. When faced with situations that were less than ideal they assessed the situations and figured out ways to negotiate around them. These adjustment strategies can be useful to others as they work in complex and changing school settings. Considering the internal and external influences on schools can also be useful to others who work in education settings, such as teachers who work in collaborative classrooms, support teachers, or special area teachers. In addition, those who consult with school personnel from other organizations, such as universities who enter partnership relationships with schools, can benefit from the strategies employed by the coaches in this study.

Adjust expectations. The coaches in this study learned to keep the entire school in mind. When external factors became too much for teachers, the coaches backed off in other areas. This was not easy, because their natural inclination was to push for excellence, but they knew these areas could be addressed later. They preferred to do a few things well, rather than many things poorly.

Another aspect of this strategy is that the coaches knew the teachers at their school, and knew their strengths and weaknesses. This helped them know when to be more of a mentor than a coach, or to adapt initiatives to fit the needs of their school. It also helped them realize that the way other coaches worked at other schools was not necessarily the best solution for their situation.

Keep your eyes on the prize. The coaches in this study won the respect of the teachers in their schools in part because they remained focused on instruction. They never spoke badly about the teachers at their school and never betrayed confidences. When they consulted with teachers they based their discussions on data rather than opinions or impressions. In addition, they maintained a positive attitude and steered clear of gossip and negative situations. They looked for the positive aspects of teachers' practices, and rather than criticize, worked to find ways to support teachers in areas of weakness.

Meet it head on. The coaches in this study were passionate about their work and about helping teachers help students. When serious problems arose, they met the situation head on and talked things out with those involved. They remained calm, and if necessary waited until their emotions were in check, and had conversations rather than arguments. Their goal was to find solutions rather than proving that they were right. They listened, but also made sure to ask for what they needed to be successful. They tried to remember that there are many paths to

achieving a common goal. In addition, they remained flexible enough to know what was possible. If it became clear that the goals they had set were just not going to be realized, they did what they could in order to be useful.

Trust yourself. The coaches in this study were highly reflective, and constantly worked to add to their knowledge and skills. They also encouraged these practices in teachers, and worked toward building collaborative learning communities rather than positioning themselves as the expert. This reflection helped them become more sensitive to the needs of the teachers, the principal, and the school as a whole. It also helped them understand their own strengths, weaknesses and needs. In some cases this led to the coach employing the ultimate adjustment strategy: leaving the school. Knowing that there is nothing more they can do at a school is not a conclusion the coaches took lightly. But their reflection and self-awareness helped them realize that sometimes this is the best solution for all concerned.

Valencia and Wixson (2006, p. 78) considered the influence of external factors at the state and district levels on instruction in schools. They created a graphic to better understand which influences at the state, district, and school context affect the quality of teaching and learning (see Figure 5.1). My Relationship Lens considers these same factors but looks at their influence on the relationships between coaches, teachers, and principals. The coaching literature has also emphasized the importance of trust and relationships between coaches and teachers. This study has shown the complicated factors that can affect these relationships.

Making It Personal

I now consider my own coaching situation through the Coaching Relationship Lens to see how it can help me understand my experiences more clearly. As I applied the diagram to my own perceptions of my coaching experiences, I was led to consider the internal and external factors

impacting the school. I also reflected on my relationships with the teachers in light of these factors.

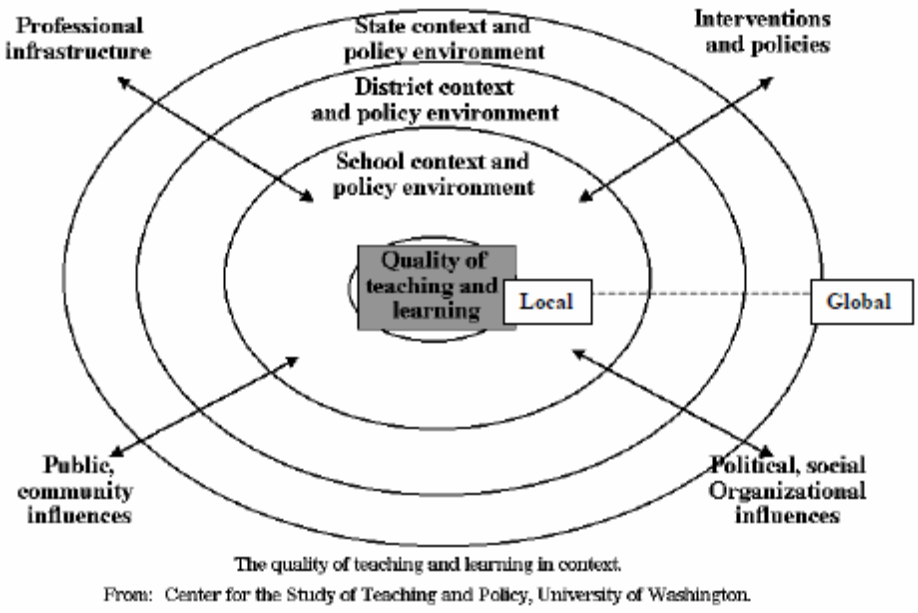


Figure 5.1. The Quality of Teaching and Learning in Context.

External factors included those from state or district initiatives. Like the rest of the state, our school had moved to standards-based instruction. The new curriculum rolled out gradually over a period of several years. Teachers were skeptical of the changes because their big concern was preparing their students for the test that would determine if the school had made Adequate Yearly Progress. They were not about to make major changes to their teaching if the high-stakes test was no different. Eventually, when they saw that the test was aligned with the new standards they began to consider making changes to their instruction.

In response to the new standards, the school district purchased new teaching materials, and implemented requirements for workshop-based lessons in reading and writing. New district leaders were putting their philosophies about balanced literacy instruction into place. Like Milford, teachers at my school were skeptical of the central office and believed that these

changes would only be in place until the new leaders moved on. In addition, they believed that reading and writing workshops "would not work for our kids." They needed explicit instruction, and lots of drill and practice. These beliefs led them to resist changing their instruction. They hoarded old basal readers and refused to implement writing workshops.

Internal factors to consider included the school culture, school demographics, and the influence of the principal. During my time at that school we lost several teachers each year, and our student population shifted as well. There were administrative changes in that our assistant principal changed. Overall, though, these changes were not considered overwhelming for teachers.

In reflecting on the school culture and the principal, it seemed that these two factors were significant barriers to my work. The teachers at the school had a negative opinion of the students' abilities, like the teachers at Carol's school, Watson Elementary, who engaged in what she called "kid-bashing." The teachers at my school were also skeptical of the inconsistent leadership at the central office. The district office was not seen as an organization to help them teach more effectively, but as imposers of meaningless regulations. Teachers were working very hard trying to keep everyone happy in a game they were certain they would inevitably lose. Even though I had good personal relations with teachers, they saw me as a representative of the central office rather than a collaborative colleague.

In considering the principal, I was reminded of Jane's comment that the principal must "bless the coach" for any significant work to be done. Mrs. King was not opposed to having a coach at her school, but did not understand the coaches' role, including how the two of us needed to work together. Her lack of presence in classrooms and at professional development sessions gave teachers the tacit permission to ignore any suggestions made there. Mrs. King was also not

clear with me about her goals for the school. Our meetings were not conversations about teaching and learning but a question and answer time where I was put on the spot.

Because the "lenses" could not be lined up in my school's "camera," it felt as though it was impossible for me to have truly collaborative relationships with the teachers and principals at my school. See Figure 5.2.

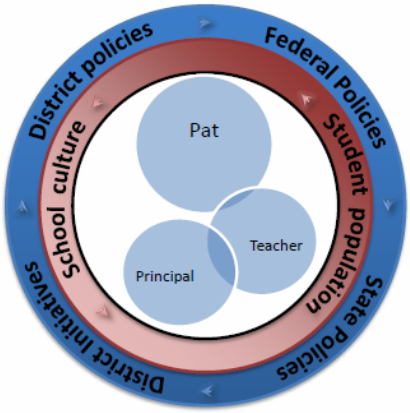


Figure 5.2. Author's Relationships Lens.

The examples of the coaches in this study have shown me ways I could have worked to make the situation better. I could have found one or two teachers who were willing to set up model reading and writing workshops. This would have helped teachers see that our students could handle lessons that did not involve drill and practice. Also, I could have tried to be useful to the assistant principal and the principal in order to develop trust, as coaches did with teachers. This could have informed the administration about what coaches do and provided openings for us to have conversations about teaching and learning. Third, I could have honored the teachers' concerns about the instructional materials, even if I didn't agree with them. By having open conversations about the materials we could have found some common ground about them. Having their voices heard may have made teachers more willing to try the materials.

Limitations of the Study

This study examined literacy coaches' perceptions of their relationships with teachers and with principals. I selected the coaches purposefully in order to have participants who held a variety of situations and experiences. While this was the case, the variety could have been greater. It would be interesting to learn about the perceptions of a coach in a prescriptive program such as Reading First or Success for All.

It also happened that not all of the coaches were available for their follow-up interviews. One coach had called in sick on the day I arrived for the second meeting and was unable to schedule another meeting time. Another was on extended leave to deal with an undisclosed family matter. I timed the scheduling of the first and second interviews in order to transcribe the tapes and begin analysis before conducting the next one. This meant that school was in full swing by the time I sent the invitations for the second interviews, which made them more difficult to fit into the coaches' busy schedules.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study examined coaches' perceptions about their relationships. Their stories reflect their experiences and their reflections about those experiences. But hearing the perceptions of teachers and principals about the same questions can expand our understandings about how schools approach the process of change. What are principals' perceptions about the role of relationships in fostering successful literacy coaching?

This study included seven participants, who were interviewed to hear their stories about their relationships. Because the study was small, more research with more participants into coaches' perceptions of their relationships will be helpful to further expand the narrative. The

study of the process of building relationships between coaches, principals, and teachers would also lend itself to the development of grounded theory.

Conclusion

The work of a coach can be frustrating and exhilarating. The coaches in this study were most fulfilled when they were working with teachers as co-learners to resolve problems of the teachers' choosing. Outside as well as inside influences that interfered with these learning experiences were constant sources of frustration. When these influences were overwhelming, the coaches found ways to adjust, being useful to individual teachers and being supportive of small pockets of learning. But sometimes, with time, energy, insight, and concerted effort, coaches can adjust the lenses to allow vibrant, professional learning communities to grow.

REFERENCES

Allington, R., & Walmsley, S. (1995). *No quick fix: Rethinking literacy programs in America's elementary schools.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Annenberg Institute on School Reform. (2003). *Instructional coaching: Professional development strategies that improve instruction.* Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute on School Reform.

Barkley, S. G. (2005). *Quality teaching in a culture of coaching*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.

Bean, R., Cassidy, J., Grumet, J, Shelton, D., & Wallis, S. (2002). What do reading specialists do? Results from a national survey. *The Reading Teacher, 55*(8), 736-744.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boyles, N. N. (2007). *Hands-on literacy coaching.* Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

Brandt, R. (1987). On teachers coaching teachers: A conversation with Bruce Joyce. *Educational Leadership, 44*(5), 12-17.

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). Grounded theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account. In Bryant, A. & Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Buly, M., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Egawa, K. (2004). From the coaches' corner: What is a literacy coach? *Voices from the Middle 12*(1) 60-61.

Burkins, J. (2007). *Coaching for balance: How to meet the challenges of literacy coaching.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research.* (2nd ed.), (pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. Los Angeles: SAGE

Clarke, A. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology [Supplement],* 94, S95-S120.

Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition. Retrieved January15, 2010, from Dictionary.com website: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/coach

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* London: SAGE.

Deussen, T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). "Coach" can mean many things: Five categories of literacy coaches in Reading First (REL 2007-No. 005). Retrieved from Education Northwest website: http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/111

Denzin, N. (2001). *Interpretive interactionism* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dole, J. A. (2004). The changing role of the reading specialist in school reform. *Reading Teacher, 57*(5), 462-471.

Dole, J. A., Liang, L. A., Watkins, N. M., & Wiggins, C. M. (2006). The state of reading professionals in the United States. *The Reading Teacher, 60*(2), 194-199.

Dozier, C. (2006). *Responsive literacy coaching: Tools for creating and sustaining purposeful change*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Ercikan, K., & Roth, W. (2006). What good is polarizing research into qualitative and quantitative? *Educational Researcher, 35*(5), 14-23.

Feger, S., Woleck, K., & Hickman, P. (2004). How to develop a coaching eye. *Journal of Staff Development, 25*(2), 14-18.

Garmston, R. J. (1987). How administrators support peer coaching. *Educational Leadership, 44*(5), 18.

Garmston, R., Linder, C., & Whitaker, J. (1993). Reflections on cognitive coaching. *Educational Leadership , 51*(2), 57-61.

Giske, T. & Artinian, B. (2007). A personal experience of working with classical grounded theory: From beginner to experienced grounded theorist. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 6*(4), 67-80.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New Brunswick: Aldine.

Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L. Darling-Hammond, & J. Bransford, (Eds.) *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do.* (pp. 358-389). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

International Reading Association. (2004). The role and qualifications of the reading coach in the United States: A position statement of the International Reading Association. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Ippolito, J. (2009). Principals as partners with literacy coaches: Striking a balance between neglect and interference. Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse Brief. Retrieved October 20, 2009 from http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/Principals_as_Partners.pdf.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teaching. *Educational Leadership, 40*(1), 4.

Kamberelis, G., & Dimitriadis, G. (2005). *Qualitative inquiry: Approaches to language and literacy research.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Kee, K. (2006). How to say it like a coach. *Teachers teaching teachers (T3), 2*(3), 1-3.

Knight, J. (2009). Coaching: The key to translating research into practice lies in continuous, job-embedded learning with ongoing support. *Journal of Staff Development, 30*(1), 18-22.

Kostin, M., & Haeger, J. (2006). Coaching schools to sustain improvement. Education Digest, 71(9), 29-33.

Kral, C. (2007). Principal support for literacy coaching. Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse Brief. Retrieved October 20, 2009 from http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/PrincipalSupportFinal3-22-07.pdf.

Lapp, D., Fisher, D., Flood, J., & Frey, N. (2003). Dual role of the urban reading specialist. *Journal of Staff Development, 24*(2), 33-36.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral practice*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Lempert, L. (2007). Asking questions of the data: Memo writing in the grounded theory tradition. In Bryant, A. & Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Systems for change in literacy instruction: A guide to professional development.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Manzo, K. (2005). States and districts send literacy coaches to the rescue. *Education Week, 24* (43), 20-21.

Matsumura, L., Sartoris, M., Bickel, D., & Garnier, H. (2009). Leadership for literacy coaching: The principal's role in launching a new coaching program. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45*(5), 655-693.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006a). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research practice. *International Journal of Nursing Practice, 12*(1), 8-13

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006b). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), Article 3.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity.* Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute on School Reform.

Pinnell, G., & Lyons, C. (1999). Literacy coordinator as instructional leader: The development of technical knowledge and skill. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association, Toronto, Canada.

Poglinco, S. M., Bach, A. J., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders, M., & Supovitz, J. A. (2003). The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's choice schools. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Putnam, R., & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher, 29*(1), 4-15.

Quatroche, D., Bean, R., & Hamilton, R. (2001): The role of the reading specialist: A review of research. T*he Reading Teacher, 55*(3), 282-294.

Rainville, K. N., & Jones, S. (2008). Situated identities: Power and positioning in the work of a literacy coach. *Reading Teacher, 61*(6), 440-448.

Roberts, T. (2008). Understanding grounded theory. *British Journal of Midwifery, 16*(10), 679-681.

Roller, C. (2006). Reading and literacy coaches report on hiring requirements and duties survey. International Reading Association. Retrieved from International Reading Association website: http://www.reading.org/downloads/resources/reading_coach_survey_report.pdf

Ross, J. (1992). Teacher efficacy and the effects of coaching on student achievement. Canadian *Journal of Education, 17*(1), 51-65.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Slavin, R. E., Madden, N. A., Karweit, N. L., Dolan, L. J., & Wasik, B. A. (1992). *Success for All: A relentless approach to prevention and early intervention in elementary schools.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service,

Steiner, L., & Kowal, J. (2007). Instructional coaching. The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement Issue Brief. Retrieved October 20, 2008 from http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefSept07Coaching.pdf

Steiner, L., & Kowal, J. (2007). Principal as instructional leader: Designing a coaching program that fits. The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement Issue Brief. Retrieved October 20, 2008 from http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefSept07Principal.pdf

Sundin, D., & Fahy, K. (2008). Critical, post-structural, interpretive interactionism: An update on Denzin's methodology. *Nurse Researcher 16*(1), 7-23.

Valencia, S., & Wixson, K. (2006). Literacy policy and policy research that make a difference. In R. B. Ruddell & Norman J. Unrau (Eds.). *Theoretical models and processes of reading, 5th ed*. (pp. 69-92). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Walpole, S., & Blamey, K. (2008). Elementary literacy coaches: The reality of dual roles. *The Reading Teacher 62*(3), 222-231.

Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2004). *The literacy coach's handbook: A guide to research-based practice.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Western Regional Educational Laboratory (2000). Teachers who learn, kids who achieve: A look at schools with model professional development. Retrieved from WestEd website: http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/teachers_who_learn/TeachLearn.pdf

APPENDIX A

TABLE OF PUBLICATIONS IN LITERATURE REVIEW ON COACHING

Researcher	Year	Approach	Purpose	Findings
Allington & Walmsley	1995	Review of Research	Review of compensatory programs for at-risk students	Pull-out models were largely ineffective
Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt & Dole	2008	Case study	Describe coach's challenges during implementation of a coaching initiative	Found conflict between coach's training and core reading program; teachers' lack of understanding of coach's role created difficulties; coaching is not a short term fix
Annenberg Institute on School Reform	2003	Report	How do coaches facilitate and guide professional learning?	Coaches are teacher leaders who guide professional learning, encourage reflection; need strong content knowledge, communication, and interpersonal skills
Barkley	2005	Training guide	How does coaching improve teachers' effectiveness?	Importance of trust because of Learning Dip when learning new practices
Bean	2001	Survey	Investigate schools with exemplary reading programs	Principals' consensus that coaches were critical to success

Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis	2002	Survey	What do reading specialists do?	Instruction, assessment, resource for teachers, administrative tasks; highly trained (IRA members)
Boyles	2007	Practitioner guide	How to provide hands-on literacy coaching	Schools receiving funds from Reading First must provide systematic, explicit instruction
Brandt	1987	Interview	Bruce Joyce's thoughts on peer coaching	Coaches engage in continuous professional learning; "coach" relationship facilitates transfer
Buly, Coskie, Robinson & Egawa	2004	Column	What is a literacy coach?	Coaches use instruction, demonstration, practice
Burkins	2007	Guide/Resource	How to develop thoughtful literacy coaching practices	Coaches should strive for balance, reflect on their beliefs
Deussen, Coskie, Robinson & Autio	2007	Evaluation report	Examine coaches in Reading First programs	Found difference between expectation and reality of how coaches spend time; described five categories of coaches
Dole	2004	Survey	Asked coaches what are the qualities of excellent literacy coaches	Exemplary coaches are expert teachers, reflective, can support and nudge teachers, can plan on the run

Dole, Liang, Watkins & Wiggins	2006	Survey	What are the qualifications for reading teachers, reading specialists, and reading coaches?	Reading specialists and coaches require teaching experience, graduate coursework in reading, exit exam
Dozier	2006	Guide/Resource	Describes responsive literacy coaching	Respectful relationships are built on understanding learning histories, constructing knowledge together, careful language choices, respecting teachers' expertise
Feger, Woleck & Hickman	2004	Practitioner article	What skills and supports are needed for coaching programs?	Interpersonal skills an important qualification of coaches
Garmston	1987	Practitioner article	Describe peer coaching models, how administrators show support	Administrators show they value peer coaching, provide training, and model positive coaching behaviors
Garmston, Linder & Whitaker	1993	Reflection	What happens during Cognitive Coaching?	Cognitive coaching helps teachers become more reflective
Hammermess, Darling-Hammond, Bransford	2005	Book chapter	Preparing teachers for a changing world	Unlearning routines in favor of new ones is difficult; Learning Dip may cause teachers to be less efficient

International reading association	2008	Survey	What topics are "hot" in literacy education?	Literacy coaching is "very hot."
International reading association	2004	Position statement	Professional Organization Framework	Lists recommended criteria for reading coaches
Ippolito	2009	Issue brief	What role should principals play in effectively supporting coaching programs?	Continuum of administrator's behavior in relation to coaches
Joyce & Showers	1982	Article drawn from research study	Describe how coaching facilitates transfer	Teachers with coaching had higher rate of transfer of training than non-coached teachers
Kee	2006	Practitioner article	Examines the ways coaches' language supports their work	Coaches' word choices demonstrate respect, build trust
Knight	2009	Practitioner article	What is coaching and what are the critical factors in coaches' success?	Coaching includes professional development that is job-embedded, intensive, and ongoing, with respectful, dialogical relationships
Kostin & Haeger	2006	Practitioner article	Describe their school coaching model	Coaches build trust by building strong, open relationships

Kral	2007	Issue brief	Principal's effect on leading and supporting reform efforts??	Principals should model collaboration and continuous learning, supports both teachers and coaches. Principals affect coaches' relationships with teachers.
Lapp, Fisher, Flood & Frey	2003	Practitioner article	How do reading specialists in urban schools help teachers improve instruction?	Coaches engage in continuous professional learning, recommend learning in presentations, active listening, reflective conversations
Lyons & Pinnell	2001	Training Guide	How to provide effective professional development for literacy teachers	Identify barriers to change, importance of principal's support, qualities of exemplary literacy coordinators
Manzo	2005	newsletter article	Examines the proliferation of literacy coaches to improve reading instruction	Rapid proliferation of coaches in federally funded programs may lead to coaches with inadequate training and background
Matsumura, Satoris, Bickel & Garmier	2009	refereed research article	Investigated relationship between principal leadership and teacher participation in coaching activities	Principal leadership was significantly associated with frequency of teacher participation in coaching activities

Neufeld & Roper	2003	Training Guide/Resource	What is coaching and what are the challenges involved in implementing coaching strategies?	Change coaches focus on whole school organizational improvement. Content coaches help teachers improve instruction in specific areas
Pinnell & Lyons	1999	Multiple case studies	How do literacy coordinators develop knowledge and skill in pedagogy, observation, and mentoring?	Literacy coordinators must have content knowledge and also understanding of mentoring
Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders & Supovitz	2003	Evaluation report	Evaluation of America's Choice by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education	America's Choice coaches need strong human relations and communication skills, training in coaching and team building, and informed and ongoing support from principal
Quatroche, Bean, Hamilton	2001	Review of research	Roles assumed by reading specialists	Among other responsibilities, assessment and instruction of students with reading difficulties; must be well prepared and skilled in collaboration
Rainville & Jones	2008	Case study	How coaches position themselves in coaching relationships	Coaching is situated and changes with context; coaches need to be able to read the contexts they encounter

Roller	2006	Survey report	What qualifications are required for literacy coach positions?	Bachelor's degree, teaching certificate only consistent requirement, author concern for coaches' depth of knowledge about reading
Ross	1992	Refereed research article	Considered relationships between student achievement, teacher efficacy, and interactions with assigned coaches	Student achievement was higher in classrooms where teachers had high efficacy beliefs and more extensive interaction with coaches
Shanklin	2007	Report	What types of research is being done on literacy coaching?	Most research on Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse is practice based
Steiner & Kowal	2007	Issue brief	Principal's role in designing a targeted coaching strategy	Successful coaching programs meet school's needs, are ongoing, and focused on content
Walpole & Blamey	2008	Multiple case study of Reading First coaches	Roles of literacy coaches, reflections from coaches and principals	Coaches are curriculum managers, assessors, trainers, observers, teachers, and modelers
Walpole & McKenna	2004	Training Guide	Overview of coaches' work and resource for coaches	Importance of coaches' interpersonal skills; importance of principal support

WestEd	2000	Evaluation report	Examine eight schools with model professional development programs	Professional learning is engrained in school culture, ongoing and focused. Effective professional development is connected to teachers' work and school reform.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Literacy Coaches' Perceptions of their Relationships with Teachers and with Principals " conducted by Patricia Waldrip, Investigator from the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia (706-542-4526) under the direction of Dr. Linda Labbo, Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of Georgia (706-542-4526). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the records, or destroyed.

The reason for this research study is to examine how literacy coaches balance their relationships with teachers and with principals. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) Participate in two interviews about my perceptions of the role of my relationships with teachers and principals. The interviews will be scheduled at my convenience and be audio recorded. The first interview will last approximately one and one half hours. The second interview will last approximately one hour and will take place approximately one week after the first.

There are no expected benefits to me. The researcher also hopes to learn ways of more effectively navigating these complex relationships. No risk, discomfort or stress is expected. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the interview, will be shared with others without my written permission, unless required by law. I will self-select a pseudonym, and this pseudonym will be used on all of the questionnaires I fill out and in the research produced by this study. The master list/pseudonym key will be destroyed as soon as possible, when interviews are transcribed. The audio-recordings will be retained through December 2010 for possible verification of transcripts during data analysis, after which they will be destroyed. The audio-recordings will not be publicly disseminated.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the project, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this form for my records.

Name of Researcher: Patricia Waldrip _____ _____
Signature **Date**

Telephone/Email: 706-542-4526, pwaldrip@uga.edu

_____ _____ _____
Name of Participant **Signature** **Date**

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant in this project should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW REQUEST

from Pat Waldrip
to [redacted]
date Mon, May 3, 2010 at 5:17 PM hide details 5/3/10.
subject interview
mailed-by gmail.com

Hi [redacted],
My name is Pat Waldrip and I got your name from [redacted] a friend of mine who teaches at [redacted]. Elementary. She said that you might be interested in participating in my dissertation research, which involves doing interviews with literacy/instructional coaches. I really appreciate your willingness to help with this!!
What would be involved are two interviews, scheduled at your convenience, the first one would take about one and one half hours. The second one would be shorter, probably 45 minutes to an hour. We would be talking about how you develop relationships with teachers and principals at your school and how you balance those relationships. Everything you tell me will be confidential.

I can come to [redacted] County at almost any time and we can meet where ever is convenient for you. We should meet after school, however, and I also want to mention that I have found that restaurants/coffee shops are tricky as far as tape recording, but we can make it work if necessary. If you want to discuss this over the phone you can call me at [redacted], or if you prefer you can send me a phone number and I'll give you a call.

Again, I really appreciate your help with this project! I look forward to hearing from you!
Thanks,
Pat Waldrip

--
Pat Waldrip
Graduate assistant
[redacted]

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Date

Pseudonym:

Number of years you have taught:

Number of years you have worked as a coach:

Grades(s) you work with as a coach:

Number of teachers you work with:

COMMENTS:

Please feel free to share any other comments that you did not get the opportunity to share during the interview.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about the school where you work.
    a. How big is it? How many classes at each grade level?
    b. How many students are living in poverty?
    c. How many students are from diverse cultures?
2. How did you come to be a coach at this school?
    a. What are some things that make your job easier?
    b. What are some things that make your job more difficult?
3. Tell me about the people you work with.
    a. What do they think about the students?
    b. What is their philosophy of teaching?
    c. How does the principal interact with teachers, staff, and you?
4. Tell me about a positive coaching experience you've had.
    a. What made it a positive experience?
5. Tell me about a negative coaching experience you've had.
    a. What made it a negative experience?
6. Do you think that the nature of the relationships you have with the teachers makes a difference in your effectiveness as a literacy coach? Why or Why not?
7. Do you think that the nature of the relationship you have with the principal makes a difference in your effectiveness as a literacy coach? Why or Why not?

8. Do you think that the nature of the relationships that the principal has with the teachers makes a difference in your effectiveness as a literacy coach? Why or Why not?
9. What else can you tell me about the role of an effective literacy coach and the role of relationships?
10. Other prompts:
    a. You mentioned _____; can you tell me more about that?
    b. What was that like for you?

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS INTERVIEW 2

1. What is important for you to be able to do your job well?
2. What have you learned about how to handle difficult situations?
3. Do you believe that you are effective as a coach?
    a. In what ways?
    b. What are the factors that contributed to your success?
4. What would you differently?
5. How has your training affected your ability to do your job well?
6. Have you had an “a-ha” moment as a coach? Would you describe it?

APPENDIX G

EARLY CODING

May 26, 2010 Interviewer: Pat Waldrip

Start time: 2:30 PM
Participant: Jane

389 know, that team really embraced it because they had somebody there...who had everyone's trust who embraced it as well, who was seen as part of the insider group. And the other particular grade level I'm thinking about, that [redacted] and I have noted has been really effective at conversations, the teacher did this, um...this type of work in her 393 previous district. They created, one of the teachers has a lot of Learning Focused Schools training, and was a practitioner of Marzano's stuff, so she already had that 395 background, she knew it was going to work. And then the other one had a very similar 396 experience in another county, so two out of three teachers knew how to have a conversation. So bam there you go, everybody else...so what we're trying to do is, we had this professional learning session called 'A Closer Look' in January. The teachers...we had, we had a couple of folks from [redacted] presenting sessions, I presented a session on the Atlas protocol for looking at student work with a colleague modeling a co-teaching 401 situation in the conversation. Um, and then we had teachers doing the rest of the 402 sessions, so we had like four teachers presenting their practices. Everybody paired up, so that it wasn't anybody by themselves. There was a collaborator, someone who 404 wasn't on their grade level. So we had all this cross-school presentations for teachers 405 who are advocating for best practices, or high impact practices in education. It really 406 created lots of shifts. But I mean, as a coach, it coming from them, and the teachers 407 owning the process I think is what made it work, just like I think it makes it work for the kids.

team embraced process
insider group
previous district work - Learning Focus training
knew it would work
2 of 3 teachers knew how to have a conversation
PL session - UGA, Jane, teachers did the rest
pairs of teachers
cross-school presentations
advocates for best practice
high impact practice
created shifts
teachers owning process

I: um-hmm. Well, it goes back to...so many times we, we see something work at a, at a school, or at a grade level or in a classroom, and then we just try to...take that, and, and do the same thing

JANE: lay it on top of the existing system, yeah

I: but if you, you have to start and create it yourself. Like, I don't know, like curriculum maps. You can't just take another school's curriculum map. You have, you have to go through the process.

413 [have to go through the process

JANE: yes

I: you know, it's the same...there's no easy...easy way.

JANE: yeah. Thank you for saying that. And I think that...this year, for our teachers in our 419 building, Pat, they've had multiple challenges. They're opening up a new school, they did not have time to get their feet wet with the curriculum—seventeen of the teachers 421 in my building are new to their content. They've never taught what they're teaching,

teachers had multiple challenges
- new school
- new content

APPENDIX H

MID-CODING: SUPPORT

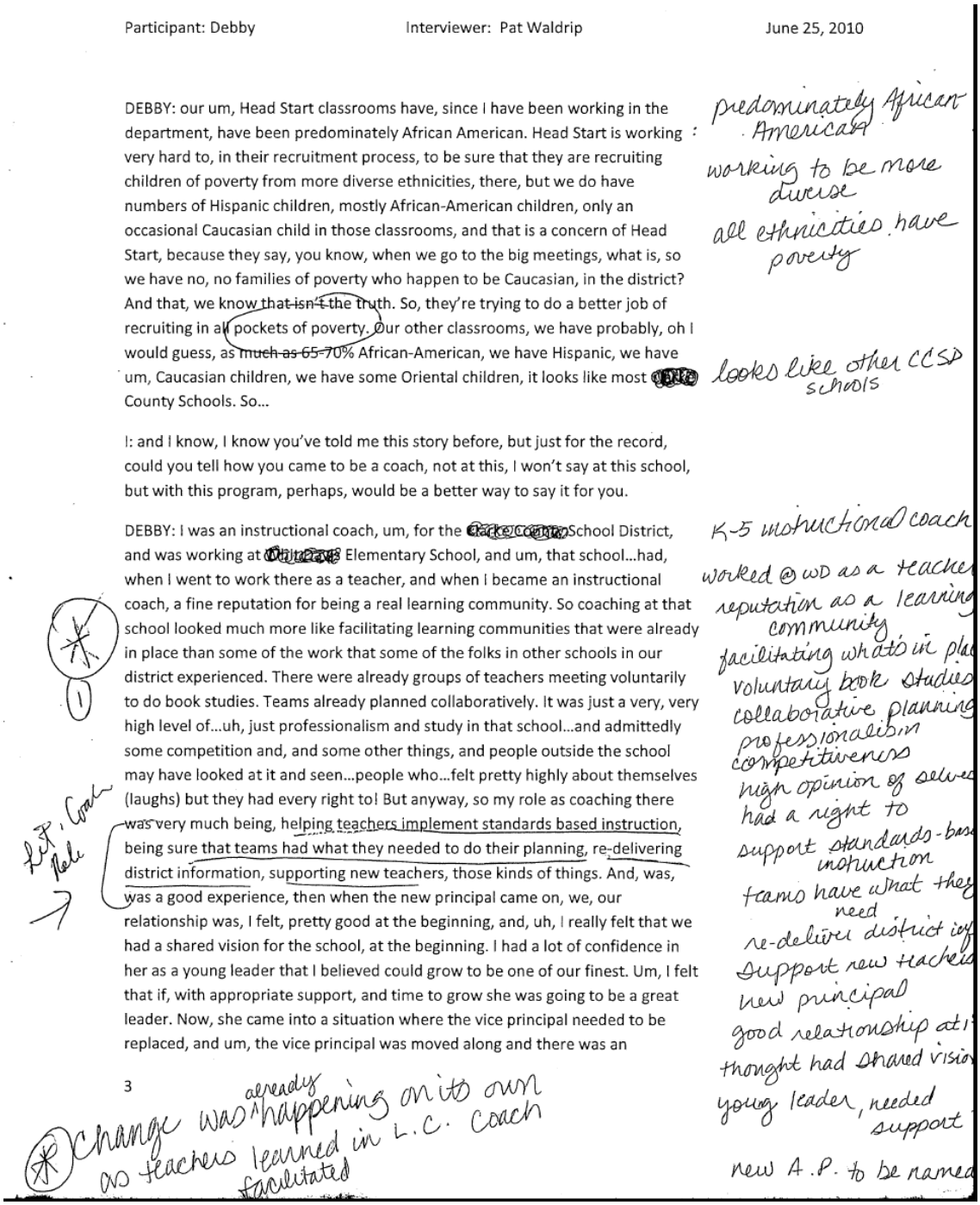
JOANN: it has taken a while to develop that rapport and that respect and that trust level. The teachers know that I'm not running to the office, and I tell them that. I'm not an evaluator, I'm a supporter, so I've built that level of trust. It takes a while to do, in the beginning there…there may be some teachers that aren't quite sure whether to trust or not, but they soon realize that I'm not a spy and I'm not running up to the office (laughs)

JOANN: they knew better than to even go there with me, because, you know, I am certainly a supporter of teachers.
I: did you ever have an experience with a principal perhaps who was…I'm not sure if inactive is the right word, but maybe when you would talk with them, maybe didn't follow through with things they needed to do to support you or didn't really give you a clear idea of…how did that work?
JOANN: yes, that has happened as well. Sometimes you can go to the assistant principal if the principal is, you know, not giving you guidelines and directives, and setting parameters for what they want you to do. Sometimes you can go to the assistant, and they can do that, and sometimes as a professional you have to step up and do what you think you should do, in spite of leadership or lack of leadership, and just do what you feel is in the best interest of teachers, and teaching, and students.

prefer not, I do have power point presentations, but I'm not in front of them, we're sitting around a table together, collaborating and sharing ideas, so they really don't see me as a threat, they see me more as a colleague or a confidante because I am a teacher. That's at the very heart of who I am.
I: and it's funny how something that seems like it wouldn't be that influential, like sitting at the table with them, makes a difference
JOANN: it makes a difference. Whether I'm standing, whether I'm very loud…I watch the level and the tone of my voice. I always bring chocolate, they love chocolate! So I let them know right off the bat how much I admire and respect the work that they do. They know that I'm genuine. And many of them, I've taught with at some capacity over my seventeen years, I've been at different schools and different jobs, but I've always been supportive of teachers and will always be a cheerleader and a supporter of teachers.

APPENDIX I

LATE CODING



Participant: Debby Interviewer: Pat Waldrip June 25, 2010

DEBBY: our um, Head Start classrooms have, since I have been working in the department, have been predominately African American. Head Start is working very hard to, in their recruitment process, to be sure that they are recruiting children of poverty from more diverse ethnicities, there, but we do have numbers of Hispanic children, mostly African-American children, only an occasional Caucasian child in those classrooms, and that is a concern of Head Start, because they say, you know, when we go to the big meetings, what is, so we have no, no families of poverty who happen to be Caucasian, in the district? And that, we know that isn't the truth. So, they're trying to do a better job of recruiting in all pockets of poverty. Our other classrooms, we have probably, oh I would guess, as ~~much as 65-~~70% African-American, we have Hispanic, we have um, Caucasian children, we have some Oriental children, it looks like most [redacted] County Schools. So...

predominately African American
working to be more diverse
all ethnicities have poverty
looks like other CCSD schools

I: and I know, I know you've told me this story before, but just for the record, could you tell how you came to be a coach, not at this, I won't say at this school, but with this program, perhaps, would be a better way to say it for you.

DEBBY: I was an instructional coach, um, for the [redacted] School District, and was working at [redacted] Elementary School, and um, that school...had, when I went to work there as a teacher, and when I became an instructional coach, a fine reputation for being a real learning community. So coaching at that school looked much more like facilitating learning communities that were already in place than some of the work that some of the folks in other schools in our district experienced. There were already groups of teachers meeting voluntarily to do book studies. Teams already planned collaboratively. It was just a very, very high level of...uh, just professionalism and study in that school...and admittedly some competition and, and some other things, and people outside the school may have looked at it and seen...people who...felt pretty highly about themselves (laughs) but they had every right to! But anyway, so my role as coaching there was very much being, helping teachers implement standards based instruction, being sure that teams had what they needed to do their planning, re-delivering district information, supporting new teachers, those kinds of things. And, was, was a good experience, then when the new principal came on, we, our relationship was, I felt, pretty good at the beginning, and, uh, I really felt that we had a shared vision for the school, at the beginning. I had a lot of confidence in her as a young leader that I believed could grow to be one of our finest. Um, I felt that if, with appropriate support, and time to grow she was going to be a great leader. Now, she came into a situation where the vice principal needed to be replaced, and um, the vice principal was moved along and there was an

K-5 instructional coach
worked @ WD as a teacher
reputation as a learning community
facilitating what's in place
voluntary book studies
collaborative planning
professionalism
competitiveness
high opinion of selves
had a right to
support standards-based instruction
teams have what they need
re-deliver district info
support new teachers
new principal
good relationship at first
thought had shared vision
young leader, needed support
new A.P. to be named

3

change was already happening on its own as teachers learned in L.C. Coach facilitated

APPENDIX J

EARLY MEMO

5/26

the principal as a "people person"
- listen
- care
- open door

when she was in a situation where the principal did not validate her, she had to find something that the principal did support that she could also believe in
She made the best of it

beach ball : all voices & perspectives

did not focus on state / district constraints
- does she have more freedom b/c of the PDS?

both she and [redacted] have only spoken positively of their teachers.
(I did not : Teachers blame the kids, did I do the same?)

APPENDIX K

MID MEMO: CHANGE

January 29, 2011 CHANGE

1. Who changes? “Making a/the shift”
    a. Teachers
        i. It’s hard
        ii. It’s easier if they have evidence the change will work for their kids
        iii. Some teachers are more willing to change
            1. Experience with a coach
            2. Already a learner
            3. School culture
        iv. It takes time
        v. Sometimes teachers try to change but the best they can do is not far along the continuum
        vi. Sometimes teachers do not know how to make the changes so they resist; change is scary, “I know what I’m doing”
    b. Principals
        i. Learn content
        ii. May have other priorities from what coach sees
        iii. Learn “what to do” with coach
        iv. May not realize how the little thing they do affect teachers

c. Coaches

i. School wide perspective: how to think like a coach

ii. When to back off

iii. Advocate for themselves

d. School culture

i. Takes time

ii. Principal's influence

2. Do coaches want all teachers to change?

a. If there is a program it may be that everyone has to do things that way

b. Sometimes a teacher will do things their own way and if it gets results the coach leaves them alone

i. Would all coaches do this? Would they admit it?

c. Changes brought on from the district or the state

i. How are these accepted? State more than district?

3. How do coaches want teachers to change?

a. Learn content

b. Procedures

c. Philosophy—is this change from within?

4. What is a shift? Is there a continuum

a. What is at either end?

i. Basal vs. workshop

ii. Teacher voice/control vs student voice/control

Category: Change

Define change/"making a shift"

(communication) Address the difference or discuss the two ways : "Here's what I want to do" and "Here's how I want to think"

WHO:

I. Teachers

II. Principals

III. Coaches

IV. School Culture?? Is it a "who," discuss its identity

TYPES:

I. Structural Change
    a. Program Change
        i. School
        ii. District
        iii. State
        iv. Federal
    b. Personnel Change
        i. Staff
        ii. Leadership (P/AP)
    c. Demographic Change
        i. School choice/ Neighborhood Schools

HOW:

I. Internally motivated to change

II. Externally motivated to change

Response to change:

I. Accepting of change

II. Resistant to change

DIMENSIONS:

I. School Culture-duality addressed?

    a. Expectations of teachers

    b. Expectations of principals

    c. Expectations of parents

    d. Background/content area of principal

II. How is the need for change or a new policy communicated

    a. Conversations amongst teachers encourage change

    b. Principals and coaches communicate to problem solve and have congruent goals

    c. Address communication breakdowns

        i. District not explaining a program change

III. Conditions pronounced

    a. Flexibilty of staff and school culture

    b. Enough time

    c. Belief that it will work, “buy in”

    d. Internal motivation of individual teachers and teams

IV. Conditions minimized

    a. Inflexibility

    b. Not enough time

c. Negativity or resistance

d. Too many/too overwhelming

i. Why do some schools at this and not others??

V. Other properties of change:

APPENDIX L

LATE MEMO: CHANGE

She says, “When I first started with her she thought it was ridiculous that they didn’t spell correctly (laughs). So I had a lot of teaching to do for her, too and fortunately she respected me…she wanted to learn.”

The coaches in this study described shifts within themselves as well. Amy moved from a second-grade classroom to a coaching position in the middle of the school year, replacing a coach who was moving on to other opportunities. She realized that as a coach she gained a school-wide perspective that was not possible from a classroom. Amy and Lydia both learned that even though their instructional experience was in primary grades that they could still effectively coach teachers in upper grades.

Shifts can be made within an entire school culture, and this was most evident at Carol’s school. When she began her work at Watson Elementary as a coach, not only was student achievement low, there was a negative attitude toward the students on the part of the teachers. She says, “blaming the child was notorious in this school. I mean, you couldn’t, it was awful. I could not sit in the workroom when teachers were having lunch there, because that’s *all* that was going on, was kid-bashing, kid-bashing, kid-bashing. It was, it permeated the culture, the air, the environment, the atmosphere…the everything of this school, and I found that so repulsive, that was hard to deal with.”

As she began working with teachers and more and more students became successful, teachers’ attitudes began to change. Eventually, many of the teachers with negative attitudes

moved on to other schools and the principal worked to replace them with teachers who fit more closely with the new school culture. Carol says, “Quite frankly, the principal got better at hiring people, you know, she started looking for people with positive attitudes.” Other negative teachers remained at the school but made shifts in their attitudes.

Structural Changes

Many of the coaches in this study described changes the teachers had to deal with over which they had little to no control. A school’s population may change because of district rezoning or changes to the community. Lydia, Amy, and Carol all described changes to their school’s population of students. Personnel changes at a school can also be noteworthy. All the coaches but Amy (who has only coached for one year) and Jane (whose school was only one year old) had had a change of administration in their years as a coach.

School faculties generally change from year to year, but when there is a significant change in teaching staff, adjustments may be necessary. Emily found her work to be much more stressful when the principal brought in several new teachers with limited experience in literacy instruction. She says, “my first year coaching they hired, what, like five or six, because remember she had been there one year, so, you know, the turnover, apple cart, you know, um, and all of the new hires, she hired them because they were able to teach math. And so, I was so overwhelmed of trying to support them all. I felt like a chicken with my head cut off, you know? I was to the point I felt like I was the classroom teacher. I was just going in, I was doing so much modeling. Just thinking about it!...And was that the best thing for the kids, you know what I mean?”